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Binge-watching as an interdisciplinary research field

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Introduction

Binge-watching (hereafter: BW) is a specific way of consuming audiovisual content (binge means ‘excessive indulgence’). As Yoon Hi Sung et al. argue (2018), this phenomenon is quite difficult to define. For example, Azza Ahmed (2017, p. 193) considers it watching “more than one episode of a TV show in a short period of time”. According to Jongsu Yoo et al. (2020), it means “watching more than two episodes of the same TV show in one session more than twice a week”, and Caroline L. Jarzyna (2021, p. 417) sees BW as “the ability to watch an entire season of a TV series in one sitting over many hours”. Researchers often highlight the intense nature of watching (Rubenking et al., 2018; Perks, 2019a; Forte et al., 2021), pointing to the number of episodes watched or the total time spent in front of a screen. Condensation of use (receiving large amounts of audiovisual content in a relatively short period of time, cf. Tefertiller and Maxwell, 2018) and sequentiality (receiving several episodes or an entire season(s) in one session, cf. Biesen, 2016; Viens and Farrar, 2021) are also accentuated.

It is worth noting that binging focuses on popular entertainment series, although some analysts argue that other serial productions, such as documentaries, may also be found among the excessively watched content (Ameri et al., 2019; Ericson et al., 2019).

The distinctive feature of BW is the viewer's decisiveness, freed from the primacy of linear television programming – here, it is the viewer who chooses what, how, where, when, with whom and how much to watch (Shim et al., 2018; Viens and Farrar, 2021; Rubenking et al., 2019). Viewers have a sense of control over their actions because they acquire the power to use unlimited resources to suit their own preferences, whether in terms of genre, content, technology or time (Susanno et al., 2019). On the one hand, this freedom can lead to immersion in the series narrative (Pilipets, 2019), and on the other, to viewer strain and fatigue (Pierce-Grove, 2017).

Binge-watching has become the focus of researchers' interest, including those attempting to structure the existing knowledge about the phenomenon. Among the increasingly rich literature on the subject, one can find works analysing the phenomenon from a media perspective, for instance: definitional (Pierce-Grove, 2017) or media discourse (De Keere et al., 2021). The reviews of definitions of the term are also regularly published. Their authors (e.g. Flayelle et al., 2020b; Starosta and Izydorczyk, 2020a; Merikivi et al., 2020) primarily focus on singling out and describing the characteristic aspects of BW and its effects. However, as far as it can be determined, there are no analyses treating BW as an interdisciplinary research area, with the greatest emphasis on the objectives and ways to study the phenomenon. This paper serves to bridge this gap, with the aim of discussing BW as a research subject, particularly from the perspective of media studies.

The paper is structured as follows: The methodology used is overviewed, followed by the presentation of the results of the analysis. BW as a subject of interdisciplinary research is first discussed, followed by the research methods, tools, and techniques used in the course of the previous studies of this phenomenon. Finally, the findings are characterised, attempting to capture the initial stage of BW research and the trends emerging therefrom.

1. Research methodology and procedure

The main aim of the paper is to review the literature in order to chart the landscape of academic knowledge on ways to study BW. In order to structure the work, the following research questions were posed:

1. What is the current state of the literature on BW in terms of chronology, forms of publication used and interdisciplinary nature of research?
2. What methodology is used by researchers studying BW regarding: methods, techniques and research tools?
3. What are the demographic profiles of the populations studied?
4. What are the characteristics, motives and effects of BW?

The study analysed the texts selected during the literature review in several stages. First, the Web of Science Core Collection database was used (search phrases: <binge-watching> or <binge-watching> or <media marathoning>). Next, the appendix bibliographies of the retrieved material were consulted, expanding the research sample to include material from other sources, including library directories and Google Scholar resources. This helped to identify additional published (in peer-reviewed journals not indexed by the Web of Science) and unpublished (e.g. doctoral dissertations) papers. This process took place between March 2021 and January 2022 and resulted in a collection of 141 papers, which were then subjected to formal review, checking whether the materials were peer-reviewed and scientific in nature. Following this, 15 publications were excluded. Ultimately, the research material consisted of 126 papers, including 113 articles, five contributions to conferences, three chapters in monographs, one monograph and five unpublished papers.

2. Research findings

2.1. Current state of the literature concerning BW

Table 1 shows a clear increase in the number of scientific papers dealing with BW (from a single one in 2014 to multiple ones between 2019 and 2021). Most of the publications (following the affiliation of the author(s), the place of publication and the title of the journal) fall into the fields of psychology, communication studies and media studies (Table 1). Surprisingly, even at this stage, attributing research on BW to a specific, single field/discipline can prove difficult, as the phenomenon is analysed from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Authors representing fields of management and marketing were the first to take an interest in the BW phenomenon, yet psychologists have also been studying it extensively. Presumably, this was related to the suspicion that binge-watching can be addictive (however, this is not always the case, as was proven by Ort et al., 2021). Psychologists are keen to delve into the motives for and consequences of binging. They have analysed why people are so keen to engage in this form of activity and how it affects them, their loved ones, functioning in groups and fulfilling responsibilities. Medical professionals have also been interested in the effects of BW, e.g. in linking the phenomenon to problems related to sleep, nutrition, obesity or diseases of the cardiovascular and digestive systems. Social communication and media studies have also been strongly represented, especially with regard to the motives for binging and its effects on social relations. Binge-watching was also studied in relation to marketing (11 items), medicine/health science (9), computer science/information systems (5), film studies (4), management (3), economics (3), as well as psychiatry, pedagogy, statistics, cultural sociology and fine arts (1 each).

Table 1
Scientific texts on BW by discipline representation (2014–2021)

Discipline/year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Psychology	–	–	3	1	2	10	11	9	36
Social communication	–	–	1	5	5	8	4	3	26
Media studies	–	–	2	2	6	7	4	2	23
Marketing	1	1	1	1	1	4	2	0	11
Medicine/Health sciences	–	–	–	1	2	2	2	2	9
Computer science, information systems	–	–	1	1	1	–	1	1	5
Film studies	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	4	4
Management	1	–	–	1	–	1	–	1	4
Economics	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	–	3
Psychiatry	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
Pedagogy	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1
Cultural sociology	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
Statistics	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	1
Fine arts	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	1
Total	2	1	8	13	18	34	27	23	126

Source: own study.

2.2. BW research methodology

As demonstrated in Table 2, the use of quantitative and qualitative methods was distributed fairly evenly, while some of the projects – most often multi-stage ones – used a mixed methodology (which is why the total number of techniques is higher than the 114 individual texts in which we identified the research-empirical component).

Surveys predominated among quantitative techniques (e.g. Granow et al., 2018; Rubenking and Bracken, 2018; Starosta et al., 2021b), and several projects were involved in the analysis of medical data (Wise, 2018) concerning, for example, voting for particular episodes of selected series (Karmarkar and Venkatraman, 2017) or the use of video platforms (Schweidel and Moe, 2016; Wang et al., 2017; Castro et al., 2019; Grimshaw et al., 2020) and social networks (Amer et al., 2019).

Qualitative studies dominated the literature reviews, predominantly linked to conceptual work aimed at preparing a theoretical model of BW (Flayelle et al., 2019a; Jenner, 2019; Gänßle and Kunz-Kaltenhaeuser, 2020; Halfmann and Reinecke, 2020; Merikiv et al., 2020). As declared by the authors, they constituted a prelude to (or synthesis of) subsequent research work.

Table 2
Research methods and techniques in BW research (2014–2021)

Research methods and techniques		Applications
Methods	quantitative	54
	qualitative	45
	mixed	18
Quantitative techniques	surveys	63
	data analysis	8
Qualitative techniques	literature review	20
	IDI (in-depth interviews)	13
	FGI (focus group interviews)	7
	content analysis	9
	experiment	14
	case study	4
	observation	1
	conceptual work	7

Source: own study.

In-depth interviews were conducted prior to quantitative research (Panda and Pandey, 2017; Nanda and Banerjee, 2020), and they were also used to learn about factors influencing the attitudes and behaviours of binging individuals (Da Costa, 2019; Feiereisen, 2019; Perks, 2019b; Jones et al., 2020; Steiner and Xu, 2020; Gumus, 2021). In contrast, quantitative research tools were developed through focus group interviews (Flayelle et al., 2019a) and, as in the IDI, they were used to explore the motivations of binging individuals (Mikos, 2016; Devasagayam, 2014; Flayelle et al., 2017; Panda and Pandey, 2017; Rubenking et al., 2018; Gangadharbatla et al., 2019).

The experiment was conducted on Amazon Prime viewers, among others. In this way, differences in the impact of the viewed material were investigated depending on whether it involved so-called traditional television or streaming (Billard, 2019). The experiment was also used in studies on BW practice in the context of its frequency, time and place (Horvath et al., 2017; Lu et al., 2017; Castro et al., 2019; Flayelle et al., 2020c), the effect of binging on platform subscription ownership (Godinho de Matos and Ferreira, 2018), in analyses of levels of narrative immersion (Jones et al., 2018; Erickson et al., 2019; Warren, 2020) and exploring differences in social relationships between binging and non-binging individuals (Ferchaud, 2020). An EEG (encephalography) study was also performed as part of a medical project (Kilian et al., 2020; Dieterich et al., 2021) to explore the particularities of brain activity in binging individuals.

Boca (2017; 2019) analysed the content of Facebook comments, investigating respondents' attitudes to their binging the first time and their motivations the second time. Laban, Zeidler and Brussee (2020) looked into the effects of product placement on watching audiovisual content.

In 2016, Jenner proposed a case study of Netflix as a 'bingeable potentate' of productions. Zündel (2019) also chose the same platform, searching for differences in textual elements (labels, descriptions) vis-à-vis classical, traditional television programming that encourage viewers to binge. The case study was also used in research on the health disorders experienced by intensively binging patients (Rangarajan and Forman, 2019; Sharma et al., 2019).

In view of the above, it can be concluded that, more often than not, qualitative research served the purpose of structuring the knowledge gathered so far, developing theories and creating new concepts. It also involved preparatory activities for quantitative research (development and/or pilot run of tools) and deepened the knowledge gained in this way. In turn, quantitative research provided a broader picture of BW – in terms of choices, practices, motivations, emotions of viewers and individual or social effects of binging.

As far as research tools are concerned, several instruments have been developed by psychologists and communicologists to meet the demands of the study of the reception of video content, including BW. Two of them were prepared by Flayelle et al. (2019a). These questionnaires were the Watching TV Series Motives Questionnaire (WTSMQ) and the Binge-Watching Engagement and Symptoms Questionnaire (BWESQ). Their initial versions were pilot tested during group interviews, after which the reliability and good psychometric properties of these tools were confirmed. They were then used in large sample studies ($n=6556$ and $n=5272$, respectively). The aim of the work was to validate the tools in different cultural groups and to collect and analyse the data obtained. A total of 12,616 respondents (TV series viewers) representing nine language groups and countries from all continents were surveyed. Among other things, similarities in the relationship between motivations and behaviours associated with BW, as well as negative health outcomes, were demonstrated. French-language versions of both questionnaires were used in subsequent projects (Flayelle et al., 2019b; Flayelle et al., 2020c; Anozie, 2020). They were also validated in Turkey with a positive conclusion (Demir and Batik, 2020).

The study of BW frequency and motivation conducted in Poland used an original form – the Questionnaire of Excessive Binge-Watching Behaviours (Starosta et al., 2019; Starosta et al., 2020b). The study sought to validate two tools as well: the aforementioned form and the Polish adaptation of the questionnaire – the Viewing Motivation Scale (Rubin et al., 2020). The project included a total of 1,004 individuals. In this project, the reliability and usefulness of both tools were demonstrated, and a strong relationship was found between frequent binging and escapist motivation and coping with loneliness.

In 2021, two project reports were published, which led to the development and testing of two additional questionnaires. The first was the Binge-Watching Addiction Questionnaire (Forte et al., 2021). It consisted of 20 questions, with responses given on a five-point Likert scale, regarding behaviour outside the norm, as well as the reactions of others to respondents' binging. It identified four factors that describe behaviours which could be indicative of the addictive

nature of BW. These are craving (hunger, pleasure-seeking), dependence, anticipation and avoidance of negative consequences.

In contrast, Viens and Farrar (2021) hypothesised that it would be useful to know the overall scale of BW before measuring its negative aspects. To this end, the General Binge Watching Scale (GBWS) was developed. It is a primary measurement tool of BW which enables us to determine whether a viewer can be considered a binge-watcher. The GBWS is a two-factor scale for estimating both basic and impulsive BW. A study on two groups of students at an American university (278 in the first version and 392 in the final version) confirmed the reliability of each factor, i.e. basic BW (consists of three items measuring binge-watching intensity) and impulsive BW (contains four components, indicating the level of impulsivity and intentionality of watching). In addition, the authors developed and tested the Single-Program Binge-Watching Scale (SPBWS) to measure single-program binging. It shared a similar structure and a similar range of questions as the GBWS mentioned above.

2.3. Study populations and research groups

The size of the research sample correlated with the methodology chosen for the project. In the 63 studies carried out using survey questionnaires only, we distinguished the following types of research samples (Table 3):

- student groups: sometimes narrowed down to active viewers of audiovisual content of different sizes and characteristics, where the smallest included 66 people from a private university (Anozie, 2020), and the largest was a group of 1,216 students from 17 countries (Fayelle et al., 2020a);
- residents of countries and/or cities (research samples ranging from 169 to 1,277 individuals): e.g. the Arab community of Abu Dhabi (Ahmed, 2017); citizens of four Southeast Asian countries (Dixit et al., 2020) or South Korea (Shim and Kim, 2018; Shim et al., 2018); Italians (Boursier et al., 2021; Forte et al., 2021), Taiwanese aged 20+ (Sung and Chang, 2021), Jakarta millennials with Netflix accounts (Susanno et al., 2019);
- Amazon Mechanical Turk – AMT– clients of Amazon's crowd-sourcing service (research samples between 160 and 800 people) (Conlin et al., 2016; Tefertiller and Maxwell, 2018; Pittman and Steiner, 2019; Aghababian et al., 2021; Ort et al., 2021; Viens and Farrar, 2021);
- series audiences (survey samples between 263 and 4,039 people): aged 16 and over (Granow et al., 2018); French-speaking series viewers and active members of fan communities on social media (Flayelle et al., 2019b); viewers of particular series (Pittman and Sheehan, 2015); South Korean viewers (Yoo et al., 2020); users of streaming platforms and also respondents of the Chinese research panel sojump.com (Song et al., 2021);
- simply 'adults' (research sample 86 to 926 respondents) (Exelmans and van den Bulck, 2017; Rubenking and Bracken, 2018; Walton-Pattison et al., 2018; Karuza Podgorelec, 2020; Steins-Loeber, 2020; Vizcaino et al., 2020).

As mentioned previously, the survey questionnaire was used in conjunction with other research techniques. Research projects covered similar populations – students (groups between 48 and 288 people; Horvath et al., 2017; Panda and Pandey, 2017; Gangadharbatla et al., 2019; Erickson et al., 2019; Flayelle et al., 2020c); AMT clients (between 105 and 420 individuals; Billard, 2019; Ferchaud, 2020; Warren, 2020); viewers of a series available on the Hulu platform (273 individuals; Walter et al., 2018); adults (30 individuals; Devasagayam, 2014) and large populations of French-speaking respondents (Flayelle et al., 2019a).

Eight research sessions relying solely on the IDI technique involved interviewing mainly adults (Steiner and Xu, 2020) who met additional criteria such as no children (meaning more time to watch; Feiereisen, 2019); binging (Jones et al., 2020); health problems (Perks, 2019a, 2019b) and use of streaming platforms (Gumus, 2021). One study involved Canadian students (ranging from 12 to 36 participants) conducting a BW project (Da Costa, 2019). Interviews were also conducted among adolescents aged between 13 and 17 (Thomas et al., 2020).

The research, which employed IDI as one of several techniques, covered viewers (Nanda and Banerjee, 2020) and students (Panda and Pandey, 2017). In three projects, FGIs were used as a stand-alone technique, while in four projects they were used in conjunction with other research methods. The research group in all seven projects consisted of adults (14–16 people; Devasagayam, 2014; Mikos, 2016), students (between 6 and 90 people; Gangadharbatla et al., 2019; Panda and Pandey, 2017; Rubenking et al., 2018) and viewers who regularly watch series (seven people; Flayelle et al., 2019a).

The experiments (used in 20 projects, either independently or in a mixed format) were carried out across different groups. These included students (between 51 and 800 people; Horvath et al., 2017; Lu et al., 2017; Woolley and Sharif, 2019; Erickson et al., 2019; Ferchaud, 2020; Flayelle et al. 2020c; Warren, 2020), AMT clients (between 105 and 2682 individuals; Lu et al., 2017; Billard, 2019; Woolley and Sharif, 2019; Warren, 2020), series viewers (between 15 and 273 individuals; Walter et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2018) and adults (between 13 and 218 individuals; Lu et al., 2017; Castro et al., 2019; Dieterich et al., 2021; Kilian et al., 2021).

In two case study applications (Rangarajani Forman, 2019; Sharma et al., 2019), individuals and their health status were studied, including the negative effects of BW (primarily related to lack of physical exercise).

As indicated in the table 3, students accounted for the most frequently studied group, which is no doubt a result of their availability (although this choice may also have been dictated by the fact that, being young, they watched audiovisual content intensively on all platforms). Next, adults were studied and defined either in an open way (only the term *adults* appeared in the description of the sample) or in a narrow way, e.g. based on the use of a particular language, childlessness, etc. Some researchers used the AMT tool, while others focused on selected groups: series viewers (including specific titles) or subscribers to VOD/streaming platforms. A few countries or regions (mainly in Asia) conducted surveys targeting a large population of residents.

Table 3
Composition and size of research groups in BW studies (2014–2021)

Research group	Research technique	Sample size	Number of projects
Students	survey	66–12.616	18
	survey + other	48–288	7
	IDI (+ other)	15–60	3
	FGI (+ other)	6–90	3
	experiment (+ other)	51–800	8
Amazon Mechanical Turk clients	survey	160–800	7
	survey + other	105–420	3
	experiment (+ other)	105–2.682	5
City and/or country residents	survey	169–1488	9
Series audiences (including specific titles)	survey	263–4039	9
	survey + other	273	1
	IDI (+ other)	12–15	2
	FGI (+ other)	7	1
	experiment (+ other)	15–273	2
Adults	survey	86–926	8
	survey + others	30–6.556	2
	IDI (+ other)	12–36	4
	FGI (+ other)	14–16	2
	experiment (+ other)	13–218	5
Individuals	case study	1	2

Source: own study.

One thing worth noting is that the study found a single representative survey conducted in a community of US adults over 25 years of age (Rubenking and Bracken, 2018). This group of 421 people was gathered through collaboration with the Qualtrics Panel Survey. As a result of this study, BW was found to be associated with habituation, emotion regulation, the pleasure derived from anticipating the continuation of the narrative, and also from being surprised.

2.4. Binge-watching: motivations and consequences

In this subsection, the study allowed the researchers to analyse the nature and development of the phenomenon within the broader context of media reception, the personal motivations of binging individuals and the motivational factors generated by commercial entities, as well as the effects of BW itself.

2.4.1. Personal motivators and factors conducive to BW

Binging was predominantly perceived as an enjoyable leisure activity, with hedonism, rest, relaxation, and getting rid of boredom and loneliness diagnosed among the motivators (Pittman and Sheehan, 2015; Sung et al., 2018; Castro et al., 2019; Karuza Podgorelec, 2020; Sung et al., 2018; Steiner and Xu, 2020; Ort et al., 2021).

Escapism, i.e. avoiding stress, distancing oneself from everyday life and its problems, and regulating one's emotions, was also indicated (Rubenking and Bracken, 2018; Ort et al., 2021). Procrastination, understood as the desire to postpone tasks and avoid fulfilling responsibilities, was often associated with this attitude (Panda and Pandey, 2017; Jones et al., 2018; Rubenking et al., 2018; Susanno et al., 2019; Gangadharbatla et al., 2019; Castro et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2019; Merill and Rubenking, 2019; Halfmann and Reinecke, 2020). The so-called fear of missing out (FOMO) has also been cited among the reasons for BW (e.g. Conlin et al., 2016).

The intensity of BW increased with the need for rest, detachment and being immersed in a different world (Pittman and Sheehan, 2015). At this point, the so-called *flow*, or deep immersion into the narrative, deserves a special reference. This immersion into fiction has been supported by producers of audiovisual content, e.g. with the use of suspense, through building tension, suspending the action (Rubenking and Bracken, 2018; Rubenking et al., 2018; Gangadharbatla et al., 2019; Ferchaud, 2020; Karuza Podgorelec, 2020). Michael Samuel (2017) associated *flow* with the weariness of having to constantly choose something, linking BW to an unwillingness or inability to make a decision.

The BW phenomenon was not considered to exclusively mean an individualised, isolating activity undertaken in solitude. Researchers have cited its relational social aspect, such as the opportunity to watch shows together, discuss them, and identify with their characters (Matrix, 2014; Pittman and Sheehan, 2015; Panda and Pandey, 2017; Rubenking et al., 2018; Perks, 2019a, 2019b; Susanno et al., 2019; Gangadharbatla et al., 2019).

Negative motivations included (paradoxically) a prolonged binging for fear of guilt over wasted time and unfulfilled responsibilities (Panda and Pandey, 2017) and a sense of loneliness: if this became the main motivator for BW, it was often associated with the risk of addiction (Starosta et al., 2019). Difficulties in self-control, lack of forward planning and escapist motivations also led to problematic excessive watching (Starosta et al., 2021a).

2.4.2. Incentive factors generated by commercial operators

Devasagayam (2014) argued that content providers deliberately and effectively drag customers into BW addiction. Lu, Karmarkar and Venkatraman (2017) found that the sequential structure of content promotes prolonged watching, which producers take into account at the development stage of a series. The episodic structure affects both the scheduling of binging sessions and the

viewing itself. It is associated with the enjoyment of having a good time and the sense of satisfaction and even utility of binging resulting from completing a certain process.

On the other hand, BW poses a certain risk for content providers. If watched too quickly, viewers lose interest in the offer and consequently the need to continue paying subscriptions (Godinho de Matosi Ferreira, 2018). A form of preventing customers from leaving was the differentiation of content delivery methods and the recommendation system, which Zündel (2019) wrote about. The researcher looked into changes in the presentation of the content offered on platforms aimed at encouraging users to continue binging. Noteworthy is the fact that Nanda and Banerjee (2020) found the issues raised above to be of significance from the perspective of the marketing activities of content producers and the protection of consumer rights.

Binge-watching was also recognised as a source of information about the lifestyles and interpersonal relationships of platform clients, e.g. by observing their social media activity (Pilipets, 2019). Such knowledge could be used by providers to tie viewers more strongly to specific media brands.

2.4.3. Effects of BW

The pejorative effects of BW have been mentioned in a number of studies dealing with the addictive nature of binging (e.g. Sun and Chang, 2021; Starosta et al., 2021a, 2021b). The sheer danger and risk of addiction were highlighted (Devasagayam, 2014), but so was the sense of compulsion and compulsiveness of watching (Krstić, 2018; Pierce-Grove, 2017). Its manifestation was rather observed on the occasion of unplanned BW (Riddle et al., 2018).

Incidentally, it is important to stress that researchers have attempted to objectively distinguish between BW that is not fraught with addiction risk and BW that poses a risk of addiction but concerns a small percentage of active binge-watchers (see Flayelle et al., 2019a, 2019b; Orti et al., 2021).

Certain authors have mentioned other negative consequences of BW, i.e. risks to, for example, family, work, health, social life and mental health (Flayelle et al., 2019a; Pierce-Grove, 2017). It has also been suggested that BW is a heterogeneous behaviour, characterised by at least two modes of manifestation: a highly pleasurable experience associated with high viewing engagement and a behaviour with significant risks of toxic use of technology, even posing a threat to mental health (Flayelle et al., 2020a).

Deterioration of social relationships (Gangadharbatla et al., 2019; Dhanuka and Bohra, 2019), negative effects of the phenomena on emotional, physical and mental health (Dhanuka and Bohra, 2019), school and work (Gangadharbatla et al., 2019), daily time management, goal fulfilment, stress tolerance (Ilyas and Qureshi, 2020) and memory (Horwath et al., 2017) have all been cited as effects of BW.

Some of the adverse effects of BW include, for example, tendencies towards emotional instability, intransigence, lack of perseverance (Starosta et al.,

2020), depression and impulsivity (Ahmed, 2017; Steins-Loeber et al., 2020) and regret for lost time – dependent on the degree of attention commitment during the show (Pittman and Steiner, 2019). Jenner (2017) further mentioned guilt resulting from spending too much time watching (Jenner, 2017), but as indicated by Castro et al. (2019), this feeling, often accompanying unintentional and uncontrolled BW, was occasional.

A separate category of negative consequences included those related to physical health. Among others, it has been shown that spending long periods of time in front of a screen can lead to deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism (Rangarajan and Forman, 2019), rectal cancer (Wise, 2018), sleep disorders (Exelmans and van den Bulck, 2017) and poor eating habits (Vizcaino, 2020; Aghababian et al., 2021).

There were also others who felt that although this phenomenon as a whole cannot be considered pathological, it requires special control and further research (Flayelle et al., 2020b; Starosta and Izydorczyk, 2020; Gänßle and Kunz-Kaltenhaeuser, 2020).

Interestingly, the positive effects of binging have received far less attention. It has been emphasised, for instance, that it adds to the sense of autonomy and independence due to the possibility of making choices (Granow et al., 2018). Thus, the central role of self-determination as a factor linking media consumption, accompanying enjoyment and psychological well-being has been confirmed. Vaterlaus et al. (2018) showed that BW could lead to the establishment or deepening of social relations, but at the same time, noted that binging could lead to social isolation. Socialisation and the fostering or strengthening of social contacts have also been mentioned as positive aspects of binging by other authors (e.g. Matrix, 2014; Rubenking and Bracken, 2018). With a degree of caution, escapist behaviour can also be included here, which sometimes helps to forget problems and to get away from the difficulties of everyday life (although it may entail serious consequences).

Some of the research findings presented in the literature have approached the phenomenon from a broader perspective, going beyond the categories of motives or consequences of binging. Undoubtedly, the academic community has assumed that BW constitutes a distinct way of watching (Krstić, 2018) and a specific expression of being an active media viewer who not only consumes the content being shown passively but also makes an effort to interpret, critically analyse, respond to the material presented and exchange opinions with other viewers (Matrix, 2014).

Conclusions

An in-depth analysis of the literature on the subject made it possible to answer the research questions. The development of research on the BW phenomenon was presented using a multidimensional approach: chronological (gradual intensification since 2014), quantitative (increased interest of researchers evident

in the growing number of publications), formal (peer-reviewed publications, listed in scientific indexing services) and subject-related (the problem addressed by representatives of various disciplines, primarily psychology, social communication and media studies).

Research on BW employs quantitative (more often) and qualitative methods, and in later stages of projects, both types are combined. Several questionnaires have been prepared so far for quantitative research, allowing for basic measurement of the phenomenon, its comparison with the traditional model of TV viewing, as well as learning about the factors contributing to the development of risky conduct. Validation carried out in different cultural backgrounds makes it possible to apply them to further research groups, including the acquisition of comparative data, and to develop knowledge of the scale and nature of the phenomenon on a global scale.

The research population is dominated by students, followed by adults, then narrowly defined groups (AMT clients, viewers of series) and residents of specific areas. This selection of samples and the populations they represent, like the research tools created and used, illustrates the initial stage of development of the research area built around BW. The groups studied are, therefore, first of all, easy to reach (students, AMT users), with a high probability of spending their free time binging.

Research into BW is evolving in multiple directions. There is a psychological trend which focuses on the study of motives, effects, and the correlation between BW and the personality traits or predispositions of viewers. Some scholars working in this field pay special attention to the risk of addiction to watching, using ‘stronger’ terms – BW that is problematic or excessive (Starosta et al., 2021b; Sun and Chang, 2021). It is likely that these will become part of regular speech, although it is worth remembering that the use of the term ‘*excessive binge*’ is a pleonasm.

Within the communication and media science discipline, there is a description of binging for various populations, including their motivations and effects in the broader context of media consumption. This is where one finds studies bordering on media studies and marketing or management, which analyse BW in the context of the offer and strategy of audiovisual content providers.

When it comes to the field of cultural studies, modes of reception, such as immersion in the narrative, a sense of flow, and a connection with the protagonists, are more often analysed. However, it should be noted that the aforementioned research themes are not distinctively separate for the different disciplines. It can therefore be assumed that the appearance of BW in the repertoire of media consumption behaviour has led to the emergence of a new interdisciplinary research field.

The current analysis is general in scope, which can be regarded as both an advantage and a disadvantage. It is also exploratory in nature, an introduction and an invitation to more in-depth research, including references to other publications, including those not registered in the Web of Science database. It allows one to see what an interesting and interdisciplinary phenomenon BW

is, but it is also unsatisfactory as regards a more in-depth analysis of BW from a media and communication studies perspective. This question is left open due to the volume of information beyond the scope of this paper, as well as future research plans.

In fact, the characterisation of the initial stage of development of research on the BW phenomenon outlined herein reveals the requirements of (and opportunities for) further analysis. In methodological terms, it would be beneficial to make wider use of the already established quantitative research tools (including representative ones), comparative studies between different populations, and the development of qualitative research, among other things. Engaging groups of respondents other than those mentioned in the article would allow for the development of a fuller, more coherent BW image. In terms of substance, it would be worthwhile to advance psychological and media studies that take into account a broader social, cultural and economic context.

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S u m m a r y

The authors of this text aim to quantitatively describe the state of the academic literature on binge-watching, formally characterize the research on this phenomenon (methods, techniques, population) and present its motives and consequences. The paper applies an in-depth literature review analysis of binge-watching (126 publications for the period 2014–2021) and discusses the development of research trends within the interdisciplinary field of binge-watching.

Binge-watching jako interdyscyplinarne pole badawcze

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego tekstu jest opis ilościowego stanu piśmiennictwa na temat zjawiska *binge-watching*, charakterystyka formalna badań nad nim (metody, techniki, populacje) oraz przedstawienie motywów bingowania i jego skutków. W artykule zastosowano pogłębioną analizę literatury przedmiotu (126 publikacji za lata 2014–2021), w efekcie przedstawiając rozwój badań nad *binge-watching* jako interdyscyplinarnym polem badawczym, z uwzględnieniem wykształcenia się i różnicowania się trendów badawczych, częściowo specyficznych dla poszczególnych nauk.

