"WTFock is going to happen next?"

A Qualitative Content Analysis Of WTFock in the Scope of VIER's Battle With Relevance

In The Flemish TV Landscape

Student Name: Björn Merckx
Student Number: 426023

Supervisor: Dr. Izabela Derda

Master Media & Business
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

The year is 2019 and technology is at an all-time peak: self-driving cars, smart cities and TV has been replaced by the Internet. Or has it? In the mid-2000's the post-network era commenced and preluded what could possibly become the most industry-altering era TV had seen since its appearance in the 1950s. More channels, more choices, no more ads and multiple screens. An era of choice and power to the consumers. But where do the broadcasters fit in this equation? These industry-altering occurrences eventually reached Flanders, with its surprisingly large media landscape. Media consumption habits changed and expectations were raised. In autumn of 2018, the commercial broadcaster VIER introduced WTFock to the Flemish youth as a secret, anonymous project, offering an unprecedented Flemish media production to its consumers. Given the timing and industry developments, the assumption was raised that VIER was attempting to regain and maintain relevancy amongst the Flemish youth, through its newest, internet-based web-series: WTFock. These aforementioned findings and state of the industry, led to the qualitative, content analysis of the following case: WTFock's first season. This research served the purpose to determine how VIER was attempting to regain this relevancy that it had seemed to have lost. Being qualitative in nature, this research conducted and treated the audio-visual content of the first season according to the process of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. After carefully having analyzed all 95 short, audio-visual clips of the first season of the web-series, seven themes emerged: *"Real-Time" Narration, Technology, Music, Intimacy, Relatable Topics and Settings, Polarizing Topics* and *Cultural Identity and Expression*. These results reaffirmed existing academic knowledge on the matter and garnered new insights accordingly. Whilst adapting a pre-existing (i.e. outside of the Flemish TV landscape) format and seamlessly incorporating current technological developments, WTFock's first season presents a truly Flemish product which raises relevant societal issues and addresses polarizing topics.

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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the divide between traditional and new media has never been bigger, yet, smaller at the same time. Much like Lotz worded in her book "We now disrupt this broadcast" (2018), the following could be said about what some would dare to refer to as the "dying" industry of broadcast:

> *Internet streaming didn't kill cable, rather, it revolutionized how we watch television*
> (p. 4).

In the last decade, the internet mogul Netflix took the online streaming industry by storm and helped to redefine media consumption amongst many audiences (Tryon, 2015). Finding its beginnings as a DVD subscription service, the company quickly realized that the internet would offer a tremendous advantage and pool of opportunities in the long run. In 2007 the company decided to shift its business plan and merely focus on online streaming, flipping and revolutionizing the industry (Rodriguez, 2017). Although revolutionizing the industry, and maintaining a strong and steady position, the traditional broadcasters and their transition to the online realm should not be dismissed.

Netflix and the on-demand streaming culture have reshaped TV landscapes on a global level (Cleveland & Bartsch, 2018), including Flanders (i.e. Dutch-speaking region in Belgium) (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018). The gradual transformation of the TV landscape includes not only alternative formats for the products that are being offered by broadcasters, production houses and other important players in the TV industry, yet also includes a change in the consumption demands and patterns of the end-consumers. In the latest annual report on media consumption in Flanders, provided by IMEC (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018) it can be noted that the younger portion of media consumers within Flanders, is being described as the "Disruptors". These "Disruptors" have been categorized as being individuals who are usually in their late teens and early twenties, with a profound preference for streaming services, rather than traditional broadcasting. Such a change in demands regarding the consumption of media products (i.e. what could traditionally be described as TV productions) combined with the emergence of alternative platforms and formats, creates a push-and-pull motion, ultimately reshaping an entire industry (Gerhardsen, 2016). A deeper insight into the "Disruptors" and how their profile can be related to similar consumer patterns outside of Flanders, will be provided in the theoretical framework.

Since 2016, the Flemish TV landscape has been slowly reshaped, with declining market shares for all three main Flemish broadcasting channels (i.e. EEN being a public

broadcaster, VTM and VIER being commercial broadcasters) (CIM, 2016, 2017, 2018). One of these channels, which holds the lowest market share of said three main broadcasting channels, is VIER. Throughout the last three years, the channel/broadcaster saw its market share decline from 7.7% to 7.28% (CIM, 2016, 2017, 2018). This decline in market share does not only indicate a decline in viewership but by definition, a decline in commercial turnover for the ads that are being run on the channel (Greiner & Sahm, 2018). In essence, in order for broadcasters to thrive and remain relevant, ad revenue and viewership are strongly correlated (Gomez-Barquero & Cardwell, 2015). Although ad revenue plays a crucial role, relevance amongst audiences forms the pivotal role. In order for broadcasters to generate the wanted numbers of viewership, and thus by extension, turnover in ad revenue, the viewer has to connect with the presented media products. In the case of Flanders, the younger portion of the audience is disconnecting itself from traditional media and has fully accepted and prioritized online streaming services and other emerging technologies (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018). Such a disconnect, could be considered one of the driving forces and simultaneously the embodiment of the changes that the TV landscape is undergoing. In such times of change, the players of the industry should carefully assess their next endeavors.

In October of 2018, VIER, in collaboration with the Belgian Telecom provider Telenet, released a new, online-series called WTFock. This online-series presents a group of high school students in Antwerp, and their daily adventures. Towards the release of the series (i.e. October 1st 2018) (https://www.wtfock.be/), VIER and Telenet purposely shied away from any publicity or official press releases, in order to maintain an element of mystery and surprise around the show (Dumon, 2018). Besides being riddled in mystery, the series follows an interesting and unique (to the Flemish TV landscape) format. Throughout the first season of the web series, viewers can note that a full "episode" is split up into several smaller chunks, consisting of about one to seven minutes each. At the end of the season, for the viewers who wish to watch the episodes in its entirety at once, the short snippets are then regrouped into 23-minute-long episodes. All episodes and short clips can be found back on WTFock's dedicated website: https://www.wtfock.be/episodes.

Moreover, the series is entirely online-based, combined with a real-time narration. Such a real-time narration, simply put, consists of a narrative being published "in real-time" whilst the scenes are happening (Andersen & Linkis, 2019). This does not entail a form of live-stream, but rather, episodes being uploaded at a similar time-frame as in the storyline of the show. In the case of WTFock, this means that when characters are performing certain activities such as going out for dinner, the fragment will be uploaded at that exact time (e.g.

dinner at 19:00, which means that an episode will air at 19:00). A more thorough elaboration of the "real-time" narration will be provided in the theoretical framework.

Although being a pioneer on the Flemish TV landscape, WTFock's revolutionizing format first appeared in the Norwegian, critically acclaimed, online-series Skam (Andersen & Linkis, 2019). Skam successfully combined current topics with a break-through format (i.e. online, real-time narration), running for three seasons from 2015 to 2017. Just like Skam's target audience consisted of teenagers and high-school goers, WTFock applies similar topics and narratives in order to attract a similar target audience (De Greef, 2018). This target audience perfectly matches the "Disruptor" profile created by IMEC and their yearly report (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018). Therefore, with the previously mentioned signs and evidence, one could argue that VIER and Telenet are attempting to remain relevant amongst the "Disruptors" and by definition, current and future media consumers (i.e. current age range between teens and twenties), by introducing revolutionary formats combined with relevant topics for the target audience. Given the tremendous success from Skam (i.e. the original web-series from Norway) in the Nordic countries (Redvall, 2018), it can be noted that replicating such a success could potentially increase viewership amongst the "Disruptors" for the Flemish broadcasting channel (i.e. VIER).

Based upon the introduction and relevance of the topic, the following research question was designed: "How is the Flemish TV broadcaster VIER attempting to remain relevant amongst youngsters in Flanders? A case study on the Flemish online series WTFock". By youngsters is meant the younger portion of the media consumers in Flanders, directly relating to the "Disruptor" profile which is mentioned prior into the introduction, and will be elaborated on in the theoretical framework. Moreover, much like the research question suggests, the aim is not to identify a quantifiable, perfected "formula" other broadcasters could apply in order to regain their relevancy in 2019. Yet, the research question serves the purpose to explore the tactics VIER is employing through their adaptation of Skam.

2. Theoretical Framework

Throughout the exploration and identification of a possible answer to the posed research question, it is crucial to acknowledge the adequate theoretical framework. To ensure a clear progression in the theory and previous research, this section of the proposal will be divided into sub-sections, accordingly.

2.1 Evolution of Broadcasting

First and foremost, in order to create the adequate context for the posed research question, it is crucial to identify the evolution of the general TV market and the possible trends it has undergone in the past, to lead to the present state of affairs.

According to Lotz (2018), there have been three main moments of adjustment in the TV/broadcasting sphere, ranging from the 1950s until the mid-2000s. The first period of adjustment occurred in the 1950s, also referred to as the "network era". Throughout this network era, it can be noted that a particular "magazine"-style of advertising was adopted by the broadcasters, ultimately allowing for the networks to gain control of their schedules from advertising agencies and sponsors. Throughout this period, competition was fairly slim, with the example of the U.S. housing three networks (i.e. NBC, CBS and ABC). Given that these three broadcasters held a monopoly on the industry in the U.S., little to no incentive was given to the channels to broadcast niche media products. With a country that was progressing into a post-war era, ABC, CBS and NBC combined with radio (i.e. the broadcasters' predecessor) played a significant role in the country's identity.

From the 1980s onwards, a second era appeared, otherwise referred to as the "multi-channel" era. In this particular era, it can be noted that the power of the networks shifted, in multiple ways. Not only did new technologies immerse (e.g. remote control, VCR and analog cable) which expanded the consumers' control and choice, the networks had to adjust to new government regulations. These regulations mainly aimed at relinquishing the power the networks held at the time (Lotz, 2014).

In the latest era, also referred to as the "post-network era", from the mid-2000s onwards, a detachment of the old practices can be noted. Throughout this era, which exceeds the publication date of Lotz's book in 2014, the biggest detachment from the previous eras can be noted in the competitive norms and operations of the industry. For this post-network era, five main driving forces were identified, which further defined the nature of the era: choice, control, convenience, customization and community. Choice and control mainly point to the fact that besides a larger variety being presented to the consumers (i.e. multi-channel

era), the viewers could also deliberately watch the media products whenever best fitted to their schedule. Convenience, additionally to referring to the time and location that viewers could consume the media products (i.e. video on demand aka VOD), also refers to the choice for customers so skip through ads, increasing their viewer experience. Lastly, customization and community refer to the sense that with the decentralization of the big three's (i.e. ABC, CBS & NBC) power, niche channels now had the ability to produce niche media products and cater to smaller, under-represented audiences (Lotz, 2010). The introduction of such niche productions and under-represented protagonists brought forth a shift in the representation of women especially, and attempted to defy long-standing stereotypes (Lotz, 2010). An elaboration on this matter will be provided in the "2.6 Archetypes and Stereotypes"-section of this theoretical framework.

Although the description and characterizations of the post-network holds the potential to paint a dark picture for the broadcasting networks' future, it should be seen as an opportunity for the networks (e.g. VIER) to rise to the occasion instead. By analyzing their consumers' profiles and their consumption patterns/choices and developing formats who make use of the new era's technology in the best way possible, the consumer's attention could be redirected to the broadcasting networks at once.

2.2 <u>TV Market in Flanders</u>

Up until 1989, the Flemish TV market was monopolized by the public broadcaster VRT (i.e. nowadays referred to as EEN). In 1989 however, the monopoly was broken after the introduction of the commercial broadcaster VTM. Due to the commercial aspect of VTM, the broadcaster quickly rose in market share, introducing entertaining commercials combined with a new era of popular programming (de Bens, 2007). As a reaction to their drop in market share, VRT (i.e. EEN) introduced similar strategies to VTM, introducing more "entertaining" productions. In 2004, VT4 (i.e. nowadays referred to as VIER), a Flemish project of the American-Swedish group SBS, made its appearance on the Flemish TV landscape. The appearance of VT4 on the Flemish TV landscape prompted a trend of launching niche stations, in order to compete with VT4 (i.e. VIER) and further diversify the Flemish TV landscape.

Besides breaking its monopoly in the late 80's, the Flemish TV landscape underwent other changes, both structural and in regards to format. On the one hand, the general public/viewers had to adapt to a drastic change in 2008 when the Flemish government decided upon an "analog switch-off", attempting to ban cable and re-structure the dissemination of TV

in Flanders (Verdegem, Hauttekeete & De Marez, 2009). The government, quite early on, realized and implemented a re-structuring of the infrastructure, pushing for a transition to digital-television. This period of transition allowed for market researchers to identify the differences in viewership in Flanders, high-lighting some of the traditional wishes and mindsets of the analog viewers. Generally speaking, some of the most avid analog viewers seemed to be badly informed about the government-induced transition to digital television, possibly leading to a negative sentiment towards the transition (Verdegem, Hauttekeete & De Marez, 2009). Moreover, besides a negative sentiment, the analog viewers expressed traditional needs and were regarded as conservative viewers: they wished to keep watching the same TV channels with the same TV/ media products. This finding created a polarizing situation between traditional viewers and viewers who were willing to embrace the changes in format. Throughout the period of transition, the Flemish government recognized prior mentioned "problem" and adapted their communication strategies in order to provide a sense of understanding to the general public, more specifically, the traditionally-oriented analog viewers.

On the other hand, a decade later, it can be noted that much like the post-network era described by Lotz (2014), the Flemish broadcasters attempted to adapt to the newly introduced technologies. These attempts included the introduction of several OTT (i.e. Over the Top Television) streaming services by some of the largest Telecom providers in Belgium (Flemish Regulator for the Media, 2017). Although these streaming services technically belong to the Telecom providers, the services offer platforms to the broadcasters to in turn offer their content to a broad audience. By branching out to other mediums, broadcasters allow more freedom to their viewers, who are no longer restricted to air-time. This notion ties in with the previous section on the overall evolution of the TV market.

2.3 <u>Media Consumption Profiles in Flanders</u>

It can be noted that media consumption in Flanders can no longer merely be categorized by demographics such as age and gender, but by consumption "profiles" based on their adoption of new trends and technologies (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018). The consumption profile that will be most important for this particular research, consists of the "Disruptor", mainly comprising the younger portion of the Flemish population, and characterized as the earliest adopters of new technologies. Moreover, this particular profile expresses a large interest towards the previously mentioned, new media consumption styles (e.g. streaming and on-

demand services), slowly but steadily disregarding the traditional broadcasting consumption. However, what about the other consumption profiles and tranches of the Flemish society? How do they experience media consumption within this region of Belgium, and most importantly, what sets them apart from the Disruptors?

In IMEC's 2017 report on media consumption in Flanders (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018), five media consumption profiles can be identified. Each profile contains characteristics/demographics that are unique to said profile, in an attempt to categorize the "attitude towards digital media" rather than the mere adoption thereof (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018). The report is being topped off by the "Disruptor", followed by the "Media Maniac". The "Media Maniac", although adopting a large set of available digital media much like the "Disruptor", has a slightly different attitude towards the matter. Besides including individuals who are on average clustered around their thirties, the "Media Maniac" comprises of a highly educated individual, with developed careers and tend to live together with their partners (with or without children). The first difference with the "Disruptor" consists of the blending of traditional media within their adoption of new/digital media consumption. A concrete example provided by the report (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018) consists of whilst the "Media Maniac" will be likely to consumer videos online, simultaneously they will be consuming traditional media products such as traditional live TV programming. The "Media Maniac" will also be no stranger to consuming online audio products such as podcasts, but shan't disregard traditional live radio products either. One could argue that where the "Disruptor" almost devaluates traditional media products, the "Media Maniac" enjoys a balanced consumption of traditional and new media products. Surprisingly, however, is the notion that these "Media Maniacs" find themselves to be the most dependent on their smartphones and other media devices, of all consumer profiles. Although both traditional media and new media are blended into their daily media consumption, digital media seems to take the upper hand and "invades" their lives.

Although the younger portion of the Flemish media consumers would argue that digital media is (becoming) the new norm, not all consumer profiles would agree. The following consumer profile that was identified by the IMEC's research (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018), consists of the "Augmented Traditionalist". As much as the "Media Maniac" would consider digital media to slowly be taking the upper hand, the "Augmented Traditionalist" considers traditional media to be the cornerstone of their daily media consumption. However, digital media is not disregarded yet stacked on top of traditional media consumption. The "Augmented Traditionalists" does not so much struggle with the

technology, but rather with themselves: how can digital media be added to their daily lives without becoming codependent of the medium?

The "Disruptors", "Media Maniacs" and "Augmented Traditionalists" comprised 58.4% of the Flemish media consumers in 2017 (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018). This means, simply put, that 58.4% of the Flemish media consumers actively incorporate new/digital media into their daily media consumption, to varying extents. However, what does this entail for the remainder of the Flemish media consumers?

One of the two remaining media consumption profiles, which falls outside of the active new/digital media adopters, can be categorized as the "Struggler" (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018). Much like the name suggests, this section of the Flemish media consumers tends to struggle with digital media. In a sense, many falling within this media consumer profile will express a willingness to consume new/digital media, however, lack a serious set of skills in order to develop new media consumption habits. Surprisingly, however, is the rise that IMEC noted from 2016 to 2017 in the "Struggler" population, coming from the last and final group, the "Resistor" (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018). The "Resistor", in general, could be categorized as highly reluctant to new/digital media and expresses a deep yearning for stability within their media consumption habits. Besides struggling to comprehend the technological advancements in the digital age, the "Resistor" oftentimes rejects new forms of media and finds themselves to be highly skeptical of anything that is deviant from what they grew up with, in terms of technological advancements in the media realm.

2.4 <u>Youngsters and Their Media Consumption Today</u>

After thoroughly describing and critically assessing the five media consumption profiles created by the IMEC and their yearly report on media consumption (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018), the scope of this research shall lie on the "Disruptors". In this section of the theoretical framework, an attempt will be made to identify what the "Disruptors" need from media nowadays, and how WTFock (and by extension, VIER) could meet these needs.

2.4.1 <u>When & Where?</u>

Earlier on, the "Disruptor" was briefly introduced by consulting IMEC's yearly report on media consumption in Flanders (Vanhaelewyn & Marez, 2018). In the previous section of this theoretical framework (i.e. 2.3 Media consumption profiles in Flanders), it was established that the consumer profiles were not particularly based on traditional demographics

such as age or gender, but rather on media consumption behavior and acceptance of emerging technologies (i.e. in regards to media consumption specifically). This finding of compartmentalizing media consumers based on media consumption behavior and acceptance of emerging technologies is being validated by Pérez's (2018) article on the abandonment of linear television by Millennials. According to the author, the Millennial's strongest trait is the sense of being connected to digital media from anywhere, at all times, and to share a strong link between user-generated content and their social networks. These findings, later on, lead to a clear and unilateral acceptance of emerging technologies amongst this section of the population, thus resulting in the Millennials and other generations that share the same distinctive traits, to be the earliest adopters of such technologies. These findings can directly be related to the "Disruptor" profile, meaning that albeit the "Disruptor" profile in Flanders generally comprises individuals in their twenties, individuals outside this age range who share the same distinctive traits, should also be included. This assumption will help to form the argument that although WTFock could be considered a web series directed at teenagers, the show's format and medium inherently targets the "Disruptors".

When it comes to what these "Disruptors" seek for in today's media landscape, academics are united in the argument that traditional broadcasting formats do not longer fit the cut (Pérez, 2018; Van Dijck & Poell, 2015; Turner, 2015). The linear model that used to be applied by broadcasters for decades, does not longer satisfy the "Disruptors", ever since fully adopting the "two-screens"-behavior, entailing the TV as a passive medium whilst they (i.e. "Disruptors") are actively engaging with/on their smartphones (Pérez, 2018). Besides passively consuming TV productions in the background, media consumers who fit the "Disruptor" profile, increasingly require more fragmented, personal and creative media products (Gould, 2014). This notion ties in with the era descriptions provided by Lotz (2014) and the clear demarcation of the "post-network" era versus its predecessors. Younger generations of media consumers no longer wish to adjust to pre-determined media-agendas, rather actively seek out personable media products that fit into their lifestyles and paces.

2.4.2   Personable and Sensitive Topics

Besides having certain wishes and needs regarding the time and place of the consumption of the media products, consumers who fit the "Disruptor" profile experience certain needs regarding the content of the products. Four years ago, when WTFock's predecessor SKAM hit the Norwegian market, the format had unprecedented success amongst the target audience of the show (i.e. Norwegian teenage girls) (Redvall, 2018). Besides

attracting immense traffic to the NRK 3 (i.e. Norwegian Youth's broadcaster) website which was translated into high numbers of viewership, the originally intended Norwegian show managed to become the most watched fictional content to date on the DBC (i.e. Danish Broadcasting Channel) (Redvall, 2018). This means that although being intended for Norwegian adolescent girls, SKAM managed to attract audiences from across the border, which did not per se comprehend the cultural nuances expressed in the web series. Due to SKAM's large success, WTFock being a format adaptation thereof and a current gap in academia on understanding what topics the European youth seek out in their media consumption, SKAM and its success will be used as a main point of reference for this section of the theoretical framework.

In an attempt to elaborate on the intrinsic success of SKAM, Danish head of the DR Fiction (i.e. important player on the Danish TV landscape) stated the following: "it is better to remain local, to become universal" (Pham, 2016; Redvall, 2018). This notion was strongly applied throughout the selection process of the content for SKAM. In order to identify and select the content that would resonate with its target audience, the creators of SKAM opted for the NABC method. This method, otherwise referred to as the Need-Approach-Benefit-Competition-model, was originally intended for the creation and diffusion of goods & services in other industries than the field of media production and dissemination (Redvall, 2018). Through the application of this model, several needs regarding the content of the show were identified early on and put into practice.

With the original format (i.e. SKAM) being released in 2015, certain topics and themes were mediatized, which would traditionally not receive large attention from broadcasters (Redvall, 2018). Whilst 'heavy' topics such as teenage pregnancy and the subsequent abortion thereof and cyberbullying were brought up into the plotlines, other more "mundane" topics such as anxiety and troubled relationships found their ways into the script as well. As the NABC method suggests, the Norwegian teenage girls had felt the need (i.e. **Need**-Approach-Benefit-Competition) to consume media products which cover exactly those topics. These "Needs" were identified by the team working on SKAM, after hundreds of hours of in-depth (qualitative) interviews were conducted amongst their target audience (Redvall, 2018). Although these "Needs" were identified three years ago and in a Norwegian context, studies suggest that the media-consumption patterns amongst European youth invites striking similarities (Pacheco, Silva, Brites, Henriques, & Damásio, 2017). Therefore, one could argue that, given the lack of knowledge on European youth's media

consumption (i.e. topic-wise), similar needs and reactions to the content of SKAM could occur amongst the Flemish "Disruptors".

Besides initially identifying what content SKAM would apply in its plotlines (Redvall, 2018), other important academic findings came up after the release and consumption of the web-series. Upon further investigation, it became evident that SKAM had garnered a large following, which organically formed an online community, allowing for the discussion and elaboration on the web-series' content (Lai, 2018). This online community around the web-series became a host for discussions on the trans-media elements applied by the show, interactions and commentary on the plotlines and a discussion of the sensitive topics brought up in the episodes. Especially the latter, proved to become the key attractive factor to the series, as academics even argued that "the series acted as a transitional object, allowing for its consumers to discuss and learn to cope with the societal challenges in a media-saturated society" (Krüger & Rustad, 2019). One of its strongest performing topics according to scholarly research on audience feedback, lies in the discussion and presentation of young females' challenges in a modern, Western society (Krüger & Rustad, 2019; Pacheco et. al, 2017; Redvall, 2018). The presence and success of this topic, reflects the findings Lotz (2010) identified in her work on "*Redesigning women: Television after the network era*".

Although the current academic body of work on the topic does not allow to identify exact and specific topics the Flemish youth expects in its media consumption, it did allow for the assumption to be made that the Flemish youth craves content that covers topics that they truly encounter in their daily lives, ranging from heavy taboo topics to the more mundane ones, with an inherently personable and relatable nature (Gould, 2014; Pacheco et. al, 2017; Redvall, 2019). That knowledge, combined with the current knowledge on SKAM, offers a sufficient context for the exploration and analysis of WTFock and the topics it approaches in its content.

2.5 Format

In this section of the theoretical framework, findings on the current and relevant academic knowledge will be provided regarding formatting in the scope of WTFock.

2.5.1 "Real-time" Narration

Throughout the identification of the "Disruptor's" needs regarding the formatting of web-series, IMEC's yearly report fails to pinpoint an exact answer (Vanhaelewyn & Marez,

2018). However, upon looking at WTFock and its predecessor SKAM, it becomes inherently clear that new and innovative formats have surfaced throughout the years. The format in question for this particular case (i.e. WTFock & SKAM), consists of a "real-time" narration (Andersen & Linkis, 2019). Such a narration consists of the following: "This form of serial publication, where a story is distributed in installments conterminously with the events being reported, is enabled by the Internet's possibilities for instantaneous transmission, and it appears in narratives on various platforms that rely on the web for content distribution" (Andersen & Linkis, 2019). For WTFock, this means that the shortened audio-visual clips of the show (as touched upon in the introduction of this proposal) are published when certain actions in the series happen (e.g. during dinner time). However, this narration does not consist of "live broadcasting", yet more of pre-constructed/edited episodes that are aired according to timelines within the storyline. This allows for consumers to not know when the next episodes will 'drop'. Moreover, given that the episode drops at uncertain times, yet remains on the website (unlike "live broadcasting), it allows for the consumer to watch the episode when most suited.

In retrospect to the previous sections of this theoretical framework, it can be noted that the "real-time" narration applied by WTFock, meets several important expectations of the "Disruptors". Not only is the format a unique and original case (in the Flemish TV landscape), due to the fact that the episodes remain on the website, the consumer is entitled to watch the episode whenever suits best. This ties in with the most important finding of the post-network era: consumers regaining power over the broadcasters.

2.5.2   Glocalization & Format Adaptation

Although globalization was the leading force in media since the 1950's up until the change into the new Millennium (Lule, 2017), in 2019 media consumers all across the globe seem to be craving a "local" element (Cherkashina & Matveey, 2015; Nieuwenhuis, 2018; Quail, 2015). Furthermore, given that WTFock is a Flemish adaptation of the Norwegian SKAM, "glocalization" seems to be an appropriate angle that contributes greatly to the theoretical framework.

Before further analyzing what format adaptation and "glocalization" exactly entail, it is important to further paint the picture for the Flemish media landscape. In the previous sections of this theoretical framework (i.e. "2.2 TV market in Flanders"), it has been argued that the Flemish TV landscape has undergone changes in terms of the post-network era, and breaking the monopoly that was set into place before the change of the Millennium. However,

a notion that has not yet been discussed, is the sense that Flemish production houses seem to invest large sums of money in local productions, with a diversified portfolio showcasing the Flemish identity (Depuydt & Haeck, 2019). Therefore, one could say that although having a relatively small media landscape, a multitude of Flemish original productions has surfaced throughout the years. Upon taking a closer look at the inner workings of the Flemish media landscape, a noteworthy media decree emerged (i.e. Media Decree Title II art 6): *"The programs contribute to the further development of the identity and diversity of the Flemish culture and of a democratic and tolerant society."* Said decree was written in 2009, and shared by the Belgian Official Gazette, regarding the distribution of Radio and Television in Flanders (Vlaamse Regulator Media, 2009). Upon further investigation of the decree, it became apparent that the public broadcaster VRT vowed to ensure that on a daily basis, programs between 18:00 and 23:00 being aired on their channels, would include 65 percent of Flemish productions. Interestingly enough, said decree and statement made by VRT, could be a way to attract the "Disruptors", who expressed wanting a more "personable" media product, which "hits closer to home".

In the introduction of this thesis, WTFock was introduced as a Flemish adaptation of the Norwegian web-series SKAM. Although "format adaptation" has been mentioned a few times throughout this thesis thus far, it seems appropriate to define what a format adaptation traditionally entails. Jangir (2018) gathered the following on the matter: "Moran states on television formats as, "a television format is that set of the invariable element in a program out of which the variable elements of an individual episode are produced" (Moran, 2004, p. 263). Therefore, a television format could be as a process through which a television industry adapts an 'engine' of a particular program into its national context making the apt modification." Simply put, SKAM possessed a successful format which was adapted to the Flemish market, by injecting it with the Flemish identity (i.e. such as stated in the previously solicited Media Decree).

Interestingly enough, injecting an international product with a local identity forms the core of the notion of "glocalization" (Wu, 2008). The notion of injecting international products/goods with a local identity can already be found back in the late 1990s (Kraidy, 1999). Although globalization was not a new notion yet certainly on the rise at the time (Masson, 2001), Kraidy (1999) criticized the notion and proposed a more inclusive alternative, referred to as hybridity. According to Kraidy (1999) this sense of hybridity, especially in the communication realm, entailed soliciting "native ethnography" as a means to "understand the articulation of local practices with global discourses" (Kraidy, 1999). In a

sense, the main point of critique against globalization, especially in terms of global communication trends and strategies, was the exclusive (i.e. opposite of inclusive) nature of the notion. Part of this argument contains the notion that globalization presents a homogenous and unified approach to different fields such as economic growth/expansion, world views and communication strategies, almost disregarding "native ethnography", local cultures and interpretations (Kraidy, 1999). Twenty years later, "glocalization" and native elements are more prevalent than ever in the Flemish media landscape, as Flemish production houses are investing more and more into local productions (Depuydt & Haeck, 2019). Such attempts, in the likes of WTFock, filled with local elements, could very possibly adhere to the wish of the "Disruptor" to have more personable, flexible and recognizable media products.

2.6 Archetypes & Stereotypes

As touched upon in the first section of this theoretical framework, the post-network era brought forth multiple changes within the TV industry, one of which being a diversification of the content presented by the broadcasting channels (Lotz, 2010). One of the main findings regarding the diversification and creation of niche content, had to do with gender representation. Below, gender-related archetypes and the difference with stereotypes will be explained, followed by the role archetypes play in modern-day media productions.

2.6.1   What Are Archetypes and Stereotypes?

Throughout the history of media productions, whether it be in films or TV shows, archetypes have played prevalent roles in a plethora of plots (Singhal, Cody, Rogers, & Sabido, 2003; Aran-Ramspott, Medina-Bravo, Rodrigo-Alsina & Munté Ramos, 2014). Archetypes, in essence, refer to what could be considered the prime example of a certain person or thing, since it incorporates all of its most important characteristics (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2016). To a certain extent, one could argue that archetypes could be confused for stereotypes. One strong example can be found in the traditional Spanish media landscape, where three main male archetypes can be identified, which oftentimes will be rotated throughout plotlines: the hero, the patriarch and the monster (Aran-Ramspott, Medina-Bravo, Rodrigo-Alsina & Munté Ramos, 2014). The reason why these three narratives are considered archetypes and not stereotypes, is the sense in which individuals can identify parts of themselves with each archetype, without a strong negative sentiment towards it. A stereotype, on the other hand, is a label based on a negative classification of an individual, in which their responses and

capabilities are limited (Snowden, 2002). By doing so, stereotypes inherently reproduce negative sentiments and prejudices.

2.6.2   The Role of Archetypes in Media Productions Today

It has been argued in academia that the usage and depiction of specific archetypes, can influence the psyche of consumers, to the extent that e.g. consumers will relate certain body types to romantic emotions (Aran-Ramspott et. al, 2014). However, in more recent times, Aran-Ramspott et. al's study (2014) has proven that the Catalan sitcom *Porca Misèria*, successfully incorporated romantically complex male narratives, which depicted what could be considered as the "ideal prototype of a partnership in the new, post-modern time". Such a development in the traditional male (Spanish) archetype indicates in a sense that archetypes can still form prevalent roles in a media product, yet, can evolve and stray further away from possible stereotypes. Moreover, in the post-network era, Lotz (2010) identified that whilst female-centric drama-series had a strong upraise in the U.S. (and later made its way to other Western civilizations), criticism surrounding these strong female characters, still raised criticism amongst viewers. In a sense, the line between archetype and stereotype became rather thin, allowing for debate and possible scrutiny. These nuances, combined with the "needs" expressed by the Norwegian teens during the creation of SKAM (e.g. Muslim-Norwegian girl expressing the desire to identify a positive Muslim female character which is nor oppressed nor feared) (Redvall, 2018), creates room for creativity and elaboration of traditional archetypes in future media productions. By creating personable, nuanced archetypes to which the Flemish youth can relate in a positive matter, WTFock could be fulfilling the needs of the "Disruptors". Throughout the qualitative analysis of WTFock's episodes, a closer look will be taken at the possible presence of archetypes and their possible ramifications.

3. Methodology

3.1 <u>Research Design</u>

After introducing the topic, presenting the theoretical framework and current state of knowledge on the topic, it is important to elaborate on the methodological aspect of the research. As the research question suggests, the aim of this study is to identify in what way(s) VIER is trying to remain relevant amongst the "Disruptors". It will be done through an analysis of their web series WTFock. However, during the introduction of this research, the assumption was made that this research will not be amounting to a quantifiable answer or perfected "formula" that could be implemented by other broadcasting stations within Flanders, yet, will be of an exploratory nature.

3.1.1   <u>Qualitative Content Analysis</u>

Given the nature and particular phrasing of the research question, the research shall be categorized as qualitative. Qualitative research aims at understanding bigger meanings, and therefore oftentimes looks at the "why's" and "how's", rather than quantifiable data (Babbie, 2015). Naturally, within the broad realm of qualitative research, several methods can be identified. However, due to the fact that this research will focus on the first season of the web-series WTFock, the method by choice consists of qualitative content analysis. Although this method could be considered rather flexible by nature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), distinctions can be made within the realm of qualitative content analysis, further guiding the angle and execution of the research. In the case of WTFock, the research entices multiple angles, allowing for a well-rounded, academic piece of work.

First and foremost, a "conventional" approach to qualitative content research was applied (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Such a conventional approach, is oftentimes applied to research for which existing theory is rather lacking. In such cases, the researcher describes a phenomenon to his/her fullest ability, mainly avoiding preconceived categories (Kondracki & Wellmann, 2002; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In the case of this particular research, it means that the categories or themes were identified in an inductive way, allowing for new insights to emerge, allowing for the creation of a possible answer to the posed research question.

In a second instance, it can also be argued that simultaneously whilst a conventional, inductive approach was applied, a "directed", deductive approach was applied as well. Such a directed approach is deductive in nature, due to the pre-existing theory or research it employs. In the case of this research, section 2 "Theoretical Framework" provides a rich theorization on the topic, injecting a deductive approach in the research (Mayring, 2000; Hsieh & Shannon,

2005). By providing such a theoretical framework, and therefore implementing a directed approach, the ultimate objective consists of validating or further extend the existing body of work, on a conceptual level (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). By soliciting existing theory, predictions can be made on the variables of interest or even the relationship among these variables. For the case of this research, a piece of work on several topics, ranging from specific formats within media productions, to profiles describing media viewership/consumption within Flanders, a rich theoretical backbone was provided. The presence of this theoretical framework allows for the research to be guided, yet does not eliminate the possibility for the emergence of new, non-predictable phenomena. This led to the following: a research with a theoretical framework and therefore deductive nature, whilst simultaneously allowing for an inductive, exploratory approach. The presented theory allowed for a certain interpretation and certain expectations towards the phenomena, whilst allowing for new phenomena and expansions on the current academic body of work on the topic.

3.1.2 Case Study Research

In academia, case studies are often a logical choice for students and researchers who wish to conduct a research on a smaller scale, focusing on for example, a single corporation, product or occurrence, or a small-scale comparison thereof. Throughout the pursuit of such a case study research, however, differentiating between a simply descriptive work or an active contribution to academia, plays a prevalent role (Rowley, 2002). It is therefore of utmost importance to consider when and how a case study research should be applied.

Despite certain criticism amongst academics, it is generally believed that case studies form the ideal medium for researches with an exploratory nature, as they allow the researcher to fully submerge him/herself into the chosen case (Rowley, 2002). Simply put, it has been argued that applying a case study approach seems well fitted for inductive researches where current academic knowledge is limited or inadequate (Eisenhardt, 1989). For the case of this thesis, as mentioned in the previous section of this methodological section, both an inductive and deductive approach were applied, due to the presence of certain academic knowledge, whilst gaps for improvement and expansion remain present. Moreover, what further helps classifying this research as a case study research, is the notion that:

> *A how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control.* (Yin, 1994, p. 9)

Regarding the execution of a case study, it follows a rather similar path to other research (i.e. forming an RQ, identifying units of analysis, linkage to theory etc.). However,

the main point of interest of a case study compared to other research methods, lies in the notion that the role of the researcher can primarily be boiled down to a commentator, who represents and interprets the chosen case, in order to make vital connections to previous academic bodies of work. For this particular study, theory was solicited whilst maintaining a critical lens, in order to digest and present possible validations of existing theory, and additions accordingly.

3.2 Sample

At the early stages of this research, it was unclear what would exactly become the chosen sample of this research. Although the decision had been made to conduct a case study on WTFock and how VIER would employ this web series to re-attract the "Disruptors", the web-series contained cross-media elements, meaning that multiple elements be could be researched within the case study. Upon further investigation, the decision was made to focus on the first season of the show, which comprised a rather large sample of short clips/episodes. Due to a lack of time and resources, other cross-media elements presented by the show had to be disregarded for this particular research. However, given the size of the chosen sample, a fruitful and rich study was ensured.

With WTFock being an online broadcasted (real-time) production, the sample of data that was gathered and interpreted was of an audio-visual nature. In order to create a comprehensive and well-rounded research project, the entire first season of the show (i.e. WTFock) was included within the sample. The first season aired from October 1st of 2018 until December 21st of 2018. This first season of the web-series comprised 95 short clips, ranging from one to seven minutes each (https://www.wtfock.be). At the end of each week of airing, the viewers were left with the option to either watch each short clip separately, or a compilation of that week's short clips. Each compilation at the end of the week amounts to 23 minutes and 59 seconds of audio-visual material (https://www.wtfock.be/episodes).

3.3 Operationalization

In a first instance, the data for this research was gathered from the official website of WTFock, www.wtfock.be. On said website, all 95 of the short clips were available for viewership, in the order that they had been released. Upon gathering the data, the audio-visual material was processed and categorized whilst applying both a conventional and directional

approach to qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Each of the 95 short clips of the first season of WTFock were carefully inspected on their audio-visual elements, which either debunked or complemented the existing literature on the topic (i.e. deductive). Moreover, throughout the extensive research, new insights and elements were also gathered, which greatly contributed to the topic (i.e. inductive). By applying both a conventional and directional approach, the sample was compartmentalized and analyzed, with the pursue to identify or reproduce themes, whilst applying open, axial and selective coding (Flick, 2018).

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

For this particular research project, the audio-visual elements of each single episode/ short clip were analyzed, in the pursue of recurring themes/codes and possible tools solicited by WTFock (as mentioned in section "real-time narrative" of the theoretical framework). By doing so, the aim was to attempt to answer the research question which investigated how VIER attempts to regain viewership amongst the Flemish youngsters (i.e. "Disruptors"). Throughout the categorization of data whilst applying such a qualitative content analysis, data or "codes" are compartmentalized in three phases: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Flick, 2018).

3.4.1 Open Coding

First and foremost, open coding can be seen as the first attempt of the researcher to split up the visual data, in a descriptive matter. The codes are rather vague and contain oftentimes multiple words or even a sentence. In the case of this particular research, the first round of open codes emerged when each of the 95 clips were treated on both their audio and visual elements. Simply put, this means that every short clip was analyzed separately on audio and visual elements, sometimes generating similarities and/or complementing one another. Throughout this initial round of open coding, general descriptions were given to the codes, resulting in longer sets of words or sentences being employed in order to describe the occurrence of a certain phenomenon (e.g.: "Luca flirts with Robbe"). Being the preliminary round, a multitude of open codes surfaced, many of which not holding a substantial meaning for the ultimate goal of the research. Therefore, throughout the progression of the research, the data was "cleaned", eliminating a set of "meaningless" (i.e. to this reseach) open codes (Flick, 2018).

3.4.2 Axial Coding

In the following round, axial coding was applied. Axial coding consists of forming the "axis" of any further coding (Smith & Firth, 2011). Throughout this phase, all existing open codes were dissembled and reassembled in more coherent descriptions/codes, allowing the researcher to gather a better understanding of the possible interconnected themes amongst the open codes. Like previously stated, this means that certain of the open codes were dropped, whilst others were refined in order for this "axis" to be generated, aiding the formation of the final selective codes. Given that the open codes embody more of a descriptive nature, the axial codes should be considered less descriptive, and carry a rather more over-arching meaning. Throughout the entirety of the research, cleaning the data remained crucial as it allowed for clearer perspectives and better understandings to be made of the themes at hand.

3.4.3 Selective Coding

Lastly, the final phase of this analysis consisted of the selective coding phase. During this phase, the remaining axial codes were gathered and inspected, in order to identify the final, over-arching themes of the collected data (Smith & Firth, 2018). These selective codes helped forming the foundation of the code-tree, ultimately relating all gathered open codes back to the larger, common themes. Moreover, these selective codes/themes allowed for connections to be drawn between the presented theory and the gathered data, in order to identify meaningful patterns and explanations, aiding the attempt to answer the posed research question. For the case of this research, seven final selective codes were formed, which will be presented and elaborated on in the appropriate results section of this thesis.

3.5 Validity & Reliability

Although validity and reliability tend to mainly be discussed in quantitative studies, qualitative studies can ensure the correct implementation thereof as well (Golafshani, 2003). For instance, to ensure the highest possible reliability (i.e. the notion that the researcher is truly researching data that is worth inquiring about) and validity (i.e. the notion that the research could be reproduced, and therefore truly measuring what is meant to be measured in the first place) (Golofshani, 2003), all gathered audio-visual data came from the source itself (i.e. WTFock). Moreover, all gathered data and examples were extensively documented (i.e.

codes, quotes, time stamps) in order for the study to be reproduced accordingly at any given time.

4. Results

In this section of the thesis, the empirical evidence and results of the qualitative, content analysis of the first season of WTFock will be presented.

Throughout the qualitative exploration and analysis (i.e. open-axial-selective coding) (Wicks, 2016) of the sample of short, audio-visual clips of the show, 7 selective codes emerged: (1) *real-time narrative,* (2) *technology, (3) music,* (4) *intimacy,* (5) *relatable topics,* (6)*polarizing topics* and (7) *cultural identity and expression.*

For each selective code (also referred to as theme), evidence will be provided which represent the underlying story of the data set (i.e. quotes and time stamps in the episodes/ short audio-visual clips), displaying the variety of context in which the selective code or theme can be placed, in order to elaborate on the different meanings. Lastly, it should be noted that all presented quotes in English, were translated from Flemish, by the author.

4.1 Real-time Narration

A first theme (i.e. selective code) that clearly manifested itself throughout the qualitative content analysis of the sample (i.e. the 95 short clips which make up the first season of WTFock), is that of *real-time narrative.* Early on in the thesis, it was indicated that WTFock, made use of a similar strategy (i.e. to SKAM) when it came to the formatting and distribution of the web-series. This strategy, as touched upon in the theoretical framework of this research, consists of airing the episodes at what would appear to the public to be "random" times throughout the day, giving the impression to the audience that the show is happening in a real-time sequence. However, this should not be confused with a "live-stream", since the episodes have been pre-filmed and edited, but simply mimicking the same time-stamp in real life, in its episode (e.g. the friends go to school in the morning around 8 AM, which leads to certain episodes being aired at that time, showing the friends going to school).

A clear visualization of this real-time narrative, can be found at the beginning of all 95 clips of the first season of WTFock. Each single short clip will start with the day of the week, followed by the exact time stamp. For example: "Monday 16:03", "Tuesday 16:09" or "Wednesday 08:22". These time stamps are indicated in the first three seconds of each episode, in large, yellow lettering which will take up the majority of the viewer's screen. In order to strengthen the perception of the viewer, these sequences are aired at the exact same time as is indicated at the beginning of the short clip. Moreover, a tactic that could be seen as building up the hype around the series, or leaving the viewers in the unknown, consists of

either multiple episodes being aired sporadically throughout one, eventful (i.e. in the plot of the show) day, or no short clips being aired for multiple days at a time. E.g.:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
"Friday 15:49" is shown on screen, in yellow lettering	-	Friday October 5th 15:49	00:01-00:03
"Friday 20:43" is shown on screen, in yellow lettering	-	Friday October 5th 20:43	00:01-00:03
"Friday 22:36" is shown on screen, in yellow lettering	-	Friday October 5th 22:36	00:01-00:03

Table 1: Examples of *"Real-Time" Narration*

This theme (i.e. selective code) manifested itself in one form only, yet continuously throughout the entire first season. This leads to the theme only consisting of one finding, being *time indication*. This axial code, consisted of 95 open codes, such as the ones exemplified in the previous paragraph (see Appendix A – Code Tree).

4.2 Technology

The second theme, unlike the first one, manifested itself in numerous forms throughout the first season of WTFock. In this sub-section, the different elements comprising the theme will be provided.

A first instance in which *technology* appears in WTFock, is at the ending of every (i.e. 95) short clip through the following finding:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
"Follow WTFock every day on www.wtfock.be" is shown on screen, in	-	All episodes	Last three seconds of each episode

yellow lettering			

Table 2: Examples of *Technology*

This example, is part of the axial code *referral to website* and as the axial code suggests, invites the viewers to go have a look at the official website of the web-series. The series, however, is only viewable within Belgian borders, as the content is blocked for other (i.e. foreign) geographical locations. Moreover, during the first season being aired on WTFock's official website, VIER was not broadcasting the show on its TV channel. Although the axial code comprises only one open code, the consistent presence thereof in all 95 short clips, signifies a high level of importance and re-occurrence throughout the web-series. Therefore, could be considered as important empirical evidence.

The second most recurring form in which the theme *technology* occurred consists of the seamless integration of technology in the content and plotlines of the show. Within *technology,* a first finding that could be identified consists of *social media* and appeared in different contexts throughout the short clips. A first example, can be found in the following open codes, as part of the finding *social media*:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Jana is on her bed, scrolling through Instagram	-	Friday October 5th 20:43	00:06-00:09
Jana looks at her pending friend request with Zoë on Facebook	-	Friday October 12th 11:47	00:30-01:33
Yasmina likes multiple pictures of Luka, through Jana's Instagram	-	Monday October 22nd 15:52	02:08-02:12

Table 3: Examples of *Social Media*

Instances like this one occurred regularly throughout the web-series, clearly demonstrating the integration of social media in today's youth and their daily activities.

Besides visually distinct elements such as the depiction of one of the characters scrolling through their social media feed, the characters also actively referred to social media jargon. Instances thereof can be found back in the following quotes:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Amber makes use of internet jargon	**Amber:** *"Hashtag thanks!"*	Wednesday October 17th 10:19	00:27-00:28
Yasmina refers to Instagram	**Yasmina:** *"Are you already following Luka on Insta?"*	Monday October 22nd 15:52	01:40-01:42
Amber refers to snapchat	**Amber:** *"I sent a Snapchat, topless!"*	Wednesday November 7th 12:17	00:51-00:43

Table 4: Examples of Internet Jargon within *Social Media*

To a certain extent, one could argue that the seamless integration of said internet jargon, reflects how today's Flemish youth might be evolving and re-shaping its vocabulary. although being prevalent throughout the series, the integration of today's technology is not particularly being highlighted to draw the attention of the audience, rather a reflection of society's acceptance and integration of technology in their daily lives. This finding, reflects the notion that was highlighted by Redvall's (2019) critical analysis on SKAM's success in Norway and Denmark. In essence, one could argue that WTFock reflects today's Flemish youth's use and integration of technology (i.e. smartphones and social media) into their daily lives. By meticulously researching their audience's needs (i.e. NABC method) (Redvall, 2018), the creators of WTFock might have found a realistic way to portray today's Flemish youth. Simply put, this means that the technological aspects of the series' content are blended into reality, to the extent that it can be assumed that it is almost unnoticeable for the "Disruptors".

The following, multi-layered theme, consists of *music.* Throughout the web-series, music seems to be continuously present, playing an important role with different implications, depending on the context.

4.3.1   <u>Setting the Mood</u>

A first context in which *music* can be placed is, *setting the mood (audio)*. This occurs throughout a plethora of short clips, indicating what could be argued as having a significant role in the portrayal and execution of the show.

Open code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
"Attention" by Charlie Puth starts playing	-	Thursday November 8th 12:32	01:40-02:11
"Freaky" by Die Antwoord starts playing	-	Friday November 9th 21:07	00:01-00:17
Sad/grimm music starts playing	-	Saturday November 10th 13:32	03:10-03:42s

Table 5: Examples of *Setting the Mood (Audio)*

Placed out of the context, the aforementioned findings do not immediately resonate with a particular meaning. However, when placed into the context of the particular short clip they occurred in, the chosen music sequence clearly indicates and possibly manipulates the sentiment that the viewers will encounter whilst consuming said short clip. For instance, for the case of the second finding (i.e. *"Freaky" by Die Antwoord starts playing),* the song used for this sequence is upbeat and covers the topic of being "freaky" and liking someone for being a "freak". In the case of the short clip it was placed in, the music fragment started playing right after the four girlfriends (i.e. Jana, Amber, Zoë and Luka) got ready for Luca's Halloween party. Given the context of Halloween, the song seemed quite fitting for that particular scene.

Throughout the entirety of the first season of the web-series, music is either used to set a particular tone in the short clips, or to refer to current popular culture/ chart topping hits. In

the first instance (i.e. setting the mood), WTFock adopts what could be seen as quite a common practice in the industry, trying to position certain moods or emotional responses amongst its audience (during the episodes). Throughout the past decades, popular TV shows such as Miami Vice, have made heavy use of certain music genres and specific songs, in order to distinguish themselves of other TV shows and create a certain mood around their show (Moschini, 2011). Moreover, within the marketing sphere, music has played a crucial role for a few decades in the sense that it allows for marketeers to shape and influence the sentiment of their target audiences, towards a certain product or service (Bruner, 1990). Lastly, in the early 2000's it could be noted that the rise of reality TV brought forth a heavy integration of current chart topping numbers and general popular culture, within the programming of the show (Holmes, 2004). Combining this knowledge, it comes as no surprise that WTFock decided to employ said strategies within the narration of the show.

4.3.2   References to Popular Culture

A second instance in which *music* plays a prevalent role, can be identified in the regular occurrence of *references to* both modern day and less time-sensitive *popular culture* (i.e. in the music realm). Below, a few appropriate examples (i.e. open codes and their respective quotes) will be provided, followed by an elaboration on the context thereof:

Open code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Moyo refers to Dr. Dre	**Moyo:** *"Can you play that one song by Dr. Dre?"*	Friday, October 12th 18:12	00:11-00:13
"God's plan" by Drake starts playing	-	Thursday November 29th 14:44	00:01-00:07
"Sad!" by XXXtentacion starts playing	-	Thursday November 29th 14:44	02:05-02:23

Table 6: Examples of *References to Popular Culture*

The first example provided, consists of Moyo (i.e. who is one of the male characters of the show) asking Jens (i.e. who is Jana's boyfriend on the show) to play *"that one song by Dr. Dre"*. This refers to the hip-hop artists Dr. Dre, who has been a well-known recording artist since 1984 (Biography, 2014).

The second example, is a subtle note to one of that year's (i.e. 2018) chart toping songs in Flanders, "God's plan" by Drake. The song entered the Flemish music charts on the 27th of January, and remained on the charts until July 7th of that year (Ultratop Belgïe, 2018).

The third song, following the same subtle note as the second example, is a reference to another chart toping song in Flanders, "Sad!" by XXXtentacion. The song entered the Flemish charts on the 24th of March, and remained there until the 28th of July of that year (Ultratop België, 2018).

Given that both episodes that contained the references to the chart topping songs both aired in November of that same year, one can argue that the production kept a close eye on the hit lists around the period of filming the web series. Especially considering that the short clips (i.e. episodes) had to be shot and edited, timing played a crucial role in the production process. The example of Dr. Drake however, is more of a general reference to popular culture, and not time-sensitive in this context.

Integrating such subtle references to (at the time) relevant popular culture, could potentially increase the ability to relate to the presented content, amongst the "Disruptors". Although one could argue that music taste is subject to change on an individual level, chart-topping "popular" songs could be seen as somewhat generalizable amongst a broader public, within the "Disruptors" profile.

4.4 Intimacy

The following theme, *intimacy*, contains multiple contexts in which it can be placed. In order to maintain a structured overview of the several contexts and meanings of the theme, the same strategy of sub-sections will be applied, such as for the previous theme.

4.4.1   Expression of Romantic Affection

The first and most recurring finding within the theme of *intimacy* consists of *expression of romantic affection*. This occurrence manifested itself throughout a multitude of short clips, exemplified by the following audio and visual evidence:

Open code	Episode	Time Stamp
Jana and Jens kiss and make up under a bridge in the city	Sunday, October 14th , 16:54	00:05-02:11

	Friday, October 19th, 12:38	00:22-00:23
Jens kisses Jana		
Jens and Jana start getting intimate	Saturday October 20th, 22:54	02:33-02:40

Table 7: Examples of *Expression of Romantic Affection*

Throughout these occurrences, it becomes rather evident that romantic affection and the expression thereof, forms a strong storyline throughout the plot of the web-series. The commonality between the selected examples, is the sense that they always involve the characters of Jana and Jens, who are involved in a romantic relationship throughout the majority of the first season of WTFock.

4.4.2   Sexualization

Besides being displayed in a romantically affective context, *intimacy* is also prevalent throughout the episodes in a much more sexualized manner. Therefore, *intimacy* also heavily comprises for example, the finding *flirting*. A few examples will now be provided:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Senne flirts with Zoë	**Senne:** *"Fuck, you're so sexy"*	Thursday December 13th 11:30	01:45-01:46
Luca flirts with Robbe	**Luca:** *"You're more than welcome. That way we can get to know one another a bit better. I know you wouldn't hand it to me, but I am very flexible."*	Wednesday October 17th 10:19	00:40-01:45
Amber flirts with Senne, who flirts back with sexual innuendo's	**Amber:** *"Nice!"* **Senne:** *"It's an own little concoction, I call it: sex in the woods."*	Friday October 26th 20:31	01:25-01:32

	Amber: *"Oh, that's totally my thing!"*		

Table 8: Examples of *Flirting*

Besides displaying multiple instances of verbal flirting, WTFock also heavily makes use of other approaches to sexualize the content of the short clips/ episodes. Another prevalent finding which occurs throughout the majority of the season, consists of *expression of sexual intimacy.* Below, examples of such instances will be provided:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Jens and Jana are engaging in intimate behavior	-	Thursday November 15th 19:12	02:54-03:12
Jens and Jana are engaging in intimate behavior	-	Thursday October 11th 17:50	00:04-00:27
Jens and Jana start getting intimate	-	Saturday October 20th 22:54	02:33-02:40

Table 9: Examples of *Expression of Sexual Intimacy*

Besides unambiguously sexualizing certain scenes such as the aforementioned examples, WTFock also makes use of a very relaxed approach towards sexual intimacy. This led to the following finding *casual approach towards sexual intimacy.* Below, examples of such instances will be provided:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Doctor expresses a relaxed approach towards sexual intercourse	… **Doctor:** *"Ah, your first time? How exciting!"* ...	Wednesday, October 31st 13:51	01:00-02:45
Luca encourages	**Luca:** *"Suck him*	Friday, October 26th	00:28-00:30

Amber to engage into sexual behavior	*completely dry, alright?!"*	21:51	

Table 10: Examples of *Casual Approach Towards Sexual Intimacy*

Throughout the end of the 20th century and the change of the Millennium, sex and media had become inseparable, not always garnering positive reactions (Duschinsky, 2012). Whether or not one rested on either side of the discussion (i.e. sexual liberation or sexualization as a social problem), one cannot argue the immense sexualization of media products from that era (and arguably to this day) (McNair, 2002). WTFock is no stranger to including sexualized scenes into their plotlines, but not per se with the polarizing approach that one would expect when putting the words "sex" and "web-series targeted at youngsters" within the same sentence.

WTFock represents two approaches when incorporating sexualized or intimate scenes into their content for the web series. The first approach consisted of portraying *romantic affection* amongst certain characters, romantic moments during which it becomes inherently clear that the characters are involved into a romantic relationship, and share many tender moments on screen. The second approach consists of a more "explicit" form of affection being showcased by the cast, referring to the act of sexual intercourse. However, actual explicit images are not shown throughout the season, ensuring that the imagery being showcased on screen from the cast remains age appropriate, as the cast members are supposed to embody 15 to 17 year old high school students.

Throughout the analysis of the sample it became evident that the screenwriters attempted to present a fully rounded portrayal of this particular generation of teenage high school students, not shying away to present the sexual exploration that may or may not occur throughout that age group.

4.5 Relatable Topics and Settings

Besides portraying the sexual exploration that comes along pubescent teenagers, WTFock ensured to include recognizable settings and topics to which the audience could relate, in a perspective that makes it feel as if the show was created not only for the audience it is targeting, but almost as if it was created by that same audience as well. The characters are oftentimes shown in places such as their high school, downtown, and parties etc., showcasing their daily lives. Given that the storylines are presented through the eyes of the teenage

characters only (i.e. no direct adult or parental perspective is involved, besides a few instances of Jana's mother), allows for the narrative to be told in a way that would be perceived far more sincere and realistic for the target audience.

Based on the previous introduction to the topic of this sub-section, the following theme that will be discussed, consists of *relatable topics and settings.* By relatable topics is meant, topics to which the target audience can mostly relate, and could be considered as more "mundane", every day topics/ plotlines. A breakdown of the theme, its findings and the appropriate examples will be provided accordingly.

4.5.1   High School

The first context or sub-section of *relatable topics and settings* consist of the omnipresent sub-topic of *high school*. Although being quite a broad topic, it contains examples that are continuously related to high school and high school students, and thus generally fit within that context (all existing within the realm of *relatable topics and settings)*. Below, examples (i.e. open codes) will be provided:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Amber, Jana, Luca and Zoë are eating their lunch outside, during the school lunch break	-	Thursday, November 8th 12:32	00:01-02:05
Jana, Zoë and Amber are talking in the hallway of their high school	-	Wednesday, November 14th 10:21	00:03-02:04
A fight breaks out amongst the group of girlfriends and another group of girls, at school	-	Monday, November 19th 08:12	01:35-01:58
The girls are sitting together, making	-	Thursday November 29th	00:03-02:18

		14:44	
their homework in school			

Table 11: Examples of *High School*

Given that the majority of the characters of the web-series (besides a few instances in which adults are portrayed) are high-school goers, it seems natural that the high school setting plays a recurring role. For a significant amount of the short clips, the five main characters (i.e. the five girlfriends) are portrayed engaging into daily activities that either revolve at or around high school.

4.5.2   Insecurities

Although the screenwriters of the web series played close attention to including recognizable settings that would resonate with the target consumers, particular relatable topics played a vital role throughout the plots of the first season as well. For instance, a topic that is largely covered by the female (and main) cast of the web series, consists of body image related insecurities, voiced by the character of Amber. Accordingly, the finding in question consists of *body image issues.* Below, examples (i.e. open codes) will be provided:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Amber talks about her body-related insecurities	**Amber:** *"I mean it was a quick picture, taken with bad lighting. And you could still see my love handles and my hip dips. I just can't seem to get rid of them."*	Thursday November 8th 12:32	00:37-00:45
Zoë and Amber talk about body positivity, not being pretty enough and eluding to eating	**Zoë:** *"You really have to be careful."* **Amber:** *"What do you even know about that?"*	Monday December 17th 09:20	01:44-02:09

disorders	**Zoë:** *"Enough."* **Amber:** *"Right, you regularly indulge on chocolate and pastries, and still look like a model."* **Zoë:** *"Me? Seriously? Amber, you're the model here. You're super, super pretty."* **Amber:** *"Yes, but not pretty enough."*		

Table 12: Examples of *Body Image Issues*

Throughout the first season, her (i.e. Amber) character depicts instances during which she becomes insecure of her changing body (i.e. puberty) and simultaneously commences her first romantic involvement. Although this could be considered a sensitive topic by some, and therefore be categorized as somewhat of a polarizing topic, due to the assumption that a large portion of the female youngsters will encounter similar feelings throughout their teenage years (Wilkins & Miller, 2017), one could still categorize it as being a relatable topic nonetheless.

4.6 Polarizing Topics

Although WTFock presents settings and situations throughout its first season to which many youngsters can relate and involve mundane, "safe" topics, the show does not shy back from a certain "shock" value. In essence, incorporating such elements invite opposing and sometimes extreme reactions or interpretations. Accordingly, the theme of *polarizing topics* emerged. Just like its predecessors in this section of the thesis, *polarizing topics* can be categorized as a multi-layered theme with several findings and their examples, which can be placed in different contexts.

4.6.1 Gender

Throughout the analysis of the 95 short clips that make up the first season of WTFock, it became inherently evident that gender plays a crucial role in the plotlines of the characters. At a first glance, *gender* would not seem as being a part of *polarizing topics*. However, upon further investigation, the following finding was identified: *gender roles and stereotypes.* This finding, simply put, is the accumulation of the empirical evidence gathered throughout the short clips of the web series. Below, examples will be provided accordingly:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Zoë schools Jana about gender roles and gender stereotypes	**Zoë:** *"What's wrong with women? Why do we always think we're the ones to be blamed for everything? And not wanting to bother anyone with our problems? Do you see men go through this? Do you think any of his friends dissed him for this? No, no, no, chances are they probably all loved it! Great job dude, another girl on your list. Keep going!"*	Thursday November 29th 08:23	00:35-01:25
Yasmina acknowledges and critically breaks down her friends into stereotypical	**Yasmina:** *"Seriously? Come on, just look around. Tomboy over there, the new chick with*	Friday October 19th 19:51	00:57-01:07

roles	*no friends, Zoë international. The only one with a bit of a name is you. Or, sorry, was you.”*		
Zoë schools amber about gender equality	**Zoë:** *“Second of all, it’s not because guys behave like idiots that we have to do the same. That has nothing, but like nothing at all to do with equal rights.”*	Monday November 5th 12:32	01:05-01:14
Zoë breaks down Senne’s fragile masculinity	**Zoë:** *“Wow, you’re such a cool dude.”* **Senne:** *“And you are?”* **Zoë:** *“What happened in your childhood that you are left behind with such a big inferiority complex? That your despicable ego finds it necessary to hurt a woman like Amber? What? Did your mom never tell you that your drawings looked nice? Or did your dad never give you hugs? Were they not there when you*	Thursday November 15th 19:12	02:01-02:51

	passed the swimming test for the 20 meters? Or wait, I know it. You didn't have any hair yet on your balls when you were in the third grade of high school! Or maybe eh, a girl from our kindergarten broke your heart? No? Well, whatever it may be, isn't it time that you get over it? That you start behaving like a human? And don't walk around like a fucking, living, breathing cliché."		

Table 13: Examples of *Gender Roles and Stereotypes*

When placed in context, the presented findings exemplify underlying social issues and strong stereotypical representations. Throughout the exploration of this finding within the theme of *polarizing topics*, it became evident rather quickly that especially Zoë and Yasmina seemed to be meta-critical of their position within society, either as a female which strived for gender-equality (i.e. Zoë) or as a self-aware female Muslim in Belgium (i.e. Yasmina). Their critical views and self-awareness will further be elaborated in the "social implications" section of this thesis.

4.6.2   Substance (Ab)Use

A second, large finding that is part of the *polarizing topics* theme, can be identified in the recurring presence of substance (ab)use in the short clips of the first season. One of the

findings that emerged throughout the critical analysis and assembly of the *polarizing topics* theme, consists of *alcohol consumption.* Below, examples will be provided of such instances in the web series, where alcohol consumption played a role, whether it be prevalent or in the background:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Jana pulls out a "Cara" Pils from under her bed (typical Belgian cheap beer) and starts drinking it	-	Friday October 5th 20:43	00:16-00:17
Moyo suggests to drink some shots	**Moyo:** *"Shots?"*	Friday October 12th 11:47	03:01-03:02
The girls talk about getting liquor for the party	**Amber:** *"Who could get us some liquor?"* **Jana:** *"I could bring one of my mom's bottles?"* **Luca:** *"I'll ask my cousin to get us two bottles of gin?"*	Wednesday October 24th 08:27	00:45-00:55

Table 14: Examples of *Alcohol Consumption*

The way In Ih the characters and their plotlines are set up, is meant to reproduce a setting in which the five girlfriends (i.e. Amber, Jana, Luca, Yasmina and Zoë) are in their fourth years of high school (i.e. according to the Flemish system) and therefore on average between 15 and 16 years old. Especially according to the timeline of the first season (i.e. October to December), this insinuates that the girls are in the first portion of their school year, creating the assumption that they are probably closer to being 15 years old, rather than 16 years old. According to the Belgian law at the time of writing this thesis (May 2019), the legal drinking age for the consumption of alcohol, excluding liquor, is 16 years old (Vlaanderen, 2013). This means that the chances are quite high that the web series portrays underage drinking. Although the minimum age remains rather low compared to other

European countries (e.g. the Netherlands has a minimum drinking age of 18 years old for all alcoholic beverages) and therefore could represent a less strict approach/sentiment to alcohol consumption amongst youngsters in Flanders, content like this could potentially spark the debate of certain media productions inciting youngsters to engage into illegal or what could be considered by some, "improper" behavior (Bushman, Gollwitzer & Cruz, 2015). Especially the quantity in which alcohol consumption is being showcased throughout the series, reflects some sort of "normalization" of said behavior, possibly further polarizing the sentiment of the end consumers of WTFock, on said topic.

Besides *alcohol consumption,* another finding came up within the context of substance (ab)use, which contributed to the theme of *polarizing topics: marijuana consumption.* Below, examples will be provided accordingly:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Jens admits to Jana that he smokes Marijuana	**Jens:** *"No, just weed."* **Jana:** *"Do you smoke marijuana?"*	Saturday November 10th 13:32	01:13-01:16
Jens schools Jana about the differences in drugs	**Jens:** *"You make it sound like it's some gross disease."* *...* **Jens:** *"It's not like I'm shooting heroin okay."* **Jana:** *"Yeah, well weed is as bad for you."* **Jens:** *"Not at all. Weed is a soft drug. Cocaine and heroin, those are hard drugs. You don't*	Saturday November 10th 13:32	01:17-01:35

	have to pretend like those two are similar."		
Jana and Jens talk about Marijuana	**Jens:** *"I just think it's funny how you call it cannabis."* **Jana:** *"I mean isn't that what it is?"* **Jens:** *"Only old people and politicians use that word."* **Jana:** *"Yeah well how do you refer to those drugs?"* **Jens:** *"Oh drugs, you always make it sound so bad."* **Jana:** *"Yeah well that's what it is you know, and bad for your health too."* **Jens:** *"Yeah well so is alcohol, especially when you have one too many drinks on a night out."*	Thursday November 15th 19:12	01:56-02:22
Robbe admits that him and Jens were high	**Robbe:** *"There were a few times that we were really high over that weekend. I still can't believe you did not catch on*	Tuesday December 18th 11:23	01:42-01:45

	to that.”		

Table 15: Examples of *Marijuana Consumption*

This polarizing topic (i.e. within the context of substance (ab)use), largely gains attention through Jens' plotline (i.e. Jana's boyfriend throughout the majority of the first season of WTFock). Throughout the middle of the first season, the topic of marijuana consumption becomes prevalent in the lives of Jens and Jana. At multiple occasions, the duo engages into dialogues, discussing Jen's marijuana consumption. Throughout these discourses, two opposing arguments are presented, reflecting the possible polarizing opinions of the outside world (i.e. consumers of the web series). On the one hand, Jana is shown expressing a clear disapproval of the matter, reproducing what could be argued as a conservative approach towards the topic. Jens, on the other hand, is shown expressing more of what could be argued as a "progressive" opinion, going as far as accusing Jana of demonizing Marijuana and the recreational consumption thereof. Put into context, such a dialogue performed by teenagers below the age of 18, creates quite the polarizing setting. However, given that this thesis rests on the analysis of the content of the show, and not on the receival and possible approval of the audience, it is unclear to identify the response of the end consumer.

4.6.3 LGBT

The final element which contributed to the *polarizing topics* theme, consists of the finding *reference to LGBT*. Throughout the web series, several instances portray references to LGBT-related matters, mostly in the form of certain characters questioning other characters' sexualities. Although in the context of Belgium, LGBT related matters are far less of a controversial nature, the topic remains polarizing in the sense that it invites for extremely varying opinions. Below, examples will be provided:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Jens mocks Robbe's song choice and calls it a "sissy" song, in Flemish slang	**Jens:** *“That sissy song?”* **Robbe:** *“Is that a gay song?”* **Jens:** *“It doesn’t get*	Thursday October 11th 20:37	00:33-00:35

	more gay than that?" **Robbe:** *"Doesn't he just sing about a girl though?"* **Jens:** *"George Michael and Freddy Mercury did that too you know."*		
Moyo suggests that Robbe is gay	**Moyo:** *"Then I'll keep on my underwear you know."* **Robbe:** *"Why?"* **Moyo:** *"I know how irresistible I am for your kind."* **Robbe:** *"What do you mean, my kind?"* **Moyo:** *"Yes?"* **Robbe:** *"You think I'm gay?"* **Moyo:** *"I don't think that."*	Friday October 12th 11:47	03:10-03:22
Amber makes insinutations about Zoë's sexuality	**Amber:** *"I thought you never had sex before? Or at least, not with guys?"*	Friday November 2nd 18:12	00:40-00:44

Table 16: Examples of *Reference to LGBT*

Throughout the first season of the web series, references are made to the LGBT community in two major instances, within the same context: questioning or eluding towards a character's sexual orientation. The first character of which the sexual orientation is questioned

is Robbe. In the plot of the web series, Robbe portrays the best friend of both Jana and Jens. The further the storyline progresses, the more question marks and straightforward assumptions are places on Robbe's sexual orientation. Throughout the first half of the season, the character of Moyo proceeds by mocking and eluding that Robbe could potentially be homosexual (as seen in the results section of this thesis). Such assumptions, oftentimes resulting in denial and "awkward" sentiments from Robbe, holds the potential to evoke reactions from the end consumer. The second instance during which sexual orientation is being thrown around loosely combined with certain assumptions, has to do with Zoë and her mysterious character. At multiple occasions, Amber's character makes assumptions about Zoë's character and eludes to the fact that she could be bisexual. However, without ever specifically mentioning the word "bisexual", the mystery remains around the topic, allowing yet once more for the audience to speculate and invite certain opinions and beliefs.

In retrospect, incorporating such storylines within the plot of a web series or TV show, is not revolutionary. Through the 21st century, TV shows such as GLEE have payed particular attention to a queer cast and characters, highlighting an LGBT-centric narrative (Sarkissian, 2014). However, the difference between WTFock and shows such as LGBT, lies in the fact that WTFock portrays several strong storylines, in which the sexual orientation of the character does not always play a prevalent role. Although the mystery around Robbe's sexual orientation attracts the attention of the other characters at quite an early stage of the show, Zoë's sexual orientation on the other hand, never truly plays an important role for her particular character development. Simply put, such a narrative holds the potential to portray some sort of attempt by the screenwriters to normalize the topic. Furthermore, offering two narratives (i.e. Robbe and Zoë) with opposing receival and discussion of a similar topic (i.e. LGBT), could be seen as an attempt to showcase the different sentiments on the topic amongst the Flemish youth (i.e. NABC method).

4.7 Cultural Identity and Expression

The final theme (i.e. selective code) that emerged through the analysis, and possibly one of the most prevalent ones throughout the entirety of the web series, consists of *cultural identity and expression.* Given its large presence throughout the short clips of the first season of WTFock, it is also one of the most multilayered themes of the show. Therefore, it seems only appropriate that this theme will contain the most sub-sections, out of the entire results section of this thesis.

The first and easiest cultural element to identify throughout the analysis of the web series, boils down to the use of language amongst the cast. Rather instantly, it becomes clear that the cast not only has a recognizable accent which occurs in the region around Antwerp, in Flanders, but also heavily relies on Flemish slang. Therefore, the first and most prevalent finding, within the *cultural identity and expression* theme, can be identified as *Flemish slang*. Below, examples will be provided accordingly:

Open Code	Original Quote	Translation	Episode	Time Stamp
Jana calls Luka names, relying heavily on Flemish slang	**Jana:** *"Omda gij een rondpoepende eikel zijt!"*	**Jana:** *"Because you're an asshole who sleeps around!"*	Tuesday November 27th 14:41	00:44-00:45
Jens and Jana have a discussion, with a lot of Flemish slang	**Jana:** *"Gast, ik heb u probere belle. Waarom reageert gij ni?"* **Jens:** *"Ik heb gewoon een platte batterij."* **Jana:** *"En gij kunt die thuis ni insteke?"*	**Jana:** *"Dude, I tried to call you. Why aren't you picking up?"* **Jens:** *"My battery's just dead."* **Jana:** *"And you can't charge it at home?"*	Tuesday October 2nd 19:24	02:14-02:20
Robbe thanks Jana, making use of Flemish slang	**Robbe:** *"Zalig da ik volgende week mee mag."* … **Robbe:** *"Superveel goesting in!"*	**Robbe:** *"Amazing that I can join next week."* … **Robbe:** *"I'm super excited*	Friday October 5th 15:49	00:14-00:22

		about it!”		

Table 17: Examples of *Flemish Slang*

In order to highlight the exact instances in which particular Flemish slang is utilized throughout the dialogues of the plot, the words have been highlighted in <mark>yellow.</mark>

As mentioned prior in this section, the first, immediate way in which culture manifested itself in WTFock, has to do with the language being used by the characters. From the first sequence of the show, the language being used undeniably refers to Flemish slang, in particular the accent and language use that could be identified in the region of Antwerp. In communication studies, language and culture, have an undeniable synergetic relationship, both influencing and shaping one another (Carey, 2008). Therefore, the assumption that language is culture, and culture is language has been accepted and applied for a significant amount within the discipline of communication (Boas, 1982; Goodenough, 1981; Kramsch & Widdowson, 1998).

Secondly, as discussed in the theorization of this thesis, WTFock can be categorized as a format adaptation of its original concept, SKAM. Format adaptation, in theory, is built around the assumption that a certain media product that might have been successful in one specific market or region, gets transformed in order to fit within a different market (Jangir, 2018). In order to do so successfully, a media product will be injected with the cultural elements of the intended market, ranging from language to recognizable settings, to other elements which represent the "localness" of that particular adaptation. In the case of WTFock, the initial demarcation which reflects the "localness" of the web series (in comparison to its original, SKAM), consists of the language and accents employed by the characters.

4.7.2   Products, Services and Practices

A second omniprevalent element which occurs within the theme of *cultural identity and expression*, are the Belgian elements that occur repeatedly throughout the first season of WTFock. The second finding within the *cultural identity and expression* theme, is that of *typical Belgian product or service*. Below, examples will be provided accordingly:

Open Code	Original Quote	Translation	Episode	Time Stamp

Robbe is drinking Jupiler	-	-	Friday December 7th 21:42	01:21- 01:23
Jens takes out a "Cara pils" for himself and Robbe and Jana	-	-	Monday October 1st 16:03	01:00- 01:02
Luca employs Flemish slang to refer to Belgian breakfast pastries	**Luca:** *"Mijn persoonlijke favoriet: het verkope van* <mark>*koffiekoeke*</mark>*."*	**Luca:** *"My personal favourite: selling breakfast pastries."*	Monday October 22nd 15:52	00:38- 00:41
Jana's mom refers to Smartschool	**Mom:** *"Ik heb nekeer op smartschool gekeke…"*	**Mom:** *"I had a look around on Smartschool…"*	Thursday November 1st 15:52	00:29- 00:32

Table 18: Examples of *Typical Belgian Product or Service*

When looking at the empirical evidence presented in the table above, the first example (i.e. *"Jupiler"*) consists of a typical Belgian lager beer, which is also available outside of Belgium for purchase. However, the brand is the most popular in its country of origin with a market share of 55 percent ("Verdwijnt Jupiler van de makt?", 2018). The second example (i.e. *"Cara pils"*), is also a famous lager beer in Belgium. However, the brand is mainly known for being very inexpensive and not particularly high quality, rather popular among students and young adults who have a stronger affinity for quantity rather than quality (Staelens, 2018). The third example (i.e. "*koffiekoeke")*, plays a detrimental role of every Belgian's traditional Sunday morning breakfast. Although these pastries are available all year around, on a daily basis, the majority of the Belgians will traditionally purchase said pastries to be consumed during the weekend with their families. The last example (i.e. *"Smartschool"*) refers to the famous school portal that was introduced and standardized in Flanders in the mid 2000's (Wikipedia, 2017). The recurrence of such products and services (e.g. Jupiler, Cara etc.) reinforces the setting in which the series takes place, namely being a Flemish city within Belgium. The way in which the elements are shown however, do not make it detrimental to the viewer to be particularly Flemish in order to understand the

plotlines, yet, subtly injects a sense of "Flemish-ness" into the identity of the adaptation (i.e. WTFock).

Besides product and service related cultural elements, common practices are also widely (and oftentimes subtly) showcased throughout the short clips of the first season of WTFock. The occurrence of these elements led to the following finding: *common Belgian practice.* Below, examples will be provided accordingly:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Jana refers to a common Belgian practice, when students get a day off because of the teachers attending seminars	**Jana:** *"We've got the day off because of the teachers' seminars on Friday, remember?"*	Sunday October 7th 11:43	00:55-00:59
Students are shown wearing their youth movement uniform	-	Friday October 19th 12:38	00:01-00:07
Zoë inquires about the "youth movement day", as she does not know what it is	**Zoë:** *"What's actually going on, with all these shirts and stuff?"* **Jana:** *"Oh, that's for the youth movement day. Didn't you have that in Oslo?"* **Zoë:** *"Nope."*	Wednesday October 19th 12:38	00:47-00:56
Luca talks about how she prepared her shoe for Sinterklaas	**Luca:** *"He's already been set up."* **Yasmina:** *"What has been set up?"*	Thursday November 29th 08:23	00:02-00:06

	Luca: *"My shoe."*		
	Yasmina: *"Do you still celebrate Sinterklaas?"*		

Table 19: Examples of *Common Belgian Practice*

Again, although instances may occur in which the viewers, much like Zoë's character, do not always comprehend certain Belgian practices, this does not jeopardize their abilities to watch the series as a whole. Where the incorporation of such elements may increase the sense of relatability amongst the Belgian viewers, it may go unnoticed by non-Belgian viewers.

4.7.3 Recognizable Scenery

Although one could argue that recognizable scenery should not be categorized as a "cultural expression", its presence and "recognizable" aspect, contributes to the Belgian/Flemish identity that is injected in WTFock's first season. Therefore, the following finding was identified: *recognizable scenery.* Below, examples will be provided accordingly:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
A view is shown of the "Mas"	-	Friday December 7th 20:43	00:01-00:02
Scenery from the Belgian Ardennes	-	Friday October 12th 11:47	00:01-00:07
All four friends arrive at the train station "Antwerpen-Berchem"	-	Sunday October 14th 16:33	00:07-00:09
Jana and her mother are shopping in the city center of Antwerp	-	Wednesday October 10th 14:27	00:01-00:03

Table 20: Examples of *Recognizable Scenery*

Throughout the series, in some instances (e.g. open code two "scenery from the Belgian Ardennes") scenery references are made on a broader, national level. However, for the majority of the cases, references are mostly made to recognizable elements from the city of Antwerp. Since WTFock focuses on high school students in Antwerp, it seems logical that the majority of their daily activities revolve around that city.

4.7.4   Belgian Popular Culture

The last example of evidence which contributes to the theme of *cultural identity and expression*, consists of the finding *Belgian artist.* This finding, much like its description suggests, refers to the presence or showcasing of Belgian artists. The two most recognizable instances (i.e. examples) comprise of audio clips of an up and coming Belgian (female) singer, Angèle. Below, the two examples and their context will be provided accordingly:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
"La Thune" by Angèle starts playing	-	Friday November 2nd 18:12	00:01-00:06
"La Loie de Murphie" by Angèle starts playing	-	Monday October 8th 10:16	01:42-01:53

Table 21: Examples of *Belgian Artist*

Besides contributing to the Belgian identity that has been injected throughout the first season of WTFock, incorporating an artist with such relevance within the Belgian music industry (Blindelle, 2018), reflects a clear understanding of the relevant popular culture within the Belgian media/music landscape.

4.7.5   Cultural Differences

Although WTFock includes a multitude of references to the traditionally Belgian or Flemish identity, culturally "foreign" elements also find their ways into the short clips. By this is meant, elements that would traditionally not occur within the Belgian or Flemish "culture", yet, through (im)migration found their way into the modern day Belgian/Flemish society. This notion led to the following finding: *cultural differences.* Below, examples will be provided accordingly:

Open Code	Quote	Episode	Time Stamp
Yasmina and Luca talk about their cultural differences	**Luca:** *"So you don't celebrate Sinterklaas?"* **Yasmina:** *"No we don't celebrate that."*	Thursday November 29th 08:23	00:10-00:12
Yasmina is wearing her Hijab	-	Saturday December 8th 10:12	00:12-00:15
Yasmina refers to herself as the biggest loser, as she is a female muslim in Belgium	**Yasmina:** *"Me, a female Muslim in Belgium? I'm the biggest loser of them all."*	Friday October 19th 19:51	01:33-01:35
Amber makes a culturally insensitive comment to Yasmina	**Amber:** *"You're entire family would go after her if that would be the case."*	Friday November 23rd 12:22	03:21-03:23

Table 22: Examples of *Cultural Differences*

For the majority of the examples where cultural differences are pointed out in certain short clips/ episodes, Yasmina seems to be at the center. Being a female, Muslim in a country that predominantly and historically had a Christian influence, can form certain challenges and highlight certain critical differences in cultural identity and expression. For example, at multiple instances, Yasmina expresses not fully understanding how "they" (i.e. her non-Muslim friends) approach certain situations. Moreover, in many cases when for example, her non-Muslim friends enjoy alcoholic beverages, Yasmina abstains from doing so. Such smaller instances, highlight the cultural differences in more of what could be considered being an objective way, without alienating Yasmina based on her religious identity and beliefs. What further differentiates Yasmina's character from other portrayals of Muslim individuals in Western (social) media productions, is the sense of self-awareness and self-reflection that Yasmina brings forth (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2018). Not only is Yasmina self-aware in the sense that she is different than her non-Muslim friends, this sense of self-awareness includes

the realization that her presence may or may not always be tolerated in Belgium, possibly reflecting certain political and cultural beliefs present in Flanders (and Belgium). Ultimately, as mentioned before in this section of the thesis, these findings simply reflect the content of the web series, and not necessarily the reception thereof by the end-consumers. Whether the sentiments expressed within the content of the show are reciprocated by the end consumers, cannot be guaranteed nor argued. However, given that the previous academic research on SKAM presented the finding that certain, in-depth tactics were applied in order to understand the audience (NABC method), and the fact that WTFock is a format adaptation of SKAM (Jangir, 2018), it seems rather acceptable that the same strategy was applied to WTFock. Therefore, incorporating a self-aware, young, female Muslim into the cast and characters of the show, could have been a conscious decision to normalize and represent the growing Muslim community in Belgium (Kettani, 2010).

5. Conclusion & Discussion

In this final section, concluding thoughts and an appropriate discussion will be presented, reflecting on the presented work in this thesis. First, the purpose of the research will be reiterated, followed by the theoretical and social implications it holds. Lastly, the limitations and recommendations for future research will be presented and elaborated upon.

5.1 Purpose of the Research

In order to appropriately reflect on academic work, providing a reiteration of the thesis seems more than appropriate. In this thesis "WTFock is going to happen next?", a qualitative content analysis of WTFock was presented, in the scope of VIER's Battle with relevance in the Flemish TV landscape. The research was driven and framed by the following research question: "How is the Flemish TV broadcaster VIER attempting to remain relevant amongst youngsters in Flanders? A case study on the Flemish online series WTFock". As the phrasing of the question indicates, this research was of a qualitative nature, providing a rich inductive whilst simultaneously deductive research on the audio-visual content presented in the first season of the web-series WTFock.

Throughout the theorization, it became inherently evident that although relevant academic work and their sources were present regarding several aspects of the topic (i.e. the deductive nature of the research), many aspects were not specifically covered, allowing for exploration and the discovery of new elements (i.e. inductive nature of the research). Moreover, besides sharing traits from both inductive and deductive research, this thesis was framed and executed as a case study. The main ways in which the case study aspect manifested itself throughout this research, was in the sense that the researcher was fully emerged into the topic, dissecting every short clips of the first season with a theoretical framework and an attempt to remain as unbiased as possible. Moreover, the findings and gathered data were presented with a critical lens, attempting to capture the relevant and nuanced implications, on both a theoretical and social level. In order to analyze and curate the data in the best way possible, all the presented audio-visual material was categorized according to open-axial-selective coding, allowing for themes to emerge. Said themes were both a confirmation and expansion on the existing academic literature on the topics presented in the theoretical framework.

Ultimately, the purpose of this research was to understand how the Flemish commercial broadcaster VIER fights its battle with relevance in a rapidly changing Flemish

TV landscape, through projects such as WTFock. With a progressively "disconnecting", younger audience which found its way easier to Netlfix and the internet than to their TV set, VIER had to start exploring into other ventures besides what they were familiar with up until recently (i.e. traditional TV productions, broadcasted on their channel). In 2015, SKAM hit the Norwegian market, and soon became an international sensation, spreading it seeds to Denmark and far beyond. The series was solely online-based, with an inventive format (i.e. real-time narrative). Soon, the format was sold to foreign countries within Europe, resulting in 2018's WTFock reaching the Flemish market. Given that WTFock is a Flemish adaptation of the Norwegian SKAM, the general format and "engine" which drove the success of SKAM were placed into WTFock, whilst simultaneously being injected with the Flemish identity. The presence of this Flemish identity, combined with a technology-driven format and the discussion of difficult topics, resulted in a product that could be considered unique yet relatable to its audience. Given that the aim of this research was to identify how VIER attempts to remain relevant through WTFock, and not to identify whether WTFock was successful in its own respective domain, success and reception by the audience were not present throughout the analysis and will not be discussed in these concluding thoughts.

Throughout the qualitative analysis of the first season of WTFock, several tactics were employed and a multitude of topics were covered. The first and most prevalent element throughout all 95 short clips of the first season of WTFock, was the real-time narrative aspect. Every clip was prefaced by a date and time indication, which matched with the current date and time that the clip was released. This tactic, as discussed thoroughly in the theoretical framework of this thesis, was set into place in order to mimic the specific day and time of the year, including the appropriate meteorological elements (i.e. weather and sunrise/-set), in order to ensure the audience would believe the content of the clips was happening in real life, at that moment. The second prevalent element was the seamless integration of technology within the web-series. Elements such as smartphones, modern-day apps and internet-jargon were integrated into the plotlines, without particularly drawing attention to it. These technological aspects were blended into reality, to the extent that it could be assumed that the "Disruptors" would not particularly notice these elements as to be "striking" or worth noting. The third element which was continuously present throughout the entirety of the first season, consists of music and the several roles it played. On the one hand, the music sequences played during the intro, throughout the clip or during the outro, oftentimes were meant to set a particular mood, which matched with the content of that clip's plot. On the other hand, the

music sequences played during certain clips were cultural nods to the Flemish/Belgian identity, since they were musical numbers from relevant Belgian artists.

Besides continuous tactics and elements, WTFock employed other, more complex element throughout its first season. The first one of these elements, consisted of the recurring theme of intimacy, and intimate scenes between some of the characters. In what can only be assumed to be an attempt to represent the different aspects of a pubescent teenager's life in Flanders, scenes in which the teens explore their intimate sides were not rare or occasional. During multiple instances, characters are shown engaging in either tender or affectionate moments, or engaging in more explicit intimate activities. However, it should be noted that although certain short clips included sexualized scenes, these scenes were not the main driving force of those particular plotlines. Besides showcasing intimacy, WTFock included both relatable and polarizing topics within its first season, ensuring what can be argued to be multi-dimensional and well-rounded plotlines. Examples of such topics range from relatable high-school-related activities to polarizing discussions on the use of Marijuana. It should be noted that albeit covering topics that hold the potential to garner polarized opinions amongst the end-consumers of the web-series, the characters within the show reflect similar polarized opinions. Upon the discussion of Marijuana consumption especially, different perspectives and opinions towards the matter are presented. Lastly, it is worth noting that much like it was widely anticipated and discussed throughout this thesis, WTFock was undoubtedly injected with the Flemish identity. From the language that the characters used to the products and services they used to the places the characters would be going, subtle and not so subtle hints to Flanders (i.e. and Belgium by extension) were omnipresent.

The accumulation of the aforementioned findings, led to the conclusion that VIER presented a multi-layered, unique yet relatable product to its audience. Whether this product perfectly catered to the "Disruptors" and holds the potential to allow VIER to regain viewership and relevancy in the Flemish TV landscape, cannot be guaranteed. However, it can be noted that this project explores new territories within the Flemish TV landscape, adapting to and further pushing the changes that the TV industry (inside and outside of Flanders) has undergone, and will continue to undergo for the foreseeable future.

5.2 <u>Theoretical Implications</u>

During the analysis of the WTFock's first season and the critical reflection thereof through the presented theoretical framework, it became evident that the analysis held several

theoretical implications. First and foremost, during several instances, theories and academic findings were reaffirmed. Instances thereof can be found in findings such as music playing a prevalent role in setting a certain ambience or manipulating the audience's sentiments towards certain happenings within the short clips. Another practice that reaffirmed an existing academic finding, was that of the real-time narrative, and the way in which it mimics real-life times of the day and dates of the year. Lastly, the third and final clearly identifiable example of theory being reaffirmed throughout this research, consists of the "glocal" elements that are applied through format adaptation. Just like other format adaptations, WTFock was made up out of the engine of the original format (i.e. SKAM), injected with local elements.

Besides reaffirming theories and their implications to real-life examples, WTFock managed to present content which holds the potential to contribute to academia, where some of the current knowledge could be lacking. Particularly in regards to the topics that were discussed during the first season of the web-series, new possible insights into the wishes and needs of the Flemish youth were offered. From sensitive and polarizing topics, to more casual and relatable topics, WTFock did not shy away from conflicting and complex conversations. As part of a possible suggestion to future research, it could be insightful to interview the end-consumers of the web-series, in order to identify the reception of said topics amongst the audience.

5.3 Social Implications

Although WTFock contributed to and held several implications to the theoretical/academic realm, the web-series presented even more social implications. From the discussion of Marijuana consumption, to LGBT-related assumptions to teen-pregnancy, WTFock opens up multiple debates, inviting opposing opinions and reactions from the audience. Whether this could be considered as a reflection of the current Flemish youth and the topic that preoccupies it, cannot be guaranteed. However, it can be argued that it reflects certain ongoing debates in the Western world.

Early on in the theorization of this thesis, nodes were made to Lotz's (2010) work on the evolution in women's representation on TV in the post-network era. Nearly a decade later, WTFock presents a young female-centric media product, wherein male counterplayers and parental supervisors play a small to non-present role. From characters ranging from a self-doubting, insecure girl (i.e. Amber), to a confident self-proclaimed feminist (i.e. Zoë) to a young, female Muslim in Belgium (i.e. Yasmina), WTFock presents a diverse cast. This

diverse cast, reiterates and enriches the notions on archetypes and stereotypes that were presented early on in the theoretical framework of this thesis. The prime example thereof in WTFock, can be identified in Zoë. Much like the male lead of *Porca Misèria,* who portrayed a non-stereotypical male approach to romance (Aran-Ramspott et. al, 2014), Zoë defied the stereotypes placed on females in the Western society, whilst maintaining a hyper-critical, self-reflective poise in the web series (Blackstone, 2003; Fullagar, Sumer, Sverke & Slick, 2003; Szirom, 2017). At multiple instances, Zoë was depicted criticizing and expressing her thoughts on what could be considered a "male-dominated" society, in which stereotypical macho behavior is idolized (Steinberg & Diekman, 2016). In other instances, Zoë lectured her friends on what it means to be a strong female, body-positivity, and gender discrimination. Arguably, Zoë's character presents a well-rounded, female young adult who critically reflects on societal matters. Another example of a strong, developed character who covers topics that hold the potential to lead to debates, is that of Yasmina. One could argue that Yasmina represented throughout the first season of WTFock, what it means to be a modern day, female, Belgian, teenage, Muslim in Flanders in 2019. On the one hand remaining true to her religious beliefs, whilst actively portraying a critical and self-aware mindset of her (not always positively viewed) position within the Flemish/Belgian society. Incorporating such plotlines could potentially have ramifications beyond the entertainment value that a media product holds, leading to real-life debates and conversations on a societal level.

Although WTFock made an active attempt at presenting revisited archetypes which defy long-standing stereotypes, the web series included certain existing archetypes and stereotypes as well. Throughout the plot, it became rather evident that Amber had an affinity for one of the male counter-players, Senne. For a significant portion of her air-time, Amber portrays a stereotypical image of a teenage girl attempting to fit a certain mold in order to please her (male) romantic interest. On the other hand, Senne's character portrays the stoic, macho-archetype, as presented in the theoretical framework of this thesis. However, although his portrayal of said archetype is present for the majority of the first season of WTFock, it should be noted that towards the final of the season, Senne's character started to undergo a certain development, possibly hinting at an evolution in his character in possible future seasons of the web series.

In conclusion, throughout this research it became evident that whilst pursuing a possible answer to the posed research question, WTFock presented a multi-layered and provoking product, possibly reflecting the ongoing societal changes and the ever-changing environment through which the Flemish youth is navigating in this digital age.

5.4 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

5.4.1   Limitations

Just like any research, this thesis cannot provide the "perfect", all-encompassing answer to the proposed research question, as this is virtually impossible in academia. Therefore, in order to further strengthen the thesis, it is important to reflect and acknowledge the instances in which the research might have been limited. Throughout academia, issues with sample size are certainly not an anomality. In the case of this thesis, the sample size could also have benefited of an appropriate expansion. Currently, the sample consisted of the entire first season of WTFock, and provided a rich and sufficient quantity of data. However, although an expansion of the sample is not detrimental for the sake of this research, it could have benefited of an addition in data. Within this hypothetical larger sample, other transmedia elements could have been included, in order to provide alternate angles and contexts to the research. For instance, incorporating the content posted on the Instagram pages of the characters of the show (i.e. characters and not the actual actors who were playing the characters) could have contributed to the understanding of the tactics employed by WTFock (i.e. and by extension VIER) to re-attract the "Disruptors" in Flanders.

Besides expanding the sample in regards to transmedia elements, the research could also have benefited from the inclusion of qualitative interviews with the production team of the web series. Currently, the thesis offers a one-sided answer to the posed research question, based on the gathered findings on the content of the first season of WTFock. However, in order to expand the narrative and depth of the research, and to further understand the decision-making process behind the inclusion of certain themes and plotlines in regards to the content of the short clips/episodes. However, although insightful, the inclusion of these interviews was not detrimental for the research as many comparisons could be drawn from WTFock's predecessor (i.e. SKAM). Moreover, due to the rich theoretical framework, appropriate connections and expansions on the current academic knowledge could be gathered.

5.4.2   Suggestions for Future Research

Alongside the aforementioned limitations, appropriate suggestions can be made for future research on this particular topic. In a first instance, as mentioned in the previous section, it would be interesting and academically enriching to incorporate other elements which are part of the production of WTFock and its transmedia elements. Examples thereof

consist of the content being published on the Instagram pages of the characters (i.e. not the personal Instagram pages of the actors, but the pages of the characters themselves in the storylines). Moreover, like Lai's (2018) article suggested, it could be enriching to to pay closer attention to the comments and discussions on WTFock's official webpage where the short clips and full-length episodes are published, to investigate whether the Flemish youth engages into community behavior such as the Norwegian youth did for SKAM.

Besides transmedia content, it might be interesting to broaden the sample by for example, incorporating in-depth, qualitative interviews with both the end-consumers of the web-series and the production team behind the web-series. On the one hand, conducting such experiments could offer new insights regarding the receival of the show amongst the audience, and the possible discussions certain topics may have garnered. Moreover, by having access to insights from the audience and the possible success of the show, future productions from VIER could greatly be improved or finetuned. Interviewing the production team, on the other hand, may offer insights into the decision-making process of the content that was showcased into the plot of the series, or the technicalities regarding the format of the show.

Lastly, the final suggestion consists of possibly conducting comparative studies within the Flemish TV industry, in order to compare different strategies amongst different broadcasters. Such a comparative study could potentially offer new insights into the Flemish TV landscape and the ever-evolving TV industry.

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Appendix A – Code Tree

Selective Code	Axial Code	Open Code	Quote (Translated by Autor)
"Real-Time" Narration	Time and date indication	"Monday 16:03" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Tuesday 16:09" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Tuesday 19:24" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 08:22" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 15:52" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 15:49" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 20:43" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 21:58" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 22:36" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date	"Friday 23:48" is	-

	indication	shown on screen in yellow lettering	
	Time and date indication	"Saturday 11:43" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 10:16" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 14:27" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 17:50" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 20:37" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 11:47" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 18:12" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Sunday 16:33" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Sunday 16:54" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Sunday 17:43" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date	"Monday 08:31" is	-

	indication	shown on screen in yellow lettering	
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 10:19" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 19:51" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 22:54" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Saturday 22:54" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Sunday 09:52" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 15:52" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Tuesday 16:23" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 08:27" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 08:16" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 20:31" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date	"Friday 21:51" is	-

	indication	shown on screen in yellow lettering	
	Time and date indication	"Saturday 09:52" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Saturday 11:27" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Saturday 14:12" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Sunday 09:50" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Sunday 10:45" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 14:23" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 13:21" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 13:51" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 14:09" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 15:52" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date	"Fiday 18:12" is	-

	indication	shown on screen in yellow lettering	
	Time and date indication	"Sunday 11:13" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 12:32" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Tuesday 16:02" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Tuesday 21:02" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 12:17" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 12:32" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 21:07" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Saturday 13:32" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 12:35" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 15:47" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date	"Tuesday 16:21" is	-

	indication	shown on screen in yellow lettering	
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 10:21" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 19:12" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 10:11" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 08:12" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 17:34" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Tuesday 12:46" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 17:12" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 18:21" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 08:08" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 12:22" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date	"Sunday 14:52" is	-

	indication	shown on screen in yellow lettering	
	Time and date indication	"Monday 14:41" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Tuesday 15:52" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 14:24" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 08:23" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 12:22" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 14:44" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 15:46" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 15:48" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 16:02" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 16:52" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date	"Tuesday 12:46" is	-

	indication	shown on screen in yellow lettering	
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 10:21" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 08:32" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 12:56" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 20:43" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 21:42" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 22:12" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Saturday 10:12" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Saturday 12:46" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 16:04" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 11:30" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date	"Thursday 11:12" is	-

	indication	shown on screen in yellow lettering	
	Time and date indication	"Friday 11:21" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Monday 09:20" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Tuesday 11:23" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 11:26" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Wednesday 15:04" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Thursday 17:03" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 17:25" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
	Time and date indication	"Friday 18:05" is shown on screen in yellow lettering	-
Technology	Vlogging	Robbe is vlogging	-
	Laptop	Jana is typing on her laptop	-
	Smartphone	Jana picks up her phone and calls Jens	-
	FaceTime	Jana FaceTimes Robbe	-

		Social Media	Keisha takes a selfie with Jana and uploads it on Instagram	-
			Keisha refers to Instagram	**Keisha:** *"Insta? So I can tag you."*
			Jana is on her bed, scrolling through Instagram	**-**
			Jana ads Zoë on Facebook	-
			Jana is Facetiming her Mother	
			Jana looks at her pending friend request with Zoë on Facebook	**-**
			Amber refers to internet slang	**Amber:** *"#thanks."*
Music		Setting the mood (audio)	Upbeat music starts playing	-
			"Roll with me" by Bantu starts playing	-
			"Eastside" by Khalid, Halsey and Benny Blanco starts playing	-
			"Focus" by Ariana Grande starts playing	-
			Upbeat rock music starts playing	-
			Electronic music	-

		starts playing	
		"Happy Now" by Zedd & Elley Duhé starts playing	-
	Reference to popular culture	"God's plan" by Drake starts playing	-
		"Sad!" by XXXtentacion starts playing	-
	Belgian artist	"La Loie de Murphie" by Angèle starts playing	-
		"La Thune" by Angèle starts playing	-
Intimacy	Expression of romantic affection	Jana and Jens kiss and make up under a bridge in the city	-
		Jens kisses Jana	-
		Jens and Jana start cuddling up	-
	Flirting	Senne flirts with Zoë	**Senne:** *Fuck, you're so sexy"*
		Luca flirts with Robbe	**Luca:** *"You're more than welcome. That way we can get to know one another a bit better. I know you wouldn't hand it to me, but I am very flexible."*
		Amber flirts with Senne, who flirts back with sexual	**Amber:** *"Nice!"* **Senne:** *"It's an own little concoction, I*

		innuendo's	call it: sex in the woods."
			Amber: *"Oh, that's totally my thing!"*
	Expression of sexual intimacy	Jens and Jana are engaging in intimate behavior	-
		Jens and Jana are engaging in intimate behavior	-
		Jens and Jana start getting intimate	-
	Casual approach towards sexual intimacy	Doctor expresses a relaxed approach towards sexual intercourse	… **Doctor:** *"Ah, your first time? How exciting!"* ...
		Luca encourages Amber to engage into sexual behavior	**Luca:** *"Suck him completely dry, alright?!"*
Relatable Topics and Settings	High school	Amber, Jana, Luca and Zoë are eating their lunch outside, during the school lunch break	-
		Jana, Zoë and Amber are talking in the hallway of their high school	-
		A fight breaks out amongst the group of girlfriends and another group of	-

		girls, at school	
		The girls are sitting together, making their homework in school	-
	Body image issues	Amber talks about her body-related insecurities	**Amber:** *"I mean it was a quick picture, taken with bad lighting. And you could still see my love handles and my hip dips. I just can't seem to get rid of them."*
		Zoë and Amber talk about body positivity, not being pretty enough and eluding to eating disorders	**Zoë:** *"You really have to be careful."* **Amber:** *"What do you even know about that?"* **Zoë:** *"Enough."* **Amber:** *"Right, you regularly indulge on chocolate and pastries, and still look like a model."* **Zoë:** *"Me? Seriously? Amber, you're the model here. You're super, super pretty."* **Amber:** *"Yes, but not pretty enough."*
Polarizing Topics	Gender roles and	Zoë schools Jana	**Zoë:** *"What's wrong*

		stereotypes	about gender roles and gender stereotypes	*with women? Why do we always think we're the ones to be blamed for everything? And not wanting to bother anyone with our problems? Do you see men go through this? Do you think any of his friends dissed him for this? No, no, no, chances are they probably all loved it! Great job dude, another girl on your list. Keep going!"*
			Yasmina acknowledges and critically breaks down her friends into stereotypical roles	**Yasmina:** *"Seriously? Come on, just look around. Tomboy over there, the new chick with no friends, Zoë international. The only one with a bit of a name is you. Or, sorry, was you."*
			Zoë schools amber about gender equality	**Zoë:** *"Second of all, it's not because guys behave like idiots that we have to do the same. That has*

			nothing, but like nothing at all to do with equal rights."
		Zoë breaks down Senne's fragile masculinity	**Zoë:** *"Wow, you're such a cool dude."* **Senne:** *"And you are?"* **Zoë:** *"What happened in your childhood that you are left behind with such a big inferiority complex? That your despicable ego finds it necessary to hurt a woman like Amber? What? Did your mom never tell you that your drawings looked nice? Or did your dad never give you hugs? Were they not there when you passed the swimming test for the 20 meters? Or wait, I know it. You didn't have any hair yet on your balls when you were in the third grade of high school! Or maybe eh, a girl from our*

			kindergarten broke your heart? No? Well, whatever it may be, isn't it time that you get over it? That you start behaving like a human? And don't walk around like a fucking, living, breathing cliché."
	Alcohol consumption	Jana pulls out a "Cara" Pils from under her bed (typical Belgian cheap beer) and starts drinking it	-
		Moyo suggests to drink some shots	**Moyo:** *"Shots?"*
		The girls talk about getting liquor for the party	**Amber:** *"Who could get us some liquor?"* **Jana:** *"I could bring one of my mom's bottles?"* **Luca:** *"I'll ask my cousin to get us two bottles of gin?"*
	Marijuana consumption	Jens admits to Jana that he smokes Marijuana	**Jens:** *"No, just weed."* **Jana:** *"Do you smoke marijuana?"*
		Jens schools Jana about the differences	**Jens:** *"You make it sound like it's some*

		in drugs	*gross disease."* *...* **Jens:** *"It's not like I'm shooting heroin okay."* **Jana:** *"Yeah, well weed is as bad for you."* **Jens:** *"Not at all. Weed is a soft drug. Cocaine and heroin, those are hard drugs. You don't have to pretend like those two are similar."*
		Jana and Jens talk about Marijuana	**Jens:** *"I just think it's funny how you call it cannabis."* **Jana:** *"I mean isn't that what it is?"* **Jens:** *"Only old people and politicians use that word."* **Jana:** *"Yeah well how do you refer to those drugs?"* **Jens:** *"Oh drugs, you always make it sound so bad."* **Jana:** *"Yeah well that's what it is you*

			know, and bad for your health too." **Jens:** *"Yeah well so is alcohol, especially when you have one too many drinks on a night out."*
		Robbe admits that him and Jens were high	**Robbe:** *"There were a few times that we were really high over that weekend. I still can't believe you did not catch on to that."*
	Reference to LGBT	Jens mocks Robbe's song choice and calls it a "sissy" song, in Flemish slang	**Jens:** *"That sissy song?"* **Robbe:** *"Is that a gay song?"* **Jens:** *"It doesn't get more gay than that?"* **Robbe:** *"Doesn't he just sing about a girl though?"* **Jens:** *"George Michael and Freddy Mercury did that too you know."*
		Moyo suggests that Robbe is gay	**Moyo:** *"Then I'll keep on my underwear you know."* **Robbe:** *"Why?"*

			Moyo: *"I know how irresistible I am for your kind."* **Robbe:** *"What do you mean, my kind?"* **Moyo:** *"Yes?"* **Robbe:** *"You think I'm gay?"* **Moyo:** *"I don't think that."*
		Amber makes insinutations about Zoë's sexuality	**Amber:** *"I thought you never had sex before? Or at least, not with guys?"*
Cultural Identity and Expression	Recognizable scenery	A view is shown of the "Mas"	-
		Scenery from the Belgian Ardennes	-
		All four friends arrive at the train station "Antwerpen-Berchem"	-
		Jana and her mother are shopping in the city center of Antwerp	-
	Typical Belgian product or service	Robbe is drinking Jupiler	-
		Jens takes out a "Cara pils" for himself and Robbe and Jana	-

		Luca employs Flemish slang to refer to Belgian breakfast pastries	**Original** **Luca:** *"Mijn persoonlijke favoriet: het verkope van koffiekoeke."* **Translated** **Luca:** *"My personal favourite: selling breakfast pastries."*
		Jana's mom refers to Smartschool	**Original** **Mom:** *"Ik heb nekeer op smartschool gekeke…"* **Translated** **Mom:** *"I had a look around on Smartschool…"*
	Common Belgian practice	Jana refers to a common Belgian practice, when students get a day off because of the teachers attending seminars	**Jana:** *"We've got the day off because of the teachers' seminars on Friday, remember?"*
		Students are shown wearing their youth movement uniform	-
		Zoë inquires about the "youth movement day", as	**Zoë:** *"What's actually going on, with all these shirts*

		she does not know what it is	*and stuff?"* **Jana:** *"Oh, that's for the youth movement day. Didn't you have that in Oslo?"* **Zoë:** *"Nope."*
		Luca talks about how she prepared her shoe for Sinterklaas	**Luca:** *"He's already been set up."* **Yasmina:** *"What has been set up?"* **Luca:** *"My shoe."* **Yasmina:** *"Do you still celebrate Sinterklaas?*
	Belgian artist	"La Thune" by Angèle starts playing	-
		"La Loie de Murphie" by Angèle starts playing	-
	Flemish slang	Jana calls Luka names, relying heavily on Flemish slang	**Original** **Jana:** *"Omda gij een rondpoepende eikel zijt!"* **Translated** **Zoë:** *"Because you're an asshole who sleeps around!"*
		Jens and Jana have a discussion, with a lot of Flemish slang	**Original** **Jana:** *"Gast, ik heb u probere belle. Waarom reageert gij*

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			ni?”
			Jens: *“Ik heb gewoon een platte batterij.”*
			Jana: *“En gij kunt die thuis ni insteke?”*
			Translated
			Jana: *“Dude, I tried to call you. Why aren't you picking up?”*
			Jens: *“My battery's just dead.”*
			Jana: *“And you can't charge it at home?”*
		Robbe thanks Jana, making use of Flemish slang	**Original** **Robbe:** *“Zalig da ik volgende week mee mag.”* … **Robbe:** *“Superveel goesting in!”* **Translated** **Robbe:** *“Amazing that I can join next week.”* … **Robbe:** *“I'm super excited about it!”*
	Cultural differences	Yasmina and Luca talk about their	**Luca:** *“So you don't celebrate*

		cultural differences	*Sinterklaas?"* **Yasmina:** *"No we don't celebrate that."*
		Yasmina is wearing her Hijab	-
		Yasmina refers to herself as the biggest loser, as she is a female muslim in Belgium	**Yasmina:** *"Me, a female Muslim in Belgium? I'm the biggest loser of them all."*
		Amber makes a culturally insensitive comment to Yasmina	**Amber:** *"You're entire family would go after her if that would be the case."*