Binge, Belong, Believe:

The Design of Fan-Centric Campaigns in Netflix's Polish Market

POLITECNICO
MILANO 1863

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Academic Year: 2025/2026

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Abstract in English

This thesis examines how Netflix translates the narrative worlds of its series into real-life experiences, transforming audiences from passive viewers into active cultural participants. In the era of streaming platforms, binge-watching has evolved into a social and symbolic practice, shaping contemporary forms of belonging and identity. Through the lenses of media sociology, communication anthropology, and semiotics, this research investigates how Netflix constructs immersive campaigns that extend storytelling beyond the screen.

The study focuses on the ways Netflix uses communication design - visual identity, interaction design, and experiential marketing to recreate narrative universes in physical and digital spaces. By analyzing selected campaigns in the CEE sector, including *Bridgerton*, *1670*, and *Squid Game*, the thesis explores how fans engage with these experiences and how their participation contributes to communal meaning-making. The methodology combines qualitative case study analysis, semiotic decoding, and cultural observation to interpret both design strategies and fan responses.

The findings reveal that Netflix leverages global narratives while adapting them to local cultural contexts, fostering emotional engagement and collective identification. This convergence of storytelling, branding, and cultural practice suggests that streaming platforms function not only as media distributors but as producers of shared cultural rituals. The thesis concludes by addressing the ethical and cultural implications of immersive brand experiences and points to future developments in personalized and interactive media design.

Abstract in Italian

Questa tesi esamina il modo in cui Netflix traduce i mondi narrativi delle sue serie in esperienze di vita reale, trasformando il pubblico da spettatori passivi a partecipanti culturali attivi. Nell'era delle piattaforme di streaming, il binge-watching si è evoluto in una pratica sociale e simbolica, plasmando le forme contemporanee di appartenenza e identità. Attraverso le lenti della sociologia dei media, dell'antropologia della comunicazione e della semiotica, questa ricerca indaga il modo in cui Netflix costruisce campagne immersive che estendono la narrazione oltre lo schermo.

Lo studio si concentra sui modi in cui Netflix utilizza il design della comunicazione - identità visiva, design dell'interazione e marketing esperienziale - per ricreare universi narrativi in spazi fisici e digitali. Analizzando campagne selezionate nel settore CEE, tra cui *Bridgerton*, *1670* e *Squid Game*, la tesi esplora il modo in cui i fan interagiscono con queste esperienze e come la loro partecipazione contribuisce alla creazione di significato comune. La metodologia combina l'analisi qualitativa di casi di studio, la decodifica semiotica e l'osservazione culturale per interpretare sia le strategie di progettazione che le risposte dei fan.

I risultati rivelano che Netflix sfrutta le narrazioni globali adattandole ai contesti culturali locali, favorendo il coinvolgimento emotivo e l'identificazione collettiva. Questa convergenza tra narrazione, branding e pratica culturale suggerisce che le piattaforme di streaming funzionano non solo come distributori di media, ma anche come produttori di rituali culturali condivisi. La tesi si conclude affrontando le implicazioni etiche e culturali delle esperienze di marca immersive e indica i futuri sviluppi nel design dei media personalizzati e interattivi.

1. Intro duction

1. Introduction

The rise of streaming culture and Netflix's global influence

In the contemporary era, we are observing a technological and cultural revolution that has resulted in an increase in the number of stimuli to which we are exposed. This phenomenon impacts human beings in terms of our perception of the narrative world and our ability to sustain attention over extended periods. The transition from the "appointment viewing" of traditional linear broadcasting television to the on-demand logic of streaming platforms has fundamentally restructured the global media landscape (Song, 2024). We are a highly comfortable and demanding audience that intensively uses the algorithm-driven platforms that serve up personalised recommendations based on viewing history and preferences. Additionally, streaming platforms as Netflix have brought along a new behavioural shift called binge-watching which in turn has encouraged marketers to use a different business model to add all episodes of a new season of a highly anticipated series at once.

In terms of Netflix, the world's leading streaming entertainment service, it pursues a global policy with local insights, and as a result, it is growing more and more every year and becoming even more unbeatable. Firstly, as a small and humble online DVD rental service in 1997 founded by Reed Hastings and Marc Randolph in Scotts Valley in California, Netflix offered

a wide selection of movie titles and one of the first in the world subscription model (Oxford Executive Institute, 2024). As a user, you could order a movie online and get it in a few days by mail. By the early 2000s, the company had noticed opportunities for digital media distribution and decided for a strategic shift: a video-streaming platform with analyzed data of users preferences. User experience was always Netflix's focus and by 2007 their platform was redesigned and algorithms more and more advanced. In 2013, Netflix debuted in a production field as they released their first original series - *House Of Card*, an iconic title with the sound of which we hear today as the intro to Netflix. The platform has extended globally for 190 countries, introduced online downloads, and its productions gained multiple awards (*The Irishman* and *Roma* garnered critical acclaim, with the latter winning multiple Academy Awards). It is important to note that, as a leading brand within a highly saturated market, the company is obligated to consistently elevate its standards and engage its target demographic in increasingly remarkable ways.

The present-day observations indicate that contemporary audiences are overwhelmed by the amount of content available to them, which complicates the process of encouraging them to engage with a narrative. This aspect forces us to ask the question: what can we do to make our campaign stand out? Who is our target audience? Should we focus on our fans or perhaps on a group we have not yet reached?

The shift from passive content consumption to active fan engagement

Observing market strategies and trends dominating the entertainment sector, it can be noted that authenticity and real emotions will always rank high on the list of audience needs.

Considering Netflix's content, many titles on the platform evoke intense emotions among people, especially among true fans. By focusing on this audience and relying on their insights, this group feels noticed and appreciated, while the rest of the audience is fascinated by the emotions that the brand can evoke. In the following paper, I will try to justify these strategies by referring to the humanities and communication sciences.

Qualitative analysis of selected campaigns (case studies), semiotic analysis, and cultural observation

The thesis consists of described selected Netflix campaigns in CEE region, sociological and anthropological perspective, semiotic analysis and cultural observations to examine how Netflix translates fictional storyworlds into real-world experiences through experiential and immersive campaigns. Qualitative case study analysis allows a deeper examination on this specific phenomenon within their context. The integration of multiple forms of evidence, such as visual materials, digital touchpoints, spatial design, and audience interaction was enabled by this case study methodology in order to understand those kind of campaigns such as *Bridgerton*, *1670*, and *Squid Game*, the biggest buzz-creating campaigns in Poland, not simply as marketing tools, but as complex cultural events that exist at the intersection of media, design, and audience participation.

Additionally, this research employs sociology of media, anthropology of communication and semiotic analysis as key methodological frameworks. These fields of communication science are constructed forms that reflect broader structures, collective identities, and patterns of media consumption, allowing for an understanding of how campaigns communicate narrative associations, values, and cultural identities. To be more

specific, referring to sociology of media allows understanding the patterns of media consumption and collective identities, anthropology of communication emphasizes the meaning behind the importance of rituals and being a part of a fandom and semiotics shapes interpretation of signs, symbols and visual codes in design.

Finally, the research incorporates cultural observation and my professional experience as one of the designers of those mentioned campaigns, to complement the qualitative methodology. Between January 2024 and January 2026 I was a graphic designer and art director in a creative agency called Bosko Agency where I had the pleasure to work for clients like Netflix Poland. Due to this aspect, I was able to observe how such campaigns are created and what the most crucial strategic steps are for their implementation.

Together these methods allowed me to deliver a multidimensional analysis with sociological, anthropological and semiotical background. This integrated approach provides a framework for understanding how narrative worlds are translated into real-life environments and how audiences engage with them as both media texts and cultural experiences.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework that is described in a few subchapters, Chapter 3 analyzes selected case studies, Chapter 4 brings the discussion part and finally, Chapter 5 presents the conclusions.

2. Theoretical Framework

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2.1 Sociology of Media

The phenomenon of binge-watching and its psychological and social implications

A relatively new habit - binge-watching, has conclusively grown in popularity since 2013. It is defined as watching between two to six episodes of some series in one sitting. As a result of a development of on-demand streaming platforms such as Netflix, HBO, Apple TV or Amazon Prime, it became one of the most favoured leisure activities for younger generations. Traditionally, new episodes of our favorite series were released on TV once a week, however Netflix has changed this characteristic by giving the possibility of watching the whole show during mentioned 'one-sitting' as new episodes are always available at once. And apparently even 73% of viewers are having positive feelings about this phenomenon (Netflix Inc., 2013), which has been made possible due to Netflix's approach.

Grant McCracken, Canadian cultural anthropologist, conducted research in which he visits binge watchers in their homes and asks them about their watching habits. McCracken (2013) revealed that binge watching has really taken off due to a perfect storm of better TV, our current economic climate and the digital explosion of the last few years. Additionally, he finalizes the paper by a statement *TV viewers are no longer zoning out as a way to forget about their day, they are tuning in, on their own schedule,*

to a different world (Netflix, 2013). Getting immersed in multiple episodes or even multiple seasons of a show over a few weeks is a new kind of escapism that is especially welcomed today.

Although the term binge-watching had not yet gained academic prominence when Mark J. P. Wolf published Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation (2012), his theory of subcreation provides an important conceptual framework for understanding why extended viewing practices foster deep immersion. Wolf does not explicitly discuss binge-watching; rather, he argues that imaginary worlds function as structured, coherent environments that extend beyond individual narratives. For Wolf, the world of stories is not limited to a single plot line, but is constructed by gathering spatial, temporal and ontological information scattered across multiple texts. Viewers gradually assemble these fragments into a mental model of a larger world that has internal coherence, history, geography and cultural logic (Wolf, 2012). Engagement therefore results not only from following a linear sequence of events, but also from discovering and cognitively mapping a world that seems to exist beyond the immediate narrative.

Marie-Laure Ryan's work on narrative immersion complements this perspective by focusing on the phenomenology of narrative experience. Ryan (2001; 2015) conceptualizes immersion as a state in which recipients feel transported into a storyworld, experiencing it as a space that can be mentally inhabited. She distinguishes between different modes of immersion -spatial, temporal, and emotional - arguing that narrative consumption involves constructing a mental simulation of a world that unfolds dynamically through sustained attention. From this standpoint, practices such as binge-watching can be understood not simply as excessive consumption, but as a mode of intensified narrative immersion that minimizes interruptions and strengthens the continuity of world-experience. Extended, consecutive viewing

reinforces the cognitive coherence of the storyworld, allowing audiences to maintain narrative memory, emotional investment, and spatial orientation within the fictional environment.

Taken together, Wolf's theory of world-building and Ryan's model of narrative immersion provide a more precise explanation of contemporary viewing practices. Wolf clarifies how fictional worlds are structurally designed to sustain prolonged exploration, while Ryan explains how audiences experientially inhabit those worlds through sustained engagement (Ryan, 2001). In the context of streaming platforms, binge-watching can therefore be interpreted as a technologically facilitated practice that enhances the immersive potential already embedded within complex storyworlds, rather than as a phenomenon created by streaming culture alone.

As for the psychological issues, the phenomenon is strongly linked to the characteristics of the present times, i.e. to the need for multiple stimuli, instant gratification, solitude (Starosta, 2020). Jolanta A. Starosta and Bernadetta Izydorczyk in *Understanding the Phenomenon of Binge-Watching - A Systematic Review* (2020) break down the entire phenomenon in terms of gender, household income, religion, etc. After analyzing results in a research Characteristics of the Studies on the Binge-Watching Phenomenon Included in the Systematic Review conducted between 2014 and 2019 according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses - PRISMA, a number of interesting issues have been obtained. In terms of motivation, not only the aspect of instant gratification was mentioned, but also a social nature, explicitly becoming a part of the group or the fandom, feeling accepted by their peers. The results obtained by Conlin, Billings, and Averset emphasise the statistically significant relation between FOMO (fear of missing out) and the binge-watching phenomenon (Conlin, 2016). Results show that increased FOMO was

a significant predictor for binge-watching especially dramatic series to “catch up” with the narrative and join the cultural conversation. Scientists emphasise that people binge-watch new TV series as soon as possible because they do not want to be ostracised in future conversations with others. Moreover, the authors indicate that high FOMO makes people binge-watch TV shows to avoid spoilers, which could potentially decrease the enjoyment of a series. Additionally, Conlin has emphasised that transportability, i.e., the ability to experience immersion into the narrative, is one of the most significant predictors of binge-watching (Conlin, 2016). Results of this study also suggest that another personality trait characteristic of people who display the tendency toward binge-watching is fantasy empathy, described as the ability to feel the emotions of fictional characters, being one of the predictors of character identification and transportation into the narrative.

Focusing on a production perspective, surveys show that more than 70% of viewers identify as regular binge-watchers, consuming 3 or more episodes in a row. This, in turn, influenced the business model: writers now structure episodes with the assumption that viewers won’t wait a week in between, and platforms have features like auto-play to keep people engaged (Batista Cabanas, 2025). This aspect shifted a production process since the audience is expected to finish the series in one-sitting, being fully focused and immersed in a title.

Given these studies, this phenomenon can be seen as a kind of addiction, although on the other hand the issue of immersion and transferring one’s sensibility to another world is equally significant. Ciancia et al. (2018) argue thatargue that binge-watching is extended viewing sessions that foster emotional attachment, narrative coherence, and a heightened sense of presence within the storyworld rather than consuming isolated episodes. The paper further suggests that binge-watching

functions as an experiential practice through which audiences temporarily suspend everyday routines and enter a sustained narrative flow (Ciancia et al., 2018). This mode of engagement intensifies affective involvement and supports a sense of intimacy with characters and settings, reinforcing the perception of the series as a coherent world rather than a sequence of discrete texts. Importantly, the authors note that binge-watching also carries social and cultural dimensions: viewers frequently integrate these experiences into social conversations, online discussions, and fan practices, transforming private consumption into a shared cultural activity (Ciancia et al., 2018). In this sense, binge-watching contributes to the formation of collective media rituals and supports the transition from passive viewing toward more participatory forms of engagement.

Streaming platforms as new cultural spaces

Streaming platforms are defined as internet services that provide unlimited access to a variety of cultural goods, including music and videos such as movies, television programmes, and internet videos. Free platforms, such as YouTube, are supported by advertising revenue. Conversely, subscription-based platforms, such as Netflix, HBO Max, Apple TV, Disney Plus, Hulu, or Amazon Prime Video, offer access in exchange for a monthly fee. Hybrid solutions are also available, comprising a complimentary advertisement-based tier and a paid subscription plan.

Streaming platforms gained global dominance by breaking down the logistical and economic barriers of traditional media. This transformation accelerated after Netflix launched its streaming service in 2007 (Chart 1). This popularity was driven by the phenomenon of “cord-cutting,” where audiences abandoned

expensive, rigid cable subscriptions in favor of affordable, on-demand access that erased physical and spatial barriers to entertainment (Ciancia, 2015). Consequently, watching patterns have fundamentally shifted from the "appointment viewing" of linear television to "binge-watching," a mode of consumption described before, where viewers watch entire seasons in a single sitting without commercial interruptions. This transition represents a deeper structural change from "mass" to "niche" logic: unlike advertiser-funded broadcasters that required broad appeal to succeed, subscriber-funded platforms utilize the "long tail" of content to satisfy fragmented, specific taste communities, revealing a much larger portion of the "storytelling iceberg". Ultimately, this era of "Netflixification" has replaced the collective experience of broadcast schedules with a highly personalized algorithmic culture, where data-driven recommendations actively shape and commodify individual user tastes (Song, 2024).

The utilisation of a comfortable experience is a key benefit of streaming platforms. As ordinary users, we share the unconditional trust that within a one click we get precisely personalised content, that for sure we will enjoy and it will entertain us. It is evident that it works due to filter bubbles occurrence (Coavoux, 2025), which means that as users we are classified to the specific groups with common cultural capital, location, hobbies, generation. Netflix' algorithms can track users' fruition behaviours 'live', which means their knowledge increases in terms of users taste (what), time of fruition (when), modalities of fruition (how) and patterns of choice and fruition (why). As an effect, users spend less time on reflection as they get an instant gratification - personalised recommendation. Consequently, this algorithmic phenomenon serves to reinforce the tendency of cultural consumers to remain within their established preferences. However, according to Netflix Global Report on Streaming Audiences in 2025, Gen Zs and Millennials almost universally (90%) agree that streaming

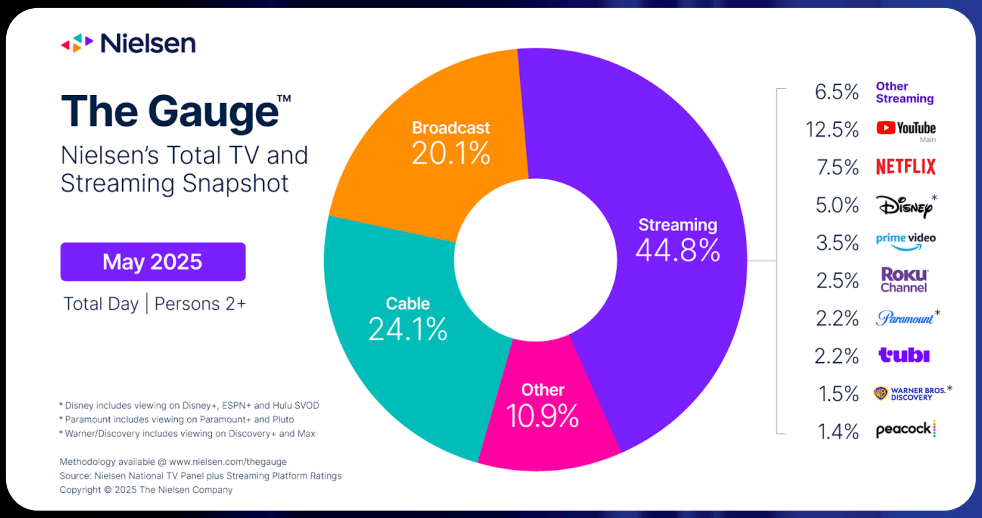

Chart 1: The Popularity of Streaming Platforms in May 2025

entertainment has broadened the content they watch and, actually, 83% of worldviewers say streaming has broadened their experience of the world (Netflix Ads, 2025).

In terms of global aspect, streaming platforms have evolved beyond simple content repositories into dynamic cultural spaces that fundamentally reshape global communication and cultural exchange. As analyzed in the article Social links vs. language barriers: decoding the global spread of streaming content, these digital environments allow culture to be shared in real-time, effectively dismantling traditional geographical barriers that once limited cultural diffusion (Park et al., 2025). Not only those imaginary worlds are continuously accessible for everyone and revisitable, but also they function as cultural spaces that persist across texts and invite the audience to engage. According to the article of Ciancia, Piredda and Venditti (2018), it means that streaming platforms are not only a consumption, but the immersion itself.

Unlike traditional broadcast media, streaming environments allow audiences to remain within the same narrative universe for extended periods, strengthening the cognitive and emotional processes described by Wolf (2012). In the era of streaming, platforms rarely just launch a show, they launch a franchise or “shared universe.” Marie-Laurie Ryan in 2001 defends the concept of the “storyworld” - an immersive environment populated with objects and characters that exists independently of the screen. These platforms do not merely host content but act as infrastructures that support immersion, repetition, and world familiarity. As a result, streaming platforms facilitate the transformation of fictional worlds into shared cultural environments rather than isolated storytelling experiences.

Fans as prosumers and participants (Jenkins' *Convergence Culture*)

Henry Jenkins' idea of *Convergence Culture* (2008) changes how we think about audiences in today's media. It moves the focus from people just watching and consuming media to them being more involved in making, sharing and understanding media texts (Jenkins, 2008). In this model, meaning is no longer only produced by media industries and sent straight to audiences; instead, it is created through ongoing interactions between producers, platforms, and users across different media. Jenkins (2008) describes this environment as a culture where people take part, and where the expression of yourself in a creative way is facile. There is a lot of support for sharing, and people learn from each other in informal groups. Knowledge and practices move around easily, not in a step-by-step way. Users no longer want to passively consume media; they want to participate in creating it (Moloney, 2022).

Within this framework, the traditional industrial distinction between the producer and the consumer becomes increasingly blurred. Axel Bruns' concept of the "produser" captures this shift by describing users who simultaneously consume and produce content, collaboratively building and extending media texts in a continuous, repetative process (MIT Center for Civic Media, n.d.). Rather than engaging with finished, closed works, produsers treat media worlds as open systems that can be expanded through reinterpretation, remixing, commentary, and creative reappropriation. This mode of engagement stands in stark contrast to the linear, one-way communication model of broadcast television, replacing it with a cultural economy based on feedback loops, circulation, and collective meaning-making (Mugil, 2025). In digital media environments, value is increasingly generated not only through content production but through circulation,

a process Jenkins terms *spreadable media*. Media texts survive and gain cultural visibility not simply because they are distributed by platforms, but because audiences actively choose to share, adapt, and embed them within their own social networks. Fans thus act as cultural intermediaries, amplifying narratives through memes (Figure 1), fan fiction (Figure 2), TikTok edits, discussion threads, and live commentary. For streaming platforms such as Netflix, this form of engagement is particularly crucial, as it extends the lifespan of series beyond the moment of release and sustains attention in an overcrowded media landscape driven by constant novelty.

From an economic perspective, fan participation can be understood as a form of unpaid or "free labor" (Terranova, 2000), a concept frequently discussed in critical media studies. While fans engage primarily for pleasure, identity formation, and community belonging, their creative outputs simultaneously generate promotional value for platforms by increasing visibility, emotional attachment, and brand recognition. This fan-driven labor contributes to what can be described as a platform's emotional capital - the accumulation of affective investment that strengthens loyalty and long-term engagement (Jenkins, 2008). In the case of Netflix, fan practices surrounding series such as *Bridgerton*, *Squid Game*, or *1670* play a key role in sustaining global and local buzz, transforming individual viewing into a shared cultural phenomenon. Moreover, in the process of creative campaign building, marketers observe fan groups and their speculations in order to be inspired by their potential development and to make use of this ingenuity.

This collaboration is not entirely symbiotic though. Critics argue that participatory culture exists in what has been described as a "moral economy of fandom", where fans feel invested in the texts they popularize as if they have some ownership over them (Terranova, 2000). Fans feel betrayed when their contributions seem to be used for little or no credit from the

Figure 1: Meme found online inspired by *Squid Game*

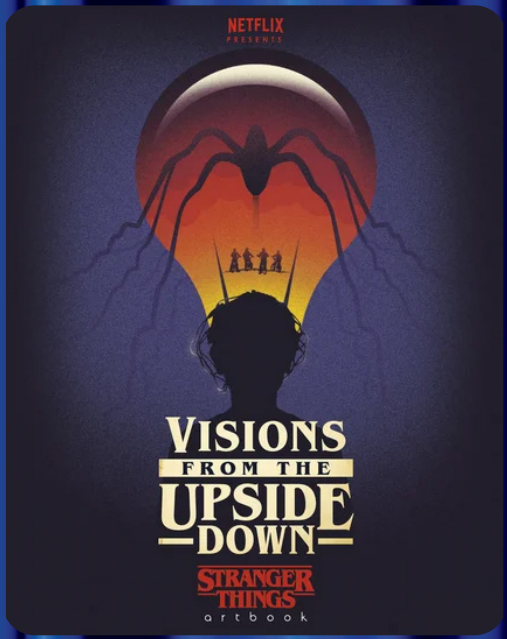

Figure 2: Cover of Fan Fiction inspired by *Stranger Things*

hosting platforms or when their creative freedom is stifled, commodified or subordinated to corporate interests. For these reasons, convergence culture can be said to have a dark side as much as it enables audiences to be creative, it houses that creativity within capitalist structures that funnel visibility and monetization (Jenkins, 2008). For that reason, fan-centered strategies (especially for companies like Netflix) must treat fans as collaborators rather than consumers. Immersive campaigns, transmedia storytelling and media events work best when fans are allowed to step inside the world of the story as a contributor, rather than just a viewer.

From a more critical perspective, Netflix gives fans an illusion of control by designing fan-focused activations (Jenner, 2015). While masking the underlying corporate "power" that is extracting from fans their free participation, they deliver a successful campaign using fandoms as engines. While Netflix's technology gives viewers unprecedented control over their viewing choices and schedules, this does not translate to a shift in actual power between the audience and the industry. These campaigns brilliantly satisfy the neoliberal demand of offering the audience ultimate control and participation, while firmly maintaining Netflix's institutional power.

Henry Jenkins' concept of convergence culture (2008) shifts the focus from world structure to audience behavior. When combined with Wolf's theory (2012), Jenkins' framework suggests that immersion in a coherent world is a prerequisite for participation: fans can only meaningfully contribute once they have internalized the world's symbols, logic, and values. Therefore, while fans must indeed internalize a world's logic to participate, Jenner's perspective (2015) reveals that this participation is structurally designed to serve the commercial, data-gathering imperatives of the broader streaming ecosystem.

2.2 Anthropology of Communication

Media rituals and cultural belonging

From an anthropological perspective, in contemporary media environments, rituals traditionally associated with religion, festival, or communal ceremony increasingly emerge around shared encounters with media content and narrative worlds (Couldry, 2003). Rituals are "constructed from a combination of ingredients that grow to differing levels of intensity, and result in the ritual outcomes of solidarity, symbolism, and individual emotional energy" (Collins, 2004). In this sense, those are repetitive activities that have meaning beyond their immediate context, shaping community identity and reinforcing group membership, as Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz described in fundamental work entitled *Media Events. The Live Broadcasting of History* (1992).

In this text, authors argue that the majority of media moments function as cultural rituals that unify people by synchronised attention and emotional attachment (Dayan et al., 1992). Those moments transform the audience into a collective public with shared beliefs and sense of belonging. Although Dayan and Katz (1992) focus primarily on live broadcast events, their conceptualization of media rituals - as structured, shared, and emotionally deep experiences - provides an useful foundation for understanding how contemporary practices like communal streaming, binge-watching parties, and social media campaign engagement function as ritualized acts of cultural participation in the era of platforms like Netflix.

By the time, when Netflix launches an immersive fan campaign - such as a pop-up escape room, an interactive digital hub, or

a live premiere event - they are constructing a highly designed liminal space (Turner, 1969). According to the dictionary, liminal space is the state or place characterized by being transitional or intermediate in some way, it functions as a result of separation and it is predetermined by incorporation (Chart 2). When fans enter this space (physically or digitally), they leave their everyday structural identities (student, employee, parent) at the door. They become “neophytes” or “passengers” in a ritualized environment. Designing a successful campaign means successfully designing this “threshold,” allowing fans to safely step out of their ordinary lives and into the fictional storyworld.

Finally, in the context of streaming platforms, rituals like binge-watching, live watch parties, social media tagging, and participatory campaign engagement (e.g., themed events, hashtag mobilizations) become cultural moments through which audiences both experience and perform belonging. These acts - repeated, public, and socially shared - help transform private consumption into communal practice, contributing to a sense of connection, identity, and shared symbolic world. This kind of perspective is supported by Mark J. P. Wolf (2012), who describes that those repeated interactions with the same narrative universe create ritualized behaviours that reinforce a sense of belonging. In this sense media rituals function less as passive reception and more as active cultural enactments that enable audiences to participate meaningfully in shared cultural narratives.

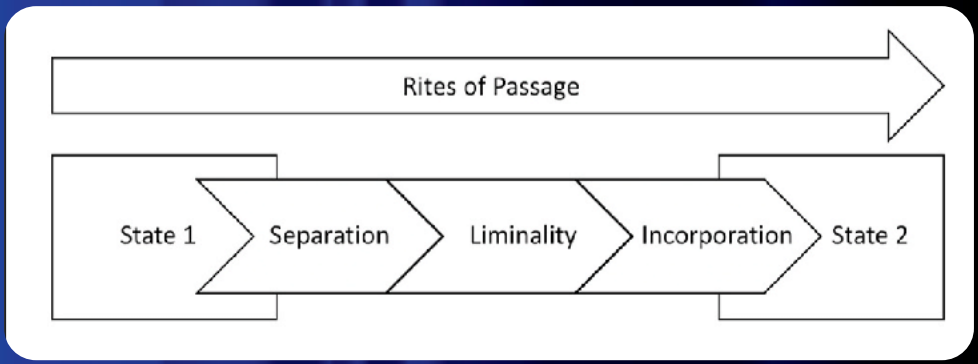

Chart 2: The Rites of Passage by W. Turner

Fandom as a form of contemporary tribe

From an anthropological perspective, fandom might be understood as a form of a contemporary tribal belonging that has shared narration, symbols, rituals or emotional attachment rather than traditional markers such as kinship or geography. According to a concept of neo-tribalism by Michel Maffesoli (Maffesoli, 1996), scholars think that postmodern societies tend to organize more often around emotional connections, common lifestyles or symbolic consumption rather than fixed social institutions. Fandoms are an example of this shift - they function as fluid, connected in the web of collectives, in which individuals match by sharing commitment to media, people or visual directions. Those communities are kept by repetitive actions such as watching, discussing, replaying and celebrating that embrace common identity. The participation is marked by symbolic elements of membership, such as specialized language, inside jokes, references, visual styles, and performative practices (e.g., cosplay, fan art, quoting dialogue). These markers serve a function similar to that of traditional tribal symbols, distinguishing insiders from outsiders while strengthening internal cohesion.

Neo-tribes are usually small network structures in which we live playing various social roles. Sports fans, work groups, trendy cafes or club-goers, hobbyists, local party organizations, neighbor support groups, youth subcultures, ecological organizations, or tamagotchi lovers - these are all examples of such communities (Maffesoli 1996). Their multitude and diversity point to a fundamental characteristic of neo-tribes, that each contemporary human is, or may be, a member of many such groups at the same time, fluently changing their tribal belonging. People associate with them voluntarily, membership is usually temporary and not formalized, it might be spontaneous. However, it is important that while these communities seemingly

serve different social, economic and political purposes, their true nature is about maintaining human interactions. This is the way in which the spirit of puissance is manifested, a will to live. Maffesoli (1996) contends that the fluidity and flexibility of neo-tribes are the most significant characteristics of the tribalism of the end of the 20th century.

Based on this specific process, another name was also created: ***communitas*** (from latin) - a spontaneous, unstructured community of equal individuals who experience a profound, generic human bond (Turner, 1969). According to Turner, in mentioned liminal spaces, secular distinctions of rank, wealth, and status disappear, creating an intense comradeship and egalitarianism among participants. Those spontaneous communitas might be the ultimate goal of fan-centric campaigns, to generate a sense of total communion.

Michel Maffesoli's concept of "neo-tribalism" from 1996, reframing fandom as a purely affective and social phenomenon, offers a fundamentally different lens than, for instance, mentioned Henry Jenkins' model written in *Convergence Culture* (Jenkins, 2006). According to Jenkins, fans are in some way producers of a content and they are characterised by intellectual engagement. The distinction is critical for campaign design: where Jenkins' fans want to influence the narrative, Maffesoli's tribes seek a "loss in a collective subject," using the content as a pretext for shared experiences and organic solidarity. Therefore, while Jenkins (2006) helps explain the economic value of fan labor, Maffesoli (1996) explains the existential drive behind why users cluster around specific niches - they are seeking an "emotional shelter" to ward off the solitude of the digital age.

In the aspect of Netflix campaigns, the company operates on a niche logic, its fan-centric campaigns in Poland should not be designed to appeal to a monolithic "Polish general public."

Instead, these campaigns must be designed as rallying points for specific, fragmented neo-tribes (e.g., sci-fi fans, anime communities, or true-crime enthusiasts). The platform's goal is to satisfy these distinct "taste communities" rather than manufacturing mass cultural consensus (Lotz, 2022).

Fandoms can be interpreted as contemporary tribes organized around shared symbolic knowledge. Jenkins' notion of participatory culture highlights how fans form communities through collective interpretation and creative engagement with media texts. Wolf's concept of world coherence further explains why such communities emerge: imaginary worlds distinguish insiders from outsiders based on familiarity with their internal logic. This shared knowledge fosters group identity and reinforces fandom as a form of cultural community grounded in narrative competence.

Symbolic participation in Netflix events and cultural values

Understanding the meaning of fandoms, not only as marketing values, but as cultural machines that will last longer than a show, was a key moment for Netflix and their campaign decisions. From the anthropological and sociological perspective, Netflix public events may be understood as a way of inviting fans into a narrative world and providing them a possibility of a symbolic participation in another world. Participation in such events is not limited to physical presence, it involves adopting aesthetic codes, reenacting narrative motifs, performing identity, and publicly displaying membership with a storyworld. In this sense, Netflix events operate as ritualized cultural performances that transform fictional narratives into socially passed experiences. These events may be interpreted as transitional spaces where participants step outside everyday social roles and enter a temporary symbolic order structured by the rules of the fictional universe.

Although Nick Couldry's book about media rituals (published in 2003) predates the rise of streaming platforms like Netflix, his theoretical framework provides a critical lens for understanding how media institutions use public events not just to entertain, but to legitimize their power. Meaning behind a participation in media events lies in its ability to validate the "myth of the mediated centre" - the belief that the media (in this case, Netflix) is the essential access point to our shared social reality. Those events are media rituals, they are successful not just because they generate "buzz", but because they recruit fans to physically perform and validate Netflix's status as a central cultural institution (Couldry, 2003). By crossing the boundary into the event space, fans enact a "practical mastery" that naturalizes the platform's symbolic power, making a commercial service appear

as a necessary center of social life. And there is no other platform that could make such a thing.

Symbolic participation in Netflix promotional activities also represents and negotiates the values of contemporary culture, such as diversity, empowerment, irony, nostalgia, or social critique. For instance, *Bridgerton* activations are centered on the values of romantic individualism and aesthetic escapism, while *Squid Game* activations are often centered on collective tension, inequality, and competitive performance. Participation in these activations thus becomes a way of aligning oneself with certain cultural values. By means of dress codes, interactive challenges, social media sharing, and the use of branded hashtags, fans publicly enact their identification with certain cultural values encoded in the narrative world. This enactment is performative in that it refers to Erving Goffman's concept of social performance, in which identity is adopted through staged interaction within culturally recognized frames (Goffman, 1959).

This kind of attendance also goes beyond the physical activation through digital circulation. Photos, short videos, memes, and user-generated content spread the activation across platforms, turning localized events into transnational symbolic events. In this way, the marketing and cultural practice distinction is erased. What was initially a marketing activation becomes a collective cultural ritual, sustained through audience participation and reinterpretation.

In the context of streaming culture, symbolic participation thus becomes a key mechanism through which Netflix translates narrative worlds into real-world experiences. By enabling fans to perform symbols of the narrative world in shared physical and digital spaces, Netflix promotes cultural belonging, sustains communal identity, and inscribes fictional narratives within systems of contemporary cultural values.

2.3 Semiotics of Brand Communication

Building symbolic systems through visual identity

Netflix branding design is an excellent example of a strength, recogniability and innovation in the modern system of visual identities. By using strong red colour with the combination of a bold sans serif typeface Netflix Sans and iconic gradient streams, it makes it difficult to ignore and serves the quality.

In the text of Melissa Aronczyk *Portal or police?* The limits of promotional paratexts author emphasises the fact that branding is not about creating links and associations but more about controlling them (Aronczyk, 2017). To confirm this thesis in the case of Netflix, one can quote the statement of Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos in 2018, saying *I don't want any of our shows to define our brand, and I don't want our brand to define any shows... There's no such thing as a 'Netflix show'* (Adalian, 2018). This statement seems to support the argument that at the beginning Netflix has not tried to create a unique brand identity for its original content, like cable networks like HBO and MTV have done. Instead, Netflix has chosen to use its website as a brand (Wayne, 2018).

In terms of visual aspect, Netflix brand identity has come a long way to get to the present state. Firstly, between 1997-2000, their logo was inspired by a cinematic tape with the addition of an elegant serif type with italics (Figure 3). Letters "N" and "F" are a bit bigger than the other ones and the tape is dividing the text in two. In terms of colors, the combination of violet and black in the gradient makes the logo look futuristic and innovative, as firstly Netflix was mostly focused on DVD rentals. Having in mind the times when this logotype was used, it definitely matched the aesthetic of the 90s, especially techno-specified companies.

Figure 3: The First Netflix Logo (1997-2000)

Figure 4: The Second Netflix Logo (2001-2013)

Figure 5: The Third Netflix Logo (2014)

As soon as the world entered in the 21st century, Netflix proposed another, a bit more modern design for their logotype, however it functioned only a year (Figure 4). The new logo introduced sans-serif typography with an additional symbol on top of letter “I”, suggesting a TV screen. The visual weight of this logotype was caused by choosing black ellipse behind the text in companion with yellow arcs suggesting a digital connection.

By the end of 2001, the company had made a monumental change in terms of their aesthetic and launched a logo version which lasted 13 years (Figure 5). This shift was not only visual but also strategic due to focusing on a different model of business - from DVD rental service to a leader in digital streaming. This logo evolved and made a statement of how original the brand is. Firstly, let’s focus on the usage of red accompanied with black and white - the effect is bold, energetic and performative. In terms of a typeface, they decided on a condensed narrow sans-serif font with capitals only - additional stroke that gave it a dimension and 3D effect. This logo switch not only refreshed a brand as the company’s model has changed, but also it made the brand easy to recognize and identify as Netflix expanded internationally in 2010.

In 2014, Netflix made another rebranding - with the help of a New York design firm, Gretel. The new brand identity was still playing with red color, although in a more vibrant mode that has officially been named as “Netflix Red” (Figure 6). The wordmarks remain in bold, sans-serif font, but the letters were refined for a more minimalist and contemporary look. The bars of the ‘E’ and ‘F’ are perfectly centered, unlike most typefaces where they are slightly higher. Letter widths were adjusted to balance the ‘F’ while maintaining even spacing. The bright red hue is memorable and distinct, ensuring instant recognition on screens and mobile applications. Additionally, the incorporation of red serves to promote a sense of consistency. The single-colour

design is versatile and can be used across a range of physical and digital platforms, including billboards and app icons. As for the Netflix symbol, the company decided on a simple ”N” letter to be used as a smaller brand icon (Figure 7) as an alternative, since a whole Netflix wordmark did not function well in smaller placements. It has a strong diagonal part standing on the front that drops a shadow on vertical parts making it look spacious.

The 2014 final design of Netflix shows that it’s a committed brand to a global audience and modernity. Moreover, its sleek and minimalist design allows it to stand out from the crowd streaming market while it still withholds a strong identity. This red color makes Netflix instantly recognizable, tied to a premium streaming experience.

In terms of iconic Netflix streams (Figure 8), their presence makes the whole brand look even more innovative, modern and energetic. The decision behind adding them and at the same time - adding a wider color palette to the brand identity - makes Netflix looking a bit more universal, as every color matches to Netflix, as every title might be found in this streaming service. Finally, multiplied vertical streams resemble frames during the video cutting process, which makes the brand refer to its pillars and film production.

As a former graphic designer working on Netflix campaigns and based on my personal experience, a few interesting insights might be helpful to understand the importance of respecting design principles of this brand. Firstly, there is a fundamental imperative about contrast-checking between wordmark and a background color - the contrast ratio has to be at least 2.25:1. Moreover, the Netflix wordmark cannot be placed on the floor on which you could step and, additionally, cannot be placed on a surface that might be bitten (for example on a cake).

NETFLIX

Figure 6: The Actual Netflix Logo (2014-now)

Figure 7: The N Rybbon Symbol (2016-)

Figure 8: The composition with N symbol and texture of streams

Adaptation of the narrative universe into real-world experiences - decoding visual signs and meanings

The adaptation of narrative universes into real-world experiences has become an increasingly important strategy through which contemporary media platforms extend storytelling beyond the screen and into physical, social, and cultural space. Instead of existing only as closed narrative structures, fictional worlds now function as expandable environments that can be translated into physical settings, objects, and interactive situations. A number of significant elements must be considered when evaluating the success of campaigns promoting particular titles, which reflect the complexity of a given storyworld. Firstly, let's take a closer look at building a narrative universe that makes this kind of adaptation possible.

Mark J.P. Wolf asserts that storytelling and world-building should not be treated in the same way, since they are built separately and combining them can make the whole process complicated (Wolf, 2012). The world can live without the story, however the stories cannot function without the storyworld, as the stories are the key-elements keeping the audience interested. Additionally, Wolf assumes that by bringing one narrative to another medium the value might be lost or gained as the process is moving from the conception of the author's mind to an incarnation in mediated form.

From the marketing perspective, designing a completed adaptation of a narrative world in campaign is a fundamental medium to get to the viewers. When incorporating history into campaigns, references to plot in a given narrative line are recommended. However, in order to interest a group that is not familiar with history, it is necessary to find a universal way to encourage them to learn about it. By incorporating storyline

insights into advertising campaigns, we might polarise the audience into insiders and outsiders - according to already mentioned Maffesoli and his neo-tribalism perspective in which belonging is based on shared symbolic commitment and elements of membership like references (Maffesol, 1996). It is crucial to recognise that perpetuating this strategy will only serve to exacerbate this division, as the campaign becomes a signal of belonging for some and a barrier for others.

Another crucial aspect of world building is consistency, as Wolf mentioned, it is a degree to which the world details are plausible and without contradiction (Wolf, 2012). The integration of the details has to be extremely careful as everything needs to be connected together and lack of this aspect might cause a world appearing sloppily constructed and a distraction of the audience. Because of this internal consistency, storyworlds are not tied exclusively to a single medium, but can be expressed across different formats while still remaining recognizable and meaningful. This makes it possible to reconstruct narrative worlds through exhibitions, public installations, performances, and live events, allowing audiences to encounter them not only as imagined spaces but as environments that can be physically experienced.

According to Ciancia et al. (2018), transmedia extensions operate as designed access points that preserve the symbolic integrity of the storyworld while relocating it into physical or digital contexts. When combined with Wolf's concept of world coherence and Jenkins' participatory culture mentioned in a subchapter before, this approach explains how Netflix's immersive campaigns transform narrative signs into experiential ones. Fans do not simply observe these signs but actively recognize, interpret, and enact them, turning communication design into a bridge between fiction, culture, and lived experience.

3. Case Studies

3. Case Studies

From January 2024 to January 2026, I was privileged to undertake the role of Designer and Junior Art Director at Bosko Agency, working on Netflix Campaigns in the CEE region. In the course of this collaborative experience, I engaged in observation, acquired a wealth of knowledge, and proffered innovative approaches to the Title Marketing Teams at Netflix. Ultimately, I had the privilege of witnessing the culmination of these efforts and participating in outstanding campaign events described precisely below. According to my experience, fan campaigns in the Polish market must reflect this "quality" branding. The events cannot feel cheap or temporary; they must be designed with high production value that mirrors the "cinematic" aesthetic of the shows themselves, thereby validating the fans' participation as a high-status cultural activity (Jenner, 2015).

3.1 Bridgerton Season 3 Campaign in Poland

A plot of the series, its visual approach and global phenomenon

Bridgerton is a Netflix original series set in an alternative version of Regency-era London, centered on the aristocratic Bridgerton family and their navigation of romance, marriage, and social status within the rigid structures of high society. The narrative unfolds through seasonal story arcs focused on different protagonists, each framed by social rituals such as debutante balls, promenades, and courtship practices. A central narrative device is the anonymous gossip column authored by Lady

Whistledown, which operates as both a storytelling mechanism and an internal media system that regulates reputation, visibility, and power within the storyworld. This structure emphasizes themes of performance and social surveillance, reinforcing the idea of society as a constructed stage governed by symbolic codes and shared rules.

The third season of *Bridgerton* shifts narrative focus to Penelope Featherington, a character previously positioned on the margins of the social world she closely observes. Season 3 centers on Penelope's journey toward self-recognition, emotional visibility, and romantic agency, particularly through the evolution of her relationship with Colin Bridgerton. A defining aspect of the season's narrative is the tension between concealment and revelation, as Penelope continues to operate as Lady Whistledown while simultaneously seeking acceptance and love within the very society she has long scrutinized from a distance. This thematic focus on transformation and self-acknowledgement provides the narrative foundation for the campaign's central symbols.

The series' aesthetic design plays a crucial role in shaping its immersive appeal. *Bridgerton* adopts a consciously anachronistic visual strategy, blending Regency-inspired costumes, architecture, and decor with contemporary color palettes, pop-music reinterpretations, and heightened visual spectacle. Pastel hues, floral motifs, ornate textures, and exaggerated silhouettes form a coherent symbolic system that communicates romance, excess, and emotional intensity. This visually distinctive language not only differentiates the series from traditional historical dramas but also ensures high recognizability across media platforms, enabling the seamless translation of the *Bridgerton* world into marketing, fashion, and experiential design contexts.

Beyond its narrative and visual qualities, *Bridgerton* rapidly evolved into a global cultural phenomenon, generating an

expansive and highly active fanbase across digital platforms. Audiences worldwide engaged with the series through social media discussions, fan art, cosplay, fashion reinterpretations, and participation in themed events, transforming the fictional world into a shared cultural reference point. The series' emphasis on spectacle, romance, and recognizable visual codes facilitated widespread circulation of images, memes, and user-generated content, reinforcing a sense of collective participation. In this way, *Bridgerton* exemplifies how contemporary streaming series function not only as narrative texts but as expansive storyworlds that encourage fan identification, performative engagement, and the formation of transnational communities. This global fan response provides essential context for understanding Netflix's subsequent immersive promotional strategies, which capitalize on the series' symbolic richness and participatory potential by translating its narrative universe into real-world experiences.

Visual decisions behind the campaign

Mirrors become a key metaphor in this context, representing both self-reflection and the act of being seen. Within the story, Penelope's development involves learning to recognize her own worth and confronting the discrepancy between how she perceives herself and how she is perceived by others. The use of mirrors in the promotional campaign visually translates this internal process into a tangible symbol, inviting audiences to engage with the themes of identity, visibility, and emotional honesty that define this particular season. Similarly, floral imagery functions as a metaphor for personal growth and delayed blossoming. The campaign slogan *Every flower will bloom* directly echoes Penelope's narrative arc, emphasizing patience, transformation, and the idea that emotional fulfillment unfolds in its own time (Figure 9). Additionally, this slogan addresses the

Figure 9: *Bridgerton* Season 3 Key Visual

Figure 10: *Bridgerton* Murals in Warsaw, Poland

difficult issues of adolescence and the problems of teenagers' lack of self-acceptance, making the target group of this series well catered for.

Through these motifs, the campaign successfully bridges narrative meaning and experiential design, translating Penelope's intimate journey into universally recognizable symbols. Mirrors and flowers not only operate as decorative elements, but as semiotic devices that communicate the season's core themes, enabling audiences to intuitively connect the promotional experience with the emotional and narrative logic of the storyworld.

Multichannel touchpoints of Bridgerton campaign and its characteristics

The Polish promotional campaign for *Bridgerton* Season 3 from May-June 2024 offers a compelling example of how Netflix translates the narrative world of a global series into immersive real-world experiences that resonate with local audiences. Key locations in the largest polish cities like Warsaw, Poznań, Białystok, Łódź, Katowice or Kraków were transformed with large-scale billboard installations featuring stylized portraits of characters as key arts with localised copy that invited passersbies to experience the visual world of the series. Moreover, within the capital city, a series of murals were commissioned for display in prominent public locations, with the aim of enhancing the aesthetic appeal of these spaces and contributing to the overall visual environment of Warsaw in May. The series' slogan - *Every Love Will Bloom* - appeared between the main characters, who looked at each other behind ornate Victorian windows (Figure 10).

In Poland, the campaign extended far beyond digital trailers and social media posts to include a series of non-standard

out-of-home (OOH) activations and few special events - two *Bridgerton*-inspired picnics in Poznań and Białystok (Figure 11, 12) gathering hundreds of *Bridgerton* fans together. They could spend their afternoon feeling like a part of the aristocracy, taking part in royal activities such as playing badminton or pall-mall, painting or listening to a string quartet concert. In terms of participation, after waiting in line for your turn to enter, you were receiving the basket and one of *Bridgerton* assistants was guiding you to find your way to picnic stations - free blanket spot. There were plenty of possibilities of refreshments for free, such as an original Bridgertonade (lemonade) and butter biscuits. The instructors were coordinating the games and writing down the results of the games on the pads. These two picnics were hugely popular and successful, as evidenced by the numbers - over 25,000 followers on Facebook, 12 million social media followers, 1,500 social media instastories, almost 100 publications in top media.

The Social Event of the Season (Figure 13, 14) in Warsaw was another experiential event for the biggest fans with the surprising presence of 2 significant actresses (Claudia Jessie & Adjoa Andoh) from the title. Held at Hotel Belotto, a historic and architecturally resonant venue in the capital, the event was designed to evoke the lived experience of a high-society ball within the world of *Bridgerton*. The transformation of Hotel Belotto into a temporary narrative setting involved tailored décor, lighting, and spatial choreography that mirrored the series' visual codes - pastel color schemes, floral arrangements, and ornamental details - creating an environment that felt both familiar to fans and evocative of the storyworld's aesthetic. Guests were invited to participate in activities reflective of the series' social dynamics, such as period-inspired dress codes, music and dance that echoed the show's orchestration, and curated spaces for social interaction that mimicked scenes from the fictional *Bridgerton* balls.

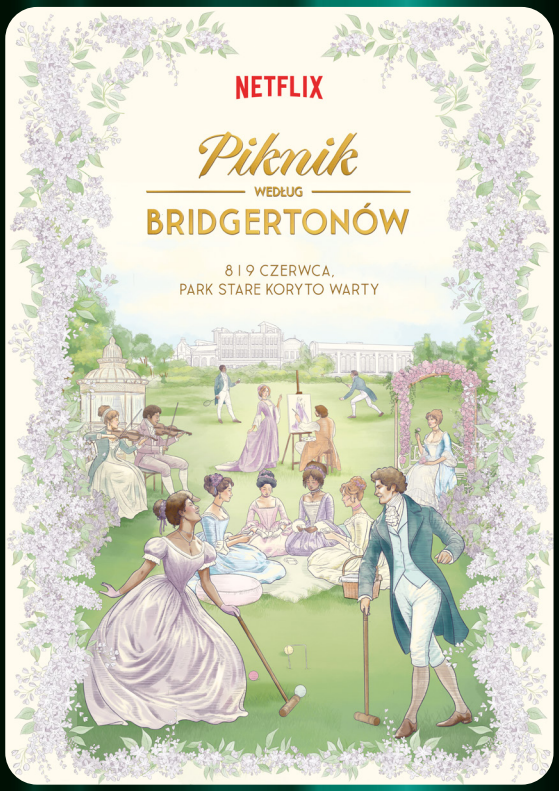

Figure 11: *Bridgerton* Season 3 Key Visual

Figure 12: *Bridgerton* Murals in Warsaw, Poland

Figure 13: *Bridgerton* Event of the Season - Claudia Jessie & Adjoa Andoh with fans

Figure 14: *Bridgerton* Event of the Season - dance moment

Figure 15: *Bridgerton* Display at ShowBuisness portal

The Belotto activation functioned not merely as a promotional gathering but as an embodied extension of the *Bridgerto*n world, inviting attendees to step into a carefully constructed social ritual with elements drawn directly from the series' narrative universe. Visitors did not simply observe *Bridgerton* aesthetics; they enacted them, temporarily assuming the roles of societal participants within a stylized but coherent social environment. This interplay between narrative world and lived event exemplifies how experiential marketing can activate symbolic systems - colors, textures, choreography, spatial zones - to foster deep engagement with a fictional world. The Hotel Belotto event thus stands as a powerful example of how design and cultural staging can transform a promotional moment into a shared ritualistic encounter, reinforcing both emotional connection to the series and public visibility for the narrative world beyond the screen.

Not only physical but also digital space was taken care of during the whole campaign - instead of the usual display advertising of the title as key art and title treatment, the native characteristics of the source were used and, for example, the gossip portals showed an advert in the form of an ad written by Lady Whisledown - the mysterious protagonist of the series - who describes the life of the socialite in the title in a gossipy way (Figure 15). Using slightly damaged yellowed paper texture and adding pen details was the exact same visual approach that Lady Whistledown had in her handwritten brochures. Combined with such contextual copywriting (that in translation means: *Apparently someone like me is particularly fond of delving into the secrets of the lives of the high society cream of the crop*), this touchpoint is the result of a well-considered and well-localised message, where by drawing the viewer's attention in a native way that does not differ from the content they expect from the medium.

Additionally, within the local context, the opening credits of the famous Polish drama series *Klan* were used, which has been broadcast for 20 years and describes the love lives and family stories of a dozen of characters. An alternative version was created for the campaign, inspired by the opening credits of the series, where instead of the original characters, the *Bridgerton* characters were featured. The lyrics of the song were changed and the famous *Bridgerton* violin was added to the soundtrack. The video was uploaded to YouTube and viewed by tens of thousands of users.

Finally, the *Bridgerton* campaign broadened polish advertising horizons and used non-standard media as tubes (Figure 16) on iconic Nowy Świat street in Warsaw by filling them with lilac flowers in seasonal color palette, there was a *Bridgerton* tramway (Figure 17, 18) in the city of Poznań with special *Bridgerton* branding outside and inside, the tram's floor turned into a Victorian chequered floor and the seatings were transformed into velour quilted backrests. There was a special bus stop in Białystok (Figure 19) with mirrors attached with golden frames and an authentic gold Victorian-style sofa on which you could sit while waiting for a bus and additionally, a non-standard mural with golden-framed mirrors and on-point call to action related to the season (Figure 20).

Overall, the whole campaign gained enourmous results in all of the touchpoints, and set the bar high for future marketing activations. The *Bridgerton* campaign was widely covered by the country's largest media outlets in Poland due to its fan-centric approach, authenticity, and use of local insights integrated with global title. Based on my personal feelings, it changed my perception of the world of advertising and confirmed my belief in what I want to continue doing (Figure 21).

Figure 16: Branded *Bridgerton* Tube with flowers in the city of Warsaw

Figure 17 & 18: Branded *Bridgerton* Tramway in the city of Poznań outside and inside

Figure 19: *Bridgerton* Non-Standard Mural with Mirrors in Zielona Góra

Figure 20: *Bridgerton* Bus Stop near the Picnic location in the city of Białystok

Figure 21: Production Team during *Bridgerton* Picnic in Poznań

Figure 22: Key Visual of *1670* Season 2

3.2 *1670* (Polish series) Season 2 Campaign

1670 Season 2: Narrative Premise, Aesthetic Strategy, and Polish Cultural Phenomenon

1670 is a Polish Netflix original comedy series set in a satirical vision of the Polish Commonwealth in the late seventeenth century (Figure 22). The series follows Jan Paweł Adamczewski, a petty nobleman obsessed with status, legacy, and the desire to be remembered as an important historical figure, despite his limited power and questionable competence. His life goal is to be the first well-known Jan Paweł in history (as a link to Polish Pope John Paul) while he is only a ruler of a small village called Adamczycha and, ironically, he even must share power with his hated neighbour - Andrzej. Through exaggerated characterization and absurd situations, the series uses historical setting as a framework for contemporary social commentary, humorously exposing themes such as class hierarchy, nationalism, patriarchal authority, and the construction of identity. For viewers unfamiliar with the first season, *1670* can be understood as a parody of historical epics, where the past is deliberately distorted to reflect modern anxieties and cultural contradictions while keeping historical events on the background as an additional platform to maintain true to the times: for instance resentment against the Swedes (Swedish Deluge), polish-lithuanian union, or negotiations with the Ottoman Empire held by Hetman Jan III Sobieski.

Season 2, launched in September 2025, builds upon this foundation by further developing both the protagonist's ambitions and the social microcosm of the village, intensifying the satirical exploration of power, tradition, and self-importance. The narrative continues to center on Adamczewski's attempts

to assert authority and control, while increasingly revealing the gap between his self-image and reality. This emphasis on performative identity aligns the series with broader discussions of social roles and visibility, reinforcing the idea that history itself can be treated as a constructed narrative rather than an objective truth. The humor of *1670* relies heavily on irony, anachronism, and linguistic play, creating a dialogue between past and present that allows contemporary Polish audiences to recognize familiar social patterns within a historical disguise.

Visually, *1670* adopts an intentionally stylized aesthetic that blends period references with modern comedic sensibilities. Costumes, interiors, and rural landscapes are designed to evoke the seventeenth century while exaggerating textures, colors, and compositions for comic effect. The series avoids historical realism in favor of visual clarity and symbolic exaggeration, allowing viewers to immediately decode social roles and power relations. This aesthetic strategy supports the series' satirical tone and enhances its accessibility, making the historical setting approachable rather than distant.

Beyond its narrative and visual design, *1670* quickly became a cultural phenomenon in Poland. The series resonated strongly with local audiences due to its use of familiar historical imagery, national myths, and linguistic references, which were reinterpreted through contemporary humor. The phenomenon has grown to such an extent that polish people tend to use phrases from the series in everyday life. Quotations from the series circulated widely on social media, while characters and scenes became subjects of memes and public discussion. This collective reception transformed *1670* into a shared cultural reference point, positioning the series not only as entertainment but as a commentary on Polish identity and social imagination, although without going into topics of crisis and controversy for

today's society, since the series *1670* is meant to unite, not divide. The popularity of the series provided fertile ground for Netflix's promotional campaigns, which could draw upon existing cultural recognition and audience participation to extend the storyworld beyond the screen into public and digital spaces.

1670 Campaign Strategy and Realisation

The success of *1670* is based on the fact that each viewer found themselves in the cast of characters and their adventures taking place in the 17th century. Regardless of the passing years, viewers share the same emotions and problems, and face similar everyday challenges. Therefore, the creative platform of a campaign was to emphasize the fact that Adamczycha is not a village, but a state of mind, and deep down, we are all from Adamczycha. In accordance with the series insight, in which Jan Paweł organizes the Royal Harvest Festival in Adamczycha, and with the link to the consumer insight, that living in cities, especially large ones, increases the attraction to the countryside, gave the final decision to produce a village of Adamczycha in temporary times to keep the consistency with one of the main storylines of the series.

Sarmatians were known for their extravagance, their need to flaunt their wealth, and above all, their hospitality. In this spirit, everyone was invited to join the harvest celebration and enjoy the festivities, all at Jan Paweł's expense. Firstly, the event was created on Facebook from the Netflix Poland account and was used in a way to keep fans updated. Apart from the Facebook event itself, both paid and organic social channels were designed to reach broader audiences and build the excitement around the event. As part of the partnership and ticket distribution through Going.app (tickets distribution service), Netflix gave the opportunity to communicate the event to people who are

not super fans of the title, and, finally, local Warsaw media (such as warsavian touristic accounts) have been asked to publish the event details on their official Facebook page, serving a supporting role in the campaign.

Another insight used both from the series and history was the fact that we do not get to choose whether we were born as a peasant or a noble. Having said that, an AR filter platform has been designed to transform a person's picture into a randomised assigned character - using the face swapping option from original peasants and noble portraits (Figure 23, 24). There has been a landing page with an AR filter, as the Tiktok branded effect and Instagram effect, giving multiple possibilities to use the engine.

In terms of the out-of-home part of the campaign, as Adamczycha is everywhere - also in the streets, the consumer's and series' insights were brought together to give another level of engagement. One of the *1670* main storylines is the never-ending feud between neighbors Andrzej and Jan Paweł, while at the same time Poles love intrigue with drama and they enjoy watching it from a safe distance. Considering those two facts, the OOH formats were transformed into a battlefield for verbal battles between the feuding Sarmatians, keeping the baroque tone of voice. The topics of a specific creation were mostly linked to its location, regarding the city, situation, proximity to important sites (Figure 25). In translation:

Left: *Jan Paweł did not write a will because he couldn't write anyway.*
Right: *Andrzej did not make a will because he had nothing left anyway.*

Considering the social phenomenon of the title and the organic popularity of some iconic situations from the series in memes, the social media part of a campaign was a fully designed experience. Firstly, a big video asset - 1st Season Recap - was published to

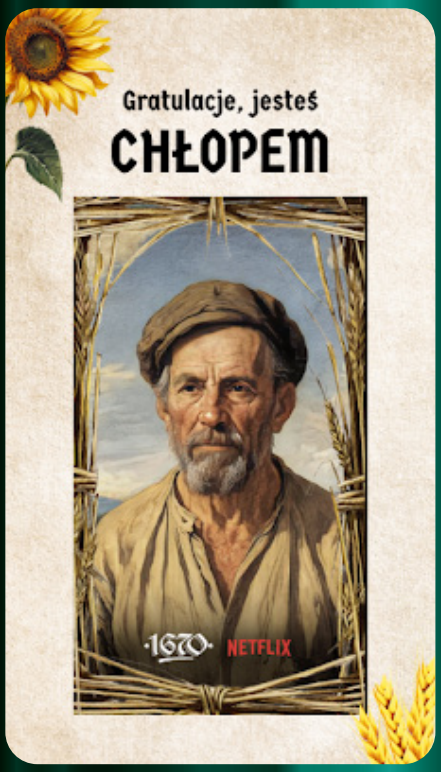

Figure 23 & 24: AR *1670* branded filter with portraits of peasant man and nobleman woman

Figure 25: *1670* OOH in Warsaw

Figure 26: *1670* Exhibition in the Museum of Polish History in Warsaw

Figure 27: *1670* PR Event and the guest

Figure 28: *1670* Event - the Entrence to the Venue saying “Szamy-Zapra” meaning “Welcome” with intentional error as ”Come-Wel”

remind some crucial moments of the previous series' batch. In order to convey the message in a manner consistent with the spirit of the series, the first season recap was essentially an old peasant woman speaking in a manner characterised by exaggeration and weeping, elucidating the peasants' perspective on the previous year, *1670*. Then, as a cross-reference with the online world in *1670*, there was an asset about fans' favourite - a lonely nobleman Bogdan, trying to find a perfect candidate on Tinder. With the help of a wooden frame looking like a layout of a popular dating app, Bogdan was searching for a match, giving the fans a hint about his love life in the new season.

1670 Event Production - Royal Harvest in Adamczycha

The main goal was to give people the possibility to transfer their physical and mental perception to seventeen-centurion Adamczycha by blurring the lines of a real life and title. As one of the most crucial Netflix's rules, people cannot pay for the possibility of experiencing any form created during the campaign. The *1670* event didn't require any paid-tickets - the only thing that mattered was how fast you clicked to get your free ticket. The runshow of an event was quite specific and it differed between a PR event for cast and influencers and marketing events for fans.

The PR event was firstly held in the Museum of Polish History where the auditorium was used to show to the audience two first episodes of a new second season. Additionally, to seize the opportunity of the location itself, there was a small *1670* exhibition designed with some original props from the series, costumes of the characters, original scripts and some elements of set design (Figure 26), accessible for free for all people.

After the screening, all of the guests were transported to the iconic village from *1670* - Adamczycha - without any specific details about the length of a trip and precise location. Surprisingly, the village was only 5 minutes far by bus, as the venue was originally Jomsborg fortress, a Viking and Slavic stronghold - home to a legendary band of Jomsborers (Jomswikings) who, according to Scandinavian sagas, served our King Bolesław Chrobry as mercenary warriors. The fortress was consequently modified to resemble *1670* set design, keeping the most meaningful locations from the title, such as Jew's Bar, Bogdan's Forge, Stable. Following the arrival of all the guests, the music and dance show commenced, reflecting the initial sequences of the new season. The audience observed a genre scene depicting peasants and peasant women engaged in quotidian activities such as the collection of hay and the washing of laundry. At a certain point, the artists initiated dance and ceremoniously inaugurated the *1670* village for the public (Figure 27, 28).

In terms of marketing events for fans, the venue was opened for whole weekend of 19-21st September and offered the same activities and installations directly inspired by the world of *1670*, including a mock village with thematic attractions like the tavern *Karczma U Żyda (the Jew's inn)*, a blacksmith's forge reflecting key character Maciej's labor, and tastings of in-world foods such as the fictional Suplement Strawy z Góry Kalwarii. To manage attendance and encourage broad participation, Netflix offered free, time-slot tickets that were distributed online, and the popularity of these tickets led organizers to expand the event, resulting in over 4,500 fans participating across the weekend.

Attendees encountered a range of participatory features that blended historical parody with contemporary engagement (Figures 28-31). These included costumed performers portraying characters or archetypes from the show, interactive stalls offering themed activities, and curated performances that

Figure 28-31: *1670* Royal Harvest Event for Fans in Warsaw

echoed the rustic pageantry and ceremonial tone of traditional harvest festivals. By staging these elements in public space, Netflix invited participants to step into the storyworld of *1670*, not merely as observers but as embodied participants within a designed cultural ritual. The event also encouraged documentation and social sharing, with designated photo areas and visually striking sets that leveraged the show's symbolic aesthetics, such as flower garlands, ornamental banners, and exaggerated heraldic elements that referenced the absurdly self-important ambitions of the series' protagonist. These visual devices functioned as world markers that guided both physical movement through space and digital circulation through social media.

In staging Royal Harvet Event, Netflix extended the narrative universe beyond the screen into everyday urban life, enabling audiences to experience the *1670* world as a communal festival rather than a series of episodes. This activation illustrates how the series' blend of satire, history, and performative identity can be translated into a public cultural event that resonates with local audiences by playing on familiar ritual forms (such as harvest festivals) while amplifying them through the show's unique visual and narrative logic. It also demonstrates how experiential design strategies - through space, costume, and interactive performance - can turn fictional worlds into shared cultural moments, reinforcing the symbolic coherence of the storyworld and activating fan participation within everyday cultural rhythms.

Figure 32: Key Visual of *Squid Game* Season 2

3.3 Squid Game Season 2 Campaign in Poland

Squid Game Season 2: Narrative Context, World Logic, and Aesthetic Expansion

Squid Game is a South Korean Netflix original series that centers on a group of financially vulnerable individuals who are recruited to participate in a secret competition composed of children's games with tragic consequences (Figure 32). The participants compete for an enormous cash prize, while elimination results in death, revealing the brutal logic of a system that exploits desperation and economic inequality for entertainment. The series uses familiar, playful imagery with extreme violence to expose the dehumanizing mechanisms of contemporary capitalist structures, positioning the games as a metaphor for social competition, surveillance, and systemic power.

While the first season focuses primarily on survival and moral compromise within the competition, the second season shifts attention toward the broader organization that sustains the games and the psychological aftermath experienced by survivors. The protagonist, Seong Gi-hun, who won the whole game in previous season, re-enters the narrative not as a passive participant but as a figure increasingly aware of the structural injustice behind the spectacle, signaling a transition from individual endurance to ethical confrontation that eventually is willing to destroy the whole organisation from inside. This narrative development deepens the storyworld, transforming *Squid Game* from a contained survival scenario into a wider critique of institutionalized inequality.

Aesthetically, *Squid Game* stands out among the series visually due to the use of primary colors, simplified geometries, and rigid

spatial organization reinforces themes of control and hierarchy, while increased attention to spaces of authority and surveillance highlights the structural nature of power within the storyworld (Figure 33). Costumes, architecture, and spatial design operate as semiotic markers that clearly differentiate roles and power relations, ensuring immediate recognizability across media contexts. This combination of narrative depth, visual consistency, and global cultural visibility makes Squid Game particularly suited to large-scale immersive promotional campaigns, where its symbols can be translated directly into real-world environments and collective experiences.

Following the release of its first season, the series achieved unprecedented international visibility, transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries to become a shared global reference point. Its distinctive visual symbols - such as numbered tracksuits, geometric masks, and brightly colored game environments - circulated widely through social media, memes, fashion, and public performances, embedding the series deeply into popular culture. This widespread recognition created an exceptionally active fanbase that engaged with the series not only through viewing, but through creative reinterpretation, cosplay, and participation in themed events. The scale of this global response positioned *Squid Game* as more than a television series, functioning instead as a recognizable storyworld with strong symbolic coherence and participatory potential.

Squid Game 2 Campaign Strategy and Realisation

The promotional campaign for *Squid Game* in Poland from December 2024 represents one of Netflix's most extensive examples of large-scale, immersive world translation into public space. Following the series' global success, Netflix deployed

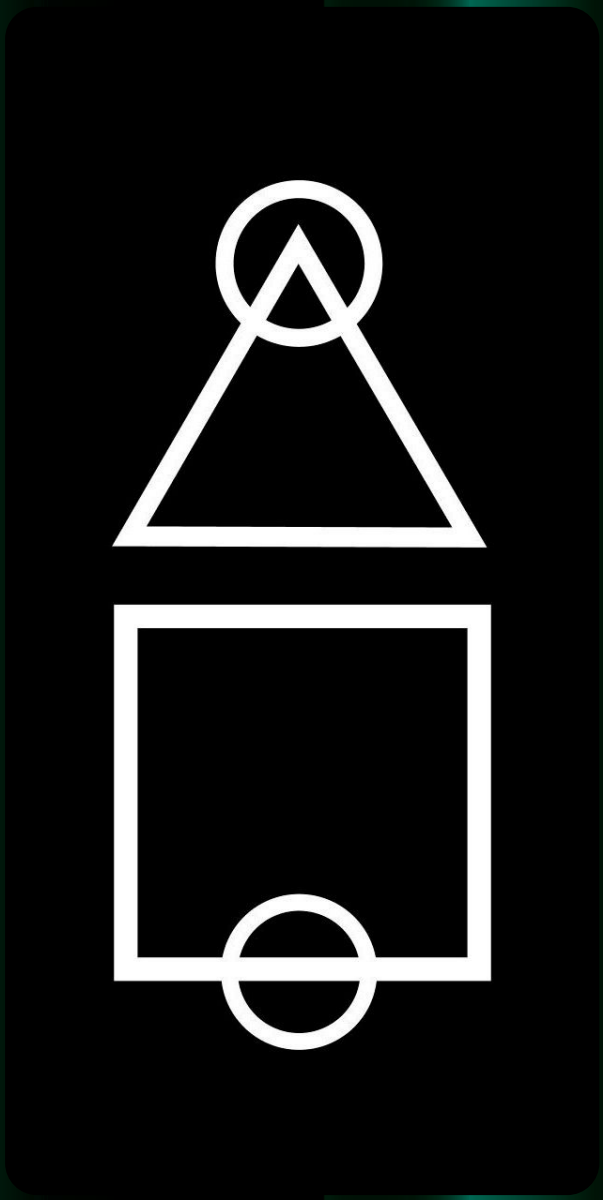

Figure 33: The most importan *Squid Game* shapes in composition

Figure 34-39: *Squid Game Season 2* murals in Poznań, Bydgoszcz, Łódź, Katowice, Warsaw

a highly visible campaign across major Polish cities, with Warsaw serving as a central site of activation. This campaign had two goals: first one was to fuel the hype among fandom, igniting excitement around this iconic title to spark early buzz and get the conversation flowing and the second - to create a magnetic sense of curiosity and FOMO for those still out of the loop, building up serious anticipation. The creative platform of the campaign transferred into every touchpoint was '**There's no stopping the Game**' - neither Player 456 nor we cannot get away from the game, it had to pervade every aspect of ordinary life: iconic imagery had to weave into our daily routines. Icon takeover was a key element of the tactical umbrella of a campaign, meaning that the most recognizable iconography had to be leveraged in real life as they are key tools for winning people's attention. Thus, the decision has been made that nothing would be as thrilling as playing in real *Squid Game* which is why the main focus was to produce an experiental event looking exactly like in the series blurring the lines between reality and the fictional world.

How did the *Squid Game* Season 2 Campaign look like in Poland?

As a constituent element of a broader campaign, I was privileged to design a series of six murals in major Polish cities, including Warszawa, Łódź, Katowice, Poznań and Bydgoszcz (Figure 34-39). The objective of the initiative was to transfer the vivid and entertaining ambience of *Squid Game* to the monochrome Polish urban landscape, coinciding with the launch of the campaign in December. In addition, the concept of being observed constitutes a fundamental element of the series, forming the underlying principle of the design.

However, the focus of the majority of communications was mentioned Squid Game Arena, and this necessitated the

creation of numerous additional assets to ensure the event achieved sufficient popularity. One such example is a video trailer designed to generate discussion, which features a few Pink Guards marching to a series of dramatic music from the series and announcing the commencement of recruitment for a special Squid Game event. From paid social posts on Instagram, Tiktok and Facebook, to large metro screens with human-sized Pink Guards - every touchpoint was designed in a similar aesthetic to inform about the recruitment. Additionally, as the title was promoted in the middle of December, there was a 'last call' video asset inspired by an iconic scene from the most Christmassy movie - *Love Actually* - a Pink Guard knocking on the door and showing the messages written on cardboard boxes.

Squid Game Arena - event production

There were two events: firstly a PR event for influencers and then - a marketing event for fans. The organisational aspect of the PR event was challenging, primarily due to the concept of 'kidnapping' influencers, which was deemed to be essential to maintain the integrity of the event with the series.. In order to receive this unexpected circumstance, influencers were invited for a *Squid Game* premiere to the cinema in the center of Warsaw to watch two first episodes of the new season before it was launched. Guests were expecting a regular cinema premiere and the task was to provide that impression by printing a photowall, designing popcorn boxes, or decorating the auditorium. By the end of the second episode, a dedicated screen appeared with the information *You are invited to play*. Guests were asked by Pink Guards to leave an auditorium and take seats in Squid Game branded buses without knowing the destination. While in transit, they were each asked to take a photo of themselves and upload it to a special landing page, which, using AI, edited their image to match that of the series - dressing them in tracksuits with

Figure 40: *Squid Game* Arena set design

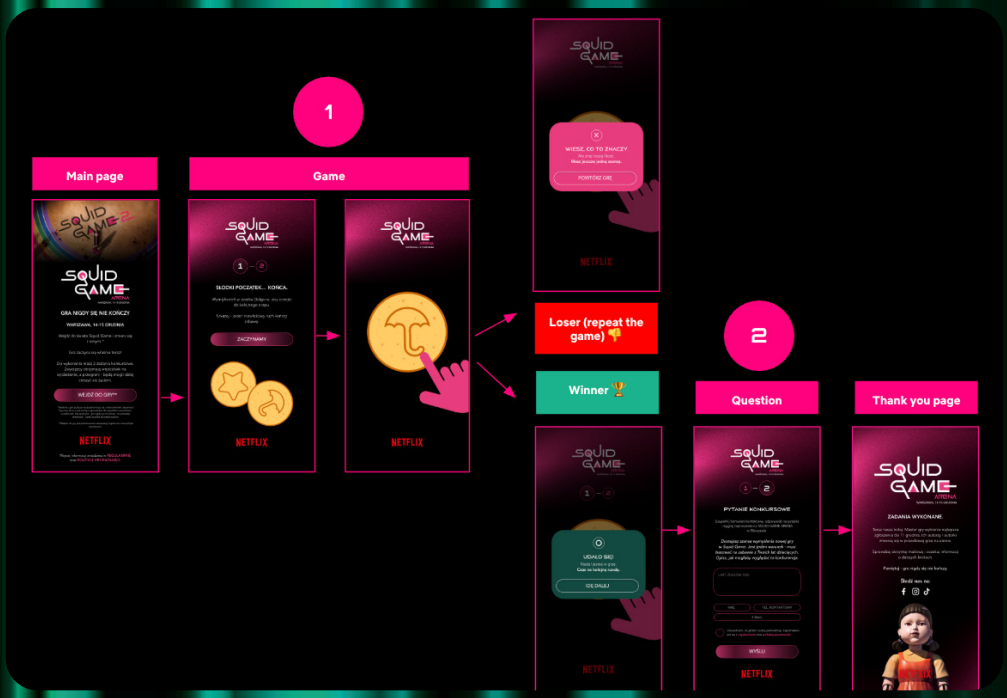

Figure 41: *Squid Game* Arena interaction map

a number marked to which they were assigned. After arrival at the venue, the Black Guard - Master of the Game, wearing an original mask, welcomed them into a space referring to the dormitory and explained to them how the game was going to proceed. His voice had to be as low and dark as in the series, which is why it was recorded before the show and played as he appeared, to make it look like he was speaking in real time.

Finally, it was time to show the Squid Game Arena, which was carefully designed to make the user feel like a real player (Figure 40). There were 4 big immersive games and 3 smaller games to play, such as Dalgona Cookie, Red Light Green Light, Tug of War. Players were able to see themselves on a big screen, where their image would fade if they failed to complete a game. Additionally, there was a buffet with korean fingerfood, bubble-tea station, korean vending machines and last but not least - official *Squid Game* tracksuits by Puma for the best players. During the games Pink Guards were supervising the correct playing, taking the scores into the boardscreen however under no circumstances they could not break the character. Their manner of speech, body language or tonality were key factors in their selection, thus a casting process had to be detailed and meticulous.

In terms of a marketing event and getting the tickets, fans were supposed to enter a landing page, which was promoted in socials, and pass its two phases - first one was a digital version of the iconic Dalgona cookie challenge, where players had to remove the shape from their cookie, leaving a perfect cookie-cutter hole in the center, without breaking or cracking it in any way. The second part was a competition question - *Which game from your youth could be one of the competitions in the Squid Game and why?* (Figure 41). The lucky ones received the tickets to this secret event without location details - only a pickup spot which turned out to be a pink *Squid Game* stop

in the city centre, from which pink branded buses were leaving (Figure 42).

The whole campaign was widely publicised among fans of the series and beyond, it obtained numerous prizes and has set new standards in marketing advertisement and event production. Squid Game Arena was mentioned in every major publication in the country which translated into a huge coverage and success of the whole campaign in Poland. These visual interventions functioned as what can be described as “world markers”, signaling the presence of the *Squid Game* universe within everyday city life.

Figure 42: *Squid Game* Pink Bus Stop

4. Discussion

4. Discussion

What do these campaigns reveal about contemporary media consumption?

These analyzed Netflix campaigns reveal how the marketing approach has changed from traditional forms of advertising in the form of printed posters and social media posts that elicit passive responses, to fully experiential and engaging campaigns that blur the lines between the real and narrative worlds. This shift expands the narrative environment that exists simultaneously in digital, physical, and social space. This new media consumption involves symbolic participation, spatial interaction, and public performance, in which audiences inhabit the aesthetic and symbolic structure of a storyworld. According to Jenkins (2006), participatory culture allows the audience to actively contribute to the cultural meaning which reflects precisely mentioned marketing shifts.

Considering another aspect, we can make an assumption that contemporary media consumption is shaped by immersion and continuity. As Wolf (2012) mentioned, the audience does not engage with individual narratives but with a combination of broader imaginary worlds which give the possibility to be explored across many channels and formats. Nowadays, streaming platforms give the allowance of binge-watching the content which facilitates uninterrupted sessions that let the audience stay mentally in the narrative world for longer periods. As a result, media consumption becomes an ongoing relationship with a storyworld rather than a discrete act of watching.

Finally, the increasing integration of media consumption with everyday life and physical space is a key observation to understand the present marketing shift. The more authentic interaction is between user and content, the more permeation and blurring of boundaries between real-life and storyworld. Those kinds of campaigns are the evidence nowadays that the best engagement for fans are the situations in which fans are not forced to participate. This reflects a broader shift in contemporary media culture, where storytelling operates as an environmental and participatory phenomenon, and audiences engage with media not only cognitively but also socially, spatially, and emotionally.

The balance between global branding and local adaptation

One of the defining characteristics of Netflix's communication strategy is its ability to maintain a consistent global brand identity while simultaneously adapting its campaigns to local cultural contexts. The balance between those two groups is a key element to maintain the campaign consistent for all of the regions and personalized at the same time. This reflects what media scholars describe as the process of glocalization, in which global media products are adapted to local cultural frameworks in order to increase accessibility, relevance, and audience engagement (Robertson, 1995). According to this approach, Netflix selectively incorporates local symbols, cultural references, and social practices into its campaigns, allowing global storyworlds to resonate within specific cultural environments. Also, even though Netflix circulates global content, its promotional apparatus must be highly localized to compete with Polish domestic broadcasters and cultural norms. While the content might belong to a global storyworld, the media ritual of the fan-centric campaign must be physically and culturally grounded in Poland to be effective (Lotz, 2022).

From a visual perspective, global branding for typography, colors, textures, and compositional style reinforces brand recognition and ensures that individual campaigns remain connected to the overarching Netflix ecosystem. This approach reflects the streaming platform's role as a distributor and curator at the same time.

Netflix can function simultaneously as a global media institution and a locally relevant cultural actor due to the balance between global branding and local adaptation. Their campaigns are both globally recognizable and locally meaningful by maintaining brand identity consistency and emphasising local factors to get to the audience in an organic way. As a result, Netflix can grow as a platform that integrates cultural life with narratives by blurring the boundaries between reality and storyworld.

5. Conclusions

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Summary of findings

The analysis conducted in this thesis shows that Netflix's campaigns do much more than simply promote new series. They translate narrative storyworlds to real-life experiences by integrating communication design, immersive media, experiential campaigns with symbolic participation of fans. Through installations, public events, and carefully designed visual communication, Netflix makes narrative worlds feel present and accessible, rather than distant and purely fictional. As a result, storytelling no longer ends with watching a series but continues through spatial experiences and audience interaction.

Additionally, communication design and its importance reflects how powerful is translating narrative worlds into reality: visual codes, typography, color schemes are not just randomly associated with a campaign, they are connected to the symbolic of the storyworld. These elements are the recognizable artefacts and enable the audience to relate emotionally with the whole narrative structure. This supports Mark J. P. Wolf's idea (2012) that imaginary worlds are coherent systems that can exist beyond a single medium, as well as Marie-Laure Ryan's (2018) argument that immersion becomes stronger when audiences can experience narrative environments in spatial and sensory ways.

Those mentioned case studies highlight the importance of providing the audience with branded-content places to which

they are invited as the native characters of a storyworld. Not only is this a move for fans to fulfil their dreams by giving them the opportunity to immerse themselves in their favourite series, but also their photos, videos and all the content they generate is a self-perpetuating promotional machine that shows how this unique event meets the expectations of the target group. This reflects Henry Jenkins' concept (2006) of participatory culture, in which audiences play an important role in shaping how media content circulates and gains cultural relevance.

Another important observation is the balance between global consistency and local adaptation. Netflix has to maintain a global branding and visual mandatories, however local context and personalised insights to each region they select is a great example of a resonative approach. In Poland, for example, campaigns for *1670* drew heavily on national historical symbolism and humor, while global productions such as *Bridgerton* and *Squid Game* were presented through locally selected insights and developed in the events that made them feel culturally relevant.

Overall, these findings suggest that Netflix's campaigns function not only as promotional tools but also as extensions of storytelling. By bringing elements of fictional worlds into real environments, the platform creates opportunities for audiences to engage with stories in more personal and collective ways.

Reflection on the future of communication design in the streaming era

Those findings reflect a broader shift in contemporary media culture, where the boundaries between media consumption, social interaction, and cultural participation are becoming increasingly blurred. Standard promotion is no longer engaging and authentic.

According to Netflix Global Report from 2025 (Netflix Ads, 2025), variety is no longer a perk; it's the expectation. This may suggest that streaming platforms will not be competing with each other on the variety of titles, but on different aspects - such as authenticity, engagement, respecting fandoms, excitement.

From another perspective, the streaming era faces one major adversary: a mobile phone. TV is no longer one and only screen at which we are looking - which introduces the concept of 'second-screening': using a phone or tablet while the TV plays. Roughly 85–90% of viewers report using another device while watching TV (Batista Cabanas, 2025).

Looking ahead, communication design in the streaming era will likely continue moving beyond traditional promotional frameworks. As platforms increasingly blur the line between fiction and everyday life, designers will be challenged to think not only about how stories look, but how they are experienced across spaces, technologies, and communities. The role of communication design may shift further toward creating environments that feel coherent, immersive, and culturally sensitive, rather than simply visually attractive. At the same time, this development raises important questions about responsibility - especially when storytelling becomes intertwined with public space, social identity, and emotional engagement. In this changing media landscape, the future of communication design will depend on its ability to balance creativity with cultural awareness, and innovation with a genuine understanding of how audiences live with and through the stories they choose to engage with.

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5. Reference Lists

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