

**Master Thesis**

*“To binge or not to binge”*

**- The online Viewing Habits of Dutch millennials**

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**ABSTRACT**

Due to digitalization the television industry has changed rapidly over the last few years. Industry disrupters like Netflix have changed the way individuals consume television. The consumption of nonlinear television is not restricted by time, place or content. Technological innovations have changed viewing modes and allow users to control what, when, where, and how they view programs. Further, platform and content choices have been greater than ever before. Since it appears that the way millennials consume television has changed, this research was interested as to what extent viewing habits have changed as well. By the means of thirteen qualitative interviews, this study aimed to explore the viewing habits of Dutch millennials in relation to on-demand streaming services. The interviews were held with Dutch millennials – age 18 to 34 –, and users of Netflix and/or Videoland. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed through coding and thematic analysis. The results suggest that the use of on-demand streaming services is motivated by a need for entertainment, relaxation, escapism, narrative immersion and cultural inclusion. The results show that respondents find it very important to be able to participate in the cultural conversation. It was a reason to watch particular content, binge-watch, and for some also a reason to sign up for a particular streaming service. Furthermore, this study found that binge-watching has become a noteworthy aspect in the viewing habits of Dutch millennials. Even though, binge-watching was done at the expense of studying and sleep, no regretful feelings prevailed among the participants of this study. Emphasis was laid on the fact that binge-watching was a conscious choice. Moreover, during the interviews it became clear that participants experience difficulties in the content selection process on Netflix and Videoland. The endless choices were found overwhelming by many of the participants. Hence, their reliance on trailers, recommendations lists and personal recommendations from friends and family. In addition, the findings suggest that television consumption via on-demand streaming services is more individualistic in comparison to consumption via linear television. The distribution attributes and devices stimulate more individualistic consumer behavior. Further, content was found to be the most important motivator for the participants to use either a streaming service, linear TV or illegal platforms. This research suggest that television consumption is driven by content: the use of streaming services, linear TV or illegal platforms to get access to particular content. Moreover, streaming services were preferred because of their content and convenience; for many it is the main way to consume television.

**KEYWORDS:** Online television, on-demand streaming services, Netflix, Videoland, viewing habits, binge-watching.

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## 1. Introduction

“Fewer, bigger and better” rings the new motto of the Dutch public broadcaster NPO. As of 2018, the NPO is going to invest heavily in quality content for their on-demand streaming platform NPO Start Plus. According to NPO’s annual business report, their aim is to be the largest video on-demand service in the Netherlands (NPO, 2018). NPO – one of the biggest traditional television broadcasters – is shifting focus from linear to on-demand. The changes observed in NPO’s business strategy, arguably illustrate the rapid and fundamental changes in the television industry.

Due to digitalization the media industry has changed rapidly over the last few years. With the rise of technological innovations media industries had to adapt, and new online platforms like Spotify, Netflix and Blendle came into existence. Consumers no longer have to physically go to a store to buy films, TV series, newspapers or music. Nor do they have to rely on programmers or TV networks for their media content. Instead, these industry disruptors allow consumers to actively seek out media content and consume it when and where they want. The internet has become a main instrument to access and consume media content at the detriment of traditional media channels and products (Obrist et al., 2015).

As of 2010, on-demand streaming services like Netflix, HBO and Videoland have become increasingly popular. In 2015, the video on-demand (VoD) industry in the Netherlands rose with 37% (nvpi, 2016). Currently, there are over 20 online video streaming services available in The Netherlands (nvpi, 2016). As a result, of the growing popularity of on-demand streaming services traditional viewership is declining (Kist, 2016; Jenner, 2016). Research by Stichting Kijkonderzoek (2017), an institute that studies Dutch viewing habits, found that linear viewership in The Netherlands declined with 3,0% in 2017. This decline was most notable in the age category of young adults. In 2016, young adults watched only 100-120 minutes linear TV, which can be defined as television viewed at the time of broadcast, per day (SKO, 2017). Nowadays, more and more people watch television nonlinear (SKO, 2017; Multiscope, 2017; Telecompapers, 2018). Nonlinear television refers to interactive television often consumed via the internet. A prerequisite of interactive television is consumer involvement; an example of this is how Netflix users are stimulated to actively select their own media content. The Dutch broadcasting industry has adjusted to this development by making a large share of their content available online, introducing platforms like Videoland, Ziggo Go and RTL XL. Such technological innovations have generated a transformation from traditional television to on-demand platforms. With these changes consumer behaviour and viewing habits have changed as well. For instance, consumers can watch *what* they want, *where* they want, *with whom* they want and for *how long* they want. Additionally, on-demand streaming services have generated an additional trend, namely the rise of original quality content (TV series and movies). On-demand platforms like Netflix, HBO, and increasingly Videoland tend to rely heavily on original scripted TV series to attract and retain customers. “We are living in the golden age of television”, McAlone (2017, para. 5) says, as more money and resources are used to produce

quality TV series. The amount of TV drama series has almost doubled between 2010 and 2015. Last year, 487 TV series were released in the United States on both traditional channels and streaming services (Benjamin, 2018). Netflix aims to release over a thousand hours of original content in the coming year. It will invest eight billion dollars in new programming, of which three billion is intended for original productions (Benjamin, 2018). High quality drama series like *Orange is the New Black*, *The Crown* and *Narcos* are becoming the new mainstream. This new phenomenon where viewers have access to an endless online library of quality TV series and movies, poses the question how streaming services have changed viewing habits, routines and motives.

### *1.1 Context: Millennials and online television*

Particularly, among millennials online streaming services have gained popularity. Young adults, aged between 18-34, are often referred to as millennials, or digital natives (Kilian, Hennigs & Langner, 2012). The level of familiarity of millennials with the internet, digital devices, and social media arguably contributes to the way they embrace online television. Television behavior of millennials is extremely fragmented; content is consumed via linear TV, VOD-streaming services, YouTube, Facebook and more (Lynch, 2017). In 2017, Netflix was the most popular VoD-streaming service in The Netherlands, with a viewing average of 84 minutes a day (Multiscope, 2017). Netflix is closely followed by YouTube (18%), NPO Start (9%) and ultimately Videoland (2%) (Benjamin, 2018). The reach of Netflix is far larger than the 2.8 million households that hold an account. It seems that over 40% of the users shares their account, meaning that in The Netherlands 5.6 million individuals have access to Netflix. That Netflix is popular goes without saying but who their users are, how and why these users use Netflix is a topic we know little about.

Over the years, Netflix and other streaming services have sporadically published figures about viewing rates and habits. These numbers are based on quantitative research and mainly provide an answer to the question what the most popular shows are. Although relevant to Netflix and to get an understanding of the popularity of their content, these numbers do not offer a deeper insight into the viewing habits of users (e.g. how and why do people use streaming services). Yet streaming services have become an essential part in entertainment consumption as people spent hours consuming television via these services. Therefore it is useful to understand how and why people use these platforms. Based on current reports by ofcom (2016), nvpi (2016), and Telecompapers (2017), we have an understanding of what and for how long millennials watch but little do we know about motives, expectations, practices and habits of on-demand streaming users. The aim of this study is to examine how and why Dutch millennials consume television via streaming services. By (the) means of qualitative research, this study aims to unveil patterns and practices related to online viewing habits.

### *1.2 Scientific relevance*

In contrast to previous research, this study aims to explore people's experiences, expectations and motivations in relation to online viewership. Previous research has mostly examined viewing habits in respect to traditional linear television. See for example the early work of Compton (1983) on viewing habits and research by Hart (1992) and Morley (2003) on television audiences. In addition, more recent research has been focused on the effects of online television. Potential negative consequences of online television on physical and mental health have been studied at large – studies by Sung, Kang and Lee (2016), Davis (2016) and Gunter (2017) examined the effects of binge-watching on loneliness, social status and schoolwork. In contrast to these studies, this study aims to study beyond the effects of particular elements. This study aims to expand the knowledge on practices like bingeing by gaining insight into how and why Dutch millennials consume television via streaming services. As television is changing so are viewing habits, motives and gratifications. Such a qualitative approach to explore nonlinear viewing habits and practices of millennials is still rare. Key theories as uses and gratifications (Katz, 1973) and mood management (Zillman, 1988) have been studied in respect to traditional television and can be considered vital points of departure for this study (Rubin, 1983). Both, the uses and gratifications theory and the mood management theory provide a framework as to why individuals consume media, specifically what motives them. The uses and gratifications theory sheds light on the needs and desires individuals aim to gratify with their media usage (Katz, 1973) whereas the mood management theory underlines the implications of mood in the entertainment consumption process (Zillman, 1988). These traditions are essential in understanding media consumption, audiences and effects (Katz, 1973; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). As this study is specifically interested in the motives of Dutch millennials to consume television via on-demand streaming services, it is important to discuss and explore the uses and gratifications theory and the mood management theory in relation to online television consumption. These theories will be further discussed and explained in chapter 2.

### *1.3 Social relevance*

This study aims to address and explore specifically the behavioural patterns of Dutch millennials. Millennials were selected as target group because of their digital interest. The media use of millennials is of great interest to many researchers as this generation has been very accepting of disruptive platforms. Their behaviour in terms of habits and practices can be representative of (future) trends. Or as Berger (2017) put it: millennials are extensive users of media and their behaviour will determine what is mainstream as they are an important consumer audience. Media consumption of millennials is deviant to that of older generations and is constantly evolving. Even though, there is quite a bit of data available on the media consumption of millennials (e.g. the previous mentioned reports by ofcom, nvpi and Telecompapers), there is still a lot unknown about the way they consume media content – particularly in regards to online television. Hence, the

relevance to explore the online viewing habits of Dutch millennials. Additionally, the focus on Dutch millennials is founded in the fact that The Netherlands rates very high on internet penetration, with a respective rate of 93% (GWI, 2017). Since internet penetration is so high, online viewership trends in The Netherlands and the role of streaming services are particularly interesting to explore as they can be considered leading in a global perspective. For the purpose of this study, research will be limited to online streaming services available in The Netherlands (e.g. Netflix and Videoland). This means that YouTube, replay TV – like RTL XL, Kijk.nl – , and other digital alternatives will not be included in the scope of this research. This study will mainly focus on the two most popular streaming platforms in The Netherlands namely Netflix and Videoland, which are commercial streaming services and require a subscription (Benjamin, 2018).

The objective of this study is to explore how and why Dutch millennials consume television via streaming services. By the means of in-depth interviews, this study aims to examine the online viewing habits of Dutch millennials, the impact of original content and the user perspective on on-demand streaming services. Hence, the following research question (RQ) and sub-questions were formulated:

**RQ:** How (and why) do Dutch millennials consume television via online streaming services?

**Sub-questions:**

- 1) What are salient motives for using online streaming services?
- 2) What (new) viewing habits have emerged among Dutch millennials due to their online TV consumption?
- 3) Based on what criteria do consumers select online streaming services?'

### *1.3 Thesis outline*

In the remainder of this thesis the theoretical background, the methodological approach, the findings and the conclusion will be discussed. In the theoretical background, the uses and gratifications theory will be discussed in relation to television consumption. Further, an overview of relevant research into viewing habits like binge-watching will be presented. Moreover, the role of content, brand identity and an overview of the streaming market in The Netherlands will be presented and discussed. In the methodology section, a detailed description of the research method will be given. Further, in the results section an overview of the findings will be given. Lastly, in the conclusion and discussion the research questions will be answered and limitation and recommendation for further research will be addressed.

## 2. Theory and Previous Research

In this chapter a brief overview of relevant literature will be provided. In the following paragraphs, (1) the uses and gratifications theory, (2) disruptive business models, (3) viewing habits, (4) the role of original content, (5) brand identity, and (6) the Dutch streaming market will be addressed. This chapter aims to provide a theoretical foundation for the research question “How (and why) do Dutch millennials consume television via online streaming services?”, by assessing relevant research and theories.

### *2.1 Uses and Gratifications*

The uses and gratifications theory, introduced by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch in 1973, forms a key point of theoretical departure when studying television consumption. This tradition is often used to understand audiences and media effects as it emphasizes the viewer’s motives for consumption. The uses and gratifications theory is used by scholars to study the gratifications audience members attract from media and what type of content satisfies their needs (Katz et al., 1973). The uses and gratifications theory has been used in the past to study linear television behavior, since the purpose of this thesis is to explore audience behavior related to streaming services, the tradition is still theoretically important (Rubin, 1983; Ruggiero, 2000). Working in this tradition creates a better (historical) understanding of motives, patterns, practices and habits of Dutch millennials with respect to entertainment consumption, or more specifically online television consumption. Moreover, this theory is useful for exploring and understanding the relationship between the media, audiences and society – or, as is the aim of this study, the relationship between streaming services and Dutch millennials.

The uses and gratifications theory understands audience members as active participants in the media selection process (Katz et al., 1973). Thus, Katz et al. (1973) posit the audience as active viewers, actively seeking out media content to satisfy their needs. Furthermore, it assumes that viewers are aware of their desires and needs, and are able to act on them. Katz et al. (1973) identified five gratifications of media consumption; entertainment, information, escapism, social interaction and identification. Similarly, Rubin (1983) identified seeking information, boredom/pass-time, companionship, escapism and entertainment as the main motivators for individuals to watch linear television. In addition, Lee and Lee (1995) found that individuals watch linear television for “relaxation and mood lifts” (p. 16). The gratifications and motives for media consumption vary per media and type of content. Reality TV appears to have different gratifications (e.g. entertainment in the form of joy at someone’s expense) than a drama series (e.g. escapism) (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). Furthermore, some consume media content for hedonic reasons – viewers who derive pleasure from the way content makes them feel (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). Scholars, to explain media consumption and behavior, have used the uses and gratifications theory for a long period of time. However, over the years concerns have been raised about the characterization of audiences, the



conceptualization of gratifications and the methodology based on self-report. For example, they question whether viewers are even aware of their motivations for media consumption, and whether can they articulate these motivations (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2008). As an alternative to – or complementary to – the uses and gratifications theory, Zillmann and Bryant introduced the mood management theory (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985). Zillmann (1988) argued that mood is a decisive indicator in the media selection- and consumption process. This theory assumes that consumers select content based on their mood (Zillman, 1988). More specifically, it assumes that individuals select content in order enhance their mood. The mood management theory consists of three dimensions: arousal, mood valence and semantic avoidance (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2008). Based on their current level of arousal individuals select relaxing or exciting content. Mood valence looks at the current mood of the individuals, positive or negative, and assumes that individuals select content to lift or prolong their mood (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2008). The third dimension, semantic avoidance, refers to individuals who avoid television content that reminds them of stressful situations. In contrast to the uses and gratifications theory, the mood management theory does not assume that viewers are aware of their motivations for their behavior. Alternatively, Zillmann (1988) argues that individuals are likely to recede to behavior that has been successful in the past. When the consumption of comedy content has enhanced your mood in the past, it is likely that the individual will resort to that behavior in the future. Zillmann (1988) argues that individuals learn from past behavior, which will shape future behavior. Audiences are confronted with an enormous variety of content choices and according to Zillmann (2000) and Knobloch-Westerwick (2008), choices are based on mood and mood-enhancing practices.

The uses and gratification theory and the mood management theory have been used in the past to explain and describe the consumption of linear television (Rubin,1983; Lee and Lee, 1995; Knobloch-Westerwick, 2008). However, the way individuals consume nonlinear television appears to be different, as nonlinear television is not restricted by time, place and content. Further, platform and content choices have been greater than ever before. This – and other nonlinear characteristics as interactive and personalized – might influence traditional needs and gratifications.

Nonlinear television requires active audience members because viewers have to decide on- and select the platform, content and time. This assumes a deliberate choice to consume particular media content. Moreover, this seems to contradict linear television consumption, which can also be unintended at times (Katz et al., 1973). As television is changing so are our viewing habits, motives and gratifications. This study seeks to explore the motives behind online television consumption and unveil how, when and where Dutch millennials consume online television. For the purpose of this study, both the uses and gratifications theory and the mood management theory are considered relevant as can they shed light on viewing habits, motivates and personal traits that influence nonlinear media consumption and selection.

## 2.2 Disrupting traditional television

In addition, to looking at online viewing habits of Dutch millennials through an academic lens and extending the theoretical scope of work on motives for consumption and binge-watching, this thesis also looks at the disrupting development in the television industry; the rise of on-demand streaming services at the expense of linear television.

In recent years, the television industry has faced some major transformation due to new technologies. Industry disruptors like Netflix, HBO, Videoland and Ziggo XL have changed the way viewers consume television. Traditional television – defined as a mass medium – is restricted by place, content and time (Cook, 2016). However, these new platforms have changed viewing modes and allow users to control what, when, where, and how they view programs (Cook, 2016; Lotz, 2014). A disruptive business model refers to an organization that has successfully challenged traditional practices and businesses (Christensen, Raynor & McDonald, 2015). Even though, these companies have limited resources by using technology to offer better services they are able to disrupt the traditional market and establish themselves as fierce competition. So-called ‘disruption’ occurs when mainstream consumers adopt the new product or service (Christensen et al., 2015). Fundamental to the disruptive innovation model theory is the lack of – or slow – response of the existing market to new innovations (Christensen et al., 2015). Netflix is an example of a successful disruptive business model in the television industry.

Netflix, originally a DVD rental services, introduced the first video on-demand streaming services in 2007. As of 2018, Netflix has over 125 million subscribers worldwide and 2.8 million subscribers in The Netherlands (Loon, 2017; Telecompapers, 2018). Netflix has disrupted the traditional Dutch market as more and more consumers have adopted Netflix. Multiscope (2018) has estimated that over 5 million Dutch individuals have access to a Netflix account (e.g. via a shared account). Since a few years the Dutch broadcasters – NPO, RTL and SBS6 – have released their own digital platforms like NLZiet and Videoland to compete with Netflix. In the table below, a brief overview is provided of the on-demand platforms in The Netherlands.

**Table 1. Overview of the subscription video on demand (SVOD) market in The Netherlands.**

| NETFLIX<br>2.7800.000  | VIDEOLAND<br>400.000  | NPO START PLUS<br>87.000   | NL ZIET<br>150.000  | Ziggo Movies<br>& Series (XL)  | Amazon Prime<br>Video  |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| International content and original productions including House of Cards, Stranger Things, The Crown, Narcos, La Casa de Papel. | Focus on Dutch content. Offers content by RTL, HULU, HBO such as The Handmaid's Tale. Original productions like Zwart tulp. | On-demand service by the public broadcaster. Re-watch programming, HD quality and ad free. | Initiative by NPO, RTL and SBS. Individuals can re-watch and watch forward all programming – ad free. | International content and the HBO catalogue including Game of Thrones. Only available for Ziggo members. | International content. Amazon prime is available since 2016 but is not a major player in the market yet. |
| From €7,99   | €8,99   | €2,95  | €7,95   | From €6,95   | €5,99  |

Research by RTL The Netherlands, suggests that in the future consumers will likely pay for two to three streaming services. At this point, a quarter of all on-demand consumers already have access to two streaming services (Brouwer, 2018). The growing popularity of streaming services gives consumers a large number of options with regards to platform, device, content, setting, time and so on. In order to understand audience behaviour in times of endless choices, the uses and gratifications theory is a useful point of departure. Since consumers have more media choices, it has become pivotal to understand motivations for consumption (Ruggiero, 2000). Identifying motivations and satisfactions of consumers is a vital part of audience analysis and can shed light on why people consume media the way they do. Hence, the first sub-question: “What are salient motives for using online streaming services?”. A more in depth overview of the streaming market in The Netherlands will be provided at the end of this chapter.

### 2.3 Viewing habits

The convenience of online streaming services in terms of commercial-free, original and quality content has changed traditional viewing habits and practices. The accessibility to content on streaming services has led to the rise of the cultural phenomenon of binge-watching. In 2014, Netflix defined binge-watching – after conducting a survey among its users – as marathon viewing, “watching two to six episodes of the same show in one sitting” (Davis, 2016, para. 2). This definition, however, does not take into account the length or content of the episodes. As more research was done into the field of binge-watching new definitions came about. Media critic McNamara (2012) defined binge-watching as “any instance in which more than three episodes of an hour-long drama or six episodes of a half-hour comedy are consumed at one sitting” (p. 147). In contrast, Petersen’s (2016) definition ignores the quantity of time and defines it as “watching consecutive episodes of the same show for at least two to four hours in succession” (p. 79). For the purpose of this study, emphasis will be put on the definition of Netflix, which defines binge-watching as behaviour where an individual watches more than two episodes back-to-back. In 2016, over 60% of Netflix users binge-watched on one or more occasions (Trouleau, Ashkan, Ding & Eriksson, 2016). Since Netflix is releasing more TV series as a whole rather than per episode, binge-watching has become a vital part of viewing behavior.

In addition to binge-watching, one can also be a binge racer – a term introduced by Netflix to describe individuals who watch an entire TV series within 24 hours after its release (Heritage, 2017). Over eight million Netflix-users binge-raced a TV series in 2017 (Morris, 2017). Binge-watching and binge-racing are particularly popular among teenagers and young adults. Television series including *House of Cards*, *Gilmore Girls* and *Stranger Things* were among the most binge-raced shows on Netflix. Over the years, mainstream media have increasingly depicted binge-watching as a “liberating experience and a cultural driver” (Steiner & Xu, 2018). The term has gradually lost its negative connotation as dangerous and is no longer seen as a sign of weakness. Instead, Steiner and

Xu (2018) argue that it has become a declaration of a person's cultural and technological sophistication. Binge-watching is disrupting tradition conventions of the television industry, including television advertising, content production and distribution (Steiner & Xu, 2018). The business models of subscription video on-demand (SVOD) services do not call for traditional advertising. Moreover, binge-watching has changed content production as storylines are no longer bound to the structure of one episode a week (e.g. beginnings and endings of an episode are fading).

Thus far, a number of studies (Davis, 2016; Sung, Kang & Lee, 2016; Gunter, 2017; Page, 2017; Horvath, Horton, Lodge & Hattie, 2017) have examined binge-watching from different perspectives including psychology, marketing and media effects. In recent years, researchers have studied binge-watching in relation to physical and mental health. Binge-watching is associated with loneliness, weight gain and a need for social belongingness (Davis, 2016; Sung et al., 2016). Davis (2016) argues that online television can substitute a sense of social belonging and can lead to neglect of real-life social contacts. Netflix has stressed that over 50% of their binge-watchers, binge-watches together.

Furthermore, critics have argued the negative effect of binge-watching on anxiety and schoolwork (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018; Karmaker, Kruger, Elhai & Kamer, 2015). The accessibility of content effects procrastination of (school)work and sleep as users are stimulated to stay up late and watch series (Gunter, 2017). Equally, a study by Sung et al. (2016) shows that binge-watchers possess weaker self-control. It appears to be very difficult – if not impossible – for these users to stop watching. In a similar fashion, Riddle, Peebles, Davis, Xu and Schroeder (2017) identified two types of binge-watchers: intentional (planned) and unintentional (unplanned). The study suggests that 80% of the college students participates in both intentional and unintentional binge-watching. Both types of bingeing occur equally among students, however during academic breaks when students have more time for bingeing, they binge-watch consequently more (Riddle et al., 2017). Research by Karmaker et al. (2015) shows that individuals who identify themselves as binge-watchers, experience higher levels of anxiety, stress and even depression. The dopamine rush caused by binge-watching initially gives individuals a state of happiness, but once the show is over a form of short-term depression can occur among binge-watchers (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018; Karmaker et al., 2015).

However, there can also be positive effects of binge-watching, as found in a study by Karmaker et al. (2015). Their study (Karmaker et al., 2015) acknowledges that binge-watching can be an important stress reliever as it offers an escape from reality. In addition, binge-watching can be salient for identification and self-esteem. Self-esteem can be improved when viewers see certain qualities or characteristics valued in the series. Page (2017) argues “binge-watching can be healthy if your favorite character is also a virtual role model for you” (para. 12). According to Page (2017) well-balanced viewing habits – consisting of both binge-watching and regular viewing – allow individuals to benefit from the highs but avoid the repercussions. Important to note is that even tough

various critics have associated binge-watching with negative effects on physical and mental health, causality has not been proven yet.

In line with previous research critical of binge-watching, the Research by Horvath et al. (2017) emphasized a negative effect of binge-watching on enjoyment. They explored the effects of bingeing on memory repossession and enjoyment of a TV series. They found that binge-watchers enjoy a TV series significantly less than individuals who watch the TV series based on a daily or weekly schedule. Binge-watchers show an increased gratification for the streaming service but a reduced satisfaction for the TV series. Individuals enjoy a TV series more when they consume it on a daily or weekly basis; the anticipation for new episodes contributes to the level of perceived enjoyment. In addition, binge-watchers were found to have the strongest memory performance the first few days after watching the program. Horvath et al. (2017) also found that spreading episodes over a longer period of time “leads to worse short-term but stronger long-term performance” (p. 96) than binge-watching episodes in a short period of time. Although, binge-watching is the preferred viewing method for many college students it does appear to have a negative effect on perceived enjoyment, comprehension of the series and memory (Horvath et al., 2017; Steiner & Xu, 2018). This is in accordance with the fact that binge-watching amounts to more inattentive viewing. Young individuals do not have shorter attention span but get more easily disrupted, particularly by their phones (Mark, 2017). Watching television for longer periods of time can foster more disruptions and can thus lead less comprehension and memory of the series (Mark, 2017).

Binge-watching is a continuous balance between attentive or inattentive viewing (Steiner & Xu, 2018). Streaming services enable viewers to participate in more inattentive viewing and put on shows as ‘background noise’ while doing other things (e.g. cooking and doing the dishes). The sub-question “What (new) viewing habits have emerged among Dutch millennials due to their online TV consumption?”, aims to explore actual viewing habits of Dutch millennials and the role of binge-watching.

### *2.3.1 Binge-watching and the Uses and Gratifications Theory*

As briefly stressed earlier, binge-watching TV series can be appealing for multiple reasons including escapism, identification and self-esteem. The uses and gratifications theory has identified needs and gratifications individuals aim to satisfy with television consumption. However, as viewing habits have changed it is still underexplored to what extent needs and gratifications have changed as well. Researchers like Pittman and Sheehan (2015) and Steiner and Xu (2018) have suggested that the uses and gratifications theory should consider the implications of technological characteristics. Streaming services have combined the advantages of multiple technological aspects such as large screen viewing, streaming and social media. Viewers can watch what they want, where they want while being empowered to rate and review content (Steiner & Xu, 2018).

According to Steiner and Xu (2018) motives for binge-watching are: “catching up, relaxation, sense of completion, cultural inclusion and improved viewing experience” (p. 9). Individuals binge-watch a show to catch up prior to the release of a new season. In addition, many find re-binging – re-watching a familiar shows – relaxing and nostalgic (Steiner & Xu, 2018). Another reason for binge-watching is the need for completion; wanting to know how it finishes: Rubenking, Bracken, Sandoval and Rister (2018) referred to this as anticipation of what is coming next. Many binge-watchers describe themselves as compulsive watchers who, sometimes, find it hard to stop (Steiner and Xu, 2018). The need for completion/the anticipation is amplified by “content and technological features” (Rubenking et al., 2018, p.78). For example, episodes no longer have a clear ending or beginning and Netflix’s interface is designed in such a way that within 10 seconds the next episode starts. Other reasons for binge-watching are procrastination and escapism (Rubenking et al., 2018). In addition, cultural inclusion was found to be a strong motivator for bingeing (Steiner & Xu, 2018; Rubenking et al., 2018). Watching TV series that were considered culturally relevant was an important reason for many individuals to binge-watch. Contributing to this motivation were intentions to join online communities and avoid spoilers. Moreover, Steiner and Xu (2018) found that binge-watching allows individuals to experience higher levels of narrative immersion. Being able to experience the narrative arc of a TV series without interruption was a strong motivator for many individuals. As a result of this immersion – where viewers can follow plots and characters seamlessly – viewers can fulfill hedonic gratifications like enjoyment and fandom (Shim and Kim, 2018). Shim and Kim (2018) found a correlation between the amount of television viewing and online fandom activities. The desire to escape reality and emerge into a fantasy world appears to be reinforced by binge-watching (Rubenking et al., 2018). The more individuals binge-watch, the more they sympathize with and want to interact with the characters (e.g. joining online communities, visiting conventions) (Tukachinsky & Eyal, 2018). The narrative immersion gratifies the viewer’s desire for enjoyment and entertainment (Steiner & Xu, 2018; Shim & Kim, 2018).

Steiner and Xu (2018) came to the conclusion that the existing typologies of the Uses and Gratifications theory by Katz (1973) are insufficient to explain the binge-watching motives like sense of completion, catching-up and narrative immersion. The Uses and Gratifications theory relies heavily on active and passive use of media to explain audience behavior, however according to Steiner and Xu (2018) a ‘viewing attentive spectrum’ (VAS) would be more satisfactory in trying to explain binge-watch behavior. Binge-watchers do not shift between passive or active viewing but instead their level of attention changes. For the purpose of this research, the main focus will be on the original Uses and Gratifications theory, which assumes that media use gratifies needs. However, if during the analysis VAS – the level of attentiveness – appears to be relevant as an addition to understand viewing behavior, it will be used. This research aims to explore the (unintended) consequences of media use. For example, what kind of relationship do audiences have with binge-watching (e.g. regretful or unapologetic). The first sub-question and overall research question “How

(and why) do Dutch millennials consume television via streaming services?”, aim to explore needs and gratifications gained from online television consumptions.

#### 2.4 *The Rise of Original Content*

Many video on-demand streaming services started out as distributors but have increasingly become content creators. Over the years, Netflix and Videoland have produced and released quality TV series and movies including serialised drama and comedy (Jenner, 2016). VoD-streaming services do not have to abide by the strict rules and regulations set for traditional broadcasting networks. This allows them to push traditional standards and explore uncommon themes and structures. Traditionally, programming was designed to appeal to mass audience, however with diverging viewer groups and endless content choices, this no longer applies. A trend towards the production of ‘unique’ content – content targeted at a specific audience segment – can be observed among online streaming services (Satell, 2016). Netflix, HBO and Videoland as content makers have changed the television landscape. Original content created by Netflix or HBO, have budgets similar to Hollywood productions. For example, the production budget of the Netflix’s series *The Crown* is estimated around 100 million dollars per season, 10 million per episode (Loughrey, 2016). Moreover, Hollywood directors and actors are increasingly involved in the productions. Just earlier this year, Michelle and Barack Obama signed a multi-year deal with Netflix to produce films and TV series (Bort, 2018). Streaming services have amplified the desire for TV series by making viewing practices effortless. Last year, a total of 487 TV series were released in the United States among traditional broadcasters and steaming services (Benjamin, 2018). At the end of 2018, Netflix aims to have 700 original TV series available on their streaming platform, of which 80 non-English (Spangler, 2018).

Recently it was announced that Netflix is going to produce more local content, possibly at the expense of traditional television and broadcasters like NPO and RTL who invest heavily in local content. In the past two years Netflix has produced Spanish, French and German TV series. Recently, they released the German series *Dark* and the second season of *La Casa de Papel*, which became worldwide successes (Jong, 2017). In the coming years, Netflix intends to produce more European series including a Dutch TV series and a Turkish TV series (Kist & Schrik, 2018). By focusing on European productions Netflix hopes to gain ground in the European streaming market. The production and distribution of local content allows Netflix to compete with local providers like Videoland and the NPO. In The Netherlands, the public broadcaster (NPO) and Videoland are the main producers of Dutch quality TV series. With growing competition from Netflix, NPO has decided to increase their production budget with 12 million euros (Jong, 2017). The total video budget of the NPO amounts to 502 million euros a year, only 22 million will be directly invested in online content (Takken, 2018). Moreover, Videoland has decided to put even more emphasis on traditional Dutch themes in future content. The production and marketing budgets of NPO and

Videoland pale in comparison to Netflix. With Netflix commencing to local content, does pose the question to what extent users yearn local content.

### *2.5 Brand Identity*

With the rise of streaming platforms and original content, television choices have been greater than ever before. Many consider this one of the major advantages of VoD services, however the endless strain of choices can also form a problem (ofcom, 2016). Netflix found that subscribers are likely to lose interest and abandon the platform if they do not find a TV series or movie within 90 seconds (Stenovc, 2016). The on-demand streaming market has seemingly become a complex place for many consumers. There are many suppliers, who differ from one another in terms of content, price, image quality, speed of content updates, accessibility and user experience. This implies that for steaming services it has become important to have a clear brand identity and brand image to appeal to consumers and create brand loyalty. Brand identity refers to “a set attributes created by a company to convey an image to consumers” (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 1986, p. 136). Ghodeswar (2008) extended this definition by saying that brand identity refers to ‘the promise’ companies make to consumers. The brand identity of an organization helps consumers differentiate the brand from other brands. Having an effective brand identity can enhance brand loyalty – the likelihood that consumers will continue to buy/use the brand’s product or service (Ghodeswar, 2008). Netflix scores high on subscribers-retention. In contrast to Amazon and Hulu, Netflix was able to retain more subscribers in 2016 (McAlone, 2016). Which, according to Callahan (2016), is because consumers are loyal to content. Netflix – and increasingly other streaming services – has built a reputation of producing good quality original content. This reputation is reinforced by media coverage of Netflix originals. In their brand identity and brand image, Netflix relies heavily on originals (Callahan, 2016). Hence, its visual branding called ‘stacks’ referring to a deck of cards, or in this case a deck of Netflix originals (see Appendix C). By portraying only the faces of the main characters from Netflix originals, ‘stacks’ has become an effective communication tool for Netflix. This type of branding/communication emphasizes the emotional connection consumers have with the characters or sparks curiosity among non-members. An effective brand identity is all that makes a brand instantly recognizable for consumers. However, this can also lead to questioning whether brand identity works the same for streaming services or – as Callahan (2016) suggests – that customers are loyal to content. Hence, the third sub-question: “Based on what criteria do consumers select online streaming services?”.

While exploring what attributes of streaming services are the most persuasive, we might find that peer pressure and taste also play a significant role in the process. Peer pressure refers to the extent in which behavior among a group of friends correlates (Robin & Johnson, 1991; Ungar, 2000). Rather than putting emphasis on the level of pressure group members feel to act or think a certain



way, this definition accounts for unconscious behavior and the decision processes. Peer pressure is often studied to explain behavior of young individuals. When exploring how Dutch millennials use online streaming services this study aims to examine the role of peer pressure in the process of selecting content and perhaps even in the process of selecting a streaming service.

## *2.6 Streaming Services in The Netherlands*

In this chapter an in-depth overview of the subscription video on-demand market in The Netherlands will be provided. In order to explore the viewing habits of Dutch millennials in relation to streaming services it is important to understand the nature and different aspects of these streaming services. The case studies will be presented in order of popularity.

### *2.6.1 Netflix*

Netflix, originally a DVD rental service, introduced the first video on-demand service in 2007. In September 2013, Netflix was released in The Netherlands and at that point Netflix had already over 40 million subscribers worldwide. Netflix was the first subscription video on-demand service and gained popularity quickly. As of 2018, Netflix has over 125 million subscribers worldwide and 2.8 million subscribers in The Netherlands (Loon, 2017; Telecompapers, 2018). According to research by Multiscope (2017) and Telecompapers (2017), the actual reach of Netflix in The Netherlands is far greater than the 2.8 million subscribers. Estimated is that over 5 million individuals have access to Netflix, either via a shared account or via a friend's account. In the Netherlands, the current market penetration of Netflix is 32%. However, among the age group 13-19, the market penetration is even over 55%. On average, Dutch Netflix users spent 84 minutes on the platform daily. Netflix has increasingly taken mainstream consumers away from traditional television. Over the years, Netflix has enlarged its online library of TV series and movies, grew its device outreach and even started to produce its own content featuring major Hollywood stars. In 2018, Netflix will release its thousandth Netflix original. In addition, it aims to offer a large variety of content, meeting all the different tastes of its viewers. Besides Netflix, the online television landscape includes Videoland, Ziggo XL, NPO start, Amazon Prime Video & NLZiet.

### *2.6.2 Videoland*

The second largest streaming service in The Netherlands is Videoland – an initiative by RTL – launched in 2014 as an ‘all you can eat’ streaming service. Videoland started out as a DVD rental services in the early eighties and introduced ‘Videoland on-demand’ in 2010. In 2013, – the same year that Netflix was released in The Netherlands – RTL purchased Videoland and closed all physical stores. Videoland was interesting for RTL because of the digital framework of ‘Videoland on-demand’ and the name (e.g. familiarity for many consumers). Since the merger, RTL has expanded Videoland which is now the second largest streaming service in The Netherlands. Even

though, RTL does not release data about the amount of subscribers or their behavior, Telecompaper (2018) has estimated the amount between 400.000 and 600.000 subscribers. Since its merger with RTL, Videoland has become a fascia for RTL content. Over the years, the online library has been expanded with both Dutch and international content. Multiple popular TV shows of HBO and Hulu – including *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Big Little Lies* – have been made available on the platform. Moreover, they have started to produce their own original content – solely available on Videoland. In 2015, Videoland released its first original TV series named '*Zwarte Tulp*'. In order to compete with Netflix and offer consumers a unique value proposition, Videoland focuses on the production of quality Dutch content (Brouwer, 2018). Videoland aspires to be the largest local streaming service by focusing mainly on Dutch content with additional quality series from abroad. This year, they have partnered up with VICE, SBS, and NPO to expand their library and create new content (Brouwer, 2018). The target audience of Videoland are Dutch individuals with a preference for Dutch content. Assumed is that their target audience is older and lower educated than audiences for international streaming services like Netflix. Research suggests that younger generations (e.g. millennials and generation Y) and higher educated individuals favor an international outlook in their online behavior. Communication and technology has reshaped the way individuals interact with one another (Perruci, 2017). This generation participates in the cultural conversation on social media, including aspects like memes, which are often a reference to international popular cultural. On average, Videoland users spent 43 minutes on the platform on a daily basis. Videoland aims to grow this number to 60 minutes per day across all age groups, by implementing a fan- and theme-based approach (Brouwer, 2018). For example, the focus on content like *Temptation Island* as a guilty-pleasure. *Temptation Island* – an international television format – can be considered a somewhat lowbrow dating reality show. In contrast to Netflix, Videoland is not an industry disrupter. Videoland is a response by the existing market to the disruptive business model of Netflix.

### 2.6.3 Additional Dutch initiatives

In April 2018, NPO – the Dutch public broadcaster – announced a deal with Videoland and Netflix in which they are going to license their Dutch TV series to both streaming services. Interesting, because NPO has its own online alternatives for linear television; namely NPO Start and NPO Start Plus. NPO Start is a free service where individuals can re-watch programming of all three public TV channels. Limitation of the service are the timespan of seven days to re-watch programs and the fact that its not entirely commercial free. In contrast to NPO Start Plus, which is ad free and allows individuals to re-watch and watch forward for 2,95 euros per month. According to Multiscope (2018), NPO Start Plus has currently over 87.000 subscribers. Telecompapers (2018), suggests that one million individuals use the free service NPO Start on a daily basis. In 2014, NL Ziet – a collaboration of NPO, RTL and SBS – was released. For 7,95 euros, individuals get unlimited access to all programming of the broadcasters. The amount of subscribers is estimated at 150.000

(Multiscope, 2018). In addition, this service also offers the options to live stream all TV channels of NPO, RTL and SBS.

#### *2.6.4. Ziggo and Amazon*

Ziggo Movies and Series (XL) is the on-demand streaming service of Ziggo and gives consumers unlimited access to international movies and TV series. The streaming service is exclusively for Ziggo consumers. Furthermore, it is the only streaming services offering the HBO catalogue including the hit-series Game of Thrones. Moreover, in 2016 Amazon Prime Video entered the Dutch streaming market. Amazon Prime Video is the cheapest streaming service available in The Netherlands but appears to be rather reactive, as it has not engaged in much promotion yet to attract consumers.

#### *2.6.5 Upcoming streaming services*

Both Disney and Apple have announced their plans to launch their own streaming service in 2019. Disney has retrieved all content licensed to other streaming services, as a first step to the launch of their own platform. Disney is not just owner of Walt Disney Studio, but also owns Marvel Entertainment, Pixar and possibly soon Fox Studios. Disney's on-demand streaming platform will offer unlimited and exclusive access to some of the biggest franchises like The Avengers, Star Wars, Pirates of the Caribbean, Toy Story and The Incredibles. It is expected that Disney's streaming service is going to change the current on-demand landscape and pose as threat to Netflix. Their large amount of content will appeal to all gender and age category: varying from millennials to families with children. In addition, Disney has announced that they are working on expanding their content for their streaming service even further. Their content is extremely fan-based; the release of Infinity War crossed 1.7 billion worldwide at the box office (Mendelson, 2018). Just imagine if Disney were to decide to release all content solely on their streaming service (e.g. instead of cinema's, DVD's, Apple Store etc.), they could change the rules of the game. In contrast to Disney, Apple does have content readily available. Earlier this year, Apple has announced the production of 12 projects varying from TV series to documentaries. Apple has hired major Hollywood directors and stars like Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon, and is likely to spend over 1 billion dollars on the projects. Apple's focus will be focus on quality rather than quantity. However, with just 12 projects it is questionable whether they can sustain against giants like Netflix and soon Disney.

#### *2.7 Summary*

In this chapter, we have explored the theoretical background of (online) television consumption, in terms of uses and gratifications, mood management, innovations in the television industry and prevailing viewing habits. Further, this chapter touched upon the rise of (local) original content produced by on-demand streaming services, and the importance of brand identity. As more and more

on-demand streaming services enter the market it is imperative to offer an unique value proposition to your consumers. In the final section of this chapter, an overview was presented of the current Dutch streaming market. In next chapter, a detailed description of the methodology of this thesis will be provided. Furthermore, the sample and sampling technique will be discussed and explained. Moreover in the results section, an overview of the findings will be presented. Last, the thesis will conclude with a conclusion, answer to the research question, suggestions for future research and a discussion of the limitations of this study.

### **3. Methodology**

In order to answer the research question “How (and why) do Dutch millennials consume television via online streaming services?”, this study draws on qualitative interviews with a group of Dutch millennials – aged 18-34. This research method is most suitable as its purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals experience and understand a certain phenomenon. This is precisely what this study aims to explore, namely how individuals use and experience online streaming services. This approach enables the researcher to explore viewing habits, motives and patterns in respect to the use of online streaming services and answer the research questions.

#### *3.1 In-depth interviews*

The purpose of qualitative interviews is to examine experiences, motivations, opinions and belief of participants on a certain phenomena (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). Interviews are most appropriate when a deeper understanding of a phenomenon is desired. In accordance with this study’s main aim – researching the relationship between viewing habits and streaming services – conducting interviews is the most appropriate research method. Interviews allow personal views, opinions and experiences to be addressed (Gill et al., 2008). As a result of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, interviews are considered the most candid form of research and leads to in-depth knowledge (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This entails that beforehand several questions were developed to structure the interview and outline areas of importance. Since relevant themes have already been identified in advance, the process of transcribing and analyzing the data will be much easier. This approach allows the interviewee and interviewer to explore views and ideas that arise during the interviews (Gill et al., 2008). The balanced level of flexibility, compared to structured and unstructured interviews, makes this the most apt approach for the study. Based on the sub-questions, several interview questions were developed in advance, covering topics like viewing habits, binge-watching, and original content (see appendix A). The interview guide contains questions that are open-ended, neutral, and are “aimed to yield as much information about the study’s objective as possible” (Gill et al., 2008, p. 292). This was done in order to obtain the most useful, relevant and rich data (Gill et al., 2008).

The interview guide was seen as a guide and when felt appropriate the guide was ignored in order to (further) explore other views or topics. The first part of the interview was created as introduction to make the participant feel comfortable. This part included general demographic questions and questions regarding the participant’s favorite film or TV series. These questions were often met with great enthusiasm. Participants enjoyed talking about their favorite shows or shows they are currently watching. After that, questions regarding online and offline television consumption were asked. These questions were designed to get a full picture of the overall television consumption of the respondent, including linear TV, online streaming services and illegal streaming or

downloading. In addition, emphasis was laid on the amount of consumption. After that, questions regarding *where* and *how* the participants use the streaming services were asked. Next, the participants were asked about their viewing habits, including topics like binge-watching and content selection. Binge-watching appeared to be an ambiguous topic as many found it hard to reflect on their own binge-watch behavior. Some started laughing whereas others were searching for some sort of standard. The demeanor of the interviewees suggested some level of embarrassment towards binge-watching. This in contrast to research by Steiner and Xu (2018), who referred to binge-watching as a declaration of technological savviness. The interviews continued with questions *why* the participant uses online streaming services. Here motives and moods were emphasised. In the final part of the interview, participants were asked about the selection criteria for subscribing to an online streaming services. Moreover, the role of (original) content and language were discussed. As stressed earlier, the interview guide was used as guide and during the interviews deviating topics or opinions were frequently explored. As a result, every interview is different yet major topics as stated in the interview guide were discussed in all interviews. This in order to ensure validity and transferability.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face. This method has the following advantages: 1) interviewees can clarify answers, 2) there is a minimization of nonresponses, and 3) it offers a rich quality of data and detailed information (Lavrakas, 2008). A face-to-face interview builds on the personal interaction between an interviewer and interviewee, which generates detailed information. Yet, personal interviews also have some disadvantages: the interviewee has limited time to think about an answer compared to email or phone interviews, and due to the interviewer's presence an interviewee might be more inclined to give socially desirable answers (Vogl, 2013). It is important for the interviewer to be aware of the influence he/she can have on the participant. Interviewer bias can affect validity, therefore it is important that the questions and non-verbal cues of interviewer are not leading. Since, the research question has been formed beforehand it is essential that the interviewer avoids confirmation bias – seeking out responses that support pre-existing notions (Phillips & Dipboye, 1989). To minimize confirmation bias emphasis was put on the development of open and non-leading questions and re-evaluation of the responses and data. Further, attention was paid to non-verbal cues in order to make sure as much information was conveyed as possible. In order to maximize validity, this study paid close attention to interviewer bias, interpretation-/translation bias and transparency of the research design and methodology.

The in-depth interviews took between 32 to 63 minutes, and were thus held face-to-face. The interview locations were chosen based on pragmatic considerations: some interviews were conducted at the participant's home or office and others in a neutral public place like a café. Initially, the plan was to reserve a room on campus to conduct the interviews but during the sampling process it appeared that most participants preferred to do the interviews somewhere more convenient to their schedule. In addition, research by Elwood and Martin (2000) suggests that conducting interviews on

campus might reinforce a power relationship between the interviewer and participant as it can characterize the interviewer as researcher and ‘expert’. The choice for practical locations was favored over an office on campus and meant that the interviews were conducted across cities in The Netherlands including Nijmegen, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

### *3.2 Units of Analysis*

The nature of this study is empirical and exploratory, as it seeks to understand motives, habits and practices related to online television consumption of Dutch millennials. A total of 13 in-depth interviews were conducted with Dutch millennials, until the point of saturation had been reached. The age group 18-34 is often referred to as millennials, generation Y or digital natives. As explained in the introductory chapter, millennials were selected based on their familiarity with and adoption of the internet and digital devices. Viewing habits of this group can emphasize current practices and potentially shed light on future trends. Participants were thus selected based on age, nationality and access to a streaming service. In order to participate in this study it was essential that the individual had access to a streaming service. This could either be via a personal or shared account. Participants were not selected based on the amount of time spent on the platform because this would be unrepresentative and is likely to only characterize heavy or light users.

For the purpose of this study, research was limited to subscription video on-demand streaming services (SVOD) available in The Netherlands. This means that YouTube, replay TV – like RTL XL, Kijk.nl –, and other digital alternatives were not included in the scope of this research. The streaming services HBO and Hulu were also excluded, as they are not officially available in The Netherlands. Interestingly, original content from HBO and Hulu is available in The Netherlands via Ziggo XL and Videoland, which means that their content could be part of the discussion. This study focuses on the streaming services Netflix and Videoland, and will address both original and purchased content available on these services. For the purpose of this study, online television will be defined as the consumption of movies, TV series, reality shows and documentaries via online streaming platforms. TV shows included typically range from 20 to 60 minutes. Initially, Ziggo XL and Amazon Prime were considered relevant for this research, but during the sampling process it appeared very difficult – if not impossible – to find someone with an account to these streaming services. Even though they are active on the Dutch streaming market, their reach remains quite limited (Multiscope, 2017).

Additionally, it was harder than expected to find Videoland users. Even though, they have between 400.000 and 600.000 subscribers (Telecompapers, 2018), their reach is still quite limited in comparison to Netflix (i.e. 2.8 million subscribers and a reach of 5.6 million). From the 13 participants, two individuals had access to both Videoland and Netflix. Four participants have tried Videoland but ultimately remained loyal to Netflix. The 13 participants – 5 men and 8 women – were between the age of 18 and 31, and had access to a Netflix or Videoland account. Interestingly,

Videoland accounts were only present among women. The men in this study showed very little interest in Videoland or its content, as none of them had an account or tried the free trial. This could be due to Videoland's focus on Dutch content and guilty pleasures. In addition, it could be that men – if they want to see particular content – are more inclined to stream or download content illegally. All male participants expressed that they still stream or download content illegally. The participants of this study were all highly educated. Most finished – or were still students of – a higher education degree (e.g. university and higher vocational education). Unfortunately, the sample is not representative of vocational education students or individuals who have not finished a degree. These groups appeared to be less prone to collaborate with this thesis. Two vocational education students – introduced by one of participants – cancelled last-minute. In addition, the participants of this study could be considered urban millennials as they all live in a city. Moreover, all – except for two – live on their own in student housing, a studio or a communal home. During the interviews it became clear that individual living in with their parents have more access to linear television, but do not watch more linear television than individuals living on their own. An overview of the candidates, their occupation and streaming-subscription can be found in Appendix B.

### *3.3 Sampling Method*

Participants were approached via personal contacts, Facebook and email. The snowball sampling technique was used to find participants. This technique presumes that individuals are reached via other participants based on referrals (Biernacki, & Waldorf, 1981). After the interviews, participants were asked whether they knew people who would like to participate in the study. For the purpose of this research, snowball sampling appeared to be very suitable as Netflix/Videoland are topics frequently discussed among friends. Participants knew exactly which one of their friends had an account and whether they were heavy or light users. Oftentimes, participants introduced outspoken or interesting potential participants, as they had inside knowledge of that person's viewing habits. Snowball sampling led to new participants, but offered limited demographic variance. For example, female 1 introduced friends who had the same age, did the same academic study and lived in the same city. In order to achieve a little more diversity and a more representative sample, not all individuals introduced by participants were included in the sample. The emphasis on Dutch millennials – age 18 to 34 – manifests in the fact that their practices can be representative of the Dutch television market and trends. International millennials living in The Netherlands were not included in the sample, as this study also aims to explore the role of (local) content. A global trend towards local content can be observed among streaming services (e.g. Netflix is increasingly investing in European content), therefore it is valuable to examine the influence of local content. The primary focus on Dutch millennials allows this study to explore Videoland and its Dutch content. Due to the fact that all participants were Dutch, the interviews were held in Dutch. The Dutch language allowed the participants to expound their views and opinions, and be perfectly clear in their



speech and meaning of it. The preference for the Dutch language is also founded in the fact that the researcher is native Dutch speaker.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed in Dutch. Based on the data verbatim transcripts were produced. Verbatim transcription refers to a literal “reproduction of verbal data, where the written words are an exact replication of the audiorecorded words” (Poland, 1995, p. 291; Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Afterwards, relevant parts of the transcribed interviews were translated to English for the analysis. Translating data across languages can be complicated as it depends on interpretation and language proficiency of the researcher/transcriber (Temple & Young, 2004). The complexity of translating lies in the fact that some words cannot be translated into English, or that some words have different meanings (Temple & Young, 2004). Therefore, it is important to focus on the overall meaning of the words rather than the etymological structure. Even though, the interviews will be transcribed with great precision, a potential semantic loss might be inevitable.

### *3.4 Data Analysis*

Qualitative interviews provide rich data but can be time-consuming to analyze. After conducting the interviews, the data was analyzed manually by the means of coding. Based on the raw data categories were created that described particular patterns and structures in the data. Codes – labels with assigned meaning – were allocated to parts of the data meaning words, sentences and sometimes even paragraphs (Basit, 2003). Codes are based on the interpretation of the researcher. For example, the researcher might assign the code ‘individually’ to a short phrase whereas others might say ‘lonely’ or ‘unaccompanied’. Coding is a step to familiarize oneself with the data, and a step towards more in-depth analysis of the data. After coding, a thematic analysis was conducted – a method to identify, analyze and report themes discovered in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) subdivided thematic analysis into six stages: “familiarization with the data, initial codes, initial themes, revise themes, define and name the themes, report finding” (p. 17). This structure was followed during the data analysis. Through the process of transcribing and translating the interviews, familiarization with the dataset occurred. Subsequently, during the process of identifying interesting aspects in the data, initial codes were established. These aspects were likely to form the basis of recurring patterns (i.e. initial themes). By taking into account the aim of the study “how and why do Dutch millennials consume television via streaming services”, themes were reviewed and specified. A theme refers to recurring topics in responses (Patton, 2005). The significance of a theme is not necessarily reflected by the level of attention it receives during the interviews. Likewise, neither does the extent of elaboration on a theme reflect the importance of a theme. In qualitative analysis, no clear guideline exists as to when – and at what number of evidence – data should be considered a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Hence, the important role of the researcher in the process of determining what should be considered a theme. Based on the researcher’s judgement themes were created. Attributes like age, education, gender, social status were not used as selection criteria but

were, on occasion, considered meaningful in the analysis. Recurring themes were used to address interesting findings and ultimately form a conclusion and answer to the research question “How (and why) do Dutch millennials consume television via online streaming services?”.

### *3.5 Summary*

This chapter touched upon the methodology of the research. It provided an explanation for the chosen research method, and elaborated on the sampling method. Further, this chapter discussed the sample and provided an overview of the interviewees. Additionally, the data collection and data analysis process was described. In the next chapter, the findings of the thirteen qualitative interviews will be presented. Further, in the final chapter the conclusion will be presented including limitations and suggestions of further research.

## 4. Findings

In this chapter, the findings from the semi-structured interviews will be presented and explained. The transcripts of the interviews have been analyzed through an open and axial coding system (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding refers to a type of analysis in which the researcher labels parts of the data: sentences or words that identify aspects of how consumers use on-demand streaming services (e.g. time, location, motives, intentions and intensity). Afterwards, connections and relationships between the codes were established, referring to axial coding. The findings will be discussed and explained based on themes created by the researcher. Additional findings and results will also be explained in relation to relevant theory and the sub questions. In this chapter, finding related to the use of streaming services, the cultural conversation, content selection, viewing habits like binge-watching and motives for the usage of streaming services will be presented. Lastly, this chapter will briefly touch upon the perceived difference between Netflix and Videoland.

### 4.1 Television consumption

Since this research is focused on the viewing habits of Dutch millennials in relation to on-demand streaming services, it is important to understand the full picture of how millennials consume television. This includes the consumption via linear broadcasters, on-demand streaming services and illegal platforms.

#### 4.1.1 Linear television

Most participants expressed that they rarely watch any linear television. In the interviews it became clear that most respondents still do have a TV. These participants use their television for different purposes: to watch linear TV, to use their game console or to stream Netflix. Julia (20), a medical student in Nijmegen, said: “Yes I have a TV with cable but I almost never use it. I know that sounds really bad”. On top of that Sam (24), an engineer, said: “Yes I have a TV but I honestly can’t tell you the last time I watched regular television on it”. However, a few of the participants stressed they still watch linear television on a regular basis, like Floor (26), a doctor in Nijmegen:

“Yes I still watch normal television but it really depends on what. For a while I didn’t watch any normal television but then *Grey’s Anatomy* and *The Good Doctor* started again. So then on weekdays I watch that on normal television”.

The citation above shows the exact reason why some of the participants still watch linear TV, namely content. The participants explained that content is the main reason for them to consume linear television. Even though it is not always convenient in terms of time, being able to watch *Grey’s Anatomy* and *The Good Doctor* was for Floor a compelling reason to return to linear television. In addition, Floor underlines the fact that she watches linear television on weekdays. This has a few

reasons: 1) the content she prefers is aired on weekdays and not on weekends, and 2) her weekends are far more unpredictable so she does not watch linear television on a regular basis. Floor does watch linear TV on the weekends from time to time but this is often an unplanned and spontaneous activity. In contrast to watching *Grey's Anatomy* and *The Good Doctor*, which is planned to a large extent. Moreover, four participants articulated that they watch linear television for sports, particularly formula 1 appeared to be popular among the participants. Due to the live nature of sports events, linear TV is preferred over other alternatives like replay TV or time-shifted TV (Waterfield, 2018). Furthermore, respondents articulated that they do frequently watch linear television when they are with their parents. For the older generation, aged 50-64 year, linear television is still the main form of television consumption. However, Danielle noticed that even with her parents she is watching less and less linear TV. Danielle (18), currently in between studies, said:

“When I am at my parents’ house we do sometimes watch normal television. You know when we’re all together on the couch just and stuff. At times we do turn on the TV to see what’s on but we never really find anything good. Not like we used too... you know with Idols or The Voice. Maybe we just get too annoyed by all the commercial breaks that we eventually turn it off or watch something via Netflix or I download something. There are just better options I guess”.

In the citation above, Danielle underlines multiple reasons for her decrease of linear television consumption: 1) the decline of quality content available on linear TV and 2) the vast amount of commercials. In addition, she stresses the change in content (i.e. content available used to be good but is not anymore). However, one could argue that in the current environment with amount of consumption options, there is always ‘better’ content available. As more alternatives to linear television are ad free, the irritation with commercials has grown among the participants of this study. For example, Jacob (31) a customer support employee laughingly said: “No I don’t watch regular TV. When I do watch regular TV I get extremely annoyed by all the commercials. And the meaningless content.” Most of the participants watch little to no linear television. Baring in mind that the sample of this study is small, it does show a more significant decrease in linear television consumption than studies by Telecompaper (2018) and Multiscope (2017), which stated that millennials still spend a third of their television consumption on linear television. In addition, research by Stichting Kijkonderzoek (SKO, 2018) suggests that Dutch individuals still watch 178 minutes of linear television a day. However, results from this sample suggest that the amount of minutes spent watching linear television is far less. The sample of this study consists of mainly highly educated millennials who live on their own. This is not a representative sample of the entire population of Dutch millennials. It is very possible that individuals still living at home have a different setting in which they watch more linear television.

Furthermore, there was quite a bit of variance between the participants in regards to illegal downloading and streaming of content. Some said that they stream content illegally because they want to see a particular show or episode that is not available on Netflix or Videoland. For example, Jacob expressed:

“Yes but before I had Netflix I used to do it far more often. I streamed and downloaded a lot but to be honest it just doesn’t work as good as Netflix. Plus I don’t mind paying for it [...] So now and then I still watch content illegally but only when the show I want to see and is not on Netflix, that happens quite a bit actually. I watch *Westworld* with my roommates. That is a HBO series only accessible if you have Ziggo. We don’t have TV so no Ziggo [...] When there is no easy way to access content I want to see, I don’t feel guilty about illegal streaming.”

In the citation above, Jacob underlines his preference for Netflix over illegal downloading and streaming. However, certain content is still consumed via illegal platforms as it is not easily accessible via legal streaming services. Similarly, other participants also stated watching content unavailable via legal channels. For example, Danny (29) downloads *Westworld* illegally, Lianne (19) downloads *Game of Thrones*, on occasion Julia and Sophie (24) watch *Grey’s Anatomy* illegally, and Eva (19) and Ben (22) watch new movies online via popcorn-time. Popcorn-time is an illegal torrent-based website which allows users to stream and download content. Interesting to note is that *Grey’s Anatomy* is actually available on Videoland, however both participants were unaware of that and stated that if they had known they would have considered a free trial. Especially because they were concerned about viruses on illegal websites. In both cases – linear and illegal television – content appears to be the main driver for consumption. Linear television and illegal websites are simply ways to achieve a goal: consuming particular content that is unavailable on the participant’s on-demand streaming services. For example, Danny watches the HBO series *Westworld* illegally because it is unavailable on Netflix. Similarly, Julia and Sophie watch *Grey’s Anatomy* via linear TV and online, because it is unavailable on Netflix and seasons aired on Dutch linear TV are behind on the US release schedule.

#### 4.1.2 The use of steaming services

In 2017, Dutch individuals watched on average 84 minutes of Netflix a day; a little over 8,5 hours a week (Multiscope, 2017). For Videoland the amount of minutes per day was less, only 43 minutes (Brouwer, 2018). These numbers are in line with the responses of the participants of this study. Participants stressed the difficulty of quantifying their consumption, as they sometimes binge-watch a show and on other days do not watch Netflix/Videoland at all. For example, Julia said:

“For instance, yesterday I watched four episode in a row. Four times forty minutes. I was just completely sucked into the series. However, other times when I have a busy social life, I don’t watch Netflix for several days. Or when I have an exam coming up, then I watch nothing or very little maybe an hour or so.”

On average, participants revealed that they watch between five to fifteen hours of Netflix per week. During the interviews, it became clear that consumption varies per week (e.g. work/school, social obligations, exams and hooked on a series). Some suggested that they watch more during the holidays and others stressed the need to finish a series as soon as possible. This is in line with the findings of Riddle et al. (2017), who suggested that college students binge-watch more during academic breaks as they have more free time. The amount of consumption of on-demand streaming services is impacted by social factors like social obligations, academic breaks and connection with the show. Streaming services allow individuals to consume television on a variety of devices including laptops, phones and tablets. Most individuals no longer consume television via a television screen in a central place in the house. This traditional way of watching television appears to be outdated as everybody can have their own screen, consuming their own content. However, many participants stressed doing both; consuming Netflix/Videoland via a mobile device like a laptop, tablet or phone and via their television screens. As Tessa (25), a medical student in Nijmegen suggests it depends on the social situation in which you watch Netflix: “It differs quite a bit. When I Netflix with friends we do it via the television screen. I have a Google Chrome system so then we can just watch it via the TV. But when I am alone I watch Netflix on my iPad.”

Likewise, Danny (29) an entrepreneur in the cultural sector stated:

“Yes, I only have Netflix on my Ipad. [...] Sometimes I connect my iPad to my television screen. Well, I only do that when I know I am going to binge-watch. When I know this is going to take a few hours. Usually at least 2 hours.”

These citations show the use of different devices in different situations; watching Netflix or Videoland via a television screen suggests intentional consumption and requires premeditation. Similarly, Sam also underlined the relationship between device and intention: “Mostly via the PlayStation [on my television screen] and sometimes via my laptop. And occasionally when I am travelling I download something on my iPad.” As stated in the responses above, various devices are being used to consume Netflix/Videoland. Laptops, tablets and phones are predominately used for individual consumption. However, even though these devices seem more individualistic, the responses show that television screens are also increasingly used to watch Netflix/Videoland alone. The participants use their television screen to enhance the experience or make it more convenient.

The core feature of streaming services is the freedom to decide when, where and what you want to watch. This affects how individuals watch content.

#### 4.1.3 Together or alone

Every single participant expressed that she/he finds watching Netflix or Videoland an individualistic activity. Even though many – now and then – watch with others, on average participants indicated that they watch most of the content alone. They stressed the easiness of watching content alone. What Netflix and Videoland ultimately represent for the interviewees seems to be a feeling of ‘watch content on your own terms’. Respondents experienced this as positive innovation but acknowledged that streaming services have made watching television less social. One of the major reasons for this is the fact that content is released all at once. As a result, individuals watch the same content at different rates. Danny, who lives in a communal home, gives an apt explanation of these feelings:

“... there are very few series I watch with others. I find Netflix a very individual thing to be honest. It is incredibly hard to watch series together cause than you can’t watch an episode in between or in the train. Watching *Westworld* together with friends only works because *Westworld* is released on a weekly basis, so you can’t watch ahead. [...] it is certainly different.”

The citation above shows exactly the difficulty many individuals experience with regards to consuming content together. Multiple participants expressed that the only shows they watch together are shows released on a weekly basis like *Designated Survivor*, *Riverdale*, *Lucifer* and *Dynasty*. These Netflix shows – because of their traditional release framework of one episode a week – are easier to follow with groups as watching them can be planned based on the release schedule. For example, every Thursday night Floor (26) watches *Designated Survivor* with her friends, and on Monday nights Danny watches *Westworld* with his roommates. A weekly schedule allows the anticipation to grow, which according to several respondents enhances the enjoyment of watching the show. This correlates with the research by Horvath et al. (2017), who found that a weekly schedule leads to higher levels of enjoyment compared to binge-watching. The anticipation makes the reward (i.e. finally watching the episode) more fulfilling. In 2016, Netflix stated that viewers watch 50% of the time together with friends. However, the results of this sample show that most of the consumption is individualistic. All thirteen participants expressed doing most the Netflix/Videoland consumption alone. More importantly, the participants *experience* streaming services to be more individualistic. Participants have argued that they, and their immediate environment, watch their own content on their own screens, just inches apart from one another. Building on the

interviews, it can be argued that millennials are used to adjusting television to their schedule and taste. However, it has made the experience of television consumption lonelier. Danny said:

“I believe watching television together is very different to watching alone and than discussing the content with others. The experience of watching together is different, you can discuss previous episodes and expectations. When I watch series together I prepare differently than when I watch alone. Especially afterwards, you can discuss what happened right there and then. I believe it allows you to discuss it more in-depth as well. [...] I find it more fun to watch series together but it is just a hustle to organize. Time consuming and everybody is always busy.”

Likewise, Jacob also stressed the ease of watching alone:

“... If you want to watch a series together, your friends – first off – have to like the same content and they have to be at the same episode as you. So it takes quite an effort to watch series together and I think that that is why I watch series mostly alone. I don't watch a lot of Netflix films, but movies I watch together more often.”

These quotations show what other participants also felt: watching alone is easier but less fun. Especially after a long and busy day, many stated that it is easier and more relaxed to watch Netflix or Videoland by themselves. For example, Sophie said: “I think I find it more fun to watch Netflix together. [...] When I watch something with my roommate we laugh and get giggles. It is fun to laugh together and discuss it you know. But sometimes I do find it very relaxed to Netflix by myself.” Likewise, Eva noted that she prefers to watch alone because it allows her to watch exactly what she wants to watch. She does not have to compromise by watching content she does not like or re-watch content because her friends are an episode behind. Similarly, Tessa emphasized the difficulty of finding something to watch when she uses Netflix with friends: “Everybody has different tastes. People don't feel like watching stuff the other one likes. Sometimes it is not even worth the trouble of looking for a film or series on Netflix.”

Furthermore, another aspect contributing to the fact that more consumption is individual is the fact that the technological devices allow individuals to watch wherever they want. Most respondents have expressed the preference to consume Netflix and Videoland while in bed or on the couch. This habit is reinforced by on-demand streaming platforms and is both a result as well as a facilitator of more individualistic consumer behavior. Compared to linear television, participants noted that watching content together via on-demand streaming services is a more deliberate decision. It requires a more active attitude and planning.



#### 4.2 Cultural conversation

So what we see happening is that even though the experience has become more individualistic, the desire to share and discuss content watched via on-demand streaming services has grown. This happens not only in online communities or through memes, but among friend groups and families as well. During the interviews it became clear that Netflix and Videoland are fun and easy topics that are very frequently discussed among groups of friends. In addition, participants expressed that they enjoy giving and receiving advice on what to watch, as will be further illustrated in this paragraph. Moreover, participants have expressed that joining the cultural conversation was an important factor for them to start watching a particular series or movies, and sometimes even a reason for them to subscribe to a streaming service, like Sam explained:

“When I started with Netflix last summer the series *The 100* had just come on Netflix. At that time, I had many friends who were constantly talking about it. I had no clue what they were talking about. Very annoying. Constant references to the show [...] but now I’m up to speed.”

The citation above shows the desire of Sam to be able to join the cultural conversation with his friends. This was an important reason for him to start watching the show. Danielle also acknowledged that – in the past – she had started on series because all of her friends were watching them (e.g. the Netflix shows *Riverdale* and *Dynasty*). However, after a while she stopped watching both shows as they did not appeal to her that greatly. Even though peer pressure and the desire to join the cultural conversation have been motivators for participants to start watching particular content, they can be invalidated by personal taste. The cultural conversation can create interest and curiosity but ultimately it cannot motivate individuals to consume content they dislike. Hence, peer pressure and the cultural conversation as motivators are most effective when they are somewhat linked to the viewer’s personal tastes.

The desire to share is also represented in the amount of people that share their accounts. It appears that sharing exceeds the financial benefits as it also enlarges the immediate group with whom individuals can discuss content. By giving friends access, one’s circle to share content with expands and stronger bonds are formed over shared experiences in regards to series and movies. This desire to share and discuss content is not new. In the age of linear TV, discussing television content at work, at school or with friends was very common. Now, instead of asking what did you think for this, participants ask ‘Have you seen *La Casa de Papel* yet?’, ‘What episode are you at?’. Lianne (19), a communications student, said that she has spoken more about TV content than Netflix content: “To be honest, I think I have talked more about last night’s episode on Net5 rather than discussing have you seen the first five seasons of *Orange is the New Black* or something.” According to Lianne this is due to the large amount of content options on Netflix: everybody is watching

something else. This in contrast to many other participants, who feel that Netflix is an extremely popular topic in informal conversations.

Respondents acknowledged the influence of the cultural conversation on their viewing habits as it impacts what content they watch and thus ultimately affects what streaming services individuals subscribe to. For example, every single participant had watched *La Casa de Papel* – either one episode or all seasons. Many recalled the buzz surrounding *La Casa de Papel* as media, friends and colleagues reported on the series, many advising them to watch it. The popularity of *La Casa de Papel* started in December 2017 when the first season was released on Netflix, but when the second season aired in April 2018 the popularity climbed to new heights. Netflix knows multiple series that have dominated the cultural conversation like *The Sinner*, *Stranger Things*, *Narcos*, *Orange is the New Black*, *House of Cards* etc. In contrast to Netflix, Videoland does not have many series that have dominated the cultural conversation. Yet, a few weeks ago *Temptation Island* has created a lot of buzz. However, *Temptation Island* is a program designed for linear television that happens to be made available on Videoland, the on-demand streaming service of RTL. For example, Emma (25) a marketing employee who has access to both Videoland and Netflix, stated that:

“...I think it all depends on content now. You know, when Videoland would offer better content, more people would discuss it. Because *Soof* was a series everybody was talking about. So I think more content like that would lead to more talk [buzz], which would lead to more familiarity and possibly popularity. I think more people will then try Videoland.”

The citation above shows what many millennials perceived to be true: Netflix has better content than Videoland. The cultural conversation and thus perceived popularity does influence millennials more than they might lead on. Of the thirteen participants of this study, two respondents specifically said not to be affected by peer pressure or the cultural conversation but at the same time they stressed that they listened to recommendations from friends. This shows the thin line as to what extent personal recommendations are part of the cultural conversation or influenced by it.

#### 4.3 Content selection

Respondents have expressed the difficulty of selecting content on on-demand streaming platforms. The endless strain of options has made it difficult for many consumers to decide on what to watch. When participants are in the midst of a series, the selection process is easy. However when they are not, participants have stated that they usually spend minutes browsing through the options before selecting a movie or series. In addition, many have indicated that they tend lose interest when it takes too long and leave Netflix or Videoland without having watched anything. Many respondents have stated that the recommendations list of Netflix and Videoland helps them in process of selecting content. Moreover, the lists ‘Popular on Netflix’ and ‘Just uploaded’ appear to be helpful to many

participants. A few participants have stressed that they only use Netflix or Videoland when they know beforehand what they are going to watch. They find the process of selecting content rather stressful and often end-up not watching anything. From the interviews, it became clear that the most important reasons to watch certain content are recommendations by friends, colleagues and family. Jacob and Lucas even said that 90% of what they watch is based on recommendations. Additionally, some recommendations were taken more serious than others. For instance, close friends with a similar taste and good track record were considered the most influential factor in the selection process. Furthermore, respondents said they frequently recommend content to friends and family, like Danny:

“Well yes, I find it very amusing when I tell people something is good and they actually start watching it. [...] I told my parents about *La Casa de Papel*, they finished the entire series in just one weekend. I felt kind of proud of the series, even though its not mine. Or *Black Mirror*, I think a lot people didn’t know it yet. I told many friends to start watching it. And when they did I was like ‘that was my recommendation!’. I felt proud. I know, sounds kind of weird.”

Similarly, other participants also expressed having positive feelings when friends take their advice. This might symbolize a gratification for being valued for giving good advice and having good taste. In the process of giving and receiving recommendations we, again, see a strong correlation between watching a series and the desire to share that experience. For the younger viewers, social media was also an important aspect in the selection process. A few respondents read magazine articles on social media (e.g. Nu.nl, Vanity Fair, Glamour) about new releases on Netflix or Videoland. Although, participants read the articles, they did not always follow up on it by actually watching the proposed recommendations. Similarly, Jacob said that he watches YouTube videos about upcoming Netflix releases. For him it is a way to find inspiration on what to watch. Another very important indicator in the process of content selection is the presence of trailers. As Lucas (22), a hotel management student suggested: “A trailer is quite important to me. If there isn’t one available the threshold to start watching the series is quite a bit higher I think. I haven’t watched a lot of series without seeing the trailer first”. The importance of trailers was highlighted by most of the participants. They found it very important to get a sense of the content before starting to watch it, like Danny suggested:

“Perceptible to trailer? Well, I think so, you want to know what you’re getting into. I know a TV series can really fascinate me... Look, a film is only 1,5/2 hours, so yeah worst case scenario you’ve watched a bad movie and wasted 2 hours of your life. That can happen and really how bad can a movie be? But TV series, I know myself, I can get very addictive and won’t stop till its finished. I find it a waste to start on something that is going to take me 12

hours to finish and is anything less than great. Yeah, you just want to test the waters a little bit and see if the temperature is right.”

For Julia trailers are not only a way to decide on what to watch, but for her it is also a form of entertainment consumption:

“When there is no trailer on Netflix I go to YouTube. Sometimes I find it really nice to just watch trailers. I end up not watching a movie or series, just trailers for 1,5 hours. It happens to me a lot when I am on YouTube, I keep clicking on trailers that look good.”

The citations above illustrate that selecting content on Netflix or Videoland can be a complicated process. What was highlighted in the interviews is that the interviewees prefer quality content. They do not want to settle for – or waste their time on – anything less. There is so much content readily available, that some interviewees find it overwhelming and endeavor – make an effort – to find the best choice in terms of taste, time, mood and so on. In addition, the interviews underlined the perceived lack of time among millennials. Participants articulated having busy lives filled with professional and social obligations. So when they do have time for television they want it to be good. Not average but good. The definition "good" is very personal but we can assume that participants allude to enjoyable. Rather contradicting is the fact that participants fear wasting their time on a bad series. However, on the other hand they lose considerable amounts of time in the selection process. A few participants have indicated that they make time for good series. The feeling of not wanting to stop because the show is so good, is a feeling many participants chase. For example, Sophie had this feeling with the Netflix series *The Crown*, Danny with *Penoza* and *La Casa de Papel*, Danielle with the Netflix series *Stranger Things*, Julia with the ABC series *Grey's Anatomy*, Ben with the HBO series *Game of Thrones*, Sam with the CW series *The 100* and Tessa with the Netflix series *Santa Clarita Diet*. Even though the content choices have been greater than ever before, consumers find it difficult to select content.

#### *4.4 Binge-watching*

During the interviews it became apparent that almost all participants binge-watch on a regular basis. However, self-reflection towards this kind of behavior appeared to be difficult as participants had different standards as to what they considered binge-watching. Julia expressed her disbelief for the official definition of binge-watching – two or more episodes in one sitting – during the interview as she laughingly said:

“Oh my god. Oh no then I officially binge-watch a lot. I almost always watch two episodes of something. [...] It is not that bad. I think I binge-watch 1/3 of all my consumption. Officially then, but according to my definition I binge-watch only 1/6.”

Similarly, other respondent also held different standards: Jacob referred to binge-watching as watching TV series for more than five hours, Lianne put emphasis on the difficulty of stopping and Ben argued that binge-watching is excessive consumption of TV series, compulsive rather than unpremeditated. This variety in the definition of binge-watching is also present among scholars, for example McNamara (2012), Davis (2016) and Petersen’s (2016) also have diverse descriptions. Apart from the fact that the participants held different standards to binge-watch behavior, it also became apparent that binge-watching still has some negative connotations. Jacob explained that talking about binge-watching makes him feel very self-conscious: “Yes I find it difficult. Especially when I tell people. I sense this struggle of can I tell people without being judged. I think there is always this struggle and realization of yes I did watch a lot.” Other participants also acknowledge that binge-watching still comes with some prejudice (e.g. wasting time, loneliness, or not having a demanding social life). This in contrast to scholars Steiner and Xu (2018), who argued that nowadays being a binge-watcher is “a proclamation of your cultural and technological bona fides” (p. 4). For the participants of this study this was generally not the case. The connotations attached to binge-watching were also reflected in the reactions to binge-watch related questions as they varied from uncomfortable laughs to questions about average behavior. Nonetheless, eventually – after defining a description and pushing for self-reflection – all participants were able to shed light on their binge-watch behavior. For example, Sam initially said that he had never binge-watched but later rectified that by saying: “Yes I have done it once but [long pause]. Uhm I might have done it a few times as a matter of fact. Yes with *The 100* I think.”. In contrast, Danny was more explicit about his binge-watch behavior from the start:

“Yes definitely. I watch almost everything for more than 1 episode. But you see, it is so automated. Netflix is designed that way. You have to make an afford not to continue watching. Well, I think I might binge-watch everything. Except series like *Black Mirror*. I don’t binge-watch that on purpose as every episode is a separate story. I want to be able to process the story. Enjoy it before I continue on to the next one you know.”

In a similar fashion, Sophie stated that she binge-watches on a regular basis:

“For sure with *Grey’s Anatomy*. Now that I have Videoland, I can just watch a few episodes when I have nothing to do or when the weather is bad. Also when Netflix releases new shows like *The Crown*. When it was just released I watched 3-4 episodes in a row.”

The citations above show that on-demand streaming services are designed to encourage binge-watch behavior. The user interface of these platforms is designed in way that requires no action to continue viewing but does require action to stop. Netflix and Videoland benefit from viewing time, so everything is designed to enhance that. Building on the interviews, it appears that participants like Danny emphasized the workings of Netflix and Videoland as a form of denial. The fact that Netflix automatically starts the next episode seemed to be a justification for Danny for his binge-watch behavior. However, later on in the interview more transparency was attained and less validation for bingeing was given as contributing aspects like addiction tendencies were evaluated. For example, Danny illustrated his awareness of the fact that he is easily addicted to a TV series and stressed the tools he uses to gain more control over his Netflix behavior. Participants also stressed the role of content in their binge-watch behavior. During the interviews, it became clear that most individuals binge-watch new series and (older) familiar comedy series like *Friends*. Even though many respondents binge-watch series that have just been released, none of them were motivated by avoiding spoilers. This in contrast to research by Steiner & Xu (2018) and Rubenking et al. (2018), who found that avoiding spoilers is an important motivator for binge-watching. For most of the participants it was the overall anticipation that motivated them, rather than the worry for spoilers. During their binge-watch sessions, most participants – except for one – watched the same show. In contrast to the other respondents Tessa (25) said that she rarely watches the same show for multiple episodes:

“...I tend to lose interest. It gets too boring. So when I watch Netflix for a long period of time I switch between programs. [...] Yes, for example I first watch an episode of *Designated Survivor* and then I watch something completely different like *The Good Place*. And when you're done with that I go back or watch something else.”

During the interviews, it also became clear that individuals have different levels of attention when they binge-watch. Newly released shows are binge-watched with great focus whereas shows like *Friends* are watched with less attention. For example, Jacob voiced that while he paints he watches *Gilmore Girls*: “It is such an easy and placid show to watch. You can easily do something on the side. [...] I am fully focused on painting. They talk so much in *Gilmore Girl* that you barely have to watch to get a sense of the story.”. As Jacob acknowledged this is an extreme example, overall he and the other participants stated that they watch most of the content with undivided attention. A few participants expressed that they even put their phones away when they start watching a new – highly anticipated – show. An exception to that finding was Emma, who stated that she is always doing something else (e.g. working, cooking, cleaning the house or looking at her phone) while watching a

series of movie. She stressed that she is too restless to watch a show or program with undivided attention.

During the interviews, it became evident that binge-watching does not lead to regretful feelings. Even though participants explained that they sometimes change their plans in order to continue watching, they do not feel remorseful about it. Like Eva said: ‘It is a conscious decision’. Participants stressed that they do sometimes think they could have used their time better, but refuse to feel apologetic about it. For example, Sophie expressed:

“I don’t feel guilty per se but I do sometimes think well I haven’t been productive with my day. Only laid in bed or sat on the couch. In the moment it feels really good but at the end of the day I usually think well that hasn’t been a particularly fun day.”

Similarly, Danny (29) stated:

“Never important things. Sometimes I do think I should go to the grocery store instead of watching another episode. [...] But I do sometimes feel like I have wasted my day. I could have gone downtown, gone outside you know. Really nice weather and I have been inside all day but I don’t think that’s necessarily due to binge-watching.”

The respondents expressed they do not binge-watch at the expense of important things. On occasion, they relinquished minor things in order to continue watching. For example, Jacob, Danny, Danielle, Julia, Ben, Eva, Lucas, Sophie and Lianne indicated that they have used Netflix at the expense of sleep. For example, Eva, while laughing, explained her regrets in the morning: “... For sure. [...] You know you have to go to bed cause you have to get up early but the series is just so good. In the moment I don’t feel that tired I think well just one more episode. I usually regret that thought in the morning.”. Others also indicated using Netflix/Videoland at the expense of going to the gym, to the grocery store or doing household tasks. Furthermore, building on the interviews procrastination was found to be a strong initiator of binge-watch behavior. Especially, the procrastination of study work. Lianne (19) explained that her study evade behavior often leads to moral guilt: “When I watch Netflix instead of finishing a project or studying for an exam, I do think to myself what have I accomplished today. Instead of watching that fourth episode it would have been better to study.” Many participants expressed similar regrets in regards to study evade behavior. This corresponds with research by Gunter (2017) and Sung et al. (2016), which has emphasized the weaker self-control of bingers and the negative effects of streaming services on procrastination of work and sleep. However, in contrast to these studies that view binge-watching very negatively, participants of this study have expressed regrets but do not feel guilty. They emphasize the *choice* to binge-watch; a decision perhaps stimulated by technological features or social motivators but still seen as a

conscious decision. Further, Tessa underlined that watching Netflix while procrastinating is different than watching Netflix in a regular situation:

“Well, let me put it this way when I study during the day I find it very hard to stop [with Netflix]. Very often. But at night when I watch at my own volition it is not. At some point I’m just so exhausted that I turn it off.”

The citation above shows something many participants also experienced: it is even more difficult to stop Netflixing when trying to evade work. Some even argued that the act of watching Netflix becomes more fulfilling when motivated by procrastination. In addition, many expressed that they rarely return to studying after they have procrastinated for a while. For example, Danielle said:

“...sometimes, I quite literally think well there is no point in going back to work [studying] now. It is already eleven o’clock. By the time I’m ready to study, have pinpointing where I left off and read the material again. I might as well go to bed [...] Or sometimes I watch another episode”

In the interviews, a trend was observed where interviewees highlight binge-watching at the expense of other things and at the same time show denial towards feelings of guilt. Procrastinating with Netflix is explained by saying it is a choice that does not negatively affect the end result (e.g. passing the exam, finishing projects on time). Some have taken steps in order to have more control over their binge-watch behavior. For example, Danny, Lianne, Jacob, Sam and Sophie have limited access to Netflix to only one or two devices (e.g. purposely not downloading the app on their phones). In addition, Tessa has made time schedules in which she indicates when she wants to stop watching. Similarly, Sophie also tries to limit her time on Netflix and Videoland by planning more time to read.

Most of the participants indicated that they unintentionally binge-watch. It starts out with just one episode that turns into two or more. Some said “binge-watching happens to me”. Participants highlighted that social and technological motivators easily persuade them to binge-watch. This finding corresponds closely with research by Sung et al. (2016), who found that binge-watchers possess weaker self-control. They argued that it is extremely difficult for these users to stop. In contrast, Danny, Jacob, Julia, Lianne and Danielle articulated that they are occasionally intentional binge-watchers. They know beforehand that they will watch more than two episodes. For example, Danny, Julia and Jacob make adjustments to the way they consume Netflix; when they intentionally binge-watch they stream Netflix via their TV or computer screens instead of their phones/tablets. Lianne and Danielle intentionally binge-watch in the weekends (e.g. after a night out). During the interviews, it became clear that binge-watching is motivated by relaxation, boredom, the cultural conversation and a sense of completion. Participants articulated a desire to watch Netflix/Videoland



after a long day at work or school. Tessa stressed her desire to watch Netflix when she is tired and does not want to be social:

“Usually when you get home from a really bad day. Or when you’re really tired. That happens more often. And when you have just finished cooking, all your tasks are done, and you just want some me-time. That’s when I usually turn on my phone or iPad and start watching.”

Respondents indicated that feeling tired and wanting to relax was a major motivation for them to watch Netflix/Videoland. In addition, they said that in such situations it was likely that they would watch more than one episode. Relaxation meant for most participants a moment in which they are absorbed by the story of a movie or series. Jacob articulated the appeal of Netflix as a way to escape from reality:

“For sure. Especially shows that are very vivacious. It is a way to transport yourself to a whole other world. A way to escape reality. That is what it feels like. All your thoughts are being sucked into the Netflix world [...] but that is of course that is what makes it that much fun. It is a perfect world where everything mounts to something.”

Escapism as motivator was highlighted by various studies including research by Karmaker et al. (2015), Rubenking et al. (2018), Tukachinsky and Eyal (2018) and Steiner and Xu (2018). These studies have emphasized that binge-watching motivated by escapism is an important stress reliever. In addition, narrative immersion is reinforced by binge-watching and gratifies needs for escapism, enjoyment and entertainment (Steiner & Xu, 2018; Rubenking et al., 2018; Shim & kim, 2018). For example, Danny underlined the relationship between binge-watching, narrative immersion and addiction:

“At some point I was so into *How I Met You Mother*, that I had to watch an episode before going to bed. Even if it was already two o’clock and I had to get up early the next morning. That happens too, but not as often as it happens out of boredom.”

What is interesting about this quote are the words ‘had to’. Danny felt like he had to watch another episode. Due to the narrative immersion Danny experienced, Danny felt ‘forced’ to continue watching which arguably illustrates signs of addiction. However, Danny stressed that after a little while the feeling of ‘have to’ passes and he watches less Netflix for several days. This phenomenon was highlighted by multiple participants as they stressed that they can be absorbed by a TV series and watch episodes every spare moment. However, they also stressed that after a little while that

feeling fades and they return to normal viewing habits. In addition, boredom was a reason for participants to start using Netflix/Videoland and often times binge-watch. According to Ben: “I usually use Netflix when I am bored. Or at least think I am bored. Sometimes you have a million things to do but still think you’re bored”.

Overall, it appeared that binge-watching does not lead to regretful feelings even though it sometimes happens at the expense of other things. Participants found that binge-watching was a choice, but also acknowledged the stimulation by the technological interface. Additionally, procrastination, entertainment, relaxation, boredom and escapism were found to be strong motivators for binge-watch behavior.

#### *4.5 Motives for using on-demand streaming services*

In the interviews, it became clear that the main reasons for individuals to use streaming services are related to content, quality, convenience and participation in the cultural conversation. What stood out the most was the fact that the participants appear to be loyal to content. Almost all participants stressed using Netflix or Videoland to consume particular content. For example, Sophie stated that she purely has a Videoland account to watch *Grey’s Anatomy*. Similarly, other participants also stressed that content was the main motivator to use Netflix or Videoland. For example Danny said:

“For me it is all about what is on it. It is the only reason why I turn it [Netflix] on. When I hear someone say *Narcos* is cool, I watch *Narcos*. That happens to be on Netflix so I watch Netflix. But if it wouldn’t have been on Netflix, I would have found another way to watch it. When *Narcos* ended I saw on the internet, when you like *Narcos* you should watch *El Chapo*. Again, that happened to be available on Netflix so I go to Netflix.”

Participants valued the content on Netflix. Even though many articulated that shows on Netflix are not always up-to-date, many still valued the quality of the content and the amount and diversity of the content. “There is something for everyone”, Lianne said. Content is also something that differentiates Netflix from Videoland. Many participants favored the international content of Netflix compared to the mainly Dutch content on Videoland. Sam said: “Videoland seems so Dutch, so limited.”. Building on the interviews, it appeared that Dutch productions are thought to be of lesser quality than international productions. For example, Jacob said: “I am very hesitant towards Dutch productions. There are very few Dutch films and series that appeal to me.”. Similarly, Julia who has tried a free Videoland trial but stayed with Netflix, laughingly said: “I am not a fan of Dutch content. I really only like *Alles is Liefde*”. In addition, a few participants underlined the smaller content library of Videoland. For example, Emma said: “In my experience there are just fewer options. Perhaps I don’t look hard enough but you don’t really hear anyone say ‘hé that is a good show you should see that’”. In the interviews, it became clear that participants are very fond of local content

like Spanish, Danish and German productions. Dutch productions not so much it appears. For example, Julia said: "... whereas I rather watch a Spanish TV series than a Dutch one." Building on the interviews, convenience was found to be an important reason to use on-demand streaming services. As Eva stated: "It is safer than illegal streaming and more convenient than linear television." Compared to linear television, many prefer streaming services as they allow the users to select their own content, they are ad free and can be consumed when and where you want. An example of the convenience of Netflix over linear television was given by Danielle who said:

"Well, a few months ago I was watching television together with my parents and we came across the movie *Unstoppable*. We fell in half-way through. 10 minutes into watching a commercial break started. My sister suggested we check Netflix whether they had it. And yes they did. So we switched to Netflix and started the movie where we had left. It was so funny cause when we finished the movie we switched back to television [...] We saw that the movie was still on and it wasn't even close to the end. The movie interrupted for *Hart van Nederland* [...] I think we saved at least half an hour of commercials!

The citation above shows the irritation many participants feel towards commercials. Further, it highlights the convenience – perhaps the new standard – of ad free television consumption. Compared to illegal streaming, many found streaming services easier to use, safer, more reliable, better quality and offering subtitle options. For example, Danny said:

"Well Netflix offers you the certainty that you can watch the entire series, it offers subtitles when I want and has good quality, always. Plus I download content, and watch it offline on my tablet in the train. Especially, de certainty of Netflix goes above streaming."

The convenience of Netflix and Videoland appears to be a strong motivator for the use of these platforms. In terms of accessibility, quality, content diversity and the fact that it is advertisement free, streaming services like Netflix and Videoland are very appealing to consumers. During the interviews, it became clear that Netflix is favored because of its original and international content. In addition, the extent of their online library is preferred over that of Videoland. Further, many participants expressed that when they signed up for a Netflix account Videoland was still very small – or in some cases not even released yet. The popularity of Netflix – both nationally and internationally – was for many participants a reason to sign up for the service as well as a reason to stay loyal the service. In the interviews, some level of brand loyalty towards Netflix was observed. Even though many interviewees stated that they were being loyal to content, very few have actually tried or looked into other streaming services.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to unveil how and why Dutch millennials use on-demand streaming services. In order to answer this research question, thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. Based on the findings discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter will discuss and answer the sub questions of this study. Further, a conclusion of this research will be provided by answering the main research question. Last, it concludes with some suggestions for future research and a discussion of the limitations of this study.

### *5.1 Conclusion*

Based on the results of this study, the research question “how and why do Dutch millennials use on-demand streaming services?” can be answered. Dutch millennials use on-demand streaming services for the convenience and content. They use on-demand streaming services at the expense of linear television. In contrast to linear television, the distribution model of on-demand streaming services stimulates individualistic consumer behavior. Consumption via on-demand streaming services is motivated by a need for entertainment, relaxation, escapism and cultural inclusion. These uses and gratifications are similar to the uses and gratifications associated with the consumption of linear television. In addition, binge-watching has become a vital part of the viewing habits of Dutch millennials. Even though, binge-watching is done at the expense of (school) work and sleep, no regretful feelings prevail among the participants of this study. Binge-watching is strongly motivated by escapism and thus narrative immersion. In sort, Dutch millennials use streaming services to gratify a need for entertainment, relaxation, escapism, narrative immersion (e.g. through binge-watching) and cultural inclusion. Further, they use these services individually enthused by the convenience (e.g. ad free) and content (e.g. vast amount of quality content options readily available).

### *5.2 Salient motives for using online streaming services*

During the interviews, motives for using online streaming services were discussed. This topic consists of two components: 1) questions designed to find out why Dutch millennials use online streaming services and whether they prefer them over linear television or illegal downloading, 2) questions designed to find out what motivates Dutch millennials and in what type of situations they use online streaming services. These questions were particularly interested in behavioral patterns with regards to mood and mental state.

Building on the interviews, it appears that Dutch millennials mainly use streaming services for the content and the convenience. The convenience of Netflix and Videoland compared to linear television and illegal downloading, was preferred by all participants. Convenience was explained in terms of easiness to use, accessibility (e.g. when and where), content choices and the absence of ads. Even though, all participants praised Netflix and Videoland for their convenience, many still watched linear television or used illegal platforms to see particular content. Participants did not solely depend

on Netflix or Videoland for their consumption, as they resort to other ways to watch particular content not available on Netflix or Videoland. Further, the importance of content was emphasized. Linear television, on-demand streaming services and illegal torrent websites are methods to consume television but what drives participants to one of these distribution channels is content. Due to the convenience and content, Netflix was used the most among the participants of this study. It appeared that Videoland was mainly seen as an additional streaming service to watch specific content (e.g. *Grey's Anatomy*, *Temptation Island*).

Furthermore, this study explored the motives of Dutch millennials to use on-demand streaming services. Participants explained that they most frequently use Netflix or Videoland when they are tired after a long day at work or school. Additionally, boredom and feelings of not wanting to be social were found to be motivators for the use of Netflix and Videoland. In these typical situations (e.g. boredom and feeling tired) participants aimed to gratify a need for entertainment and relaxation. Similar to linear television, the use of on-demand streaming services was motivated by escapism (Ruben, 1981). Participants use Netflix and Videoland to relax and – for a moment – escape everyday life. Escapism was often driven by procrastination of work and study. Netflix and Videoland were frequently used to evade work and procrastinate. It appeared that when the consumption of Netflix and Videoland was motivated by procrastination and escapism, the consumption was even more tenacious and participants stressed that in such situations it was even more difficult to stop.

Moreover, based on the findings it became clear that wanting to join the cultural conversation was also a strong motivator for the use of on-demand streaming services. Being able to join the conversation about TV series and movie considered culturally relevant, was important to many participants. According to Steiner and Xu (2018) and Rubenking et al. (2018) the need for cultural inclusion stimulates the use of on-demand streaming services and binge-watch behavior. Participants articulated the joy they experience from talking about series on Netflix and Videoland, and giving recommendations to friends and family. Lucas, one of the participants explained as followed: “TV series are experiences and just like any other experience, you want to share it with friends and family.” Based on the findings, it appears that the use of streaming services is motivated by a need for cultural inclusion, which is gratified by talking about culturally relevant content with friends and family.

Overall, it appears that motives in terms of entertainment, relaxation and escapism have not changed compared to the consumption of linear television. However, a few differences were observed. Based on the results of this study, seeking information does not appear to be a motivator to use on-demand streaming services; in contrast to linear television. This is not surprising as on-demand streaming services feature little to no news/information programs. Most of the content is meant for entertainment purposes. Furthermore, due to the nature of on-demand streaming services participants experienced higher levels of narrative immersion. Compared to linear television where

viewers can only watch one episode per week, on-demand streaming services allow users to binge-watch and completely immerse into the fictional world of a TV series, and potentially gratify needs for entertainment, enjoyment and fandom (Shim & Kim, 2018). Hence, the fact that escapism and narrative immersion were considered the most persuasive among the participants of this study.

### *5.3 New viewing habits*

The second sub-question was aimed to unveil new viewing habits that have emerged among Dutch millennials due to online streaming services. Building on the interviews, a deeper understanding of viewing habits associated with on-demand streaming services was obtained. Firstly, binge-watching appears to be a noteworthy part of television consumption via on-demand streaming services. All participants articulated binge-watching on a regular basis. In addition, this study found that even though binge-watching was done at the expense of (study) work and sleep, no regretful feelings prevailed among the participants. Emphasis was laid on the fact that they experience binge-watching to be a conscious choice. The absence of regrets about binge-watching could arguably be a form of denial, however participants stressed that binge-watching has never led to negative outcomes in terms of school work, social or professional obligations. Binge-watching appears to be motivated by similar motives as to the use of on-demand streaming services. Entertainment, relaxation, cultural inclusion, escapism and narrative immersion were stressed as motivators for binge-watching. These motivations overlap; some participants binge-watched to be able to join the cultural conversation, others to escape reality and others to gratify both. These findings correspond with research by Karmaker et al. (2015), Steiner and Xu (2018), Rubenking et al. (2018) and Shim and Kim (2018), who emphasize that binge-watching can be an important stress reliever as it allows you to escape reality. Additionally, these studies stressed the higher level of narrative immersion experienced through binge-watching. Likewise, the results of study show that experiencing a narrative arc as a whole without interruptions is a strong motivator to binge-watch (Steiner and Xu, 2018; Shim and Kim, 2018). Overall, these results suggest that binge-watching was motivated by entertainment, relaxation, cultural inclusion and escapism. As a result of the higher levels of narrative immersion experienced through binge-watching, escapism was found to be a compelling motivator.

Furthermore, building on the interviews it appears that television consumption via on-demand streaming services is more individualistic compared to the consumption of linear television. Two explanations for this individual consumer behavior were highlighted in the results: content (e.g. the release schedule) and the devices. The large amount of content and the release framework of Netflix and Videoland, makes it very difficult for consumers to watch TV series together. Further, it was stressed that the technological devices allow users to watch content wherever they want, which means that individuals no longer have to come together to watch television. Viewing habits like watching in bed or on the couch are reinforced by on-demand streaming platforms and are both a result as well as a facilitator of more individualistic consumer behavior. Even though the act of

online television consumption has become more individualistic, the results suggest that Netflix and Videoland users face a greater need to share experiences and thoughts on content. Participants have noticed that Netflix and its content is often a subject in conversations among friends and family. Receiving and giving advice on recommendations is a source of enjoyment for many participants.

In addition, the large amount of content choices available on streaming platforms has led to the introduction of content selection practices. Participants have developed ways to make the content selection process manageable. They rely on trailers, recommendations lists, personal recommendations from friends and family and online sources like blogs, vlogs and magazine articles. These new practices to manage the content selection process on on-demand streaming services, illustrate the downside of unlimited content options. Many have articulated feeling overwhelmed by the content choices, on a regular basis.

#### *5.4 Selection criteria*

The third sub-question was aimed to explore the criteria on which consumers select an online streaming service. The following three instigators were found based on which individuals sign up for a particular streaming service: content, perceived popularity and cultural inclusion. These three motivators are somewhat intertwined. For example, perceived popularity is linked to cultural inclusion; the more friends discuss content of a particular streaming service the higher the perceived popularity of that streaming service. The results suggest that content is an extremely important aspect on which participants select a streaming service. However, content as a criteria appears to be more complex than simply wanting access to a particular show. The interviewees articulated that they want access to a large and diverse content library with high quality TV series and movies. Rather than it being one show that convinces individuals to sign up for a streaming service, it is more about the perception of the entire content database. For instance, many participants perceive the content library of Videoland to be inferior to the library of Netflix. Hence, the fact that four participants have tried a free Videoland trial but decided to remain loyal to Netflix. Additionally, all participants stressed the fact that they share their account, meaning that the content choices should be diverse to meet the different tastes. The second instigator 'perceived popularity' is closely linked to content. The popularity of Netflix is based on the success of its content, specifically their original content (Benjamin, 2018; Kist & Schrik, 2018). Further, perceived popularity is based on the cultural conversation. Netflix more than Videoland is subject of the cultural conversation as media outlets, online communities and friend groups frequently discuss aspects of Netflix (e.g. content and business strategies). In addition, aspects like price, quality, user-friendliness and accessibility to subtitles were discussed in relation to the selection of a streaming service. Due to the fact that these aspects do not differ substantially between the streaming services, they were reviewed as less predictable criteria on which individuals select a streaming service.

In sort, content, perceived popularity and the cultural conversation were found to be the major instigators to sign up for a particular streaming service. These criteria explain the popularity of Netflix (i.e. self-fulfilling prophesy), but also explain the moderate popularity of streaming services like Videoland, Ziggo XL and Amazon Prime. At this point, it appears that these streaming services are not part of cultural conversation yet. Most interviewees articulated that they were unaware of content available on these platforms, as it is rarely discussed in their friend groups. Additionally, some even argue that they were unaware of the existence of these platforms.

Are consumers loyal to content? Yes, to a certain extent. The results suggest that content is the main driver for television consumption and thus the use of on-demand streaming services. However, the results also suggest that consumers can be quite idle and prefer the ease of staying with their familiar streaming service. It appears that the interviewees articulate loyalty to content in their speech, but in reality show little motivation to find the best streaming service to fit their content needs.

### *5.5 Limitations and future research*

This study has some limitations. First, although in-depth interviews have many advantages, this approach is time-consuming and necessitates a smaller sample size than quantitative surveys. The sample of this study is relatively small and reflects limited diversity, as most of the interviewees were highly educated Dutch millennials living in urban parts of The Netherlands. The current sample is insufficient to extrapolate viewing habits of all Dutch millennials. In order to increase and ensure representability, a larger and more diverse sample should be obtained. Second, this study focused solely on Netflix and Videoland, but steaming services like Ziggo XL, Amazon Prime, NLZiet and NPO Start Plus are increasingly gaining ground in the Dutch streaming market. For future research it would be interesting to explore the Dutch streaming market more thoroughly by including these streaming services. This would perhaps mean expanding the age group, as currently very few millennials have subscriptions to these streaming services. During the interviews, it became apparent that interviewees find it very difficult to determine their television consumption via on-demand streaming services. Oftentimes, interviewees stated a number but throughout the interview contradictions arose (e.g. often watched more hours than indicated). For future research it would be interesting to see whether data can be obtained via Netflix or Videoland about viewing habits and consumption. This could be used as a point of departure, after which insights can be obtained about certain practices like binge-watching.

Furthermore, the conceptualization of binge-watching resulted in some variation. Many interviewees held different standards to the definition of binge-watching, which is likely to have effected their attitudes towards binge-watching. Most adopted a definition they do not see themselves to be part of. The phenomenon of binge-watching calls for further research. For example, research into the attitudes towards binge-watching, feelings while binge-watching, feelings after binge-



watching and the gratifications gained from binge-watching. As Steiner and Xu (2018) also stated the use of the uses and gratifications theory in relation to binge-watching needs further research. The measurement and conceptualization of the needs and gratifications associated with binge-watching might be too restricted at this point in time. Further research into binge-watching might call for a mixed methods approach or an experiment in which actual views, experiences and attitudes can be tested. In addition, a sample of individuals binge-watching a show in several days might be interesting to interview as experiences and feelings are still raw. During the interviews of this study, the observation was made that interviewees were sometimes searching to recall feelings associated with binge-watching. It is very possible that over time the intensity of feelings associated with binge-watching downgrades and negative effects are explained away. The viewing habits associated with the use of on-demand streaming services call for further research, as consumers are spending more and more time watching television via on-demand streaming services (Multiscope, 2018; Benjamin, 2018; Telecompapers, 2018)

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## **Appendix A – Interview guide**

### **Algemeen:**

- Voorstellen

*(leeftijd, student/werkende, woonsituatie, familie, relatiestatus etc.)*

### **TV kijken – online en offline**

- Je hebt een Netflix account. Wanneer heb je het account afgesloten?  
*(Eigen account of gedeeld, met hoeveel, hoeveel betaal je, wat motiveerde je daarbij?)*
- Hoe vaak gebruik je Netflix?
- Kijk je daarnaast nog traditionele TV?  
*(Hoeveel, wat, waarom. Als je TV kapot gaat zou je een nieuwe kopen?)*
- Stream of download je nog films of series illegaal?
- Wat kijk je op Netflix? Is dat anders dan wat je via traditionele televisie kijkt/keek?

### **Waar en hoe kijken Nederlandse millennials?**

- Kun je me meer vertellen over hoe je naar Netflix kijkt?  
*(Wanneer, hoe precies, waar en met wie kijk je zoal? Waarom alleen of samen?)*
- Op welke apparaten kijk je Netflix? Kijk je ook Netflix via je TV?

### **Kijkgedrag en binge-watchen**

- Doe jij wel eens aan binge-watchen?  
*(Wat binge-watch je, hoe vaak, hoe lang duurt één zitting gemiddeld, neem je pauzes?)*
- Hoe voel je je nadat je enkele afleveringen hebt gebinge-watched?
- Als je binge-watch, gaat het weleens ten koste van andere dingen?  
*(Kun je een voorbeeld geven, schuldgevoel)*

### **Content selecteren op online streaming services**

- Hoe selecteer je wat je gaat kijken?  
*(Vind je het wel eens moeilijk, hoe lang duurt het meestal voordat je iets hebt gevonden, weet je van te voren al wat je gaat kijken, spelen je vrienden en familie daar een rol in, reclame op TV of sociale media)*
- Kijk je de trailer van films en series voordat je ze gaat kijken?

### **Waarom kijken Nederlandse millennials Netflix?**

- Wat is voor jou een typische reden of moment om Netflix aan te zetten? Wanneer heb je doorgaans behoefte aan Netflix?



*(Gemoedtoestand, beweegredenen, afleiding, (school)werk uitstellen)*

- Verkiest je het dan boven 'normale' TV? Waarom?

### **Hoe selecteren Nederlandse millennials hun streaming services?**

- Wat gaf voor jou de doorslag om juist voor deze streaming services te kiezen?  
*(reclame vrij, het gemak, de content, prijs)*
- Binnenkort komen Disney en Apple met hun eigen streaming services, overweeg jij om over te stappen?
- Wat zou een reden zijn voor jou om over te stappen?

### **Lokale content (Netflix Originals, Videoland Originals)**

- Kijk je wel eens Netflix originals (*House of Cards, Orange is the New Black, The Crown, La Casa de Papel etc*)? Wat spreekt jou daarin (niet) aan?
- Wat voor content kijk je vooral/normaal? (*Waarom? Afkomstige van waar? Heeft de lokale taal dan een toegevoegde waarde?*)
- Een paar weken geleden heeft Netflix aangegeven dat ze meer gaan investeren in lokale content om zo de concurrentie met lokale aanbieders en grote nieuwe internationale aanbieders (Disney, Apple, Amazon) aan te gaan. Afgelopen jaren zijn er meerdere Netflix Originals verschenen afkomstig uit Frankrijk, Engeland, Duitsland en Spanje. Volgend jaar kunnen we de eerste Nederlandse productie verwachten. Heeft Nederlandse content voor jou een toegevoegde waarde? Heb jij behoefte aan Nederlandse content?

## Appendix B – Overview of Respondents

All participants wish to remain anonymous. Names mentioned in this thesis are fictional.

|    | <b>Name</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Occupation</b>                      | <b>Residence</b> | <b>Netflix</b> | <b>Videoland</b>        | <b>TV</b> | <b>Linear Television</b> |
|----|-------------|------------|--|------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| 1  | Julia       | 20         | Medicine student                       | Nijmegen         | Netflix        | Free trial<br>Videoland | Yes       | Almost never             |
| 2  | Floor       | 26         | Doctor                                 | Nijmegen         | Netflix        |                         | Yes       | Yes                      |
| 3  | Emma        | 25         | Marketing employee                     | Rotterdam        | Netflix        | Videoland               | Yes       | Yes                      |
| 4  | Eva         | 19         | Student Culture studies                | Maastricht       | Netflix        | Free trial<br>Videoland | Yes       | Almost never             |
| 5  | Sophie      | 24         | Dentistry student                      | Utrecht          | Netflix        | Videoland               | No        | Never                    |
| 6  | Tessa       | 25         | Medicine student                       | Nijmegen         | Netflix        |                         | Yes       | Yes                      |
| 7  | Danielle    | 18         | In between studies<br>(gap year)       | Utrecht          | Netflix        | Free trial<br>Videoland | Yes       | Almost never             |
| 8  | Lianne      | 19         | Student Communications                 | Rotterdam        | Netflix        |                         | No        | Almost Never             |
| 9  | Sam         | 23         | Engineer                               | Rotterdam        | Netflix        |                         | Yes       | Almost never             |
| 10 | Danny       | 29         | Entrepreneur in the cultural<br>sector | Rotterdam        | Netflix        |                         | Yes       | Never                    |
| 11 | Jacob       | 31         | Customer's service<br>employee         | Rotterdam        | Netflix        |                         | No        | Never                    |
| 12 | Ben         | 21         | Student Economics                      | Utrecht          | Netflix        |                         | Yes       | Never                    |
| 13 | Lucas       | 23         | Student hotel management               | Utrecht          | Netflix        |                         | Yes       | Yes                      |

## Appendix C – Examples Stacks Netflix

