The Re-engineering of Time in Video Streaming Platforms: Structures, Strategies, and Experiences

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Abstract

Time has always been a structural asset of audiovisual programming, regulating the arrangement of content within predefined grids and, consequently, shaping rhythms and consumption practices. In the context of video streaming platforms, time becomes a deliberately manipulated and strategically conceived element, emerging as a central resource that spans from narrative composition to sociocultural relations with audiences, as well as business models. This paper therefore proposes the concept of *temporal re-engineering* as a critical tool for analysing the ways in which video streaming platforms intentionally redesign the experience of time, in response to algorithmic metrics, loyalty logics, and the dynamics of the attention economy. The analysis is organised around three axes: i) **Narrative** (examining time both as a narrative structure and as a theme); ii) **Economic** (investigating how time is transformed into a quantifiable and monetisable resource, whether through release frequency, average episode/chapter duration, or the segmentation of temporal experience according to predictive and algorithmic recommendation mechanisms; iii) **Sociocultural** (addressing the influence of temporal re-engineering practices on the social and cultural experience of time). By integrating these three dimensions, we argue that temporal re-engineering constitutes, simultaneously, a device of symbolic and economic power for video streaming platforms and an analytical framework that enables a critical approach extending beyond textual analysis or reception studies. It places the focus instead on the productive choices and business decisions that shape media temporality.

Keywords: media consumption practices; programming strategies; re-engineering; time; video streaming platforms