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## ABSTRACT

The modern television viewer enjoys an unprecedented amount of choice and control -- a direct result of widespread availability of new technology and services. Cultivated in this new television landscape is the phenomenon of binge watching, a popular conversation piece in the current zeitgeist yet a greatly under-researched topic academically. This exploratory research study was able to make significant strides in understanding binge watching by examining its effect on the viewer - more specifically, how it affects their reception towards a television show. Utilizing a uses and gratifications perspective, this study conducted an experiment on 212 university students who were assigned to watch one of two drama series, and designated a viewing condition, binge watching or appointment viewing. Data gathered using preliminary and post questionnaires, as well as short episodic diary surveys, measured reception factors such as opinion, enjoyment and satisfaction. This study found that the effect of binge watching on viewer reception is contingent on the show. Results also revealed that binge watching better delivers an escape gratification for viewers than appointment viewing.

BREAKING BINGE: EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF BINGE WATCHING ON  
TELEVISION VIEWER RECEPTION

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THESIS

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

It starts with one episode.

Then two. Then a few more... suddenly it's a whole season. Before you know it, it's the next morning and you're lying sideways on your couch covered in sandwich crumbs over a thin blanket with the remote falling from your grasp as you turn off the TV. That's right -- you've just binge-watched a show. And it doesn't matter if it's an elaborate fantasy series such as *Games of Thrones*, an intricately zany comedy like *Arrested Development*, or a high intensity crime drama like *Breaking Bad* -- it's all the same. You were drawn in, became consumed in a show and you couldn't resist the indulgence of binge watching.

You are not alone. A 2013 poll revealed 67% of American television viewers, ages 13 to 49, binge-watch, ("MarketCast," 2013). In 2014, a survey of TiVo subscribers resulted in 91% reporting binge viewing as common viewing behavior, ("Viewers' New TV," 2014). Those figures are likely to keep growing as more technology and TV content becomes easily available to consumers. Services like Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, HBO Go and several others remain committed to making binge watching profitable to business and convenient to television viewers. Binge watching is transforming the way people watch television and changing the economics of the industry, (Jurgensen, 2012).

Binge watching is a recent concept, ripe for research and although its growing popularity and frequency of use has been the subject of several media company studies ("MarketCast," 2013; Netflix, 2013; "Americans Taking Advantage," 2013; "Viewers' New TV," 2014), there is very little academic research on the

subject. Much remains to be explored about its effects on the television audience and reception towards a show. The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of binge watching with a two-pronged experiment, which examined its effect on viewer reception towards television shows. This study aimed to test if a relationship exists and to what extent, thus creating a better comprehension of this new television phenomenon.

### Binge Watching

Binge watching, also known as binge viewing or marathon viewing, is the recent television behavior of viewing multiple episodes of a single show over a concentrated period of time. This new habit allows viewers to bypass full seasons on linearly scheduled television in favor of watching them all at once at their convenience (Sodano, 2012, p. 28, 32). Binge watching offers a new option to viewers -- a sort of instant gratification if you will. Say a viewer is interested in the love affairs of 1960's ad executive Don Draper -- he or she can now sprint through the first several seasons of *Mad Men* on Netflix instead of having to wait to tune into a weekly episode on AMC. The act of watching a string of episodes back-to-back might seem simple, but it's become quite groundbreaking. Binge watching has defied traditional viewing styles and broken the mold of watching a show for a fixed amount of time on a predetermined schedule. Beyond that, it empowers the television consumer with a newfound control and choice. "Binge viewing threatens to shake up television's status quo... It's the viewer saying, 'I will watch it how I want to watch it... It's television on my terms'," (Chmielewski, 2013).



The term binge-watch has become so common in everyday vernacular that in 2013 it was added into the Oxford English Dictionary. It was even a runner up for its word of the year, which underlined its significant impact in recent time, (“Oxford Dictionaries,” 2013). Oxford referred to binge watching as the practice that freed viewers from the traditional one-episode-per-week schedule of broadcast television, and cited the reason for the recognition was its explosion in mainstream use. Labeled as a verb, Oxford defined “binge watch” as “to watch multiple episodes of a television program in rapid succession, typically by means of DVDs or digital streaming,” (“Oxford Dictionaries,” 2013).

The expression “binge watch” was derived from the word “binge,” which is commonly described as a short period devoted to indulging in an activity to excess, frequently used in the terms binge-drink or binge-eat. The word binge, in itself, often carries a negative and guilt-ridden connotation; and despite becoming a widespread viewing practice, binge watching is sometimes regarded as a ‘guilty pleasure,’ (Ramsay, 2013). While many TV fans can admit to lost weekends devoted to binge watching, it isn’t necessarily always the no-sleep, up-all-night fest as previously illustrated. In fact, many viewers who binge-watch see it as the new normal with no guilty feelings. A 2013 Harris Interactive survey conducted on behalf of Netflix found that 73% of TV streamers have positive feelings towards binge watching, (“Netflix,” 2013).

Binge watching has become a custom often encouraged to others when recommending a show -- “Oh you’ve never seen *Dexter*? You should start binge watching it one weekend, it’s all online!” New articles will regularly pop up online

with headlines such as, “Best Shows To Binge Watch,” or “The 10 Top Shows to Binge Watch This Summer.” Binge watching is now an embraced consumer habit -- one that might be threatening another television practice.

### Appointment Viewing

Appointment television is programming that viewers deliberately set aside time to watch -- it's when viewers arrange their schedules in order to be available to view at the time of a show's original broadcast. Appointment television is the popular shows that people make a point to remember to watch, (Castleman & Podrazik, 2003, p. 318). Now that television options aren't as time-constricted, the lifespan of appointment television is uncertain. Binge watching is “totally disrupting the old model of television appointment viewing, where it was 8 o'clock you had to watch this show... that's off the table now,” (Bloomberg, 2013). The *Baltimore Sun* went as far as calling 2013 the year appointment television died, challenging the notion that people would still allow the networks and cable channels to tell them when to watch, (Zurawik, 2013.) Appointment television sets the viewing parameters for audiences, while binge watching lets the audience decide for themselves.

### Uses and Gratifications

The television audience is an active and purposive one under a uses and gratifications perspective. Rubin (2009) explained uses and gratifications as the idea that one seeks out media that best serves their needs -- behavior and selection is motivated and functional, and people filter through competing media to consume what most gratifies their needs and desires. Accordingly, uses and gratifications

examines directly the impact media have and why people use them, (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Uses and gratifications is valuable in gaining understanding in a new media environment, (Rubin, 2009), therefore the framework is fundamental in this study on binge watching to better illustrate the effect it may have on the television viewer.

Within uses and gratifications, it's essential to clarify the distinction made between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. Katz et al. (1973) outlined the difference between the two in which gratifications sought is the "expectation about content formed in advance of exposure," and gratifications obtained is the "satisfaction subsequently secured from consumption of it." As Ruggiero (2000) further explained the difference, gratifications sought are what consumers hope or expect to get out of media, whereas gratifications obtained are ultimately what they actually get. The distinction is crucial in this study in which the goal was to understand the result of binge watching on viewer reception, thus when implementing this theoretical framework in this research the focus will lie with gratifications obtained.

#### Goals of this Study

The concepts of binge watching and appointment viewing fall on different sides of the television consumption spectrum. By conducting an exploratory experiment that compares both models and applies uses and gratifications to measure possible variances, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does binge watching affect a viewer's reception towards a show (as compared to appointment viewing)?

A. To what extent is opinion towards a show affected?

B. To what extent is enjoyment of a show affected?

C. To what extent is satisfaction with a show affected?

RQ2: To what extent does binge watching affect a viewer's reception of an individual episode (as compared to appointment viewing)?

RQ3: To what extent does binge watching affect a viewer's gratifications obtained (as compared to appointment viewing)?

We know that binge watching has become a popular option for television viewers, but these questions were aimed to explore how that option is affecting their reaction to the show and its content. These questions also explored how those reactions may be different from the traditional viewing style of appointment television.

The next chapter is the literature review, which will detail the integral themes of this study, including chronicling the concept of binge watching, from its emergence to its widespread growth, as well as more deeply examining appointment television, and television viewing habits. It will also review past studies on concepts from the research questions, including opinion, enjoyment and satisfaction, as well as the literature on the uses and gratifications theory. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology and explain decisions behind the research design of this study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter of this study will elaborate on the literature surrounding the central themes of this study. It will begin by addressing the current state of television landscape, then go back to how appointment television grew from the network era, examine how new television viewing habits began, and investigate the binge-watching boom. This chapter will also review the literature and past studies on viewer reception factors such as opinion, viewer enjoyment and viewer satisfaction, and furthermore study the role that uses and gratifications has among these concepts.

### **Current Television Landscape**

The television landscape has cultivated a climate of change in recent time. Lotz (2007, p. 81) described the barrage of new technologies at the start of the twenty-first century as an indicator of the changing nature of television. It's no longer just the box that sits in the living room-- the television screen has dispersed into countless avenues. Chamberlain (2010, p. 84) explained how new devices and services are contributing to emerging television-viewing practices, which offer customization, navigation and control. Chamberlain outlined the term television as referring to the interrelated system in which content is financed, produced, packaged, distributed, screened and engaged-- with each of these facets now being constantly renegotiated as the industry experiences major upheavals. Likewise, these changes are also affecting the television watching experience and allowing for more individualized viewing patterns, (Chamberlain, 2010, p. 84). There is a new generation of consumers accustomed to having everything they want at their

fingertips and on their own time (Damratoski et al, 2011, p. 69). Furthermore, video-on-demand services are becoming key in evolving viewer behavior and crucial in new business models (Fontaine, 2013). Moreover, producers and manufacturers of television are now aware of the new on-demand audience, which has more control than ever over how it consumes the product (Poniewozik, 2012).

One of the most profound changes currently happening in television is binge watching, which is a revolution in the way TV is distributed and consumed, (Verini, 2014). The arrival of binge watching cannot be ignored; its presence in television is vastly apparent, yet before we can examine bingeing we must discuss the viewing custom that arrived first -- appointment television.

### Appointment Television

Much of television history falls under the network era. It was a time when viewership norms centered around mass appeal, few genres, limited programming on fixed schedules and restricted control for the audience, (Lotz, 2007, p. 12). A handful of major networks controlled the television industry and they each provided non-differentiating, fairly uniform programming and availability, which forced viewers to choose among the same controlled options, with the only variation lying in daytime and prime-time schedules. (Lotz, 2007, p. 11). Networks devoted their energy into winning those key time slots and persuading audiences to continue to tune in and approach each episode like a meeting they can't miss, (Gillian, 2011, p. 6). "Those decades were determined by programming power blocks like NBC's Thursday Must-See TV," (Gillian, 2011, p. 1). "The term appointment television was coined to describe the phenomenon of TV viewers setting aside their Thursday

evenings to watch,” (Rohrs, 2005). Television shows would be structured as long arc-serials, designed to be addictive, and programmers hoped this would be the key to create “appointment television” that would generate the blockbuster ratings, (Gillian, 2011, p. 6). Before the term was coined, a show like *Dallas* was the textbook example of appointment television. During the show’s prime in the 1980s, *Dallas* stood atop the Nielsen ratings, and the episode which revealed the answer to the wildly popular long-arc storyline “Who Shot J.R.?” drew in a massive audience, becoming the highest rated individual show in television history to that point, (Castleman & Podrazik, p. 292). In the mid to late 1980s, *The Cosby Show* became appointment television; it was a buzz-generating show that people made sure to tune into and became the linchpin that solidified NBC’s Thursday night line up, (Castleman & Podrazik, p. 318).

Evidence of audiences following “appointment television” was supported in a study that examined the TV viewing habits of college students (Pingree et al., 2001). Researchers collected diaries from 731 participants, who recorded their television viewing for one week. The study found viewing peak hours were in the daytime and primetime evening hours, and participants demonstrated a preference for the shows they watch in those peak hours. The research results also revealed that in determining television selection, participants were influenced by both their own personal schedules and television schedules. Furthermore, viewers often appeared to make “appointments” with popular programs and genres for selective viewing.

However, in the short time since the term appointment television became trendy, a surge of innovation has infiltrated television. America has since shifted

from a country where viewers have weekly appointments with favorite shows, (Horsey, 2013), to one with unprecedented choice and control thanks to the widespread accessibility of new technology that provide a new experience. Appointment television “requires a time commitment and a high tolerance for delayed gratification,” (Gillian, 2001, p. 6), but new services and availability don’t come with such high demands. “Viewers no longer need to tolerate ‘appointment television’ access to content at a time prescribed by content creators or distributors and availability only on a single broadcast, satellite or cable channel,” (Frieden, 2014, p. 60).

#### New Viewing Habits

Damratoski et al. (2011) illustrated how television audiences are moving away from traditional viewing habits. Their study found the use of new technology like digital video recorders and the Internet affect television viewership. Researchers distributed questionnaires and obtained data from 228 college students. The results showed the usage of DVRs and the Internet increased the overall amount of time participants watch television on a given day. Results also found that missing originally scheduled broadcasts, avoiding commercials and conflicts with other shows were among the top reasons participants watched recorded television. Damratoski et al. (2011) concluded that developing technologies allowed viewers more convenience and options to watch programs on their own time.

Marshall (2009) discussed how the Internet has allowed for a far more individualized experience than the traditional mode of television consumption.



Shortly following their broadcasts, many shows are available online or through other forms of distribution - thus the computer screen is able to replace the television screen, audiences can search for content in an internet-delivered format and although they aren't directly watching network broadcasts their choice of what to watch is driven by network produced content, (Marshall, 2009). "Using timeshifting technology, broadcast TV viewers make TV conform to their schedules and subject it to the whims of their clickers," (Gillian, 2011, p. 76). "Time-shifted" viewing, the watching of recorded programming up to seven days after an original broadcast (Nielsen "Television," 2015) is a new viewing opportunity made possible in the changing television landscape. It circumvents the carefully planned flow of network placements and "challenges the decades-long practice of the linear segmentation of an evening's programming," (Gillian, 2011, p. 76). Recently, time shifting is most often associated with DVRs and Video-On-Demand services however videocassette recorders allowed for time-shifting practices decades before the arrival of digital technology. Van den Bulck (1999) studied VCR use and patterns of time shifting and found that VCRs allowed for a more diverse television viewing diet. Van den Bulck (1999) suggested to look at the VCR as another channel, which influences TV consumption to the extent that it's part of the viewers' repertoire for selecting programs.

Gillian (2011) argued the foundation of network promotion of "Must See TV" was based on the notion audiences would or should be watching on-air programming with millions of other Americans at the same time, however that simultaneity is no longer necessary, (p.15). Audiences can now miss the original

broadcast of a program by hours, days, even years and still find plenty of other viewing options. Evening being “prime time” for watching a television program is disintegrating as people are utilizing their option of catching their favorite shows at various times of the day, whether it be in the morning, at midnight, or whenever it is most convenient for them. Time shifting was almost like the necessary precursor that would lead to the next control-driven television viewing habit.

### Binge Television

Binge watching came into fruition after viewers began getting accustomed to watching shows on their own timetable. Horsey (2013) explained, “In the new world of television, there is no such thing as missing a show.” VCRs went digital, turning into TiVo and DVR which “made it possible for viewers to record an entire season's worth of a show, to be watched in big gulps later,” (Chmielewski, 2013). Soon after came the expansion of digital services, such as Netflix, Hulu, and video on-demand, further fueling the habit to consume continuous episodes for hours on end, (Umstead, 2014). And now audiences are devouring shows and developing a penchant for binge watching, (Beer, 2013). Jurgensen (2012) illustrated the stages of how the television viewer arrived at this point-- it began with the couch potato of the limited-optioned broadcast era, which morphed into the channel surfer following the addition of hundreds of cable channels, which has now evolved into the binge viewer resulting from the rise of digital technology. Binge watching can happen wherever and whenever so desired by the consumer. A person can spend Spring Break trekking through the series of *Smallville*, he or she can dash though the first season of *Parks and Recreation* on Netflix during a long flight, or even catch up

on *Downton Abbey* while fighting the flu at home -- binge watching makes those options possible.

### Early Binge Methods

As aforementioned, binge watching is more often associate with Netflix, Hulu, HBO Go and Amazon Prime, however the practice is a lot older than these services. "All-you-can-eat viewing is not a new phenomenon," (Chmielewski, 2013). Binge watching was bred from network reruns. For many years, networks broadcasted marathons of popular shows to allow viewers to catch up on episodes they missed or to help build awareness for an upcoming new season," (Umstead, 2014). Companies also began using marathons as a way to build up hype and gain viewers for a show's season DVD releases during the same month. In 2000, Fox originated this distribution strategy when it broadcast a complete season of *The X-Files* leading up to the DVD release, (Gillian, 2011, p. 81). Eventually season DVDs lead to the manufacturing of the DVD series box sets, which spurned countless lost weekends in front of the tube (Chmielewski, 2013,). "The DVD box set gave hard-core enthusiasts the first taste of the binge-viewing that is a Netflix trademark," (Wu, 2013).

### Who is Binge-Watching?

The growing popularity of binge-watching was highlighted in a recent poll by Harris Interactive, which found nearly eight in ten Americans (78%) have utilized the varied technology that enables folks to watch television shows on their own schedules, ("Americans Taking Advantage," 2013). Of those who do so, over six in ten (62%) confirmed that they have partaken in binge watching. The same survey found the top methods for watching TV programming on one's own schedule were

on-demand services (41% total, split with 34% cable and 9% satellite); TiVo, DVR's or other recording devices (37%), Netflix streaming services (30%), purchasing, renting or borrowing episodes or seasons on DVD (29%) and Hulu or Hulu Plus (22%). The poll also discovered that younger people were more likely to binge watch than older people. Among those watching TV shows on their own schedules, about 75% of 18-39 year-olds participated in binge watching. Meantime, only about 53% of those 40 and older were binge viewing, with 40-54 year-olds also more likely to do so than the group of 55 years and older. Another interesting indicator about the binge watching audience that the Harris survey found was that those people with children under 18 in the household were likely to binge view current seasons of shows than those without.

A separate study by MarketCast found correlating results that younger people tend to binge view more often than those in older generations, (MarketCast, 2013). Moreover, the study pointed to a large portion of the binge-watching group as part of the "millennial" generation. It also found that binge watching is gender neutral with men and women equally likely to have binge viewed television shows. However, they did note that men under 30 were the segment most likely to say they binge-watch exclusively. This study also looked at social setting of continuous television watching and found that just over half of binge viewers (56%) prefer to do it on their own, alone, with 98% doing so at home. The rest was done while on vacation (16%) or traveling on an airplane (13%). In regards to television content, this study found binge viewers preferred dramas (at 60%), followed by comedies (45%), action (31%), reality shows (26%) and animated shows (15%). Another

interesting note is that this survey found most binge watching was not done intentionally, with 71% of binge-watcher claiming they initially intended to watch just an episode or two and then ended up watching more.

### Seriality

A shift in storytelling was one of the reasons behind viewers being unable to stop a series once they start-- the move towards seriality. It was instrumental in the growing popularity of appointment television and remained fundamental in the rise in binge watching. Seriality was a structural change away from the early episodic television shows in which each episode had a proper ending and could stand independent from other episodes, so that TV viewers didn't have to engage every week in order to understand the plots, (Bourdaa, 2012). With the exception of soap operas, episodic shows were often the norm, until the 1980s when more serialized shows like *Dallas* and *Dynasty* became popular. Seriality introduced the elements of continuous storylines, entangled character arcs and complex narratives designed to span over many episodes or even the entire show series (Bourdaa, 2012). In his book, *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER*, Robert Thompson (1996) described the trademarks of "quality television," many of which aligned with the attributes of seriality. One example was *Hill Street Blues*, which was written almost like a novel and innovative in its time for using complex intertwining of many different storylines that continued from each episode to the next, (Thompson, 1996). This narrative method provided a way of finally breaking free of one of episodic television's greatest constraints: the need to tell a story from beginning to end in each episode, (Thompson, 1996).

Following *Hill Street Blues*, more television series embraced the idea of seriality and the departure of typical episodic programs. Serialized shows like *St. Elsewhere* and *ER* found success and an audience, and many critics recognized these series as part of an emergence of more sophisticated, quality television programming (Thompson, 1996). The concept of seriality, the continuity and the cliffhangers in television shows keeps TV audiences glued to the screen, waiting frantically to see what happens next, (Bourdaa, 2012). Seriality helps viewers create attachments to a series-- to its plot and characters and now people don't necessarily to wait to see what unfolds in the next episode -- there is now a way catch up instantly. Of course, binge watching also has its limitations. Viewers can only binge watch up until the most recently available episode. That's not a problem for shows that have already ended. For other shows that means zipping through a few seasons and then reverting back to appointment viewing or time-shifting. Therefore, binge watching can be very beneficial for building further success of a show, with help from seriality keeping the viewer hooked.

#### Successes from Binge-Watching

There are many instances of television programs that found great success due to an audience that was able to catch up thanks to bingeing. One series that has recently become synonymous with binge watching is the AMC drama series *Breaking Bad*. It's the story of a high school chemistry teacher Walter White, played by actor Bryan Cranston, who is diagnosed with cancer and decides to cook methamphetamine in order to pay his medical bills. He quickly stumbles down the path towards corruption, getting entangled with dangerous characters and perilous

situations. *Breaking Bad* is a highly serialized show with complex characters and continuous plotlines, and its sophisticated storytelling style garnered much praise and accolades. The show debuted to a small audience, but gained a strong fanbase throughout its run. According to Nielsen, 1.4 million viewers watched the *Breaking Bad* pilot episode in 2008. Fast-forward five seasons later, the finale yielded an audience of 10.28 million-- a colossal leap for a cable series. The show's creator credits much of that to Netflix and binge viewing. In the article, "Breaking Bad Creator Vince Gilligan on Why Binge Watching Saved His Show," Watercutter (2013) described the "binge worthiness" of the series:

*Breaking Bad* is a show that revolves around addiction. Not just the plot, mind you, but the way its fans consume it. There are no casual users. Once you start watching it, suddenly you find yourself sifting through each new episode and plot point with the rigor of a junkie looking for a lost crystal in the carpet.

Watercutter explained that even an addictive show needs an avenue to get viewers hooked and fortunately *Breaking Bad* came along at a time when viewers were growing accustomed to "all-you-can-eat viewing," (2013). Netflix added the first three seasons of *Breaking Bad* to its library in September 2011, (Netflix US [Twitter Post], 2011) while the show was airing its fourth season. After winning an Emmy for the show the following season, Vince Gilligan credited Netflix for keeping *Breaking Bad* on the air and giving it an audience and revenue lift (Stelter, 2013). Gilligan felt Netflix and binge watching helped generate new fans and positive word of mouth, which in turn allowed viewers to be able to catch up and join the series in

time to view final episodes as they aired (Watercutter, 2013). "I'd love to attribute that to how wonderful a show we have," Gilligan said. "But if I'm being honest, I realize we're riding a wave, a very new wave, that has been very beneficial to us and to other serialized shows" (Chmielewski, 2013). Netflix also confirmed the practice of binge watching exploded with *Breaking Bad* when it found that 74% of customers who started with one episode of the first season ended up watching the entire series. The percentages were even higher when Netflix studied subsequent seasons (Chmielewski, 2013).

Speaking of Netflix, the company has also found great success among the surge of binge watching by constantly supplying the library of television series available to its subscribers. "Almost any talk of binging these days gets around to Netflix... because, for bingers, the service has built just about the perfect mousetrap," (Gay, 2013). Netflix further offered bait for binge watching fans, when it produced its own original series, the political thriller *House of Cards*. Netflix made the entire season of episodes available all at once and the show proved to be quite successful, receiving many accolades and award nominations. Ted Sarandos, Netflix's chief content officer was quoted that he felt television audiences were always made to wait, whether it was for a new episode or a new season. But now, he said, "the Internet is attuning people to get what they want when they want it. *House of Cards* is literally the first show for the on-demand generation" (Chmielewski, 2013). The release of *House of Cards* challenged the network norm of television schedules and created a stir among TV fans and among the industry. "What was perhaps most interesting about the launch of *House of Cards* on Netflix was the



debate it spawned about binge viewing versus traditional appointment... The headlines, interestingly, were not so much as the novelty of original content via Netflix, but rather about the viewing patterns," (Ulin, 2013, p. 372).

### Uses and Gratifications

The uses and gratifications approach to communication research examines needs as a component of media selection and consumption, (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). Uses and gratifications is an audience-centered perspective, in which individuals have particular needs that drive selections of certain kinds of media, (Rubin, 2009). Under uses and gratifications, people have needs that can be satisfied by media, and this framework seeks to understand why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs.

Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch (1974) were among the first to implement uses and gratifications in research and examine media effects from the viewpoint, "ask not what media do to the people, but what people do with media." Uses and gratifications has an overarching goal to understand the interaction between user needs and media context, (Palmgreen, Wenner & Rosengren, 1985). "This theory has been applied to a variety of mass media and media content, with the selection of media evolving to match the dominant or emerging media of the day," (Dunne, Lawlor & Rowley, 2010). Early uses and gratifications research was applied in the context of radio (Herzog, 1944; Cantril & Allport, 1935), print media, such as newspapers and magazines (Berelson, 1949; Payne, Severn & Dozier, 1988) and eventually applied to study television (Greenberg, 1974; Rubin, 1981, 1983; Bantz, 1982). In recent years, further evolution of uses and gratifications has explored the

Internet (Grant, 2005; Ruggiero, 2000; Song et al., 2004), Facebook (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010, Giannakos et al, 2013) and other social media (Whiting & Williams, 2013, Ezumah, 2013).

The uses and gratifications perspective has also been instrumental when studying media behavior, such as television viewing habits (Compton, 1983, Krcmar et al, 2010). One recent study (Khan & Manzoor, 2013) applied uses and gratification to investigate television behavior and attitude. Researchers surveyed 180 schoolgirls and the results found that age of respondents, television use behaviors and attitudes have significant positive correlations with level of identification with viewing motivations. This theory has been beneficial in gaining insight into television viewers, however what is lacking thus far is uses and gratifications research on binge-watchers. Because binge watching is so new and remains relatively unexplored in communication research, this literature review will now focus on other studies that examine themes within television viewer reception, such as opinion, satisfaction and enjoyment.

#### Viewer Opinion

Binge watching is a television habit that accelerates the frequency of viewing. Barwise and Ehrenberg, (1987) found there is a positive relationship between a viewer's opinion of a television program and how frequently they watch it. Their study measured how viewers and non-viewers felt about certain television series, as well as specific episodes. Researchers also explored how liking a TV series correlated with whether people viewed it and how often. There were two parts of this study-- the first was collecting data from 375 diaries, which asked participants

to record what shows they watched over an 8-day period and how much they liked the episodes. The second part of the study gathered data from 709 questionnaires, which measured the claimed frequency of viewing and included several different liking scales. The questionnaire covered past viewing of TV series, which allowed participants to share their opinion on a show even if they hadn't seen the current episode. The results found that viewers mostly watch what they say they like and how much a viewer likes a particular series correlates with how often they see it.

Several recent studies involving TV audience opinion have focused on how viewers feel towards particular characters on a program, (Evans, 2008; Hoffner and Buchanan, 2009; Tian and Hoffner, 2010). One of these studies found that as a viewer's liking of a TV character increases so does their parasocial interaction, (Tian and Hoffner, 2010), which refers to the bond, or perceived relationship, an audience member feels towards a character (Giles, 2002).

#### Viewer Satisfaction

Dennis and Gray (2013) studied the satisfaction of television viewers with an episode-by-episode examination. Researchers employed a diary methodology on two groups of 200 TV viewers in Australia over a period of six weeks. Each group was assigned a drama series to watch every week and given an online survey to complete shortly after each episode. The surveys asked the participants to measure expectations, involvement, satisfaction, program performance and connectedness. The findings revealed program performance was the most significant predictor of audience satisfaction. Expectation was the second most substantial predictor, and to a very limited extent, connectedness was another indicator of viewer satisfaction.

Lu and Lo's (2007) study on the antecedents and consequences of audience satisfaction found a positive connection between connectedness and satisfaction--as viewers' connectedness with a TV program increased, so did their satisfaction. To investigate, researchers conducted a telephone survey and collected data on 253 Hong Kong residents. Interviews included questions pertaining to television viewing behavior, motivation, involvement, satisfaction connectedness and intentions. Besides concluding that connectedness has a positive relationship with satisfaction, this study also found that as audience satisfaction increases, so does intentional viewing, positive word-of mouth and the likelihood of watching commercials.

#### Television Enjoyment

Zillmann and Bryant (1994) proposed viewer enjoyment correlates with characters and the consequences of their experiences. Oliver & Armstrong (2005) examined this disposition theory in a study about viewing and enjoyment of crime shows. "Disposition theory suggests that viewer enjoyment is strongest when liked characters are portrayed as winning and disliked characters are portrayed as losing," (Oliver and Armstrong, 2005, p. 561) and the results of this study were consistent with this theory, suggesting that crime shows were more appealing to viewers who enjoyed the capture and punishment aspect. Weber et al. (2008) also tested disposition theory and viewer enjoyment in a longitudinal study on viewer responses to daytime soap opera. Participants were assigned to watch a week's worth of episodes during one of 10 consecutive weeks and then complete an online survey. Questions included episode content, participant information, character and show evaluation. The study found liking and disliking program characters had an

effect on exposure and enjoyment. Specifically, higher Nielsen ratings and increased viewer enjoyment resulted when positive or negative outcomes happened to characters who were morally deserving.

Nabi et al. (2009) sought to find a connection between uses and gratifications paradigm and enjoyment of reality-based and fictional television programming. The results of two survey studies found that voyeurism or curiosity about others was a key gratification fulfilled by reality television, however it wasn't always a predictor of enjoyment. Researchers also suggested that gratifications obtained might not necessarily result in program enjoyment.

The existing literature on these television topics provided a solid foundation for this exploratory study on the effects of binge watching, a yet uncharted subject.

To restate what questions this study sought to answer:

RQ1: To what extent does binge watching affect a viewer's reception towards a show (as compared to appointment viewing)?

A. To what extent is opinion towards a show affected?

B. To what extent is enjoyment of a show affected?

C. To what extent is satisfaction with a show affected?

RQ2: To what extent does binge watching affect a viewer's reception of an individual episode (as compared to appointment viewing)?

RQ3: To what extent does binge watching affect a viewer's gratifications obtained (as compared to appointment viewing)?

### **Chapter 3 - Methods**

For this study, data was collected from online questionnaires during a two-pronged experiment. There were 212 total participants -- which were split into a group of appointment viewers and a group of binge-watchers and assigned to watch a half season of a television show. "An experiment seeks to determine if a specific treatment influences an outcomes," (Creswell, 2014, p.13). Since the goal of this study was to test if binge watching has an effect on viewer's reception towards a show, an experiment was chosen as the most appropriate method to arriving at the answers to the research questions.

#### **Participants**

This research study recruited students from a private Northeast university as participants. Basil (1996) reasoned student samples were appropriate in studies that do not draw conclusions about a population as a whole and instead look at a hypothesized relationship between two variables. Therefore, students are suitable for this study because the goals are not to make estimates about the population, or even the television viewing audience, but to specifically learn about those who binge watch and if the process of binge watching has an effect on their reception of a show.

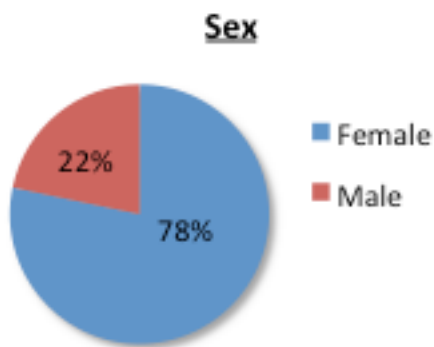
Students were recruited to join the study by offering extra class credit in exchange for their participation. Flyers were also distributed to attract volunteers. Since involvement in the study required a significant amount of time from participants, a chance to win a gift card was used as incentive to finish. Names of the

participants who completed the study were entered into a drawing and five were randomly selected to each receive \$50 Visa gift cards.

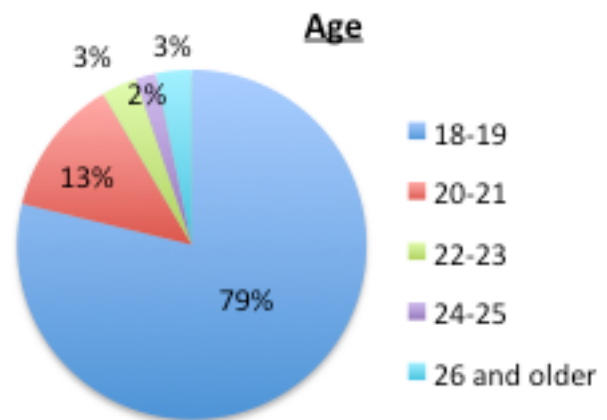
### Participant Demographics

Among participants (n=212), 78% identified as female and 22% male. The age range was 18-28, with the majority (79%) identifying as 18-19 years old. 66% of participants identified as White/Caucasian, 16% as Asian or Pacific Islander, 9% as Black/African American 5% as Latino/Hispanic American, 2% as American Indian or Alaskan Native and also 2% as Indian or Middle Eastern.

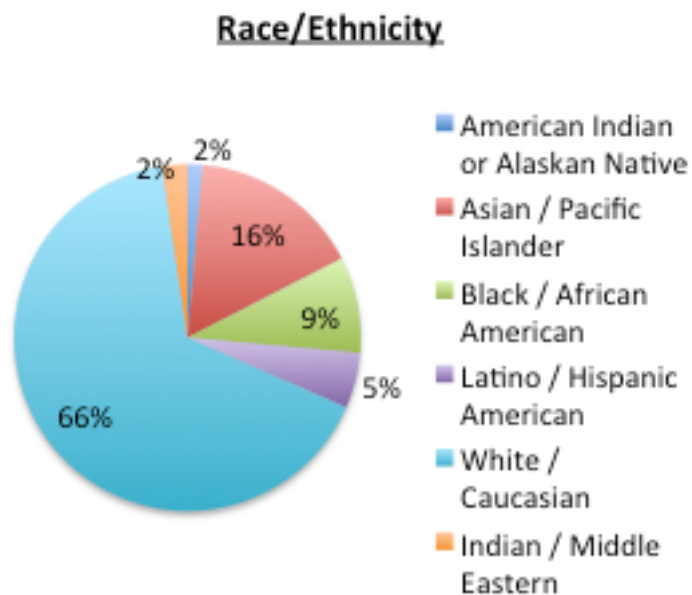
Pie Chart 1.1



Pie Chart 1.2



Pie Chart 1.3



This study used two popular and serialized drama series for the viewing content: *Scandal*, a show on ABC about a Washington, D.C. fixer with a client list consisting of the rich and powerful, including the President of the United States, with whom she's having an affair; and *The Walking Dead*, a show on AMC which follows a group of survivors lead by a sheriff's deputy, living in a post-apocalyptic world overrun by zombies. These two shows were chosen because they have known to be popular among binge watchers, plus their ratings demonstrate a strong live broadcast audience. *The Walking Dead* yields massive ratings, constantly breaking ratings records - 17 million viewers watched its season 5 premiere, and when another 5 million DVR/VOD viewers were factored in the total arrived at 22.4 million, making it the most-watched drama in the history of cable television, (Starr, 2014). It also repeatedly pops up on lists of the most binge-watched shows, (Spangler, 2014). *Scandal* also delivers strong ratings for ABC, continuously gaining viewers each year and its active live audience it constantly produces high Twitter ratings (Levin, 2014). The show is also frequently cited as a binge worthy show (Cintrón, 2013; Gillin & Cridlin, 2013), and even the First Lady Michelle Obama confessed to binge watching it, (Hibberd, 2014). Both series began a new season in the fall of 2014. *Scandal* premiered on September 25 and aired its mid-season finale on November 20, for a total of nine episodes. *The Walking Dead* premiered on October 12 and concluded its half season on November 30, for a total of eight episodes.



## Design

Each participant was randomly assigned to watch either *Scandal* or *The Walking Dead* and instructed to either appointment view or binge watch. Thus among the 212 total participants, there were two condition groups: appointment viewers (n=111) and binge-watchers (n=101); and two show groups: *Scandal* viewers (n=102) and *The Walking Dead* viewers (n=110). The subgroup were: *Scandal* appointment viewers (n=51), *Scandal* binge watchers (n=51), *The Walking Dead* appointment viewers (n=60), *The Walking Dead* binge watchers (n=50).

In order to track and gather the data, this experiment utilized a number of surveys: a preliminary questionnaire and post questionnaire; and short episodic diary surveys. Questionnaires are instruments designed to extract information and although often associated with survey research, questionnaires can also be useful in experimental research, (Babbie, 2012). Diaries were advantageous in this study because they are an ongoing means to collect self-reported experiences from participants, (Bolger et al., 2003). Diaries also reduce participant retrospection and allow phenomena to be measured within their natural context, (Bolger et al., 2003). The episodic diary surveys tracked each participant's reaction to every episode as they experienced it, furthermore the same content was tested between the binge-watching group and the appointment-viewing group. All of the surveys employed in this study were completed on SurveyMonkey.com.

This study was designed as a two-pronged experiment conducted over the duration of about five months. The timeline for this study went as follows:

Participants for the first half of the study, the appointment-viewing group, began in late September (*Scandal*) and early October (*The Walking Dead*). They completed the pre-questionnaire before their assigned show premiered and were then instructed to watch as it aired weekly during the fall television season. Participants also filled out a short diary survey after each episode. At the end of the season, participants were given a post questionnaire. The first half of the study concluded in December.

The second part of the study began after the academic winter break. The binge-watching group began in late January and early February. Participants were also given a preliminary questionnaire before they started watching. Then participants were given two weeks to watch all of the episodes of their assigned show, the same ones that had just aired in the fall season. Participants were given an Amazon account with the episodes pre-purchased for their watching convenience. Just as like the appointment-viewing group, each participant in the binge-watching group also completed short surveys for each episode. One difference was that since binge-watching participants controlled when and how frequently they watched the episodes, consequently it was up to them to decide when to fill out the short surveys, which may not necessarily have been one after each episode. Since the nature of binge watching is choice and control, this seemed quite fitting. When they finished the show, participants completed the post-questionnaire. The second half of the study concluded at the end of February.

## Instrument

The pre-questionnaire consisted of 24 questions. The pre-questionnaire was beneficial in this study because it painted a clear starting point for each participant. Questions included demographic information, as well as television preferences, habits and motivations, familiarity and opinion of assigned show, and binge watching experience thus far.

The post-questionnaires consisted of 25 questions for the appointment viewing group and 26 for the binge watching group. The post-questionnaire gauged the overall reception of participants after viewing the season of their assigned show through their designated condition. Questions included opinion and other reception factors towards the show, the episodes and the season, gratifications obtained, and general feelings about the overall experience.

Questions for both pre and post questionnaires were multiple item and scales, with the exception of one optional open-ended question about additional comments in the post questionnaire. Both questionnaires included inquiries about reception, specifically opinion, satisfaction and enjoyment. Participants were asked to rate each of these reception factors on a 0-10 scale, 0 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. Additionally, for opinion, participants were also asked to measure the factor on a 5-scale response rating, which consisted of the multiple-choice options: "Loved it," "Liked it," "It was okay," "Didn't like it," and "Hated it."

Both questionnaires included gratifications measures, using the established items: escape, learning, habit, social interaction, companionship, information, pass

time, relaxation and entertainment -- which are prominent television viewing gratifications as based on earlier studies, (Greenberg, 1974, Rubin, 1981, 1983). The items were preceded by the question, "I like(d) viewing through [viewing condition] because..." and respondents were asked to rate each item, slightly modified to a conversational phrase, on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This question format was modeled after previous uses and gratifications studies on television (Barton, 2009 & 2013; Logan 2011).

Note: The pre-questionnaire included these items mainly to get a picture of the participants' gratifications before beginning the experiment. Results for this study will be drawn from the post-questionnaire in order to measure gratifications obtained after viewing.

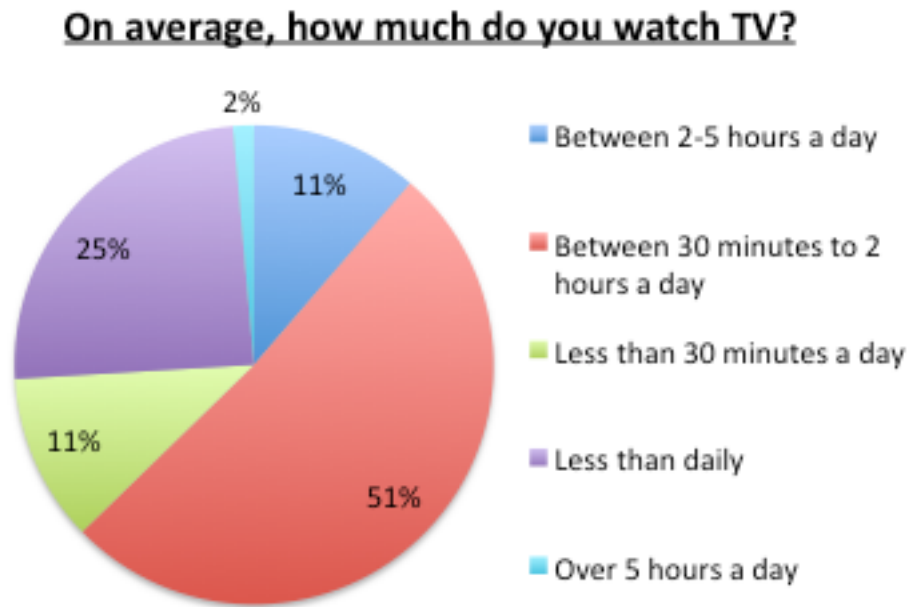
The short episodic surveys consisted of 6-7 multiple choice questions about their reaction to the episode. It included the same four reception factor questions as previously described, as well as an episode content question for viewing verification, and an optional open-ended question for additional comments.

Samples of all of the instruments used in this study are included in the appendix. Data was compiled from all the questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS.

## Chapter 4 - Results

Data from the pre-questionnaire showed the viewing habits of the participants before beginning the experiment. Just over half (51%) of our participants reported watching between 30 minutes to 2 hours a day of television on average. 13% reported watching more than 2 hours a day and 11% reported watching less than 30 minutes a day. 25% reported watching television less than daily.

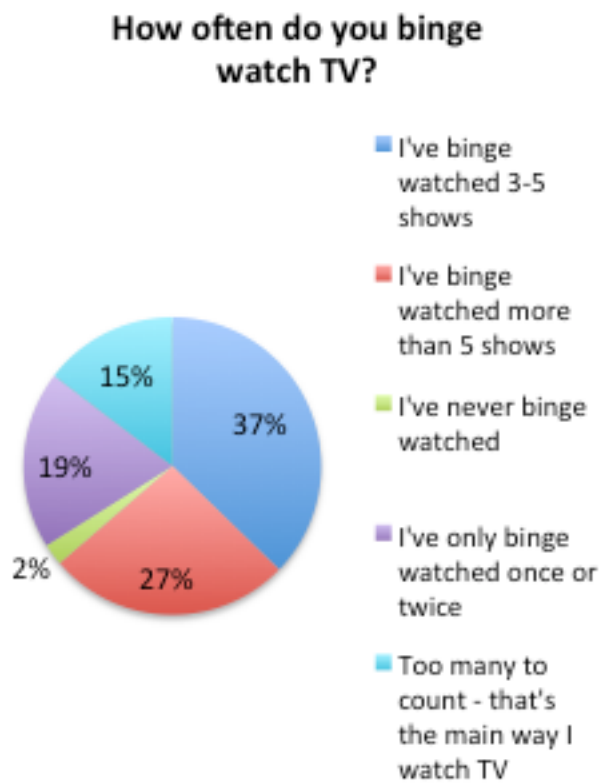
*Pie Chart 2.1*



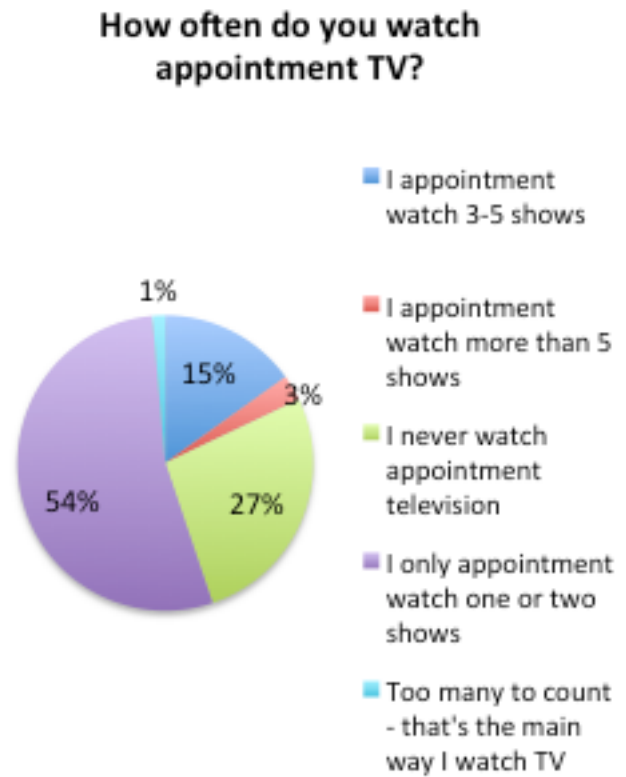
When it came to viewing conditions, participants reported binge watching more often than appointment viewing. The majority of participants (79%) reported binge-watching more than three shows, with 27% within that group reporting to have binge watched more than five shows and 15% within that group reporting to have binge watched too many to count because that's the main way they watch television. Only 2% of participants reported never having binge watched a show. On the other hand, the majority

of participants (81%) reported appointment viewing *less* than three shows when it came to appointment television. 27% within that group reported never watching appointment TV. Only 3% reported to have appointment viewed more than five shows and just 1% reported to have appointment viewed too many shows to count because that's the main way they watch television.

Pie Chart 2.2

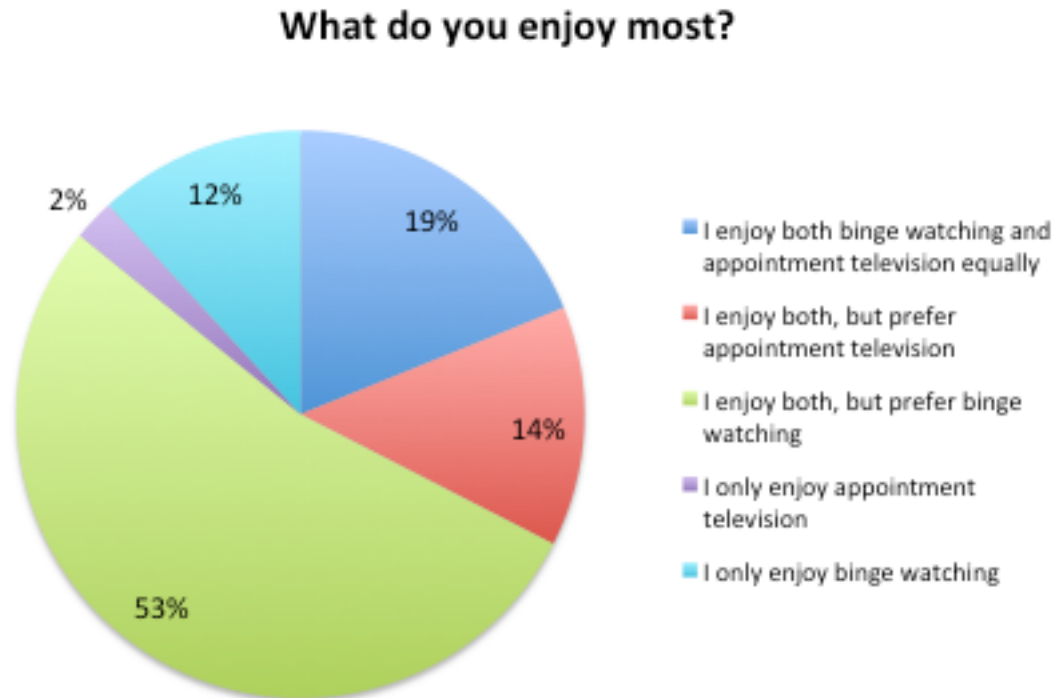


Pie Chart 2.3



Concerning viewing preferences, slightly over half of participants (53%) reported enjoying both but prefer binge watching. The next biggest group (19%) said they enjoyed both binge-watching and appointment television equally. 14% said they enjoyed both, but preferred appointment television. 12% reported to only enjoying binge watching, and only 2% reported to only enjoying appointment television (see Pie Chart 2.4 for visualization.)

Pie Chart 2.4



Participants who said they binge watched overwhelmingly reported Netflix (85%) as what they used to view content. Other streaming services the participants reported to using were considerably less, such as Hulu (25%), Amazon (14%) and HBO Go (2%).

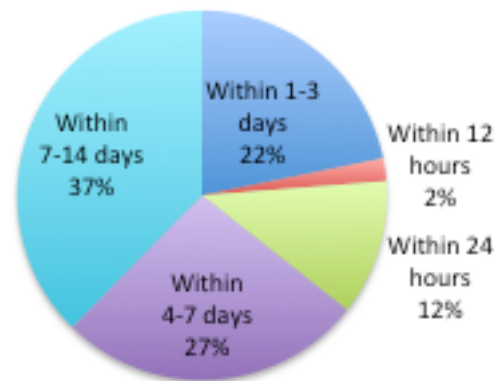
Regarding the participants' familiarity with their assigned shows before beginning the study, slightly over half (53%) reported to knowing about the show but never having seen it. 16.5% reported having seen many episodes but not being fully caught up and another 16.5% reported to having seen a few episodes of the show. 13% of participants said they had seen every episode. Only 1% reported that they had never heard of the show.

During this experiment, participants watched a show by either appointment viewing or binge watching. Within the appointment viewing population (n=111), 52% actually watched the episodes live over the entirety of the half-season. 23% of participants watched the episodes within 24 hours of the original airing, 14% watched within 1-2 days and 11

watched within a week. For episode one, 64% watched it live, 55% watched it live for episode two, 53% for episode three and this figure steadily declined throughout the season with its lowest at 42%. Within the binge watching population (n=102), 37% watched all assigned episodes within 7-14 days. 27% watched all the episodes between 4-7 days, 22% finished in 1-3 days, 12% within 24 hours and 2% within 12 hours.

*Pie Chart 2.4*

**Binge watchers: How long did it take you to finish all episodes?**



**RQ1: To what extent does binge watching affect a viewer's reception towards a show (as compared to appointment viewing)?**

Data collected from the post-questionnaire was used to answer this question. Results found no significant difference between viewing conditions, showing that binge watching does not affect viewer's reception towards a show. However, further examination of the data revealed the variable of show can contribute to a binge watching effect on reception. The following details the data analysis of RQ1.

A univariate ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) was conducted on each of four show reception measures: a 5-point scale opinion response, an 11-point opinion rating, an 11-point enjoyment rating and an 11-point satisfaction rating. The fixed variables were show



and condition. For these tests, familiarity was controlled due to the significant differences among participants between the shows (see Table 1.1 and Table 1.2) and because familiarity significantly correlated with all four opinion measures (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.1

Descriptives: How familiar are you with show?								
Show	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Scandal	102	3.06	1.241	0.123	2.81	3.3	1	5
Walking Dead	110	2.69	0.946	0.09	2.51	2.87	2	5
Total	212	2.87	1.111	0.076	2.72	3.02	1	5

Table 1.2

One-way ANOVA: How familiar are you with show?					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.164	1	7.164	5.943	0.016
Within Groups	253.138	210	1.205		
Total	260.302	211			

Table 1.3

Correlations		Season Opinion	Season Opinion Rating	Season Enjoyment	Season Satisfaction	How familiar are you with show?
Season Opinion	Pearson Correlation	1	.859**	.898**	.857**	.327**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	212	212	212	212	212
Season Opinion Rating	Pearson Correlation	.859**	1	.932**	.936**	.272**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	212	212	212	212	212
Season Enjoyment	Pearson Correlation	.898**	.932**	1	.946**	.292**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	212	212	212	212	212
Season Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.857**	.936**	.946**	1	.254**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	212	212	212	212	212
How familiar are you with show?	Pearson Correlation	.327**	.272**	.292**	.254**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	212	212	212	212	212

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1.4 displays the means for the first reception measure, the 5-point scale opinion response. Tests of between-subjects effects, controlled for participant familiarity, found there was no significant difference in condition,  $p=.228$ ,  $F(1,207)=1.464$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.007$ . There was a significant difference between the shows,  $p=.001$ ,  $F(1,207)=11.864$ ,  $\eta^2_p=0.054$ , with the means indicating participants liked *Scandal* better. There was also a significant interaction of condition and show,  $p=.002$ ,  $F(1,207)= 9.678$ ,  $\eta^2_p=0.045$ . Chart 1.1 illustrates *Scandal* binge-watchers had higher season opinion rating than *Scandal* appointment viewers. *The Walking Dead* yielded a different response from participants - a lower opinion among binge watchers than appointment viewers.

Table 1.4

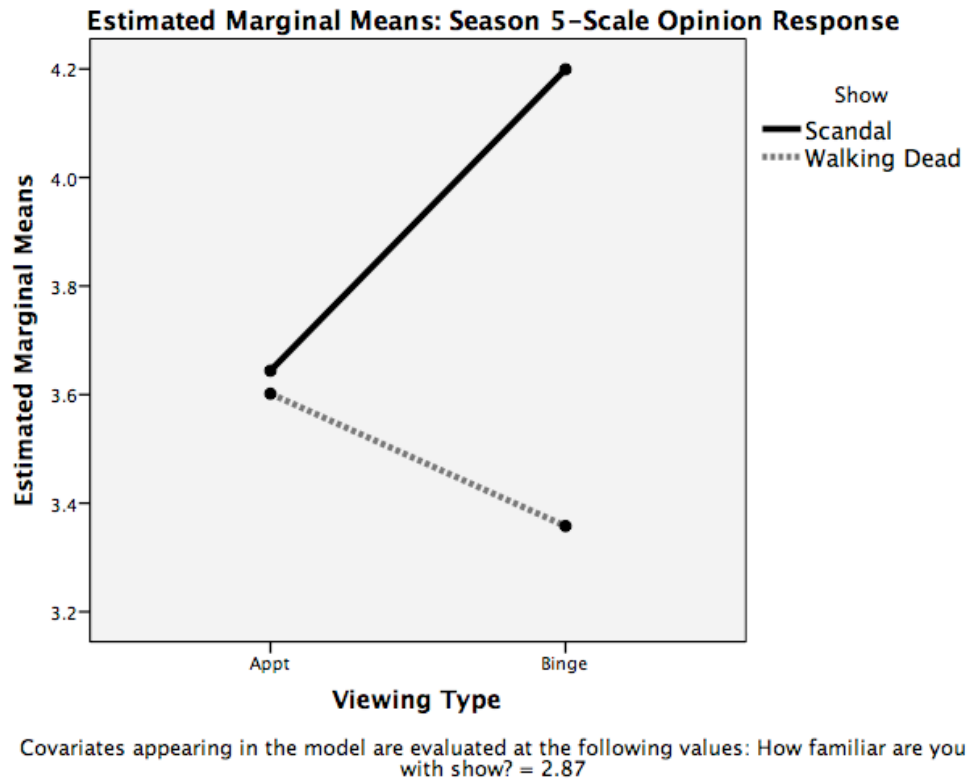
Descriptive Statistics		Season 5-Scale Opinion Response		
Viewing Type	Show	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Appt	Scandal	3.82	1.014	51
	Walking Dead	3.55	0.982	60
	Total	3.68	1.001	111
Binge	Scandal	4.14	0.825	51
	Walking Dead	3.3	1.055	50
	Total	3.72	1.031	101
Total	Scandal	3.98	0.933	102
	Walking Dead	3.44	1.018	110
	Total	3.7	1.013	212

Table 1.5

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects								
Dependent Variable: Season 5-Scale Opinion Response								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Para-meter	Observed Power
Corrected Model	42.378a	4	10.595	12.582	<.001	0.196	50.329	1.000
Intercept	200.819	1	200.819	238.493	<.001	0.535	238.493	1.000
Familiarity	22.5	1	22.500	26.721	<.001	0.114	26.721	0.999
Condition	1.233	1	1.233	1.464	0.228	0.007	1.464	0.226
Show	9.99	1	9.990	11.864	0.001	0.054	11.864	0.929
Condition*Show	8.149	1	8.149	9.678	0.002	0.045	9.678	0.872
Error	174.301	207	0.842					
Total	3116	212						
Corrected Total	216.679	211						

a. R Squared = .196 (Adjusted R Squared = .180)

Chart 1.1



For the season opinion rating responses, tests of between-subjects effects, controlled for participant familiarity, also found a significant difference between the two shows,  $p=.003$ ,  $F(1,207)= 8.907$ ,  $\eta^2_p=0.041$ , with higher means for *Scandal*. Similar to the 5-scale opinion response, the test found no significant difference in condition alone,  $p=.196$ ,  $F(1,207)= 1.683$ ,  $\eta^2_p=0.008$ . Once again though, there was a significant difference within the interaction of condition and show,  $p=.055$ ,  $F(1,207)= 3.716$ ,  $\eta^2_p=0.018$ . Chart 1.2 illustrates the difference between show and viewing condition, showing the noticeable upward shift in opinion ratings from *Scandal* appointment viewers and *Scandal* binge-watchers. As for *The Walking Dead*, there was only a slight decrease in opinion ratings from the binge watchers.

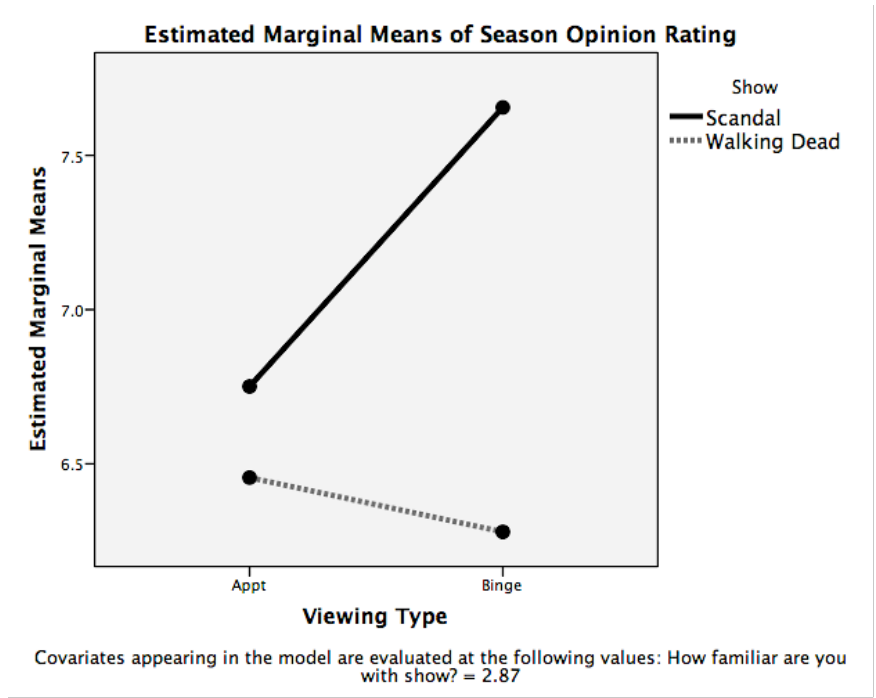
Table 1.6

Descriptive Statistics   Dependent Variable: Season Opinion Rating				
Viewing Type	Show	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Appt	Scandal	7.06	2.266	51
	Walking Dead	6.37	2.075	60
	Total	6.68	2.183	111
Binge	Scandal	7.55	1.759	51
	Walking Dead	6.18	2.173	50
	Total	6.87	2.082	101
Total	Scandal	7.3	2.033	102
	Walking Dead	6.28	2.112	110
	Total	6.77	2.132	212

Table 1.7

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					Dependent Variable: Season Opinion Rating			
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
Corrected Model	128.659a	4	32.165	8.017	<.001	0.134	32.069	0.998
Intercept	702.359	1	702.359	175.067	<.001	0.458	175.067	1.000
Familiarity	66.292	1	66.292	16.524	<.001	0.074	16.524	0.982
Condition	6.752	1	6.752	1.683	0.196	0.008	1.683	0.252
Show	35.736	1	35.736	8.907	0.003	0.041	8.907	0.844
Condition*Show	14.908	1	14.908	3.716	0.055	0.018	3.716	0.484
Error	830.473	207	4.012					
Total	10686	212						
Corrected Total	959.132	211						

Chart 1.2



For the season enjoyment ratings, tests of between-subjects effects, controlled for participant familiarity, resulted in a significant difference between the shows,  $p < .001$ ,  $F(1,207) = 13.8$ ,  $\eta^2_p = 0.063$ . Means for *Scandal* enjoyment rating were also higher than *The Walking Dead*. There was no significant difference in condition alone,  $p = .331$ ,  $F(1,207) = .951$ ,  $\eta^2_p = 0.005$ , but a significant interaction of condition by show,  $p = .033$ ,  $F(1,207) = 4.608$ ,  $\eta^2_p = 0.022$ . Chart 1.3 echoes the same trend as previous charts. Enjoyment ratings were higher with *Scandal* binge watchers than its appointment viewers, but ratings were lower for *The Walking Dead* binge watchers than its appointment viewers.

Table 1.8

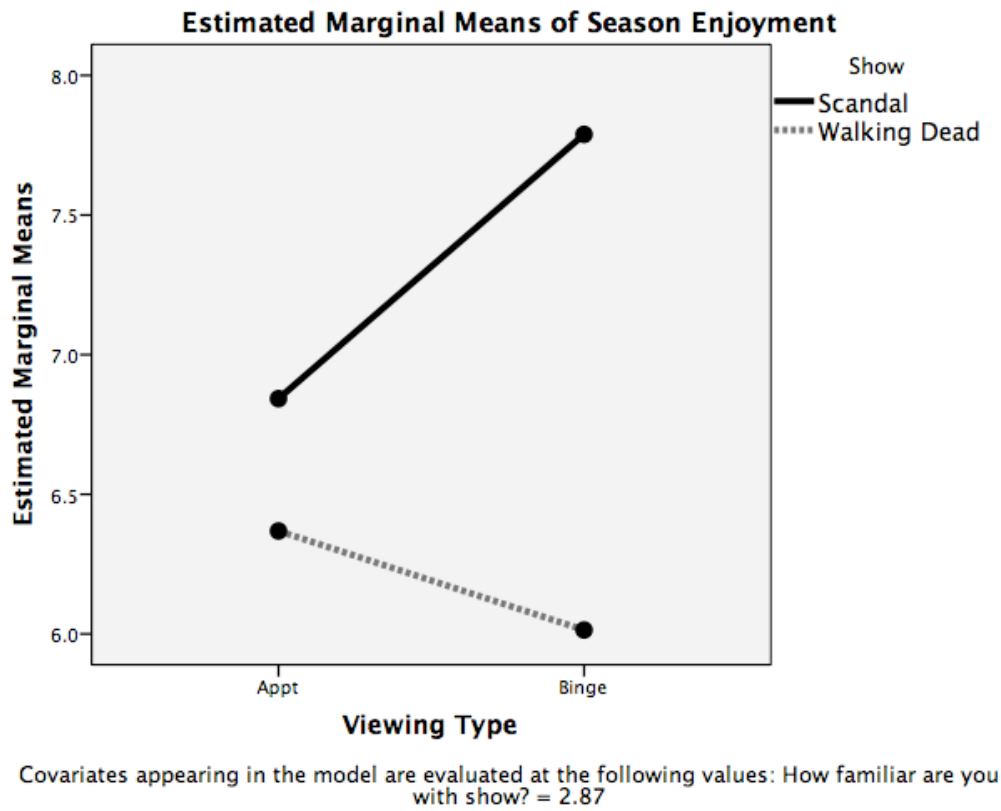
Descriptive Statistics   Dependent Variable: Season Enjoyment				
Viewing Type	Show	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Appt	Scandal	7.2	2.425	51
	Walking Dead	6.27	2.378	60
	Total	6.69	2.434	111
Binge	Scandal	7.67	1.818	51
	Walking Dead	5.9	2.323	50
	Total	6.79	2.255	101
Total	Scandal	7.43	2.146	102
	Walking Dead	6.1	2.35	110
	Total	6.74	2.345	212

Table 1.81

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects								
Dependent Variable: Season Enjoyment								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
Corrected Model	190.485a	4	47.621	10.16	<.001	0.164	40.64	1
Intercept	635.779	1	635.779	135.642	<.001	0.396	135.642	1
Familiarity	87.36	1	87.36	18.638	<.001	0.083	18.638	0.99
Condition	4.455	1	4.455	0.951	0.331	0.005	0.951	0.163
Show	64.682	1	64.682	13.8	<.001	0.062	13.8	0.959
Condition * Show	21.601	1	21.601	4.608	0.033	0.022	4.608	0.57
Error	970.246	207	4.687					
Total	10793	212						
Corrected Total	1160.731	211						

a. R Squared = .164 (Adjusted R Squared = .148)

Chart 1.3



For the season satisfaction ratings, tests of between-subjects effects, controlled for participant familiarity, found similar results as the previous three reception factors. Once again there was a significant difference between the two shows,  $p=.003$ ,  $F(1,207)= 8.868$ ,  $\eta^2_p=0.041$ , reaffirming that participants had more positive reception to *Scandal*. There was not a significant difference between condition alone,  $p=.232$ ,  $F(1,207)= 1.436$ ,  $\eta^2_p=0.007$ , but a significant interaction was found between condition by show,  $p=.027$ ,  $F(1,207)= 4.931$ ,  $\eta^2_p=0.023$ . Chart 1.4 outlines the season satisfaction ratings, and confirms the patterns of the previous reception factors. The extent of binge watching's effect on reception is dependent on the show; in this case, binge watching resulted in higher responses for *Scandal* but slightly lower for *The Walking Dead*.

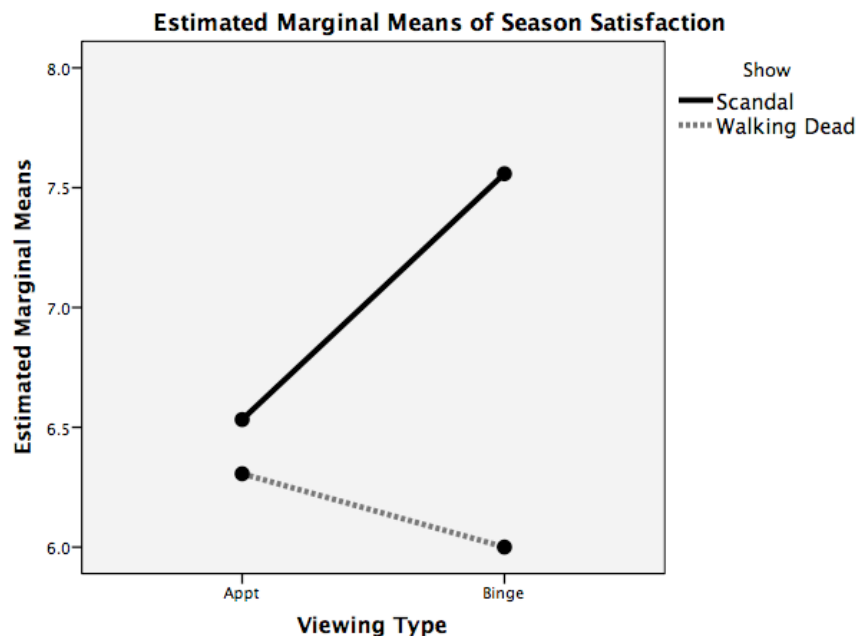
Table 1.9

Descriptive Statistics   Dependent Variable: Season Satisfaction				
Viewing Type	Show	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Appt	Scandal	6.84	2.477	51
	Walking Dead	6.22	2.202	60
	Total	6.5	2.343	111
Binge	Scandal	7.45	1.942	51
	Walking Dead	5.9	2.197	50
	Total	6.68	2.204	101
Total	Scandal	7.15	2.236	102
	Walking Dead	6.07	2.196	110
	Total	6.59	2.274	212

Table 1.91

Tests of Between-Subjects   Effects Dependent Variable: Season Satisfaction								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
Corrected Model	140.715a	4	35.179	7.661	<.001	0.129	30.642	0.997
Intercept	650.208	1	650.208	141.59	<.001	0.406	141.59	1
Familiarity	67.474	1	67.474	14.693	<.001	0.066	14.693	0.968
Condition	6.594	1	6.594	1.436	0.232	0.007	1.436	0.222
Show	40.723	1	40.723	8.868	0.003	0.041	8.868	0.842
Condition*Show	22.645	1	22.645	4.931	0.027	0.023	4.931	0.599
Error	950.582	207	4.592					
Total	10297	212						

Chart 1.4



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How familiar are you with show? = 2.87

**RQ2: To what extent does binge watching affect a viewer's reception towards individual episodes (as compared to appointment viewing)?**

For this question, a repeated-measures MANCOVA (multivariate analysis of covariance) was conducted on the first eight episodes of both shows (episode #9 of *Scandal* was excluded because there was no episode #9 of *The Walking Dead* that fall season to compare it against) to examine how the differences in reception of each episode varied over the season. The fixed variables were show and condition and the dependent variables for each episode were the same reception measures as RQ1: a 5-point scale opinion response, an 11-point opinion rating, an 11-point enjoyment rating and an 11-point satisfaction rating.

Tests of within-subjects effects (which measures the mean of change for the average participant in our sample over time) on the episode 5-scale opinion response, controlled for participant familiarity, found a significant difference between the episodes,  $p=.024$ ,  $F(7,1330)=2.32$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.012$ . There was also a significant difference between the two shows,  $p=.002$ ,  $F(7,1330)=3.256$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.017$ , which supports earlier findings that participants liked *Scandal* more than *The Walking Dead*. There was no significant difference in condition alone,  $p=.93$ ,  $F(7,1330)=3.44$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.002$ , however there was a significant interaction of show and condition,  $p=.016$ ,  $F(7,1330)=2.481$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.013$ , further supporting the findings of RQ1 that a binge-watching effect on viewer reception depends on the show.



Table 2.1

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects								
Measure: Opinion 5-Scale Response								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power $\alpha$
Episodes	7.165	7	1.024	2.32	0.024	0.012	16.243	0.853
Episodes*Familiarity	5.21	7	0.744	1.687	0.108	0.009	11.812	0.699
Episodes*Condition	1.063	7	0.152	0.344	0.934	0.002	2.41	0.159
Episodes*Show	10.052	7	1.436	3.256	0.002	0.017	22.789	0.958
Episodes*Condition*Show	7.66	7	1.094	2.481	0.016	0.013	17.366	0.88
Error (episodes)	586.639	1330	0.441					

Tests of between-subjects effects (which, contrast to within-subjects effects, examine differences between participants) on the episode 5-scale opinion response, controlled for participant familiarity, also found a significant difference between the two shows,  $p < .001$ ,  $F(1,190) = 14.575$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .071$ . There was a significant difference in condition,  $p = .019$ ,  $F(1,190) = 5.590$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .029$ , and a significant interaction of show and condition,  $p = .029$ ,  $F(1,190) = 4.843$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .025$ .

Table 2.2

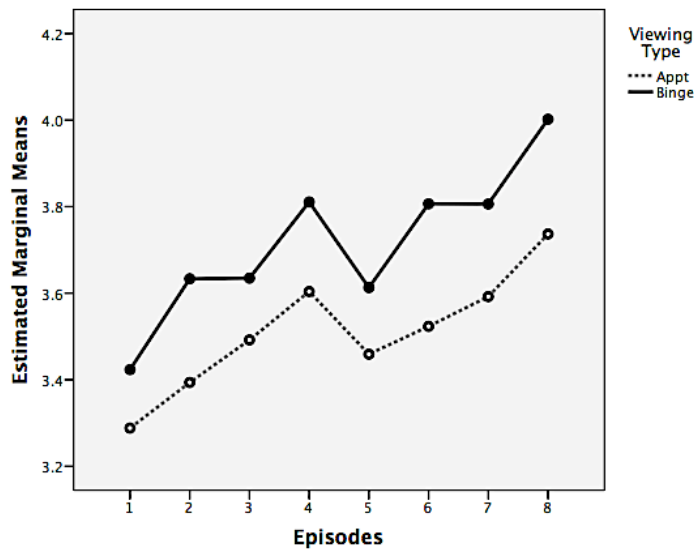
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects								
Measure: Opinion 5-Scale Response								
Transformed Variable: Average								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power $\alpha$
Intercept	1825.177	1	1825.177	638.759	<.001	0.771	638.759	1.000
Familiarity	54.19	1	54.190	18.965	<.001	0.091	18.965	0.991
Condition	15.973	1	15.973	5.590	0.019	0.029	5.59	0.653
Condition*Show	13.838	1	13.838	4.843	0.029	0.025	4.843	0.591
Error	542.902	190	2.857					

The following plot charts illustrate the means of the 5-scale opinion responses over the eight episodes for both of the fixed variables. Chart 2.1 plots the episode means of the viewing conditions alone. It shows binge watching was consistently yet only slightly greater than appointment viewing. Both lines show a steady increase over the season, with

a dip at episode #5 yet bouncing back to end at a high. Chart 2.2 plots the episode means of only the shows. *Scandal* is always higher than *The Walking Dead*, though the gap is wider for some episodes than others. Episode #8 yielded the closest gap between the shows in the season and was also the finale and peak episode for *The Walking Dead*. *Scandal* peaked in episode #4, dipped in episode #5 and slightly again in episode #8. (Note: The chart does not plot for episode #9 of *Scandal*, which was the season finale.)

Chart 2.1

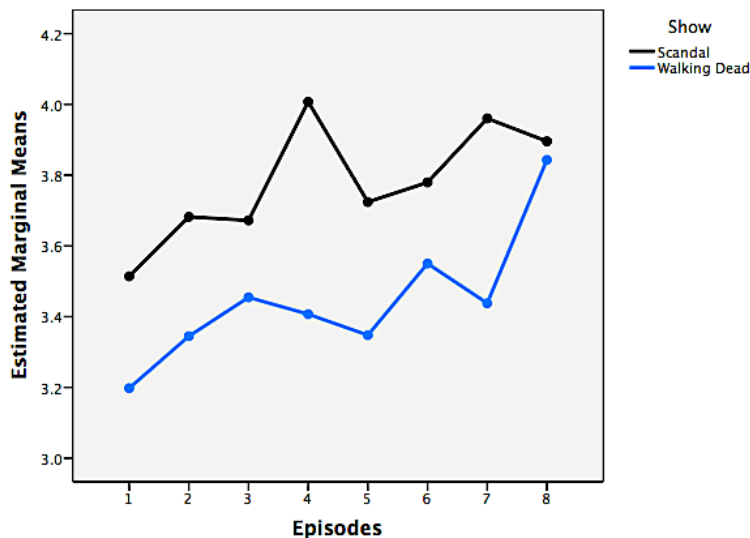
Estimated Marginal Means of Measure: Opinion 5-Scale Response



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How familiar are you with show? = 2.86

Chart 2.2

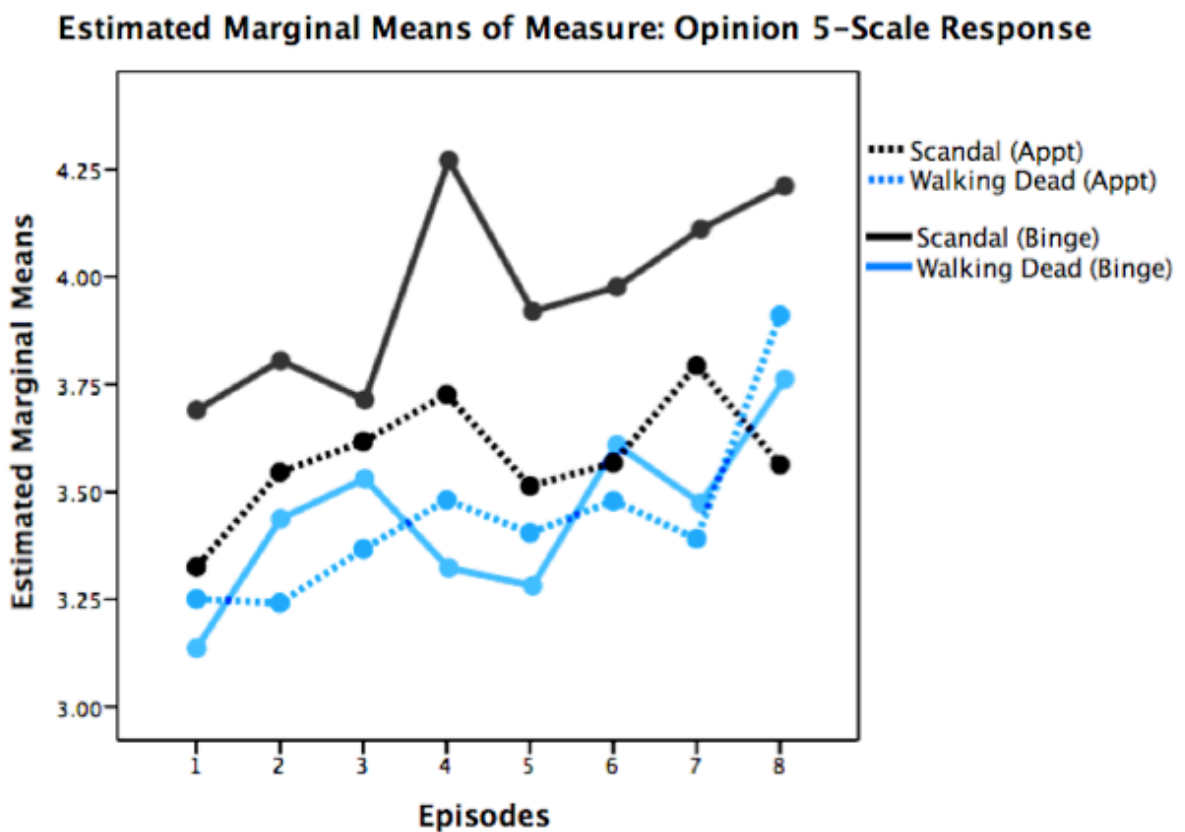
Estimated Marginal Means of Measure: Opinion 5-Scale Response



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How familiar are you with show? = 2.86

The following chart shows the plots of the episode means of each show by condition. The *Scandal* binge-watching line is always the highest and the *Scandal* appointment viewing line is usually the second highest with a couple dips later in the season. *The Walking Dead* plots are most often the lowest - this plainly illustrates the findings that participants had higher opinion of *Scandal*. The binge-watching plots have the most visibly wide differences between shows, illustrating the findings that the effect of binge watching is contingent on the show.

Chart 2.3



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How familiar are you with show? = 2.86

The repeated-measures MANCOVA ran on the remaining three reception factors: opinion rating, enjoyment rating and satisfaction rating, yielded similar results as the episode 5-scale opinion response and supported the same trends.

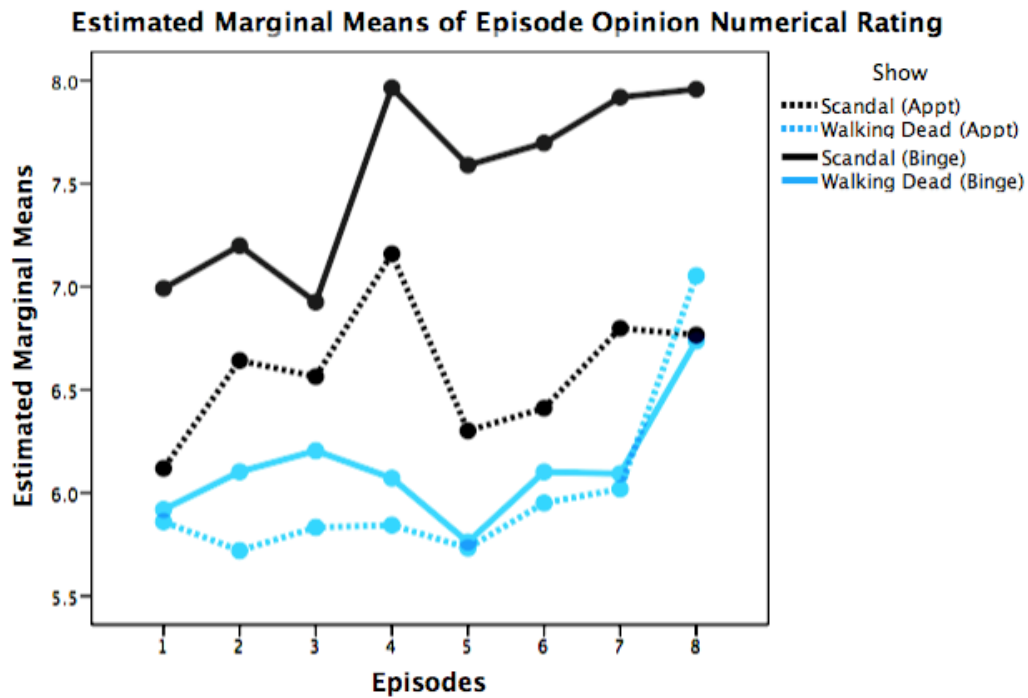
Tests of within-subjects effects on the episode opinion ratings, controlled for participant familiarity, also found a significant difference between the episodes,  $p=.002$ ,  $F(7,1330)=3.193$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.017$ . There was also a significant difference between the two shows,  $p<.001$ ,  $F(7,1330)=4.361$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.022$ . There was no significant difference in condition alone,  $p=.870$ ,  $F(7,1330)=.451$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.002$ , yet again there was a significant difference within the interaction of show and condition,  $p=.029$ ,  $F(7,1330)=2.237$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.012$ .

Table 2.3

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects								
Measure: Episode Opinion Numerical Rating								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power $\alpha$
Episodes	33.554	7	4.793	3.193	0.002	0.017	22.351	0.954
Episodes*Familiarity	16.022	7	2.289	1.525	0.155	0.008	10.673	0.646
Episodes*Condition	4.735	7	0.676	0.451	0.870	0.002	3.154	0.201
Episodes*Show	45.832	7	6.547	4.361	<.001	0.022	30.53	0.992
Episodes*Condition*Show	23.51	7	3.359	2.237	0.029	0.012	15.661	0.837
Error (episodes)	1996.606	1330	1.501					

The following plot charts illustrate the means of the opinion ratings over the eight episodes of each show by condition. It's similar to the opinion response chart -- once again the *Scandal* plots are the highest, with its binge-watching line much higher than the others. On the other hand, *The Walking Dead* binge-watching line starts of the season a bit higher than its appointment line, but ends the season lower, thus illustrating that the extent of a binge-watching effect on episode opinion vary with show.

Chart 2.4



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How familiar are you with show? = 2.86

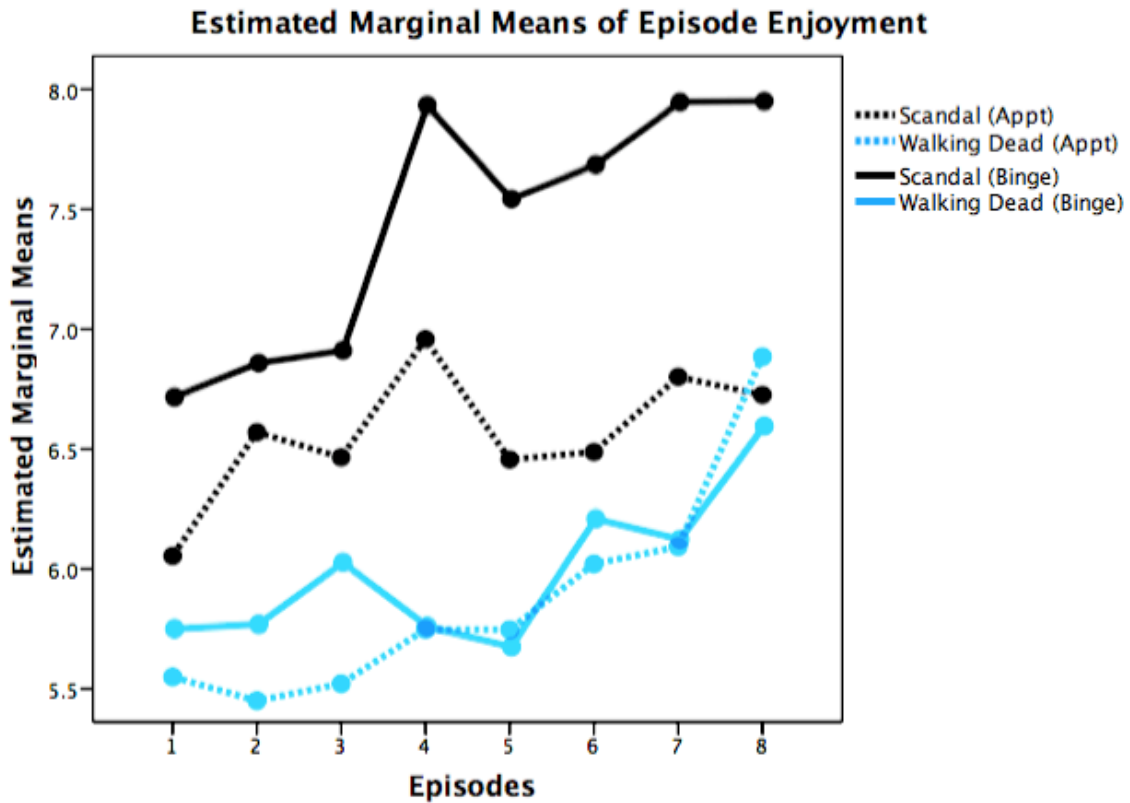
Tests of within-subjects effects on the episode enjoyment ratings, controlled for participant familiarity, found a significant difference between episodes,  $p=.003$ ,  $F(7,1330)=3.052$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.016$ . Again, there was a significant difference between the two shows,  $p=.001$ ,  $F(7,1330)=3.408$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.018$ . No significant difference in condition alone,  $p=.910$ ,  $F(7,1330)=.388$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.002$ , and yet again a significant interaction of show and condition,  $p=.021$ ,  $F(7,1330)=2.369$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.012$ .

Table 2.4

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects								
Measure: Episode Enjoyment								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power $\alpha$
Episodes	36.643	7	5.235	3.052	0.003	0.016	21.366	0.944
Episodes*Familiarity	14.921	7	2.132	1.243	0.276	0.006	8.7	0.54
Episodes*Condition	4.653	7	0.665	0.388	0.910	0.002	2.713	0.176
Episodes*Show	40.908	7	5.844	3.408	0.001	0.018	23.853	0.966
Episodes*Condition*Show	28.441	7	4.063	2.369	0.021	0.012	16.584	0.862
Error (episodes)	2280.968	1330	1.715					

This plot charts outlines the means of the episode enjoyment ratings over the eight episodes of each show by condition. It's similar to the previous charts -- the enjoyment ratings also show *Scandal* plots are higher, its binge-watching line the highest. *The Walking Dead* plots stay similar between appointment viewing and binge watching.

Chart 2.5



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How familiar are you with show? = 2.86

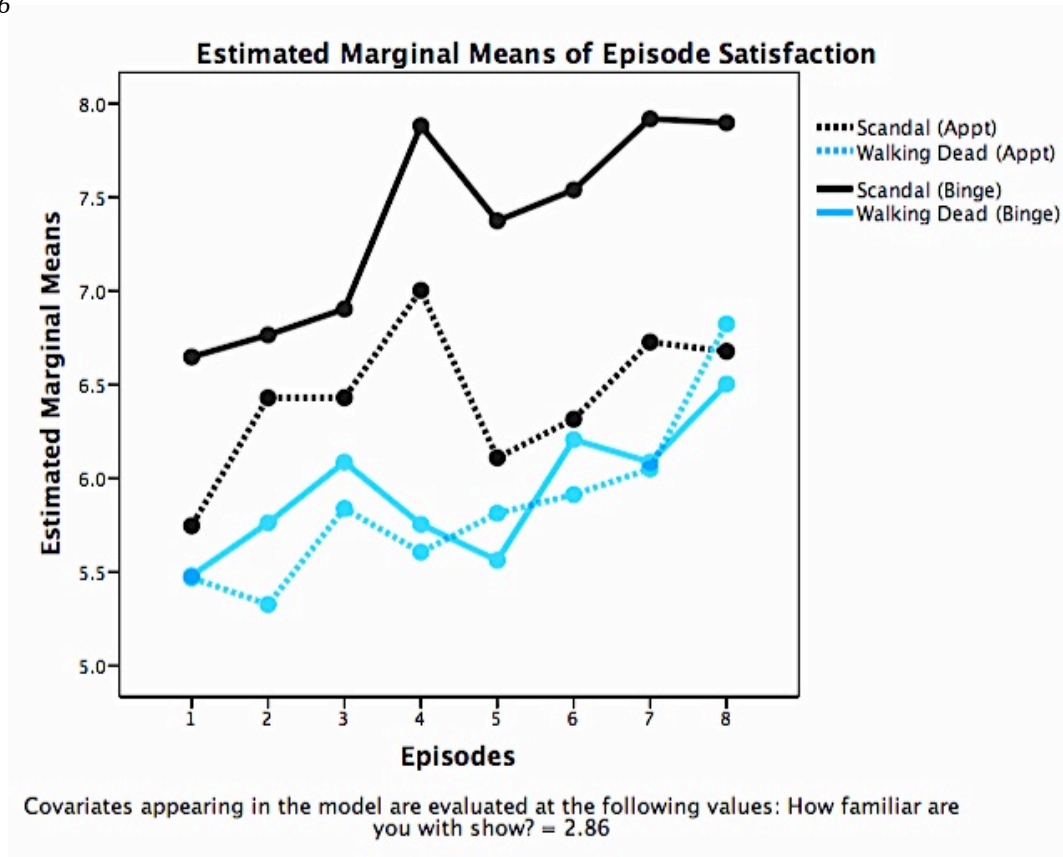
And finally, tests of within-subjects effects on episode satisfaction ratings, controlled for participant familiarity, yielded similar results to the previous reception factors. There was a significant difference between episodes,  $p=.002$ ,  $F(7,1330)=3.296$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.017$ . Again, a significant difference between shows,  $p=.001$ ,  $F(7,1330)=3.708$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.019$ . No significant difference in condition,  $p=.870$ ,  $F(7,1330)=.451$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.002$ , but a significant interaction of show and condition,  $p=.030$ ,  $F(7,1330)=2.221$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.012$ .

Table 2.5

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects								
Measure: Episode Satisfaction								
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power $\alpha$
Episodes	41.231	7	5.89	3.296	0.002	0.017	23.075	0.960
Episodes*Familiarity	21.243	7	3.035	1.698	0.105	0.009	11.889	0.703
Episodes*Condition	5.642	7	0.806	0.451	0.870	0.002	3.158	0.201
Episodes*Show	46.383	7	6.626	3.708	0.001	0.019	25.959	0.978
Episodes*Condition*Show	27.778	7	3.968	2.221	0.030	0.012	15.546	0.834
Error(Episodes)	2376.445	1330	1.787					

The means of the satisfaction ratings over the episodes of each show by condition are shown Chart 2.6. It matches the trends of the previous charts -- as usual the *Scandal* plots are higher. Across all four reception factors participants liked binge watching *Scandal* better. *The Walking Dead* plots, as usual, are more closely intertwined between appointment viewing and binge-watching, reaffirming that the extent of a binge-watching effect on individual episode reception is contingent on the show.

Chart 2.6



**RQ3: To what extent does binge watching affect a viewer’s gratifications obtained (as compared to appointment viewing)?**

Data used to answer this research question came from the participants’ post-questionnaire responses to each of the ten gratifications obtained after watching their assigned show through their designated viewing condition.

Table 3.1 show the descriptive statistics on the ten gratifications obtained, divided by viewing condition. Responses for “I liked knowing what was going on” had the highest means for both conditions. Responses for “I learned from it” had the lowest means for both conditions. “I liked knowing what was going on” also have the highest percentage (82%) of “Agree/Strongly” agree responses from appointment viewers and “it entertained me” had the highest percentage (77.2%) of “Agree/Strongly” agree responses from binge watchers.

*Table 3.1*

Gratification Obtained	Viewing Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Agree/Strongly Agree
it entertained me.	Appt	3.7	1.005	111	64.80%
	Binge	3.9	0.975	101	77.20%
I liked knowing what was going on.	Appt	3.95	0.824	111	82.00%
	Binge	3.95	0.899	101	76.20%
it passed the time.	Appt	3.46	1.077	111	55.80%
	Binge	3.82	1.004	101	66.30%
it allowed me to forget my life for awhile.	Appt	3.41	1.132	111	55.80%
	Binge	3.68	1.058	101	66.30%
I learned from it.	Appt	2.68	0.842	111	13.50%
	Binge	2.74	0.891	101	19.80%
it helped me relax.	Appt	3.38	1.145	111	52.20%
	Binge	3.47	1.136	101	61.40%
it was a habit.	Appt	3.25	1.124	111	48.60%
	Binge	2.9	1.127	101	33.60%
I could talk to others about it.	Appt	3.93	1.033	111	76.50%
	Binge	3.3	1.015	101	53.40%
I got information from it.	Appt	3.01	1.014	111	32.40%
	Binge	3	0.825	101	25.80%
I identified with characters or content.	Appt	2.97	1.057	111	33.30%
	Binge	3.05	1.033	101	34.60%



A univariate ANOVA (analysis of variance) was conducted on each of the measured gratifications obtained. Tests of between-subjects effects found significant differences between appointment viewers and binge-watchers on four of the ten gratifications obtained. “It passed the time,” and “it allowed me to forget my life for awhile,” favored binge watching and “it was a habit” and “I could talk to others about it” leaned towards appointment viewing.

Table 3.1

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects								
Source: Viewing Condition								
Dependent Variable (Gratifications Obtained)	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Para- meter	Observed Power $\alpha$
it entertained me.	2.079	1	2.079	2.118	0.147	0.010	2.118	0.305
liked knowing what was going on.	0.001	1	0.001	0.001	0.970	.000	0.001	0.050
it passed the time.	6.942	1	6.942	6.384	0.012	0.030	6.384	0.711
it allowed me to forget my life for awhile.	3.82	1	3.82	3.173	0.076	0.015	3.173	0.426
I learned from it.	0.177	1	0.177	0.237	0.627	0.001	0.237	0.077
it helped me relax.	0.400	1	0.400	0.307	0.580	0.001	0.307	0.086
it was a habit.	6.525	1	6.525	5.152	0.024	0.024	5.152	0.618
I could talk to others about it.	21.049	1	21.049	20.045	<.001	0.087	20.045	0.994
I got information from it.	0.004	1	0.004	0.005	0.944	.000	0.005	0.051
I identified with characters or content.	0.31	1	0.31	0.283	0.595	0.001	0.283	0.083

The gratification obtained, “it passed the time,” had a significant difference between the two viewing conditions,  $p=.012$ ,  $F(1,120)=6.384$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.03$  in this population. Binge-watchers ( $n=101$ ) had a mean score of 3.82 ( $SD=1.004$ ), higher than the appointment viewing group ( $n=111$ ), which had a mean score of 3.46 ( $SD=1.077$ ) demonstrating that this obtained gratification of passed time is more resonant with binge watching television than appointment television.

“It allowed me to forget my life for awhile” showed a difference approaching significance between the two viewing conditions,  $p=.076$ ,  $F(1,120)=3.173$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.015$ . For this gratification, binge-watchers ( $n=101$ ) had a mean score of 3.68 ( $SD=1.058$ ), which was higher than the appointment viewers’ ( $n=111$ ) mean score of 3.41 ( $SD=1.132$ ). This indicates binge watching is more strongly connected to watching a program for escape.

The gratification obtained, “it was a habit,” showed a significant difference between viewing conditions,  $p=.024$ ,  $F(1,120)=5.152$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.024$ . The binge-watching group ( $n=101$ ) had a mean score of 2.9 ( $SD=1.127$ ), lower than the appointment viewing ( $n=111$ ) mean score of 3.25 ( $SD=1.124$ ). This indicates that appointment viewing has a stronger connection to the obtained gratification of habit than binge watching.

And the gratification obtained, “I could talk to others about it,” showed a significant difference between viewing conditions,  $p<.001$ ,  $F(1,120)=20.045$ ,  $\eta^2_p=.087$ . In this case, binge watchers ( $n=101$ ) had a mean score of 3.3 ( $SD=1.015$ ), which was notably lower than the appointment viewing ( $n=111$ ) mean score of 3.93 ( $SD=1.033$ ). This gratification obtained resulted in the strongest difference between the two viewing conditions, which signals that appointment viewing has a close link to a timely social interaction gratification.

## Discussion

The overarching goal in this research study was to learn more about binge watching by exploring its possible effect on viewer reception. The research questions facilitated in focusing the study's efforts and its results shed insightful data about the nature of binge-watching effects.

RQ1 asked: to what extent does binge-watching affect a viewer's reception of a show (as compared to appointment viewing)? This study found that binge watching by itself does *not* have a significant effect on a viewer's reception towards a show. However, binge watching does have a significant effect on viewer reception *depending on the show*. Furthermore, the strength and direction of this effect varies with the show. Within this study, viewers of the show *Scandal* liked the show considerably better when binge-watching it, whereas viewers of *The Walking Dead* liked the show slightly less when binge-watching. Although this study cannot say for certain why, results do indicate that certain shows may be better suited for making the binge-watching experience more favorable to viewers. Several participants echoed this sentiment in the optional open-ended comment section in the post-questionnaire:

*"I think this show is one that is better watched by binge watching (because I can really get into the show)."*

*"While I enjoyed appointment viewing this, I don't necessarily prefer it for all shows."*

*"I could definitely tell by watching just this season that this is not a show that I would ever want to binge watch."*

*"I believe I might have enjoyed watching this show more if I got to binge watch it."*

Results showed a significant difference in reception between the two shows, and while both share similarities, they are hour-long serialized drama series with ensemble casts, each strongly differ in setting and content. Notably *Scandal* features a strong female lead and a lot less graphic violence than *The Walking Dead*, which might indicate why the largely female participant pool was more receptive to *Scandal* overall. Perhaps the sample was more drawn to Olivia Pope as the lead than Rick Grimes - it is also noteworthy that *The Walking Dead* implemented a unique and infrequently used storyline device this season, which isolated the characters, leaving Rick Grimes absent from 3 out of the 8 episodes and possibly lessened the chances of growing attached to the show. Both shows also differ in their pace of storytelling, so one could also speculate that a show like *Scandal*, which is full of plot twists and develops at a quicker pace than a show like *The Walking Dead*, might be more befitting for the quicker consumption of binge-watching.

RQ2 asked: To what extent does binge watching affect a viewer's reception towards an individual episode? This research study found that binge watching had no significant impact by itself. Yet, the intersection of binge watching and the show did reveal a significant effect on reception of individual episodes. This means the effect of binge watching on viewer reception is contingent on the show, supporting the findings of RQ1. Both shows demonstrated a rise in opinion and other reception measures on individual episodes as the season progressed, yet varied in the differences between the binge-watchers and appointment viewers. For *Scandal*, viewers once again liked it more when binge watching, with that gap in difference growing midway towards the end of the season. For *The Walking Dead*, opinion and other reception measures between binge-watchers and appointment viewers were more intertwined and the differences less substantial. Viewers

liked some individual episodes better when binge watching, while other episodes fared better when appointment viewing.

RQ3 inquired: To what extent does binge-watching affect a viewer's gratifications obtained (as compared to appointment viewing)? This research study found significant differences between appointment viewers and binge-watchers on four out of ten previously established television gratifications. Binge-watchers responded more strongly to the items "it passed the time," and "it allowed me to forget my life for awhile," than appointment viewers. Appointment viewers had stronger responses for the items "it was a habit" and "I could talk to others about it" than the binge-watchers. One participant expressed this exact feeling in the optional open-ended comment section in the post-questionnaire:

*"I started watching Scandal via appointment viewing around Season 3. I definitely gleamed some "water cooler" value from switching to appointment, but I believe I felt more "immersed" in the show when binge viewing."*

These findings elicit interesting implications about what audiences get from binge watching, further adding to our understanding about its effects on viewers. Both gratifications obtained items reveal that binge watching serves as an escape for viewers. It's a pastime that allows them to forget their life for a while. This gratification is best obtained for television viewers when binge-watching, which is intuitive because binge-watching requires spending prolonged periods of times viewing a show, in front of a screen and away from everyday activities, essentially becoming immersed in a show. On the other hand, appointment viewing is better suited for obtaining the ritual gratification of habit and the social interaction gratification of being able to talk to others about it. Regularly tuning

into a show at a certain time creates the ritual gratification obtained by appointment viewing. Being able to talk to others about the show that just aired because they saw it at the same time fulfills the social interaction gratification, which is the foundation that appointment viewing was sold on. The opportunity to talk to others about an episode that just aired is a valuable commodity for appointment viewing. That immediate social interaction component is not something easily attained with binge watching because people can't be sure when their friends have watched a show or how far along they are. Satisfying a social interaction need is perhaps the key that will keep appointment television relevant amidst the changing television landscape.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study was able to accomplish interesting and significant strides on the recently popular yet under-researched television phenomenon of binge watching. The primary finding of this research experiment was that the effect of binge watching on viewer reception is contingent on the show. This also underscores that content and storyline still matter in viewer reception even in the midst of new services and technology. This study also found that binge watching delivers an escape gratification for viewers better than appointment viewing. This insight could perhaps explain why some shows are better suited for bingeing than others. Binge-watching accelerates the consumption of a television series, making some shows more enjoyable -- yet other particular shows may be better received when given enough time to digest. If the show a viewer is binge-watching serves as an escape, it's reasonable to believe that their positive or negative feelings towards it may be amplified because of the concentrated amount time they are spending with it.

This deeper understanding of binge-watching effects is advantageous to on-demand streaming media companies as well as television networks and production companies when making decisions on content, development, marketing and distribution. Recognizing the effects of binge watching could be helpful in effective media planning and making meaningful audience gains and retention. This research is also a meaningful contribution to field of mass communications because it explores a new and under researched area of television, and helps begin create a fuller comprehension of this latest manifestation among television viewing audiences.

Limitations within the research study include a slightly homogenous participant pool -- a majority consisting of young Caucasian females, which is representative of the university population where this study took place. This might be indicative for why participants had a more favorable reception to *Scandal* than *The Walking Dead*. Future research on binge watching effects should aim towards testing a more diverse population, as well as attaining a larger participant pool than this study (n=212) in order to better recognize the often-subtle effects of binge watching. This study was also did not account for the possible variable of advertising. Appointment viewers had to sit through ads while viewing the shows, whereas as binge watchers did not. This might have had an impact on reception, so it is recommended future research find a way to control or account for ad exposure. Another limitation was the timeline for implementation of this experiment affecting content choice. Because this study could only spend two semesters worth of time collecting data, in order to test the same television content on both viewing conditions, the shows chosen were ones that were both airing new episodes in the fall season and making them available on streaming platforms to binge watch later. Without this timeline limitation, a broader selection of shows could be considered for use in research, as well as new television series. This study could not afford testing a new show because of the risk of cancellation and loss of time, however it is suggested that future research consider testing on new shows to remove the factors of preconceived opinions and familiarity, which had to be controlled for in this study. This study was able to gain valuable insights into binge-watching effects by testing two different drama series, therefore it is recommend that future research continue testing this topic on a variety of different shows, even studying other television genres. This study found that the effect of binge watching depends on the



show, but could not answer why. By investigating different types of shows, future studies could begin to find characteristics of a show that make it better suited for binge watching.

## **Appendix A**

### *Pre-Questionnaire*

Binge Watching: When a viewer watches multiple episodes of a television program in rapid succession, or over a concentrated period of time.

Appointment Television: When a viewer deliberately sets aside time or arranges their schedule to watch a television program at the time of original broadcast.

#### 1. Participant

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. On average, how often do you watch television?

1. Less than daily
2. Less than 30 minutes a day
3. Between 30 minutes to 2 hours a day
4. Between 2-5 hours a day
5. Over 5 hours a day

#### 3. How often do you binge watch television?

1. I've never binge watched
2. I've only binge watched once or twice
3. I've binge watched 3-5 shows
4. I've binge watched more than 5 shows
5. Too many to count - that's the main way I watch TV

#### 4. How often do you watch appointment television?

1. I never watch appointment television
2. I only appointment watch one or two shows
3. I appointment watch 3-5 shows
4. I appointment watch more than 5 shows
5. Too many to count - that's the main way I watch TV

#### 5. Which do you enjoy most?

1. I only enjoy appointment television
2. I enjoy both, but prefer appointment television
3. I only enjoy binge watching
4. I enjoy both, but prefer binge watching
5. I enjoy both binge watching and appointment television equally

6. For those who binge watch - which was do you use? Check all that apply.

- Netflix
- Hulu
- Amazon Plus
- TV/Network websites
- Other websites
- DVDs
- TV Reruns
- Other (please specify)

7. For those who binge watch - how much do you agree with the following?  
(Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree Nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree)

I like to binge watch because...

- it entertains me.
- I like to know what's going on.
- It passes the time.
- It allows me to forget my life for awhile.
- I learn from it.
- it helps me relax.
- I can talk to others about it.
- I receive information from it.
- I identify with content or characters.

8. For those who appointment view - how much do you agree with the following?  
(Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree Nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree)

I like to watch appointment television because...

- it entertains me.
- I like to know what's going on.
- It passes the time.
- It allows me to forget my life for awhile.
- I learn from it.
- it helps me relax.
- I can talk to others about it.
- I receive information from it.
- I identify with content or characters.

9. How familiar are you with the *Scandal/The Walking Dead*?

1. Never heard of it
2. I know of it but never seen it
3. I've seen a few episodes
4. I've seen many episodes but am not fully caught up
5. I've seen every episode

10. If you are NOT fully caught up, do you plan to?

1. No, I definitely don't plan to catch up
2. I will likely not catch up
3. I'm not sure
4. I will try to catch up
5. Yes, I definitely plan to catch up

11. If you have seen it, what is your overall opinion of *Scandal/The Walking Dead*?

1. I hate it!
2. I don't like it.
3. It's OK.
4. I like it.
5. I love it!

12. If you have NOT seen it, what is your impression of *Scandal/The Walking Dead*?

1. I have a terrible impression of the show.
2. I have a bad impression of the show.
3. I have an OK impression of the show.
4. I have a good impression of the show.
5. I have a great impression of the show.

13. If you have seen *Scandal/The Walking Dead*, how would you rate your overall opinion of it?

Lowest opinion 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest opinion

14. If you have NOT seen *Scandal/The Walking Dead*, how would you rate your overall perception of it?

Lowest opinion 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest opinion

Skip this section if you have not seen the show.

Please answer the following questions if you have seen episodes of *Scandal/The Walking Dead*.

15. How have you watched *Scandal/The Walking Dead* up until now?

- Appointment television
- Binge watching
- Combination of both
- Other (please specify)

16. How much did you enjoy *Scandal/The Walking Dead*?

Lowest opinion 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest opinion

17. How much were you satisfied with *Scandal/The Walking Dead*?

Lowest opinion 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest opinion

18. Who is your favorite character on the show?

1. Olivia Pope/Rick
2. Fitzgerald Grant/Darryl
3. Cyrus Beene/Glenn
4. Mellie Grant/Maggie
5. Huck/Carol
6. Jake Ballard/Carl
7. Quinn Perkins/Beth
8. David Rosen/Hershel
9. Abby Whelan/Andrea
10. Harrison Wright/Michonne
11. Rowan Pope/The Governor
12. Sally Langston/Merle
13. James Novak/Lori
14. --/Shane
15. --/Noah
16. --/Tyreese
17. --/Sasha
18. --/Bob
19. --/Merle
20. --/Abraham
21. --/Eugene
22. --/Tara
23. --/Rosita
24. --/Gareth
25. --/Dawn
26. --/Father Gabriel

19. Who is your least favorite character on the show?

1. Olivia Pope/Rick
2. Fitzgerald Grant/Darryl
3. Cyrus Beene/Glenn
4. Mellie Grant/Maggie
5. Huck/Carol
6. Jake Ballard/Carl
7. Quinn Perkins/Beth

8. David Rosen/Hershel
9. Abby Whelan/Andrea
10. Harrison Wright/Michonne
11. Rowan Pope/The Governor
12. Sally Langston/Merle
13. James Novak/Lori
14. --/Shane
15. --/Noah
16. --/Tyreese
17. --/Sasha
18. --/Bob
19. --/Merle
20. --/Abraham
21. --/Eugene
22. --/Tara
23. --/Rosita
24. --/Gareth
25. --/Dawn
26. --/Father Gabriel
27. Other

20. What is your favorite storyline?

1. Olivia & Fitz relationship/ The trail to Terminus
2. B613/ Fighting off the Governor
3. Defiance/ Living at the prison
4. Cyrus's morality/ Rick's leadership, soul searching
5. Olivia & Jake relationship/ Carol's questionable morality
6. First lady Mellie/ The group splitting up
7. Huck's background/ Glenn & Maggie's relationship
8. Olivia's parental relationships/ Daryl & Merle's brotherhood
9. Quinn going rogue/ Michonne's past
10. Abby & David romance/ Hershel treating the group's illness
11. White house and politics/ Shane going crazy
12. --/Life at Hershel's farm
13. --/The search for Sophia
14. --/Daryl and Beth's relationship
15. Other

21. What has been your least favorite storyline?

1. Olivia & Fitz relationship/ The trail to Terminus
2. B613/ Fighting off the Governor
3. Defiance/ Living at the prison
4. Cyrus's morality/ Rick's leadership, soul searching
5. Olivia & Jake relationship/ Carol's questionable morality
6. First lady Mellie/ The group splitting up

7. Huck's background/ Glenn & Maggie's relationship
8. Olivia's parental relationships/ Daryl & Merle's brotherhood
9. Quinn going rogue/ Michonne's past
10. Abby & David romance/ Hershel treating the group's illness
11. White house and politics/ Shane going crazy
12. --/Life at Hershel's farm
13. --/The search for Sophia
14. --/Daryl and Beth's relationship
15. Other

22. Which race/ethnicity best describes you?

1. American Indian or Alaskan Native
2. Asian / Pacific Islander
3. Black / African American
4. Latino / Hispanic American
5. White / Caucasian
6. Indian / Middle Eastern

23. What is your gender?

1. Female
2. Male

24. What is your age?

1. 18-19
2. 20-21
3. 22-23
4. 24-25
5. 26 & older

## **Appendix B**

### *Sample of Episodic Survey*

How did you watch this episode? (Appointment viewers only)

1. I watched it live.
2. I watched in later within 24 hours.
3. I watched in later within 1-2 days.
4. I watched in later within a week.

Who did not attend Harrison's funeral? What color was Beth's lollipop?

1. Olivia Pope/Purple
2. Abby Whelan/Green
3. Quinn Perkins/White
4. President Fitzgerald Grant Red
5. Huck/Black

How did you feel about this episode?

1. I hated it!
2. I didn't like it.
3. It was OK.
4. I liked it.
5. I loved it!

How would you rate your overall opinion of this episode?

Lowest 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest

How much did you enjoy this episode?

Lowest 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest

How satisfied are you with this episode?

Lowest 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest

How much are/were you looking forward to the next episode?

Lowest 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest

If you have any comments about this episode, share below:

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## Appendix C

### *Post-Questionnaire*

Binge Watching: When a viewer watches multiple episodes of a television program in rapid succession, or over a concentrated period of time.

Appointment Television: When a viewer deliberately sets aside time or arranges their schedule to watch a television program at the time of original broadcast.

#### 1. Participant

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. What is your opinion of this half-season of *Scandal/The Walking Dead*?

1. I hated it!
2. I didn't like it.
3. It was OK.
4. I liked it.
5. I loved it!

#### 3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate this half-season?

Lowest opinion 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest opinion

#### 4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much did you enjoy this half-season?

Lowest enjoyment 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Highest enjoyment

#### 5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with this half-season?

Not satisfied at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Most satisfied possible

#### 6. How did you feel about watching this half-season by appointment viewing/binge watching?

1. I hated it!
2. I didn't like it.
3. It was OK.
4. I liked it.
5. I loved it!

#### 7. Did you prefer to watch this half-season by binge watching?

1. No, I would have preferred to watch by appointment television/binge watch.
2. I would have rather watched a combination of binge watching and appointment television.
3. Yes, I preferred to binge watch/appointment television.

8. How much do you agree with the following sentences?  
(Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree Nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree)

I liked viewing this season through binge watching/appointment viewing because...

- it entertains me.
- I like to know what's going on.
- It passes the time.
- It allows me to forget my life for awhile.
- I learn from it.
- it helps me relax.
- I can talk to others about it.
- I receive information from it.
- I identify with content or characters.

9. Rank the episodes this season, with #1 being the highest (drag to arrange order)

- Episode 1 (summary)
- Episode 2 (summary)
- Episode 3 (summary)
- Episode 4 (summary)
- Episode 5 (summary)
- Episode 6 (summary)
- Episode 7 (summary)
- Episode 8 (summary)
- Episode 9 (summary) Scandal only

10. Who is your favorite character on the show?

1. Olivia Pope/Rick
2. Fitzgerald Grant/Darryl
3. Cyrus Beene/Glenn
4. Mellie Grant/Maggie
5. Huck/Carol
6. Jake Ballard/Carl
7. Quinn Perkins/Beth
8. David Rosen/Hershel
9. Abby Whelan/Andrea
10. Harrison Wright/Michonne
11. Rowan Pope/The Governor
12. Sally Langston/Merle
13. James Novak/Lori
14. --/Shane
15. --/Noah
16. --/Tyreese
17. --/Sasha

18. --/Bob
19. --/Merle
20. --/Abraham
21. --/Eugene
22. --/Tara
23. --/Rosita
24. --/Gareth
25. --/Dawn
26. --/Father Gabriel

11. Who is your least favorite character on the show?

1. Olivia Pope/Rick
2. Fitzgerald Grant/Darryl
3. Cyrus Beene/Glenn
4. Mellie Grant/Maggie
5. Huck/Carol
6. Jake Ballard/Carl
7. Quinn Perkins/Beth
8. David Rosen/Hershel
9. Abby Whelan/Andrea
10. Harrison Wright/Michonne
11. Rowan Pope/The Governor
12. Sally Langston/Merle
13. James Novak/Lori
14. --/Shane
15. --/Noah
16. --/Tyreese
17. --/Sasha
18. --/Bob
19. --/Merle
20. --/Abraham
21. --/Eugene
22. --/Tara
23. --/Rosita
24. --/Gareth
25. --/Dawn
26. --/Father Gabriel
27. Other

12. Who is your favorite character *of this season*?

1. Olivia Pope/Rick
2. Fitzgerald Grant/Darryl
3. Cyrus Beene/Glenn
4. Mellie Grant/Maggie

5. Huck/Carol
6. Jake Ballard/Carl
7. Quinn Perkins/Beth
8. David Rosen/Hershel
9. Abby Whelan/Andrea
10. Harrison Wright/Michonne
11. Rowan Pope/The Governor
12. Sally Langston/Merle
13. James Novak/Lori
14. --/Shane
15. --/Noah
16. --/Tyreese
17. --/Sasha
18. --/Bob
19. --/Merle
20. --/Abraham
21. --/Eugene
22. --/Tara
23. --/Rosita
24. --/Gareth
25. --/Dawn
26. --/Father Gabriel

13. Who is your least favorite character *of this season*?

1. Olivia Pope/Rick
2. Fitzgerald Grant/Darryl
3. Cyrus Beene/Glenn
4. Mellie Grant/Maggie
5. Huck/Carol
6. Jake Ballard/Carl
7. Quinn Perkins/Beth
8. David Rosen/Hershel
9. Abby Whelan/Andrea
10. Harrison Wright/Michonne
11. Rowan Pope/The Governor
12. Sally Langston/Merle
13. James Novak/Lori
14. --/Shane
15. --/Noah
16. --/Tyreese
17. --/Sasha
18. --/Bob
19. --/Merle
20. --/Abraham
21. --/Eugene

- 22. --/Tara
- 23. --/Rosita
- 24. --/Gareth
- 25. --/Dawn
- 26. --/Father Gabriel
- 27. Other

14. What is your favorite storyline of the season?

- 1. Olivia & Fitz relationship/ The trail to Terminus
- 2. B613/ Fighting off the Governor
- 3. Defiance/ Living at the prison
- 4. Cyrus's morality/ Rick's leadership, soul searching
- 5. Olivia & Jake relationship/ Carol's questionable morality
- 6. First lady Mellie/ The group splitting up
- 7. Huck's background/ Glenn & Maggie's relationship
- 8. Olivia's parental relationships/ Daryl & Merle's brotherhood
- 9. Quinn going rogue/ Michonne's past
- 10. Abby & David romance/ Hershel treating the group's illness
- 11. White house and politics/ Shane going crazy
- 12. --/Life at Hershel's farm
- 13. --/The search for Sophia
- 14. --/Daryl and Beth's relationship
- 15. Other

15. What has been your least favorite storyline of the season?

- 1. Olivia & Fitz relationship/ The trail to Terminus
- 2. B613/ Fighting off the Governor
- 3. Defiance/ Living at the prison
- 4. Cyrus's morality/ Rick's leadership, soul searching
- 5. Olivia & Jake relationship/ Carol's questionable morality
- 6. First lady Mellie/ The group splitting up
- 7. Huck's background/ Glenn & Maggie's relationship
- 8. Olivia's parental relationships/ Daryl & Merle's brotherhood
- 9. Quinn going rogue/ Michonne's past
- 10. Abby & David romance/ Hershel treating the group's illness
- 11. White house and politics/ Shane going crazy
- 12. --/Life at Hershel's farm
- 13. --/The search for Sophia
- 14. --/Daryl and Beth's relationship
- 15. Other

16. What is your favorite storyline of the whole series so far?

- 1. Olivia & Fitz relationship/ The trail to Terminus
- 2. B613/ Fighting off the Governor
- 3. Defiance/ Living at the prison

4. Cyrus's morality/ Rick's leadership, soul searching
5. Olivia & Jake relationship/ Carol's questionable morality
6. First lady Mellie/ The group splitting up
7. Huck's background/ Glenn & Maggie's relationship
8. Olivia's parental relationships/ Daryl & Merle's brotherhood
9. Quinn going rogue/ Michonne's past
10. Abby & David romance/ Hershel treating the group's illness
11. White house and politics/ Shane going crazy
12. --/Life at Hershel's farm
13. --/The search for Sophia
14. --/Daryl and Beth's relationship
15. Other

17. What is your least favorite storyline of the whole series so far?

1. Olivia & Fitz relationship/ The trail to Terminus
2. B613/ Fighting off the Governor
3. Defiance/ Living at the prison
4. Cyrus's morality/ Rick's leadership, soul searching
5. Olivia & Jake relationship/ Carol's questionable morality
6. First lady Mellie/ The group splitting up
7. Huck's background/ Glenn & Maggie's relationship
8. Olivia's parental relationships/ Daryl & Merle's brotherhood
9. Quinn going rogue/ Michonne's past
10. Abby & David romance/ Hershel treating the group's illness
11. White house and politics/ Shane going crazy
12. --/Life at Hershel's farm
13. --/The search for Sophia
14. --/Daryl and Beth's relationship
15. Other

18. If you have any comments about this season of *Scandal/The Walking Dead*, or any opinions about viewing the show by binge watching, please share below:

---

19. Did you watch *Scandal/The Walking Dead* before participating in this study?

3. Yes
4. No

20. Did you consider yourself a fan of *Scandal/The Walking Dead* before participating in this study?

1. Yes
2. No

21. Will you continue to watch *Scandal/The Walking Dead*?

1. I definitely will not.
2. I probably won't.

3. I'm not sure.
4. I probably will.
5. I definitely will.

22. Do you consider yourself a fan of *Scandal/The Walking Dead* now?

1. Yes
2. No

23. If you do consider yourself a fan, do you think appointment viewing/binge watching could be a reason why?

1. Yes, I think binge watching could be a reason why.
2. No, I do not think binge watching could be a reason why.
3. N/A

24. From when you began the 1st episode, how long did it take you to finish all episodes of *Scandal/The Walking Dead*? (Binge watchers only)

1. Within 12 hours
2. Within 24 hours
3. Within 1-3 days
4. Within 4-7 days
5. Within 7-14 days

25. If you were or were NOT caught up with the show before this study - which of the following apply?

- I caught up with some episodes before watching this season.
- I caught up with some episodes **while** watching this season.
- I caught up with the **whole** show **before** watching this season.
- I caught up with the **whole** show **while** watching this season.
- I did not catch up.
- I was already caught up.

26. If you do continue to watch *Scandal/The Walking Dead* - how will you do so?

- Appointment television
- Binge watching
- Combination of both

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**EDUCATION**

Syracuse University <i>Masters of Media Studies</i>	Syracuse, NY June 2015
The University of Texas at Austin <i>Bachelor of Journalism in Broadcast News</i>	Austin, TX August 2009

**EXPERIENCE**

Syracuse University <i>Instructional Associate, Broadcast &amp; Digital Journalism</i>	Syracuse, NY August 2015 - May 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supported professorial staff in classroom instruction within the Broadcast and Digital Journalism department at S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.</li><li>• Occasionally filled in for professors in teaching duties, including leading lectures, class discussions and assignment instruction.</li><li>• Provided technical direction to students, including story conception, scripting, video editing, rundown producing and newscast production.</li><li>• Assisted with digital equipment, news software and supervised lab facilities.</li></ul>	

WSYR-TV/NewsChannel 9 <i>Senior Producer, Bridge Street</i>	Syracuse, NY September 2012 - July 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Produced content and book segments for community-based, mid-morning talk show.</li><li>• Researched and coordinated timely segment topics, captivating stories, and interesting and informative subject content. Conducted pre-interviews with potential guests, booked appearances, gathered and authenticated background segment information.</li><li>• Produced video and visual segment elements, build graphics, write scripts, arrange show rundown, and delegated other various assignments to staff.</li><li>• Supervised live show, monitored time, relayed instruction with talent, appointed studio directions and ensured high quality broadcasts.</li><li>• Organized and oversaw internship program, mentored students, assigned duties and projects, and tracked academic progress.</li></ul>	

KTVK-TV/3-TV <i>Producer, Good Morning Arizona</i>	Phoenix, AZ January 2011 - July 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Produced for highest rated morning news show in highly competitive market.</li><li>• Generated and organized the most compelling and fresh news content and subject matter, arranged story order, wrote and copyedited scripts, created visual news elements and graphics, assigned technical directions for crew, boothed live newscast, all while maintaining high journalistic standards.</li><li>• Developed segment ideas and booked guests, including local and state newsmakers and experts from various fields. Conducted pre-interviews and produced supplemental elements for segments.</li><li>• Managed talent in studio and in the field, assigned reporter stories, directed photographers to live shots, monitored breaking news, and quickly relayed the most accurate, updated news to the audience.</li></ul>	

KSWO-TV/ 7 News <i>Producer, 5PM Newscast</i>	Lawton, OK March 2010 - December 2010
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- Produced for top-rated evening newscast; selected, wrote, and managed news content. Copyedited scripts, checked for accuracy, and assigned corresponding news graphics.
- Arranged and organized news rundown, boothed live show, efficiently communicated directions with crew and supervised overall flow of newscast.
- Contributed to station website, wrote web stories, uploaded and edited videos.

Time Warner Cable/News 8 Austin

Austin, TX

*AP/Intern, News 8 Austin*

*January 2009 – May 2009*

- Helped news producers by gathering information, checking facts and writing scripts. Worked with newsdesk on story ideas and reporter assignments, monitoring police scanners and making beat calls.
- Shadowed reporters, pursued story ideas and followed up on leads. Wrote stories, edited packages and contributed to online content with additional story elements.

Texas Newswatch

Austin, TX

*Anchor/Reporter/Producer*

*August 2008 - July 2009*

- Reported for student-run newscast, which aired weekly on public television, and focused on covering state, city and campus news. Gathered information, interviewed sources, shot video and edited packages.
- Produced and anchored newscasts. Wrote and copyedited scripts, and designed news graphics.

KXAS-TV/KXTX-TV

Dallas/Fort Worth, TX

*News Intern*

*June 2008 – August 2008*

- Assisted in the newsroom by helping producers find news content. Shadowed reporters on assignment, and aided in pursuing leads and developing story ideas.
- Helped production crew with camera operation and prompter.