

A Local Shape for a Global Phenomenon: Circulation Practices of the Television Series *Breaking Bad* in Brazil

Una forma local de un fenómeno mundial: las prácticas de distribución de la serie de televisión Breaking Bad en Brasil

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RESUMEN

Este texto aborda una confluencia de factores en relación con la distribución de la serie de televisión *Breaking Bad* en el mercado brasileño, el más grande de América Latina. Desarrollamos la discusión en este texto con una observación de las prácticas de distribución de los episodios piloto y final de la serie entre el público brasileño por medios tanto oficiales como extraoficiales, donde las muestras de una mayor velocidad en la distribución son evidentes, como también lo son los diferentes caminos de la circulación de dichos episodios en cada mercado como un signo del cambio de las audiencias.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Breaking Bad, Brasil, Piratería, complejidad narrativa, series de televisión

ABSTRACT

This text discusses a confluence of factors regarding the distribution of the television show *Breaking Bad* as it reached the Brazilian market, the largest in South America. This discussion is established through an observation of the distribution practices related to the first and the last episodes of the show among Brazilian audiences by official and extra official means, where signs of a greater speed in distribution become clear, as do the different paths the circulation of the series' premiere and finale took in each market as a sign of changing audiences.

KEY WORDS

Breaking Bad, Brazil, Piracy, narrative complexity, television series

1. INTRODUCTION

The misadventures of Walter White, a chemistry teacher turned drug dealer, became a worldwide hit as the main plot theme as the television series *Breaking Bad*, a North American production distributed by AMC and produced High Bridge Entertainment, Gran Via Productions and Sony Pictures Television that ran originally from 2008 to 2013. Praised for its dramatic density, quality of filmmaking and treatment of adult subjects, the show spread from subscription-based channels to online venues, DVD and Blu-ray sales, syndication, and, finally, broadcast TV channels, thus following a conventional course of distribution through the many exhibition windows. In tandem with regular channels, lively communities of fans also sprang up online, accompanied by abundant extra official distribution practices that followed the episodes' release dates closely, and continually kept the many audiences attending the ironic tale of an anti-hero being the protagonist, a hallmark of a postmodern narrative.

Aside from its narrative qualities, the authors question the reasons why *Breaking Bad* became one of the poster shows of the so-called *new golden age of television* even in Brazil, a market that got hold of the series first by extra official distribution practices and only later by regular outlets. As an hypothesis to understand this, the text discusses a confluence of factors that dovetail into each other: the prevalence of long story arcs in television series and how such format came to be as an attraction factor to audiovisual narratives, the widespread adoption of broadband and various audiovisual replay technologies and its consequences and the ubiquity of social media as an echo chamber for fans. We question if a highly serialized, character-based narrative could be an optimal content to an interconnected time, due to the combination of continuous appeal and the ease to consume more and more content after it has premiered.

This consumption of audiovisual content through mostly digital based platforms is discussed in this text with an observation of the distribution practices related to the premiere and the finale of *Breaking Bad* among Brazilian audiences by official and extra official means. This is widely understood by such viewers as a practice that is not entirely legal, but legitimated by the desire to be up to date with the show schedule and sustain dialogue among their peers.

2. SERIES AND SERIALS, EPISODES AND STORY ARCS: NOTES ON A NARRATIVE LANDSCAPE OF THE 21TH CENTURY

Breaking Bad is an American television series that first ran on TV in January 2008. The show explains the story of Walter White, a talented chemist that lectured in a school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and worked in a car wash. After being diagnosed with lung cancer, Walter decides he needs to make a lot of money shortly for his wife and two children before death. For this purpose, he invites a former student / methamphetamine dealer, Jesse Pinkman, to begin a partnership, making and selling the purest drug of this kind in United States. The series have had five seasons with 62 episodes, and the last episode aired in September 29, 2013.

The difference between the terms *series* and *serial* is bound to confound the reader as the shows exchange labels and mix both modes continuously. The serialized narrative format is not new, first appearing, as Meyer (1996) describes, a mass-market

phenomenon in the newspaper feuilletons of the early 19th century. Later, as Katz (1998) puts it, both series and serials share a common ancestry from the early days of film. The difference is that the early movie “serials” did present weekly episodes presenting a serialized narrative that progressed from one to the other, often linked together by cliffhangers. The early “series” did present complete narratives in each installment, repeating cast and situations in a flexible, but formulaic, structure. As television developed from the postwar days onwards, the meanings were inverted as both formats spawned a variety of shows, mixing input from both episodic and serialized narratives.

An episodic format was the dominant one since the early days of television. It consisted of a sequence of stand-alone episodes: they are complete on their own and the viewer would only have to watch a single episode to be familiar with the main story points of the show. They share a main cast and dramatic situations, solved in a similar way every week, even if they accumulate changes in plot points over the years. It is possible to identify this format in shows such as *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957), *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-1977) or even more recently in *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000-2015) and its various spinoffs.

The most known meta-genre of this narrative format is the procedural drama - usually associated with crime investigation, law or hospital environments. Their formulaic structure, following the professional resolution of a problem, can be considered less character-driven than plot-driven. One of the series' format most important features are the self-contained episodes. They allow the viewer to watch the show in any order and still enjoy the story. This was a very useful attribute to television networks, since they were able to re-run episodes, even out of order, and still keep spectators returning to the program. Since the main concern of the networks was to reach a mass audience rather than please niche segments or focus on the engagement of the fans, a large number of episodes can effectively create the sense of enduring freshness to all but a small number of hardcore fans.

A television series is organized as a long-spanning coherent narrative with intertwined plots that run from episode to episode throughout one or more seasons. The viewer needs to watch them in order to understand the unfolding of the story. As Martin (2014) puts it, the narrative arc is longer on this type of show, extending the same main story through a whole season - or even through the whole program. This narrative extension makes the serial drama a more character-driven structure than procedural ones. Well-known examples of this format include *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991), *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) and *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013).

In the serialized drama structure the screenwriter can progressively develop the characters. As Martin (2014) puts it, this enables the creation of richer characters and allows the exploitation of bigger dilemmas. As a result we have less flat, manichean characters and new “shades of personality” which allow greater identification by the viewers. This is one of the reasons for the constant presence of anti-hero figures in contemporary shows - such as *Breaking Bad*, *The Sopranos* and *Mad Men* as Shaffer&Raney (2012) affirm. This approach demonstrates how any individual is

ultimately flawed and potentially corruptible, but also capable of relevant actions. A fitting paradox for the ambiguous epoch of the first days of the 21st century.

The extension of the narrative arcs over the complete seasons' episodes was a shift that brought a change in the narration style serialized fiction on television. Complex structures were created using narration tools such as analepses and cliffhangers as Mittell (2006) and Gerbase (2014) affirm. What Mittell calls *Complex TV* was created, challenging the viewer to follow the puzzled development of the plot. These contemporary shows demand more engagement, but they deliver a richer work in terms of aesthetic, characters and narrative. To understand series and serials as polar opposites is, however, a naïve proposition. Most shows feature a combination of both narrative formats, with one becoming predominant over the other.

3. QUESTIONING THE COMING OF THE "NEW GOLDEN AGE OF TELEVISION" AS TOLD BY THE EMMYS

Part of the success of the recent television series is often attributed by critics and commentators to their elaborate narrative format, repeatedly identifying *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) as a watershed moment in the medium. Questioning such common-sense affirmations regarding the presence of "episodic" and "serialized" formats on television the authors decided to use the Primetime Emmy Awards¹ as a data source, measuring the prevalence of each format in the category "Outstanding Drama Series", in which *Breaking Bad* earned 16 Primetime Emmy Awards and 58 nominations, including the prize for Outstanding Drama Series in 2013 and 2014. Although awards are not the only measure of success and relevance, they can be considered a reasonable and unified parameter to measure the consensus of quality content from broadcast, cable and internet media being watched on any screen available — televisions, computers or mobile devices.

The data on the nominees and winners of the category was reviewed from 1970 onwards, showing at first a prevalence of the episodic series format. The choice of that year to begin the collection of data was motivated because it predates the premiere of most of the best-known series of the decade such as *Six Million Dollar Man* (1974-1978) and *Charlie's Angels* (1976-1981), allowing to the perception of relevant changes in the process. At first the presence of serial dramas on the primetime hour wasn't a common occurrence when compared to episodic series. The first highly serialized content which aired on the primetime spot in the US was the soap-opera *Dallas* (1978-1991) at CBS, nominated only once in 1981. After *Dallas*, there was *Dynasty* (1981-1989) at ABC, another serial drama with the same soap-opera structure - nominated in 1982.

After these programs, the nominations were dominated by episodic series year after year in the 80s. Classical procedural dramas such as *Magnum, P.I.* (1980-1988) and *Cagney and Lacey* (1981-1988) - with a crime investigation plot; *St. Elsewhere* (1982-1988) - showing a medical background; and *L.A. Law* (1986-1994) - dealing with law subjects. There were some hybrid narratives between the nominated programs too,

¹ The awards are granted since 1949 to television productions aired in the USA. The results are fully available online for consultation at <http://www.emmys.com>.

such as *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987) - a police procedural show which tried to create longer arcs between its episodes maintaining the stand-alone story in each one of them.

It was only in 1990, with *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991) aired by ABC, that another highly serialized series drama was nominated again. After its nomination, there was another decade dominated by procedural dramas. Some well-known programs from the 90s, such as *Law & Order* (1990-2010) and *NYPD Blue* (1993-2005); or the medical dramas *Northern Exposure* (1990-1995), *Chicago Hope* (1994-2000) and *ER* (1994-2009). Again, it's possible to identify some hybrid shows as *The X-Files* (1993-2002) -which had some plot development between its episodes, but still had stand-alone episodes and a procedural structure.

Research showed the common sense about the subject to be partially correct, as it was only in 1999, with the nomination of *The Sopranos* (1999-2007), that a serialized drama returned to the spotlight. This nomination was relevant not only due to the return of the series format, but also because it was the first time a cable network (HBO) was nominated to that category. In the following years (2000 and 2001) two serial dramas were nominated: *The Sopranos* and *The West Wing* (1999-2006) - a broadcast series, aired by NBC, which won the prize on both years.

In 2002, for the first time, highly serialized dramas outnumbered the number of the ones where an episodic narrative is present in the nominations: three serialized dramas (*The West Wing*, *Six Feet Under* and *24*) versus two procedural series (*Law & Order* and *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*), a constant trend in the following years. Since 2009 the cable networks started getting more nominations than the broadcast networks. From 2012 to 2015² only serialized dramas were nominated. From 2013 on, at least once internet-first serialized drama was nominated, Netflix's *House of Cards* (2013-)being one of them.

When it comes to *Breaking Bad*, the show received Emmy awards and nominations for all its seasons since the debut in 2008. There were 16 awards and 30 nominations from 2008 to 2014 - three nominations for outstanding drama series (2009, 2010, 2012) and two awards (2013, 2014). Although television in its many screens and shapes can benefit from an episodic format, where new audiences can "get into" the show at any point, the data observed demonstrates the highly serialized narratives become the *de facto* standard in the Emmy category on the second decade of the 21th century, a shift that can be related to changes in the distribution and consumption of content after DVD home video distribution and later, on demand online.

4. TELEVISION AND BROADBAND IN BRAZIL: A NATION'S UPCOMING MEDIA OF CHOICE

In this next segment of the text the authors would like to bring the discussion closer to Brazilian screens, since its distribution in the local market reflects the changes

² The text reflects data available as of the time of the writing, November 2015.

of demographics and technology adoption in the country. *Breaking Bad* has³ an interesting audience in Brazil and some key factors help us understand it, the first being the importance of televisual storytelling for the country.

Census data affirms Brazil has over 205 million inhabitants in early 2016 (IBGE, 2016) and remains a country with a strong connection to television. According to a published research called Brasil Mídia Dados (Brazil Media Data), 97% of the households have a TV set, still the most widespread media device in the country. As stated by the Brazilian Secretariat for Telecommunications in 2015, there are 19,6 million cable and satellite TV subscribers in Brazil, with over than 4,1 million estimated pirated connections by the sector's business association. The highly serialized dramas and narratives made in the country's audiovisual industry continue to be the *telenovelas*, usually taking prime time slots on the high profile broadcast networks as Globo, Record and SBT. Series, especially imported ones, ebb and flow on the audiences'tastes, remaining mostly outside of prime time or segmented on cable and satellite networks.

The internet is a relevant media in Brazil, but it still has room to grow. According to data from Secretaria de Comunicação Social da Presidência da República (Secretariat of Social Communication of the Federal Government of Brazil, 2015), internet is the media with most growth among brazilians. Still, more than half of the population (51%) has yet to gain access to it. There are 25,2 million broadband Internet subscribers, but this number includes businesses and other points with public access such as bars and cafés. There has also been a significant rise in the number of access through cellphones (mentioned by 66% of users in 2015 and only 40% of respondents in 2014) can be seen, as well as a decrease in personal computer access (down to 71% in 2015 from 84% of respondents in 2014).

The most cited website as source of information by Brazilian internet users were Facebook (30,8%), followed by Globo.com (6,8%), G1 (5%), UOL (4,5%), Yahoo (3,3%) and others of small representation (PLANALTO, 2013, p. 58). The fact that a social network website was the most cited (and with a much greater representativity than traditional news websites) in the search for information reveals us the importance that these sites have acquired in everyday activities.

According to Aguiari (2012), most home users (45%) have network access at speeds ranging from 512 Kbps to 2 Mbps, followed by those who have access at speeds ranging from 2-8 Mbps (27% of users), a threshold of speed that may not replace the experience of TV altogether, but that gives them access to a vast array of audiovisual products available online that augment their primary screens, either by official or extraofficial means.

The practice of piracy has been present throughout the history of film distribution, but gained a softer twist on the sharing of television recordings in the 21th century. Vince Gilligan, *Breaking Bad's* creator, has affirmed to the press that illegal downloads of the show helped popularize it, because piracy reaches an audience that would not have

³ The verb is in present tense due to the fact the show is available on demand on Brazilian Netflix, available for download extra officially or sold in DVD and Blu-Ray with complete seasons as of November 2015.

access to the content otherwise and therefore would not watch it and probably not even know of its existence. According to information from the website Torrentfreak.com quoted in Brazilian media, the final episode of the series had over half a million downloads (G1 PORTAL, 2013).

The discussion about copyright and anti-piracy laws is part of a complex content ecosystem interweaving film and television production, accelerated by the presence of digital and social networking environments. As above-mentioned, digital technologies allow users to create, watch and share content easily. This has spawned businesses such as Netflix and Hulu that became household brands in distributing audiovisual content on demand, promising its users access to films and series. In Brazil, Netflix began operations in 2011 with a subscription price of R\$14,99 per month (around US\$7 at the time). As of November 2015⁴ the company offers three plans, starting at R\$17,90 (about U\$4,5) for one user without HD streaming up to R\$ 26,90 (circa U\$6,7) to four simultaneous streams including 4K. Still, it has yet to find the same relevance it has in the American market, troubled by limited consumer bandwidth.

However, companies are bound by legal contracts regarding distribution rights that restrict the availability of contents by country, region, or timeframe. Based on the same technological infrastructures, informal, peer-to-peer distribution does not follow such restrictions as its official counterpart and, therefore, ends up being more agile in delivering audiovisual content as it becomes available, sometimes minutes after the first broadcast. As the latter distribution mentioned follows the interest of users immediately, the first arrival of *Breaking Bad* in Brazil happened through unofficial means as will be described on the next segment of the text.

Internet enhanced the culture of sharing and appropriation in our society through its technological basis, catalysing a “copyleft culture” as defined by Lemos (2005). As discussed by Castro (2006), users have the perception that downloading music on the internet is similar to borrowing a CD, and those practices are not perceived as a crime, but as a way of sharing among friends. Reciprocity, an essential part of the culture related to content sharing on internet, is very important for the construction of social life and is a very strong element in Brazilian culture where personal relationships are more important than other bonds, as defined by Da Matta (1994) and Ortiz (1994). Often in this national context the practice of piracy seems normal and treated as a simple exchange of kindness between peers, thus something not illegal. This culture operates through sociability, ending up eventually disrespecting the property of the products and services through distribution of extra official copies, understood as a kind of impromptu fair use policy.

Overcoming piracy is a challenge that producers must face today. Despite the corporate vision of businesses that the digital sharing services are the great villains and should be blamed for a crisis in media consumption, researches suggest that these unorthodox services only exist because the industry has not adapted fully to the emerging consumer models (Lima & Oliveira, 2005: 52), a conceptual battle that has yet to be resolved and continues to impact the content distribution.

⁴ Brazil has faced a severe currency devaluation in 2015, thus the values in US\$ were converted considering U\$1 = BRL 4.

5. COMPARING *BREAKING BAD*'S DISTRIBUTION IN BRAZIL AND THE USA

At our final segment in this text, we take a look at the release dates in USA and Brazil of the various media of distribution of *Breaking Bad*, thus identifying the evidence of change in the audience engagement and the greater agility imposed by the extra official distribution practices on traditional media when comparing the series premiere in 2008 to its finale in 2013.

To do so, the authors chose to restrict the distribution media to five main outlets and one marker of online activity: broadcast TV (over-the-air, free, prevalent in Brazil); cable and satellite TV (subscription-based), DVD (released as a complete season or, in the fifth and final one, the last half-series), Netflix (among the various online video services, the one that is available both in the USA and Brazil), Pirated copies (as made available on BitTorrent sharing websites⁵) and the subtitles of such pirated copies (as accessible in online communities dedicated to portuguese-speaking fans). The choice of such media is justified by the wide gamut of distribution practices it indicates: from the original producers, fans, casual viewers and online audiences.

The data were collected on the first week of November 2015 from various sources for cross-checking: Broadcast dates were verified on the television networks' websites⁶ and checked on press coverage of the transmission⁷; DVD release dates were cross-checked on online retailers⁸ and communities' websites⁹; Netflix dates were observed through the company's press releases and checked on fan communities and media coverage; extra official copies and subtitles are timestamped on the websites when made available¹⁰. In all cases, the dates found indicate the earliest consistent day of public availability of each medium.

However, the undertaking of such research on television products' circulation is not an easy job, and seldom one is entirely certain of what you find. What the authors can surely affirm is that these dates are the earliest manifestations of each category found online. Even so, as online information is easily made ephemeral if it does not continue to circulate, there may be earlier manifestations, to be retrieved and corrected by future media archaeologists.

Chart nº1 shows the release dates to four of the media outlets discussed previously. On the chart, the Y axis lists the media outlets and the marker and the X axis represents the

⁵ The choice of BitTorrent as the extra official distribution technology of choice resides in its resilience in escaping blocking and deletion online.

⁶ The networks' websites consulted were AMC for the USA and AXN and Record in Brazil.

⁷ The authors chose to check the media reports on newspapers with both high reputation and circulation: The New York Times for the USA and Folha de São Paulo for Brazil.

⁸ As online retailers the authors chose to turn to Amazon.com for the North American market and to Submarino.com to the Brazilian counterpart.

⁹ Eventual cross-checking was made on fan pages and websites. The sites of choice were *Breaking Bad* Brasil (<http://www.breakingbadbrasil.com>) dedicated to the Brazilian fans and *Breaking Bad* Wikia (<http://breakingbad.wikia.com/>).

¹⁰ Online availability of extraofficial copies of the show was checked on The Pirate Bay (<http://www.thepiratebay.se>) and the search returned only more recent versions of the episodes, extracted mostly from DVD and Blu-Ray releases. Other sites were found with earlier dates of postage for the episodes, the earliest being Torrent Mule (<http://torrentmule.com>). Subtitles were retrieved from the web sites Open Subtitles (<http://www.opensubtitles.com>) and the Brazilian-based Legendas.TV (<http://www.legendas.tv>).

release dates in both countries, with the center column indicating the number of days the releases are apart. In this chart we chose to omit the data related to Netflix because its services in Brazil did not begin until 2011, what would suggest a delay that did not reflect eventual changes in the distribution practices.

Pilot: episode nº1	USA	Difference (days)	Brazil
Broadcast TV	-	-	14/01/2014
Cable TV	20/01/2008	863	01/06/2010
DVD (season 1)	24/02/2009	134	08/07/2009
Piracy		20/01/2008	
Subtitle	24/01/2008	5	29/01/2008

Chart nº1 — Comparison of dates between releases of the Pilot

The first chart indicates some interesting differences between the North American and Brazilian relationship with *Breaking Bad*. As the USA dates indicate, they follow a conventional release path, having the first premiere on AMC and later reaching DVD. The pressure of the extra official distribution follows the release dates closely, with the first copies made available on open torrent trackers right after the broadcast.

The Brazilian columns show a completely different dynamic. The first sign of *Breaking Bad* reaching a national audience was sighted as the translated subtitle to the file “Breaking.Bad.S01E01.DSR.XviD-0TV” was posted online on 29/01/2008, nine days after the series premiere, with the next episodes following this pattern. The complete first season was released on DVD approximately four months after its launch in the American market. Cable television arrived nearly two and a half years after its premiere. Last came Brazilian broadcast television, almost six years behind, and only after the series had reached syndication¹¹ in the USA.

This “inverted path” on the Brazilian consumption of *Breaking Bad* gives us clues to the relevance of the serial narrative structure to create a fan base as well as enable binge-watching as soon as the season is complete and released on DVD. These core viewers were the first to watch the series in Brazil, and remained a relatively tight group as a comparison with Chart nº2 will show.

Finale: episode nº62	USA	Difference (days)	Brazil
Broadcast TV	-	-	09/07/2014
Cable TV	29/09/2013	124	31/01/2014
DVD (2nd part, last season)	26/11/2013	15	11/12/2013
Netflix (2nd part, last season)	24/02/2014	5	01/03/2014
Piracy		30/09/2014	
Subtitle			

Chart nº2 — Comparison of dates between releases of the Finale

Chart nº2 shows a whole different context from the series premiere. In the USA column it is possible to observe that the distribution windows continued to follow the same steps, with one clear difference: the time from the television broadcast to the DVD

¹¹ According to Goldberg (2013) the series reached syndication on the Sundance Channel, affiliated with AMC, on march 2013.

release shrank from nearly one year in the first season to less than two months in the last one. We attribute this both to the great success that the show has met and the sense of urgency that extra official distribution practices have brought to the market.

By comparison, the Brazilian data column in chart nº2 also shows a different dynamic. The season finale was accompanied by great media coverage on the perceived quality and relevance of the show to the television medium. This was first reflected on the speed of the extra official subtitling fans, that delivered the translation in less than a day after the broadcast aired and was uploaded online. This indicates also a pressure for greater speed in the fan communities.

Continuing with the trend indicated in Chart nº1 where the release dates indicated that the series in Brazil first formed its core viewers online and on DVD, the last half of the fifth season was available on disc nearly one month and a half before it was shown on Cable television. The DVD box with the final episodes was released in Brazil only two weeks after the North American market, nearly nine times faster than the first season.

Perhaps the most curious information to emerge from the comparison of both charts is that Brazil got a complete showing of the series during 2014 on broadcast TV, albeit an unsuccessful one regarding the ratings. The rights were acquired by Rede Record, the second-largest network in the country, and the premiere date intended to take advantage of the series finale airdate on Cable TV, borrowing interest on the subject from the hype raised by the culture journalism coverage. However, as the core audiences had already watched the series elsewhere, the broadcast network found *Breaking Bad* not to be the blockbuster it was expected to be.

6. CLOSING COMMENTS

The observation of the dates in both countries offers clues about how television shows are consumed - and spread - under pressure from on demand distribution. On one hand we can stress the acceleration of the release windows in Brazil that the extra official distribution practices of the first episodes of *Breaking Bad* demonstrated. The series reached the south american's country audience first online, later on DVD, and only after that on TV. It followed the opposite order of the distribution on its primary market, what points to an important movement from the series' potential consumers: if the official means are not able to deliver the desired goods, someone will manage to bridge this gap.

With TV shows going to on-demand platforms, by official or non-official ways, audience abandoned a routine based on TV stations schedules in all moments but the episodes' premiere dates. The series finale shows a very different dynamic, this time centered on the acceleration of the distribution practices, what is evident in the narrowing of the gap between the American and Brazilian release dates, trying to beat the speed of delivery often found on extra official channels. The rules of engagement between audiences and producers are constantly being rewritten both by saturation of formulas and formats and the precipitation brought by digital technologies. The serial drama structure naturally demands more attention from its spectator than the procedural

drama format does. As it shows a long story with bigger narrative arcs and complex elements, this format requires a greater engagement from its audience so they can fully immerse themselves in the plot. Long format, highly serialized, narratives, are hardly anything new. But is a good fit to the online distribution context of the second decade of the 21th century.

This level of engagement was facilitated thanks to the popularization of new forms of consumption – as season releases on DVD, DVRs, digital content stores and on demand streaming platforms. These new technologies have enabled a new form of interaction between the viewers and the content. As a result, these complex narrative structures found their own consumers. The dynamics of distribution in *Breaking Bad* illustrate this, as new circulation systems demand not only good content, but that creators understand the dynamics of an ever changing media landscape.

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