'Streaming wars' - how major subscription video on demand services use social media to keep us watching more

A qualitative content analysis of Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video Instagram accounts

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Abstract

The arrival of subscription video on demand (SVOD) services have changed the definition of television. One is no longer attached to a specific device for TV content consumption. SVOD services have taken over the expensive cable television packages, offering unlimited subscriptions with thousands of movies and TV episodes to watch, without any interruption. Hence, the streaming industry is growing, and new players are entering the market, making it harder for the legacy players, Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video, to maintain the leading positions in the market. To attract more customers and stand out among competitors SVOD services are trying to strengthen their brand identity, which is partly done on social media channels, such as Instagram. Instagram is a popular social media channel among SVOD services, as it focuses on visual content, furthermore, people rely on Instagram as the main source of popular culture and humorous content. Thus, the aim of the study is to understand how major SVOD services, Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video, use Instagram content to produce their brand identity as well as what types of content they produce to connect with popular culture and humor. To answer the research question and sub-question a qualitative content analysis method using a constructivist grounded theory approach was used to analyze 159 Instagram posts of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video US accounts.

The findings of the study revealed that all three SVOD brands use Instagram to raise the sense of urgency and anticipation about their shows, which presents SVOD services as the leading entertainment producers. Moreover, Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video use Instagram to produce gender equality and diversity messages, in order to be a part of the popular culture conversations. Additionally, the findings revealed that SVOD services focus on connecting people through their content by engaging them in brand conversations. Finally, the SVOD brands use lifestyle promotion to emphasize the casualness of the service.

KEYWORDS: *Subscription video on demand services, Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video, Instagram, brand identity, popular culture*

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1. Introduction

The delivery of video media has been evolving rapidly in the last 70 years. Since the start of television in the 1950s, people were used to turning on their television set at the time their favorite television program was scheduled to air. This has changed with the arrival of the VCR and later on the DVD player, which allowed users to watch video media at any time (Lotz, 2018; Strangelove, 2015). It did not take long until the DVD was replaced by online television. The rise of YouTube and Apple iTunes has turned a new page in the video media industry, allowing people to switch from their television set screens to their computers. Some scholars call it a *post-TV-era* (Leverette, Ott, & Buckley, 2008; Strangelove, 2015), the rapid technological change when one is no longer attached to a specific device for TV content consumption. The post-TV-era boomed in 2007 when Netflix, DVD rental service, introduced its streaming service, which overtook the company's DVD rental sales and completely changed the definition of television (McDonald & Smith-Rowsey, 2016).

Subscription video on demand (SVOD) can be defined as "all-you-can-eat-buffet style" (Strangelove, 2015, p.149) video broadcasting service, which does not require a traditional television set. SVOD has taken over the expensive cable television packages, offering unlimited subscriptions with thousands of movies and TV episodes to watch, without any interruption (Rataul, Tisch & Zámborský, 2018). Right now, the most popular SVOD services in the United States are Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video (Csathy, 2019). North America is the biggest SVOD market, which holds 60% share of the global market (Futuresource Consulting, 2019), with the United States accounting for the most subscriptions and generating the most revenue in 2019 (GlobalData, 2019). Consequently, this study will focus on the US market and its most popular services Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video (Csathy, 2019). Netflix focuses on delivering unique content available all over the world, completely ad-free; Amazon Prime Video offers a wide variety of content from Hollywood movies to the independent ones, combined with Amazon Prime membership it extends to other benefits, such as access to a library of music, e-books, etc.; Hulu's main offering is the latest episodes of the favorite television shows, that are usually uploaded less than 24 hours after airing on broadcast television ("Overview," n.d.; Radošinská, 2017).

At the beginning of the SVOD era, only a few SVOD services were available, which filled in the gap in the market. The broadcasting companies were slow to adapt to the changing business model, as most of them still believed in the power of the broadcasting TV (Markets, 2019). However, the growing revenue of the SVOD platforms proved to the legacy

players that a low-priced streaming service with its unique content is more attractive to the viewers than the big bundle-TV packages (Rataul, et al., 2018). Today, the streaming industry is growing as fast as ever with a lot of high-profile services entering the market, such as Apple TV+ and Disney+. SVOD industry started as an alternative to the expensive bundle-TV packages, nevertheless, the increasing number of SVOD platforms brings the issue back, subscribing to all the available platforms is too expensive for most of the viewers. The average subscriber in the US has a subscription of three SVOD platforms (Fitzgerald, 2019), meaning that the services are competing to be among the top three of the most subscribed SVOD services. Media calls this situation the streaming wars (Alexander, 2020a; Berman, 2019; Sherman & Evans, 2019), the battle among the SVOD leaders for viewers' attention and money.

To attract more customers and stand out among competitors SVOD services are trying to strengthen their unique idea of a brand, called brand identity (Aaker, 1996). Strong brand identities attract customers, make brands more desirable and increase the perceived product or service quality. Being the most recognizable and memorable brand improves the trust, reliability and value of the company and its products (Budac & Baltador, 2013). Therefore, streaming services are reinforcing their brands by trying to create hype around their products and foster social conversations. This is often being done through social media (Martín-Quevedo, Fernández-Gómez & Segado-Boj, 2019). Social media conversations have a significant impact on consumers' valuation of a brand and their purchase decisions (Liu & Lopez, 2016). For media services, social interactions are crucial as they increase the brand value, encourage word-of-mouth communication, and spread brand awareness (Nanda, Pattnaik & Lu, 2017). Instagram is a popular social media channel among SVOD services, as it focuses on visual-oriented content (Martín-Quevedo et. al., 2019). Instagram allows brands to initiate and respond to social conversations, promote their products and represent their identities, through the use of creative content strategies (Carah & Shaul, 2016). Moreover, people rely on social media, such as Instagram, as the main source of popular culture (Yong Jin, 2018). Instagram allows for the production and spread of popular culture, which relates to a wider audience and increases customer engagement (Highfield, 2015).

Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video own several accounts on Instagram. These SVOD brands have originated in the United States; hence it is their first and the most established market which holds the biggest social media following. At the end of March 2020, Netflix US account has 20 million followers (https://www.instagram.com/netflix/),

Amazon Prime Video has 890,000 (https://www.instagram.com/amazonprimevideo/), while the US account of Hulu has 645,000 followers (https://www.instagram.com/hulu/).

Existing academic literature provides a lot of information about the use of social media for brands (Ashley & Tuten 2015; Goh, Heng, & Lin, 2013; Martin, & Todorov, 2010; Tuten & Solomon, 2018;) and media's shift from cable television to streaming services (Barker & Wiatrowski, 2017; Leverette, et al., 2008; Strangelove, 2015; Wayne, 2018), however, there are a few gaps which this research is aiming to cover. In general, SVOD services have been widely studied as a new media phenomenon (Davis, 2016; Matrix, 2014; McDonald & Smith-Rowsey, 2016). A lot of scientific interest has been shown to *binge-watching*, the change in viewers' media consumption behavior from watching one episode per week via cable television to watching multiple episodes in one sitting via streaming services (Jenner, 2016; 2017; Matrix, 2014; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015; Panda & Pandey, 2017; Schweidel & Moe, 2016). Nevertheless, academic research on SVOD services and their social media strategies is limited. A study carried out by Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) analyzed a total of 731 Netflix and HBO Instagram posts and compared the differences of the strategies used in the US and Spain. Tryon (2015) analyzed the promotional strategies of Netflix Originals, including the use of social media and promotional campaigns, which have been found to normalize new viewing behaviors, such as binge-watching.

However, there have been no papers aiming to analyze the relationship between SVOD services' social media content and brand identity. Hence, this study explores the content of social media, particularly the Instagram accounts of Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video, its relationship to their brand identities and connection to humorous content and popular culture. Based on the rationale mentioned above, the following research question was developed to guide this thesis:

RQ: How do major subscription video on demand services (Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video) use social media content to produce their brand identity?

To understand how Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video Instagram content connects with humorous content and popular culture, the following sub-question was posed:

SQ: What types of Instagram content do Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video produce to connect with popular culture and humorous content?

By creating new movies and shows subscription video on demand services take a part in popular culture production. Their offerings are widely discussed and interpreted among the viewers, which often takes place on social media (Matrix, 2014). Social media increased the spread of popular culture. It is accessible to anyone with internet access. On social media people can create fan communities, share their favorite movies, discuss the new episodes, etc. (Burns, 2009). Hence, social media allows SVOD brands to strengthen their offerings by fostering such conversations and promoting streaming culture (Matrix, 2014).

Streaming services have changed viewers' media consumption habits. On March 11th, 2020, the global health crisis called coronavirus (COVID-19) has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) (World Health Organization, 2020a). To prevent the virus from spreading people around the world were advised to stay home and self-isolate (World Health Organization, 2020b). The global quarantine disrupted many existing businesses and industries, such as aviation and events industries. However, the video game industry and streaming industry, boomed (IBISWorld, 2020). Millions of people were locked down inside their homes with very few entertainment options, which resulted in increased media consumption in the form of streaming services and gaming (Spangler, 2020). SVOD services were built to satisfy people during their free time, which during the pandemic was most of their time. Allowing to watch as many as you want episodes at one sitting, SVOD services changed the way people spend their free time. Scholars and media call this *The Netflix Effect*, the streaming services impact on our daily lives (Matrix, 2014; McDonald & Smith-Rowsey, 2016; Morgan, 2019). Therefore, this research possesses social relevance as SVOD services have become a global media phenomenon. Additionally, this study contributes to social relevance by helping to understand how these brands reinforce their brand identities by using social media to promote their output. This paper will offer a better perspective on the Instagram content strategy of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video and their use of popular culture and humorous content to initiate social conversations. Moreover, the study poses academic relevance as it offers new insights to the topic that is lacking. As this study focus on the SVOD brands' identities on Instagram, it can be advantageous to further studies investigating other aspects of SVOD brands' social media use.

The research question and sub-question are going to be answered using a qualitative research design. The study aims at exploring the most popular SVOD brands' identities through the use of social media content strategies. To do so, the content analysis method

focuses on Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video Instagram posts. The gathered Instagram data is analyzed and interpreted following the constructivist grounded theory approach.

In total, the thesis consists of five chapters, including this introduction. The second chapter, theoretical framework, presents the relevant literature, theories and prior research and is divided into five subchapters. The third chapter, methodology, describes and provides justification for the choice of choosing a qualitative content analysis method and constructivist grounded theory data analysis approach to answer the research question and sub-question. Chapter four, results chapter, presents the results of the analysis, the categories and subcategories that emerged from the analysis of Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video Instagram posts are discussed.

2. Theoretical framework

In order to answer the RQ and SQ, five key theoretical concepts and theories are addressed. The first subchapter explains Lury's (2009) concept of brand as assemblage. The second subchapter addresses brand identity topic and examines the brand identities of Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video. The third subchapter is dedicated to social media and the value it brings for branding opportunities, in particular Instagram and its benefits. The fourth subchapter presents the literature review and prior research about humorous content and popular culture on social media. The last subchapter summarizes the chapter findings.

2.1. Brand as assemblage

The concept of *brand as assemblage*, defined by Lury (2009), explains the complicated structures of brands and helps to acknowledge various functional and material elements of the brands. She argues that the understanding of branding has changed from a single process towards multiple cultural meanings of a brand as a combination of different activities (Lury, 2009; Rokka & Canniford, 2016). For Lury (2009) and others (Canniford and Badje, 2016; Onyas & Ryan, 2015, Rokka & Canniford, 2016), a brand is not a simple construction, but a combination of multi-dimensional relations, which involves the research, testing, commercial calculation, production, etc. A brand has a unique ability to merge diverse groups of human and material agents into an assemblage, which together shape the market (Onyas & Ryan, 2015). In other words, a brand is a product itself, which is constantly being made. The product is not only defined by its functional possibilities, but it also extends to much more like the infrastructure, production, pricing, consumer interpretations, marketing techniques, communications, etc. (Lury, 2009; Onyas & Ryan, 2015).

According to a brand as assemblage perspective, consumers also play a role in a brand making process. Rokka and Canniford (2016) defined the assemblage process as a brand co-creation between the brand and the audience. The assemblage which is created by brand representatives is the position of how the brand wants customers to read the brand, it promotes a certain brand identity, while the audience gives brand meanings by participation in brand activities, purchasing, communication, and the use of the products or services.

Canninford and Badje (2016) split the assemblage components, that create brand understandings, into expressive and material. Material components are concrete objects, such as products, production facilities, transportation, etc., while expressive components consist of ideas, messages, stories, etc. Assemblages never remain the same, the components are

continually changing, and new things come in meaning-making, therefore assemblages adjust (Rokka & Canniford, 2016).

2.1.1. SVOD brands as assemblages

Brand as assemblage concept helps to explain how SVOD brands exist and are being produced. In order to understand the process, it is important to recognize the expressive and material components that make up these brands.

In the late 2000s the developing internet and television technologies allowed to improve systems for video playback and buffering, which enabled SVOD services growth (Hoyt, 2014). The favorable technology situation allowed the emergence of brands, such as Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video. In order to use SVOD services, the consumer must have a device with a fast internet connection, which is a primary component needed for SVOD brand to exist (Leverette et al., 2008). Without access to needed infrastructure, SVOD brands are just a bunch of logos; there are no created meanings which construct the brands.

Further, SVOD subscriptions were made cheaper than regular bundle-TV packages (Rataul et al., 2018), making them more affordable for the public, which is another component constructing the brand. Moreover, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video subscription plans allow streaming from two different screens at the same time (Beatman, 2018; "How many screens," 2019), while Netflix's family plan allows up to four ("Netflix Streaming Plans," n.d.). The streaming options create a meaning that SVOD streaming is an activity for family and friends, something that is made for sharing.

Binge-watching is another component that plays an important role in understanding SVOD brands. The strategy of Netflix is to release a whole season of the show at once, so that people would not need to wait a week for a new episode (La Monica, 2017). Such strategy led to the growth of binge-watching culture, watching all the episodes in one sitting (Jenner, 2017). Hulu and Amazon Prime Video have also started following the binge-watching culture by uploading more shows all at once. While binge-watching has become an essential part of SVOD services, it has also inspired the phenomenon called the *fear of missing out* (FOMO), the fear of being the only one that has not seen the show that everyone is talking about (Matrix, 2014).

Other components that create SVOD assemblage are the production of the content and movie actors. All the three SVOD brands discussed in the thesis are not only streaming platforms but also the production companies ("About Hulu," n.d.; "What is Netflix?," n.d.; https://studios.amazon.com/). Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video create their own

movies and shows under the name Originals (Beatman, 2018; "Getting started with Hulu," 2020; "About Netflix," n.d.). The actors of these shows and movies become a part of the brand, they are no longer just actors, they are brand ambassadors.

Brand identity and social media presence are another two components constituting the SVOD brands. Brand identity is developed by the marketing team and a part of the identity is created on Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video Instagram accounts. These accounts would not exist without all the other components mentioned above, and the other way around. Without existing infrastructure there would be no movies, without the movies there would be no brand identity, without brand identity there would be no social media accounts, etc. The concept of brand as assemblage helps to explain how SVOD brands are constructed and maintained, particularly how brand identity and Instagram accounts of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video are connected and influenced by each other and all the other material and immaterial components that make up the brands. As brand identity and social media play crucial roles in how the SVOD companies are assembled as a brand, it is essential to understand these components better, hence they will be further discussed in the following subchapters.

2.2. Brand identity

In the marketing literature, *brand identity* is described as a unique idea of the brand created by brand management (Aaker, 1996; De Chernatony, 1999). Da Silveira, Lages and Simões (2013) divide this concept into an aspirational and enduring brand identity. Aspirational brand identity is an internal position, adopted by managers, a set of ideas about the brand created by its management (Aaker, 1996). Enduring brand identity means the set of ideas, which are timeless and stay constant, even when a brand explores new environments (Ghodeswar, 2008). However, more modern understanding of endurance in brand identity resonates with maintaining the core values, while other dimensions can change when needed to adapt to the changing environment (Da Silveira et al., 2013).

Nandan (2005) examined the brand identity through the brand concept idea by Park, Jaworski and MacInnis (1986). The brand concept is seen as its meanings that originate from certain product features and company's actions to create definitions from these features. The concept is based on the needs of customers, Park et al. (1986) define three: symbolic, functional, and experiential. A brand, which has a symbolic function, is created to link the consumer to the desired group, label or role. It helps the customers to better communicate

their desired symbolic concept. Functional brand solves the externally generated needs, while experiential brand created to satisfy the customer's need for variety or stimuli. Nandan (2005) identifies that the motivation behind choosing a certain product for some people is the enjoyment which they experience when they consume the product. SVOD brands are serving symbolic need by offering cultural relevance, such as binge-watching, functional need by offering thousands of hours of content available anytime at the comfort of home and experiential need by transforming the movies to real life experiences, such as a 'Bird Box' movie challenge made by Netflix, which invited people to identify with the horrific terror of the movie themselves (MC² Experience, 2019).

Brand identity and customers' perception of a brand are two of the most important factors on which the further existence of the brand depends. The main principle of brand identity is to reach the customer the way brand managers want it to happen and communicate to customers the message of the brand (Janonis, Dovalienė, & Virvilaitė, 2007). Brand managers aim to ensure that customers perceive their brand the same as they present it, however, customers' perceptions sometimes differ (Srivastava, 2011). Consumers interpret the brand's identity and convert it into an image. The customers' perception of the brand is called *brand image* (Keller, 2003; Nandan, 2005). The harmony between these two concepts is essential for strong brands (Janonis et al., 2007). When brands achieve the balance between brand identity and brand image their brand loyalty increases (Nandan, 2005). Nevertheless, sometimes brands fall in 'brand identity trap', the use ineffective and limiting strategies while trying to achieve the balance between brand identity and image, which result in unexpected and negative associations with the brand (Srivastava, 2011).

Brand identity comes from a lot of sources, such as goods, brand origin, brand values, brand name, brand personage, brand developer, brand visuals, brand communication, etc. (Janonis et al., 2007). Communication, in particular, is crucial for brand identity development as it allows the brand to communicate its voice to audiences and inform about their goods and services (Janonis et al., 2007). Currently, communication technologies allow brands to communicate directly to the customer by means of social media (Uzunoğlu, & Kip, 2014). Social media provides unique and creative features for brands to promote their brand identity. Brand managers can create their visual identity, share branded content and create a personalized communication with their customers (Meng, Stavros, & Westberg, 2015). Furthermore, social media participants can engage with brands by telling brand stories, which become a part of the brand identity (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz, 2013).

Social media and its importance for creating strong brands will be further discussed in subchapter 2.3.

2.2.1. Netflix brand identity

Netflix started its business as an online-based DVD delivery service ("About Netflix," n.d.). Following the improving broadband speed and an increasing number of computers in households Netflix quickly adapted to changing customers' needs and in 2007 started offering their subscribers to watch their favorite movies online from their computer screens instead of the traditional DVD player (Rataul et al., 2018). However, as Netflix brand was already well known to the public, the company still needed to find a way to stand out as the new competitors, such as Amazon SVOD platform and Hulu, were entering the market (Rataul et al., 2018). Consequentially, Netflix initiated a competition called Netflix Prize to create a recommendation system which predicts what movies or shows the user would like to watch (Hallinan & Striphas, 2016). The system works by estimating the user's interactions with the service, other members with the same taste, information about movies and shows, devices the user uses, etc. ("How Netflix's recommendation," n.d.). The recommendation system is a leading element of Netflix's value proposition (Rataul et al., 2018).

In early 2010s Netflix realized the importance of the original content for the brand's success and created Netflix Originals brand. Netflix Originals is a name for content produced, co-produced or distributed exclusively by Netflix (Rataul et al., 2018). The first show 'House of Cards' was released in 2013 and immediately received a huge success, which proved that the public wanted shows with shorter seasons (10 -13 episodes), which you can easily binge-watch in a few days (La Monica, 2017).

As Netflix became increasingly available worldwide, with the exception of China, North Korea, Crimea and Syria ('Where is Netflix available?,'n.d.), it has established a successful localization strategy. Netflix increasingly produces foreign content and uses dubbing to attract viewers to watch the content that is not in their native language (Alexander, 2020b).

Throughout the years Netflix has positioned itself to be the innovator of the SVOD market by constantly adjusting its programming to market dynamics and technological shifts (Tryon, 2015). First, by successfully switching from DVD rental service to SVOD, second, by creating original content and third, by constantly aspiring technological improvements, such as the recommendation system or interactive content (Roettgers, 2018; Rataul et al.,

2018). At the moment, Netflix is the only one SVOD platform offering interactive content (Cohen, 2020).

Another component of Netflix's brand identity is its distinctive marketing strategy. Netflix uses its own actors as brand representatives, their appearances on YouTube, TV shows, social media accounts works as a promotion for Netflix while creating an entertaining and personal brand experience for the users (Adalian, 2020; Parker, 2016). Netflix's GIF campaign created by creative agency Ogilvy Paris in 2014 represented the brand through interactive billboards displaying animated pictures called GIFs of the most popular shows (Ogilvy Paris, 2014). The campaign presented Netflix as an entertaining, funny and interactive brand. Other campaigns, such as 'Don't Watch Netflix', which took place in Argentina during the 2018 FIFA World Cup (Ogilvy Paris, 2014), also represented Netflix as funny, entertaining and original brand. Netflix used posters, billboards and other public advertising places to promote the slogan 'Don't Watch Netflix', however, they did it anonymously, which made people wonder who was making these posters, people were outraged that someone was telling them what not to do. After a lot of discussions on social media, Netflix revealed that they made these posters to encourage people not to watch Netflix during the month of the World Cup. The campaign was a success, people loved the idea, it reached 24 million unique users online, was dubbed as the most original campaign of the World Cup and received 90% positive sentiment online (Ogilvy Paris, 2014).

2.2.2. Hulu brand identity

Hulu was launched in 2008 by NBC Universal, News Corporation Providence Equity Partners, and later The Walt Disney Company with the goal offer the most popular cable TV shows online (Johnson, 2012). In 2016 Hulu released a campaign called Come TV With Us, which demonstrated the brand's identity as an online television, unlike Netflix or Amazon Prime Video, Hulu is trying to supplement the broadcasting television rather than replace it (Cause + Effect, 2016; Nath, 2020).

In 2007 Hulu launched Hulu + Live TV, a live TV feature allowing its users to watch more than 50 live TV channels online (Snider, 2017). In two years, Hulu + Live TV surpassed its competitors and now ranks as a number one streaming pay TV service with more than 2.7 million subscribers (Spangler, 2019). In addition to Hulu's successful Live TV service, the brand offers additional add-ons with TV networks HBO, Showtime, Cinemax, and STARZ ("Cinemax on Hulu," n.d.; "HBO on Hulu," n.d.; "Showtime on Hulu," n.d.;

"STARZ on Hulu," n.d.). Hulu features let the user watch customized television, the marketing chief of Hulu calls it a "better way to watch TV" (Patel, 2019, para. 6).

In 2019 The Walt Disney Company acquired Hulu (Lee, 2019). Disney company also owns the SVOD platform Disney+, which is considered one of Hulu's competitors (Tuttle, 2019). However, Disney decided to distinguish the two services by providing Hulu with more mature content than family-friendly Disney+ (Blumenthal, 2020).

Through its marketing campaigns, Hulu focuses on transparency and honesty. A campaign called 'Watch More, Lie Less' shows 30-seconds-long videos of people caught lying about watching Hulu shows. Hulu invites people not to lie, but rather watch the shows they have not seen (Macleod, 2016). Another Hulu campaign, 'Hulu Sellouts', containing two 30-second-long videos showing NBA athletes promoting Hulu for money (Hulu, 2019a, 2019b). The campaign aims to highlight Hulu's transparency as most influencers nowadays tend to be subtle about revealing that they are getting paid to promote products or services (O'Brien, 2019).

2.2.3. Amazon Prime Video brand identity

Amazon Prime Video is a brand owned by technology giant Amazon. Amazon is offering a lot of things, but its main focus is online retail ("Who we are," n.d.). One of its features is Amazon Prime membership, which offers free next day delivery, subscription to Amazon Prime Video, music and e-books library, exclusive discounts, etc. ("Check out what's included," n.d.). Subscribing only to Amazon Prime Video is also possible, however, due to increasing online shopping the Amazon Prime membership is more popular, it has around 90 to 95 million subscribers in the US (Reisinger, 2020). Amazon's focus on a wide range of features and different brands, such as Amazon Pantry, Amazon Prime Air, Amazon Channels, Prime Now, etc., has made it harder if nearly impossible for Amazon Prime Video to position itself as a separate brand and not just a feature of Amazon Prime membership (Schneider, 2017). Amazon Prime Video has fallen into 'brand identity trap', the brand name confusion due to its similarity to already existing Amazon services.

Instead of positioning itself as a high-quality content platform, Amazon Prime Video focus on quantity, it enables a platform called Prime Video Direct for indie filmmakers to upload their work straight to Amazon Prime Video ("Overview," n.d.). Therefore, Amazon Prime Video offerings include much more 'art', their own shows are more like small movies, which is completely different from Hulu and Netflix offerings that are well researched, what-customer-wants kind of TV shows and movies (Schneider, 2017). However, despite the

quantity of Amazon Prime Video, 30% of the most popular titles are not available to Amazon Prime Video subscribers, the titles are only available to rent or buy, which makes Amazon Prime Video also a rental platform (Zara, 2019).

In the UK Amazon Prime Video uses a marketing campaign following the tag line 'great shows stay with you'. The brand brings attention to binge-watching culture by creating 60 seconds long video movies showing the impact of Amazon Prime Video movies and shows have on real-life situations (Watson, 2019). A marketing campaign released in India shows the flexibility of the product. One can watch his favorite shows whenever and wherever he wants through computer, TV or phone screen, Amazon Prime Video user is not attached to one device (Sharma, 2017). In the US Amazon Prime Video does not execute such marketing campaigns, with exception of TV commercials shown during the annual American football game, called Super Bowl, however, the commercials only contain the teasers of Amazon Prime Video shows (Amazon Prime Video, 2018, 2019, 2020).

The findings of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video brand identities helps to draw a better understanding of how these brands intend to be seen. However, brand identity is a complicated structure and the findings are not sufficient enough to make any conclusions as it is missing an essential social media perspective. Therefore, the thesis will demonstrate how these brands use social media to create their brand identities and if the findings above translate into their social media strategies, in order to find this the qualitative content analysis will be carried out.

2.3. Social media

According to brand as assemblage concept, discussed above, a brand is not something that simply exists, instead, the brand is constantly being created by brand managers and the audience. For these brands, a significant portion of that happens on social media. Social media is a group of platforms built on Web 2.0. foundation allowing its users to exchange and create user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The word social represents the purpose of these platforms, they facilitate communities and focus on human collaborations. It is an online place where people connect, establish networks and share the same social value, connectedness (Van Dijck, 2013). The main social aspects of social media include communication, cognition, communities, and collaborations (Fuchs, 2017). Social media has created the opportunity for people to expand their access to information, it allows its users to

find a job, shop, and maintain relationships, which are impossible to maintain in real life due to the distance (Hjorth & Hinton, 2019).

Social media initially was created for people, it was not intended to be a platform for brands and their advertising. When brands entered social media, they interrupted the people and their conversations, Fournier and Avery (2011) referred to this as 'uninvited brands'. The brands entered social media expecting to target consumers, however, it turned out the other way around, as the consumers started using social media to target brands and spread their opinions. The process of branding was no longer in the hands of marketers only (Fournier & Avery, 2011). The interactive structure of social media grants brands to communicate with their customers at the same time customers are engaging in sharing information and making interactions with other customers. Social media started a trialogue, a conversation between a brand and a customer and between the customers themselves (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Brands can use these customer relationships to form communities, which would allow discussions to identify existing problems and develop solutions (Sashi, 2012). Such conversations change the long-established roles of seller and customer in exchange relationships. Customers add value to the brand by interacting, creating content, and spreading the message of the brand, this indicates that every consumer and their created value matters (Habibi, Laroche, & Richard, 2014).

Social media allows for many options for marketers to use for branding opportunities, such as paid advertising, developing brand communities, using interactive possibilities to increase customer participation, create, and use social media personas, etc. (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). However, achieving success in social media can be complicated. Developing social media strategy is a day to day activity and in order to succeed marketers have to keep customers connected by engaging them in brand stories on a daily basis (Martin, & Todorov, 2010). Sheehan and Morrison (2009) described four challenges that marketers are facing when trying to develop social media marketing strategies: (1) social media challenge, the challenge to use social media efficiently; (2) growing challenge, the challenge to grow talent; (3) consumer-generated marketing challenge, the challenge of getting customers to share their own stories; and (4) engagement challenge, the challenge to reinvent the mass message model. This paper aims to give a better understanding what SVOD services are doing to overcome these challenges, particularly what sorts of content they use in their social media strategies and how that connects to their pursued brand identities, this will be further discussed in chapter 5.

2.3.1. Instagram

Instagram is a social media application launched in October 2010 (Hu, Manikonda, & Kambhampati, 2014). The app is made for sharing pictures and videos with your friends. Similar to Facebook or other social media platforms, the user is required to create a profile. When a user posts a picture or video, it will automatically be displayed on the news feed to the user and all the people that follow the user's profile. Other users can interact with the picture or video by pressing a button "like" or leaving a comment (Moreau, 2020). Instagram has a very clear purpose and is easy to use, however, it is much more than just photo sharing, it is algorithms, captions, geolocative tags, emojis, photo filters and more (Leaver, Highfield, & Abidin, 2020). The successful integration of these components helped Instagram to become the most popular photo-sharing application, the sixth most popular social media application worldwide and second in the US (Statista, 2020a, 2020b).

The central part of Instagram is social engagement, collecting "likes" and comments, which have become an online social currency (Rainie, Brenner, & Purcell, 2012). The more engagement the profile receives, the better reach it gets. Therefore, to gain more "likes" and followers Instagram users tend to create fantasy lives, which include sexy bodies, never-ending vacations, fancy cars and expensive clothing (Biggins, 2018). However, these seem-to-be-perfect Instagram profiles are not just for fun, their owners use it as a financial opportunity (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). A profile with a lot of followers and high engagement is called a social media influencer. Social media influencer is a social media user who has access to a large and engaged audience and can shape their attitudes, their influence makes them a useful tool for brands to promote products, services or ideas (Freberga, Grahamb, McGaugheyc, & Frebergc, 2010). Marwick (2015) calls the influencer life an Instafame, the practice of micro-celebrities that create social profiles to receive attention on Instagram. Instafame flourishes on Instagram, since most of the people go to social media to find shopping recommendations (Meyersohn, 2019).

In 2016 Instagram introduced stories function, which allows users to upload a video up to 15 seconds long or a picture to their profile, that would only be visible for 24 hours. Each story is followed by another story either by the same profile or another followed profile, the user can go back and forth between these stories and reply to the stories in a private message (Belanche, Cenjor, & Pérez-Rueda, 2019). The new function was the most salient development that made Instagram the leading visual social media channel around the world.

Instagram stories allow users to exchange information easier, faster and even receive instant gratification for doing so (Ko, & Yu, 2019).

Instagram benefits for brands have been widely discussed (Latiff & Safiee, 2015; Khan, 2018; Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017;). The platform allows brands to communicate with their customers, promote the brand, make sales and reach new potential clients (Virtanen, Björk, & Sjöström, 2017). Furthermore, user-generated content can help to spread brand awareness and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017). However, Instagram and other social media platforms are full of brands trying to reach a big audience, in order to be successful, brands need to have a well-planned social media content strategy (Carah & Shaul, 2016; Wood, 2020).

In order to understand SVOD services and their brand identities, it is crucial to look at their social media accounts. The main offering of streaming services is visual media content, therefore Instagram being the most popular visual media based social media platform is the most suitable for Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video to promote their content, engage with customers and generate social conversations.

2.4.   Popular culture and humorous content on social media

To stay relevant on social media brands, organizations, influencers, etc. are using creative content strategies, such as humorous content and popular culture. Social media's growth amplified the audiences' appetite for popular culture, people share their favorite movies, create their music playlists online and record YouTube videos to discuss their favorite topics, activities, celebrities, brands, etc. Social media increased not only the dissemination but also the production of popular culture (Burns, 2009). Instead of consuming popular culture by using DVDs, listening to CDs or going to the cinema, people nowadays rely on social media as the main source of popular culture (Yong Jin, 2018)

The use of popular culture and humor on social media channels is increasing because it relates to a wider audience and it is the key element for creating viral content (Highfield, 2015). Humor devices, such as parody or irony, provide social media mocking replies to existing discussions, these answers can either be participatory, allowing other users to make their own versions or spreadable, allowing social media users to share the replies with their network (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013). One of the most popular online humor phenomena is called meme. Knobel and Lankshear (2007) describe it as a viral pattern of cultural information that are transmitted from person to person that directly create and form the

mindsets and behaviours of a social group. The study conducted by Shifman (2012) analyzed the anatomy of YouTube meme. The author found six features that are common for YouTube memes: (1) focus on everyday people, (2) humor, (3) flawed masculinity, (4) simplicity, (5) playful content, and (6) repetitiveness. These possessions transform these videos into bad texts, but it makes them into good memes.

However, memes can be used not just for entertainment purposes. Harlow (2013) analyzed the impact of social media memes on the 2011 Egyptian protests. The author found that meme-like content helped to spread the message faster, more people were inspired to join the protests. Xiao, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) found that humor, such as memes, can also be useful in crisis communication, particularly when the crisis is unknown, have not been confirmed or is just a rumor it can minimize stakeholders' perceptions of the extend of the crisis.

The use of humor in social media communication can raise customer engagement and is one of the key reasons why users interact with brands on social media (Nielsen, 2015). Humor may assist brands to have emotionally involved customers, allowing an emotional bond and relational exchange (Ge & Gretzel, 2017). Moreover, humor can increase revenue growth. Arguably, successfully integrated humor in a social media promotion campaign generates higher audience engagement which, eventually, leads to increasing sales (Ge & Gretzel, 2017).

The success of humorous content on social media lies in audience involvement possibilities. Humorous content received from a close friend might be transmitted to larger social media audiences. In such a situation, humorous content can cross the country, language and cultural borders, creating follow-on jokes and interpretations (Weitz, 2017). The use of popular culture and humorous content come as the opposite to perfectly polished corporate content, nevertheless, it increases the positive brand attitude and intends to purchase the advertised brand (Phua & Kim, 2018).

SVOD brands are known for their creative social media strategies, such as an Instagram account of Netflix dedicated to humor called Netflix Is A Joke (https://www.instagram.com/netflixisajoke/) or Hulu's use of influencers to promote their new shows (Schrieberg, 2019). Therefore, this study will examine how Instagram content strategies of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video connect to humor and popular culture and how systematic the use of these strategies is.

2.5. Summary

The theoretical framework given in this chapter gives a better understanding of the phenomenon, existing theories and sets a ground for the research in order to answer the research question. Brand as assemblage theory explains that Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video are brands that do not simply exist, they are constantly being made and the understanding of these brands includes a lot of things, such as the devices people use to watch these SVOD platforms, subscription plans, advertising, movie stars, communication, etc. While brand as assemblage concept helps to understand the components constituting Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video brands, brand identity reveals how these brands are aiming to reach their customers. However, to understand the brand identities it is crucial to examine their social media practices. Instagram is the most popular visual content sharing platform and the most used social media communication channel of the brands in the study. Instagram allows SVOD brands to engage with their customers, promote their products and foster social conversations, which in return ensures the increase in subscriptions. Therefore, the research will identify, which social media content strategies these brands are using and if those strategies connect to their product offerings, that are part of popular culture.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

The purpose of this study is to provide a view of how major SVOD services are using Instagram to produce their brand identities. To do so, a research question and a sub-question were formulated, as mentioned in chapter 1. These questions are addressed by means of qualitative content analysis through which posts from Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video US Instagram accounts were analyzed. In the following sections, the research design and justifications as to why these approaches were chosen will be explained.

3.1.1. Qualitative Content Analysis

To answer the research question and sub-question, raised in the introduction of the thesis, the qualitative content analysis method was chosen. The qualitative method was chosen due to the nature of the research question and sub-question which are concerned with exploring the social media content of SVOD brands and its relationship to their brand identities. Qualitative research is "the nonnumerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships" (Babbie, 2013, p. 403). Qualitative methods go beyond the surface of data and allow the researcher to search for the hidden meaning of the message (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The aim of the study is to examine the Instagram posts of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video; therefore, the qualitative content analysis is the most suitable method as it can be used for graphic and textual social media messages (Neuendorf, 2017). The qualitative content analysis looks for the presence of words, phrases or concepts in the social media posts and attempts to understand their meanings and relationships (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

3.1.2. Constructivist Grounded Theory

The gathered data analysis was based on a constructivist grounded theory approach. Grounded theory approach emerged from the idea that theory should not have an influence on data. The main argument by Glaser and Strauss (1967) coming up with the grounded theory was that data should be analyzed without theoretical biases or prejudices. Instead of using theory as a ground for the research, grounded theory is built up from data as the process is carried on. Grounded theory uses an inductive approach to the theory when explanations (theory) derive from gathered data, rather than a deductive approach when the hypothesis is tested on existing theories (Morse, 2001). Strauss and Corbin (1998) argued that grounded theory allows the researcher to be scientific and creative, when the guidelines below are followed: (a) think comparatively, compare the data to prevent arising biases from initial

observations; (b) get multiple perspectives, such as different point of views of data in the study; (c) periodically step back, do not allow the rising interpretations to take over, focus on the data; (d) maintain an attitude of skepticism, as data interpretation starts the researcher should not use the interpretations as confirmed, instead of test them using new observations; (e) follow the research procedures, even though grounded theory enables some flexibility in data collection, the researcher should follow the essential techniques that are comparing, asking questions and sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 as cited by Babbie, 2010).

For this research, a constructivist approach was taken in relation to grounded theory which emphasizes the complexity of reality, more specifically that reality is a construct of the participant's mind (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). It allows for discovering a reality which arises from the data and its interpretation which is derived from the experiences of the researcher and participants (Charmaz, 2000). This means that the results are not final and only represent a specific way of understanding the phenomenon and its accompanying data (Mills et al., 2006).

A constructivist grounded theory approach to content analysis was chosen because it is a structured yet flexible analysis that allowed for new creative ideas to be produced by careful analysis of the data. After the data is collected, this approach follows a systematic pyramid type process of research. The pyramid process starts with open coding of the data, and these codes are then combined using axial coding, which leads to the selection of main categories called selective coding. The writing part follows the reverse pyramid process, starting with selective coding leading to axial categories exemplified by identified open codes (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The detailed analysis process will be discussed further in the data analysis subchapter.

The aim of a constructivist grounded theory approach is to construct an understanding based on the gathering and analysis of data that may lead to new or expand existing theoretical understandings (Babbie, 2010; Mills et al., 2006). However, developing theories is a complex process, which is challenging even for the most experienced researchers. This research is too small to build a particular theory, and therefore is developed with the intention to contribute to the already existing knowledge about SVOD brands social media content and its connection to brand identities.

3.2. Data collection

3.2.1. Sampling units

While Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video have a presence in multiple social media channels, Instagram is the most popular among the audience between 18-34 years old (Chen, 2020), which is the main target audience for the SVOD services of interest (Statista, 2019). To analyze these brands and their identities on social media this study will focus on their most-followed Instagram accounts, namely the US accounts of Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video.

Instagram is a highly visual social media platform, therefore textual data, such as comments, hashtags and captions, do not receive much attention (Marwick, 2015). However, while conducting qualitative research using social media data McKenna, Myers and Newman (2017) suggest combining different types of data within the social media platform for a better understanding of the phenomenon. Following the advice, to provide more reliable results, the two parts of an Instagram post, visuals (images, videos, GIFs) and caption, were analyzed for this study.

3.2.2. Sampling strategy

Instagram accounts Netflix and Hulu were created in 2016, while Amazon Prime Video in 2015. Combined, these accounts have more than 4000 posts. The scope of this research is not big enough to analyze all of this data. Therefore, a non-probability sampling method was used for this study. Moreover, social media is a fast-paced environment, meaning that brands are sharing new content every day (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). Most social media data posted a couple of years ago are less relevant now, and in order to understand the current situation, it is important to look at the most recent data. The Instagram posts were gathered using a purposive sampling strategy, which allows choosing the sample based on criteria important for the study (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The main criterion for the data collection was relevance, hence approximately 50 posts of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video Instagram accounts, posted between the 22nd of February and 22nd of March 2020 were analyzed. During the chosen period of time Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video posted 89, 50 and 77 posts, respectively. To make the samples more equal, the analysis was done for every Hulu post and for every two posts analyzed one post was skipped for Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, making it to 50 (100%) of Hulu posts, 58 (65%) of Netflix, and 51 (66%) of Amazon Prime Video. Instagram feed posts can be separated into four types: (1) videos, up to one minute long; (2) IGTV videos, up to one hour long; (3), images; (4)

carousels, a group of multiple pictures or videos in one post (Leaver et al., 2020). In order to analyze the collected posts as reliable as possible, it is important to understand the social media users' behaviors. One of Instagram goals is to provide its users with as much content as possible, meaning that most of the content is shorter than one minute. Social media users are used to receiving instant gratification, which leads to a shrinking attention span. The average transient attention nowadays is around eight seconds (Lamba et al., 2014). Due to the fact that most of the social media users do not spend more than eight seconds per post, this study analyzes only the first eight seconds of the posts containing videos. Instagram carousel posts are created to provide additional information about what is pictured in the first visual, since only the first visual is visible on the profile it acts like the main visual and reveals the most information about the post ("Posting and Adding Locations," n.d.), hence only the first visual of the Instagram carousel posts is analyzed.

3.2.3. Data collection and processing

The gathering of data took place between the 23rd and 29th of March 2020. In order to access the data, an Instagram account was created. To prevent any influence of cookies, algorithms, etc., the history of the internet browser was deleted before the data collection process. Following the criteria mentioned above, a total of 159 posts, 119 images and 40 videos were collected. The data were split into three data sets, Netflix data set included 58 Instagram posts, Hulu 50 and Amazon Prime Video 51 posts. The most efficient way to systematically analyze the qualitative data is by using qualitative analysis software (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The software chosen for this study was ATLAS.ti. The software is designed to process large amounts of data, create memos and notes and analyze images and videos it by applying codes and creating code groups ("What is ATLAS.ti?", n.d.). To enter the data into ATLAS.ti the Instagram posts containing images were screenshotted and videos were screen recorded.

3.3. Data analysis

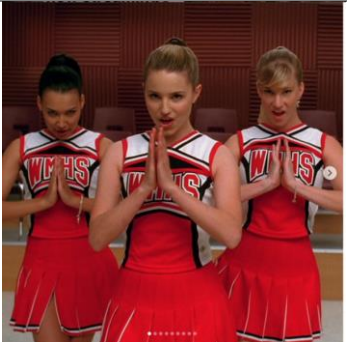The collected data were analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach. As mentioned above the constructivist grounded theory follows a three-step coding system: open, axial and selective. The main purpose of coding is to find the main categories and underlying patterns that lead to better understandings of the phenomenon (Babbie, 2010). The coding steps will be further explained in the following sections.

3.3.1. Open coding

The first step of the coding process is to break down the data into units of meaning. Open coding allows the researcher to find new insights about the data by breaking through the traditional forms of thinking about the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The open coding starts with identifying the themes and categories which emerge from the data. The categories are shortly described and assigned appropriate names (Matthews & Ross, 2010). During the phase of open coding, every data unit was carefully revised in order to familiarize with the content of the data. While creating the codes the amount of interpretation was limited and only the evidential details emerging from the data were coded. Some of the data extracts had more than one concept, therefore they were coded for more than one open code.

Table 3.1

Sample open codes

Open codes	Illustrative extracts
1. **Female director on set** 2. **Behind the scenes**	
1. **Female cheerleaders**	
1. **Only on Hulu** 2. **Now streaming** 3. **#HilaryOnHulu**	"#HilaryOnHulu is now streaming, only on Hulu."

1. **Runaway show** 2. **High fashion** 3. **Fashion model** 4. **Eiffel tower**	

Table 3.1 demonstrates a sample of the open codes with illustrative data extracts. In total, the 1573 open codes emerged from the data. After all the codes were created, they were revised, repetitive codes were merged, and unnecessary or insignificant ones were removed, leaving it to 1370 open codes, 585 open codes in Netflix data set, 442 in Hulu and 343 in Amazon Prime Video.

3.3.2. Axial coding

Due to the significant number of open codes, a step in between open and axial coding was taken. Open codes were revised and clustered into groups based on similarity. This process allowed to decrease the number of open codes and perform axial coding more efficiently. Once all the open codes have been identified and all the data has been assigned, the next step was to conduct the axial coding. Axial coding goes further in-depth and classifies existing categories into more specified ones by searching for connections (Flick, 2014). While examining open codes, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest following a coding system which focuses on causal factors, context, strategies and consequences. Such a system helps to find concepts, similarities and connections, which lead to the formation of axial codes. Once the open codes were clustered into groups, they were assigned names based on the similarities and relationships they had.

Table 3.2

Sample axial codes

Axial codes	Clustered open codes	Open codes
Urgency and anticipation about shows	New releases	• New season announcement • Final season arrives

		• Series returns
	Content availability	• Movies from 2001 to 2010 on Netflix
		• Available on Netflix US
Self-help promotion	Raising awareness	• Discussing mental health issues
		• Grieving experience
		• Actors discuss acne
		• Sharing mental health journey
	Promoting positivity	• Swipe to feel good
		• Man complimenting himself
		• Feel-good show
	Breaking stereotypes	• Actress wearing masculine clothes
		• 'Stop trying to fit in' message
		• 'Don't be ordinary' message
Promoting women in the filmmaking industry	Women behind the scenes	• Women in the production team
		• Female director on set
		• Female leading projects
	Inspiring Hulu actresses	• Award-winning actresses
		• Famous cook
		• Former United States Secretary of State
		• Actresses that bring fire

Table 3.2 demonstrates a sample of the axial coding process. In total, 19, 14 and 14 clustered codes emerged from Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video data sets, respectively, which lead to the formation of seven axial codes for each data set.

3.3.3. Selective coding

The last step of the coding process is selective coding. It is the process of finding out the core categories of the research, which explain the phenomenon and give an answer to the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Selective coding process aims to integrate the established axial codes into core categories, which allow complementing the existing theory (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019). To find the core categories Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggestion was followed to ask questions like "what are all the similarities/patterns about?" and "what is the main idea presented in the codes?". Moreover, the theoretical framework and previous research were taken into account when forming the core categories, since such practice allows for developing further understandings of theoretical work within the SVOD services and their use of Instagram to connect with brand identity (Dumitrica, & Pridmore, 2019). This final stage revealed three core categories for each of the data sets. Those categories are linked to all other axial coding groups. The coding trees representing an overview of the entire coding process can be found in Appendix A. The findings of the analysis will be thoroughly discussed in the following chapter.

4. Results and discussion

This study aimed at exploring and interpreting the ways major subscription video on demand services (Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime Video) use social media content to produce their brand identities and how they connect to popular culture. To answer the research question and sub-question the results of the content analysis, their interpretations and connections to theoretical framework are presented in this chapter.

The results of the qualitative content analysis showed that Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video are three different brands with three different ways of promoting their brand identities, however, they share some similarities. In the next subchapters, the categories that have emerged from the analysis and the summary of all the SVOD brands will be presented and discussed. Each subchapter represents one SVOD brand and the categories that have emerged from the brand's Instagram content analysis.

4.3. Netflix

Table 4.1

Netflix core categories and subcategories

Core categories	Sub-categories
Active content promotion	Urgency and anticipation
	Creating Instafame
Advocacy promotion	Diversity & inclusion promotion
	Self- help promotion
	Female empowerment
Young adults' orientation	Teenage lifestyle promotion
	Interpersonal relationships promotion

A total of three core categories have emerged from analyzing 58 Netflix US Instagram posts (see Table 4.1). Each one of the core categories and their subcategories will be further discussed in the following section.

4.3.2. Active content promotion

Active content promotion is the first core category to emerge from the data. This category represents the effort that the brand puts into promoting its product. The existing streaming wars put the SVOD brands under the pressure to constantly promote their offerings (Alexander, 2020a; Berman, 2019; Sherman & Evans, 2019), which partly happens on social

media. Two subcategories, that active content promotion category is made up of, explain how Netflix is promoting its product, which is by creating a sense of urgency and anticipation and creating Instafame.

4.3.2.1.Urgency and anticipation

Creating a sense of urgency and anticipation is the first subcategory which represents the active content promotion on Netflix US Instagram account. This code shows how Netflix is creating a value proposition by offering new content on a regular basis. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Netflix was the first SVOD service to begin offering short-length content, such as shows of 10-13 episodes, which led to the rise of the binge-watching culture (La Monica, 2017). The binge-watching has created social pressure on people to be always informed about the new shows in order to engage in the conversations, which results in FOMO (Matrix, 2014).

Figure 1 Netflix new arrivals

As shown in Figure 1, Netflix uses Instagram to urge people to watch the show. Due to the fast content production and fast content consumption Netflix's shows and movies quickly become irrelevant. Therefore, Netflix creates FOMO to promote its shows in order to make viewers watch the shows and movies that are relevant today.

Figure 2 Netflix content availability

Moreover, the results show that the sense of urgency and anticipation is not only created to promote new content but also for the availability promotion. As shown in Figure 2, Netflix uses Instagram to bring attention to some of the older content. Which raises the FOMO as Netflix presents these shows and movies as something that everyone must have seen.

4.3.2.2. Creating Instafame

The second subcategory presenting the active content promotion on Netflix US Instagram account is creating Instafame. Instafame is a term suggested by Marwick (2015), which explains the practice of micro-celebrities that strategically create social profiles to reach out, interact and share personal life details in order to gain attention on Instagram. Netflix is already known for its unique marketing strategy using its actors for brand promotion (Adalian, 2020; Parker, 2016). The findings reveals that such strategy is emphasized on Netflix US Instagram account as well. When promoting the content Netflix aims to immerse people not only in the interesting storyline of the show, but also in the cast and to transform them into micro-celebrities. The practices of micro-celebrities benefit the brand as their personal life, experiences and opinions are associated with the brand (Carah & Shaul, 2016). Netflix actors are serving exclusive details about the shows and their private lives, which attract the audience and connects them to the brand. Netflix uses micro-celebrities to encourage people to consume their content by practices, such as sharing a short video of an actor making a joke about people who have not seen the show yet.

Figure 3 Netflix entertaining content

Another practice that is noticed on Netflix US Instagram is to use the actors to create entertaining content. Figure 3 illustrates the video of Netflix's 'On My Block' cast sharing the notes from their phones. Netflix takes advantage and uses the micro-celebrities to create more content, which Netflix viewers watch to connect with the actors, share inside jokes and to start conversations. Such content relates to fans' content. Fans are "spectators who transform the experience of watching television into a rich and complex participatory culture" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 23). Nowadays, brands see fans as an essential part of the show's existence. The fans are the ones who determine the show's lifespan and success (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007). When fans meet online, they do not just share their love for their favorite show, they interpret, create and adapt meanings about the show (Misailidou, 2017). By creating entertaining content with actors Netflix feeds the fans' need for show related content and creates new show meanings, in such way acting as a fan itself.

Figure 4 Netflix cast promotion

The cast promotion is another approach of creating Instafame. It happens by sharing pictures or short videos of the cast behind the scenes or from photo shoots. Figure 4 shows how Netflix promotes cast members by sharing photos, moreover, the example also presents

how Netflix encourages the social media presence of the cast members. By creating Instafame, Netflix creates brand ambassadors, whose appearances and practices promote the brand and its content. Netflix uses Instagram as a tool to create cultural meanings, foster fan conversations and turn its actors into micro-celebrities.

4.3.3. Advocacy promotion

The second core category to emerge from the qualitative content analysis is advocacy promotion. This category demonstrates how Netflix uses Instagram to promote a positive attitude and support. Brands are using Instagram to produce and promote culture, which is seen and consumed by their followers (Carah & Shaul, 2016). By promoting advocacy Netflix is using Instagram to connect with concerns that are broadly in the culture. Three subcategories, diversity and inclusion promotion, self- help promotion and female empowerment, explain in detail how advocacy promotion happens on Netflix US Instagram account and how that connects to the brand identity of Netflix.

4.3.3.1.Diversity & inclusion promotion

The first subcategory of advocacy promotion category is diversity and inclusion. People often use social media to share and carry out their social and political views. Being constantly exposed to certain views, social media users start adapting such opinions and beliefs, therefore social media can be utilized as a platform to increase people's critical consciousness (Al'Uqdah, Jenkins, & Ajaa, 2019; An, & Kwak, 2019). As the results show, Netflix uses its Instagram to draw attention to diversity and inclusion, which emphasize the brand's aim to inform the viewers about the multicultural world. Netflix offers its services worldwide ("Where is Netflix available?", n.d.), which means that Netflix viewers come from different races, ethnicities, sexual preferences and social statuses. People tend to identify themselves better with the brand content that presents models/actors of the same race or ethnicity as they are (Sierra, Hyman, & Torres, 2009).

Figure 5 Netflix inclusivity promotion

Therefore, Netflix uses actors from different backgrounds to present the brand, relate to the multicultural viewers and initiate a change in the filmmaking industry. As shown in Figure 5 Netflix promotes actors of color that are not afraid to break the rules, such as choosing a role that is pronominally performed by white actors. However, even though Netflix uses Instagram to present the brand as inclusive, the brand does not successfully present that outside its social media. In 2007 Netflix released a television series 'Atypical' which follows a story of an 18-year-old boy with an autism spectrum disorder (Rashid, 2017). The series received a lot of controversy for its unsuccessful representation of autism on screen and behind the scenes. Autism community was disappointed that Netflix did not include any actors or creators who have actually experienced such disorder in the making of the series (Arky, 2017; Rowe, 2017).

Figure 6 Netflix cultural diversity promotion

Besides using Instagram for inclusivity promotion, Netflix also uses it to celebrate the cultures around the world. Despite the analyzed Instagram account being the US account, the content promoting other nations was found present. Figure 6 is an illustration of the post promoting Tokyo and its vibrant culture. This finding resonates with Netflix strategy to include and produce more foreign content to appeal to the markets outside the US (Lobato, 2019). Cultural diversity promotion on Netflix US Instagram introduces the US viewers to other cultures, which not only represents Netflix as a diverse brand but also raises their viewers' acceptance of other cultures, which results in more attention for foreign content on Netflix.

4.3.3.2. Self-help promotion

The following subcategory presents Netflix support and interest in serious topics, such as mental health, self-confidence and stereotype breaking. Netflix is a culture producing service, which products are seen and discussed by millions of users (Matrix, 2014). In early 2017 Netflix released the series called '13 Reasons Why', which follows a story of a teenage girl who has committed suicide and left 13 audio tapes, which she has prerecorded to explain who she blames for her suicide. The series has received a lot of controversy in media for promoting suicide (Ayers, Althouse, Leas, Dredze, & Allem, 2017). Research by Bridge et al. (2020) has shown that the suicide rate among 10- to 17-year-olds in the United States noticeably increased directly after the release of the series. The controversy followed Netflix for more than two years, that lead Netflix to remove the suicide scene from the show (Alexander, 2019). This example presents the power Netflix cultural products has over its audience. Therefore, the content analysis results demonstrate that on Instagram Netflix takes its power seriously and produces self-help content to bring positive change. Most of the SVOD users are between 18 and 34 years of age (Statista, 2019), meaning that most of the viewers are young adults. Therefore, problems like finding yourself, acne or mental health are common issues among a young adult audience.

netflix ✔ All the Bright places author
@JenniferNiven speaks with mental
health advocates @alokvmenon and
@vivnunez for this edition of What I
Wish You Knew.

Everyone's mental health journeys look
different and so does their mental
health care. From therapy to art and
writing, everyone can have different
outlets that help them process and
heal.

#WhatIWishYouKnew #MentalHealth

6w

Figure 7 Netflix mental health awareness

Figure 7 shows an example of Netflix raising mental health awareness. As mentioned above, brands have the power to use social media as a tool to promote certain ideas and shape social media users' beliefs (An & Kwak, 2019). Therefore, Netflix produces more understandings about mental health issues, acne and positivity. Netflix uses Instagram to connect with the issues that exist in young adults' culture.

netflix ✔ swipe to smile

Figure 8 Netflix positivity promotion

Netflix spreads positivity by sharing uplifting content, as shown in Figure 8, as well as promoting the positivity inducing behaviors, such as self-confidence, by complimenting yourself.

Figure 9 Netflix breaking stereotypes

Moreover, Netflix is taking the time to start a conversation about breaking stereotypes. Figure 9 shows an example of Netflix sharing the story of an actress, who is breaking gender stereotypes. By promoting self-help, the brand relates to its audience, connects to their culture and uses its power to bring a positive outlook.

4.3.3.3. Female empowerment

Another subcategory that advocacy promotion is made up of is female empowerment. In 2017 Me Too movement hit the entertainment industry by revealing sexual assault allegations against powerful men around the world, some of them were working for Netflix (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019). Hence, Netflix expressed the brand's disapproval of such behavior by firing these men. However, it did not last long, in 2019 Aziz Ansari, a comedian accused of sexual assault, returned to Netflix by releasing his comedy special (Golby, 2019). Moreover, Netflix docuseries' 'Tiger King' creators were recently accused of sexism for being too sympathetic to animal abuser Joe Tiger while conducting violently misogynistic attacks against his rival, Carole Baskin (Walsh, 2020). Such controversies surrounding Netflix result in negative associations regarding the brand's outlook towards women.

The analysis results show that Netflix uses Instagram to resolve the controversy and emphasize the brand's support for powerful women. A study by Drake (2017) showed that brands using female empowerment topic in advertising receive a positive impact on brand opinions, purchase intentions and emotional connection to the brand. However, Netflix is known for controversial actors and even shows regarding female empowerment.
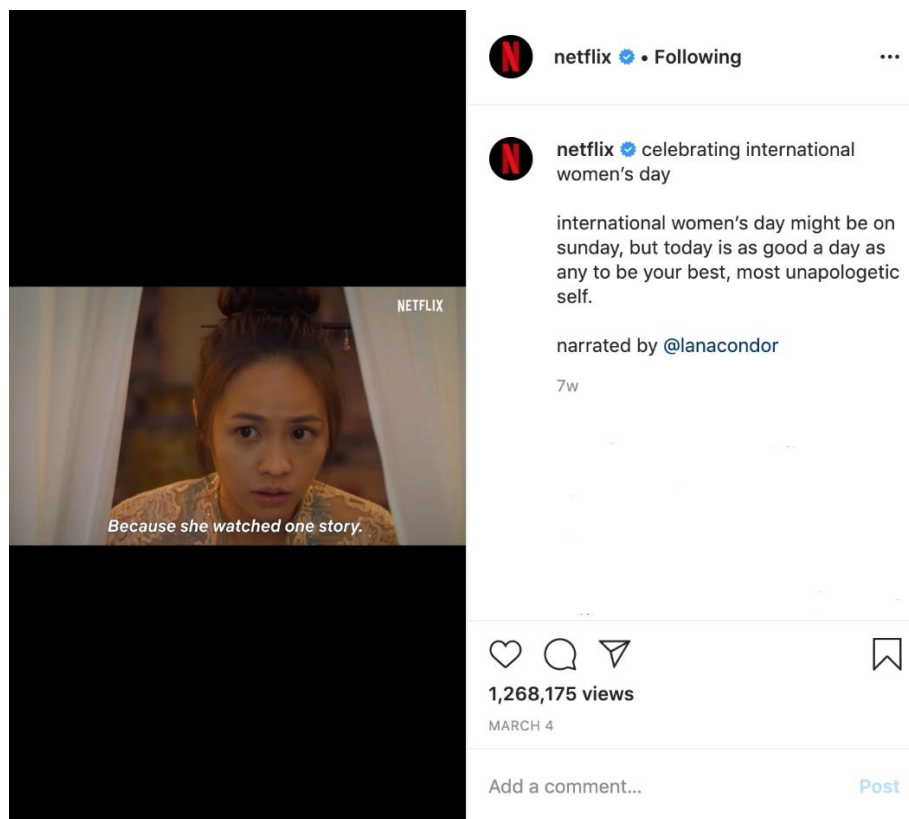
Figure 10 Netflix inspiring women

An example of female empowerment can be seen in Figure 10, which presents Netflix campaign for International Women's Day. In the video of the campaign, Netflix talks what it is like being a powerful woman. Netflix uses Instagram to produce and engage the viewers in female empowerment culture.

Moreover, Netflix actively promotes women by presenting inspiring female characters, such as a female doctor, female ice skater, female spy, female doctor, female boss, etc., Netflix spreads the message that women can be whoever they want to be. By doing this Netflix evokes positive emotions and strengthens female viewer's loyalty to the brand.

4.3.4. Young adults' orientation

Young adults' orientation is the third core category to emerge from Netflix US Instagram analysis. This category explains how Netflix content resonates with young adults' culture. While Netflix content has something to offer for everyone and varies from classics, such as 'Lord of the Rings' saga, to reality shows challenging singles not to have sex with each other, such as 'Too Hot to Handle' (Gibson, & Bennett, 2020; Osborne, Walsh, & Sanders, 2001), on Instagram, Netflix focus on young adults and content which relates to them. Young adults have grown up with technology, they are used to 'scroll' and 'swap' on

their phones, they are at the age of flexibility, open to trying new things, exploring new trends and engaging with popular culture. These are the people who do not just stream movies and listen to music for their entertainment, this is how they form their identities and build part of their lives about (Dovchin, Pennycook, & Sultana, 2017). Moreover, the binge-watching culture is more predominant among young adults, since they have more free time and can allow themselves to binge watch Netflix for a whole weekend (Matrix, 2014). Therefore, by using young adult orientation on Instagram, Netflix fosters the spread of popular culture, inducing binge-watching and represent the young adults' lifestyle. Two subcategories, teenage lifestyle promotion and interpersonal relationships promotion, explain in detail how young adult orientation happens on Netflix US Instagram account and how that connects to Netflix brand identity.

4.3.4.1. Teenage lifestyle promotion

The first subcategory to emerge from the analysis is a teenage lifestyle promotion. This category includes various signs that relate and connect with the lifestyle of teenagers, such as high school activities, teenager issues, sexual objectification and urban culture. The American high school experience has been documented in media so much that it has become a worldwide pop culture phenomenon. Prom nights, homecoming, cheerleaders, mean girls are just a few symbols that are connected to American high school (Best, 2000).

Figure 11 Netflix presenting school activities

As shown in Figure 11, Netflix participates in presenting high school as a pop culture phenomenon by promoting such symbols as cheerleaders. As this might resonate with some

teenagers, particularly the ones from the US since those symbols are part of their high school culture, teenagers from the rest of the world could hardly relate to such school experiences. As the above-mentioned core category advocacy promotion shows, Netflix tries to be more relatable to the global public, however, when portraying the high school, Netflix only connects with the popular image of it.

Figure 12 Netflix internet language and humor promotion

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that in order to connect with young adult audience Netflix uses internet language and humor. Figure 12 is an illustration of both, the picture presents a meme about friendship, the caption of the post uses internet language, such as 'LMAO' and 'OMG', to further describe the situation. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the use of humor in social media communications emotionally involves the customers more, builds the emotional bond between the brand and the customer and increases audience's engagement (Ge & Gretzel, 2017). Additionally, by using internet language Netflix resonates with young adults, new trends and takes part in popular culture production.

4.3.4.2. Interpersonal relationships promotion

The second sub-category of young adult orientation is interpersonal relationships promotion. Building and maintaining friendships and pursuing romantic relationships are the central social activities in young adult's life (Furman, Brown, & Feiring, 1999). Netflix uses Instagram to portray such relationships.

Figure 13 Netflix promoting friendship

Figure 13 illustrates a scene from the Netflix show, which explains what it feels like to have a best friend. However, Netflix only emphasizes the positive side of relationships, such as best friends sticking with each other through hard times, friends falling in love or a late-night date while confessing love to each other, instead of presenting the bad side, which is fights and heartbreaks.

While trying to relate to young adults Netflix is using symbols representing young adults' life, such as high school experience, internet language and relationships. However, the presentation of these symbols rather relates to the existing popular culture views than reality. On the other hand, the use of humorous content and internet language brings Netflix on top of internet trends, initiates social conversations and engages the young adult audience.

4.4. Hulu

Table 4.2

Hulu core categories and subcategories

Core categories	Sub-categories
Active content promotion	Emphasizing exclusivity and inclusivity
	Urgency and anticipation
	Brand engagement promotion
Active women promotion	Female empowerment
	Women in the filmmaking industry promotion

The US orientation	The US promotion
	African American community promotion

A total of three core categories have emerged from analyzing 50 Hulu US Instagram posts. Each one of the core categories and their subcategories will be further discussed in the following section.

4.4.2. Active content promotion

The first core category to emerge from the qualitative content analysis is active content promotion. This category explains in detail how Hulu active content promotion strategies differ from Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. Three subcategories, which are emphasizing exclusivity and inclusivity, brand consumption and increasing the sense of urgency and anticipation, made up active content promotion category and will be further discussed in the following subsections.

4.4.2.1.Emphasizing exclusivity and inclusivity

Emphasizing exclusivity and inclusivity is the first subcategory that presents the active content promotion on Hulu US Instagram account. This category stood out among others as it appeared in most of the Hulu US Instagram posts. Hulu concept is much closer to a traditional television than other SVOD services since a lot of Hulu content is coming from broadcasting TV channels (Nath, 2020). Hulu offers live television too, which allows watching more than 50 TV channels online (Snider, 2017). With so many television brands under Hulu name it is hard not to confuse it with other brands. Therefore, the brand is using social media to clarify the brand identity confusion.

Moreover, people like brands that share the feeling of exclusivity. Commonly luxury brands are associated with exclusivity since they offer the scarcity of the products. However, luxury brands want to maximize profits, expand into different markets and maintain their exclusivity at the same time. Therefore, they create limited edition products, that get sold out immediately and create the desired exclusivity feeling, yet such products also increase the sales of the other products since customers who were not lucky enough to get that limited edition item also want to be a part of the exclusive brand, so they purchase other items instead (Radón, 2012). Hulu uses Instagram to promote similar strategy by offering 'limited edition' Hulu shows, which are only available on Hulu, while at the same time increasing the interest in the content that is not exclusively from Hulu, such as shows that originally aired on broadcasting television.

Figure 14 Hulu exclusivity promotion

As shown in Figure 14, Hulu actively promotes exclusivity by using a hashtag '#HilaryOnHulu' and phrase 'only on Hulu'.

Figure 15 Hulu inclusivity promotion

Figure 15 presents the inclusivity promotion, the FX show, which is only available on Hulu. Since Hulu owns a lot of content from other broadcasting television channels, the brand uses Instagram to promote that as inclusivity of the brand, while still keeping it exclusive. In other words, inclusivity is the content, collected from various broadcasting television channels, exclusivity – the content is only available on Hulu. Hence, by using the hashtags and words to explain the origin of the show Hulu promotes its partnerships, variety of available content and clears the confusion between Hulu as SVOD service and content produced by other brands.

4.4.2.2.Urgency and anticipation

The second subcategory that presents active content promotion by Hulu is urgency and anticipation. This category shows how Hulu promotes the new shows and the ones that are leaving the SVOD service. While Hulu mostly operates on a television-like strategy and uploads a new episode every week, rather than uploading a season at once, the brand uses Instagram to remind the viewers about the new episodes weekly. Even though Hulu does not stimulate binge-watching as much as Netflix does, the brand still uses FOMO to promote the content. Abel, Buff and Burr (2016) suggest brands to use FOMO in order to induce social media users' emotions and increase their purchasing decisions. Hulu uses phrases in the captions, such as 'only 4 days left', 'tonight is the new episode', to initiate the FOMO.
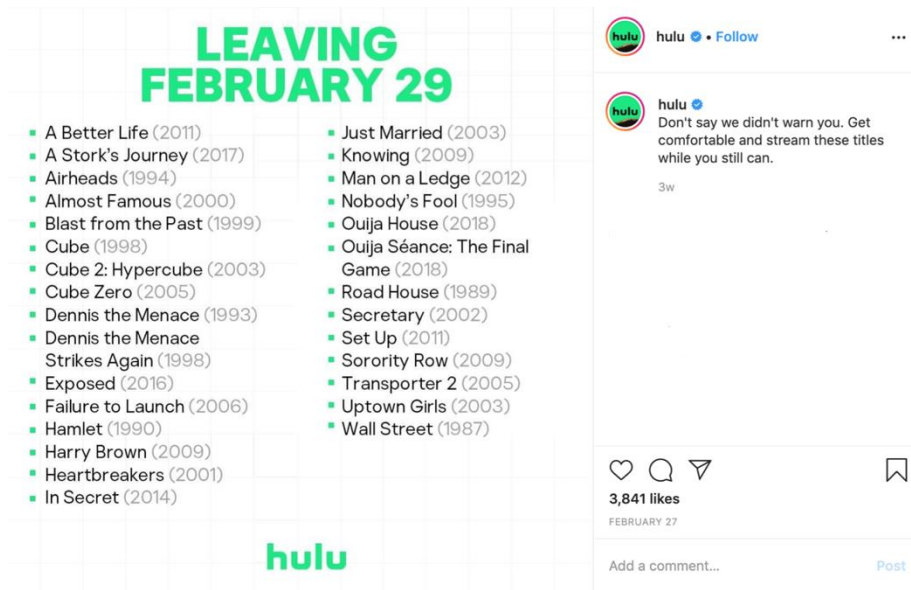
Figure 16 Hulu the sense of urgency and anticipation promotion

Moreover, as shown in Figure 16, Hulu not only increases FOMO by reminding people about new content, but also by informing about the content that is leaving Hulu. Hulu urges the viewers to watch some of their favorite shows before they are gone, which none of the other two SVOD brands have been seen doing. Such practice also connects with Hulu marketing campaigns 'Watch More, Lie Less' and 'Hulu Sellouts', which are promoting honesty and transparency (Hulu, 2019a, 2019b; Macleod, 2016). However, even though Hulu is using its Instagram and marketing campaigns to create the honest and transparent brand identity, the brand has recently been blamed for the lack of transparency in political ads. Hulu does not provide any additional information about budgets or target groups, which allow understanding of who is trying to influence viewers' voting decisions. While on other political advertising platforms, such as Facebook and Google, such information is easily accessible, Hulu does not provide the same level of transparency (Romm, 2020).

4.4.2.3. Brand engagement promotion

The last subcategory that active content promotion is made up of is brand engagement promotion. As the content analysis shows, Hulu promotes brand engagement by engaging the followers in Hulu Instagram activities, such as answering a question, commenting an emoji or creating a caption for a picture. Using strategies to engage followers in a brand's social media communication helps to keep them connected to the brand (Martin & Todorov, 2010). Moreover, engaging followers in conversations increase their sense of social belonging (Kim & Drumwright, 2016).

Figure 17 brand engagement

Hence, Hulu uses Instagram to start conversations with followers. Figure 17 is an illustration of Hulu prompting followers to participate in brand conversations by asking to comment an emoji of a person raising both hands in celebration.

Figure 18 Hulu content consumption promotion

Furthermore, Hulu promotes brand engagement by endorsing content consumption. Figure 18 illustrates an example of Hulu encouraging people to consume Hulu's content. Streaming services have changed the culture of content consumption from watching a movie in the cinema or renting a new DVD to streaming from your own device and your home comfort. Streaming has become a part of the everyday culture (Flanagan, 2018). To promote such culture Hulu uses phrases like 'grab popcorn', 'light up your screen' or 'get comfortable and stream'. By starting brand conversations and promoting content consumption Hulu keeps their followers connected and advertise streaming as a part of everyday culture.

4.4.3. Active women promotion

The second core category that has emerged from the qualitative content analysis of Hulu US Instagram account is active women promotion. This category demonstrates how the brand is presenting women through the use of Instagram. The nature of SVOD services promotes an independent viewer, the one who can choose what to watch and when. The rise of SVOD services and female independence removed the image of a man sitting in front of the TV with a remote control in his hand from a common practice (Bucciferro, 2019). Moreover, female empowerment has become a mainstream development concern, widely used by corporations, politicians and non-governmental organizations (Cornwall, 2016). Hence, Hulu uses Instagram to connect with cultural conversations promoting independent

and powerful women. Two sub-categories, female empowerment and women in the filmmaking industry promotion, explain in detail how Hulu promotes women on the brand's Instagram account and will be discussed in the following subsections.

4.4.3.1. Female empowerment

This subcategory demonstrates how Hulu presents women on its Instagram account. Female empowerment is a particularly popular topic in the United States since the election of the 45th president of the United States of America, Donald Trump. He has inspired a new wave of feminism in the country. His attitude and comments towards women have received a lot of backlash and become a center of attention (Gutsche, 2018). Since Hulu is the only SVOD service among services of interest, that is only available in the US ("Why can't I use Hulu internationally?", 2019), the brand uses Instagram to initiate conversations that are popular in the country. On Hulu Instagram account women are in the center of attention, the female characters are praised by using word 'queens' or complimented on their great sense of style. Most of the Hulu shows promoted on their Instagram, such as 'The Handmaids Tale' and 'Little Fires Everywhere', are led by female characters.

Figure 19 Hulu female empowerment

Moreover, Hulu is promoting women's hard work towards success by sharing personal stories of the women who inspire other females to start a journey of finding their own success. An example is shown in Figure 19, Hulu actress Daisy Edgar Jones shares a message to support and encourage other women. Female empowerment subcategory presents Hulu as a socially active brand, which participates in social conversations happening in the country.

4.4.3.2. Women in the filmmaking industry promotion

Women in the filmmaking industry promotion is the second subcategory that represents the active women promotion on Hulu US Instagram account. At the times when gender pay gap, gender discrimination and sexism are massive global issues affecting most of the industries, Hulu uses Instagram to promote females in the filmmaking industry. In 2018,

Only 31% of individuals working in the filmmaking industry in the US were females (Lauzen, 2019). Hulu emphasizes the importance to make the difference in the industry and promotes the social responsibility of the brand.

Figure 20 Hulu female filmmakers' promotion

Figure 20 illustrates two examples of Hulu promoting female filmmakers on their Instagram. First, the brand demonstrates behind the scenes shots to present the female film directors, producers & writers on set. Second, Hulu uses hashtags #MadeByHer, #ReFrameStamp and #FemaleFilmmakerFriday to mark the content that is produced by women.

The analysis revealed that Hulu honors female filmmakers, celebrates female friendships and the ability to work together by continuously sharing women's stories, creating female oriented campaigns and celebrating powerful women. On Hulu US Instagram account female characters are presented as powerful, independent and hard-working, in addition, the brand engages in conversations regarding female empowerment.

However, such Instagram posts serve as Hulu brand promotion. While conversations regarding gender equality and female empowerment are viral topics in the US, the brand may be exploiting the topic to benefit from the current situation. Hulu has already shown some action towards gender equality in the filmmaking industry by sponsoring Reframe initiative, which works to provide guidance for more gender representative industry and support female filmmakers ("About," n.d.). Yet, it is just a small step rather and not the actual change. Hulu

has a lot of power in the filmmaking industry, even so, the brand just promotes the idea of gender equality rather than acting on it.

4.4.4. The US orientation

The US orientation is the third core category to emerge from the qualitative content analysis of Hulu US Instagram account. This category presents how Hulu endorses a culture of the US and promotes African American community. Hulu is the US brand, which only functions in the US market. Therefore, the brand uses Instagram to show off the patriotism, please the US audience and create the identity of a truly national brand. Two subcategories, the US culture promotion and African American culture promotion demonstrate what strategies Hulu uses to promote the US culture and African American community on Instagram. Each one of the subcategories will be further discussed in the following subsections.

4.4.4.1.The US culture promotion

The first subcategory that represents the US orientation is the US culture promotion. This subcategory focus on all the symbols that promote the US and demonstrates the culture of the country. Since the US is a highly patriotic country with strong independence spirits (Matthews, Reinerman-Jones, Teo, Burke, & Scribner, 2017), Hulu uses Instagram to emphasize the brand's American pride.

Figure 21 Hulu the US culture promotion

As shown in Figure 21, Hulu uses its Instagram to express the national identity and tackle the patriotism of American citizens. Hulu promotes the American culture by inviting

viewers to watch a cooking show exploring American food diversity as well as advertising series about the history and historical figures of the US. Moreover, the brand uses famous politicians, such as Hilary Clinton, to present the US political scene. By promoting the US culture Hulu relates to its one and only market, engages in the cultural conversations of the country and produces new cultural meanings.

4.4.4.2.African American community promotion

The US orientation core category also comprises of the African American community promotion. As African Americans are the biggest ethnic group in the US and make up 14% of the US citizens (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018), it is a huge part of the US market. Hulu uses Instagram to target this ethnic group and promote their culture in order to transform them into the brand customers.

Moreover, racism is a major problem in the US. Popular culture has helped to establish and maintain white supremacy since the emergence of modern America. African Americans were and still to this day are, often portrayed in a degrading, negative and stereotypical way, that impact the racial perceptions in the country (Verney, 2013). Hence, more and more people are initiating racial equality conversations. In 2015, after two consecutive years of all the Academy Awards' winners being white actors, the African American community took it to social media to show their dissatisfaction by starting a campaign called #OscarsSoWhite (Molina-Guzmán, 2016). The campaign brought attention to the racial inequality in the film industry and started a movement for more representation of race and gender.
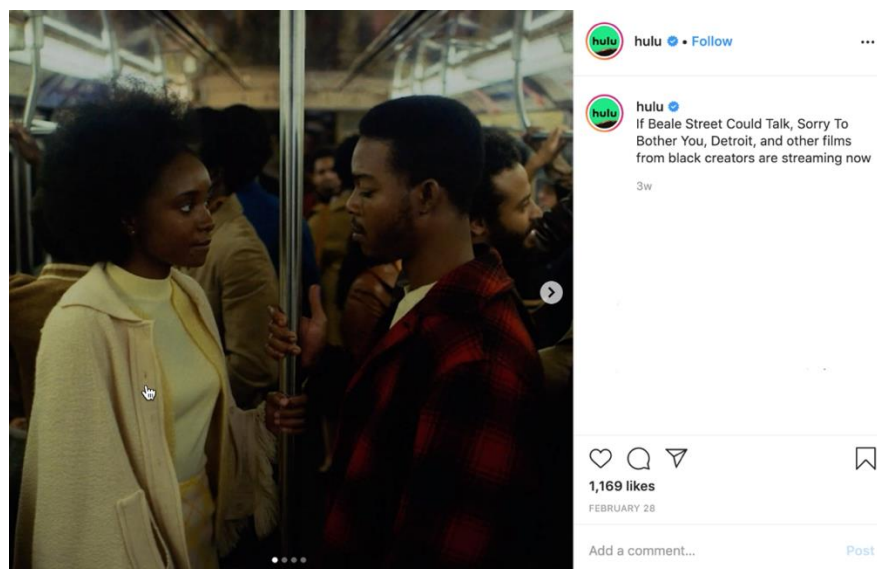

Figure 22 Hulu African American community promotion

Hence, as shown in Figure 22, Hulu takes the conversations to Instagram to show the brand's support for African Americans filmmakers. Hulu tells the stories about successful African American people, presents content created by African American filmmakers and uses famous African American people to promote the shows. However, the brand does not provide any statistics on how many Hulu filmmakers are people of color, thus the proof of the brand's effort to make a change in the industry is lacking.

While trying to relate to the US audience Hulu uses symbols representing American culture, such as food or history. Moreover, Hulu engages in conversations related to the African American community, racism and gender inequality in the filmmaking industry, which bring Hulu on top of cultural conversations happening in the country.

4.5. Amazon Prime Video

Table 4.3

Amazon Prime Video core categories and subcategories

Core categories	Subcategories
Active content promotion	Quality promotion
	Urgency & Anticipation
	Brand engagement promotion
Lifestyle promotion	Pleasures promotion
	Life advice
Female orientation	Sexual behaviours promotion
	Active women promotion

A total of three core categories have emerged from analyzing 51 Amazon Prime Video US Instagram posts. Each one of the core categories and their subcategories will be further discussed in the following section.

4.5.1. Active content promotion

The first core category to emerge from Amazon Prime Video US Instagram account content analysis is active content promotion. This category explains in detail what active content promotion strategies Amazon Prime Video use, how they differ from other SVOD brands and how they connect with the brand's identity. Three subcategories, that active content promotion category is made up of, which are quality promotion, urgency and

anticipation, and brand engagement promotion, will be further discussed in the following subsections.

4.5.1.1.Quality promotion

The first subcategory presenting active content promotion on Amazon Prime Video US Instagram account is quality promotion. A study by Tsiotsou (2006) revealed that perceived quality has a direct effect on purchase intention. Amazon Prime Video uses Instagram to emphasize the quality of its offerings by presenting the awards the actors have won, their experience in the film industry and other achievements.

Additionally, Amazon Prime Video uses celebrities as a mark of quality. Most of the SVOD subscribers in the US are between 18-34 years old (Statista, 2019). Due to their still-developing identities, young people are more likely to look to celebrities for meanings and trust them as a sign of quality (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). Hence, Amazon Prime Video promoting celebrities as a mean of quality is a sign of trying to reach the young Instagram audience. Amazon Prime Video uses pop culture icons, such as well-known models, reality show stars, and singers that young audience of the brand acknowledges.

Figure 23 Amazon Prime Video promoting talented actress

As shown in Figure 23, Amazon Prime Video actively promotes outstanding characters. The brand uses memorable characters to build social media hype around them by creating memes, jokes and inspiring quotes related to them. Following the brand assemblage concept suggested by Lury (2009), the characters of Amazon Prime Video shows are part of the brand's assemblage. Memorable characters act as brand symbols since people see them and

immediately associate with Amazon Prime Video brand. Therefore, by choosing to promote the most outstanding, well-developed characters and the cultural meanings surrounding them, Amazon Prime Video aims to increase the association with quality characters.

Nevertheless, internet users are rather more interested in the brand's extensive library of B-movies than the quality shows (DeNisco Rayome, 2020; u/FilmUncensored, 2018). Amazon Prime Video offers hundreds of these movies, which are terribly made but fun to watch. While all the three brands offer content, which is made by famous directors and award-winning actors, Amazon Prime Video is the only SVOD service that offers loads of terrible cinema, which could be used as a distinctive value proposition.

4.5.1.2.Urgency & anticipation

The second subcategory to emerge from active content promotion category is urgency and anticipation. This category presents how Amazon Prime Video is promoting their new arrivals and content that is already available on the platform. As mentioned before, Netflix and Hulu are actively using FOMO to create a sense of urgency, Amazon Prime Video follows the same strategy.

Figure 24 Amazon Prime Video promoting urgency and anticipation

The brand creates FOMO by promoting new shows, offering a sneak peek of a show or sharing pictures from the new releases. Figure 24 presents an example of urgency and anticipation promotion.

Moreover, Amazon Prime Video uses Instagram to promote content that is already available on the platform by presenting it as a must-see, sharing scenes from the show and information about the cast of the show, which everyone should already be familiar with, such practice increases the FOMO, the viewers.

4.5.1.3. Brand engagement promotion

The third subcategory that active content promotion on Amazon Prime Video US Instagram account is made up of is brand engagement promotion. This subcategory demonstrates how Amazon Prime Video engages with its followers and promotes content consumption habits. Amazon Prime Video follows the same strategy as Hulu by engaging followers to participate in Instagram activities like comment the name of your favorite character, tag a friend or share with your friend.

Figure 25 Amazon Prime Video brand engagement

Figure 25 illustrates an example of Amazon Video Prime engaging with the followers by asking a question. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, social media allows brands to create an emotional attachment between the brand and the customer by engaging them in brand stories on a daily basis (Martin & Todorov, 2010). Amazon Prime Video engages the Instagram followers in the brand conversations, which create the emotional attachment to the brand, produce the cultural meanings and form a trialogue between a brand and a customer and between the customers themselves (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2013), which adds value to the brand by identifying existing problems and spreading the word.

Figure 26 Amazon Prime Video brand consumption promotion

Furthermore, brand engagement is created by endorsing content consumption. Figure 26 illustrates an example of a meme promoting content consumption habits. While Hulu promotes content consumption habits by using phrases like 'grab popcorn' or 'get comfortable and stream', Amazon Prime Video uses memes and jokes related to streaming culture to promote it. By using memes Amazon Prime Video engage viewers with the brand's content outside the SVOD platform. Moreover, millennials find promotions in the type of memes more interesting and attractive than traditional promotion strategies (Sadath & Shanmugasundaram, 2019). Therefore, by using memes Amazon Prime Video is promoting content consumption, engaging in internet culture and relating to the young adults and their streaming habits.

4.5.2. Lifestyle promotion

Lifestyle promotion is a second category to emerge from the qualitative content analysis of Amazon Prime Video Instagram account. Carah and Shaul (2015) states that by generating images brands and users are creating a sense of culture, which gets recreated by other users. Lifestyle promotion is a part of the culture, which Amazon Prime Video is creating on its Instagram, therefore such culture gets recreated and spread by the brand followers. Two subcategories, pleasures promotion and life advice, present the lifestyle, which is generated by Amazon Prime Video images on Instagram. The categories will be discussed in-depth in the following subsections.

4.5.2.1. Pastime promotion

The first subcategory, which presents lifestyle promotion on Amazon Prime Video Instagram account is pastime promotion. Instagram allows people to share the images of their everyday lives, therefore posts exposing the use of alcohol, drugs and cigarettes are increasingly apparent (Cavazos-Rehg, Krauss, Sowles, & Bierut, 2016; Hendriks, Van den Putte, Gebhardt, & Moreno, 2018). These posts present habits as a part of social life, such as drinking is a part of dinners and parties (Hendriks et al., 2018). Hence, by promoting habits like alcohol and drugs Amazon Prime Video participates in the social culture creation on Instagram. Such images demonstrate Amazon Prime Video as a part of everyday culture and relate to the lives of the followers.

Figure 27 Amazon Prime Video astrology promotion

Furthermore, Amazon Prime Video promotes astrology as a pastime. Figure 27 illustrates Amazon Prime Video sharing an astrology meme. Daily horoscopes and star forecasts have become a part of mainstream culture and the organization habit of everyday lives (Willis & Curry, 2004). Amazon Prime Video takes part in producing such culture and promoting it on the brand's Instagram Astrology jokes and meme engage the followers into sharing the brand's content with other people.

4.5.2.2. Life advice

The second subcategory, which presents lifestyle promotion on Amazon Prime Video Instagram is life advice. One of the most desirable qualities that brands and social media influencers try to achieve is to be seen as relatable (Leaver et al., 2020). The qualitative

content analysis has shown that Amazon Prime Video uses relatable life situations to either advise people or express the relation. The life advice that is seen on Amazon Prime Video Instagram account is sarcastic and funny, the messages are meant to entertain people rather than provide any useful advice.

Figure 28 Amazon Prime Video life advice

As shown in Figure 28, Amazon Prime Video shares a piece of humorous advice, the brand uses sarcasm and irony to initiate participatory and spreadable replies. Such messages present the brand as a casual brand, which relates to viewers' problems with a humorous attitude.

4.5.3. Female orientation

The third core category to emerge from the analysis is female orientation. This category explains how Amazon Prime Video content resonates with females and female culture. Gender is an indicator of Instagram use. Women use Instagram more and are more active on the platform than men. Social media sites are more attractive to females since they care more about personal relationships than men do (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Hence, Amazon Prime Video Instagram content is shaped towards the female audience. Two subcategories, active women promotion and sexual behaviours promotion, present the female orientation and will be further discussed in the following subsections.

4.5.3.1. Active women promotion

The first subcategory that represents the female orientation of Amazon Prime Video US Instagram account is active women promotion. The female promotion has been seen on

Netflix and Hulu Instagram accounts as well. Amazon Prime Video follows a similar strategy and shows off strong female characters and praises the actresses and hostesses of Amazon Prime Video shows.

Figure 29 Amazon Prime Video women promotion

Figure 30 illustrates the female promotion. Since the movement against sexual harassment and sexual abuse of women, #MeToo, social media has become a place to dialogue and spread sexism, sexual assault and misogyny prevention. #MeToo has allowed women from all over the world to speak out about their experiences and engage in feminist discussions (Mendes, Ringrose, & Keller, 2018).

However, Amazon Prime Video has not escaped #MeToo scandal, the brand had to fire director Woody Allen and actor Jeffrey Tambor over #MeToo allegations (Bishop, 2018; Pulver, 2019). Moreover, the former executive of Amazon Studios, Roy Price, caused a controversy by not agreeing to launch a series 'Big Little Lies' unless there is more female nudity. The executive has been called misogynist and sexist (Gee, 2017). Hence, Instagram serves as a platform for Amazon Prime Video to resolve the brand's image by promoting women and content related to them.

4.5.3.2. Sexual behaviours promotion

The second subcategory, which presents female orientation on Amazon Prime Video US Instagram account is sexual behaviours promotion. Sexual objectification of women is a widely discussed issue, however, the conversation about objectification towards men's bodies is relatively small. A study by Bell, Cassarly and Dunbar (2018) suggests that posts including

objectified self-images receive more engagement, shares, likes, comments than non-objectified self-images. However, the study only analyzed the female self-images, the research about male self-images is still lacking. Amazon Prime Video uses male sexual objectification as a tool to engage with the female audience and to provoke social conversations.

As mentioned above, Amazon Prime Video was involved with #MeToo scandal and, now, takes it to Instagram to resolve the misogynist associations. However, instead of solving the problem, the brand turns it the other way around and sexually objectifies men.
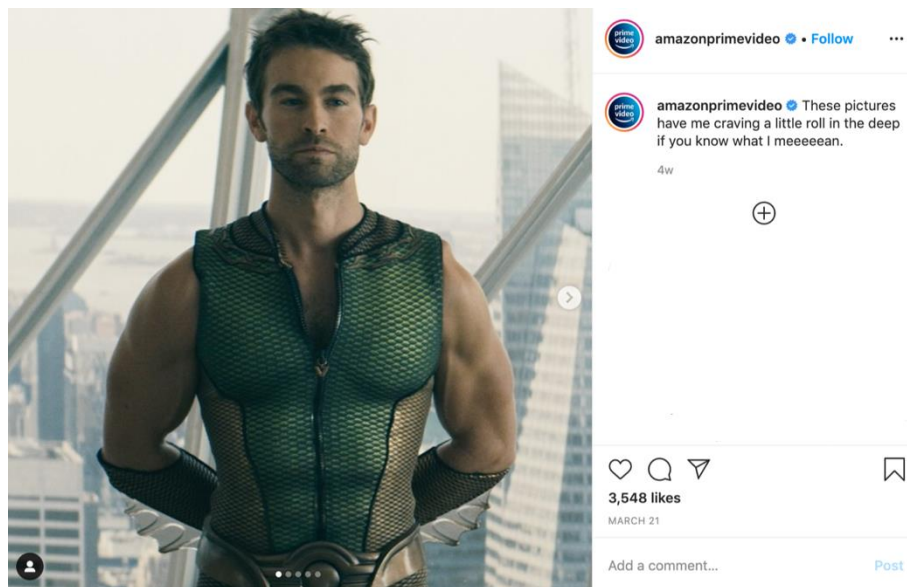

Figure 30 Amazon Prime Video sexual objectification of men

An example is shown in Figure 29, Amazon Prime Video shares a picture of an attractive actor together with sexual activity implying caption. The SVOD brand creates a sexual tension to reach the female audience, Amazon Prime Video emotionally engages women by showing a man flirting, a man organizing a romantic date or making jokes about sex from a woman's perspective.

While trying to relate to the female audience Amazon Prime Video uses attractive male figures and promotes sexual behaviours, as well as engages in female empowerment topics and presents females as powerful and inspiring, which brings the brand on top of the conversations important for the female audience. Amazon Prime Video uses Instagram to make up for the misogynist and sexist associations with the brand, nevertheless, the brand fails to do so since the sexism has not disappeared but turned the other way around towards men.

4.6. Summary

Table 4.4

Commonalities of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video Instagram content

	Netflix	Hulu	Amazon Prime Video
Urgency and anticipation	x	x	x
Female empowerment	x	x	x
Brand engagement promotion		x	x
Lifestyle promotion	x		x
Diversity promotion	x	x	

As the results have shown, all three SVOD brands are actively using Instagram to produce their brand identities. Table 4.4 summarizes the commonalities Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video share to produce the brand identity.

First, the findings suggest that all three major subscription video on demand services use active content promotion strategies to create the sense of urgency and anticipation. The sense of urgency and anticipation is created by practices like announcing new available shows, counting down the days left until the premiere or reminding about already available shows. Strangelove (2015) called SVOD as an "all-you-can-eat-buffet style" (p. 149) video broadcasting service, that emphasizes the vast amount of content SVOD services produce on a regular basis. The constant release of new content means that shows are getting very short amount of promotion time and they become irrelevant quicker. Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video boost their shows which are relevant to watch at the moment in order to create the hype, which attracts more people to watch the show before the new one comes in. By creating the constant sense of urgency SVOD brands promote the instant-gratification and focus on promoting the quantity of their content. The results complement Matrix (2014) suggestion that SVOD services induce the fear of missing out (FOMO), the fear of being the only one that has not seen the trendy show and not being able to participate in social conversations. A part of how SVOD brands introduce themselves on Instagram is by presenting the enormous amount of content available and inducing binge-watching culture.

Trying to keep up with all the new releases and old classics consumes a lot of time, while not keeping up with it can be seen to produce FOMO, which possess some negative health outcomes, such as poor sleep hygiene or depression (Luca et al., 2020; Rogers & Barber, 2019). Arguably, SVOD brands captivate their Instagram users into a trap of watching more so that there is no time left for the competitors' content.

Second, the results have shown that all three brands are using Instagram to actively promote women. In the last years, feminism has received more attention in popular culture due to the feminist movements and popular culture producers who are embracing feminist ideas. Beyonce, a popular singer, known as a feminist, dedicated her whole album 'Lemonade' to feminism topic and female empowerment. Her 2014 MTV Awards performance transformed feminism into something that is desirable and trendy overnight (Diani, 2017). In 2015, singer Ariana Grande has publicly released a feminist statement in which she talks about double standards and gender discrimination issues, which has been shared more than 82,000 times and brought attention from other female celebrities (Grande, 2015; Lawson, 2015). Furthermore, female empowerment movements like 'Free the Nipple', that argues to stop female nipple censorship and bestseller books like 'Gone Girl' by Gillian Flynn take feminism into mainstream culture and everyday conversations (Brandbergh, 2015). The popular belief argues that social media often decreases women's self-esteem by promoting unrealistic expectations. However, the recent raise in female empowerment movements changed the view of social media as a powerful tool to spread the message (Householder, 2019). Carah and Shaul (2016) suggest that brands use Instagram to participate in the cultural events so they can be seen. Therefore, the SVOD services use Instagram to engage in female empowerment conversations in order to connect to the trending feminist topics and be seen by the female audience. However, all three SVOD services have been in a way involved with #MeToo, sexism or gender inequality controversies, yet Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video are lacking real action regarding these issues and are rather exploiting the topic for the brand promotion reasons.

Third, the analysis revealed that Hulu and Amazon Prime Video uses brand engagement strategies. Such strategies create a relationship between the followers and the brand (Martin & Todorov, 2010). The SVOD brands are achieving this by asking followers who is their favorite character or what is their opinion about a certain character in the show, as well as inviting to share emojis or tag their friends in relatable posts. Hence, such findings present how SVOD services are changing the established roles of seller and customer in

social media. Hulu and Amazon Prime Video talk to the followers as if they were friends, which comes in return as engagement that adds value to the brand. (Habibi et al., 2014).

Fourth, the findings suggest that Netflix and Amazon Prime Video are promoting lifestyle as a part of the brand identity. This is done by using practices like presenting teenagers lifestyle by attending high school activities and going on the first date, as well as promoting pastime activities like astrology. Lifestyle promotion identifies the brands aim to be relatable to the audience, be more like their viewers. As being relatable is one of the most desired qualities of a brand on social media (Leaver et al., 2020), for SVOD services it may arguably be the most essential one, since SVOD brands are selling entertainment their offerings should touch the interests of their target group, otherwise the viewers will switch to a more relatable SVOD service.

Fifth, the last commonality found between Netflix and Hulu is diversity promotion. Both brands actively promote the diversity of their offerings by creating special posts to promote diversity in the industry. Including more diversity into its offerings brings the interest of the minorities since they can relate to the actors and creators of the same background. Social media rise allowed for the emergence of conversations regarding diversity, such as #OscarsSoWhite (Molina-Guzmán, 2016;). Hence, SVOD brands listened to such conversation and acted upon what the audience wanted. Diversity promotion is not only presenting SVOD brands as socially responsible but also as listeners of the audience. However, it is difficult to understand if the brands are actually doing the most to ensure diversity on screen and off screen, since available information is limited. Diversity promotion may be rather used to benefit the brands than present the actual strategy.

5. Conclusion

SVOD services offer viewers a convenient way to watch thousands of hours of content from their own home at any time. Due to the growing revenue, the SVOD industry is growing quickly and even as new players are entering the market. Hence, the biggest SVOD services have to battle for viewers' attention and money in order to keep their positions in the market. To do so the brands are strengthening their brand identities. Being more memorable and recognizable improves the reliability and value of the company and its products (Budac & Baltador, 2013). A significant part of these brands' identity is being developed and created on social media (Martín-Quevedo, Fernández-Gómez & Segado-Boj, 2019). Therefore, the aim of this research was to understand how the major subscription video on demand services are using Instagram to create and connect with their brand identities.

The findings revealed that all three SVOD services use Instagram to create sense urgency and anticipation about their incoming and already available content. This finding indicates that Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video focus on being the leading entertainment producers by constantly producing new content based on the detailed market research and trends. Hence, the SVOD services identify as fast delivered and culturally relevant content producers. Unlike broadcasting television, which releases new content once or twice a week, SVOD services are releasing new original content and adding already released titles to their library on daily basis. Additionally, Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video use the content promoting urgency and anticipation to create a fear of missing out of the latest popular culture conversations and in this way presenting the service as a leading popular culture producer.

Moreover, Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video use Instagram to produce gender-equality and diversity messages. The brands are using these cultural topics to be a part of the popular culture conversations and to promote the brand's social responsibility. By promoting diversity in their content and empowering women, the SVOD brands present themselves as the industry change-makers, however, this identity does not match with their offline actions ensuring diversity and gender equality. Thus, the streaming services should use their power to initiate the action and provide more transparent about the steps they already take to provide diversity and gender equality in their organization.

Subscription video on demand brands use Instagram to connect with the viewers and engage them in brand conversations. This finding indicates the SVOD brands' focus on connecting people through their content. By engaging followers in conversation Netflix, Hulu

and Amazon Prime Video diminish geographical and cultural borders. It enables the development of an emotional relationship, which benefits both, the brands and the viewers. Moreover, the SVOD brands use lifestyle promotion to emphasize the casualness of the service. SVOD brands act as a friend, they follow the audience's interests and listen to their problems, in order to provide the content shaped to their needs. Hence, the SVOD brands are creating the feeling of closeness and belonging to a community. Sharing humorous content, such as inside jokes or memes, allows the viewers to share the joy and excitement about the show with other like-minded people, as well as it attracts people outside the brand community to join. The viewers are converted into the brand ambassadors who actively promote the service by creating and spreading the cultural meanings of the brand.

Even though Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video share a lot of commonalities in their use of Instagram to produce the brand identity, each brand possesses a unique way in creating the brand's identity. Netflix creates Instafame, a strategically created social media profile of microcelebrity in order to gain attention on Instagram (Marwick, 2015). The use of Netflix stars to continue conversations on social media presents the brand's authenticity and act as an advantage over its competitors. Instagram allows people to see these actors as regular people, follow their lives, which makes the viewers feel in a close relationship with the actors. By creating Instafame Netflix transforms the press tour experience to social media and feed the viewers hunger for extra details about their favorite actors.

The distinction of Hulu's brand identity on Instagram is the exclusivity and inclusivity of the brand. By owning a lot of content produced by different broadcasting televisions Hulu presents the brand as inclusive yet, Hulu tries to separate itself from the televisions by highlighting the content as exclusively available on Hulu. The emphases on owning a lot of content from broadcasting brands demonstrate Hulu's identity as a convenient way to watch cable television; all the popular broadcasting television shows available any time on Hulu.

Amazon Prime Video uses Instagram to highlight the quality of its content. Amazon Prime Video emphasizes the memorable characters and award-winning actors that are part of the brand. By choosing to promote outstanding characters and the cultural meanings surrounding them, Amazon Prime Video aims to increase the association with quality characters. The promotion of quality presents the brand's aim to be seen as a higher quality service, almost as a luxurious option out of the available SVOD services. However, the intended brand identity may not match the perceived brand image, since the brand offers a lot of content, which is not widely perceived as high quality. Hence, Amazon Prime Video

should reconsider its high-quality identity and embrace the not-so-perfect content, which may work as a unique selling point.

5.2.   Theoretical and societal implications

The study possesses academical relevance as it contributes to the lacking research of the SVOD services and their brand identities, as well as provides a ground for the future studies on SVOD brands and their use of Instagram. The research illustrates Lury (2015) brand as assemblage concept, which made it easier to understand the complicated assemblages of the SVOD brands. Brand identity and social media use are two expressive components make up the SVOD brands' (Canninford & Badje, 2016). The categories that emerged from the analysis revealed how Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video use Instagram to develop a brand identity. The brand identity concept is made of meanings that come from the features and benefits of the brand, which Park et al. (1986) separate into symbolic, functional and experiential. The results have provided a better understanding of the SVOD services' benefits. The SVOD brands are offering symbolic benefit by creating cultural relevance, such as diversity conversations, binge-watching, etc., functional benefit by providing the vast amount on content on a daily basis available any time and experiential benefit by providing fan experience online.

Moreover, the findings expand the understanding of social media use for brands. The study adds to Hjorth and Hinton (2019) grasp of social media as an expansion of our lives by presenting the cultural everyday conversations happening on Instagram. Then, the findings illustrate Gensler et al. (2013) idea that social media users' conversations can be used as a tool to build brand identity, which, as a result, illustrates Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2013) social media trialogue, the conversations between the SVOD brand and the followers, and between the customers, that benefits the SVOD brands by allowing to listen and understand the audience's needs, and customer as they can engage in fan conversations with like-minded people. Besides, the research explains how SVOD brands overcome some of Sheehan and Morrison (2009) described social media marketing challenges: (1) social media challenge by creating urgency and anticipation to raise the views of the content; (2) consumer-generated marketing challenge by engaging viewers in brand conversations; (3) engagement challenge by initiating conversations that are relevant in the culture.

Furthermore, the study aligns with and the previous research regarding the SVOD services as well as adds new insights in understanding their brand identities. The research

confirms Tryon (2015) findings that Netflix uses social media and its promotional strategies to naturalize new viewing behaviors, such as binge-watching. The study also illustrates Marwick's (2015) Instafame concept using Netflix actors' promotion. Moreover, the study aligns with Matrix (2014) suggestion that SVOD brands use the FOMO phenomenon to keep the viewers watching more and demonstrates how that is done through Instagram. Besides, the findings coincide with and complement Weitz (2017) work by explaining how SVOD brands use humorous content is to diminish geographical and cultural borders.

As for societal implications, this study allows gaining a better understanding of how SVOD services are changing people's streaming habits and how it connects with popular culture. The research provides an overview of how leading SVOD services make more and more people cancel their cable television subscription and switch to their service. Hence, this paper explains the way SVOD brands use Instagram to induce binge-watching and FOMO phenomena, which keep viewers watching more. Additionally, the research provides an understanding of how Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video create cultural meanings on their Instagram accounts and engage viewers in brand conversations, as well as demonstrate how SVOD brands use Instagram to be the leading popular culture producers.

The findings also provide useful insights for other brands that are using social media to develop brand identity. In designing their own identity, brands could use the SVOD brands as an example of cultural relevance creation. Moreover, it provides understandings concerning the use of Instagram for businesses.

5.3. Limitations and further research

This research as any other is not without limitations. One limitation of the study is that the analyzed Instagram posts were posted between February and March of 2020. Hence, the International Women's Day, celebrated annually on 8th of March, may have affected the content of the Instagram posts to be more female oriented. Unfortunately, the study was not big enough to analyze more Instagram posts in order to understand the influence of the International Women's Day on the content of the posts, thus for the future, it would be relevant to conduct longitudinal research to provide a better understanding of the effect that celebrations, holidays and other important days have on the SVOD brands social media content.

Another limitation of the study is that the market of streaming services is changing as new brands enter the market, such as Disney+, Apple TV+ and Quibi, hence the increasing

number of services may change the dynamics in the market. Therefore, the SVOD market is changing and so is the brand identities that these brands develop on social media, thus the future research could take investigate the brand identities of the new SVOD services and how those compare to brand identities of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime Video.

Moreover, this research has used a lot of non-academical references. This is due to the nature of the topic and the fact that academic research investigating SVOD services, their use of Instagram and their brand identities is missing. Hence, it would be advised to carry out more studies regarding this topic to provide a body to the lacking literature.

Despite a few limitations, the thesis has contributed to the lacking academic research of the SVOD brands and their use of Instagram to produce their brand identity and, hence, it could act as a ground for future research investigating other brands or other social media channels used to produce brand identity.

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Appendix A

1. Netflix coding tree

Selective codes	Axial codes	Clustered codes	Sample open codes
Active content promotion	Urgency and anticipation	New releases	• New season announcement • 25 minutes until the new show • Final season arrives • Series returns
		Content availability	• Movies from 2001 to 2010 on Netflix • Available on Netflix US
	Creating Instafame	Actors actively promoting content	• Actor inviting to watch the show • Series cast behind the scenes • Actress announcing the show
		Entertaining content with actors	• Actors share what's on their phones • Actor talks about his idols • Cast playing a game
		Character promotion	• Character in first and last episodes • Character in first and second movie • Rating characters • Introducing the character
		Cast promotion	• Introducing the cast • Cast photoshoot • Cast in first and last season • Cast hug
Advocacy promotion	Diversity & inclusion promotion	Promoting inclusion	• Actor of color playing a wizard • Transgender person • Gender neutral cast member
		Cultural diversity	• Discovering Indian culture

			• Actress trying Japanese food • Traditional Indian dance • African series
	Self-help promotion	Raising awareness	• Discussing mental health issues • Grieving experience • Actors discuss acne • Sharing mental health journey
		Promoting positivity	• Swipe to feel good • Man complimenting himself • Feel-good show
		Breaking stereotypes	• Actress wearing masculine clothes • Stop trying to fit in message • Don't be ordinary
	Female empowerment	Women inspiring other women	• Women supporting other women • Women that bring magic to the world • Actress embracing herself • Bold self-expressed actresses • Actress with blue hair • Actress sharing her story
		Inspiring female characters	• Female cheerleader • Female ice skater • Female spy • Female doctor • Female boss
Young adults' orientation	Teenage lifestyle promotion	School activities	• Cheerleading team • Homecoming party • Varsity jacket
		Teenager issues	• Teenagers fighting • Teens complaining about their parents • Wishing for a sister • Acne problems
		Male sexual objectification	• Attractive actor • Shirtless man • Actor sexy winking

			• Guy wearing his shirt unbuttoned
	Urban culture	• NGL (Not gonna lie) acronym • LMAO (Laughing my ass off) acronym • Showing middle finger • Same energy meme
	Interpersonal relationships promotion	Friendship	• Best friends' picture • Friends hugging • Friendship meme
		Romantic relationships	• Intimate conversation • Teenagers kissing • Girl flirting with a guy

2. Hulu coding tree

Selective codes	Axial codes	Clustered open codes	Sample open codes
The US orientation	The US culture promotion	Promoting the US culture	• Food that shapes the United States of America • The United States of America flag • History of the United States of America
		Famous Americans	• United States Secretary of State • Phyllis Schlafly
	African American culture promotion	African Americans in the film industry	• Black movie creators • Classic African American show
		Promoting African American culture	• Black people share their stories • Movies about black culture
Active women promotion	Female empowerment	Women support women	• Actress sending inspiring message • Tag a female change-maker • Women share her path to success
		Honoring women	• Favorite actresses

			• Complimenting woman's outfit • Women are queens
	Women in the filmmaking industry promotion	Women behind the scenes	• Women in production team • Female director on set • Female leading projects
		Inspiring Hulu actresses	• Award winning actresses • Famous cook • Former United States Secretary of State • Actresses that bring fire
Active content promotion	Emphasizing exclusivity and inclusivity	Promoting exclusivity	• Now on Hulu • Coming to Hulu • Watch it on Hulu • Exclusively on #FXHulu • Streams only on Hulu
		Promoting partnerships	• #FXonHulu • Stream it with HBO on Hulu • Now streaming with Cinemax on Hulu • FX original series
	Urgency and anticipation	Increasing urgency	• Only 4 days left • Shows leaving Hulu • Stream while you can • Stream it tonight
		Announcing new content	• New season coming • Premiere of third episode • New arrivals
	Brand engagement promotion	Engaging followers	• Give a caption to a picture • Drop a hands up emoji • Asking a question
		Promoting content consumption	• Grab some popcorn • Get comfortable and stream • Light up the screen

3. Amazon Prime Video coding tree

Selective codes	Axial codes	Clustered codes	Sample open codes
Female orientation	Active women promotion	Admiring actresses	• Giving a compliment • Showing love • Actresses are queens • Striving to match the actress
		Strong females	• Actress holding an award • Mother teaching the daughter • Girlfriend taking care of her boyfriend • Female team leader
	Promoting sexual behaviours	Male sexual objectification	• Shirtless actor • Hot priest • Muscular superhero • Sexy looking actor
		Sexual tension	• Craving for sex • Sexual tension between characters • Sex joke • Having a sexual kink
Lifestyle promotion	Pleasures promotion	Promoting bad habits	• Girl smoking a cigarette • Teenager smoking weed • Priest drinking alcoholic drink • Girl avoiding housework
		Promoting astrology	• Mercury in retrograde • Mercury affecting your life • Water signs watching Amazon Prime Video • Aries love attention meme
	Life advice	Advice	• You are a lot of things message • Do everything wrong
		Relatable messages	• 2020 is a bad year • Today is not a lovely day

			• Black African Women in the US
Active content promotion	Quality promotion	Talented actors	• Oscar winning actress • Actress in different characters • Comedy actors in serious roles
		Celebrities	• Famous supermodel • Famous rapper • Famous comedian
	Urgency & Anticipation	Content availability	• Reminding about available shows • 10 movies for the weekend • Available HBO shows
		New releases	• New stuff coming this month • New series arrives May 1 • The duo is back in March
	Brand engagement promotion	Promoting content consumption	• Watching hours of content • Binge-watching • Movie night
		Engaging followers	• Name your favorite character • Tag a friend • Share with your friends