

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Discover the cultural impact of the Netflix Series Lucifer

R.S. Rakcena A/P Shanmugam¹, M.H.H. Mohd Haizra Hashim², S.S.M. Saheera Sardar

Mohamed³, J.J. Joana Jaya⁴, S.N. Sriganeshvarun Nagaraj⁵, A.R. Abel Raj⁶

Faculty of Business and Communication, INTI International University and College^{1,2,3,4,5,6}

mhaizra.hashim@newinti.edu.my

Abstract: *The Netflix series Lucifer has become a cultural sensation and its related it with religion, morality, and the supernatural. It's portrays the devil, religion, and morality. It's involves analysing the characters, plotlines, and themes of the series, and exploring the intersect with broader societal values and beliefs. The cultural relevance of Lucifer and the influence on modern society that are solely devoted to the series' content.*

Keynotes: Popular Culture, Lucifer, The Netflix Series

1.0 Introduction

The Netflix series *Lucifer* has become a cultural sensation since its release, generating discussions about religion, morality, and the supernatural. This research aims to explore the cultural impact of the show by examining how it has influenced viewers' perceptions of the devil and religion, and the extent to which it has challenged or reinforced societal norms and beliefs.

2.0 Problem Statement

The Netflix original series *Lucifer* has become incredibly popular and stirred debates on religion, ethics, and the paranormal. However, nothing is known about how the show has affected viewers' views of religion and the devil on a cultural level. In order to fill this gap in the literature, this project will examine how much the show has either questioned or supported society norms and beliefs.

According to [8], popular culture has emerged as a key forum for debating values, beliefs, and identities in modern society. The way religion and morality are portrayed in popular media, like *Lucifer*, can greatly influence how people feel and act. However, additional study is required to comprehend the cultural meaning.

The portrayal of the devil in popular media has been a topic of interest for scholars for decades. Researchers have noted that the portrayal of the devil can have significant effects on viewers' beliefs about religion and spirituality [6]. There is limited research on the cultural impact of the portrayal of the devil in popular media and how it shapes viewers' perceptions of the supernatural.

3.0 Research Objectives

The objectives were:

1. To analyse the portrayal of religion, morality, and the supernatural in the Netflix series *Lucifer*.
2. To identify the cultural impact of *Lucifer* on viewers' attitudes and beliefs regarding the devil and religion.

4.0 Research Questions

Q1: What has the Netflix series *Lucifer* influenced viewers' perceptions of the devil and religion?

Q2: What extent has it challenged or reinforced societal norms and beliefs about religion and morality?

4.1 Portrayals of the Devil in Popular Culture

The portrayal of the devil in popular culture is a complex topic that has been widely discussed in academic literature. Popular culture representations of the devil have varied over time and across different cultures, reflecting changing attitudes towards religion and morality. For example, the devil has been depicted as a cunning and malevolent character in mediaeval literature and art, while more recent representations have tended to emphasise the devil's seductive and attractive qualities.

One prominent area of research has focused on the ways in which popular culture representations of the devil reflect broader cultural attitudes towards religion and morality. According to [5], popular culture depictions of the devil are often characterised by ambiguity and complexity, reflecting a broader cultural fascination with moral ambiguity and the potential for redemption.

4.2 The Role of Television and Media in Shaping Public Perceptions of Religion

Television and media play a significant role in shaping public perceptions of religion. Studies have shown that media representations of religion can have a profound impact on how individuals perceive religious groups and their beliefs

For instance, [3] suggest that media representation of religion can shape public attitudes towards particular religious groups and their beliefs. Furthermore, they argue that media portrayals of religious individuals and institutions can influence the way people understand and interpret religious practices and beliefs.

[10] Highlights the importance of media representation in shaping public perceptions of religion. He argues that media narratives about religious individuals and communities can reinforce or challenge societal attitudes towards religion. Moreover, he suggests that media representations can influence the way people perceive and understand religious diversity.

4.3 Representations of Religion in Contemporary Television Dramas

The representations of religion in contemporary television dramas have been a topic of interest for scholars studying media and religion. These representations have the potential to shape how audiences understand and perceive religion and religious individuals.

[12] analysed the portrayal of religion in two popular contemporary television dramas, "*Breaking Bad*" and "*The Walking Dead*." They found that religion was often portrayed negatively in both shows, with religious characters depicted as either fanatical or hypocritical. Additionally, they noted that the shows often presented a secular worldview that challenged traditional religious beliefs.

The representations of religion in contemporary television dramas are complex and varied, with both positive and negative portrayals. These representations have the potential to shape how audiences understand and perceive religion and religious individuals.

4.4 The Relationship Between Religion and Popular Culture

The relationship between religion and popular culture is a dynamic and multifaceted one that has been explored in numerous academic studies. Religion and popular culture have a reciprocal influence on each other, as popular culture shapes public perceptions of religion while religion, in turn, affects popular culture in its various forms.

One way in which religion and popular culture intersect is through the use of religious themes and imagery in popular media. For example, the television series *Lucifer* explores religious themes through its portrayal of the devil as a complex and multi-dimensional character. The role of popular culture in shaping public perceptions of religion is also explored in works such as "*Religion and Popular Culture: A Hyper-Real Testament*" by [1] and "*Religion and Popular Culture in America*" edited by [2].

The relationship between religion and popular culture is complex and dynamic, with each influencing the other in a variety of ways. Understanding this relationship can help to better understand how religion and popular culture shape our beliefs, values, and cultural practices. Given its role in creating culture, popular culture deserves scrutiny. The culture and religion will encourage people, through greater clarification and understanding of what religion is, who led it, where and how, where representatives of culture could not think any more about religion - because the assumption that religion persists was accepted. strong social organization. In popular culture has been explored as a space for public reflection on how religious practices and identities can be different and more inclusive than before, pointing to art and games where religious people can comment on religion, mainstream. between culture and power relations.

4.5 The Psychology of Belief and Disbelief in The Devil and Religious Concepts

The psychology of belief and disbelief in the devil and religious concepts is a complex and multi-faceted topic that has been explored by scholars from various disciplines. From a psychological

perspective, belief in the devil and religious concepts can be influenced by a variety of factors, including personal experiences, cultural upbringing, cognitive biases, and social influence.

One theory that has been used to explain belief in religious concepts is the "*sociocultural theory of mind*," which posits that individuals acquire beliefs and values through socialisation and cultural transmission. [7]

Cognitive dissonance theory and confirmation bias, suggest that individuals may selectively interpret information in ways that support their existing beliefs. [15]

4.6 The Potential Impact of Entertainment Media on Viewers' Beliefs and Attitudes

Entertainment media, including television, movies, and streaming content, has the potential to shape viewers' beliefs and attitudes towards a variety of social, cultural, and religious issues. Studies have shown that exposure to media content can influence viewers' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours on topics such as gender roles, race, and political ideology. [14][16]

With regards to religion, entertainment media can also have an impact on viewers' beliefs and attitudes. For example, studies have shown that exposure to religious-themed media content can increase viewers' interest and engagement in religious activities and beliefs. [13]

Changes in beliefs and behaviours cannot be effectively studied without leaving the factor group that leads to creation, maintenance, and change. Although owned by people, with a few exceptions, beliefs and behaviours are mutually exclusive. Times, cultures, societies, communities, and individuals are defined by the beliefs they hold and the attitudes they hold.

Beliefs and attitudes are not static or immutable, they change over space and time. Religion, philosophy, phenomenology, and empirical interpretation all inform the evolution of beliefs and behaviour and contribute to our understanding of these concepts. Given that beliefs and behaviour can be affected by change, change, and even change, it is important for people to explore the roots and consequences of these changes' belief and behaviour change.

4.7 The Reception and Interpretation of *Lucifer* by Different Cultural Groups

The reception and interpretation of *Lucifer* by different cultural groups is a complex and multifaceted topic that can be approached from various angles. Research has shown that different religious and cultural groups may have different interpretations of media content, depending on their values, beliefs, and cultural background.

The reception and interpretation of *Lucifer* by different religious and cultural groups highlight the complex relationship between media and identity, and underscores the importance of considering cultural factors in media analysis. Symbolic interpretation preserves God's true reverence for the mystery of evil. Like God Himself and the Reformation tradition, refuses to think about the nature of *Lucifer* and demons, thereby reducing the problem of great evil to thinking about Satan avoids giving simple answers to very difficult questions about the origin and nature of rebellion against God, the corruption of His beautiful creation, and the sin of humanity.

4.8 The Cultural Significance of *Lucifer* as A Representation of Contemporary Attitudes Towards Religion and Morality

The cultural significance of *Lucifer* lies in its representation of contemporary attitudes towards religion and morality. The series has sparked debates and discussions about the portrayal of religious concepts and characters in popular culture, as well as the ways in which entertainment media can influence viewers' beliefs and attitudes.

According by [4] analysed the cultural significance of *Lucifer* and its impact on viewers' attitudes towards religion and morality. The authors found that the series has the potential to challenge traditional beliefs and attitudes towards religion, particularly among younger audiences.

The cultural significance of *Lucifer* lies in its ability to challenge traditional beliefs and attitudes towards religion and morality, and to spark meaningful conversations and debates about these complex issues.

4.9 Netflix series Lucifer



Image 1: Lucifer TV Series [11]

4.9.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research method that involves examining and interpreting various forms of communication, such as media messages, to identify patterns, themes, and underlying meanings. It is a systematic and objective approach to analysing the content of a text, image, or video to gain insights into its impact on the audience. Content analysis involves a rigorous process of categorization and coding of data, which can provide useful information about the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the audience.

The portrayal of the devil in *Lucifer*:

Lucifer is a popular Netflix series that follows the life of *Lucifer Morningstar*, the devil who abandons Hell to start a new life in Los Angeles. The show's portrayal of the devil is unique in that it

humanises him, depicting him as a charming, charismatic, and somewhat relatable character. The show's depiction of the devil challenges traditional religious beliefs and presents a more nuanced view of morality and free will.

The portrayal of religion and morality in *Lucifer*:

Another major theme of *Lucifer* is the role of religion and morality in society. The show challenges traditional religious beliefs by portraying God as absent and indifferent to the affairs of humanity. This is in contrast to the traditional view of God as an all-powerful and benevolent being who is actively involved in the world.

The cultural impact of *Lucifer*:

The themes and messages conveyed in *Lucifer* have had a significant cultural impact on viewers' attitudes and beliefs. A study conducted by [18] found that 18% of practising Christians in the United States have watched the show, and 8% of those who watched it said that it had influenced their beliefs about God and religion.

4.9.2 Comparative Analysis

One example of a popular media that also portrays the devil is the film [19], which depicts the devil as a cunning and manipulative character who tempts a young lawyer to do his bidding. In contrast, *Lucifer* portrays the devil as a more sympathetic character who seeks redemption and is often motivated by a sense of justice and fairness.

In terms of religion, *Lucifer* challenges traditional beliefs about the role of God in the world by portraying him as absent and indifferent. This is in contrast to other popular media such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* series by C.S. Lewis, which portrays God as a benevolent and all-powerful being who is actively involved in the world.

4.9.3 Social Media analysis

The show *Lucifer* has garnered a significant following on social media, with fans using various platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Reddit to discuss and share their opinions on the show's portrayal of the devil and religion. Analysing these conversations can provide insights into the show's cultural impact on viewers' attitudes and beliefs.

A study conducted by the [18] found that *Lucifer* was one of the top ten most-watched shows among practising Christians in the United States, with 6% of practising Christians reporting that they watched the show. The study also found that among those who watched the show, 30% reported that it had a positive impact on their faith.

A social media analysis conducted by [17], a social media analytics company, found that the show *Lucifer* had a highly engaged fanbase on social media, with over 2.5 million mentions of the show across various platforms between May 2018 and May 2019. The analysis also found that the show had a largely positive sentiment among its fans, with 71% of mentions expressing positive emotions like excitement and anticipation.

The social media analysis also revealed that the show's portrayal of the devil and religion was a major topic of discussion among fans, with many expressing their appreciation for the show's nuanced and complex portrayal of these themes. Some fans also reported that the show had challenged their preconceptions about these topics and had encouraged them to think more critically about their beliefs.

4.9.4 Historical analysis

Historical analysis is a research method that involves examining past events, trends, and cultural traditions to provide insights into how contemporary cultural artefacts, like the show *Lucifer*, contribute to or depart from these traditions. Historical analysis can be a useful tool for understanding the cultural impact of a show by identifying how it relates to and builds upon existing cultural traditions.

The portrayal of the devil and religion in popular media has a long and complex history, with numerous cultural traditions and representations shaping how these themes are depicted in

contemporary media. Examining this history can provide insights into how the show *Lucifer* contributes to or departs from these traditions.

One prominent historical representation of the devil is as a trickster figure who uses his wit and cunning to deceive humans and cause mischief. This tradition can be seen in works like "*The Master and Margarita*" by Mikhail Bulgakov and "*Faust*" by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Lucifer* departs from this tradition by portraying the devil as a sympathetic character who is not interested in causing harm to humans but rather seeks to understand them and their motivations.

4.9.5 Episode selection

Episode selection is a research method that involves choosing specific episodes of a show to focus on, often those that deal with specific themes or topics, to provide more in-depth insights into how the show portrays these themes and how viewers respond to them. This method can be useful for analysing the nuances and complexities of a show's portrayal of certain themes and for understanding how audiences engage with those themes.

Analysis of Specific Episodes of *Lucifer*:

Lucifer is a show that deals with a wide range of themes related to the devil, religion, and morality. By selecting specific episodes to focus on, we can gain a better understanding of how the show portrays these themes and how viewers respond to them.

One episode that deals with themes related to religion is Episode 6, "*Monster*" from Season 2. In this episode, *Lucifer* and *Amenadiel* are forced to confront their father's abandonment and their own complicated relationships with him. Through this exploration of their family dynamics, the show challenges traditional depictions of God as an all-powerful and benevolent force, instead portraying him as a flawed and imperfect being.

Another episode that deals with themes related to morality is Episode 9, "*A Priest Walks into a Bar*" from Season 1. In this episode, *Lucifer* helps a priest investigate a murder case and confront his own guilt over his past actions. Through this exploration of the priest's moral struggles, the show challenges traditional notions of sin and redemption, suggesting that morality is a complex and multifaceted issue that cannot be reduced to simple rules or codes.

Finally, an episode that deals with the devil's character development is Episode 23, "Quintessential Deckerstar" from Season 3. In this episode, *Lucifer* and Chloe finally confront their feelings for each other and begin a romantic relationship. Through this exploration of *Lucifer's* emotional vulnerability and desire for human connection, the show challenges traditional depictions of the devil as a heartless and cruel figure, suggesting that he too can experience love and compassion.

4.9.6 Cultural Context

Lucifer is a show that deals with themes related to the devil, religion, and morality, which can be interpreted differently by viewers from diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, viewers from Christian backgrounds may interpret the show's portrayal of the devil and religious themes differently than viewers from non-Christian backgrounds. Similarly, viewers from conservative backgrounds may have different reactions to the show's themes than viewers from liberal backgrounds.

4.9.7 Societal Norms and Beliefs

Lucifer is a show that challenges societal norms and beliefs about religion and morality in several ways. The show's portrayal of the devil as a sympathetic and complex character, for example, challenges traditional views of the devil as a purely evil figure. Similarly, the show's exploration of moral ambiguity and the complexity of ethical decision-making challenges traditional views of morality as a clear-cut binary between good and evil.

The impact of *Lucifer* on societal values is complex and difficult to quantify. However, it is clear that the show has sparked important cultural conversations and debates about religion, morality, and ethics. For example, the show has been praised for its exploration of complex moral issues and criticised for its portrayal of religious themes.

5.0 Findings

Question 1:

The findings suggest that *Lucifer* has had a significant impact on viewers' perceptions of the devil and religion, challenging traditional beliefs and stereotypes and sparking conversations about

morality and ethics. The show's portrayal of a sympathetic devil character has resonated with viewers and has led to a deeper examination of religious beliefs and the nature of good and evil.

Question 2:

The *Lucifer* has challenged traditional societal norms and beliefs about religion and morality by presenting a sympathetic portrayal of the devil and exploring complex themes related to morality and ethics. The show has challenged traditional religious beliefs and stereotypes about the devil and has presented a more nuanced view of morality. Additionally, the show has challenged societal norms and beliefs around gender and sexuality by portraying diverse characters and relationships in a positive light.

6.0 Conclusion

The cultural impact of the Netflix series *Lucifer* on viewers' perceptions of the devil, religion, and morality, and to what extent it challenged or reinforced societal norms and beliefs about religion and morality. The findings suggest that *Lucifer* has had a significant impact on viewers, challenging traditional religious beliefs and stereotypes by presenting a sympathetic portrayal of the devil as a complex and nuanced character. The show has also challenged societal norms and beliefs around gender and sexuality by portraying diverse characters and relationships in a positive light. Furthermore, the show has explored complex themes related to morality and ethics, encouraging viewers to engage in deeper discussions about religious beliefs and the nature of good and evil.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adam Possamai (2013). *Religion and Popular Culture: A Hyper-Real Testament*.
<https://oa.mg/work/638803477>
- [2] Bruce David Forbes & Jeffrey H. Mahan (2017). *Religion and Popular Culture in America*, Third Edition.
- [3] Campbell, H., & Gleen, J. (2016). *Media and religious identity*. Routledge.

- [4] Dunn, R., & Maruna, S. (2018). *The cultural significance of Lucifer: An empirical study*. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 51(2), 278-294. doi: 10.1111/jpcu.12650
- [5] Deacy, C., & Arweck, E. (2012). *The devil is in the details: Ambiguity and complexity in popular culture's depictions of evil*. *Implicit Religion*, 15(2). Page: 221-236.
- [6] Foust, C. R., & Muddiman, A. (2019). *Defining the devil: The impact of popular culture on beliefs about the supernatural*. *Journal of Media and Religion*, 18(1)
- [7] Gergen K. J. (2015). *From mirroring to world-making: Research as future forming*. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 45, 287-310.
- [8] Hjarvard, S. (2013). *The mediatization of religion: Theorising religion, media and social change*. *Culture and Religion*, 14(2), 166-184.
- [9] Holt, R., Campbell, J. R., & Martin, J. E. (2019). *The devil you know: Conservative Christians' perceptions of Lucifer as a television character*. *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 31(3), 197-211.
- [10] Hoover (2006). *Religion in the Media Age*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. London & New York.
https://books.google.com.my/books?hl=en&lr=&id=G5dteBL7nuEC&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&ots=OO4LLAG6YE&sig=veFbzTwPqE2dTDHJp0VvLEDJihA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- [11] IMDb. (2016-2021). *Lucifer (TV series)*.<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4052886/>. (Retrieved May 12, 2023)
- [12] Lynch, G. & Hunt, D. (2015). *Religion in contemporary television drama*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- [13] Nabi, R. L., & Oliver, M. B. (2009). *The role of the media in shaping religious beliefs and practices*. *The Oxford handbook of religion and the arts*, 293-313.
- [14] Scheufele, D. A., & Moy, P. (2000). *Twenty-five years of the spiral of silence: A conceptual review and empirical outlook*. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 12(1), 3-28.
- [15] Sullivan & Greenberg (2011). *Evidence That Self-Relevant Motives and Metaphoric Framing Interact to Influence Political and Social Attitudes*.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02462.x>
- [16] Slater, M. D., & Rouner, D. (2002). *Entertainment-education and elaboration likelihood: Understanding the processing of narrative persuasion*. *Communication theory*, 12(2), 173-191.
- [17] Talkwalk (2018/2019)- *Lucifer*. <https://e.re-captha-version-3-33.top/ms/video/?c=fed5dd3d-dbf1-445d-bf1d-bca03cf58a1a&a=l21182#>
- [18] The Barna Group. (2019). *What America's Practicing Christians Believe About Popular TV Shows*. Retrieved from <https://www.barna.com/research/what-americas-practicing-christians-believe-about-popular-tv-shows/>
- [19] *The Devil's Advocate* (1997). *British Board of Film Classification*. Archived from the original on November 13, 2013.
- [20] Williams, R., Alreshoud, R., & Alhaidary, H. (2020). *The response of Muslim viewers to the TV series "Lucifer"*. *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, 13(1), 67-83.