

# Go Fourth and Prosper

Why a curated platform of fourth season offerings is the next big thing in television streaming



# Introduction

## A new mandate for streamers

As audience viewing habits shift more and more toward digital streaming, the importance of content curation becomes increasingly clear. Despite the veritable smorgasbord of entertainment options at their fingertips, audiences' hunger for media has not been satisfied. On the contrary, many viewers find the amount of choice in streaming content more oppressive than enjoyable. Think about a popular chain restaurant's expansive menu: there's something for everyone, but you have to look through everything to find it, and that's how you end up with Chicken Marsala.

To combat decision fatigue and promote customer retention, streamers need to streamline. By drawing on qualitative data and analysis to offer a tailored selection of content, media providers can give television audiences easy access to more of the media they want and less of the rest.



# Trends in streaming

## Lead us into curation

Streaming enables access to more and more content at the press of a button, but the increase in choice results in an embarrassment of riches. Overwhelmed by the deluge of available content, audiences spend an increasing amount of time scrolling instead of watching. In response to this entertainment dilemma, the television industry has a clear mandate—**curation, curation, curation**.

The average American consumer spends **45 hours** per year choosing what to watch next.

- Source: Vox

To provide the best experience for the viewer, digital platforms must refine their approach to selecting which content to license or produce for streaming. Rather than providing an impossibly vast library of titles, including every season of every television series they offer, some streaming platforms are beginning to tailor their offerings around specific seasons of television shows.

Most notably, NBC's Peacock streaming service differentiates levels of membership access by which seasons of "The Office" are available to stream—baseline Peacock members may stream only seasons 1 & 2, while Premium and Premium Plus members have access to all episodes.

By dividing access to different seasons of the same series by membership level, Peacock underlines an important trend in consumer behavior: viewers will pay for access to specific seasons of their favorite shows, not necessarily the complete series. Even in an era when binge watching has become the norm, the sheer amount of television viewers must consume to remain au courant means that very few finish every show they binge in its entirety. The more effective strategy for streaming platforms—and the preferred option for viewers—is to curate television offerings around the content viewers enjoy the most.

**36%** of streaming subscribers – including **56%** of respondents who subscribe to five or more services – said they were likely to use a shuffle feature that randomly selected a film or TV show for them to watch.

**27%** of streaming subscribers say there are too many entertainment options available on streaming services.

- Source: Morning Consult

# The peak of Peak TV

## One season stands above the rest

Before digital streaming disrupted the television landscape, the mark of a high-quality show was defined by the 100-episode syndication model. Under this model, a television series that reached a threshold of at least 100 episodes would be considered eligible for syndication, as that number would enable TV stations to broadcast episodes every weekday for five months before repeating the cycle. In recent years that number has dropped to just 88—roughly four seasons of 22 episodes each—but the mark of quality conferred by syndication still remains an important signifier. Television shows aim to improve steadily over those 88 episodes to prove their merit and earn the badge of syndication. As a result, the fourth season, often the last hurdle before that goal may be reached, traditionally represents the best a series has to offer.

While digital streaming has upended the syndication model in some ways, the new status quo still favors the superiority of the fourth season. Broad, universally appealing series composed of traditional 22-episode seasons are slowly giving way to shorter, more finely crafted arcs of television, flipping the 100-episode syndication model on its head. Now, the length of the typical TV show is shrinking, not only in the average number of episodes—approximately 6-10—but also in the average number of seasons—approximately 3-4. That means that instead of building toward syndication, today's television shows are more likely to build toward a fourth season climax.

The lifespan of the average streaming television series is between 3 and 4 seasons.

- Source: The Ringer

In other words: then and now, the fourth season of a TV show tends to be the best.



# Why Quatrio?

## Does the world need another streaming service?

Quatrio's data-driven, quantitative approach to content curation is the first of its kind in the digital streaming industry. While other platforms ignore the problem of content overload, offering multiple seasons of uneventful exposition and forcing the burden of choice upon the viewer, Quatrio is the first to ask the question: why wait to get to the good stuff?

Drawing on robust statistical analysis indicating that, on average, the fourth season of any television series is the most impactful, Quatrio offers our viewers exactly what they want to see—their favorite shows at peak quality—and nothing else.

**That's right: it's season 4 and nothing more.**

**Forget binge watching. This is cut-to-order television.**



# The arc of television quality

## The number 4 echoes through network history

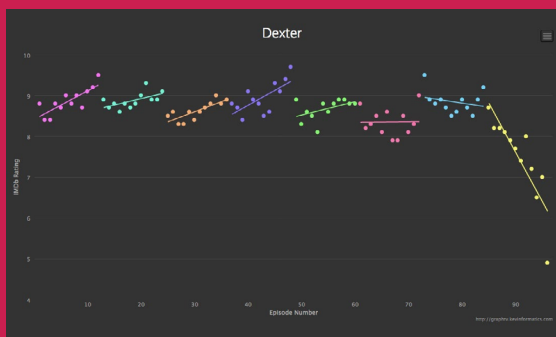
Showrunners and audiences alike are familiar with the idea of a “sophomore slump”—the ill-fated second season of a once-promising television show that loses its way thematically before redeeming itself in later seasons. Extending the metaphor of academia offers a helpful framework by which to understand the general arc of a television program’s quality. If season 2 represents a series’s sophomore slump, then season 4 is its senior year—welcome to the party.

### An abbreviated list of TV shows that peaked in season 4:

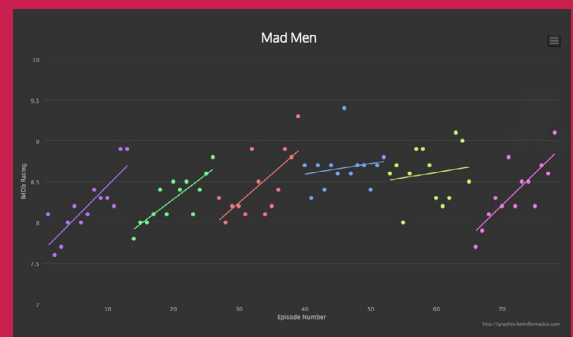
- Halt and Catch Fire
- Breaking Bad
- Seinfeld
- Dexter
- The Wire
- The Office
- Mad Men
- The Larry Sanders Show
- Friends
- Game of Thrones
- Rectify
- Archer
- The Americans
- The Simpsons
- Shameless

The early seasons of a television series are a crucible in more ways than one. On the artistic side, actors develop a rapport with one another and deepen their understanding of their characters. Writers lay the groundwork for seasons-long storylines that, with luck, will come to fruition down the line. Directors, camera people and other crew members develop a shorthand with one another and with the actors that will lead to more effective communication and a more polished final product.

Early success may even provide the production with the budget to aspire to bigger and better things: more elaborate visual effects, higher quality costumes, flashier stunts. To borrow from sports, the first seasons of a TV show might be described as “building seasons”—planting the seeds for something wonderful to come. By the time a show reaches its fourth season, all of those seeds have sprouted and borne fruit. The result is a narratively and stylistically cohesive season of television produced by a cast and crew at the height of their powers.



Graph of Dexter series quality organized by season and episode number  
- Source: Graph TV



Graph of Mad Men series quality organized by season and episode number  
- Source: Graph TV

# Numerology and the subconscious mind

## It's all in your head—and your head is real

Though the appeal of a television show's fourth season is attributable in large part to the coalescence of talent and expertise on set—the accrual of Malcolm Gladwell's famous (though scientifically dubious) 10,000 hours—there are subtle psychological forces at play as well. The number four has carried auspicious symbolism throughout history, particularly in Western cultures. Beyond the most obvious association—the four-leaf clover—the number four also has symbolic significance linked to those of the cross and the square, symbolizing wholeness and universality.

Furthermore, four is literally written into the DNA of the natural world. There are four nucleotide bases, four states of matter, four seasons, to say nothing of the innumerable and subtle ways the number appears in politics, religion, music, computing, philosophy, and many other areas of our lives.

The ubiquity of the number four bestows an implicit significance on the fourth item in any series. Thousands of years of inherited symbolism mean that humans tend to have subconscious positive associations with the number, whether or not they are aware of it. Not only does the number four convey balance, stability, and symmetry, it also embodies more abstract concepts such as luck, justice, and even the idea of deity. The ancient Pythagoreans believed four to be a perfect number, symbolizing God, while these days, Beyoncé and Jay-Z (wedding anniversary: [April 4](#)) are both obsessed with it.

The accumulation of symbolism in our collective psyche informs our subconscious preferences. Statistically, the fourth season of any television series is not only more likely to be of a higher standard of artistic quality due to the cohesion of its cast and crew. Viewers are more likely to perceive it as being of high quality due to unconscious positive associations with the number four.



# A new path four-ward

## Has traditional streaming run its course?

Quatrio represents the next generation of television streaming platforms, bringing viewers the content they want most. Backed by robust scientific research and quantitative data, we deliver the elite fourth season of all your favorite shows via mobile app—plus web browser, smart TVs, and other media players.

**The time for binging is over. Now, in streaming, less is more.**

To learn more about Quatrio, visit [quatr.io](http://quatr.io).

