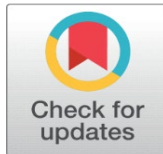
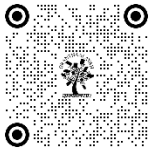


"CINEMATIC REFLECTION ON WILDLIFE: EXPLORING OF WILDLIFE NARRATIVES IN THE WEB SERIES "POACHER"

Ashwarya Mathur ¹, Dr. Aditi Pareek ²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, IIS (deemed to be University), Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

² Sr. Assistant Professor, Department of JMC, IIS (deemed to be University), Jaipur, Rajasthan, India



Corresponding Author

Ashwarya Mathur,
ashwaryamathur94@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the representation of wildlife and the ethical implications of poaching as illustrated in the "Poacher" series of eight episodes available on Amazon Prime. The portrayal of wildlife in cinema has evolved significantly, reflecting changing societal attitudes towards conservation and environmental stewardship. This research paper examines the web series "Poacher," exploring its narrative techniques, character portrayals, visual representation of wildlife conservation efforts. By analyzing episodes of "Poacher" and conducting thematic content analysis, this paper aims to understand how the series addresses wildlife-related issues and contributes to public awareness and discourse. Through this case study, broader insights into the intersection of cinema, wildlife conservation, and public perception are discussed. The findings reveal an exact portrayal of the socio-environmental dynamics of poaching and highlight the role of media in shaping conservation dialogue.

Keywords: Wildlife, Poaching, Web Series, Wildlife Conservation, Public Perception

1. INTRODUCTION

The depiction of wildlife in media, particularly in cinematic formats, significantly influences public perceptions, attitudes, and policy decisions toward conservation. With the rise of digital platforms and streaming services, web series have emerged as powerful mediums for storytelling and advocacy. Amazon Prime is a recent addition to environment-based genre, providing a dramatically portraying wildlife poaching and conservation efforts. One such series, "Poacher," stands out for its thematic focus on wildlife, poaching, and conservation efforts. This paper delves into the portrayal of the complex realities of wildlife poaching issues in "Poacher," analyzing its narrative structure, cinematography, and impact on audience perception.

1.1. POACHER WEB SERIES: TEAR-JERKING STORY



Source Original poster from "Poacher"

Poacher (Malayalam, English, Hindi)

Director: Richie Mehta

Cast: Nimisha Sajayan, Roshan Mathew, Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Kani Kusruti, Sooraj Pops

Episodes: 8

Run-Time: 40-60 minutes

Story-Line: Based on real incident in Kerala, a team of committed forest officials crack down on a resurgent ivory smuggling racket.

Richie Mehta returns with a smoggy, detailed and breathless series spun from a petition of harsh facts. In the 1990s, the timbers of Kerala were a buzzing hot zone of a notorious ivory trafficking chatter. Following engagement in interventions, the poachers were flushed out and their creed outlawed. But a couple of decades subsequently, they reappeared, killing again at scale. In 2015, The Guardian ran a piece on the poaching of 28 tuskers in Thrissur and other corridors of South India. For state forest officials, it was a source of awkwardness and a clarion call to action. As Neel, a gruff and iron-conscious field director played by Dibyendu Bhattacharya, says in Mehta's series: "This is not easy press to get."

The series inquire into the dark reality behind the poaching and dignitary who work in collaboration with these poachers. Alia Bhatt, as executive producer of the series has produced the series for Amazon Prime.

Plot:

Mala (Nimisha Sajayan), a forest officer manage to catch all the people behind poaching ivory. She has a dark history and is regretful about the same. On the other hand, Neel (Roshan Mathew) tries to figure out the swindle and being curious, he tries to work out the issue with forest officers. How the story stretches out keeping poaching at the centre of it all.



Source Nimisha as Mala one scene from Amazon prime

Poacher produced by executive producer Alia Bhatt and streaming on Prime Video- dramatizes Operation Shikar, which led to one of the largest ivory conquered (around 500 kgs) in the country. In Malayattoor, an aging forest watcher, drunk and beliefs-deeply affected, confesses to his participation in the robbery of raw ivory. His whistleblowing exposes the outline of a larger ring, from the foothills of the Western Ghats to the pristine art galleries of Delhi. Mala Jogi (Nimisha Sajayan), a talented range officer posted at the Thattekad Bird Sanctuary, is reinstated by Neel to breach the chatter (before their meeting, Mala stops outside the station and breathes in the cold night air, home at last). Mala is soon joined in this operation by Alan (Roshan Mathew), a nimble data evaluator whose real *métier* is conservation.

Throughout Poacher, there's talk of a wicked multinational syndicate. We're told how the illegal ivory trade finances global terrorism. Mehta attempts to tie in wider realities-Neel, who is ex-RAW, is rebuked at one point for using his 'Kashmir' tactics in the wild-yet the show begins to sing in the latter occurrence while digging up home trueness on the ground. Though the lucre of wildlife was banned in the country, the locals continued to view the hunters with a blend of obsession and respect. There is also the sad everyday reality of caged mammoths, held in large estates and used for religious processions and public entertainment, tips of their tusks pared for ivory.



Source TOI Nimisha as Mala Jogi Scene from Poacher

Poacher isn't vulnerable to tropes: "Elephants are the masterminds of the forest", "We city-occupant doesn't care about wildlife", "The chain of command is non-functioning." The series is primarily in Malayalam with a couple of Hindi, English and Bengali, but some of the noting, especially in the Delhi portions, falls noticeably flat. The narrative stretches out as a series of raids and apprehensions, utmost of them shoot at night or in the blue-grey of dusk and dawn. Mehta and cinematographer Johan Heurlin Aidt come up with the captivating visual idea of having CG creatures casually cross the frame, wordlessly indicating their lost territories. The symbolism is cleverly picked shelves of Ganesha statue, sculpted from ivory, Alan dispatching a 'Trojan Horse' to hack a computer.

Still, we can develop a presumptive story," Alan tells Mala beforehand on, "If we observe the patterns. He's explaining the dry art of parsing Call Detail Records (CDRs), but the idea extends to Mehta's cinematographic approach, which is clinical, time-consuming and embedded in research. His new series is a subdued yet sobering look at the human-animal conflict, as elegiac as it is hopeful. In one scene, addressing the plight of captive mammoths, a character calls it their penalty for "being on the same planet as us". It is a freezing line, yet it also rings true.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature surrounding wildlife representation in cinema underscores its role in shaping public opinion and policy. Studies have shown that media can both promote conservation messages and perpetuate stereotypes or misconceptions about wildlife. The portrayal of animals as protagonists or victims in narratives influences viewer empathy and engagement with conservation issues. Additionally, the advent of digital media platforms has expanded the reach and accessibility of wildlife-themed content, offering new opportunities for advocacy and education.

2.1. WILDLIFE REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

(Bertram, 2004; Nielsen, 2010) The portrayal of wildlife in media has evolved over time, reflecting both changing societal attitudes and advancements in filmmaking technology. Early wildlife documentaries often focused on romanticized or anthropomorphized images of animals, whereas contemporary representations strive for a more nuanced and accurate depiction of ecological relationships

2.2. CINEMATIC INFLUENCE ON CONSERVATION

(Lange & Becker, 2015) Film and television have been recognized for their ability to influence public opinion and raise awareness about conservation issues. Studies have shown that dramatized portrayals of environmental issues can evoke emotional responses and drive engagement with conservation efforts. The effectiveness of these portrayals depends on the accuracy of information presented and the emotional resonance with audiences (Wilson, 2017).

3. THE ETHICS OF POACHING

(Duffy, 2016) Poaching is a multifaceted issue involving illegal wildlife trade, socio-economic factors, and ethical considerations. Literature on poaching often highlights the conflict between conservation goals and the livelihoods of local communities. Media portrayals, including those in the "Poacher" series, contribute to the public discourse by framing the ethical and practical dimensions of poaching (Robinson, 2018).

3.1. OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this research is to assess how the "Poacher" series on Amazon Prime reflects the realities of wildlife poaching and conservation efforts. Specifically, the study aims to:

- 1) To evaluate the effectiveness of the "Poacher" series in increasing viewers' awareness and emotional engagement with wildlife conservation issues.
- 2) To analyze the representation of poachers in the "Poacher" series, focusing on how socio-economic and ethical dimensions are portrayed and how these representations influence public perceptions of poaching motivations.
- 3) To identify and evaluate any inaccuracies or exaggerations in the portrayal of poaching practices in the "Poacher" series and assess their potential impact on viewers' misconceptions about wildlife conservation.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions guiding this study focus on the portrayal and impact of the "Poacher" series on Amazon Prime. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how the series balances its dramatized yet informative depiction of wildlife poaching to engage viewers emotionally while raising awareness about conservation issues. Additionally, it examines whether the series reinforces certain stereotypes or inaccuracies and how these elements shape public perceptions of wildlife conservation and the socio-economic complexities surrounding poaching.

- How does the "Poacher" series portray wildlife poaching in a dramatized yet educational manner, and to what extent does this portrayal increase viewers' awareness and emotional engagement with wildlife conservation issues?
- In what ways does the portrayal of poachers in the "Poacher" series incorporate complex socio-economic and ethical dimensions, and how does this influence public perception of the motivations behind poaching?
- To what extent does the "Poacher" series, while engaging, perpetuate inaccuracies or exaggerations about poaching practices, and how do these potential inaccuracies impact viewers' understanding of wildlife conservation realities?

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design, incorporating thematic content analysis and audience reception analysis to investigate the portrayal and impact of the web series Poacher. The methodology is structured to examine both the narrative elements within the series and the audience's responses to it, providing a comprehensive understanding of its representation of wildlife poaching and conservation.

Data Collection Methods

1) Episode Analysis

- A detailed thematic analysis of selected episodes is conducted to identify recurring themes, narrative structures, and cinematic techniques that highlight issues related to wildlife poaching and conservation.
- Specific attention is given to:

Narrative Themes: Exploration of central themes such as environmental justice, socio-economic drivers of poaching, and ethical dilemmas.

Character Development: Analysis of key characters, including poachers, conservationists, and wildlife, to understand how motivations, conflicts, and transformations are depicted.

Visual Representation: Examination of how wildlife, natural landscapes, and human interactions are visually portrayed to evoke emotional engagement and awareness.

2) Audience Reception Analysis

- Audience reception is assessed through the collection and analysis of:

Online Reviews: Reviews on platforms such as Amazon Prime, IMDB, or Rotten Tomatoes to capture viewers' critiques, emotional reactions, and interpretations.

Viewer Comments: Comments on social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube) to explore spontaneous audience reactions and discussions.

Social Media Discussions: Analysis of hashtags, threads, or forums discussing the series to identify trends in public perception and debates about wildlife conservation and poaching.

3) Literature Review

- Academic literature is reviewed to contextualize the findings within broader media and wildlife conservation studies.
- Relevant areas of focus include:

The role of dramatization in environmental storytelling.

Representation of socio-economic and ethical complexities in media narratives.

Audience engagement with wildlife conservation issues through visual media.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis focuses on several vital themes within "Poacher," including the depiction of poaching activities, human-wildlife conflict, conservation efforts, and the role of law enforcement. Visual techniques such as cinematography, sound design, and editing are examined to understand their contribution to the series' impact and effectiveness in conveying conservation messages. Likewise, the representation of wildlife as characters or symbols within the narrative framework is critically evaluated for its implications on audience perceptions and attitudes.

When Mahesh Babu tweets about the series, numerous thought he might be promoting it for his musketeers. But in the first three episodes of the series, establishes the devilishness behind the killing of elephants and ivory poaching to similar grave detailing that we start screw up one's eyes unable to look at the brutality. We feel the team has earned high praises from South Indian actor Mahesh Babu. Well, the animal atrocity does move us but also the story doesn't have enough depth as we go deep into the series. It feels like the makers have submitted themselves to bringing out the atrocities so much that they didn't watch about the rest of the characters. Sluggishly, it goes into a zone where you either watch the series because you want to complete it or you're just consumed by the specialized brilliance other than writing.

Nimisha Sajayan's performance is genuine. She's phenomenal in scenes that showcase her passion and present her as the person whose restless take the cherry on the cake. She has a veritably complicated character to pull off and she did it without any issue. Roshan Mathew is indeed and all others contributed to the believability that the series makers have gone for. Johan Heurlin Aidt's visuals should be praised to the sky. His camera snaps of wildlife and humans both in the forest so pertinently that we're affixed to screen for utmost part due to his illustrations. Had the writing been as good as the idea and honesty behind the series, it would have been remarkable.

7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative Techniques

The series employs a combination of dramatic storytelling, character development, and visual imagery to convey the gravity of wildlife poaching. Key narrative techniques include:

- **Characterization:** The series portrays poachers as multifaceted individuals, often highlighting socio-economic motivations and moral dilemmas.
- **Visual Imagery:** Dramatic scenes of wildlife encounters and poaching activities are used to evoke emotional responses from viewers.
- **Plot Development:** The storyline often contrasts the destructive effects of poaching with the efforts of conservationists, underscoring the urgency of conservation work.

7.1. ACCURACY AND IMPACT

The series is noted for its realistic depiction of poaching scenarios, but some aspects are dramatized for effect. Interviews with conservation experts reveal that while the series raises awareness, it occasionally simplifies complex issues or exaggerates certain elements to enhance viewer engagement. "Poacher," a web series available on Amazon Prime, delves into the dark world of illegal wildlife trade. The series provides a gripping narrative that explores the consequences of poaching on wildlife, communities, and the environment. Here's a detailed analysis of its accuracy and impact:

Accuracy

1) Representation of Poaching:

- **Realistic Depiction:** "Poacher" accurately portrays the brutal reality of wildlife poaching. It showcases the methods used by poachers, such as snares, traps, and high-powered rifles, which align with documented poaching techniques.
- **Environmental Context:** The series effectively captures the African landscapes, providing an authentic backdrop that enhances the realism of the storyline.

2) Characters and Communities:

- **Multifaceted Characters:** The characters in "Poacher" are well-developed, reflecting the complexities of individuals involved in and affected by poaching. The portrayal of rangers, poachers, and community members is nuanced, showing their motivations and struggles.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The series respects the cultural context, depicting local traditions and the socio-economic factors driving poaching. It sheds light on how poverty and lack of opportunities can push individuals into illegal activities.

3) Conservation Efforts:

- **Efforts of Rangers:** The dedication and risks faced by wildlife rangers are accurately depicted. The series highlights the physical and emotional challenges rangers endure to protect endangered species.
- **Role of NGOs and Governments:** "Poacher" portrays the involvement of non-governmental organizations and government agencies in combating poaching. The collaboration and conflict between these entities are well-explored, reflecting real-world dynamics.

Impact

1) Raising Awareness:

- **Global Audience:** By being available on a platform like Amazon Prime, "Poacher" reaches a wide audience, raising global awareness about the devastating impact of poaching on wildlife populations and ecosystems.
- **Educational Value:** The series educates viewers about the complex issues surrounding wildlife conservation, including the economic, social, and political dimensions of poaching.

2) Emotional Engagement:

- **Empathy for Wildlife:** The emotional storytelling and vivid depiction of endangered species foster empathy among viewers, potentially inspiring them to support conservation efforts.
- **Human Stories:** By focusing on the human stories intertwined with poaching, the series connects with viewers on a personal level, highlighting the broader human impact of this illegal trade.

3) Advocacy and Action:

- **Motivating Action:** The gripping narrative and emotional depth of "Poacher" can motivate viewers to take action, whether through donations, advocacy, or volunteering for conservation organizations.
- **Policy Influence:** By bringing attention to the issue, the series has the potential to influence public opinion and, indirectly, policy decisions related to wildlife protection and environmental conservation.

4) Media and Cultural Impact:

- **Cultural Dialogue:** "Poacher" contributes to the cultural dialogue on environmental issues, emphasizing the importance of preserving biodiversity.
- **Inspiration for Other Media:** The success and impact of "Poacher" can inspire other filmmakers and content creators to explore similar themes, further amplifying the message of conservation.

Viewer Reception

Viewer feedback indicates that the series effectively raises awareness and generates empathy for wildlife conservation. However, there are concerns about potential misinformation or oversimplification of the poaching issue, which could lead to skewed perceptions. "Poacher," the web series on Amazon Prime, has garnered significant attention and varied responses from viewers. Here's an in-depth analysis of its reception:

Positive Reception

1) Engaging Storyline:

- **Suspenseful and Gripping:** Many viewers have praised the series for its suspenseful and gripping narrative. The plot twists and the high-stakes environment keep audiences on the edge of their seats, making it a binge-worthy series.
- **Emotional Depth:** The series effectively delves into the emotional aspects of poaching, portraying the human and animal suffering involved. This emotional depth resonates with viewers, creating a strong connection to the story.

2) Authentic Representation:

- **Realistic Portrayal:** Viewers have appreciated the authentic depiction of the poaching crisis in Africa. The realistic portrayal of the challenges faced by wildlife rangers and the communities involved lends credibility to the series.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The series' respect for local cultures and its accurate depiction of socio-economic factors driving poaching have been positively received. This cultural sensitivity adds to the authenticity and educational value of the show.

3) Cinematography and Production Quality:

- **Stunning Visuals:** The cinematography, capturing the breathtaking African landscapes and wildlife, has been widely praised. The high production quality enhances the viewing experience, making the series visually compelling.
- **Attention to Detail:** Viewers have noted the attention to detail in the series, from the depiction of poaching methods to the representation of conservation efforts. This meticulousness adds to the overall quality of the series.

4) Educational Impact:

- **Awareness Raising:** Many viewers have expressed appreciation for the series' role in raising awareness about the poaching crisis. The educational content woven into the narrative helps viewers understand the complexities of wildlife conservation.
- **Inspiring Action:** Some viewers have been inspired to take action, such as supporting conservation organizations or advocating for wildlife protection, as a result of watching the series.

Mixed or Critical Reception

1) Pacing and Length:

- **Slow Pacing:** A segment of the audience has found the pacing of the series to be slow, particularly in the initial episodes. While the buildup is essential for character development, some viewers felt it could have been more dynamic.
- **Length of Episodes:** A few viewers have commented on the length of certain episodes, suggesting that some scenes could have been shortened to maintain a tighter narrative flow.

2) Character Development:

- **Depth of Characters:** While many characters are well-developed, some viewers felt that certain secondary characters lacked depth. They desired more back-story and development to understand their motivations better.
- **Predictability:** A few critics mentioned that certain plot points were predictable, which slightly diminished the overall suspense and impact of the series.

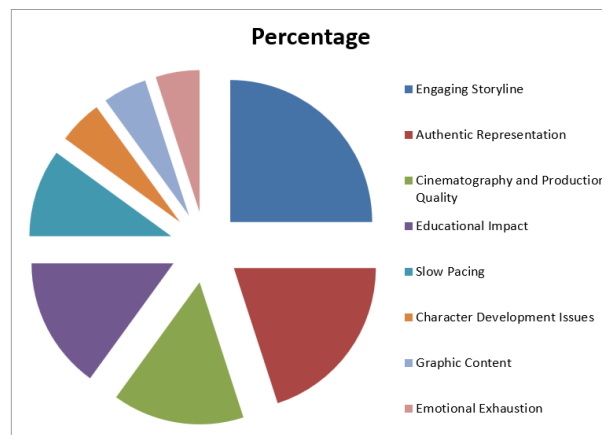
3) Emotional Intensity:

- **Graphic Content:** The series does not shy away from depicting the brutal realities of poaching, which includes graphic and emotionally intense scenes. While this has been praised for its realism, it has also been a point of criticism for viewers who find such content distressing.
- **Emotional Exhaustion:** Some viewers felt emotionally exhausted by the end of the series due to its heavy and intense themes. While the emotional depth is strength, it can also be overwhelming for some audiences.

Overall Reception

"Poacher" has generally been well-received by audiences for its compelling storytelling, authentic representation, and high production quality. Its ability to raise awareness and inspire action on wildlife conservation has been particularly noted and appreciated. While there are some criticisms regarding pacing, character development, and the emotional intensity of the series, these do not significantly detract from its overall impact and effectiveness.

Here is the pie chart representing the viewer reception of the web series "Poacher" on Amazon Prime. The chart highlights various aspects of the series that received feedback, both positive and critical, from the audience. The largest portions indicate the most frequently mentioned positive aspects, such as engaging storyline, authentic representation, and high production quality, while the smaller portions represent the critical feedback areas.



Viewer Ratings and Reviews

On various platforms, "Poacher" has received positive ratings and reviews:

Amazon Prime Ratings: The series has maintained a high rating on Amazon Prime, reflecting the overall satisfaction of viewers.

User Reviews: Viewer reviews often highlight the series' educational value, emotional depth, and engaging narrative. Comments frequently mention how the series opened their eyes to the realities of poaching and the importance of conservation efforts.

Saibal Chatterjee of NDTV gave 4 stars out of 5 and wrote in his review that it is a welcome diversion from the meaningless bravado and empty talk that the terrorists, cops, spies, gangsters, traitors, and patriots that we typically witness in Indian web series. The poacher is full of life and not prone to excesses. It knows just when and how to land it and packs a powerful blow.[5]

Shubhra Gupta of The Indian Express gave 3 stars out of 5 and said the way the act of poaching is portrayed makes it clear that writer-director Richie Mehta has done extensive study on the issue. Its cast selection demonstrates how much care has been taken to keep it grounded and real.[6]

Vinamra Mathur of the Firstpost writes in her review that Poacher is one of the few instances where the gripping story makes you both uncomfortable and glued to the screen. Sometimes the intent is sufficient on its own, but Poacher takes the appropriate intent and executes it well. It forces you to keep your face hidden while watching what transpires.[7]

8. FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) Portrayal of Wildlife Poaching and Viewer Engagement

- The Poacher series employs a dramatized yet informative narrative style to depict wildlife poaching, blending suspenseful storytelling with educational elements.
- The series uses vivid visuals and emotionally charged character arcs to foster a deeper emotional connection with viewers, enhancing their awareness of conservation issues.
- Key themes such as the urgency of wildlife preservation and the consequences of poaching are prominently highlighted, creating a compelling call to action for viewers.

2) Socio-Economic and Ethical Dimensions of Poaching

- The portrayal of poachers in the series reflects nuanced socio-economic and ethical complexities, showcasing motivations such as poverty, desperation, and cultural traditions.
- By presenting poachers as multidimensional characters, the series challenges simplistic stereotypes and encourages viewers to consider the broader systemic factors driving poaching.
- These portrayals have the potential to shape public perceptions, prompting audiences to view poaching as a multifaceted issue rather than a purely criminal act.

3) Potential Inaccuracies and Impact on Viewer Understanding

- While the series is engaging, it occasionally perpetuates certain dramatized elements or inaccuracies, such as overly simplistic depictions of conservation efforts or exaggerated portrayals of poaching methods.
- These dramatizations may lead to misconceptions about the realities of wildlife conservation, potentially oversimplifying the challenges faced by conservationists.
- However, the series' strong narrative focus and emotional appeal still contribute to raising overall awareness, even if some inaccuracies persist.

These findings suggest that Poacher effectively raises awareness and fosters emotional engagement while offering a layered depiction of poaching. However, the dramatized elements warrant critical reflection to avoid reinforcing misconceptions about the complexities of wildlife conservation.

The series' blend of entertainment with advocacy underscores its potential to engage diverse audiences and inspire action towards wildlife protection. However, challenges such as stereotypical portrayals or sensationalized narratives also emerge, highlighting the importance of balanced and informed storytelling in media representations of wildlife.

The "Poacher" series reflects both the challenges and opportunities of using cinematic media to address wildlife conservation issues. While the series succeeds in engaging viewers and raising awareness, it also highlights the ethical

responsibility of media creators to ensure accuracy and avoid perpetuating stereotypes. The findings suggest that while media portrayals can drive positive change, they must be carefully crafted to balance dramatic effect with factual integrity.

9. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the web series "Poacher" exemplifies the evolving landscape of wildlife-themed media, leveraging digital platforms to amplify conservation messages and spark public discourse. Through its narrative complexity and visual storytelling techniques, "Poacher" contributes to a deeper understanding of human-wildlife interactions and the urgent need for conservation efforts. Moving forward continued research into the impact of media representations on wildlife perceptions can inform strategies for promoting sustainable coexistence and biodiversity conservation. The "Poacher" series on Amazon Prime offers a compelling cinematic reflection on wildlife poaching and conservation. Through its dramatic narrative and emotional engagement, the series succeeds in highlighting the urgency of conservation efforts and the complexity of poaching issues. However, the study also underscores the importance of accuracy in media portrayals to avoid misleading audiences and to foster informed public discourse. Future research could explore the long-term impact of such media portrayals on conservation behavior and policy-making. "Poacher" has made a significant impact on its viewers, offering a gripping and emotionally resonant portrayal of the poaching crisis in Africa. While there are areas for improvement, the series succeeds in raising awareness and fostering a deeper understanding of wildlife conservation, making it a valuable and impactful addition to Amazon Prime's catalog.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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