

Telepresence and Binge Watching: Future Research Directions

Introduction and Defining Concepts

Telepresence and Binge Watching are likely two correlated concepts. There has been little research investigating the possible relationship between these concepts. This poster provides the basis for future research.

Telepresence is defined as “requires the use of technology and resulting in a psychological state in which media users voluntarily suspend the experience of mediation in order to feel a sense of connection with the mediated content they are using (i.e., connection to characters, involvement in the story line)” (Petty, Bracken, Rubenking, Buncher, & Gress, 2010, p. 4). Telepresence experiences may be influenced by the user’s expectation of the technology, the media content, and characteristics of the media user.

Binge watching is defined as “Long periods of focused, deliberate viewing of sequential television content that is generally narrative, suspenseful, and dramatic in nature. Binge watching may be a planned, purposeful activity, or unintentional.” (Rubenking & Bracken, 2018). This definition makes clear the differences between binge watching and just watching more TV. Academics, streaming services such as *Netflix*, and popular media discussions have all weighed in on defining the term. Similar terms such as “media marathoning” (Perks, 2018; Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018) and “high dosage viewing (Conlin & Tefertiller, 2016) have also been offered.

While time spent viewing television by U.S. audiences has been slowly decreasing since 2009 (Madrigal, 2018), binge watching has steadily increased in the past decade (Harris Polls). These data demonstrate the differentiation of heavy television viewing and binge watching. As streaming service subscriptions have now surpassed cable subscriptions (Roettgers, 2019), it may be foolish to describe binge watching as a fad.

Like telepresence, binge watching has been defined in numerous ways. Rubenking and Bracken (in press) argue that binge watching is one of several new modes of television viewing that are phenomenologically distinct, and have quickly become a new norm of viewing.

Why examine Telepresence & Binge Watching

Rubenking and Bracken (in press) argue that **binge watching is a new norm in television viewing that challenges many of the currently accepted assumptions under the existing methodological and theoretical framework employed in the academic study of media effects**. Other researchers have also called for adopting a psychological processes-based approach towards binge-watching investigation to further our understanding of this new viewing behavior (Flayelle, Maurage, Vögele, Karila, & Billieux, 2018).

Relevant Literature

Binge watching is empirically linked to many dimensions studied under presence. Previous research has found the concepts below to either be dimensions of telepresence, or to share a consistent positive relationship with the concept.

Enjoyment – binge watching is related to greater enjoyment than other modes of television viewing (Shim & Kim, 2018)

Parasocial Interaction – binge watching is related to greater levels of parasocial interaction (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018)

Involvement – involvement with program content has a positive relationship to binge watching (Flayelle, 2020)

Immersion – for binge watching greater levels of immersion were found to be linked to familiarity and comfort (Hassan, Landsman, Knappmeyer, Vallines, Rubin, & Heeger, 2008)

Transportation - binge watching, as compared to appointment viewing fosters greater transportation experienced while viewing (Erickson, Dal Cin, & Byl, 2019)

Connections between Telepresence and Binge Watching

1) Technological factors contribute to the media users experience

- Both bingeing and telepresence have technological factors that contribute to media audience response.
- Binge watching technological factors: “autoplay” of next episodes, distribution strategies that allow for whole seasons or shows to be available at once. (Flayelle, et al., 2018; Petty, et al, 2010)

2) Individual difference contribute to media users experience

- Difference in engaging in Binge Watching vary by age (Bury & Li, 2015; Shannon-Missal, 2013)
- Binge watching has been linked to greater need for cognition (Shim & Kim, 2018; Shim, Lim, Jung, & Shin, 2018)

3) Feelings of closeness to or connected to others – fictional and real world

- Consistent findings report greater emotional connections to characters and parasocial relationships in binge watching experiences as compared to other modes of viewing (Flayelle, Maurage, & Billieux, 2017; Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018)

4) Content influences media users responses

Binge watching research has demonstrated the role of cliffhangers & their placement in seasons, storytelling across longer time arcs, and prestige dramas. While, Telepresence research demonstrates content impacts levels of engagement, immersion, feelings of being there, and connection to others.

For a graphic representation of this relationships – See Figure 1.

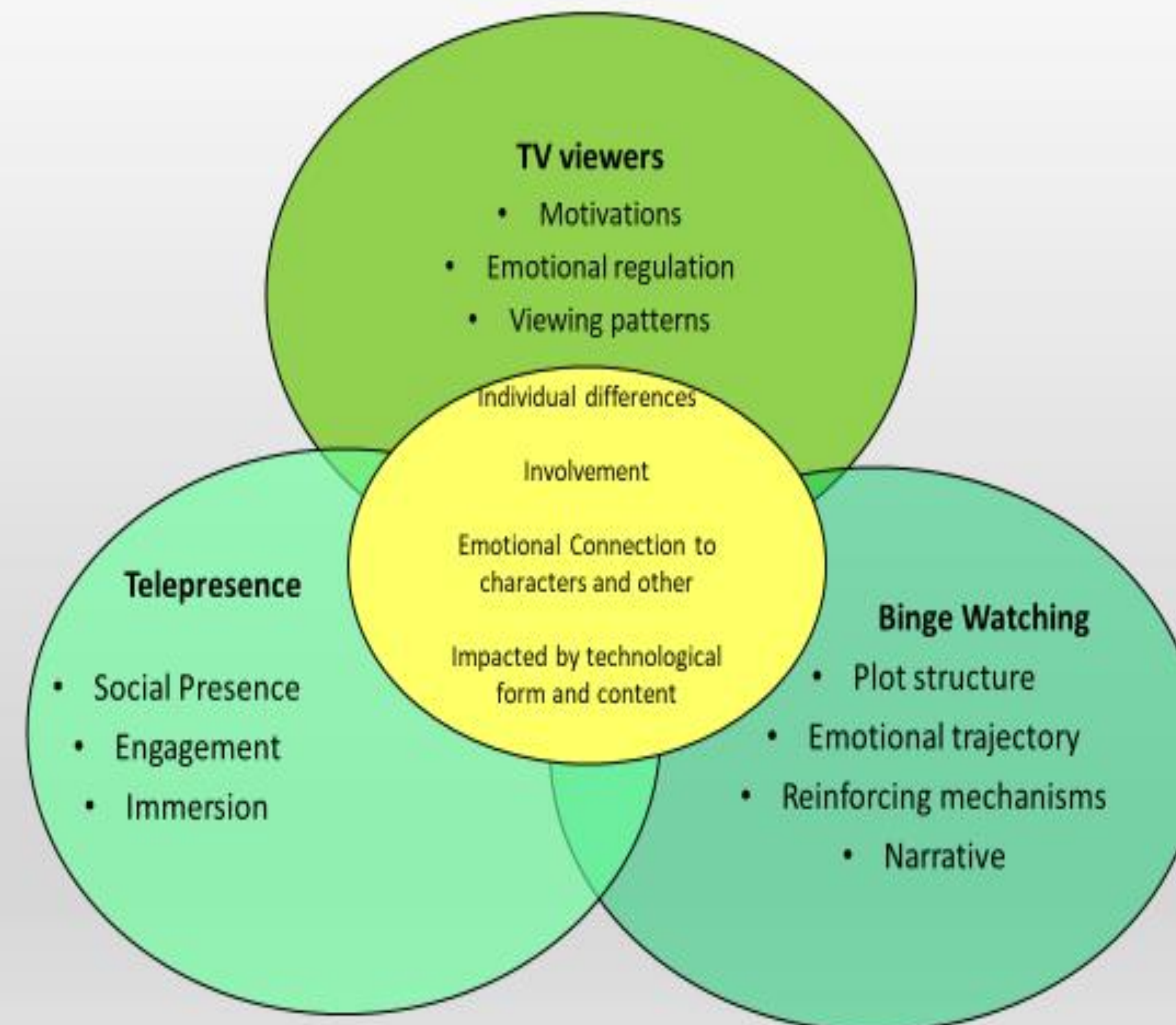


Figure 1: Connections between Binge Watching, Telepresence and TV Viewers

Future Research Questions

Research Questions:

- Will (spatial) telepresence or social presence share a stronger relationship with binge watching?
- Do higher levels of engagement, involvement, immersion, and parasocial interaction predict longer durations of binge watching ?
- Do higher levels of telepresence predict longer binge watching durations compared to appointment viewing?

Hypotheses:

- Those who experience greater feelings of telepresence will be more likely to binge watch with greater frequency or duration.
- Binge watching for a longer duration will increase feelings of telepresence.

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