

How Netflix voices their brand in different languages:

An analysis of Netflix' brand identity and branding strategy on Instagram in India and the
Netherlands

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Abstract: With the widespread, international audience that Netflix has around the globe, questions arise surrounding Netflix' brand management, specifically in the continuously fluctuating online space of one of the largest social media platforms: Instagram. Hence, this research analyses how Netflix establishes and maintains its brand image globally, and examines the role of national and cultural borders in Netflix' brand strategy. This is done by examining Netflix' branding in the Indian and Dutch market, as these nations are found to be significantly different in cultural values. Focussing on social media branding, posts published by Netflix on the Instagram accounts dedicated to India and the Netherlands are analysed in a qualitative content analysis that combines inductive and deductive analysis, to syndicate current academic theory with new findings in this confined field of international branding. Analysis is performed on $n = 80$ posts from each account: a total of $n = 160$ Instagram posts.

The results reveal significant differences as well similarities between the Indian and Dutch Instagram accounts, and indicate that Netflix employs a combination of local and global elements in communicating its brand on Instagram in India and the Netherlands. The posts of both accounts suit the specific cultural dimensions as defined by Hofstede (n.d.; 2011) to some extent, yet paradoxical relations are also observed frequently. Netflix is branded as a uniform brand internationally, hinting towards standardization, yet in-depth analysis shows a significant amount of local elements implemented in the content, indicating localization. Therefore, it is argued that the image transferability of Netflix' brand is best understood as a combination of global –and local consumer culture positioning (Alden et al., 1999; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Netflix' branding strategy on Instagram in India and the Netherlands both are best understood within the contingency approach as strategies where local elements are found important in increasing consumer culture positioning whilst maintaining the internationally established brand that Netflix is today. The findings contribute to the academic field of international advertising and the complex role that cultural and social borders play in this. The findings are also relevant in the practical field of managing an international brand on social media, and the consideration of cultural and societal differences in doing so.

Keywords: Netflix, Branding strategy, Globalisation, SVODs, Localization, Standardization

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“What we learn with pleasure, we never forget” – Alfred Morcier (1816-1894)

Preface: With this Master’s thesis, I finish what was once a dream, and with this Master’s thesis, I finally start with what is still a dream. And for that, I am forever grateful. I am grateful for those who have been there for me, and whom have impacted me in ways that made me who I am, and where I am, today. And for that, I wish to acknowledge the great people who have helped me in doing so.

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1. Introduction

In 2018, Netflix became available worldwide in over 190 countries (Netflix Help, n.d.), and served over 125 million paying subscribers (Dwyer et al., 2018). Starting as a small DVD rental and sales website in 1997, the company became one of the most prominent examples in the current field of the SVOD industry nowadays. Its international success has made Netflix a recurring topic in discussions both in press and academia. International scholars have discussed Netflix widely, such as regarding its big data algorithms, its influence on choice-making by the consumers with rating systems (Maryanchyk, 2008) and the effect of algorithmic information on culture in relation to the Netflix Prize competition, which was set up to improve recommendations and data gathering (Hallinan & Striphias, 2016). Adding to this, Netflix's position within the contemporary media landscape of other traditional and VOD television is addressed (Jenner, 2016), as well as its influence on viewing practices in relation to traditional television watching behaviours (Matrix, 2014).

In terms of branding and marketing, Netflix has sparked a distinct academic interest as the relative new SVOD market continues to grow globally. For example, Jenner (2016) explains that although Netflix focuses on representing quality and cult TV and therefore moves away from traditional television and towards online companies such as Google or Amazon, it still draws television marketing strategies in its branding. Likewise, Wayne (2018) establishes a comparison between Netflix and its competitors (e.g. Amazon) to examine the role that traditional television network branding plays in SVOD portals.

Additionally, Netflix' social media strategies and other SVODs' branding practices are also addressed in the current academic field, although in lesser degree. Mann (2016), for example, discusses the brand identity of both Netflix and Hulu, and considers Netflix as a brand that identifies itself as a certain "new technology influenced start-up" (p. 135). The author also notes Netflix' strong ties with forms of Internet culture and confidence in that audiences are acquainted with this online culture (Mann, 2016). Similarly, Jenner (2018) describe Netflix' brand as one associated with technology companies. Furthermore, Jenner (2018) examines the company's international success and its branding strategy in terms of transnationalism. Here, social media is also discussed briefly, related to Netflix Originals being released simultaneously around the globe, instead of geo-blocking content as traditional broadcasters often do.

Although international scholars are paying attention to Netflix' branding, still little is known about how Netflix brands its identity via social media, and how this is put into

practice. Hence, the goal of this research is to contribute to the current academic debate by adding new knowledge and more understanding regarding Netflix' brand promotion online.

Online platform branding strategies and marketing practices are often discussed in combination with Web 2.0 and social media (Berthon et al., 2012). In the current digital age we live in today, social media plays a key role in reaching audiences worldwide (Berthon et al., 2012). Netflix has put this into practice, as the company is highly present on social media platforms. On Facebook for example, Netflix has an online following of 52 million¹, and Netflix' US Instagram account has almost 13 million followers². Compared with resembling companies' social media presence, such as Google, Amazon Prime or Hulu, Netflix bypasses them- by far³

Netflix' online presence and large following raises questions regarding Netflix' brand image, and how this crosses the 190 national boundaries in which the platform is currently available. Similar to other international companies such as Hulu or Amazon Prime, Netflix has divided their social media activity into different accounts that cover specific countries, regions or territories. For example, the Instagram account 'Netflixnordic' is targeted at the Scandinavian countries, whilst 'Netflixhk' is dedicated to the specific audience in Hong Kong, the administrative region of China.

In this research, specific focus is put on Netflix' branding practices on Instagram. Instagram is argued to be the most relevant platform for the researches' aim, as Phua et al. (2017) found that it is most valuable for community engagement and brand loyalty. Additionally, the authors found that Instagram scored highest in general on brand-related inquiries such as brand identification, brand engagement and brand commitment (Phua et al., 2017). As the aim here is to research Netflix' branding activities, and as Instagram is found to be most strongly related to branding practices, it is argued that this combination is most relevant to analyse.

In the Netflix podcast 'WeAreNetflix', US Manager of Brand and Editorial Rae Votta reviews this division with the example of the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand being put together in one social department as there are 'a lot of cultural similarities', and because 'it's very culturally close to us' (Troxel & Paulson, 2019). This notion of cultural similarities and differences is also stressed by Okazaki and Taylor (2013), who state that national borders do not define cultural and social norms, as they vary between different national boundaries.

¹ Netflix general Facebook page, checked on February 21

² @Netflixus, checked on February 21

³ @Google, @AmazonPrimeVideo, @Hulu, checked on February 21

Adding to this, Kim, Sohn and Choi (2011) emphasize the importance of cultural differences in motivations for using social networking sites (SNS). Clearly, cultural elements play a significant role in how social media is used, and how brands like Netflix are perceived. Based on this, in this research, interest is given to the role of culture in international branding, with specific focus on Netflix' social media branding strategies and the international environment in which they play.

1.1 Research question

The possible differences in cultural and social values, and how Netflix deals with this in reaching their audiences, has sparked interest in the way Netflix voices their brand around the globe, which inspired the following research question (RQ) and sub-research question (Sub-RQ):

RQ: How does Netflix use Instagram to construct and promote its brand identity in India and in the Netherlands?

Sub-RQ: What are the differences and similarities between the branding strategy that Netflix uses in its Indian and Dutch Instagram accounts?⁴

Methodologically, these questions have been answered by means of qualitative content analysis. Analysis is performed on 180 Instagram posts, of which 60 from Netflix Instagram account dedicated to the Indian audiences, and 60 from the account dedicated to Dutch audiences. The posts collected include posts from each day of the week, published between February 21, 2019 and April 29, 2019. Netflix is available in the Netherlands since 2013, and in India since 2016 (Netflix Media Center, n.d.). The Dutch Netflix Instagram account was set up on December 10, 2014, and the Indian Netflix Instagram account was set up on May 11, 2016.

1.2 Scientific relevance

The academic relevance of this research lies in the fact that Netflix exemplifies the development of “Internet media companies” (Burroughs, 2019, p. 2). The analysis provides insights in fields such as that of SVODs, the influence of national borders and cultural and social differences in marketing internationally, as well as contributing to further understanding of social media branding and its influence on brand perception. This research thus relates to the broader academic field of international digital marketing and branding,

⁴ The analysis of the differences and similarities is multifaceted. For example, the types of speech (colloquial vs formal) and elements included in their messages (e.g. such as emoticons) have been explored.

adding more knowledge and understanding on the implications of being an online platform with worldwide reach.

1.3 Social relevance

The social relevance of this research first and foremost regards Netflix, as an external overview of Netflix' branding practices on Instagram is presented. The fact that there is no influence on this research from Netflix itself however, also has its limitations, as no inside information about Netflix' social media strategies is present. Additionally, the social relevance lies in the broader marketing and branding branch, for marketers who manage an international brand or are going to expand a brand internationally. This research adds more knowledge and understanding to the practical field of marketing businesses or brands in the digital and globalized time we live in today; it looks into the branding foundations of an emergent industry sector and thus this research is relevant for those whom work in this sector. Furthermore, it contributes to a broader understanding of how social and cultural elements influence the way social media and branding is perceived, which teaches on the social and cultural differences we experience in everyday-life.

1.4 Thesis outline

This thesis is structured in line with the research question and sub-research question. In the theoretical framework, first, the academic debate on globalisation is addressed critically. Then, relevant concepts and theory on branding on social media, and specifically Netflix' branding practices, are touched upon. This is aligned with the three overarching categories of the analysis (written text, visuals and formal features). The theoretical framework is concluded with a discussion on the use of Hofstede's model of national culture comparison, a critical examination of the six cultural dimensions, and a comparison between the scores of India and the Netherlands on each dimension.

This is followed by the research design, where the choice for qualitative content analysis is addressed, and the reasoning behind combining inductive and deductive analysis is described. Additionally, the data collection, validity and reliability and the operationalization are presented. Finally, the results are presented as well as interpreted with the theory from the theoretical framework. In this section, an answer is provided on the sub-research question.

In the conclusive chapter, an answer on the main research question is formulated and placed in broader academic context, to ultimately discuss theoretical and methodological implications as well as suggestions for further research.

2. Theory and previous research

This section is devoted to the analytical discussion of previous research on social media and international advertisement and branding, complemented with literature related to the specific case of Netflix and other SVODs such as Hulu and Amazon Prime. Additionally, the employed theoretical approaches are addressed, relating this research to the broader academic debate on the role of globalisation in international advertising. Finally, the Hofstede model of national culture comparison is critically discussed, and the comparison on each cultural dimension between India and the Netherlands is presented.

2.1 Branding in the global arena: standardization versus localisation

Focussing on international branding and branding on social media, Okazaki and Taylor (2013) identify three main capabilities for international advertising, of which ‘image transferability’ is closely related to this research. This capability refers to brand image construction and the standardization of a uniform brand image and brand strategy (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Creating a uniform brand image, which takes into consideration the target audience a product is aimed, constitutes a pivotal objective for many international companies. The reason for this is that it embraces the essence of a brand in attracting comparable consumer segments in overseas markets in an efficient manner (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Okazaki and Taylor (2013) use the example of Apple Iphone to illustrate the value for brand to attract similar consumer segments located in different markets. According to the authors, Iphones are internationally branded as “cool and innovative”, and that because of this, people from different countries purchase them (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013, p. 64). Attracting similar consumer segments in different countries thus allows a brand to position itself in overseas markets similar as in the home market. This increases the likeliness that people in this different market will buy the product for similar reasons, which is a valuable asset for brands.

With the conceptualization of image transferability specific attention can be paid to cultural implications that emerge when a brand positions itself internationally (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Netflix constitutes one of those examples. Two different positioning strategies have been identified, namely the opposing standardization and adaptation. The literature review conducted shows the academic debate that international scholars have established on this topic. For example, Okazaki and Taylor (2013) state that the trend in international marketing is to standardize strategies. However, Burt and Mavrommatis (2006) argue that more subtlety is preferred in the process of transferring brand images on an international

level.

Schuiling and Kapferer (2004) go even further, and encourage large international companies to develop new, local brands to unite with, and this way, stress the importance that regionalism plays in brand image placement. Berthon et al. (2012) address the phenomenon of brand image placement in international markets similarly. The authors discuss the different aspects of effectively using social media in international advertisement, and mention that international operating companies need to adapt their social media strategy to national singularities (Berthon et al., 2012). Adding to this, Berthon et al. (2012) note that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ standardization strategy in the communication on social media can be dangerous, as it will hinder the positioning in the overseas market. Similarly, Okazaki and Taylor (2013) stress that the effectiveness of image transferability may differ depending on the culture of the consumers. Nonetheless, the authors do argue that image transferability enables marketers to establish and strengthen their brand image across the globe (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

With the conceptualization of image transferability, a comprehension of essential capabilities regarding branding and brand image construction in internationalized markets is provided. The concept provides a clear and relevant scope to this research, as it helps creating a deeper understanding of how Netflix deals with cultural particularities, and how they establish a sustainable brand image across international borders.

Consumer culture positioning

In an international market, brands need to adapt their social media strategy and the type of incentives they create to encourage positive “online sharing behaviours” according to the different user behaviours existing in different countries and cultures (Gao, Tate, Zhang & Liang, 2018, p. 48). Creating a positive online sharing behaviour is, according to Gao et al. (2018), rather challenging. This is because social media users are often unwilling to adapt well-aligned brand content proposed by the brand (e.g. the use of Hashtags proposed by the brand) into their own social media user behaviours (Gao et al., 2018).

Adapting strategies to different countries and cultures thus is rather important to establish effective branding activities on social media. The concept of consumer culture positioning describes such adaptation strategies, which consist of three main components: language, aesthetic style and story themes (Gao et al., 2018). Based on these elements, three types of strategies for consumer culture positioning in branding are identified. First, “global consumer culture positioning (GCCP)”, second, “brand foreignness or foreign consumer culture positioning (FCCP)”, and, third, “local consumer culture positioning (LCCP)” (Alden,

Steenkamp & Batra, 1999, p. 77).

GCCP helps at identifying the brand “as a symbol of a given global culture” (Gao et al., 2018, p. 48). This strategy entails the utilisation of global elements that are well known to create its brand image. Here, global languages such as English are used, as well as worldwide known spokespersons, logos and brand narratives that mirror universal values (Gao et al., 2018). FCCP and LCCP respectively locate the brand inside the given foreign or local culture (Gao et al., 2018). The FCCP strategy does so by using local language, local symbols in logos, or narratives that mirror the local culture (Gao et al., 2018). Employing this strategy, a brand thus aims at associating with a particular culture, as for example Singapore Airlines did when they used its ‘Singapore Girl’ in their international marketing (Alden et al., 1999). The Singapore Girl represented the Singaporean culture and social values that Singapore Airlines associates with, using local symbols and utilizing the Singapore Girl to mirror local cultural narratives in their global branding. The LCCP strategy differentiates itself by association with local symbols (Gao et al., 2018) or local culture (Alden et al., 1999). Budweiser’s connotation with ‘small-town American culture’ in its branding and marketing in the US is a great example of employing a LCCP strategy (Alden et al., 1999). Here, Budweiser aimed heavily at increasing sentimental feelings on the local, national American culture, in targeting the American consumer.

Gammoh, Koh and Okoroafo (2011), who investigated the impact of both GCCP and LCCP strategies on consumers’ appraisals of brands, state that global and local consumer cultures are indeed “viable brand positioning options” (p. 54). Particularly the GCCP strategy was found to be sufficient in managing positive consumer reception and appeal (Gammoh et al., 2011). Additionally, the authors argue that globality, not locality, is the most beneficial strategy for brands entering a new market, where they are unknown yet, especially when consumers have a more global orientation in their beliefs.

Standardization versus adaptation/localization

Focussing on the global aspect of Netflix’ online branding, the notion of globalisation and its role in media requires further addressing. The GCCP strategy as examined by Gammoth et al. (2011) and redefined by Gao et al. (2018) addresses the notion of local and global consumer cultures, where the tension between local and global strategies in addressing consumers is tangible. As noted by several academics (see Chandra, Griffith & Ryans Jr., 2015; Hofer, 2014; Jeong, Lee & Kim, 2019) there are two main sides on the debate; whether to standardize or localize the international brand marketing strategies. The academic debate

on how international businesses deal with the complex matter of globalisation in defining and marketing their brand is still highly active (Hofer, 2014). Hence, it is necessary to take this debate into account and go more in-depth on this *standardization* versus *adaptation* discussion.

Chandra et al. (2015) state that, from the standardization proponents' point of view, the world is becoming increasingly homogenised in both markets and consumers, and thus businesses should be able to standardize advertising and branding across the globe (Chandra et al., 2015). However, critics of standardization argue in favour of adaptation or localization, based on cultural, economic and political barriers that complicate standardization and require at least a certain degree of adaptation to brand and market the business globally (Chandra et al., 2015). According to the authors, the debate fundamentally surrounds the complex matter of balancing between the economic benefits of standardization and the strategy to gain performance that is established through adaptation (Chandra et al., 2015).

Similarly, Jeong et al. (2019) discuss the debate in the context of international branding from a more impartial perspective, although focussed more on the extent of applying localization or standardization. According to the authors, deciding on localization as a branding strategy entails managing fundamental brand elements across borders, for example a brand name, or translation to local levels (Jeong et al., 2019). Maintaining a brand image and position in a uniform way or adapting the brand image to the local national market comes with important complications regarding a business' global marketing strategy (Jeong et al., 2019). Hence, the authors note that, as the market environment is heterogeneous in each country, and business' branding strategies play a critical role in incorporating the activities of global business, deciding on the degree of localization needs to be considered carefully (Jeong et al., 2019).

Where Chandra et al. (2015) provide a rather absolute opposition between standardization and localization, Jeong et al. (2019), as well as Hofer (2014), argue it is not that dichotomous, rather it should be questioned to what extent standardization or adaptation is applicable to a field, in which national market characteristics and cultural differences have to be taken into careful consideration. What makes the choice for localization difficult, is that standardization of a branding strategy brings certain advantages, such as cost reduction and "the creation of a unique brand image across countries" (Buzzel, 1968, as cited in Hofer, 2014, p. 687).

Adaptation/localization

Krueger and Nandan (2008) discuss the role of culture in branding, and argue that to enter the global market effectively, a branding strategy has to be developed which coheres the cultural traditions of the country of operation. In doing so, the brand's image and brand identification are of key significance, as this allows the company to voice their brand image and identity, and to generate consumer acceptance (Krueger & Nandan, 2008). The authors thus urge firms that operate on a global scale, to appreciate the local cultures in their branding strategies (Krueger & Nandan, 2008).

Adding to this, Chalaby (2002), who discusses the notion of localization in the “pan-European television industry”⁵ in the framework of globalisation, argues that the rise of globalisation entails a certain expectation that cultures were homogenising into a cultural convergent globe (p. 183). Hence, according to the author, a certain degree of localization is necessary to operate in foreign markets. Similarly, Chandra et al. (2015) argue that distinctive local attributes should be catered for overseas markets, to enlarge profits deriving from localized campaigns. Local differences urge global businesses to incorporate elements of local culture to establish and remain relevance to local audiences (Chalaby, 2002). Nonetheless, the author notes that this does not necessarily apply to every company aiming at internationalizing their business. Some businesses may aim for a mere international image, where intensive localization would contradict such image (Chalaby, 2002).

In this respect, the global approach or the international image preferred by the business will affect the approach on localization. Approaching localization thus does not mean turning an international business into a local one, yet “it consists of adapting the international to local culture while retaining its global flavour” (Chalaby, 2002, p. 199). Jeong et al. (2019), who assess brand localization based on brand elements, also provide some arguments pro localization. According to the authors, for example, there is a positive relationship between the degree of internationalization and brand localization (Jeong et al., 2019). They found that businesses that are internationally experienced are able to recognize market conditions more swiftly, which motivates contemplation of distinctive strategies and responding to local conditions. As Jeong et al. (2019) state, local market environments play an important role in brand localization, and international experience increases the likeliness of brands to localize their branding strategy to match those local conditions.

⁵ The pan-European television industry entails the transnational television in Europe, where national channels crossed European borders (Chalaby, 2002).

However, on the other hand, Jeong et al. (2019) found that the size of a business negatively influences the likelihood of localizing brand strategies, as larger businesses often lean towards global standardization – mainly because this is easier and cost-efficient. Relating this to the large and international business that Netflix is, it would be interesting to see how their branding strategy unfolds on their Instagram.

Standardization

Localization and standardization are not as opposing as black and white. International scholars discussing standardization do not necessarily exclude localized elements. For example, Chandra et al. (2015) discuss the support of standardization as a result of the globalizing world we live in today, and state that this has created a homogeneous consumer pallet, who share similar wishes and desires. For this reason, it is argued that with minor adjustments such as translation of advertising copies into local language, an effective standardized campaign can be performed internationally (Flinder, 1961, as cited in Chandra et al., 2015).

Steenkamp (2017) goes even further in his discussion of global branding strategies in the digital age. The author argues that the global aspect of a company attributes to the brand's attractiveness in local markets, as it increases the perceived quality (Steenkamp, 2017). Still, the author does make a side note in this argument, stating that interpretation of a brand message is rather difficult, as in the world of different cultural values one message in one country, can lead to repercussions in other countries (Steenkamp, 2017). Hofer (2014), who assesses brand promotion standardization in Central and Eastern Europe markets, complements this by stating that a long-term brand vision combined with marketing standardization adds to the business performances.

Ghauri, Wang, Elg and Rosendo-Rios (2016) take a different stance on standardization, although still in line with what is discussed above. The authors describe localization as a certain adaptation to local consumers to improve business implementation in international markets (Ghauri et al., 2016). Yet, the authors found that businesses operating in several foreign markets often minimize adaptation, in favour of initiating branded value propositions that fulfil consumers' latent needs (Ghauri et al., 2016). This strategy is termed *market driving*, which is best understood as a more proactive approach to market orientation, emphasizing the growing latent needs in the overseas market such as the usability or convenience of the product, rather than adapting to the known (Ghauri et al., 2016). Ghauri et al. (2016) seek the influence of certain capabilities on market driving performance and study

the influence of networking, knowledge transfer, and configuration and brand orientation capabilities. The latter two are relevant for this research, as they can be related to Netflix' branding strategy.

Although Ghauri et al. (2016) focus merely on this strategy as part of the marketing or even overall corporate strategy, these capabilities allow this research to go more in-depth on the strategy that is behind Netflix' branding on Instagram in specific. The configuration capability is described as the capability that "allows a firm's proprietary business model to operate in different foreign markets" (Ghauri et al., 2016, p. 3). The idea behind this is that the business concept can be accepted in international markets with minimal adaption (Ghauri et al., 2016). Branding capability is described as the "power to influence the behaviours and structures of the market" (Ghauri et al., 2016, p. 4). The corporate brands of market driving firms often communicate positive associations with unique and innovative offerings, increasing local implementation without much adaptation or localization.

Contingency approach to international marketing and branding

Hofer (2014), Jeong et al. (2019) as well as Ghauri et al. (2016) understand the conceptualization of standardization from the contingency approach, which is more or less defined as the assumption made that both "organizational and external factors determine the optimal degree of international marketing strategy standardization" (Hofer, 2014, p. 687). Discussing this, Hofer (2014) provides a clear overview of what the organizational and external factors entail; "competitive strategies, coordination of marketing activities, aspects of international marketing strategy, product homogeneity and general firm characteristics" are noted as organizational factors, while similarities in for example "economic conditions and marketing infrastructures", as well as in "customs and traditions, technological intensity and the regulatory environment" are attributed to external factors influencing this process (Hofer, 2014, p. 687). In a corresponding manner, Chandra et al. (2015) add that this contingency approach does not entail an extreme of standardization nor absolute adaptation; rather it is conceptualized as a "third, middle-ground contingency approach" (p. 47). The approach includes specific focus on identifying both internal and external factors, which facilitate standardization and/or adaptation.

From the contingency perspective, this research follows Chandra et al. (2015) in that the debate does not entail whether one approach or the other is (or should be) applied, but to what degree standardization or adaptation is used and how this differs between markets. Hence, it surrounds the complex matter of the extent to which elements of brand marketing

are standardized or localized, and how this can be interpreted in this research. Following Gao et al. (2018) who defined the consumer culture positioning strategies, the different strategies and approaches discussed here provide a fundament on which brand-aligned online content will be analysed. As the challenge for international brands is to incentivize social media users, they draw on knowledge of user types and ties, to engage them with the CCP content (Gao et al., 2018). Incorporating this theoretical approach, as well as the discussion of standardization versus localization, provides a theoretical framework that aids in understanding how Netflix brands itself on Instagram.

2.2 Social media branding

As this research aims at examining Netflix' branding activities in India and the Netherlands, existing research Netflix' branding and social media strategies is discussed here. Additionally, other relevant literature regarding branding on social media is also touched upon. This is structured in line with the three main categories of the analysis: written text, visuals and formal features.

2.2.1 Netflix' branding and social media activities

International scholars have initiated discussions surrounding Netflix and other SVODs' branding strategies. In current academic literature, Netflix' brand identity is discussed in several ways, such as being associated with a “new, technology influenced start-up” (Mann, 2016, p. 136), or described as “the world’s leading Internet television network” (Burrough et al., 2018, p. 3). Burrough et al. (2018) add that Netflix – as well as other SVODs – “wants to be your television” (p. 3). This idea of being *your* television is illustrated by audiences who indicate that they ‘watch Netflix’, rather than discussing the specific shows they watch (Mann, 2016). Netflix, as well as other SVOD services such as Hulu, are described as brands which are “not tailored to niche demographics”, as the brand identity situates the platforms namely as “generalized landing places for users” (Mann, 2016, p. 104). Here, the consumer – or audience – can find a broad variety of quality content adjusted to their preferences (Mann, 2016).

The notion of ‘quality’ is prominent in describing SVOD services like Netflix, Hulu and HBO. HBO has been discussed elaborately as a proponent of ‘quality’ television with its tagline ‘It’s not TV, it’s HBO’, and Netflix made sure to associate its brand accordingly (Mann, 2016). Netflix thus is discussed prominently as a quality brand. Both Jenner (2018) and Burrough et al. (2018) also refer to Netflix as associating itself with ‘quality’ and ‘cult’. Jenner (2018) notes that with the introduction of Netflix’ original content in 2013, the notion

of quality TV as well as the practice of binge watching were important elements of the marketing campaigns, aiming at normalizing “long-form viewing” (Jenner, 2018, p. 109).

Furthermore, Mann (2016) considers Netflix as having strong brand relevancy. This means that Netflix is well defined within the category of SVOD services, and that Netflix is a strong option within this market for consumers to choose (Aaker, 2010). This strong brand relevance is accompanied by the increasing chance that audiences engage with the brand, which improves the consumer-brand relationship (Mann, 2016). The company has become a strong ‘category’ in brand strategists’ terms, as it is perceived as offering “unique, valuable services”, relating the brand to “high quality online streaming television and film” (Mann, 2016, p. 105).

Mann (2016) describes Netflix’ social media practices on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as ‘experimental’, as Netflix and other SVOD services are fairly young businesses, enabling them to look for and experiment with alternative ways of promotion. For example, Netflix does so with the usage of videos, memes and gifs, which according to Mann (2016) displays a certain confidence in the audience’s acquaintance with these forms of online culture. Martín-Quevedo, Fernández-Gómez and Segado-Boj (2019) also note this use of memes and videos by Netflix (and HBO), describing it as strong familiarity with – and targeting on – digital communities.

Furthermore, Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) argue that Netflix’ approach on Instagram is rather global, although slightly adapted to the country the account is dedicated to. Also, the authors found that most of Netflix’ US Instagram posts had the purpose of promoting program contents (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Jenner (2018) also refers to a certain link between social media and program content promotion, focussing on the worldwide release strategy. According to her, Netflix releases a vast amount of its shows worldwide at the same time, to avoid that spoilers are being shared on social media in one country, and read in another country where the show is yet to be released (Jenner, 2018). Additionally, this worldwide release strategy also encourages the transnational conversation about the shows on social media as soon as the content is released (Jenner, 2018). Hence, Netflix’ social media is best understood as closely linked to forms of online/digital culture and focussed on promoting (new) shows. Adding to this, Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) note that this is mostly done with a mostly positive tone of voice, “using humour as a main resource” (p. 17).

Clearly, there are some interesting aspects of Netflix’s social media strategy, and how Netflix constructs its brand image. As noted by Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019), Netflix carries out a more global approach, somewhat adapted to specific countries – as their research on the

Spanish and US market found. Nonetheless, the current state of academic literature on Netflix and its branding practices and strategies is fairly limited. Hence, in the following part of this section more general research on branding on Instagram and other social media is touched upon, to connect this with this researches' case of Netflix in India and the Netherlands. Additionally, the discussion of branding on Instagram and other social media will also provide the conceptualizations and theory from which coding scheme variables and categories are operationalized.

2.2.2 Branding on Instagram and other social media

In today's digitalized world, connectivity plays an increasingly important role, and more and more countries around the globe are connected through the Internet (Steenkamp, 2017). This connectivity mostly regards the rise of social media, and the potential reach that each customer has in discussing a brand (Steenkamp, 2017). According to eMarketer (2013), marketing managers value the use of social media platforms mostly for branding purposes. Hence, following Steenkamp (2017), brands are constructed emotionally and socially, derived from everyday customer experience, leading to the perception of a brand being beyond the brand's control, yet relying heavily on the brand's influence from inside. Anagnostopoulos, Parganas, Chadwick and Fenton (2018) attribute a slightly larger degree of the consumer's brand perception to the brand's communication on social media. Social media allows organisations or businesses to communicate with their consumers directly, and in doing so communicating their distinctive brand image too (Wallace, Wilson, & Miloch, 2011).

Due to the rise and advance of technological developments, as well as consumers growing to be more demanding, brand management has become an increasingly complex matter (Elikan & Pigneur, 2018). Elikan and Pigneur (2018) also attribute the brand positioning to the internal vision of an organization, which entails the "long-term purpose, reason of existence, vision and philosophy" (p. 4). The internal culture is an important element in the construction of a brand, as the moral beliefs and cultural values influence the principles of an organization, which eventually play a role in constructing the brand's personality, or brand identity (Elikan & Pigneur, 2018). Social media, then, is of key significance in how organisations or businesses communicate their brand and to strengthen the particular perception consumers have of this brand image (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018).

The consumers' perception of a brand is essential because how consumers perceive a brand influences the liking of, and engagement with, the brand. Social media allows organisations to communicate this brand to its existing as well as potential consumers, hence

it is necessary to gain deeper understanding of what elements on social media – here Instagram in particular – play a role in doing so. Therefore, this section is devoted to identifying and discussing such elements. Following Anagnostopoulos et al. (2018), the main elements of which an Instagram post consists are the visual (e.g. image or video) and the written text posted under the visual. Additionally, the formal features of each post are taken into consideration, entailing the type of media, use of logos, engagement and the date of posting. This is broadly categorized into written text (e.g. tone of voice, message orientation), visuals (e.g. display of people, real-time marketing, anthropomorphism) and formal features (e.g. engagement, posting frequency). The elements discussed here serve the purpose of the foundation on which the categories and variables in the content analysis are based.

2.2.2.1 Visuals

Using images is an important aspect of constructing and vitalizing the brand, as visual contents allow fans to interact with the brand's promotional activities on social media (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018). Carah and Shaul (2016) go even further, stating that Instagram specifically stimulates the behaviour of “producing, circulating, and attending to images” (p. 70). This led the author to terming Instagram a so-called “image machine”, indicating that each image on Instagram contains a variety of elements for brands in communicating their message and constructing the perceived brand image (p. 70-1).

In images, this brand perception is significantly defined by visual elements, such as “name, symbols, design, (...) and everything that can be seen” in the brand's communication (Elikan & Pigneur, 2018, p. 4). Nonetheless, translating the brand communication into a creative strategy for social media brand engagement entails developing creative messages in order to increase engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Ashley and Tuten (2015) discuss the development and employment of creative strategies in their content analysis of a sample of “top brands” (e.g. Coca Cola, Google and Disney) and their creative strategies in social media marketing (p. 15). Interactivity, according to Ashley and Tuten (2015), is a pivotal element in the creative strategy of a brand and the communication between the brand and the consumers, as it aids to understanding the consumer-brand relationship whilst also encouraging engagement. However, the notion of interactivity will be further discussed in the ‘written text’ category.

Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) examined the promotional activities of Netflix and HBO on Instagram in two markets: the US and Spain. Here, they found a difference in the emotional and cognitive elements in the content posted. The authors found that Spanish

accounts were more focussed on diegetic content whilst the US accounts posted more non-diegetic imagery (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Adding to this, Netflix also was found using more humour and focussing more on celebrities than HBO does, which increased or at least encouraged engagement (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Another important element is the use of realistic content, which entails a simulated reality, and extradiegetic content, such as for example the display of actors off the set (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019).

Focussing on the display of people in general, research in the field of media representation shows that the representation of gender (how many times women or men are present) and how gender is displayed (for example displaying women stereotypically in the kitchen) on social media is an important factor to take into account. Smith and Sanderson (2015) for example note that the display of gender tends to differ in terms of gender norms and traditional gender display, specifically on the image centred platform of Instagram. Similarly, Carah and Shaul (2016) explore the portrayal of gender in their analysis of brands on Instagram, and how this effected the engagement on Instagram advertisements. They include the notion of gender with that of body depiction in images, arguing that the “labour of drawing on gender scripts and styling the body” is employed to personalize the brand (Carah & Shaul, 2016, p. 79). Following Goffman (1979, Smith and Sanderson (2015) define gender display in the context of social media and branding as “the culturally established correlates of sex (whether in consequence of biology or learning)” (p. 1). Hence, cultural intermediaries of consumers are related to how the brand brands itself (Carah & Shaul, 2016). Due to the arguments that gender display on social media plays a role in branding and this being culturally dependent, the notion of gender display has been taken into consideration in this study. This is done from a constructionist approach, which means that meaning is not fixed; it heavily relies on the interpretation individuals make (Hall, 1997). As the author describes in his renowned encoding-decoding model, meaning is a social construct, and the material (here the posts) should not be mistaken with the symbolic value it has, which may differ between individuals (Hall, 1997).

Another important element of the image, and of branding on social media in general, is the connection between brand messages and ‘timely events’, as discussed by Willemsen, Mazerant, Kamphuis and van der Veen (2018). The authors examine the alignment of brand messages with timely events, which are described as “public events happening in the moment”, a reoccurring activity on social media (Willemsen et al., 2018, p. 829). The authors define this connection of brand messages with timely, public events as “real-time marketing (RTM)” (Willemsen et al., 2018, p. 829). The idea behind RTM is that brands publish a brand

message on social media related to a certain event happening, which gains a “free ride” on the already present discussion or attention surrounding this event, and to become part of this discussion (Willemesen et al., 2018). Doing so, RTM allows brands to gain a degree of awareness which is otherwise unreachable (Willemesen et al., 2018). Kerns (2014), who coined the term ‘trendology’ for this practice, adds that audiences expect real-time marketing, and that this demand is growing increasingly.

An early example of RTM can be found in the 1990 Christmas advertisement by the whisky brand J&B, who created a billboard with the text “ingle ells, ingle ells – The holidays aren’t the same without JB” (Willemesen et al., 2018, p. 830). Nowadays, we still see this type of RTM, such as in the famous Super Bowl ads and how brands refer to the Super Bowl in their messages on social media. However, real-time is becoming increasingly timely in the recent years, and audiences expect real-time marketing to be quicker than ever (Kerns, 2014). An example of timelier brand messages is the case of Oreo, during the blackout at the 2013 Super Bowl (Allagui & Breslow, 2016). Oreo tweeted the famous words “You can still dunk in the dark”, within minutes after the blackout, which in total gathered over 525 million earned impressions online (Allagui & Breslow, 2016, p. 27). It shows that timely messages are worth more than any other message, or even more than the amount of people watching the actual Super Bowl (Allagui & Breslow, 2016).

Willemesen et al. (2018) discuss this difference in RTM, focussed on timing. This has led to the identification of two RTM types: brands connecting timely to predictable events and brands connecting timely to unpredictable events (Willemesen et al., 2018). Predictable events are “moments that are known to happen, like holidays, seasonal happenings (e.g. start of summer), and public events that are announced far in advance (e.g. Super Bowl)” (Willemesen et al., 2018, p. 829). Unpredictable moments, on the contrary, are “moments that unexpectedly happen, like trending topics, social media content that obtains viral status (e.g. #thedress), and breaking news stories (e.g. the death of a well-known artist)” (Willemesen et al., 2018, p. 829).

Furthermore, Willemesen et al. (2018) found that RTM messages most often make use of “moment-driven hashtags” and “moment-driven visuals” (p. 835). In the case of hashtags, this means that the brand message entails a hashtag that refers to the timely event, which therefore resonates more closely with the written text of a post. Hashtags allow a message to be assigned to a topic, and to be searched based on this topic, and in doing so the message is connected with the timely event, or viral content (Willemesen et al., 2018). The moment-driven visuals entail a message with a visual that refers to the timely event, or just a visual that on its

own refers to the timely event (Willemesen et al., 2018). The key in moment-driven visuals is that the content visually connects with a certain event happening at the moment of posting (Willemesen et al., 2018). Especially these types of moment-driven visuals were found to be effectively influencing the word of mouth, such as with images and videos (Willemesen et al., 2018). This is no surprise, as visuals are found to strongly enrich branded messages on social media (Sabate et al., 2014).

These practical approaches to RTM help brands to increase their brand message's impact, and to maintain relevant in their messaging (Willemesen et al., 2018). Additionally, this also increases the likeliness of people sharing the branded messages, and it creates a positive connection with the brand too, van Noort, Antheunis and van Reijmersdal (2012) found. Hence, RTM is an important element in nowadays social media branding strategies, which should therefore be taken into consideration in this research as well.

2.2.2.2 Written text

The second key element of branding on Instagram is the written text that goes with each post. As the text is limited, the creation of “meaningful social media posts” has to be done wisely (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018, p. 429). Also, the text conveys more of the message orientation, as well as to whom the message is targeted to (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018). According to Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019), “the use of first, second or third person” resonates closely with the personalisation of the post, where using the first-person and to some degree second-person in written text is perceived as more personal, whereas third person is seen as more distant (p. 4). Similarly, Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) take the use of emoticons and hashtags into consideration as expressive signs in the written text. Where the expressive function of emoticons seems rather obvious – showing emotions or referring to e.g. buildings, vehicles, food, etc. – the expressive function of hashtags is more complex. Giannoulakis and Tsapatsoulis (2016) found that hashtags only describe the visual content of the image in half of the posts posted on Instagram, affecting the interpretability of the post. Hashtags can thus add to the concept of the image, or add a new layer of expression to the post in total.

Another element in written text is that of interactivity, which according to Ashley and Tuten (2015), is a pivotal element in the creative strategy of a brand and the consumer-brand relationship, as it encourages engagement. Interactivity is described as “the extent to which consumers can participate and engage and be active with the campaign” (Ashley & Tuten, 2015, p. 21). Often, brands encourage users to be interactive, such as by posting questions for

users to answer, or to ask users to send in user-generated content. Hudson, Huang, Roth and Madden (2016) discuss the role that anthropomorphism in marketing and branding on social media plays, which also touches upon interactivity. Anthropomorphism is generally described as the phenomenon where ‘real’ humans perceive a ‘human’ in objects or in the environment that surrounds this given object (Guthrie, 1993). Related to branding on social media platforms, Hudson et al. (2016) describe it as entailing the humanization, or the attribution of humanlike characteristics to a certain degree, of a brand (Hudson et al., 2016). Brands that humanize their brand are described as “brands perceived by consumers as actual human beings with various emotional states, mind, soul and conscious behaviours that can act as prominent members of social ties” (Puzakova, Kwak & Rocereto, 2009, p. 413-4).

The process of anthropomorphising a brand is often used to satisfy the demand for “social connection and the need for control and understanding of the environment.” (Hudson et al., 2016, p. 30). It increases the relationship between consumer and brand in a positive manner, as is exemplified by Chandler and Schwarz (2010) who found that anthropomorphising car brands increases brand loyalty.

In anthropomorphized brands, Hudson et al. (2015) describe two types of anthropomorphism: analogical and humanlike. In the analogical type, a brand is seen as trustworthy due to its communication of human characteristics (Hudson et al., 2015). Analogical anthropomorphism relates more to a brand fulfilling its advertised promises, however with lesser actual human notions (Kim & McGill, 2011). The humanlike type of anthropomorphism involves a deeper association with human characteristics, as mental conditions are attributed to the object or brand, “triggering social and behavioural beliefs possessed by people” (Hudson et al., 2015, p. 4). This type increases the process of customer-brand relationship and the brand’s impact on consumers’ behaviours to the humanized brand (Hudson et al., 2015). Examples of first steps into anthropomorphising a brand are “giving a nickname to the brand, using an animated image as a portrait, and/or using the first-person tone may facilitate anthropomorphizing.” (Hudson et al., 2015, p. 11).

Hudson et al. (2015) also relate anthropomorphised brands to Hofstede’s (2001; 2011) index of uncertainty avoidance and power distance. Power is an important factor in social interaction, and when one interacts with anthropomorphised brands this implies the growth of control, which affects the judgement of the humanized brand, implying “that risk/uncertainty concerns will play a role in consumers’ evaluation of their social media interaction with a humanized brand.” (Hudson et al., 2015, p. 4). As in some cultures uncertainty is avoided rather than embraced, the interaction with humanized brands might have the effect being a

suspected risk in personal power, leading to uncertainty avoidance and thus a decreased consumer-brand relationship – depending from cultural origin and the culture’s influence (Hofstede, 2011; Hudson et al., 2015). For this reason, Hudson et al. (2015) argue that anthropomorphising brands, and the social interactions that go with this process, are more beneficial in high uncertainty avoiding cultures (e.g. France).

As mentioned before, anthropomorphising a brand is just one element in the broader concept of interactivity on social media between brands and consumers. Ashley and Tuten (2015) for example discuss four subcategories; invitation, incentives, ranking or voting and the ability to interact. Hudson et al. (2015), note that an important element of improving the relationship between consumer and brand is based on interaction, which on social media platforms like Instagram mostly entails forms of brand engagement such as “following, replying, tweeting, sharing, liking, and participating” and more (Hudson et al., 2015, p. 29). The authors argue that with these elements higher engagement and consumer investment in the relationship with the brand is encouraged, which results in higher brand loyalty or brand commitment (Hudson et al., 2015). These forms of engagement are established by addressing several consumer appeals, such as functioning as a service provider, touching upon the emotional appeal or underlining the “unique selling proposition” of the product (Ashley & Tuten, 2016, p. 21).

Adding to the factors that impact engagement in social media branding, Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Cañabate and Lebherz (2014) note that the presence and number of links included in a post also impacts the engagement. This is because the authors found that links included in a post decrease the metrics of likes and comments because links usually navigate away from the platform, which decreases the likeliness of a user to return to the post to comment on or like it (Sabate et al., 2014). Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) however found that HBO America often included links to other “official profiles of the series and their actors”, which, contrary to Sabate et al (2014), has a positive influence on engagement (p. 10). Nonetheless, it should be noted that Sabate et al. (2014) approaches links as third parties such as websites, whereas Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) consider links as references to other official profiles within the platform. This is also closely related to the number of images and/or videos in a post, and according to the authors adding one or more links to the post negatively influences the engagement, whilst images and videos positively do so (Sabate et al., 2014). Regarding the length of each post, Sabate et al. (2014) found that posts with more text are likely to increase the number of likes, although the text has no influence on the number of comments.

2.2.2.3 Message Orientation

In the category of message orientation, focus is put on the overarching message that the brand communicates with each post. For example, tonality is an important factor in establishing the online brand communication and reaching the consumer. Guidry, Messner, Jin and Medina-Messner (2015) – who also analyse content posted on social media by large global companies such as McDonalds and Starbucks – focus on the presence of fast-food chains on Instagram in times of crisis. Their analysis of Instagram resonates closely to this research. Including emotional appeal (Ashley & Tuten, 2016), the authors note that tonality usually refers to the tone of voice of a post, which can be negative, neutral or positive (Guidry et al., 2015). The tone of voice influences the engagement, as positive posts are usually more engaging (Guidry et al., 2015).

Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) focus more on the reasons for brands to establish brand pages on social media, and how they are used in terms of strategy and the possible benefits for users to follow such pages. One of the main reasons for brands to engage with consumers on social media, and to encourage consumers in engaging with the brand, is that social media is a strong tool in persuasive forms of promotion and increasing electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Similarly, Sabate et al. (2014) discuss how brands are developing their online presence to establish “brand awareness, engagement and word of mouth” (p. 1001). For example, social media is often used by brands to introduce new products, or to promote existing ones, which links to Netflix’ Instagram activities, too. The introduction or announcement of a new product is discussed by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) as an important factor in using social media brand pages, which also includes providing product details. Interestingly, the authors found that “providing advice and providing useful information for everyday life” were two important variables that reoccurred in their research (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014, p. 334). This strategy of providing information demands high customer involvement (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Nonetheless, when established, these two variables are considered a higher level of communication between the company and the users, as the company in this way presents their users some “tips and a kind of knowledge about everyday-life issues” (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014, p. 334).

Hudson et al. (2015) also focus on social media usage by companies, and associate this with the “consumer-brand relationships” (p. 27). This is conceptualized as the idea that consumers have a perceived relationship with the brand, and that from this brand, meaning to their lives is added (Hudson et al., 2015). This relationship can have “functional and

utilitarian or psychological and emotional meaning”, however all are important factors in engaging consumers with the brand (Hudson et al., 2015, p. 29).

2.2.2.4 Formal features

Sabate et al. (2014) analyse additional factors that have an impact on branded (Facebook) posts, such as likes or comments as engagement. Adding to the notion of likes and comments, Sabate et al. (2014) mention the specific variable of characters, referring to the “post length measured by the number of characteristics” (p. 1006). The length of the message in a post affects the ‘click-through rates’ – the users clicking on an advertisement – negatively (Baltas, 2003), and has an important effect on the engagement, too. Sabate et al. (2014) found that the amount of characters (word count of characters with spaces) in a message positively correlates with the amount of likes, meaning the longer the message, the more likes. Buddy Media Inc. (2011) however report that a maximum of 80 characters (or less) results in higher engagement. Additionally, Guidry et al. (2015) note that the type of media (e.g. an image, text, video, gif, meme, etc.) should also be taken into consideration, in order to examine differences in the type of media in relation to the engagement.

Taking these formal features into consideration in the present study supports further interpretation of engagement as well as interpretation of possible trends. High engagement in either likes, comments or both, might indicate a trend or at least some trigger for the audience to engage with, which can be helpful in interpreting other phenomena such as the aforementioned variables of anthropomorphism, real-time marketing and gender display.

2.3 A critical approach to the Hofstede model

Developing an effective brand identity and brand image connection for each individual nation or distinctive culture requires anticipation on “shared attitudes and behaviours” by individuals and groups within specific countries, as these collective attitudes and behaviours shape the beliefs on what is fundamental in the given culture (Krueger & Nandan, 2008, p. 32). Each country has their own cultural norms, language and symbols, which together require a different cultural framework for each country, to foresee customer behaviours in and among each country (Krueger & Nandan, 2008). As this research aims at comparing two national markets, namely that of India and the Netherlands, a well-funded and elaborate understanding of the relation between these countries’ culture is vital. In order to compare cultures and to discuss the notion of cultural similarities or differences, it is needed to define what exactly is understood when talking about culture in this research.

Related to research on branding, Banerjee cites Taylor’s definition of culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals and law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of that society” (1891, as cited in Banerjee, 2008, p. 313). Sergiovanni and Corbally (1986) provide a comparable definition, although adding the importance of rituals and objects, referring to culture as “the system of values, symbols and shared meanings of a group including the embodiment of these values, symbols and meanings into material objects and ritualised practices.” (p. viii). Hofstede’s (2015) definition closely resonates with this, whilst also focussing on the ‘in the mind’ element of culture; “culture is the collective programming of the mind and distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from another” (p. 2). He argues that culture is something that is shared and which also “distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.” (Hofstede, 2015, p. 2). In this research, culture is understood in line with Sergiovanni and Corbally’s (1986) definition, whilst also taking into account Hofstede’s (2015) notion of the mind being the complex programme of collective values and with whom this is a communal attribute. This is important to consider, as the values and beliefs shared by the people who are part of a culture, have an impact on their individual process of decision-making (Banerjee, 2008).

As culture is now clarified in the light of this research, focus is put on comparing the Indian culture with that of the Netherlands. There are several academic research projects on developing models to analyse differences and comparisons between nation’s cultures, such as the renowned Hofstede Insights (Hofstede, 2001), and the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) research project (House, Hanges, Javidan,

Dorfman & Gupta, 2004). Hofstede Insights offers two tools: national culture comparison and organisational culture comparison (Hofstede, n.d.). As in this research the cultural differences between India and the Netherlands on the national level are central, the Hofstede model of national culture is most relevant. This model is based on six dimensions, which are; power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence (Hofstede, n.d.). These dimensions, and thus this model, are grounded by the widespread research done by Hofstede (2001, as cited in Hofstede, n.d.). The Hofstede model of nation culture comparison is one of the first worldwide studies that “identifies and differentiates cultural dimensions” (Krueger and Nandan, 2008, p. 32) and the extensive research on which the model is based is applied globally in academic and professional contexts, as it covers over 70 countries (Hofstede, n.d.).

The GLOBE project assesses national cultures on nine dimensions, of which six originating from the earlier work of Hofstede (House et al., 2004). These nine dimensions entail “performance orientation, future orientation, assertiveness, power distance, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and gender egalitarianism” (House et al., 2002, p. 3). The GLOBE project consists of surveys performed on “thousands of middle managers” in several industries in 61 countries (House et al., 2002, p. 3). The project compares cultures and measures the effect of differing cultures on their characteristics of successful leadership (House et al., 2002).

The main difference between these models, is that where Hofstede (2011) provides a framework for researching cultures in organisational, national, ethnic groups, occupations, societal and gender fields, the GLOBE project has specified on organisational culture, focussing on leadership, since their main goal is formulated as “to develop an empirically based theory to describe, understand, and predict the impact of cultural variables on leadership and organizational processes and the effectiveness of these processes” (House & Mansor, 1999, p. 11). Based on this main difference in scope, it is here argued that the Hofstede model of national culture comparison is most relevant for this study, as it is aimed to compare the national markets of India and the Netherlands on a more societal cultural level, rather than focussing on organisational cultures within each country – for which the GLOBE model would be a better fit. Following Nakata and Izberk-Bilgin (2009), culture theories like the work of Hofstede help explain “the market and marketing behaviours within and across countries, including consumer innovativeness, brand credibility, and global advertising effectiveness” (p. 61).

2.3.1 A critical examination of Hofstede's cultural dimensions

As the GLOBE and Hofstede model are extensively utilized in both academic and professional fields, a fair amount of critique is presented as well, which needs to be taken into consideration. McSweeney (2002), and in a similar manner Brewer and Venaik (2012), for example criticise Hofstede's work for not providing data about entire national cultures; it is limited in understanding a nation's diversity as it understands national cultures as uniform constructs, whilst nations often are rich to a variety of subcultures. Hence, the dimensions only allow for identifying and clarifying other "national-level phenomena" (Brewer & Venaik, 2012, p. 679). Additionally, McSweeney (2002) argues the data is old, as the data collection is performed between 1967-1973, and therefore is obsolete.

Hofstede (2002) responds to McSweeney (2002) by stating that although nations may not be the best way of analysing culture, 'nations are usually the only kind of units available for comparison' (p. 1356). Hofstede (2002) adds that the aim of the model is not to provide information about entire cultures; rather the goal is to measure differences between national cultures. Finally, addressing the criticism of the data being 'old', Hofstede notes that although this might be true, the found dimensions 'have centuries-old roots' and maintained constant across two succeeding surveys, while adding that the work is updated frequently with the latest edition dating from 2001 (Hofstede, 2002).

Furthermore, there has been critique in examining and comparing both the Hofstede model and the GLOBE project. Venaik and Brewer (2011) critically approached some of the dimensions included in both Hofstede and GLOBE models. For example, the authors discovered contradictions in the way Hofstede and GLOBE deal with the notions of individualism and collectivism, and suggest revisions in terminology, namely "Self-orientation versus Work-orientation" for Hofstede's Individualism versus Collectivism, and "Institutional and Family Collectivism" for GLOBE's dimension on In-group Collectivism (Venaik & Brewer, 2011, p. 442). In Hofstede's case, Venaik and Brewer (2011) argue that the dimension explains the differences in national practices or values relating to self-orientation versus work-orientation, instead of relating to Individualism versus Collectivism (Venaik & Brewer, 2011). This revision is proposed as this "more faithfully represent the items used in these studies to measure these dimensions" (Venaik & Brewer, 2011, p. 442).

Adding to this, Venaik, Zhu and Brewer (2013) examined Hofstede's long-term orientation (LTO) in comparison with GLOBE's future orientation (FO). Both LTO and FO are widely utilized in explaining differences in time orientation across countries, and how this reflects and influences behaviours in those countries (Venaik, Zhu & Brewer, 2013).

However, in the examination of the theoretical and empirical analysis of LTO and FO, some important implications were found in regards to the usefulness of employing either Hofstede or GLOBE national culture time dimensions (Venaik, Zhu & Brewer, 2013). The variables in the LTO dimensions are “conceptually multidimensional”, focussing on the multiple elements of time orientation: “perseverance and thrift for the future pole, and tradition and steadiness/stability for the past pole” (Venaik, Zhu & Brewer, 2013, p. 378). GLOBE’s FO dimension, on the contrary, corresponds to “unidimensional” conceptualization, focussed mainly on “a single planning attribute for the future, in practices or values, versus living for the present” (Venaik, Zhu & Brewer, p. 378).

Based on this, Venaik, Zhu and Brewer (2013) propose that LTO should be labelled “Past-tradition versus Future-saving orientation” (p. 378). This is because the “past-tradition pole” is assessed with elements that mainly reflect upon societies’ perspective on tradition, whereas the “future-saving pole” is examined using elements of thrift values reflected in society (Venaik, Zhu & Brewer, 2013, p. 378). In the case of GLOBE FO, it is proposed that future orientation is understood as “present versus future-planning orientation”, as this highlights that the future in this dimension is related to the present, whereas Hofstede’s future is compared to the past (Venaik, Zhu & Brewer, 2013). The authors argue that with adding this nuances in terminology, a more precise understanding of what the dimensions entail is added, which allows for a more appropriate and accurate interpretation in national culture characteristics (Venaik, Zhu & Brewer, 2013).

As noted before, the Hofstede-GLOBE debate is still on going. This section is not and should not be understood as a contribution to this debate, rather it should be seen as the careful consideration of employing the Hofstede model of national culture. As Tung and Verbeke (2010) note, both models have their own strengths and weaknesses, and whichever model one uses, it should be critically assessed how and why the given model and framework is appropriate in line with the research question and the context in which the research takes place. It is argued that in discussing the Hofstede-GLOBE debate as presented here; a critical approach is taken into consideration when employing the Hofstede model as done in this study.

The decision to employ Hofstede’s model of national comparison instead of for example the GLOBE model, is based on several arguments, such as that Hofstede’s model is conceptually multi-dimensional, focussing on multiple elements of time orientation whereas GLOBE is unidimensional. It is argued that, while focussing on time orientation, in this research a multidimensional conceptualization allows for richer detail in interpretation of the

results from the analysis in this dimension. Additionally, the GLOBE model is defined predominantly for purposes in the field of business management thus focussed on culture in organizational contexts and behaviours. Hofstede's model of national comparison focuses more on the general national culture, which resonates more closely with the aim of comparing cultures in this research, as the focus is put on the culture of the users that watch and engage with Netflix' Instagram posts, rather than organizational culture in India and the Netherlands.

From this section, the proposed revisions of the LTO dimension as well as the Individualism versus Collectivism dimension are taken into account, as will be discussed in the discussion of each dimension below. Taking from this debate, it is also important to stress that the use of Hofstede's model, with the dimensions and how each country scores on these, does not stipulate the exact country positions. Rather, it provides their relative positions to other countries in the dataset (Hofstede, 2011).

2.3.2 Positioning Indian and Dutch culture in the Hofstede model

In this section, the six dimensions of the Hofstede model of national are touched upon. First, the dimensions are presented and briefly described (see table 1). Second, the results from the comparison between India and the Netherlands made by employing the model are discussed. Here, a more in-depth discussion per dimensions is presented, in relation to the cases of India and the Netherlands specifically. This comparison will also be used in the research' analysis accordingly, serving as the foundation on which further theoretical and empirical interpretations will be made.

Table 1. Description of the six Hofstede dimensions of national culture

Dimension	Description
Power Distance Index (PDI)	PDI addresses how unequal power distribution is handled and accepted in a society (Hofstede, 2011). High PDI shows a certain acceptance of hierarchical order; while a low PDI score suggests that the given society strives to equality in power distribution and stress the importance of justification for any inequality of power (Hofstede, 2011). This exemplified in how elderly are “neither respected nor feared” (low PDI) versus them being “both respected and feared” (high PDI) (Hofstede, 2011, p. 9).
Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV)	IDV regards the “preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families” (Hofstede, n.d.). This entails the opposition between Collectivism, where individuals are expected to take care of their relatives and are loyal, and Individualism, where this is not present or in lesser degree (Hofstede, n.d.). This is reflected in the image of the self, and whether this is defined in terms of “I” or “we”. (Hofstede 2011, p. 11).
Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS)	Masculinity represents the favouring of “achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success in a society”, which is purely competitive (Hofstede, n.d.). Femininity refers to preferring societal care for the weak, “cooperation, modesty (...) and quality of life” (Hofstede, n.d.). The MAS index also relates to the degree of “tough versus tender” and the relation between genders in cultures (Hofstede, n.d.).
Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)	UAI voices the extent societies feel distressed when facing ambiguity or uncertainty (Hofstede, 2011). Also, it touches upon either “letting it happen” or attempting to control unknown prospects (Hofstede, 2011, p. 13). A higher UAI expresses strong beliefs and behaviours against untraditional behaviours and ideas, whilst a low UAI represents a ‘relaxed’ stance on changing ideas, in which principles are less important than practice (Hofstede, n.d.).
Long-term Orientation versus short-term normative orientation (LTO)	LTO addresses how societies deal either pragmatic or normative with the shared past and future challenges differently (Hofstede, n.d.). This is best understood as an orientation on “past-tradition versus future-saving” (Venaik, Zhu & Brewer, 2013, p. 378). Low LTO suggests preference for maintenance of established traditions and norms, while “viewing societal change suspiciously” (Hofstede, n.d.). High LTO indicates a pragmatic approach to social changes, encouraging more modern preparation for future challenges (Hofstede, n.d.).
Indulgence vs. Restraint (IND)	Indulgence indicates a society where free gratification of basic and natural human drives relating to enjoying life are allowed, whereas Restraint suggests that this gratification is suppressed and ordered, such as by firm social norms (Hofstede, 2011). An example of indulgence perceives life as under personal control, whereas restrained people perceive this as being out of their own control (Hofstede, 2011).

2.3.2.1 Comparing India and the Netherlands

In this section, the scores of India and the Netherlands on each cultural dimension are presented and explained. Additionally, a graph is displayed that presents an overview of the scores per country, per dimension (see table 2.).

On the power distance dimension, India scores a high 77 out of 100, indicating a high appreciation for hierarchy in Indian society. The communication is top-down, meaning that for example negative feedback is never provided to someone higher in the societal ladder, and that unequal power relations are accepted. The Netherlands, on the contrary, score relatively low with 38 out 100. Hence, the Dutch societal characteristics suggest preference for independency, equality and decentralized power relations. Here, communication is direct and non-hierarchical.

On the individualism versus collectivism dimension, India scores intermediate with 48 out of 100. Indian society is best understood as having both collectivistic and individualistic qualities. Here, the feeling of belonging to a larger social basis is preferred, in which for example the opinions of family and other social networks are valued (Hofstede, n.d.). However, Indian people heavily rely on Hinduism, the dominant religion and/or philosophy (Hofstede, n.d.). Therefore, Indian people often share the feeling of being individually responsible for the impact of their lives, relating to an individualistic view of life. Krueger and Nandan (2008) found that India has a strong collectivist culture, and that in Indian culture group membership is important. According to the authors Indian culture takes pride in belonging to in-groups, which also emphasizes the feminine aspect in concerning yourself with others and valuing relationships (Krueger and Nandan, 2008).

The Netherlands scores quite high (80 out of 100) which suggests that the Netherlands is a very individualistic society. Individuals take care of themselves and close family only, and society in general shares a great liking for a ‘loosely-knit social framework’ (Hofstede, n.d.).

On the dimension of masculinity, India scores intermediate with a score of 56 out 100. However, following Hofstede’s (n.d.), this suggests that India is a masculine society. In terms of visual portrayal of power and success, India is considered very masculine, as advertising individual success – by showing branded clothing for example – is performed extensively (Hofstede, n.d.). In masculine societies, focus is put on success and accomplishments and this is endorsed by material gains. The Netherlands, on the contrary, is considered a feminine society, as it scores 14 out of 100 (Hofstede, n.d.). Here, maintaining balance between work

and private life is valued, and others are involved in decision-making processes in higher degree (Hofstede, n.d.).

Regarding the uncertainty avoidance dimension, India scores a medium low 40 out of 100, meaning India is considered a patient society, where uncertainty is highly tolerated (Hofstede, n.d.). In Indian society, adjusting to the circumstances is central to its culture towards the unexpected or the unknown (Hofstede, n.d.). In the Netherlands, with a score of 53 out of 100, a preference for uncertainty avoidance is present, as security is of great importance in individual motivations and a certain emotional need to establish rules is present (Hofstede, n.d.). Dutch society in general is considered less tolerant to innovative or unknown ideas as the society leans more towards maintaining the current beliefs and behaviours as they are.

On the long-term orientation dimension, India scores intermediate with a 51 out of 100, meaning that a main preference cannot be concluded. This may be due to India's wide tolerance towards various religions, and the acceptance of many truths (Hofstede, n.d.). The Netherlands scores a 67 out of 100 on this dimension, displaying the rather pragmatic nature of Dutch culture. This refers to the belief that truth is dependent on time and context, and it shows a certain extent of being able to adapt to changing environments (Hofstede, n.d.).

For the indulgence dimension, the differences between India and the Netherlands are profound. India, scoring a lower score of 26 out of 100, is considered a restraint culture. This means that in general, Indian society often leans towards cynicism and pessimism. Indian people thus are often restrained by social norms in their actions, or at least have the perception of being restrained to some degree. (Hofstede, n.d.). The Netherlands, on the other hand, scores rather high with 68 out of 100, supporting the idea that the Dutch share a culture of indulgence. This means a willingness to realise desires and to enjoy living life with a positive attitude, leaning towards optimism (Hofstede, n.d.).

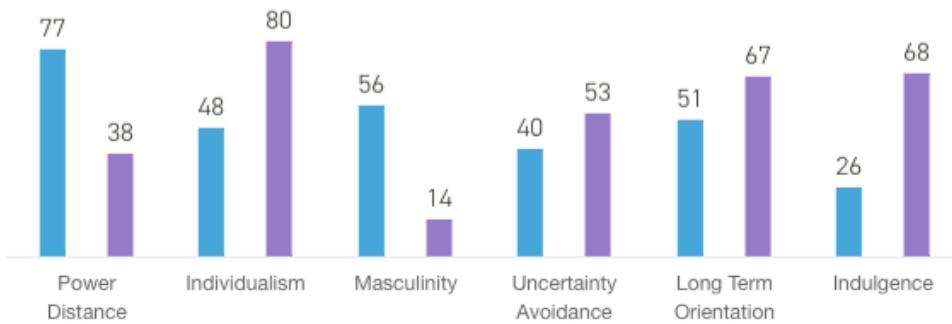


Table 2. Graph overview of the scores of India and the Netherlands on Hofstede's six dimensions of national culture (Hofstede, n.d.)

The discussed results from the Hofstede model of national culture comparison demonstrate that the Netherlands and India share quite different cultural values and beliefs. Culture has an important impact on brand identification, as Krueger and Nandan (2008) illustrate for the case of India. Regarding cultural eating habits, for example, fast food brands like Pizza Hut and McDonald's changed their products according to Indian cultural and religious principles. McDonalds for example abandoned beef products, to avoid offending Indian groups who value cows as sacred animals (Krueger & Nandan, 2008). The authors stress that India's culture is "extremely strong and provides significant barriers to marketing in that country" (Krueger & Nandan, 2008, p. 32). Beneficial marketing in India demands for thorough knowledge of the Indian consumer and its culture, and thus requires a careful selection of target markets (Krueger & Nandan, 2008). Consumer acceptance then, depends on the brand image, which entails a variety of beliefs surrounding a specific brand, which detaches the brand from competitors (Krueger & Nandan, 2008).

With the cultural differences between India and the Netherlands in mind, it is hypothesised that Netflix entails a rather localized approach. Following Jeong et al. (2019), differences between markets often require localized brand strategies, as the local environment plays an important role in brand localization. Chandra et al. (2015), who also address marketing businesses in India, assess transferability of advertising between India and the US. The authors address India as a Big Emerging Market (BEM), which means that the Indian market allows for remarkable growth opportunities (Chandra et al., 2015). India has a growing middle class – growing both in size as in purchasing power – and from an economic point of view India thus holds great opportunities for internationalized businesses (Chandra et

al., 2015). Nonetheless, culture-driven preferences specifically in India do not allow for advertisers to standardize their marketing (Chandra et al., 2015).

An interesting example of Netflix adapting to the local Indian market occurred recently, suggesting that Netflix indeed considers the Indian market as rather important. In competition with other SVODs in the Indian market – such as Disney's Hotstar – Netflix started piloting an adjusted subscription plan to win over the Indian market (Ramachandran, 2019). In this new subscription plan, the basic Netflix plan is reduced to only half of the original price. Yet, with this plan Netflix can only be watched on mobile devices (Ramachandran, 2019). As data plans for mobile phones in India are relatively cheap, more and more Indian consumers consume content on their phones, and this specific subscription plan for Indian Netflix consumers shows that Netflix adapts its marketing to the local market environment and to the local needs and desires of the Indian consumers. Hence, this example shows, as both Chandra et al. (2015) and Krueger and Nandan (2008) noted already, that the Indian market is becoming increasingly important for international businesses.

3. Research design

In order to answer the research question ‘How does Netflix use Instagram to construct and promote its brand in India and the Netherlands?’, it is necessary to establish and described the method applied for doing so. As the aim here is to identify if and explore how Netflix constructs and promotes its brand in culturally differing markets, and to offer an in-depth understanding to how Netflix deals with the globalizing aspect of online brand marketing, a qualitative research approach is argued to be most suitable for this research (Jackson, Drummond & Camara, 2007). Analysing and interpreting the phenomenon of Netflix’ brand promotion on Instagram in a qualitative approach will lead to rich, detailed information, on which a more comprehensive interpretation and understanding will be based. As already mentioned before, the analysis will be performed on Instagram posts, which are published on the Netflix accounts dedicated to both India (@netflix_in) and the Netherlands (@netflixnl). The accounts respectively have an online following of 716 thousand⁶ and 140 thousand followers⁷.

Firstly, the process of data collection is touched upon, including a discussion of the selected Indian and Dutch accounts, as well as the sampling. Secondly, the data analysis is discussed, in which a more precise definition and explanation of the applied method is presented. Lastly, the validity and reliability are touched upon, and ethical implications are discussed and disclosed.

3.1 Data collection

The data analysed in this research is the content published by Netflix on Instagram, particularly that of the Indian and Dutch accounts. As the aim here was to seek how Netflix deals with cultural differences in voicing their brand, the choice for India and the Netherlands was based mainly on the cultural differences between the both. Although it is rather complex to establish what differs countries in terms of culture, or cultural values, the Hofstede Insights tool provides some useful information on this topic. The tool is based on the work of Geert Hofstede (2001), who has developed a variety of models for comparing cultural values on national levels. In this research, the model to compare countries and their cultures with other countries is used, which is termed the Hofstede model of national culture. This model distinguishes countries from each other on six cultural dimensions, which are; power distance index (PDI), individualism versus collectivism (IDV), masculinity versus femininity (MAS),

⁶ As checked on February 21, 2019 1 million followers on May 28, 2019

⁷ As checked on February 21, 2019, 184 thousand followers on May 28, 2019

uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), long-term orientation versus short-term normative orientation (LTO), and indulgence versus restraint (IND).

As the aim of this research is to understand how Netflix deals with different cultures in promoting their brand, the goal of using the Hofstede model of national culture was to find two countries with significant differences in their cultural values. Additionally, the researcher's knowledge of the Dutch and English language guarantees a proper translation and thus a proper analysis of the data. Hence, in addition to the cultural differences, the selection was also based on the spoken language on the Netflix accounts, sampling only English or Dutch written accounts. Netflix has multiple nation-dedicated accounts that employ English as the main spoken language, under which @Netflix (US), @Netflixnl (the Netherlands), @Netflix_in (India), @Netflixuk (UK and Ireland), @Netflixnordic (Nordic countries), @Netflixasia (Asia), and @Netflixca (Canada). From comparing these countries with the Hofstede model of national culture, the largest difference was found between India and the Netherlands.

It is argued that, based on the analysis of the content published on these two accounts, interesting and relevant statements can be made regarding cultural and social values and the differences in these values, and how an internationalized company such as Netflix deals with these differences in voicing their brand on Instagram. With this sample, an interesting comparison can be made between Western and Asian culture, as Dutch culture closely relates to predominantly Western culture while India is well-known for its Bollywood culture, distancing itself from Western Hollywood productions (Derné, 2008).

As the accounts have been selected, it is necessary to collect the data from the accounts. For the analysis, a total of 160 Instagram posts are collected; 80 from the account dedicated to India and 80 from the account dedicated to the Netherlands. The data collection is done in chronological order, meaning that the 80 most recent posts are collected for each account, on the last day of April 2019. As the accounts publish posts in differing frequencies, the posts date from February 2019 until April 2019, since this leads to 80 posts per account. In the data collection, posts from Monday to Sunday have been collected, as this allows for identification of potential differences in content per day, as well as to recognize the frequency of publishing posts per account. For example, Netflix releases its new seasons on Fridays, which makes it likely that the type of post published that day differs from those published on Tuesdays (Jenner, 2018). Based on Smith and Sanderson's (2015) argument that the principal draw of Instagram is its photographic content, and that images tell stories, the analysis is focussed mainly on photographic content, as well as the additional text under the post

(caption), together referred to as a ‘post’. Photographic content is understood as photo and video, as well as the more recent trend of GIFs (Graphics Interchange Formats), as Mann (2016) touched upon Netflix’ use of this GIF media type. As social media is highly dynamic, capturing content from the Instagram platform is rather tricky. Accessing the contents online is dangerous as content may be altered or modified, or even deleted, and the amount of likes and comments constantly changes (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). For this reason, the content is captured by taking screenshots from each post. This way, the sample is preserved in a static manner, and the Instagram posts maintained available for analysis. An example of this can be found in image 1.



Image 1: Netflix Instagram post⁸

In the analysis, the number of likes and comments on each post will also be taken into account. The retraction of the amount of likes and comments took place on the same day as the data collection, and is obtained from the overview that each post presents (see image 2). These numbers allow for the measurement of differences in engagement between the posts from one account, which helps interpreting trends or indicating particular high or low engagement with the branding activities. Following Nanda, Pattnaik and Lu (2018), high levels of interaction are important as this encourages “electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)” as well as stronger fan communities, which underwrite the benefits of social media campaigns (p. 247).

However, actual contents of the comments are not analysed, as the goal of this research is to analyse how Netflix promotes its brand identity, without notions of how audiences respond to this on an in-depth level. Also, a comparison of likes and comments between one

⁸ Netflix_in. (2019, March 7). Real heroes let you xerox their notes. [Instagram post]. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/ButDNxxASl2/>

post from the Indian and one post from the Dutch account will not take place, as trends may differ and the amount of followers between these accounts differs significantly (140 thousand followers on the Dutch account relative to 716 thousand followers on the Indian account).

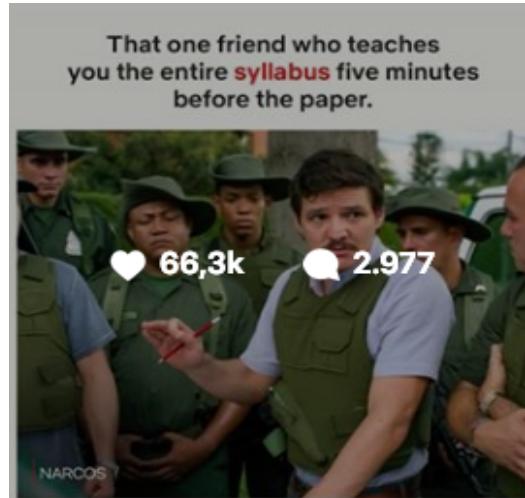


Image 2: Number of likes and comments per post⁹

3.2 Data analysis

The goal of this research is to analyse the content published by Netflix on the accounts dedicated to India and the Netherlands, to compare and interpret possible differences and similarities. For the analysis, it is argued that conducting a content analysis is highly appropriate, as this methodology entails a discreet, nonreactive approach that allows for in-depth interpretation. Content analysis is often used by social scientists for the analysis of several types of media content (Krippendorff, 2004), for instance to gain understanding on “television commercials, product placement, outdoor advertising, and Web sites” (Ashely & Tuten, 2015, p. 20). Content analysis does not allow for examining the success of Netflix’s branding strategy on Instagram, however it does allow for the identification and interpretation of strategies (Ashely & Tuten, 2015). Krippendorff (2018) discusses content analysis as a “(...) research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use.” (p. 24). As Neuendorf (2016) states, performing content analysis entails the principal that the audiences are more than just recipients; rather, they are given an active role in the perception. As Jackson et al. (2017) explain, content analysis entails breaking down the data into parts that are categorized and

⁹ Netflix_in. (2019, March 7). Real heroes let you xerox their notes. [Instagram post]. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/ButDNxxASl2/>

coded, to establish a pattern by comparing and relating the identified categories. This includes interpretation, theorization and making sense of the collected data (Jackson et al., 2017).

As the research questions are defined and the data collection is described, the next step is to build the coding frame, also referred to as “the heart of the method” (Schreier, 2013, p. 174). Here, preliminary analysis of 20 posts (10 per account) is executed, on which the main categories’ specifications are based. Additionally, subcategories are identified too. During this process of identification, a combination of both deductive and inductive content analysis is performed. As Elo and Kynäs (2008) explain, the main difference between deductive and inductive content analysis is understood as lying in the phase in which sense is made from the data. As the authors describe, a deductive approach entails categorization of the data based on existing academic literature and concepts, whereas the inductive approach is often used in cases where previous work on the phenomenon is limited (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

The data is first examined in a deductive manner. In this first step, the theory as discussed in the theoretical framework, and concepts related to branding and marketing on Instagram, offered the foundation of categories and variables to which the data was assigned. Deductive content analysis entails an iterative nature, drawing from existing academic knowledge to add an in-depth understanding of the data in this research (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In the deductive analysis, the data is moved from general into smaller, specific pieces of data categories, based on previous theory (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Secondly, the data is assessed in an inductive way. As already mentioned before, although some relevant theory and concepts are found, a certain scientific gap is still present, to which this research aims to contribute. Performing the analysis in an inductive manner then offers a recursive dimensions to the analysis, as this entails coding the data with open coding and coding sheets, which means that the data is read through thoroughly before attributing it to different categories – that together describe the whole dataset (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). After this, a coding scheme was created in which the different categories are defined. Doing so, the objective of grouping the data is to create distinctive categories and thus reduce the total amount of (similar) categories, to support further interpretation of the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). These categories serve the purpose of both describing the phenomenon as well as increasing existing knowledge and adding new knowledge and understanding (Cavanagh, 1997).

After building the coding frame, Schreier (2013) describes the next step of segmentation, which means that the material will be divided into meaningful segments, a necessary step for trial coding. After doing so, the built coding frame is evaluated and

modified, based on the unidimensionality, consistency, validity and exhaustiveness of the coding frame (Schreier, 2013).

Finally, the main analysis is conducted. Here, a comparative element is applied as the results from the Indian and the Dutch Instagram accounts will be compared, to understand the potential comparisons and/or differences between the content, which contributes to further interpretation of the analysis. The results are entered in a coding scheme in Excel, later to be organized to answer the research questions. This coding scheme is displayed in the results section, where the results are interpreted based on the theory from the theoretical framework. Schreier (2013) adds that for content analysis, a delicate and precise analysis of all compartments of the accounts is necessary, as it avoids own assumptions and expectations from the researcher in the selection and analysis processes.

Moreover, the results of the analysis are summarized in a “quasi-statistical analysis style”, by means of numerically displaying the data with descriptive statistics (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338). Here, the observations are quantified in order to create a comprehensive overview of the findings, which allows for a clear and interpretable comparison between the content on the analysed accounts. Although this research relies firmly on qualitative data, quantifying the observations allows the researcher to capture and compare impressions and trends (Chi, 1997). By doing so, a well-founded comparison of the frequency of observations can be established in a quantitative manner, while maintaining the detailed meaning attributed to each code (Chi, 1997). Furthermore, this contributes to the transparency of the analysis, as the display and summary of the data in descriptive statistics allows the reader to derive information from the data in a comprehensive manner (Dytham, 2011).

In the descriptive statistics, the mean and standard deviation of the likes and comments are calculated, and the frequency and percentage of the observations are reported. As Sandelowski (2000) rightfully notes, quantifying data by means of counting observations in qualitative content analysis is “a means to an end, not the end itself” (p. 338). Rather, by doing so, a clear description of the patterns identified in the data is given, on which comparison is based (Sandelowski, 2000). For example, data is presented by means of averages, and standard deviations are calculated and displayed. Calculating the averages of nominal scale values is exclusively done in order to establish a clear comparison between the observations of the analysed accounts. The calculation of the standard deviation (SD) serves a similar purpose. SD indicates the “typical distance of an observation from distribution centre or middle value” (Barde & Barde, 2012, p. 3). Here, low SD suggests little variability in the data, whereas high SD means that the data is more spread out (Barde & Barde, 2012). This

also helps in further interpretation of trends and patterns in the analysed contents, as for example a high SD in the engagement on posts indicates the presence of trends in the engagement on posts.

With the mentioned specifics of the methodology and approach to the data analysis, it is thought that performing a qualitative content analysis is an appropriate method for the analysis of the sample, and for connecting the results to the broader field of international media marketing and brand management. It is argued that by providing descriptive statistics, the analysis is performed in a well-funded and transparent manner, suitable for the comparative characteristics of this research.

3.3 Operationalization

In this research, a variety of variables are adapted from previous research on branding on social media, as well as from earlier research on Netflix and other SVOD platforms specifically. During the inductive phase of trial coding, additional variables were identified. Together, the variables are divided and dedicated to different categories. In this section, these variables and categories are described and defined, in order to clarify how they are made observable for the analysis of this research. Below this section, a broad overview of the established categories and variables are presented in tables 3, 4 and 5.

In order to answer the research question on how Netflix constructs and communicates their brand image on Instagram in culturally different countries – namely that of India and the Netherlands – the data was first divided into two overarching categories. These two categories are written text, dedicated to all the elements in the text written besides the image (the ‘caption’), and visuals, dedicated to all the visual elements. The section of visual then is divided into image, which contains imagery such as photography, gifs and memes, and video, which contains all motion pictures. Table 3 shows the categories and variables for the written text, whereas table 4 does so for images, and table 5 for video specifically. It should be noted that each unit of analysis (e.g. a post), could be coded with multiple posts. For example, an image can consist of multiple people from different ages (e.g. baby and grown-up) and multiple ethnicities (e.g. Asian and Hispanic).

Table 3. Written text

Written text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone of voice • Message orientation • Interactivity • Real-time marketing • Formal features

Table 4. Image

Image
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origin of content • People • Socioemotional appeal • Real-time marketing • Interactivity • Formal features

Table 5. Video

Video
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origin of content • People • Socioemotional appeal • Interactivity • Formal features • Type of video

3.3.1 Written text operationalization

The overarching category of written texts consists of variables to observe all elements of the written text, including emoticons, hashtags, and numerical text such as the number of likes. These variables are organized in several categories, as presented above. The category of tone of voice entails three variables: point of view, expressive signs and use of imperative words (see table 6). Point of view is observed by examining the use of first, second or third person, where second and third person are understood as less personal than using first person messages (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) also discuss the use of expressive signs, which is here further divided into the variables of hashtags, emoticons and punctuation. The use of hashtags and emoticons is considered as an important factor in personalisation of the message of the post, and from the inductive phase of trial coding it was found that punctuation such as exclamation marks potentially does so as well. These elements are observed by counting the number of emoticons, hashtags or punctuation. Additionally, the use of imperative words is observed by count as well, as this also is an influential element in tone of voice as well as in engagement with the post (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Together, it is argued, observation of these variables allows for an interpretation of the tone of voice of Netflix' brand messages applied on Instagram.

The message orientation category contains variables focussed on the message behind the text; the overarching orientation of the message embedded in each post. This is observed by three variables: socioemotional appeal, intention and objective (see table 6). The socioemotional appeal addresses the interpretation of the emotion that the message aims at, such as being humoristic or sad, and showing solidarity or tension release (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). The direction variable specifies the interpretation of the written text's direction.

Instrumental texts for example ask for opinions or suggestions from the audience, whereas an informational text provides other information. The variable of objective serves the observation of the interpreted objective behind the message's orientation, such as greeting, polling, or promoting content (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Together, the socioemotional appeal of each message is observed, which allows for further interpretation in connection with the Hofstede model and relevant literature as described in the theoretical framework.

The category of interactivity is defined in each overarching category, as in both visual as textual elements the posted content the encouragement of participation occurred. This category is divided into two variables: encouragement and tagging. Encouragement is observed by indicating the presence of three variables, which are incentives or invitations, the ability to rank or vote and the ability to participate (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Together, these three variables allow for analysis of the encouragement to be interactive from Netflix, to its audience. The variable of tagging is used to observe the use of tags in the visuals and text, as the inductive phase trial coding reported the frequent practice of doing so. Based on the work of Sabate et al. (2014), this variable observes the tagging of users, celebrities (e.g. actors and actresses), official profiles (e.g. Instagram profile of *La Case de Papel*).

From the inductive trial coding, references between public or viral events and the visuals and text frequently reoccurred. This phenomenon within branding on social media is here understood as real-time marketing (Willemsen et al., 2018). Although this relates closely to interactivity in the sense that it refers to real-life events in the lives of the audience, real-time marketing is defined as a separate category. The reason for this is that the phenomenon is rather new, and it does not resonate completely with interactivity as defined here. To observe real-time marketing, first, the presence of such connection between the content and public events or viral contents is examined. Second, the predictability is observed; whether the event referred to was predictable or unpredictable (Willemsen et al., 2018). Third, based on the findings in the inductive trial coding, and in order to connect real-time marketing with Hofstede's (2011) model of national comparison, the locality of the event or viral content is interpreted, be it national, international, or cultural/religious specific. This also allows for further interpretation of the content in the context of the aforementioned debate surrounding standardization versus localization.

The category of formal features in written text is employed to examine the post length, which is measured by counting the number of characters (including spaces) of each post's caption. This is based on the findings that post length effects engagement (Sabate et al., 2014) as well as the click-through rate on advertisements (Baltas, 2003).

3.3.2 Visuals operationalization

The overarching category of visuals includes video and still imagery, which share the same categories and variables. For video however, an extra variable is added to examine the type of video content specifically, whether it is a trailer, extended content, a making-off or other content.

For visuals in general, first, the origin of the content is observed, as to whether the content is diegetic, which means that the content is taken from Netflix shows, or non-diegetic, which means that the content is not from any Netflix show (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Considering the reoccurrence of memes during the trial coding, the notion of simulation is taken into account as well, which is best understood as using own content (e.g. Netflix shows) and creating a new context within this existing content, which often is the case with memes (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Also, the visuals are observed on extra-diegetic origins, which considers diegetic content outside of the diegetic context, for example by portraying actors offset (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019).

The category of people is designed to observe how people are displayed in the visual content, with a specific focus on gender display (Goffman, 1979). Gender display is considered valuable as observing this adds to the understanding of how gender is displayed in different cultural contexts, also relating to Hofstede's (2011) dimension of masculinity versus femininity. Gender display is observed with the variables of centralisation, professional role and affection. The observation of centralisation regards the placement of males and females within the image. The displayed professional role is observed by examining if males and females are depicted in more stereotypical, traditional, or more modernised roles, which adds to the interpretation of stereotypical gender display. Affection, which entails the sensual, sexual, or more friendliness or seriousness of the person displayed, is observed with two sub-variables: clothing and expression. For clothing, the nudity is considered, as nude, showing skin, dressed and fully dressed. Expression here regards the facial expression of the people displayed. Together, it is argued, the observation of these variables allows for an interpretation of the affection and gender display, on which further interpretation in the discussion can be based. Additionally, the category of actor/actress is employed in order to examine if the visuals displays people in character or as themselves (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019), and 'other' takes into consideration the cases where other people than actors or actresses are displayed.

Observing the demographics of the people displayed, the variables of estimated age and the assumed ethnicity are defined. For age category, a broader estimation is made

regarding whether the people displayed are baby, child, adolescent, grown-up or elderly. Ethnicity is considered important as the inductive trial coding indicated a possible degree of difference in the representation of different ethnicities between the Dutch and Indian profiles. As the variable of ethnicity entails estimation, the identification needs to be done delicately. Webb, Vinsoki, Bonar, Davies and Etzel (2017) also note the importance of considering the ethnicity of people displayed on Instagram, and describe this in a careful manner, which is aimed for here as well. Therefore, their scale is adapted in this study, which includes the categories of “White/European American, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/South Asian American, or Other.” (Webb et al., 2017, p. 56).

The main categories of socioemotional appeal, real-time marketing and interactivity are similar to the observations made for written text. For real-time marketing, the notion of visual drive is also taken into account (Willemsen et al., 2017). This variable aids in understanding the role of visual elements in real-time marketing (Willemsen et al., 2017). Also, the category of message orientation is dedicated specifically to written text, as the inductive trial coding phase showed that the message orientation was found in the written text predominantly. Nonetheless, socioemotional appeal is considered to still be relevant for visual content, as the visuals often carry emotional messages too (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Hence, for visuals this variable is included as well, similar to the category of written text.

Furthermore, the formal features category is included, although different than for the written text category. Here, the presence of a logo in the visual is observed, as well as whether or not the image has text. Also, the number of visual elements is included, as one post can include multiple images or videos. Additionally, the number of likes and number of comments are observed, as Seo et al. (2018) noted the paratextual signalling cue that these numbers have, as well as because comparing different posts from one account on this variable allows for measuring trends in engagement.

Adding to the aforementioned categories and variables, the earlier discussed notion of anthropomorphism will also be explored. To make anthropomorphism in the brand message observable, as Tuškej and Podnar (2018) argue, a clear dissociation between anthropomorphism and functional traits needs to be distinguished. Hence, based on the work of Waytz, Epley and Cacioppo (2010), corporate brand anthropomorphism is made observable by the analysis five anthropomorphic brand traits, which are “emotional, self-conscious, sociable, honest, has good intensions” (Tuškej & Podnar, 2018, p. 9). This can be in both texts as in visual contents. The emotional brand trait is analysed in the category of socioemotional appeal, self-consciousness is observed in the category of written text, by the use of first,

second or third person, which reflects on self-consciousness too. Honesty and having good intentions are observed in the category of message orientation, made observable as the variable of direction and socioemotional appeal. Together, this helps reflecting on the presence and extent of anthropomorphism of the branded messages on Instagram of Netflix in both India and the Netherlands. The degree of connection found between any given post and the definition of anthropomorphism then helps to further categorize the data – if anthropomorphic – into analogical or humanlike anthropomorphism (Hudson et al., 2016).

Table 6. Categories and variables for Written Text

Category	Sub-category	Sub-subcategory	Description	Adapted from
Tone of voice	1.1 Point of view		First, second or third person	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
	1.2 Expressive signs			
		<i>Hashtags</i>	1, 2, more than 2	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
		<i>Emoticons</i>	1, 2, more than 2	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
		<i>Punctuation</i>	Exclamation/question marks, 1, 2 or more than 2	
	1.3 Use of imperative words		Yes or no	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
Message orientation				
	2.1 Socioemotional appeal		Humoristic, surprised, angry, sad, fear, neutral, show solidarity, tension (-release)	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
	2.2 Direction		Instrumental, informational, provides opinions/suggestions	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
	2.3 Objective		Unique selling proposition, greeting, polling, promote platform, promote content	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
Interactivity				
	3.1 Encouragement			
		<i>Incentive/invitation</i>	Yes, no	Ashley & Tuten (2015)
		<i>Ability to rank or vote</i>	Yes, no	Ashley & Tuten (2015)
		<i>Ability to participate</i>	Yes, no	Ashley & Tuten (2015)
	3.2 Tagging		Tag users, celebrities, official profiles, other profiles	Sabate et al. (2014)
Real-time marketing				
	4.1 Presence		Yes, no	
	4.2 Predictability		Predictable, unpredictable	Willemesen et al. (2018)
	4.3 Locality	National/ International Cultural/religious		
	4.4 Hashtag driven		Yes, no	Willemesen et al. (2018)
Formal features				
	5.1 Characters		Post length measured by number of characters, counted with spaces	Sabate et al. (2014)

Table 7. Categories and variables for Visuals

Category	Sub-category	Sub-subcategory	Sub-sub-sub category	Description	Adapted from
<u>1. Origin of content</u>	1.1 Image			Diegetic, non-diegetic, simulation with own content, extra-diegetic	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
	1.2 Video			Teaser, trailer, extended content, making-of, Other	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
<u>2. People</u>	2.1 Number of people			1, 2, more than 2	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
	2.2 Gender			Male, female, both, other	Carah & Shaul (2016); Smith & Sanderson (2015)
	2.3 Body display			Long shot, mid shot, close up	Carah & Shaul (2016)
	2.4 Gender Display				Goffman (1979)
		<i>Centralisation</i>		Placement of male or female central or non-central?	
		<i>Professional role</i>		Is the professional role of the person traditional (stereotypical) or modernised?	
		Affection		Sensual, sexual, romantic, friendly, disgrace, anger, serious	
			<i>Clothing</i>	Nude, show skin, dressed, fully dressed	
			<i>Expression</i>	Facial expression: happy, sad, angry, serious, neutral	
	2.5 Actor/Actress			In character or not in character	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
	2.6 Other			Other people than actors e.g. directors, crew, animals, animation	

	2.7 Demographics				
		<i>Age category</i>		Baby, child, adolescent, grown-up, elderly	
		<i>Ethnicity</i>		White/European American, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/South Asian American, Other	Webb et al. (2017)
3. Socioemotional appeal				Humoristic, surprised, angry, sad, fear, neutral, show solidarity, tension (-release)	Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)
4. Real-time marketing	4.1 Presence			Yes, no	Willemesen et al. (2018)
	4.2 Predictability			Yes, no Predictable, unpredictable	Willemesen et al. (2018)
	4.3 Locality			Yes, no Predictable, unpredictable National, international, cultural/religious	Willemesen et al. (2018)
	4.4 Visual driven?			Yes, no	Willemesen et al. (2018)
5. Interactivity					
	5.1 Encouragement				
	<i>Incentive or invitation</i>		Yes, no	Ashley & Tuten (2015)	
	<i>Ability to rank or vote</i>		Yes, no	Ashley & Tuten (2015)	
	<i>Ability to participate</i>		Yes, no	Ashley & Tuten (2015)	
	5.2 Tagging			Tag users, celebrities, official profiles, other profiles	Sabate et al. (2014)
6. Formal features					
	6.1 Logo			Yes, no	
	6.2 Text in visual			Yes, no	
	6.3 Number of visual elements			1, 2, more than 2	

	6.4 Engagement				
		<i>Number of likes</i>		Count	Sabate et al. (2014); Seo et al. (2018)
		<i>Number of comments</i>		Count	Sabate et al. (2014); Seo et al. (2018)
7. Other					
	7.1 Date of post			Day of the week, day, month, year (e.g. Monday January 1, 2019)	

3.4 Validity and reliability

As Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) rightfully note, qualitative content analysis is an interpretive method, and thus implications arise regarding the judgement of the validity and reliability of this research. Acknowledging this, such implications are described and critically assessed, as an effort is made to make this process as transparent as possible to strengthen the trustworthiness of the analysis (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

It is noteworthy that the researcher has a prolonged engagement in the field of social media and marketing, and media representation, and thus is trained in the observation and interpretation of raw data in this field. Nonetheless, it is important to reflect on the position of the researcher in relation to the research (Berger, 2013). This regards the “active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation” (Horsburgh, 2003, p. 309). Hence, it should be acknowledged that I am a White, European, male student, focussed on inequality and stereotyping of gender and ethnicity. Inevitably, this will impact my views and interpretations and thus a certain bias is inescapable.

Although this bias is always present, an effort is made to protect the analysis’ validity. As this study performed an inductive and deductive content analysis, emphasis is put on immersion with the data, in order to ensure all relevant data is observed. Constant reciprocity between the observation and categorisation is established in order to develop in-depth meanings attributed to each unique code. Also, in the results section, a detailed overview of the results is presented, where the interpretations are well described in order to follow the researcher’s reasoning. The combination of an inductive and deductive approach furthermore allows for the observation and interpretation of relevant data that might not have been discussed in the theoretical framework. Hence, regarding the credibility of this research and the researcher, it is thought that an adequate representation of the construction is present.

Considering the transferability of this research, it is thought that with providing the categories and variables in a clear overview as presented in tables 6 and 7, as well as with the detailed operationalization, other researchers are able to make inferences regarding the findings of this research, in similar or other contexts. As the analysis of social media content requires a delicate consideration of the constantly fluctuating online environment, the dependability of this research is ensured by collecting all the data on one day, and saving the data as screenshots (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). In doing so, still images of the contents are gathered, preventing the sample from any sudden modification that could alter the data.

3.5 Ethics

Analysing content that is published online such as on Instagram or other social media platforms comes with certain ethical complications. As the content is published publically, it could be considered a public domain. However, as Brownlow and O'Dell (2002) describe in their article on ethical issues regarding research on online communities, users who publish a post online most likely do not do this with the goal of being subject to research analysis. The authors therefore suggest that ethical issues such as consent and privacy are protected (Brownlow & O'Dell, 2002). In this research, however, the published contents that are subject to analysis are not personal, as the company Netflix posts it. As the content comes from a company, and as the content is posted with promotional purposes, it is here considered as public domain. Nonetheless, it occasionally occurs that user-generated content is integrated in the content posted by Netflix, whilst also referring to the user that created this particular content. An example of this is shown in image 3. If this type of content may occur in the collected data for this research, elements such as the face, or references to personal accounts that could possibly refer to this particular personal user will be anonymised. By doing so, it is thought that the analysis and report of this research is done in an ethical considerate manner, and that the privacy of individual users is protected.



Image 3: User-generated content on @Netflixnl¹⁰

¹⁰ Netflixnl. (2019, March 5). Jullie zijn kei gezellig. #Carnaval #Netflix [Instagram post]. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BunwMxvlgIy/>

4. Results

In this section, the results from the analysis are presented. In total, $n = 160$ posts were analysed, of which $n = 80$ posts come from the Netflix-India Instagram account and $n = 80$ posts come from the account dedicated to the Netherlands. The posts were published in the period between February 21, 2019 and April 29, 2019, and collected on the latter date. As the aim of the analysis was to observe and interpret differences and similarities between the strategies employed on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts, for each category the results of both accounts are presented together.

Additionally, the results are organized in a way that a clear connection is made with the different theoretical concepts from the theoretical framework, such as anthropomorphism, real-time marketing and gender display. As described in the operationalization, several categories and variables together allow for the interpretation of these phenomena. Finally, the results allow for a broader, yet well-founded and in-depth discussion within the academic field of media and branding on social media. Based on this, in the conclusion, an answer to the main research question of this research is developed, which entails the question on how Netflix uses Instagram to construct and promote its brand identity in India and the Netherlands.

4.1 Engagement

For engagement, the number of likes and comments were collected. Relative to the number of followers on each account at the date of data collection, the engagement was found to be rather high on both accounts. As can be seen in table 8, all posts received more likes than comments. Because the average number of likes and comments on both accounts have a rather high standard deviation, for clarity, the average of likes and comments of the top five posts was also added to the table. This is argued to add to what is understood as high engagement and what is not, which is difficult to interpret from the average and standard deviation only (Martín -Quevedo et al., 2019). Additionally, the engagement ratio is calculated and presented. This number shows the engagement relative to the number of followers of each account. For example, if an account has an average of 100 likes per post, with 1000 followers on the account, the engagement ratio would be $(100/1000 \times 100) = 10\%$. This calculation is based on the number of followers at the time of data collection.

Table 8. Engagement on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts

	Average likes	Standard Deviation	Average comments	Standard Deviation	Average likes top 5 post	Average comments top 5 posts	Average engagement ratio
Netflix India	35749.94	26538.98	529.71	955.14	112677.2	3700.4	Likes: 4,9930% Comments: 0,0739%
Netflix Netherlands	3637.16	2245.46	165.83	282.71	9975.6	939.4	Likes: 2,5979% Comments: 0.118%

The analysis shows that the Indian account has a significantly higher engagement ratio on the number of likes, whilst the Dutch account has higher engagement in the comments.

The top five averages unravel the standard deviation, as for the Netherlands for example the average comments is relatively low, whilst the top five posts have a rather high comment engagement. This large standard deviation serves as an indicator for trends, and shows which posts gained extremely high engagement in likes or comments.

As Anagnostopoulos et al. (2018) note, social media branding is of key importance in improving the perception that consumers have of a brand. Engaging with a brand therefore influences this perception in a positive manner. As found in the analysis here, there is high engagement present on both the Indian and Dutch accounts. This facilitates the communication between the brand and the consumers; however, the question remains what elements play a role in doing so (Wallace, Wilson, & Miloch, 2011). For the Netherlands, engagement is highest in cases where popular, international available content is promoted (e.g. *La Casa de Papel*). However, on the Indian account, a different trend is spotted. Here, the top five posts share one cohesive factor: all included local Indian elements – be it Indian actors specifically, shows with predominantly Indian actors (e.g. *Sacred Games*) or references to Indian holidays such as Holi. This suggests that, based on the top five posts and the engagement on these posts, Indian users tend to engage more with posts that contain local Indian elements. For the Dutch account, an opposite trend was found. Posts that promote Dutch spoken Netflix content (e.g. *Undercover*) receive significantly lower engagement, far below the average of all posts together and with a significantly smaller SD ($n = 8$, see table 9)

Table 9. Average likes and comments on Dutch Netflix Instagram posts that promote Dutch native content

Likes and comments on Dutch native content promotion	M	SD	M all posts	SD all posts
Likes	1952	779.861465	3637.16	2245.46
Comments	58,285	37.1835857	165.83	282.71

4.2 Interactivity

Ashley and Tuten (2015) describe interactivity as the ability to interact with the brand, which is often encouraged by formulating questions to be answered by the Internet users or creating questions for participation. The encouragement of interactivity is a pivotal element in creating a strategy on brand communication (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). The results of this study revealed that Netflix predominantly uses ‘pushes to engagement’ in the two Instagram accounts explored; that is, Netflix incentivises users to enact some sort of engagement with the posts. For example, with a caption that states “Feel free to use this as your Tinder bio.”¹¹. This type of interactivity occurred in 43,75% ($n=35$) of the posts on the Indian account, and in 60% ($n=48$) of the posts on the Dutch account. In written text (the ‘caption’) on the Indian account the ability to participate occurred occasionally as well (13,75%, $n=11$). The encouragement of interactivity is a pivotal element in creating a strategy on brand communication (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). However, other quests for interactivity were rather low (see table 10).

Table 10. Interactivity on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram account

Interactivity	India Text		Netherlands Text		India Visual		Netherlands visual		Total India		Total NL	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Push engagement	28	35	32	40	7	8,75	16	20	35	43,75	48	60
Ability to rank or vote	1	1,25	0	0	1	1,25	0	0	2	2,5	0	0
Ability to participate	11	13,75	9	11,25	6	7,5	5	6,25	17	21,25	14	17,5
Tagging	5	6,25	8	10	18	22,5	36	45	23	28,75	46	57,5

¹¹ Netflix_in. (2019, April 27). Feel free to use this as your Tinder bio. [Instagram post]. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BwwKzwrATlp/>

Concerning the general use of tags, on the Indian account in 28,75% ($n = 23$) of the posts tagging occurred, whilst this happened in 57,5% ($n = 46$) of the posts on the Dutch account. Furthermore, tags are more often included in the visual component of the Instagram post (22,5%, $n = 18$ posts on the Indian account; 45%, $n = 36$ posts on the Dutch account) than on the written part (6,25%, $n = 5$ post on the Indian account; 10%, $n = 8$ on the Dutch account). Since this category shows significant differences between the accounts, a closer look is given to the variables within the category of tagging (see table 11).

Tagging other profiles, Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) found, positively influences engagement. On the Dutch account, most tags referred to official Netflix profiles dedicated to specific shows (e.g. @lacasadepapel, verified account for *La Casa de Papel*). This was the case in 84,84% ($n = 21$) of the tags. Additionally, 37,21% ($n = 16$) of the tags on the Dutch account linked to actors of the shows. For the Indian account, tagging actors was the highest scoring tag, accounting for 86,36% ($n = 19$) of the tags. Based on the analysis, it can be stated that the Dutch account draws more heavily on such social media resources. This only occurred rarely on the Indian account, and, if present, often entailed the tagging of local Indian actors.

Table 11. Tagging practices on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts

Tagging	India Text		Netherlands Text		India Visual		Netherlands Visual		Total India		Total Netherlands	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Actors	3	75	3	42,86	16	88,89	13	36,11	19	86,36	16	37,21
Official profiles	1	25	2	28,57	1	5,56	19	52,78	2	9,01	21	84,84
Users	0	0	2	28,57	0	0	2	5,56	0	0	4	9,30
Other	0	0	0	0	1	5,56	2	5,56	1	4,54	2	4,65

4.3 Anthropomorphism

As described in the operationalization, the notion of anthropomorphism in the branding strategy is observed in the category of socioemotional appeal in written text and visuals, as well as in the categories of tone of voice and message orientation. This is based on Tuškej and Podnar (2018) discussion of the need to distinguish the functional traits and actual anthropomorphism of brands. In this study, anthropomorphism is understood similar to how Hudson et al. (2016) describe it, as the phenomenon of attributing human characteristics to objects, or in this case specifically, to the Netflix brand (Hudson et al., 2016). This is done in two levels; analogical or humanlike, as explained in the theoretical framework. In the

analysis, the extent to which the Indian and Dutch accounts use anthropomorphism is interpreted based on the degree of connection between the selected variables that allow for observation.

As Hudson et al. (2016) argue, using first-person and second-person tone is an example of first steps towards anthropomorphising a brand. First-person reflects on a more humanlike way of anthropomorphism, whereas second-person is considered more analogically, and third-person is understood as somewhat distant, therefore understood as not being anthropomorphic. In the analysis, in general, the use of first- and second-person point of view (singular and plural) are observed in both Instagram accounts (see table 10). On the Dutch account, the number of posts that used first person is slightly higher as 45,57%, ($n = 36$) of the messages was in first person, and 50,63% ($n = 40$) in second-person, cumulatively accounting for 96,2% ($n = 76$) of the posts on the Dutch account. On the Indian account, a balance is found between the use of first-person and second-person point of view, as both occur in 41,77% ($n = 33$) of the posts, which cumulatively account for 83,54% ($n = 66$) of the posts. Nonetheless, on the Indian account, third-person also is observed in a significant number of messages, as this was found in 16,45% ($n = 13$) of the posts, compared to only 3,79% ($n = 3$) on the Dutch account.

Complementing to the point of view, and based on the work done by Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019), the notion of expressive signs is added to the analysis of the tone of voice. This entails the use of hashtags, emoticons and punctuation (see table 12). On the use of hashtags, a larger difference was found between the Indian and Dutch accounts. 78,75% ($n = 63$) of the posts on the Dutch account included hashtags, whilst the Indian account only used hashtags in 27,5% ($n = 22$) of the messages. A similar difference was found in the use of emoticons, as 75% ($n = 60$) of the posts on the Dutch account included emoticons, whilst only 7,5% ($n = 6$) of the Indian account messages did so. These emoticons concern mostly hearts and emotions such as happy faces, or references to the image of the post (e.g. a dog in the image and a dog-emoticon in the caption). Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) understand the use of imperative words as part of personalisation, which resonates closely with anthropomorphism. However, the authors suggested that the use of imperative words negatively influences the engagement. In the analysis, the use of punctuation is low on both accounts, whilst the use of imperative words is relatively high on the Dutch account (25%, $n = 20$, relative to 6,25%, $n = 5$ on the

Indian account). This entailed for example phrases like “Get ready for diehard crime and drama on your screen”¹² and “Tag your BFF (...).”¹³

In the category of tone of voice, although slightly differing, a rather personal approach in communication is employed on both accounts – which hints towards humanlike anthropomorphism (Hudson et al., 2016). However, concerning the significant higher use in emoticons, Hashtags and imperative words on the Dutch account, this account is considered to be more humanlike, based on the tone of voice. The Indian account leans more towards an analogical way of anthropomorphism.

Table 12. Tone of voice on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram account

Tone of voice	India		Netherlands	
	n	%	n	%
1th person	33	41,77	36	45,57
2nd person	33	41,77	40	50,63
3rd person	13	16,45	3	3,79
Hashtags	22	27,5	63/80	78,75
Emoticons	6	7,5	60/80	75
Punctuation	8	10	15/80	18,75
Imperative	5	6,25	20/80	25

The tone of voice is only the first pillar in interpreting the notion of anthropomorphism in the branding strategies on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts. Secondly, the category of message orientation is examined. Observing message orientation is done by three subcategories. The socioemotional appeal of the messages on the Indian and Dutch accounts are found to be in balance with that of the visuals, as humour is found to be dominating in the written text as well (see table 13). On the Indian account, this is done relatively more often (62,03%, $n = 49$, relative to 44,30%, $n = 35$ on the Dutch account). On the Dutch account the socioemotional appeal of neutrality (22,78%, $n = 18$) and tension (20,25%, $n = 16$) were also observed relatively often, whilst on the Indian account solidarity played an important role (16,46%, $n = 13$), often as part of a combination with humour.

The ‘direction’ of the posts was quite different between the Indian and Dutch account. On the Dutch account, most messages were directed at informing (59,49%, $n = 47$). On the Indian account, three directions pillarized: suggestive (29,12%, $n = 23$), opine (32,91%, $n = 26$)

¹² Netflixnl. (2019, April 16). Vanavond was de speciale screening van de nieuwe serie Undercover. [Instagram post]. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BwU9j-7h9au/>

¹³ Netflix_in (2019, April 3). #WCW goals: Tag your BFF, you know you'd marry them in a heartbeat. [Instagram post]. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bvy3c0ugiSo/>

and informational (27,85%, $n = 22$). The objective of the posts is quite monotonous on the Dutch account; 88,61% ($n = 70$) of the posts communicate the overarching objective of promoting Netflix content (see table 13). On the Indian account, this was also observed in more than half of the posts (56,96%, $n = 45$), although this is significantly lesser compared to the Dutch account. On the Indian account, the overarching objective regularly included elements of what is perhaps best understood as simply ‘saying hi and being online’. 16,46% ($n = 13$) of the objective on the Indian page entailed greeting, and another 15,19% ($n = 12$) had the objective of polling. Interestingly, the Dutch account also included posts that stress unique selling propositions (3,79%, $n = 3$), and the Indian page included platform promotion once (1,27%, $n = 1$).

Table 13. Message orientation on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts

Message orientation	India		Netherlands	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Socioemotional appeal				
<i>Neutral</i>	10	12,66	18	22,78
<i>Humour</i>	49	62,03	35	44,30
<i>Excitement</i>	1	1,27	7	8,87
<i>Solidarity</i>	13	16,46	3	3,80
<i>Tension</i>	2	2,53	16	20,25
<i>Serious</i>	2	2,53	0	0
NA	1	1,25	1	1,25
Direction				
<i>Informational</i>	22	27,85	47	59,49
<i>Suggestive</i>	23	29,12	11	13,92
<i>Opine</i>	26	32,91	13	16,46
<i>Instrumental</i>	7	8,87	5	6,33
NA	1	1,25	1	1,25
Objective				
<i>Promote content</i>	45	56,96	70	88,61
<i>Promote platform</i>	1	1,27	0	0
<i>Greeting</i>	13	16,46	3	3,80
<i>Polling</i>	12	15,19	3	3,80
<i>Solidarity</i>	3	3,80	0	0
<i>Unique selling prop.</i>	0	0	3	3,80
<i>Promote other</i>	1	1,27	0	0
NA	1	1,25	1	1,25

The use of mainly humoristic socioemotional appeal on the Indian account can be interpreted as a positive tone of voice, which is likely to increase brand engagement (Ashley & Tuten, 2016). Positive posts in general influence the engagement with a brand in a positive manner (Guidry et al., 2015). The employment of solidarity on the Indian account also increases positive brand engagement. This aligns with what Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014) describe as the providing of or being solidary to the everyday-life issues that the users experience. On the Indian account, thus, a strategy is employed in which a more personal approach is centralized, aiming to add meaning to the messages by providing relevant or humoristic everyday-life advice and information (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). In combination with predominantly promoting content, this strategy is best interpreted as the development of high online presence to establish “brand awareness, engagement and word of mouth” (Sabate et al., 2014, p. 1001). This is a rather personal strategy, in this study is interpreted as a more humanlike level of anthropomorphism, as it establishes the brand a having a humanlike state of mind. This shows solidarity to the real-life issues that the users also experience in their everyday-life (Hudson et al., 2016).

On the Dutch account, the message orientation is interpreted as to be more neutral, rather than personal. Most posts promote content and relatively few posts focus on providing suggestions or opinions. This is understood as less personal and, also, less humanlike. The notion of humour as socioemotional appeal occurred often, creating an emotional connection. Yet, the direction and objective lean more towards neutral aspects such as informing about new content, and directing towards tension. Tension results in a more negative or neutral perception, rather than a positive one (Guidry et al., 2015). Hence, based on these variables, the results suggest that the Dutch Netflix Instagram account employs a more neutral strategy, with certain degrees of anthropomorphism, on a more analogical level.

Focussing on the socioemotional appeal of the visuals, humour is the most prominent one on both accounts (see table 14). Nonetheless, a significant difference between the accounts is identified. On the Indian account, a humoristic socioemotional appeal was observed in 51,25% ($n = 41$) of the posts, whilst on the Dutch account this only occurred in 27,5% ($n = 22$) of the posts. On the Dutch account, a wider spread is applied, also drawing on the socioemotional appeal of fear (16,26%, $n = 13$) and tension (also 16,25%, $n = 13$). For the Indian account, next to humour, solidarity (16,25%, $n = 13$) and more neutral (12,5%, $n = 10$) visuals were identified. Other socioemotional appeals such as excitement, sadness or surprise only occurred very occasionally.

Relating this to the notion of anthropomorphism, it is argued that the Indian account,

with more humoristic appeal combined with solidarity, is best understood as anthropomorphic in a humanlike sense. Especially since solidarity is found to be close to the strategy of the brand having a humanlike state of mind, as it shows it is able to understand and emphasize with the users' everyday life. The Dutch account, on the other hand, is argued to do so in lesser degree. Aiming at the socioemotional appeal of fear and tension does require certain engagement, yet it does not necessarily cause the brand to be perceived as anthropomorphic. The humoristic socioemotional appeal on both accounts does influence the brand engagement in a positive manner (Guidry et al., 2015).

Table 14. Visual socioemotional appeal on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts

Visual socioemotional appeal	India		Netherlands	
	n	%	n	%
Serious	5	6,25	4	5,00
Neutral	10	12,5	8	10,00
Humoristic	41	51,25	22	27,5
Angry	1	1,25	1	1,25
Saddening	1	1,25	3	3,75
Excitement	2	2,5	5	7,50
Tension	3	3,75	13	16,25
Solidarity	13	16,25	1	1,25
Fear	1	1,25	13	16,25
Surprising	3	3,75	1	1,25

Based on the analysis of the tone of voice, message orientation and visual socioemotional appeal, a well-funded interpretation of the employment of anthropomorphism can be made. As Tuškej and Podnar (2018) argued, anthropomorphic brand traits include the brand being “emotional, self-conscious, sociable, honest, [and to have] good intentions” (Tuškej & Podnar, 2018, p. 9). Based on the obtained results, the Indian Netflix Instagram account is best understood as being anthropomorphic, leaning mostly towards a humanlike strategy. The Indian account employs first- and second-person in most of the posts and shows empathy with the users' everyday-life. Moreover, on this account suggestions and opinions on those real-life experiences are offered. This reflects on the honesty and good intentions as well as on being sociable and self-conscious. Therefore, this aligns with humanlike anthropomorphism (Tuškej & Podnar, 2018).

The Dutch account can also be considered as anthropomorphic, although in a lesser degree than the Indian account. On the Dutch account, the use of first- and second-person is more frequent than on the Indian account. However, the main objective and direction of the

messages published can be interpreted as more neutral instead of personal, and having non-anthropomorphic brand traits. These traits are best understood as what Tuškej and Podnar (2018) describe as functional brand traits. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that the Dutch account does show a certain degree of anthropomorphism. For example, the opinions and suggestions made in the message direction do reflect on empathy, relating to the brand having humanlike characteristics. Hence, the Dutch Netflix Instagram account can be understood as having a branding strategy that relates to analogical anthropomorphism. The posts most certainly are anthropomorphic in some degree, however not as having a humanlike state of mind.

4.3.1 Anthropomorphism and Hofstede's cultural dimensions of Uncertainty

Avoidance and Individualism versus Collectivism

Employing the cultural characteristics of India and the Netherlands, as provided by the Hofstede model, an interesting connection with anthropomorphism can be made on two dimensions: the uncertainty avoidance index and the individualism versus collectivism dimension (Hofstede, n.d.). Hudson et al. (2016) and Epley, Waytz and Cacioppo (2007) address the connection between anthropomorphism and uncertainty avoidance.

As reported, India scores medium-low on the uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) with a score of 40 out of 100, whereas the Netherlands shows a certain preference towards avoiding uncertainty with a score 53 out of 100. Following Hofstede (n.d.; 2011), this indicates that Indian individuals in general have a “medium low preference for avoiding certainty”, with high tolerance for unexpected prospects (Hofstede, n.d.). Dutch individuals, on the other hand, share a minor preference for avoiding uncertainty, preserving somewhat stricter beliefs and behaviours, and a lower tolerance towards deviating behaviours or ideas.

Epley et al. (2007) found that the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance impacts the value of anthropomorphised brands, as lower scoring cultures on the UAI – such as India – are less likely to value anthropomorphism in their interaction with brands. This is possibly because “they do not have such high anxiety” towards the unknown (Hudson et al., 2016, p. 31). Higher scoring UAI cultures, such as the Netherlands in this case, tend to value anthropomorphism in brands more. This is due to the fact that anthropomorphism enables individuals to structure, interpret and predict the brand communication. This stimulates the individual to be less anxious towards the unknown (Epley et al., 2007). Thus, a difference is present in the value of anthropomorphism in relation to the dimension of uncertainty avoidance, where high scoring cultures are more in need of understanding and controlling the

environment. These cultures often do so by attempting to “gain mastery of unfamiliar objects, and by conceptualizing them in human-like terms” Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014, p. 72).

Based on this, the employment of anthropomorphism on the Indian Netflix Instagram accounts arguably contradicts with the cultural characteristics of India. On the Dutch account, anthropomorphism is found especially more present on the level of tone of voice, mainly in the point of view – where third-person occurred rarely. Anthropomorphic brands are often received as less risky; hence they are valued more by those fearing risk and uncertainty (Epley et al., 2007). As the Netherlands is understood as a country where uncertainty avoidance is highly present compared to India, the brand strategy on the Dutch account with the employment of anthropomorphism matches the cultural characteristics of the Netherlands. Here, an effort is made to reduce risk and uncertainty. Thus, on the Dutch account, the evaluation of the interaction on social media with the humanized brand is done so more considerably in regard to the local culture than on the Indian account (Hudson et al., 2016).

Aguirre-Rodriguez (2014) also notes that in anthropomorphising a brand, strategies should be developed in a localized manner. For instance, a certain anthropomorphised brand might work well in the US, yet the message could be interpreted differently in China (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014). Hence, adapting the strategy to a local level, allows for implementation of anthropomorphism in such a manner that the branded message is decoded more accurately. Moreover, this increases the effectiveness of the brand message (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014). When human association with a brand is lacking or limited, consumers compensate this by “attributing human, social behaviour to nonhuman objects” (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014, p. 73). The author interprets the effectiveness of anthropomorphic branding on two levels; cognitive and motivational factors which facilitate “anthropomorphic inference making” (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014, p. 72). With these levels, the author connects anthropomorphism with Hofstede’s (2001) cultural dimension of individualism versus collectivism. This dimension – as to whether a culture is individualistic or collectivistic orientated – effects the perception of anthropomorphism (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014).

The Hofstede model of national culture comparison identifies India as intermediate on this dimension, scoring 48 out of 100, suggesting that a combination of individualism and collectivism is present. In Indian society, preference for belonging to “a larger social framework” is considered important, combined with the existing belief that individuals are responsible for how they live their life (Hofstede, n.d.). With a score of 84 out 100, the Netherlands is more profound in its cultural traits on this dimension. This aligns with the highly individualistic nature of the country (Hofstede, n.d.). According to the author, Dutch

individuals highly prefer a “loosely-knit social framework” where everyone takes care of their own (Hofstede, n.d.).

According to Aguirre-Rodriguez (2014), individualistic societies share deepened needs for connection, which strengthens their “sociality motivation” (p. 72). The stronger this sociality motivation (thus, the more individualistic a society is), the more likely it is that people make “inferences about objects portrayed in a human-like manner” (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014, p. 72). Therefore, Aguirre-Rodriguez (2014) argues, consumers in individualistic cultures are more prone to acknowledge anthropomorphic elements in brands and branded messages, contradicting more collectivistic cultures where this is less so. Based on this, the Dutch individualistic culture is best understood as one where people are in relative high need for social cues. Therefore, anthropomorphism is valued more, since individualistic people are more likely, and more receptive, to processing brand messages by making human-like inferences. India, on the contrary, is understood as a more collectivistic culture relative to the Netherlands. Following Aguirre-Rodriguez (2014), in collectivistic cultures social affinity and interdependence is valued more. Hence, they are less likely than individualistic people to attribute humanlike characteristics to nonhuman objects. In other words, in collectivist cultures, anthropomorphism in branded messages is less valued.

The level of anthropomorphism on the Indian account was found to be rather humanlike, whilst more analogical on the Dutch account. Therefore, it seems like the employment of anthropomorphism contradicts the local culture of India and the Netherlands on the dimension of individualism versus collectivism. As Dutch society is described as rather individualistic, it would be expected that Netflix would employ a more humanlike anthropomorphic brand, to accommodate to this culture. However, the findings of this study report that the Dutch account shows more analogical anthropomorphism, whilst on the Indian account the notion of anthropomorphism is more humanlike. This is striking because, although anthropomorphism can be an effective strategy for addressing and engaging both people from collectivistic and individualistic societies, Dutch audiences would value humanlike brand anthropomorphism much more as the Indian audiences do (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014). The use of anthropomorphism in relation to the dimension of individualism versus collectivism therefore indicates that the implementation of anthropomorphic brand messages by Netflix does not consider the nation’s cultures in a considerable way.

4.4 Origin of content

Focussing on the strategy in using videos and images on both the Indian and Dutch account, Netflix uses a similar strategy, where the use of diegetic content is dominant (see table 15). On the Dutch account, slightly more diegetic content (66,25%, $n = 53$) is displayed than on the Indian account (52,5%, $n = 42$). Interestingly, on the Indian account the amount of simulated content (27,5%, $n = 22$) is found to be twice as much as on the Dutch account (15%, $n = 12$). This means that on the Indian account, more posts in the analysis qualified as memes – which strongly relates to high acquaintance of digital culture (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Within the diegetic content, the results indicate a profound resemblance between the published posts, as multiple posts refer to the same shows (e.g. *Friends*, *Stranger Things*, *Black Mirror*). This is likely connected with the idea that Netflix releases new shows simultaneously in multiple countries (Jenner, 2018). Images 4 and 5 illustrate this practice: Netflix has published the same post on the Indian and Dutch accounts, only one day apart from each other. The only difference is the date, which in Dutch first names the month and in English first names the day and then the month.

Furthermore, user-generated content (UGC) did not play a significant role in the posted content, as only 3,75% ($n = 3$) of the posts on the Dutch account entailed UGC – whilst on the Indian account this did not occur at all. The UGC images on the Dutch account for example included images of people dressed as characters from shows on Netflix for the Dutch national holiday Carnival. The account depicted followers dressed up as Pablo Escobar from *Narcos*, or wearing the typical red suits of the criminals in *La Casa de Papel*.

Table 15. Origin of content on Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram account

Origin of content	Netflix India		Netflix Netherlands		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Diegetic	42	52,5%	53	66,25%	95	59,38%
Non-diegetic	14	17,5%	7	8,75%	21	13,13%
Extra-diegetic	2	2,5%	5	6,25%	7	4,38%
Simulated	22	27,5%	12	15%	34	21,25%
UGC	0	0%	3	3,75%	3	1,88%



Image 4. Dutch announcement of *Homecoming* on Instagram¹⁴



Image 5. Indian announcement of *Homecoming* on Instagram¹⁵

Concerning the type of audio-visual content, some differences are identified between the two investigated accounts. On the Dutch account, 30% of the posts ($n = 24$) include video content. On the Indian account, this occurs in only 12,5% of the posts ($n = 10$). In table 16, the type of video is presented. The largest number of videos, on both the Indian and Dutch account, contains teasers (90%, $n = 9$ on the Indian account and 75%, $n = 18$ on the Dutch account). Additionally, trailer (8,33%, $n = 2$) extended content (4,17%, $n = 1$) and 'other' (12,5%, $n = 3$) were also present on the Dutch account, whilst only one trailer ($n = 1$) is found on the Indian account. For the variable of 'other', for example, a video of diegetic shots of 'cute animals' was published on the Dutch account – in which a variety of shots from *Our Planet* were montaged into one video.

As can be seen in table 16, significantly more videos are posted on the Dutch account. On both accounts, teaser type of videos occurred most frequently. This indicates a difference in strategy as the characteristics of the messages posted (here type of video) differ significantly (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019).

¹⁴ Netflixnl, (2019, April 7). [Instagram post]. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv9KYZbFAo8/>

¹⁵ Netflix_in, (2019, April 8) [Instagram post]. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv-eOanAtpm/>

Table 16. Types of video content on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram account

Video	India		Netherlands	
	n	%	n	%
Teaser	9	90	18	75
Trailer	1	10	2	8,33
Extended	0	0	1	4,17
Making-of	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	3	12,5

4.5 Approach to interpreting media representation

Before embarking the report of the analysis on the display of people and gender display, a disclaimer is provided, as this is ought to be crucial to the approach taken in interpreting these categories and variables.

As aforementioned, when discussing the category of origin of content (see table 15), the posts published on both the Indian and Dutch accounts are tightly connected to the shows that are available on the Netflix platform (100% on the Indian account, $n = 80$, 96,25% on the Dutch account, $n = 77$). Consequently, an imbalance in the display of people of colour or female actresses could be, for instance, the result of Netflix offering limited shows with coloured main characters, and more shows with male leading roles – which, in turn, may result in more males displayed (centrally) on the Instagram accounts.

Nonetheless, in this research, a constructionist approach is employed in considering the representation of people and gender on the Instagram accounts (Hall, 1997). This entails the understanding that the images do not possess meaning themselves, yet meaning is assigned to the images, as a social construct. As Hall (1997) addresses this: “It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning” (p. 11). Netflix’ awareness about what the renowned encoding-decoding model argues, is unknown in the frame of this research. Furthermore, the analysis of how people interpret Instagram posts is out of the scope of this investigation. However, this study aims to identify and reflect upon some potential challenges that the publication of certain content may entail for a brand. This will be further discussed in section 5.1 after the conclusion of this research.

Contemplating the fact that these posts are branded messages, it is reasonable to assume that the messages (the posts) are created in a considerate manner. The finding that 27,5% ($n = 22$) of the posts on the Indian account, and 15% ($n = 12$) of the posts on the Dutch account are simulated – meaning that diegetic content is modified into meme-like creations –

supports this (see table 15). Because of this, as well as the fact that different accounts are created for different nations, the posts are considered as depictions subject to representational values. Despite the tight connection between the published content and the shows offered by Netflix, the content is still considered to be of value for, and influenced by, national culture.

4.6 Display of people

No significant differences were found in the number of people displayed on the Indian and Dutch account (see table 17). However, the representation of gender differs significantly. On the Indian account, 39,68% ($n = 25$) of the depicted people is male, and 22,22% ($n = 14$) is female. On 38,09% ($n = 24$) of the posts, both females and males are represented. On the Dutch account ($n = 61$), on the contrary, 19,67% ($n = 12$) of the people displayed is male, 32,79% ($n = 20$) is female and 47,54% ($n = 29$) of the posts included both females and males. The difference between the Indian and Dutch account thus is that on Dutch account relatively more females are displayed, and on the Indian account relatively more males are displayed.

Regarding the age category, the similarities between the accounts are almost 1:1 (see table 10). 6,35% of the people displayed on the Indian account are assumed children ($n = 4$) and so is 6,56% of the people displayed on the Dutch account ($n = 4$). Eighteen adolescents are observed on both accounts ($n = 18$), which accounts for 28,57% on the Indian account and 29,51% on the Dutch account. 50,79% of the people are assumed being grown-up on the Indian account ($n = 32$), and for the Dutch account this was 54,09% ($n = 33$). Grown-ups thus appeared most frequently. On the Indian account, estimated elderly people are displayed (4,76%, $n = 3$) compared to the Dutch account (1,64%, $n = 1$).

In the display of ethnicity, it is found that both accounts predominantly display white European/American people, as this is the case for 55,55% ($n = 35$) on the Indian account, and 67,21% ($n = 41$) on the Dutch account. On the Indian account more Asian people (26,98%, $n = 17$) are displayed than on the Dutch account (1,64%, $n = 1$), indicating that a certain degree of localization is present (Jeong et al., 2019). Ethnic Hispanic and Latino people were displayed once on the Dutch account, and zero times displayed on the Indian account. Nonetheless, these ethnicities did occur on the Indian page in the mixed variable. Black African/American people were displayed only twice (3,17%, $n = 2$) on the Indian account, and only seven times (11,48%, $n = 7$) on the Dutch account. Hence, diversity in the display of people argued to be rather low.

As aforementioned, this is tightly connected with the shows Netflix offers. Therefore, it should be noted that difference regarding the inclusion of more males or females in

published posts about the same show was not identified. Nonetheless, this is still understood as part of the representation of ethnicity as the posts are created thoughtfully, and therefore argued to be a social construct rather than just the result of the offered shows on Netflix.

Table 17. Display of people on Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram account

People	India		Netherlands	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Number of people				
0	20	31,75	19	31,15
1	25	39,68	16	25,39
2	12	19,04	11	18,03
<i>More than 2</i>	23	36,51	34	55,74
Gender				
<i>Male</i>	25	39,68	12	19,67
<i>Female</i>	14	22,22	20	32,79
<i>Mixed</i>	24	38,09	29	47,54
Age category				
<i>Children</i>	4	6,35	4	6,56
<i>Adolescent</i>	18	28,57	18	29,51
<i>Grown-up</i>	32	50,79	33	54,09
<i>Elderly</i>	3	4,76	1	1,64
<i>Mixed</i>	1	1,59	5	8,19
Ethnicity				
<i>White</i>	35	55,56	41	67,21
<i>Black</i>	2	3,17	7	11,48
<i>Asian</i>	17	26,98	1	1,64
<i>Hispanic</i>	-	-	1	1,64
<i>Latino</i>	-	-	-	-
<i>Mixed</i>	9	14,29	11	18,03
Characterisation				
<i>In character</i>	56	88,89	51	83,61
<i>Non-character</i>	7	11,11	10	16,39

4.7 Gender display

Taking a closer look at the display of gender, and how males and females are portrayed on the visuals, focus is put on different elements. Regarding the variable of centralization of each gender, on the Indian account, females are put in a central position only once, whilst this happened nine times on the Dutch account (see table 18). Males on the other hand, were put in central positions seven times on the Indian account, and only twice on the Dutch account. Here, a balance is found between the number of males and females displayed,

and their position within the visuals: on the Indian account, females are displayed less, and given central positions in lesser extent and vice versa for males. On the Dutch account, females are displayed more often and given central positions more often, and vice versa for males.

Examining the display of affection is done with the variables of the displayed people's' clothing and facial expression, in relation to their gender. For clothing, on the Indian account, most people are 'dressed' (84,13%, $n = 53$), meaning that they are dressed without showing excessive skin (e.g. swimwear) or being nude (no clothing observed on body). On the Indian account, additionally, 9,5% ($n = 6$) of the people show skin, and one person (1,58%, $n = 1$) is observed as being nude (as no clothing is observed, yet no explicit content is observed either). On the Dutch account, 67,21% ($n = 41$) of the people is 'dressed', 24,59% ($n = 15$), showed skin and also one person is observed as being nude (1,64%, $n = 1$). Fully dressed, such as for example characters from *La Casa de Papel* wearing the iconic masks, was observed in 4,76% of the posts on the Indian account ($n = 3$) and in 6,56% of the posts on the Dutch account ($n = 4$).

Addressing the variable of facial expression, happy facial expression (25,39%, $n = 16$), serious facial expression (23,81%, $n = 15$) and neutral facial expression (23,81%, $n = 15$) occurred regularly on the Indian account. On the Dutch account, predominantly serious facial expressions are observed (32,79%, $n = 20$), with happy facial expressions as second largest (19,67%, $n = 12$).

Lastly, the profession of males and females is examined, which entails the examination of the extent to which males and females are portrayed in stereotypical, traditional professions (e.g. females as mothers, in the kitchen, males as businessmen/providers for the family). Additionally, a closer look is also given to the extent of males and females being portrayed in rather modern professions (e.g. as males as fathers, females as businesswomen). From the analysis, this variable was not found as highly present as anticipated; therefore, the sample size is rather small. Nonetheless, on the Indian account more males are observed as portrayed in traditional professions (e.g. businessmen, athletes, doctor) in eight posts ($n = 8$), and females are portrayed in traditional professions (e.g. mother) in two posts ($n = 2$). On the Dutch account, this was quite similar, as females were displayed in traditional professions twice ($n = 2$) and males five times ($n = 5$). On both the Indian and Dutch account, females were portrayed in rather modern professions only once ($n = 1$), and males were not observed in more modern views of professions on both accounts ($n = 1$).

Similar to the category of ‘Display of people’, the display of gender tightly connects with the origin of the content posted, as in almost all of the posts this consist of visuals from shows available on the Netflix platform. Hence, it should be considered that when shows have a female main role, the female is centred in the visual and vice versa for males. However, this still results in an imbalance in representation. As a vast amount of posts are modified before being published, the visuals are, it is argued, thoughtfully selected and modified in order to increase the post. For this reason, despite the connection with the shows available on the Netflix platform, the representation found in the posts is still considered to be of value for, and influenced by the nation’s culture.

Table 18. Gender display on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram account

Gender display	India		Netherlands	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Centralisation				
Female central	1	1,58	9	14,75
Male central	7	11,11	2	3,28
Profession				
Traditional	Male <i>n</i> =8	Female <i>n</i> =4	Male <i>n</i> =5	Female <i>n</i> =2
Modern	Male <i>n</i> =0	Female <i>n</i> =1	Male <i>n</i> =0	Female <i>n</i> =1
Clothing				
<i>Full dressed</i>	3	4,76	4	6,56
<i>Dressed</i>	53	84,13	41	67,21
<i>Show skin</i>	6	9,52	15	24,59
<i>Nudity</i>	1	1,58	1	1,64
Expression				
<i>Happy</i>	16	25,39	12	19,67
<i>Sad</i>	0	0	5	8,19
<i>Angry</i>	3	4,76	5	8,19
<i>Surprised</i>	2	3,17	0	0
<i>Serious</i>	15	23,81	20	32,79
<i>Seductive</i>	2	3,17	3	4,92
<i>Neutral</i>	15	23,81	6	9,84
<i>Mixed</i>	3	4,76	9	14,75

From the reports from the Hofstede model of national culture comparison, it was indicated that on the Masculinity index, India scores rather high (56/100) compared to the Netherlands (14/100). India thus is best understood, on a national level, as a rather masculine society, whereas the Netherlands is rather feminine (Hofstede, n.d.). Based on the Hofstede model, thus, it is expected that on the Indian account masculinity would be represented visually in the “display of success and power” (Hofstede, n.d.). According to Hofstede (2011),

masculine societies are assertive, whilst in India this is combined with rich spiritual culture. Hence, the display of masculinity is often naturally indulged to some extent (Hofstede, n.d.). However, based on the visuals analysed on the Indian Netflix Instagram account, it is argued that the notion of neither masculinity nor the spirituality is considered in the branding strategy employed. Moreover, the relative high presence of solidarity seems to be fitting more closely to feminine societies (Hofstede, 2011). On the superficial level, the notion of masculinity is found in the difference between displayed males and females, where males are present more often and given central positions in the visuals more frequently. However, on gender display specific, based on the analysis, the branding strategy employed on the Indian Netflix Instagram account is identified as not to be in balance with the national culture as described by Hofstede (n.d.; 2011).

In case of the Netflix Instagram account dedicated to the Netherlands, the display of gender resonates more closely with the feminine society of the Netherlands. As the Netherlands is considered a feminine society, there is minimal difference between gender on social and emotional level (Hofstede, 2011). Here, caring about each other is important and males and females are compassioned towards the weak (Hofstede, 2011). Feminine societies find agreements by discussions and value an equal balance between work and personal life (Hofstede, n.d.).

Relating this to the Netflix Instagram account dedicated to the Dutch, more specifically to the display of gender, this resonates closely with the cultural values of the Dutch society. Although females are portrayed more frequently than males, no differences are found socially or emotionally. Nonetheless, there is some more masculine stereotypical representation present, as males were often still portrayed as for example politicians, which relates more closely to masculine societies (Hofstede, 2011). This is also found on the Indian account, which in the Indian case thus does relate to the national culture of the masculine Indian society (Hofstede, 2011). In general, on the Dutch account, there is some resonance between the display of gender and the masculinity index. Taking into consideration the message orientation as well, however, there is little resonance found. The Dutch posts are found to be mostly neutral or serious, whilst based on the Hofstede model it would be expected that the Dutch account consisted of more posts with hints of solidarity, as is the case on the Indian account. Hence, it is argued that although to some extent present, in general on both the Indian and Dutch account a rather generic approach is employed in terms of the display of gender and the message orientation as compared to Hofstede's (n.d.; 2011)

masculinity index. This branding strategy thus is considered to be rather uniform, close to standardized.

4.8 Real-time marketing (RTM) strategy

In the analysis, specific focus is put on the notion of real-time marketing (RTM), where posts visually or textually refer to timely events (Willemesen et al., 2018). If present, the RTM posts were examined on the predictability of the timely event it refers to (Willemesen et al., 2018), and from the inductive phase of trial coding the notion of locality was added, which adds to the understanding of the resonance with local, international or online culture.

The analysis suggests that RTM is an important element in content posted on both the Indian and Dutch account (see table 19). Particularly on the Dutch account, RTM was observed regularly, as 41,25% ($n = 33$) of the posts were observed referring to timely public events. On the Indian account, RTM was present in a significantly lesser degree, although still important, as 21,25% ($n = 17$) of the posts entailed references to timely public events. Focussing on the predictability in the RTM posts, on the Dutch account 45,45% ($n = 15$) of the posts referred to unpredictable events (e.g. the weather), whereas on the Indian account 58,82% ($n = 10$) referred to unpredictable events. With regards to the locality of the events referred to in the RTM posts, on the Dutch account, those posts most often referred to national events (60,61%, $n = 20$), whereas on the Indian account a balance was found between national (41,18%, $n = 7$) and international (41,18%, $n = 7$). References to viral events were made in significant lesser degree (see table 19).

From the analysis thus, the use of RTM is found to be an important element to take into consideration when examining the branding strategy that is employed. On the Dutch Netflix Instagram account, the strategy is focussed on timely events, as these often increase the share-ability and engagement most, creating a positive connection with the brand (van Noort, Antheunis, & van Reijmersdal, 2012). As for the variable of locality, clearly on the Dutch account a strategy is employed which focuses mainly on local events, such as the national holiday of Kingsday and carnival. On the Indian account, the locality is balanced 1:1 between national and international RTM posts, which indicates that the strategy employed here does not entail specific focus on either local or international culture. Focussing on the predictability, Willemesen et al. (2018) note that references to unpredictable events, such as the weather of that day or viral trends – be it national or international – is perceived as more meaningful content. Such moment-driven content positively influences the word-of-mouth, increasing the “free ride” on the already contemporary attention given to the event

(Willemsen et al., 2018, p. 829). On the Dutch account, RTM on unpredictable events is observed more frequently ($n = 15$) than on the Indian account ($n = 10$), indicating that on the Dutch account the strategy is focussed more on increasing share-ability and thus encouraging positive engagement (Willemsen et al., 2018; van Noort, Antheunis and van Reijmersdal, 2012).

Additionally, in the analysis of the visual or hashtag drive, it was found that most RTM posts on both accounts entailed a combination of both. For the Dutch account, visual drive was present 100% ($n = 33$) of the cases, be it solely the visual or a combination of visual and hashtag. This supports the argument made by Willemsen et al. (2018) and Sabate et al. (2014) that especially visuals are of great importance in effectively influencing eWOM, and enriching branded messages on social media.

Table 19. Real-time marketing (RTM) on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram

RTM	Text India		Text Netherlands		Visual India		Visual Netherlands		Total India		Total Netherlands	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Presence	10	12,5	19	23,75	7	8,75	14	17,5	17	21,25	33	41,25
Predictable	4	40	11	57,89	3	42,85	7	50	7	41,18	18	54,55
Unpredictable	6	60	8	42,10	4	57,14	7	50	10	58,82	15	45,45
National	3	30	11	57,89	4	57,14	9	64,28	7	41,18	20	60,61
International	5	50	4	21,05	2	28,57	2	14,28	7	41,18	6	18,18
Viral	2	20	4	21,04	1	14,28	3	21,42	3	17,65	7	21,21
Hashtag/visual driven	3/10	30	8/19	42,11	4/7	57,14	14/14	100				

4.9 Formal features

In the observation of the formal features, it is found that on the Indian account, 68,75% ($n = 55$) of the visuals included the Netflix logo, as was the case in 43,75% ($n = 35$) of the posts on the Dutch account (see table 20) Also, a significant difference is identified in the amount of characters used in the caption, which on the Indian account is $M=58.33$, whilst on the Dutch account $M=79.58$ (see table 20) Additionally, although not presented in the table, a significant difference is present in the posting frequency. Collecting the 80 posts of each account on April 29, 2019, for the Dutch account the posts date back to February 21, 2019, whereas for the Indian account the posts only date back to March 21, 2019. Hence, on the Indian account the posting frequency averages on $M=2.05$, whilst for the Dutch account this is $M=1.08$.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, Jenner (2018) noted that most Netflix releases its new seasons on Fridays. Based on this, the expectation was that the promotion of content, specifically that of new seasons or new shows, would take place on – or the day before – Friday. However, in the analysis no relation is found between the promotion of (new) content and the day of the week. On both the Indian and the Dutch account, posts with the objective of promoting or introducing (new) content took place on different days, and no patterns were found in relation to the days of the week.

Table 20. Formal features on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram account

Formal features	India				Netherlands			
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	Average	Std.Dev	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	Average	Std.Dev
Logo	55	68,75			35	43,75		
Text in image	67	83,75			59	73,75		
Characters			58.33	45.98			79.58	47.62
Visuals			1.66	1.42			1.53	1.40

The high use of logos on the Indian account, compared to relative lower use of logos on the Dutch account, could be interpreted as an important element in the globality of the branding strategy. As Alden, Steenkamp and Battra (1999) note, “the aesthetic construction and display of logos also may reflect alternative consumer culture positioning.” (p. 77). The Netflix logo, consisting of the words ‘Netflix’ in red or the symbol ‘N’ in red, are however quite abstract, and not strongly related to any specific cultural symbolism. Rather, the Netflix logo and its frequent appearance on predominantly the Indian account is here understood as linking to a more global entity (Alden, Steenkamp & Battra, 1999).

Additionally, the language used on both accounts is notable, as on the Indian account English is used and on the Dutch account Dutch language is used. Alden et al. (1999) note that the use of English language in marketing and branding, to a certain degree, functions as a suggestion towards the audience, the consumers, suggesting that “they are cosmopolitan” (p. 77). Based on this, it could be argued that, on the Indian account, this suggestion is made. However, in Indian society, a variety of local languages live together, such as Bengal, Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, and the predominantly spoken Hindi and English. Based on the argument made by Alden et al. (1999), the use of language on both Netflix Instagram accounts is interpreted as rather local because English is one of the main languages in India, and Dutch is the main language in the Netherlands.

Now that the results are reported as well as interpreted with relevant theory, answer on the sub-research question on identifying the differences between the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts is clarified. By doing so, in the conclusive section that follows, an answer is formulated on the main research question of this research.

5. Conclusion

Starting as a small DVD rental company, Netflix has grown to be one of the most successful SVOD platforms, offering content to consumers around the globe. In terms of branding, Netflix has sparked distinct interest, as the relatively new market of SVODs is growing exponentially in markets all over the world. On social media, Netflix is highly present and expresses well its acquaintance with online culture. This high presence and large following that Netflix has on social media, sparked specific interest in how Netflix deals with different national cultures in presenting their brand online. Based on this specific interest, this study critically examined the contents published on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts, in order to answer the main research question regarding how Netflix uses Instagram to construct and promote its brand identity in India and the Netherlands. Furthermore, this study aimed to identify differences and similarities between the branding strategies that Netflix uses in the abovementioned two countries.

The published posts on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts are analysed by means of qualitative content analysis, employing an inductive and deductive approach. In the results section, the found differences and similarities are discussed and connected to relevant theory surrounding branding on social media in international contexts. Additionally, connections are made between the results and the cultural values as defined with Hofstede's model of national culture and comparison. With profoundly the notions of anthropomorphism, real-time marketing, gender display and the connection with the cultural dimensions of India and the Netherlands, this research contributes to the understanding of how Netflix uses Instagram to construct and promote its brand identity in India and the Netherlands. By interpreting the results in the broader debate on the role of globalisation in international branding on social media, in this section an answer is formulated on the research question.

5.1 Answer to research question

In comparing the strategies employed on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts, the conceptualisation of image transferability is proven useful in interpreting the content published on the investigated accounts. Based on the observations and interpretation of the analysis, the image transferability capability in Netflix social media branding is identified as a combination of global consumer culture positioning (GCCP) and local consumer culture positioning (LCCP) (Gao et al., 2018).

The notion of a GCCP strategy is found predominantly in the interpretation of anthropomorphism and gender display. In the use of anthropomorphism on the Indian and

Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts, the results suggest a contradiction between the employment and the cultural values of India and the Netherlands as defined by Hofstede (2001; 2011). Similarly, the representation of gender as well as gender display is interpreted as having little resonance with the reports from the Hofstede model of national culture comparison on predominantly the dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance and Individualism versus Collectivism. This lack of compatibility between Netflix' branding strategies employed on Instagram for India and the Netherlands and the cultural values of these countries, indicate that Netflix promotes its brand from a more uniform perspective. This is strengthened by significant resemblance in the origin of the content published on both accounts, suggesting that a generic source is used from which the media is employed to publish on Instagram for branding purposes, rather than adapting this to local national and cultural characteristics (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019; Gao et al., 2018).

On the other hand, localized elements are also observed, on which the argument of Netflix employing LCCP strategy is based. For example, as reported, the Indian account displayed significantly more Asian – and in some cases specifically Indian – people. Also, in the RTM posts on the Indian account a balance is found between references to national and international events. Similarly, on the Dutch account LCCP strategy is employed as well. On the Dutch account, the RTM posts even most frequently referred to national public events. Additionally, the display of gender and the use of anthropomorphism of the Netflix brand on the Dutch account relates closely to Dutch culture, which is understood as a feminine society (Hofstede, n.d., 2011).

Adding to this, the use of language is understood as rather local, relating to the local consumer culture positioning more than towards a global one. As Gao et al. (2018) note, consumer culture positioning is interpreted generally on three levels; that of language, aesthetics and story themes. Focussing on the story themes – observed mainly with the categories of message orientation and real-time marketing – differences between the Indian and Dutch account are found, which resonates with the cultural and societal differences drawn from the Hofstede model (Hofstede, n.d.). As described in the theoretical framework, apart from GCCP and LCCP, Gao et al. (2018) also address foreign consumer culture positioning (FCCP). However, this strategy is not identified in this study, as there were no leads that indicate that Netflix brands itself in India or the Netherlands as a distinctive, 'typical Northern American' product or service.

Based on the above discussed interpretation of the differences between Netflix' brand promotion in India and the Netherlands, as well as the strategies employed on the Dutch and

Indian Netflix Instagram accounts, an answer is formulated to the main research question this research set out to answer. It is concluded that the strategy of Netflix' brand construction and promotion on Instagram in India and the Netherlands is best understood as a combination of GCCP and LCCP. In the analysis it is found that both accounts to some extent contain distinctive local (national) elements (e.g. amount of Indian people on Indian account, national located RTM messages on both accounts, resonation of Dutch account with Dutch feminine culture). Therefore, localization is argued to be present, on which the argument of Netflix employing LCCP strategy is based. On the other hand, the results show elements on both the Indian and Dutch account where a connection with the given local culture as drawn from Hofstede's model is lacking, at least to some extent (e.g. anthropomorphism, origin of content, resonation between the Indian account and India's masculine society).

Relating these findings to the broader academic debate on globalisation, which predominantly surrounds the opposing standardization versus localization, the interpretation of Netflix' branding strategy on Instagram in India and the Netherlands is argued to be best described within the contingency approach to international marketing and branding (Chandra et al., 2015). The understanding of international branding strategies is, as Chandra et al. (2015) also argued, not dichotomous as often suggested. Rather, as identified in this study on the case of Netflix, a strategy of global and local consumer culture positioning is employed, operating as the middle ground in the broader academic debate on the role of globalisation in international marketing and branding (Chandra et al., 2015; Hofer, 2014). Netflix' branding strategy on Instagram in India and the Netherlands is best described with the contingency approach, where its first layer consists of a more uniform brand image, while below this uniform brand image, local elements are used to enhance the brand positioning in the local, national culture.

5.2 Theoretical implications

In the analysis of the published content on the Indian and Dutch Netflix Instagram accounts, Netflix' branding strategy is identified by utilization of profoundly the conceptualisations of anthropomorphism, real-time marketing and the display of people and gender. Accordingly, this research contributes to academic research in the field of social media branding, and its theoretical implications are identified and described here.

Mann's (2016) and Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) discussion of Netflix' strong familiarity with online culture and digital communities is confirmed, based on the amount of simulated (meme-like) posts observed in the analysis. Also, Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019)

finding that Netflix carries a rather global approach on Instagram with slight adaptions to specific countries is confirmed to some extent. This research has found a similar combination; however it should be noted that this is more balanced than Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) formulate. Nonetheless, with the work of Martín-Quevedo et al. (2019) and this thesis, a trend is observed in Netflix' branding strategy, which regards the application of an overarching standardized strategy in combination with localized elements.

Regarding Jenner's (2018) argument that Netflix' global approach to its branding and marketing is connected with the worldwide release strategy that Netflix employs, it is argued that such connection is not as profound as Jenner (2018) suggests, since this relation was not identified in this study. Hence, this relation requires further investigation.

The conceptualisation of anthropomorphism is proven to be rather helpful in the interpretation of personalisation strategies employed on the investigated accounts. Furthermore, examining the notion of anthropomorphism on the designated accounts revealed relevant findings in connection with the cultural dimensions, as the conceptualisation of anthropomorphism allows for a rather clear, in-depth connection with the Hofstede model of national culture comparison, especially the dimensions of uncertainty avoidance and individualism versus collectivism. Regarding the use of the Hofstede model, however, it should be mentioned that the cultural dimensions of individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and uncertainty avoidance are predominantly found effective in the interpretation of Netflix' brand strategies' relation to the local cultural values of India and the Netherlands. The dimensions of power index, long-term orientation versus short-term normative orientation and indulgence versus restraint, are found to be less helpful in doing so compared to the aforementioned used dimensions.

Additionally, the phenomenon of real-time marketing is identified frequently, and is considered a prosperous way of connecting the more standardized strategy with local, national elements, to address local audiences with events in their near-by surroundings. However, the notion of predictability as Willemsen et al. (2018) defined did not suffice completely in interpreting the role of real-time marketing in the branding strategy. Hence, in this study, the notion of the locality of the timely event is added to the operationalization. This is argued to strengthen the applicability of the concept, as the notion of locality in this study is proven to aid in understanding the role of real-time marketing in the branding strategies. Therefore, it is suggested that the notion of locality is added to the conceptualization of real-time marketing, alongside the notion of predictability, to increase comprehension of the phenomenon.

5.3 Practical implications

The social relevance of this research brings, foremost, some practical implications regarding Netflix' branding practices on Instagram. Although no inside information from Netflix is obtained in this study, it is suggested that Netflix should further localise its branding strategy on Instagram, as the results implicate that localization, such as by anthropomorphising the brand more for the Dutch Instagram users, is likely to increase the effectiveness of the brand messages. On the Indian account, on the other hand, it is suggested to decrease the humanlike anthropomorphism that is found in this study, as with the cultural dimensions of uncertainty avoidance as well as individualism versus collectivism, it is found that Indian society favours this in lesser degree than currently present. Also, the use of real-time marketing is proven an effective way of localising the branding strategy, yet on the Indian Netflix Instagram account this is suggested to be increased, as on the Dutch account this was identified as a positive influence on the branding effectiveness. Regarding the display of people and gender, it is stimulated to critically examine the current representation of people, specifically regarding ethnicity, as diversity is rather low. A more inclusive representation is suggested to increase brand engagement and the effectiveness of the branding strategy.

Although the findings of this study are specified on the case of Netflix, they are highly relevant for other internationally operating brands as well. Marketers and brand managers of international business should consider the role that national culture plays in the reception and perception of a brand, when using social media such as Instagram to pursue branding activities. Practitioners in the field of marketing and branding are thus advised to consider the local cultural values of the market they (are about to) operate in, when developing the branding strategy. Additionally, the use of real-time marketing is identified as an effective branding strategy on Instagram, and the timeliness of doing so is suggested to be as swiftly as possible. It is also stressed that the closer the locality of real-time marketing, the more likely it is that users will engage with it. As this study suggests, taking these practical implications into consideration, will positively impact the effectiveness of branding on social media.

5.4 Limitations and further research

Despite the aforementioned findings and contributions to the academic field of social media and branding, and the discussion of globalisation in international advertising, there are certain limitations to this research. In this section, these limitations are addressed, alongside with several suggestions for future research.

While it is thought that conducting a qualitative content analysis is the most appropriate approach to this study's aim, it should be acknowledged that content analysis relies heavily on the ability of the research in coding and attributing meaning to the codes. Although the process is made apparent as transparently as possible, it is, thus, possible that other researchers might formulate slightly different interpretations. Also, it is suggested to combine qualitative content analysis and interviews or focus groups with employees from Netflix, so that one can go deeper in the interpretation of the data collected.

Despite the strengths that combining inductive and deductive content analysis bring, there are some limits that are ought to be addressed. For instance, the data driven approach that inductive content analysis entails, challenges the researcher to maintain focused on detail, as well as maintaining unbiased. The latter has its limits, as bias is an insurmountably, complex matter. The acknowledgement made that I, the researcher, am a White, European male enables me to realize and reflect on the point of view from which I see and understand the world around me, and the certain privileges I have, from which possible bias might derive (e.g. in recognizing stereotyping). Although an effort is made to decrease this influence, by critical self-reflection as well as peer-review, possible bias is unavoidable.

Finally, in this study, a significant difference is observed between the Indian and Dutch accounts regarding the representation of profoundly gender and ethnicity. As aforementioned, this is tightly connected with the origin of the published content, which mainly stems from the shows that Netflix offers. However, in this research, the published contents are considered depictions subject to representational values. This is due to the fact that, although the representation of gender and ethnicity are explainable in connection with the origin of contents, this might complicate the reception of brand messages. Since the analysis of how people interpret these posts is out of this study's scope, it is suggested that in future research focus is put on how users perceive and interpret the content published on Instagram, regarding the representation of people. By means of in-depth interviews or focus group, it is suggested, rich information can be added to the understanding of how the users – for whom the content is published – perceive and interpret the contents. This will further contribute to the academic field of social media branding as well media representation.

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