

**INSTITUTE OF ART STUDIES, BAS**



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VALCHANOVA**

**STREAMING PLATFORMS AND  
TRANSFORMATIONS OF  
CONTEMPORARY TV SERIES**

**ABSTRACT**

**OF A THESIS FOR THE AWARD OF  
THE EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC DOCTOR'S DEGREE  
(PHD)**

**SOFIA  
2024**

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**OF THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
PHILOSOPHY  
IN  
CINEMA STUDIES, CINEMA ART AND TELEVISION, 8.4**

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**Reviewers:** Prof. DSc Bozhidar Manov  
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The thesis was discussed and approved for public defense at a Screen Arts Department's meeting held on 11.12.2023.

The thesis consists of 311 pages: an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion, 14 titles of bibliography in Cyrillic and 25 titles in Latin, 9 titles of filmography, 5 online sources in Cyrillic, 108 online sources in Latin and 10 appendices.

The public defense will be held on May 29th, 2024, Wednesday, at 11:00 a.m. at an open meeting of a scientific panel: Prof. DSc Bozhidar Manov, NATFA, Prof. Dr. Ivan Draganov, New Bulgarian University, Prof. Dr. Nadezhda Mihaylova, Institute of Art Studies, BAS, Prof. Dr. Svetoslav Ovcharov, NATFA, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teodora Stoilova-Doncheva, Institute of Art Studies, BAS.

All materials on the defense are available to interested parties at the *Department of Administrative Services* of the Institute of Art Studies, Sofia, 21 Krakra Str.

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The research "Streaming Platforms and Transformations of the Contemporary Television Series" was conducted between January 1, 2018, and January 1, 2023, during my studies in the full-time PhD program in Film Studies, Cinema Art and Television, *Screen Arts Sector* at the *Institute for the Study of Arts* under the scientific supervision of Prof. Dr. Ingeborg Bratoeva-Darakchieva. The results of the research were presented in separate scientific publications, and later – in the thesis.

### **General Characteristics of the Thesis**

Over the past ten years, video streaming has gone from a novelty to a common and preferred way of watching television. Not only TV series, but also films are being made for video platforms, and their high quality has earned them a place among the contenders of the television arts awards, but also those of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and other awards in USA and Europe.

According to a number of studies, streaming is already more popular than cable and linear TV in the viewers' habits. At the same time, it is also affecting the way TV production is being created. The changed audience perceptions and different approaches to creating series determine the necessity of such a research.

The **main hypothesis** of the thesis is that under the influence of video streaming platforms not only the way in which series reach their audiences is changing, but also the way in which TV series are constructed. The **object** of the study is the essence of contemporary television series in the era of streaming platforms, and the subject is the transformations that occur under the influence of streaming services. The thesis covers the period from early 2007 to 2021, although it also includes an overview of the history of television since its first days. The year 2007 is a pivotal moment because then one of the largest pay-per-view video companies, Netflix, began to distribute its content on the Internet via streaming. The **main purpose** of the study is to identify and analyze the transformations that have occurred under the influence of the new services. Among the main **tasks** is to clarify the definitions used in the thesis, such as multi-platform, multiscreen, interactivity, and binge-watching.

Statistical data is analyzed as part of the study. An overview of the development of streaming platforms is made, as well as categorization and an overview of the main characteristics of the most popular of them. The current trends in viewing habits and the new approaches in the creation of series are highlighted. The specific transformations in the

creation of television series can be observed through case studies of series. Nine in-depth interviews with experts from the cinema, television and streaming platforms were conducted, and the majority of the interviewees have worked on the series analyzed in the research. The hypotheses are tested and proven through the opinions and practical experience of the professionals. Among them are Sabrina S. Sutherland, Tony Kearns, Marianne Furevold-Boland, Karen DiConcetto, Kyle Gilman, Sean Cusack, Nicholas Dunn, Dimitar Noikov and Vanya Dimitrova. The interviews were analyzed on different topics that emerged during the conversations and they all highlight the main transformations studied in the thesis.

Changes in television due to digital technologies have been discussed in a number of scientific research around the world and in Bulgaria, with various aspects of it being addressed in studies by Bozhidar Manov, Alexander Donev, Elitsa Gotseva, Ingeborg Bratoeva-Darakchieva, Petya Alexandrova, Teodora Stoilova-Doncheva, etc. This thesis expands the existing knowledge in the field, paying in-depth attention to the transformations that have occurred under the influence of streaming platforms and the new opportunities emerging for professionals in the fields of cinema production and television series.

### **Main Content of the Thesis:**

In the **Preface** the object and subject of the research are outlined, as well as the purpose and the tasks, the methodology, the chronological framework, and the necessity of the thesis.

**Chapter One** provides a historical overview of the development of the television series and describes the definitions used in the thesis. **Chapter Two** examines the emergence and development of streaming platforms. It categorizes and identifies the most popular ones worldwide based on viewership, highlights audience attitudes through statistical data analysis and traces the change in audience behavior. Chapter Two also specifies the characteristics of binge-watching as a trend and "branching narrative" as a phenomenon that is becoming more widely used in the creation of television series.

**Chapter Three** provides a case study analysis – the titles that were chosen broaden the understanding of series and stand as examples of different approaches to creating TV series in the streaming platform environment.

**Chapter Four** is dedicated to analysis of the interviews with professionals and presents conclusions about the development of series and the transformations observed under the influence of streaming platforms in both the perception of viewers and production of television works.

The **Conclusion** summarizes the most important conclusions of the research and identifies the contributions of the thesis.

## **Chapter One**

### **TV Series, Streaming and Interactivity**

In Chapter One the main definitions used in the thesis are introduced, and the theoretical basics of the topic are described. It studies the historical development of the television series from the advent of television in the early 20th century, through the early days of soap operas, the "golden era" in the 1950s characterized by the rise of soap operas, to the rise of streaming platforms when it became easier for the audience to access television productions. The ability to watch a film or series on any screen, any device, anytime and from anywhere there is internet access helps to bring television products to a wider audience.

This chapter also clarifies the definition of a television series in the age of streaming platforms: a screen work that is a sequence of episodes on the same theme, set in the same imaginary or real world, or with the same characters. It can be watched on a television set or broadcast via terrestrial, cable or satellite television, and at the same time on the screen of a laptop or mobile device with internet access and a subscription to a streaming platform.

It defines the terms *convergence*, *streaming*, *interactivity* and *multiscreen*, key to understanding transformations in contemporary television. As a term, convergence began to be used in media theory in the 1970s, but in the 1990s the broader meaning of the term took shape, extending to the rise and development of the Internet. Convergence in television is characterized by the merging of television and internet technology and the blurring of the boundaries between television and internet access. Convergence is not a complete process, but a term that is continually being developed as technology evolves and its socio-cultural meaning changes. Convergence in television affects both the way screen works reach the viewer, and the way audiences engage with them.

Since the remote control's introduction, audiences have been able to choose which program to watch and change channels effortlessly, and viewers are beginning to take an increasingly active role. Today the user can use not only a remote control, but also a keyboard, voice or even gesture command; they can watch live, pause, rewind, select video on demand; and watch on one or several screens, alone or in a network of people. Another example of convergence is smart TV, which technologically combines a TV, a computer and a music system. The smartphone adds to these options the talk function and a range of other

choices. Another result of convergence is video streaming platforms, where the function of watching TV is combined with the features of internet communication.

Streaming services are key to bringing contemporary screen art, and TV series in particular, to viewers. They are no longer a new phenomenon, but it is nevertheless necessary to clarify the definition of streaming to understand how the concept will be used in this thesis. In recent years, streaming has become an important medium for both listening to music and watching video.

In order to make the meaning of streaming clearer, a difference should be made between streaming and downloading, as well as the difference between live streaming and streaming of pre-recorded audiovisual work. The phenomenon that concerns this thesis with a focus on thematic limitation concerns the internet broadcasting of pre-produced content intended for viewing by a wide range of viewers with access to a streaming platform. By streaming platforms, we mean websites or applications that enable viewers to watch video content without having to store the files on their computer.

Due to this type of service, the viewers do not need to be in front of the TV at specific times, on specific days, to watch a movie or a TV show. Instead, they can choose the time and place, as well as at which point in the film or program to start or continue watching. These options are also related to the interactive nature of contemporary multimedia, a consequence of the convergence between television and the Internet, between art and media.

The question of the interactivity of screen art is not new. It is an issue that has been discussed since the last decades of the 20th century, with the 1990s already making it clear that the screen of the future will be about two-way communication between viewer and screen work. The development of interactive television is also conditioned by the evolution and accessibility of the Internet, so it will be viewed as a convergent phenomenon. When analyzing this interactivity, more than just the already familiar aspects are taken into account – the viewer can also participate by pausing, 'rewinding' and choosing which element of the audiovisual work to watch. In addition, the opportunity for full two-way communication between the viewer and the work on screen, the "responsiveness" of the screen to the viewer's preferences are also taken into consideration.

The dissertation also examines interactive series – television works that involve the active participation of the viewer, who can choose one of several possible narrative storylines, can participate by answering questions, or can follow different perspectives on the television narrative. When referring to interactive television, it is also understood as the process of viewing the work, i.e. the transformation of passive participation into active



participation, in which the viewer is invited to interact through a smartphone, computer, joystick or other remote-control device and guide their choices in an interactive convergent environment.

The term "multiscreen" has a number of different definitions in scientific literature depending on which stage of technological development it refers to. It can be thought of as a 'second screen', as 'multiplatform', as the use of several media simultaneously, or as the use of multiple screens to display the same moving image. Multiscreen is a consequence of the convergence of television and mobile technologies, and although at first it may seem as if the two screens, the television screen and the smartphone screen, are competing for the viewer's attention, they can be successfully used simultaneously. The English-language studies use the terms media multitasking, second screen, media mashing to describe this phenomenon.

Multiscreen is also a feature of television series, the perception of which encourages the use of a 'second screen' for an interactive experience. The use of multiple screens is also associated with so-called social TV, i.e. the way viewers use technology to connect with friends and family even when they are not watching the same screen. This is where another characteristic of the concept is overlaid – the ability to connect viewer experiences, regardless of where viewers are. Based on the information known so far, in the further exposition "multiscreen" will be understood as the simultaneous or sequential use of two or more screens when communicating with contemporary media, in particular – with contemporary television.

Framing the terms identified in this chapter is necessary to understand how current technologies are transforming the processes of creating and reaching television series.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Streaming Platforms and Transformation of Viewers' perception**

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the enormous potential of streaming platforms to provide TV and film art to the audience in a situation in which going to the cinema is impossible. The trend of increasing viewers' interest in this type of platforms has existed since before then. Chapter Two uses the analysis of statistical data to show the main transformations in viewing habits. A categorization of the types of streaming platforms is also made, and the most popular ones around the world according to their number of subscribers are identified.

One of the reasons for the great popularity of streaming platforms, in addition to easy access from different devices, is the absence of commercials. The viewer can choose what and when to watch, but without the pressure to watch or wait for ads to end. However, due to increasing competitiveness in the video-on-demand segment, the model is subject to revision and more and more companies are offering subscription plans at lower access prices but combining the subscription with ads. How and whether this affects the productions themselves is the subject of research in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis.

The types of video-on-demand platforms are: subscription video on demand (SVOD), advertising-based video on demand (AVOD), broadcaster video on demand (BVOD), premium video on demand (PVOD), and transactional video on demand (TVOD). An overview of the viewership of streaming platforms according to statistical data is provided. Statista.com data for 2021 shows that the most watched pay-per-view streaming platform in the world is Netflix – 57.1%. Interest in Amazon Prime Video is also high at 12.2%, followed by Disney Plus (7.4%), Apple TV Plus (5.8%), HBO Max (5%) and Paramount (3.2%).

It is important to note that the interest in a platform depends largely on the content it offers. Due to its huge potential to offer original productions, Disney Plus is expected to easily catch up and overtake the competitors in the next few years. This chapter also examines other platforms that, while not included in the most visited globally, play a huge role. These are China's iQIYI, with a huge influence in Asia, and Facebook Watch, which has a significant viewership share but, because it offered programmed content briefly, is not included in this list.

The focus in this chapter narrows down towards the interest in different platforms in Europe, Eastern Europe, and Bulgaria. Data shows that consumption in Western Europe significantly exceeds that in Eastern Europe, but growth is expected in both regions. According to 2020 data, Netflix subscribers in Eastern Europe are expected to reach 12 million by 2026 – around twice the 2021 figure – and in Western Europe, around 74 million users. In Eastern Europe, the share of viewers with a subscription is significantly lower, and in the Baltic countries, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria, around 3.5% of people have subscriptions for a video streaming platform.

One of the main reasons for the small number of users is the widespread popularity of Internet piracy. It is well-known all over the world and causes enormous damage in creative industries. With the rise of COVID-19, limited access to cinemas and other forms of entertainment has led to an increase in subscriptions to streaming platforms, but also to an increase in visits to pirated video content sites around the world. In just the first few days of

the enforcement of health measures around the world in March 2020, there has been an increase of over 33% in movie piracy and over 20% growth in piracy of TV productions, according to anti-piracy technology company MUSO. For the first 9 months of 2021, demand for pirated movies and TV productions has reached 3.7 billion titles, and this includes access to content via illegal streaming and torrents. The countries with the largest share of Internet piracy over the period were the US (13.5 billion visits to pirate sites), Russia (7.2 billion), India (6.5 billion), China (5.9 billion) and Brazil (4.5 billion). The damage done by piracy affects not only the creators and producers of television production, but also the viewers themselves – less revenue means fewer possibilities to create new productions with more interesting drama, better quality filming or the participation of world-famous names behind and in front of the camera. Governments in turn suffer losses in the form of taxes. The potential loss of benefits for legitimate TV providers in Europe amounts to 3.21 billion in annual revenues.

The problem of piracy is not new in Bulgaria. Although a decade ago the predominant viewing of pirated content was explained by the unavailability of titles on the Bulgarian market, this is no longer the case. HBO Max, Netflix, SkyShowtime, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV Plus, Disney Plus, Voyo and Nova Play can be legally watched in Bulgaria. However, it would be interesting to observe, on the one hand, what users get in exchange for paying a subscription fee, and on the other hand, what the interest of the corresponding platform is for development in Bulgaria. A comparison of the Amazon Prime Video titles that users have access to in Bulgaria and in other countries shows that in Bulgaria the subscription payment relative to the number of titles that the user has access to is much higher compared to other territories. On the other hand, Bulgaria is among the countries with the most access to Netflix titles for the lowest subscription fee, even though the platform stopped supporting subtitles in Bulgarian back in 2018. This is probably explained by the small percentage of users in the country – around 2.5%, or under 200,000 subscribers.

The data analyzed in this chapter shows not only an increase in interest in video-on-demand streaming platforms, but also an increased interest in feature television series. The data also indicates a shift in preferred television format – once popular series with over 20 episodes per season are giving way to shorter seasons at the expense of higher budgets. The statistical data also suggests a shift in the concept of television, which no longer includes only titles created for TV networks, but also includes productions from video streaming platforms, which only highlights their undeniable role.

The opportunity to watch chosen television productions at the viewer's preferred time, and even – preferred sequence, leads to new trends in television consumption. One of these is the opportunity to follow a series without pausing between episodes, or binge-watching. In English, the phrase is associated specifically with taking episode after episode of a television series without a break, as was the case in 2015 – when it was named "word of the year" by Collins – with "House of Cards" (2013-2018) and "Breaking Bad" (2008-2013). Lexicographers describe the verb as "to watch a large number of television programs (esp. all the shows from one series) in succession."

Some researchers make a distinction between binge-watching and a "media marathon", a term used to give a more positive connotation to binge-watching, given that the English-language binge is associated with negative behavior patterns such as overindulging in food and alcohol. "Marathon", on the other hand, carries another meaning – one of dedication and commitment to an activity. Currently, however, the established term preferred by researchers and media remains binge-watching. The changed viewing habit also has relevance to the way series are constructed and the way they are presented to viewers on streaming platforms – removing the commercial break, skipping the recap of what happened in the previous episode, etc.

In recent years, there has also been discussion in the media of a trend that is opposed to binge-watching – savor watching – which involves the slow following of series with more complex plot construction or ideas that require more time to digest.

Contemporary television is interactive not just in the way we access it – interacting with the on-screen interface, choosing when to watch, pausing and rewinding the episode or film. When referring to interactivity, we mean the general concept of interaction between viewer and screen. Branching dramaturgy (branching narrative) is an opportunity to narrow the focus. It is mostly related not to the perception (viewing) of a television work, but to the way it is created. According to one of the most common definitions, a branching narrative, or a narrative with multiple paths of development, is a literary, video, or film work in which viewers or readers must choose between branching possibilities within the text at certain points.

This branching storytelling is also known as "interactive narrative," "interactive literature," "hyperfiction," or "branching narrative".

The exploration of changed viewers' habits in this chapter and the shifting direction of that change is related not only to outlining viewers' reception, but also to suggesting a

prerequisite for transformations in television series themselves. The new demands of viewers lead to challenges for series creators to find a way to satisfy and provoke viewers' interest.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Transformations of Contemporary TV Series**

This chapter presents examples of TV series and films from the screen universe of the titles in order to identify some of the most interesting transformations that have occurred in the field of TV art due to the streaming platforms.

Nowadays, television series are becoming increasingly hybrid in nature, in some cases they can be perceived as a series and a film at the same time, and in others – as a series and a game. The examples examined in this chapter offer an in-depth look at the researched transformations. This chapter also contains quotations from conversations with film and television professionals who have worked on the titles in focus, which provides context and helps to better understand what is changing and how it's changing in the development of these types of productions.

In this chapter, series and interactive films related to the research hypothesis of transformations in contemporary television series are selected. The titles are from the period 2015-2020 and each contains an example of specificity in its creation. "Twin Peaks: The Return" is an example of a work with a hybrid character that is presented to the audience in the form of a series, in parts, but at the same time developed as a film from the concept and script level to the filming process. It can be considered both as a film because of the way it was written and shot, and as a TV series because of the way it was broadcast on the small screen. "Skam" and "Skam: Austin" are examples of a multi-platform production that is simultaneously a web series, and which can be viewed in parts on a website or via a streaming platform. Both series provide viewers with an experience that blurs the line between onscreen image and real image by building digital identities of characters, but furthermore also allows episodes to be viewed in their entirety or as a collection of separate short scenes. Thus, the creators of the TV series are simultaneously creators of digital content on social media, and viewers watch and participate by following the characters in their online profiles. "Mosaic" provides a variation on interactive dramaturgy by adopting a multi-platform approach where two different versions of the work can be viewed on two different screens and the viewer can choose their own point of view. However, this is a series that can also be watched on a mobile app, which offers complementary elements to the experience

and brings the television work to a second screen, enabling a different narrative approach to be explored. "Black Mirror: Bandersnatch" and "The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt: Kimmy vs. the Reverend" show that the series can be turned into a film, which in turn can be made into a game by employing branching dramaturgy. The two examples present both films, peculiar episodes of the series that end, and games that invite the viewer to take a more active role, playing out different options of how the narrative might unfold.

The analysis of the selected titles helps in understanding the potential that streaming platforms present not only for bringing TV series and films to audiences, but also for using different, less popular approaches to their development. The examples illustrate the major role of streaming platforms in the transformation of the television series, but they also suggest a shift in viewers' perceptions.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Transformations of TV Series from the Perspective of Streaming and Television Professionals**

This chapter analyses the in-depth interviews with professionals who have worked on the series studied as examples in this thesis, as well as those related to streaming platforms. The interviews were conducted using the method of the qualitative interview. Interviewees were given distinct areas on which to elaborate, and questions required free response with the opportunity to ask further follow-up questions. Although all interviews were conducted using a similar pattern, each interview also had separate questions that addressed the specific position of the professional and the production on which they worked. A total of nine interviews were conducted for the purpose of this study. Eight of these, with respondents living in other countries, were conducted using online conversation platforms – Zoom and Google Meet. One was conducted by sending the responses via email. The interviews were completed between January and December 2022.

#### **Respondents:**

Sabrina S. Sutherland is an American producer at the David Lynch Theater working in partnership with director David Lynch. She was the coordinator of the second season of "Twin Peaks" (1990-1991). Later, she worked with David Lynch on "Inland Empire" (2006), "Twin Peaks: The Missing Pieces" (2014) and in 2017 she was executive producer of "Twin Peaks: The Return", analyzed in chapter three of this thesis. She holds a BA in Film and Television Arts and an MA in Education. She has worked as a producer since 2000.

Kyle Gilman is a film editor with years of experience. He has worked on a variety of television series, including "Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll" (2015-2016), "Mr. Mayor" (2021-2022), "The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt" (2015-2019), the interactive film "The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt: Kimmy vs. the Reverend" (2021), and dozens of other titles.

Sean Cusack is a film and television editor who has worked on a number of films and series for Hulu, Netflix, NBC, TruTV and others. He worked as an assistant editor for the fourth season of the series "The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt" and the interactive film "The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt: Kimmy vs. the Reverend" (2021).

Nicholas Dunn is a screenwriter and playwright. He worked as a script coordinator on the HBO series "Mosaic" (2017).

Marianne Furevold-Boland works at the Norwegian national broadcaster NRK, as head of drama series production. She produced the teen series "Skam" (2015).

Karen DiConcetto is an American screenwriter and producer. She worked on the second season of "Skam: Austin" as a showrunner (in addition to her role as a producer, she also led the creative process in developing the series). She has also worked on the series "Recovery Road" (2016, as an actress) and the film "Henry Fool" (1997, as a writer), "The House is Burning" (2006, as an actress).

Tony Kearns is an Irish film editor, BAFTA-nominated for his work on "Black Mirror: Bandersnatch". He has also done music videos, TV commercials, short films and features, as well as TV series.

Dimitar Noykov is a Director of Distribution at HBO owner *Warner Bros. Discovery* and is responsible for the development of channels and services on the Bulgarian market. Since 2007 he has worked for HBO and since 2010 he has been the Executive Director of HBO for Bulgaria. He has been involved in the digital transformation of the channel and the launch of HBO Go, later HBO Max.

Vanya Dimitrova is Content Development Manager at Neterra.tv, a platform for distribution of legal audio and video content live, on record or on demand. Previously, Vanya Dimitrova had extensive experience at Fox Networks Group and The Walt Disney Company.

The summary of the main theses and their arguments based on the conversations is separated in a special chapter, because it expands the theoretical framework provided in the first and second chapters, adding to it the experience and insights of professionals involved in the production and distribution of television. The interviews provided a deeper understanding of the transformations in television and series due to streaming platforms. They confirm the observations and analyses made in the previous chapters. Streaming platforms are shaping the

development of television while giving more creative freedom to television production creators. An increase in interest in drama series can be noted, with a focus on those that reflect a historical period, true crime, science fiction and fantasy. The fewer restrictions online are leading to an exploration of provocative language and the visualization of violence in a way that has been non-traditional for television. The larger number of series being produced also allows addressing of different themes that have not previously been central to the TV screen, such as religion, sex, sexuality, and ethnicity. At the same time, viewers expect a higher quality of the productions.

Conversations with experts show that binge-watching as a phenomenon is not only a habit, but also an object of marketing strategy, which inevitably affects the creative process of TV series production. Binge-watching is a sustainable trend and depends not only on streaming platforms providing an entire season of a series at once, but also on how viewers want to watch the episodes. Not all series are suitable for binge-watching because there are some that require more time to digest through their structure and ideas. Thus, the tendency to watch in one sitting is opposed by savor watching – the opportunity to take in a particular TV production slowly and with pleasure.

Through their availability, streaming platforms are also affecting the problem of piracy by educating audiences to pay for selected titles, and the interactive and multi-platform approaches function as barriers against the full viewing experience when watching a pirated copy.

## **Conclusion**

The research conducted in this thesis confirms the scientific hypothesis that under the streaming platforms' influence, transformations occur not only in the way television works reach the audience, but also in the way they are created.

Six main trends are identified in the study: watching TV series through streaming platforms is becoming more popular than watching traditional TV; creating more series for streaming platforms than for traditional TV; abandoning the previously required timeframe for episodes; creating shorter seasons of TV series; prioritizing the creation of series not with an episode structure, but with an entire story arc within the season; and the shifting role of the viewer from a passive to an active participant.



These trends are also leading to changes in the creation of television series, where there is more experimentation with storytelling approaches, platforms, genre, themes and language.

More active engagement by viewers on multiple screens simultaneously is seen as an opportunity to offer a more comprehensive viewing experience. The following transformations have been identified: a change in the definition of a TV series and its characteristics; a blurring of the boundaries between film and TV series; changes in the structure of TV series episodes; changes in the genres, themes and language of TV series; experimentation with new narrative approaches, examples of which are interactive and multi-platform productions; and the rise of binge-watching, but also of the opposite trend, savor watching.

### **Contributions**

1) This is the first study in Bulgaria that addresses the way streaming platforms affect not only the distribution of TV series and marketing, but also audience perceptions and the transformations that occur in the production of TV series;

2) A systematization of streaming platforms was made in the study, that frames the development of television art in a digital environment. The factors that determine changes in the creation and viewing of television production are clarified through analysis of statistical data;

3) The main tendencies and transformations in the production of TV series are outlined in the thesis, and the case studies help to clearly identify the specific changes occurring due to streaming platforms;

4) For the first time in Bulgaria, I conducted in-depth interviews with specialists from the American film and television industry, as well as with specialists from Europe who have been involved in the creation of some of the most popular television series, presenting the transformations of television in a streaming environment from the perspective of the creators of leading television productions;

5) I conducted the same type of interviews with respondents working for some of the most prominent streaming platforms in Bulgaria, which allowed me to analyze the transformations in a local context;

6) The thesis sets a foundation for future research related to the topic, narrowing the focus in terms of specific genres; hybrid forms; interactive approaches, and points of intersection between the gaming industry and television art.

### **Publications on the Topic of the Thesis**

1. Valchanova, Zlatina. The Netflix model and transformations in audience perceptions. In: Infrastructure: business and communications. Proceedings of the VIII International Conference of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students "Infrastructure: business and communications", 2019, ISBN 978-619-232-186-4

2. Valchanova, Zlatina. Transformation of the concept of "TV series" in the era of streaming platforms. In: Ideas, ideals – upsurge and wreck: proceedings of the international scientific conference, Ruse, 2019. Vol. 1. p. 190-197

3. Valchanova, Zlatina. Approaches to Creating a Contemporary TV Series: Interactivity and Branching Narrative. In: Art Readings 2019: Motifs, Models, Sketches, The Institute of Art Studies, BAS, Sofia, 2020, p. 464-472

4. Valchanova, Zlatina. "Twin Peaks: The Return" – model for the development of the TV series in the era of streaming platforms. In: Evolution Against Revolution or for Models of Development: proceedings of the international scientific conference, Ruse, 2020, Vol.1. p. 540-546

5. Valchanova, Zlatina. Streaming platforms: the challenge of Covid-19 in 2020 as an opportunity. In: Changes in the global world and the new solutions: proceedings of the international scientific conference, Ruse, 2021, Vol. 2. p. 272-279

6. Valchanova, Zlatina. The TV series "Skam" (2015–2017) – the protagonist as a personality of digital age. In: Art Readings 2021: Personalia, The Institute of Art Studies, BAS, Sofia, 2022, p. 500-506