

**Changing marketing strategies during the pandemic:**

*A qualitative analysis of Netflix France's marketing strategy on Twitter before and during the pandemic*

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## **Abstract**

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The television industry has been fastly developing, from traditional and limited TV to high technology, and nowadays people can watch TV wherever and whenever they want. The emergence of the Internet and then video-on-demands services has played a revolutionary role in the television industry. Netflix is one of the leading streaming companies, with more than 200 million users in over 190 countries. Netflix has a competitive advantage due to its business model and quality and exclusive media content. Further, the integration of highly developed algorithmic technologies and social media presence is a significant strategic approach.

Netflix manages multiple social media pages with a country-specific approach. Social media marketing allows brands to strengthen their brand awareness, create brand loyalty and get insights about their audience. Social media is a two-way communication tool where users can interact and strengthen their relationships. Therefore, brands not only showcase their products or services but also achieve higher engagement and build brand communities.

Twitter is one of the main social media platforms used by media companies. This research explores Netflix France's Twitter account by answering the following research question: "How does Netflix France use Twitter as a marketing tool before and during Covid-19?". The researcher analyzed a total of 500 tweets by applying qualitative content analysis. The results show that Netflix France applies consistent social media marketing strategies that align with its playful and youthful brand identity. Netflix France focuses on the promotion of popular and international original series by using positive feelings. However, the company's marketing strategy changed during the pandemic. This difference is related to the increasing binge-watching habits and changing audience behaviors. The tweets during the pandemic seem to be, more engaging, descriptive, longer, and promotion oriented. Furthermore, the use of call-to-action doubled, which results in higher engagement and interactivity. The overall brand voice is exciting, engaging, and humorous, which creates an approachable, young, and friendly brand image.

Keywords: Netflix, social media marketing, France, Twitter, pandemic, Covid-19

## 1. Introduction

Netflix applies various global and local social media marketing strategies that attract the academic fields. Netflix has become one of the most popular streaming services due to various reasons such as its youthful brand identity, user-friendly technologies, recommendation system, and social media communications. Being a globally recognized brand comes with a lot of entry barriers, restrictions, and regulations. Yet, Netflix still challenges the television industry by being active in more than 190 countries (*Where Is Netflix Available?*, 2022).

Netflix entered the French market in 2014 and reached noticeable success despite the high entering barriers. Currently, more than 3% of Netflix subscribers are from France (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). Users can access a large range of content that can be viewed via internet-connected devices by paying a cost-effective membership fee. Improved digitalization has changed the way we connect, communicate, collaborate, and, engage. Accordingly, social media plays an important tool in branding and audience engagement. Previous research shows that Netflix has a specific social media strategy that differs from its competitors: the type of content and viewing options (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018). This research focuses on Netflix France's Twitter activity by comparing the ongoing Covid-19 period and the pre-pandemic period.

Clearly, the rise of social media has helped the communication between brands and customers. The interaction between brands and consumers is a two-way communication where consumers can interact with the brands, and the brands can receive direct feedback from the consumers. Accordingly, with the popularity of social media use, customer experiences, engagement, and brand building have become new aspects of social media marketing. Many companies have created social media profiles on different platforms regarding their target audience. So, the interaction between companies and customers is no longer restricted to location and time. Research shows that brands can explore their audiences' needs and demands earlier than the customers themselves by using social media platforms (Chen & Lin, 2019).

Furthermore, social media platforms have become effective tools for content promotion in the television industry. Especially to reach the audience, as well as, to get to know the audience. Television has always been social by bringing people together at their homes or other locations. Twitter is one of the most used social media platforms by media production companies (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Nearly, 90% of Twitter users tend to

follow their favorite companies, therefore Twitter has an important role in reaching the consumers (Sook Kwon et al., 2014). Netflix is actively using Twitter to promote content by using humor and suspense, which leads to higher audience engagement (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019).

In addition to social media practices, Netflix gained more than 16 million new subscribers during the second half of the pandemic in 2020 (Uluçay, et al., 2021). Because of ongoing quarantines and restrictions, people have started to spend more time online. Along with social media use, binge-watching on Netflix also has increased (Rahman & Arif, 2021). Research shows that users' engagement rate and time duration on social media have increased during the pandemic (Uluçay, et al., 2021). Furthermore, the pandemic led to a change in consumer behavior in terms of product search, information search, comparing, and purchase decisions (Mason et al., 2021). Clearly, the pandemic could be one of the milestones in social marketing. Companies must adapt to unexpected changes to keep their customers engaged and loyal. The pandemic is a significant example of how an external stimulus can change customer behavior (Mason et al., 2021). However, there is a lack of research regarding changing the behavior of companies during the pandemic. This study aims to discover how Netflix France uses Twitter as a marketing tool before and during Covid-19. Twitter is chosen as a platform since it is the most actively used platform by Netflix (Uluçay, et al., 2021). Hence, the French market is significant for Netflix due to its large proportion, and uncovering Netflix France's marketing strategies would be a valuable addition to academia.

Consequently, this research aims to find out whether Netflix France has made changes in Twitter marketing strategies during the period when users used to spend more time online because of Covid-19. This is done by answering the research question of "How does Netflix France use Twitter as a marketing tool before and during Covid-19?".

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Social Media Marketing**

Social media is a significantly useful tool for brands since the one-way communication of traditional media is transformed into interactive communication (Chen & Lin, 2019). Therefore, social media marketing refers to using social media technologies to create, deliver, and communicate with the audience (Jacobson et al., 2020). Accordingly, social media marketing consists of five key factors which are; interaction, customization,

entertainment, trendiness, and word-of-mouth. All these components have an impact on brand image and customers' behavior (Chen & Lin, 2019).

Social media use leads to brand-customers communication without any physical boundaries and limitations. This means that brands are able to reach global audience by using social media platforms. Additionally, brands are not limited in terms of posting frequency and creating social media posts are significantly more affordable than traditional advertising. Hence, as using social media increases, the consumption of brand messages increases. Moreover, social media data is useful for three operations; opinion mining, targeted advertising, and, customer relations (Jacobson et al., 2020). Opinion mining refers to determining an audience's overall impression and reaction to a topic or previous marketing strategy. Targeted advertising is the segmentation of the audience into subgroups. Lastly, customer relations refer to communication between brands and customers (Jacobson et al., 2020). Therefore, the active and effective use of social media helps brands to know their audiences and to respond to their demands by creating interactive connections.

Accordingly, brands must develop effective marketing strategies after analyzing the audience's behavior. The changing consumer habits lead to new marketing strategies. Study about Netflix Turkey discovers various changes in Twitter marketing strategies during the pandemic, such as posting times and frequencies (Uluçay et al., 2021). For example, the frequency of tweets between 16:00-18:00 has increased from 6% to 23% during Covid-19 due to the fact that users have been spending more time during the afternoon (Uluçay et al., 2021). Before the pandemic, tweets were mostly posted during the morning to create word-of-mouth marketing. Yet, the pandemic has caused changes in daily communication practices and times. Moreover, followers and engagement rates have increased along with subscription rates.

Apart from engagement, social media is a useful tool for building brand awareness. Social media has become even more important during the ongoing global restrictions. Research shows that Covid-19 led to changes in consumers' social media marketing behaviors in terms of searching for a product, gathering information, comparing, and purchase decisions (Mason et al., 2021). Indeed, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of social media marketing to reach consumers. Brands must adapt to changes in their marketing strategies due to new consumer behaviors. Social media has become the most active virtual space during the pandemic. Accordingly, studies on S-O-R Theory discuss that external stimuli can change consumer behavior (Mason et al., 2021). Research shows that external stimuli and pressure encourage companies to adopt social media

marketing. (Patma et al., 2020). So, a pandemic is an uncontrollable external cause of changing marketing behaviors.

Social media is an essential tool for marketers, since consumers tend to use social media in order to have control over products and services. Social media has become even more important during Covid-19 because consumers started to spend more time engaging and comparing products (Mason et al., 2021). Research demonstrates that using social media during the pandemic has positively influenced companies (Syaifullah et al., 2021). Through social media marketing companies can easily build their brand image and create consumer loyalty (Patma et al., 2020). Therefore, companies need to be active on social media to communicate with consumers, especially when physical contact is restricted and social media is widely used. For instance, brands can share engaging content and provoke excitement for their products and services. Using active social media during pandemics can increase consumer satisfaction as brands take part in consumers' virtual space. Therefore, companies can support and fulfill their audiences' cognitive and emotional needs by using social media marketing. This can be done by providing content that leads to joy, entertainment, humor, and excitement (Mason et al., 2021). Notably, engagement and interaction between the brand and users affects consumer behavior. (Mason, et al., 2021).

The increasing influence of social media marketing has been demonstrated during Covid-19. Therefore, effective social media marketing strategies must be considered due to consumers active presence on social media and, limited physical and social activities.

## **2.2 Netflix**

Streaming has become more just audience practice as it is an important part of the media industry. Clearly, the development of the Internet has led to new streaming opportunities and engagement types. Therefore, a new concept of the "digital media industry" has emerged (Burroughs, 2018). Digital streaming companies like Netflix actively compete with Hollywood, conventional TV companies, and cable companies. Netflix has become one of the main video-on-demand platforms by reaching more than 200 million subscribers who can watch numerous movies, series, feature films, and documentaries (Statista, 2022). Netflix was launched as a DVD-by-mail subscription in 1999 (Uluçay, et al., 2021). The brand has been successfully developed by adapting to new technologies and trends. As customers' behavior changed from DVD renting to streaming, Netflix launched its Internet streaming service in 2007 (Daidj & Egert, 2018). Now, users can watch Netflix content whenever they want from different devices, and they can reach millions of international and national content (Uluçay, et al., 2021). Additionally, the company offers

free-trial memberships before the subscription. Therefore, Netflix challenges the TV industry due to the increasing number of subscribers and content. Apart from its streaming strategies, Netflix is not a part of the large conglomerates that dominate the TV industry (Jenner, 2018). Even though Netflix shares similar features with online platforms, it is considered television in academic discourses since it is different from online platforms like YouTube. Indeed, in 2013 the CEO of Netflix positioned the brand as a competitor to HBO, by describing the company as a television service (Jenner, 2018).

Moreover, Netflix has branded itself as "the world's leading Internet television network", so that Netflix sees itself as a leader in Internet television (Burroughs, 2018). Netflix generates remarkable user viewing, subscription revenue, marketing spending, and network mindshare (Burroughs, 2018). Previously, Netflix operated as a third-party distribution technology. Yet, currently, Netflix operates as a streaming distribution technology and a content creator. Its development into content creation led to significant change for all of the television and media industries. Consequently, conventional televisions and movie companies need to update their technical ability and be part of the digital streaming industry (Burroughs, 2018). In other words, Netflix actively disrupted the conventional media industry approaches with the introduction of its original content.

Netflix has a different subscription-based business model which generates revenues mainly from subscriptions. For example, Hulu generates revenue from advertisements where viewers have to pay more if they want to see fewer advertisements and a wider range of content. Additionally, Amazon generates revenue from subscriptions and micropayments. So, Netflix is a unique platform that provides a wide range of programs without any extra payments and advertisements. Further, unlike traditional television, Netflix offers a whole season of a show at a time which leads to long-term consumption since many viewers don't want to commit to a program that might be canceled before its finale on TV (Burroughs, 2018). Therefore, audiences are able to consume the entire season without advertising interruption or a weekly schedule.

According to a report from MarketLine (2019), Netflix has strong competitive advantages such as a strong and unique business model, significant revenue growth, successful marketing strategies, and improving consumers. While Netflix follows active marketing strategies on social media it also continues to develop its viewers' experience by streaming more content, developing UI, and expanding its service to more devices (MarketLine, 2019).

The co-CEO Ted Sarandos describes Netflix as "Our brand is personalization. We didn't want any show to define Netflix" (Sepinwall, 2017). Therefore, the main brand identity is personalization. In its campaigns, Netflix often highlights the experience of watching shows at any time through different devices such as TV, laptops, and smartphones. Yet, the main focus of the brand is individual show recommendations which are related to personalization (Havens, 2018). Similar to the broadcasting industry, Netflix embraces a corporate approach in its branding by combining service branding and product branding in its communications (Havens, 2018).

Further, Netflix competes differently in more than 190 countries. Each country has distinct cultural norms and television culture therefore Netflix develops branding strategies for each market. Accordingly, this leads to the development of different brand hierarchies (Havens, 2018). Netflix created two very different campaigns in Germany and India, however, both of the campaigns focused on Netflix as a service rather than focusing on specific programs or series, positioning instant delivery and satisfaction as disruptive. Further, both the countries delivered this disruption as 'playful and youthful', enabling it to differentiate itself from conventional media, while also identifying as a tech company. The youthful side of the brand identity and its division from conventional media strengthen other attempts to build up the brand identity as a tech company, instead of just a media organization (Snider, 2017). Even though Netflix operates in various countries it uses the same themes of personalization, technology, playfulness, youthfulness, and instant delivery, suggesting that its audience shares generational responsiveness (Havens, 2018).

Furthermore, Netflix describes itself as revolutionary, disruptive, and fearless as a tech company. Therefore, the company tends to take risks and to follow trends in order to keep up with the young and fast-consuming audience. The reason for using the tech identity is to target subscribers and investors. For subscribers, the tech brand identity reflects itself as playful, young, modern, individualistic, and tech-savvy. While, for the investors, Netflix can sustain high investments and high satisfaction (LaKosh, 2017).

According to Netflix (2020) reports, Netflix gained more than 26 million subscribers during the first 6 months of 2020. This is almost equal to the total gained subscribers in 2019. The reason for the increase might be related to the significant increase in restrictions and lockdowns during 2020 (International Energy Agency, 2020).

### **2.3 Localization**

Until the early 1990s broadcasting channels such as MTV followed a global strategy with the assumption that all cultures were following a homogenization process by sharing a high number of common interests (Chalaby, 2002). Therefore, marketers were focusing on a similar marketing strategy in different cultures. For example, the slogan of MTV was "One planet, one music" which aimed to publish the same music in English across the globe (Chalaby, 2002). However, this marketing view was challenged by audiences and national broadcasters since cultures were not as homogenized as expected. The national televisions adapted the global formats to their culture more successfully since they had better knowledge of their local audiences (Chalaby, 2002). Therefore, MTV's 'global strategy' failed since localization has significant importance in television industries. Similar to MTV, Netflix also aims to target an international market with broadcasting as its focus.

According to Schäler (2007) localization is defined as ‘‘the linguistic and cultural adaptation of digital content to the requirements and locale of a foreign market, and the provision of services and technologies for the management of multilingualism across the digital global information flow’’ (p.157). According to Chalaby (2002) ‘‘ localization consists of adapting an international channel to a local audience with the aim of making it more palatable to that public’’ (p.192). Subtitling and dubbing are simple ways of localization, while local production can be a more complicated way of production (Chalaby, 2002). Therefore, Netflix offers subtitles and dubs for the local audiences so that they can enjoy the content in their language. However, because of complexity and expensiveness the local production and programming are low (Lobato, 2019).

Furthermore, the United States based streaming platforms like Netflix have become the main sources of the global transformation of cultural content (Vlassis, 2021). The digital era of highly spreadable video-on-demand content challenges the protective policies of national and local cultures (Debrett, 2009). Moreover, the global streaming industry also challenges the production, distribution, and consumption of national and local media content (Vlassis, 2021). Consequently, the European Union measures show a degree of path-dependence from the analog broadcast era to the digital era, and the new text is based on the logic à la carte that has historically dominated EU intervention in the audio-visual industries (Vlassis, 2021). Consequently, in 2020, Germany, Italy, France, Poland, Belgium, and Denmark introduced measures for foreign video-on-demand streaming providers (Vlassis, 2021). Clearly, the pandemic has led to new implementation among European countries in

terms of finances. For example, at the end of 2020, France announced that foreign VOD streaming services like Netflix, are required to contribute to French and European media based on a minimum of 20% of their revenue in France. Additionally, 85% of the investment must be spent on national French audio-visual content (Vlassis, 2021). Hence, these new decisions could be an indicator of a conflict between reinforced national intervention and dominant digital capitalism in terms of the pandemic.

As a result, localization has great importance in broadcasting strategies. National and local markets consist of different interests, incomes, cultural elements, and languages. Therefore, Netflix has to apply different marketing and content strategies depending on the local market. Additionally, nations tend to preserve their cultural elements rather than complete homogenization. International broadcasting services must follow the governmental obligation in order to operate in the country.

#### **2.4 Netflix France**

Although Netflix's popularity is increasing globally, each country's market consists of different regulations and features. The French market contains several characteristics that lead to high entry barriers. The French market follows a tax system to finance its movies. Also, the market practices investments in the free-to-air market (Daidj & Egert, 2018). Netflix must respect the quota system like other TV channels. For example, in 2018, Netflix had to publish 40% more French content than in 2017 (Daidj & Egert, 2018). Therefore, Netflix decided to focus on exclusive content more by increasing the number of non-English programming to 100 per year (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). Netflix's business model is to provide numerous ranges of content among the audience can watch rather than providing limited content that everyone loves. Therefore, the French market sets some barriers in order to prevent disruptions. For example, TV channels are not able to release a movie before its 36-month theatrical release in France (Daidj & Egert, 2018). Operators of digital distribution platforms (SVOD) (such as Netflix) are prevented from publishing recent films in their catalogs.

Since January 2011, SVOD services must invest 21% of their annual revenues in French productions (Daidj & Egert, 2018). Additionally, they have to pay a cultural exception tax of 19% on video-on-demand sales (Daidj & Egert, 2018). However, despite the high entry barriers, Netflix successfully took a part in the market after its' launch in 2014. Although its quick success, Netflix is facing two main competitors TV group Canal+ and the telecom operator Orange. (Daidj & Egert, 2018). Therefore, Netflix has developed

specific strategies to align itself with the French market. Netflix has developed different relationships with its competitors. For example, it has made distribution agreements with three main telecom operators: Orange, SFR, and Bouygues (Daidj & Egert, 2018). Additionally, Netflix creates profitable relationships with its competitors. For instance, Netflix uses various technological tools offered by Amazon, while Amazon is far behind Netflix in the French market.

However, Netflix is still facing challenges from conventional broadcasting televisions. French TV boss Daphine Ernotte Cunci indicated that ‘ ‘ Streaming platforms won’t be on equal footing until TV channels too are only one click away. There is a Netflix button... There must be a France Televisions button in the same way’ ’ during her interview with Politico (Kayali, 2022). For the French TV industry, the political battle with Netflix has also become a cultural battle. Most of the local televisions are not able to counteract streaming platforms because of finances. Private French broadcasters TF1 and M6 suggested that merging is the main way to compete with global conglomerates like Meta and Google on the advertisement side, and global streaming services like Netflix on the production side. Consequently, they launched together a French streaming service named Salto aiming to challenge global U.S. streaming services (Kayali, 2022).

Yet, entering the French market is valuable for Netflix since the French audience composes more than 3% of the total platform subscribers (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). Even though France doesn't offer significant attractiveness for foreign broadcasters, Netflix aims to become a safe place for creators who want to produce original content. So, because of the high audience demand, Netflix has increased its investment in production in France. Netflix has developed various strategies since early 2010, however obtaining the distribution rights of the House of Cards streaming series was a milestone for the company (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). The company differentiated itself by following a strategy that focuses on distributing a catalog with exclusive content.

Netflix combines global and local by providing content that every user can relate to. Then, local production is spread globally to increase the potential audience. In 2019, Netflix invested 15 billion dollars in original content and various French series (Family Business, Plan Coeur), movies (Paris est a nous, Mortel), and documentaries (Gregory) were launched by following the French regulations (Keslassy, 2019). Furthermore, the recommendation system and algorithm show that Netflix is mostly used by a younger audience who doesn't value the cinematographic landscape as much as the previous generation. They prefer

"continuous, and limitless joyful experience"(Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). Netflix's target audience is young people who don't watch TV or go to the cinema. Hence, quantity is more important than artistic quality. Netflix France's director intends to finish his shows 12-18 months after their pitch – which is three-time faster than what is typical for regular French television broadcasters (Keslassy, 2019). Accordingly, Netflix France hires new generation creators who can produce "glocal" content. Since, although a wide range of global productions is attractive, the cultural connection between audience and media content still remains (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020).

In 2018, approximately 35 non-English shows were produced (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). Vice-president Erik Barmack aims to release more than 100 non-English original content to create a global streaming platform where any country can have a global impact (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). Accordingly, the strategy of Netflix France is to launch at least 12 content per year since French users represent more than 3% of the subscribers (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020).

Strategies developed by Netflix when operating in a market with strong regulations and cultural connections such as France could provide beneficial examples for other streaming companies that aim to reinforce their engagement. Moreover, a longitudinal study from Sigre-Leirós et al. (2022) found that in French-speaking European countries, Netflix watching habits significantly increased during the first pandemic lockdown. Therefore, the marketing strategies of Netflix France before and during the pandemic could provide useful models for streaming services.

## **2.5 Binge-watching**

The media consumption habit has changed significantly in recent years. Audiences prefer streaming services rather than traditional media. In the traditional format, viewers have to consume the media content according to a particular schedule and advertising distractions. TV's definition has been transformed and expanded in the 21<sup>st</sup> century since TV consists of digital labor, production of user-generated content, connected viewing and active audience participation (Steiner & Xu, 2020). Online media differs from traditional media due to the fact that it offers more control, more choice, and more consumption authority (Panda & Pandey, 2017). Therefore, the broadcaster and the viewer share control over 21<sup>st</sup> century TV content production and distribution. Streaming media services like Netflix has provided more control to the audience. Nowadays, audiences are able to determine their show schedule and they have a lot of choices among enormous media

content. The developing technology and the habit of binge-watching have expanded the perception of the TV even more.

McNamara (2019) defines binge watching as: 'any instance in which more than three episodes of an hour-long drama or six episodes of a half-hour comedy are consumed at one sitting'. However, other studies argue that the number of episodes is a more significant indicator rather than the number of hours (Steiner & Xu, 2020). Another definition of binge-watching is watching more than three episodes of an hour-long show at one sitting (Steiner & Xu, 2018). The quantity of time and episodes may vary, but the action of binge-watching need to be consisted of at least two completed episodes in a row. The numbers grow, especially when people have to stay at home due to restrictions or quarantine. Although the pandemic has influenced positively content consumption on Netflix, on the other hand, new productions were slowed down because of physical restrictions (Rahman & Arif, 2021).

A research shows that 88 % of Netflix viewers are watching a minimum of three episodes of the same show in one day (Panda & Pandey, 2017). Until 2021, the notion of bingeing was associated with negative and harmful actions such as binge drinking (Steiner & Xu, 2020). Despite negative connotations, the media industry mostly described binge-watching as a liberating, fun, and relaxing experience (Stelter, 2013). The possibility of 'whatever, whenever, wherever' is embraced by audiences and media producers. Streaming services such as Netflix provide us the opportunity to choose from a wide range of media content and then consume the amount we desire. Consequently, viewers are not only able to control place, time, and the way of their consumption habits, but they also have the power to develop a culture and affect media content producers (Steiner & Xu, 2020).

Steiner and Xu (2020) argue that the user and gratifications (U&G) theory plays an important role while discovering binge-watching since it highlights the audiences' needs and motivations. According to research from Steiner and Xu (2020), there are five key assumptions of user and gratification theory. To begin with, audiences' communication behavior includes media selection and media usage which can be determined as goal-oriented. Second, audiences are more active than before. Third, audiences' media behavior is influenced by psychological and personal factors. Fourth, the use of media and interpersonal communication compete with each other. Last, media can influence the way audiences rely on media channels (Steiner & Xu, 2020). In the past, media consisted of newspapers, television, radio, magazines, and movies, whereas nowadays media have become more interactive, smart, and mobile. Accordingly, Netflix and other streaming

services have integrated the characteristics of screen viewing, social media, and streaming video efficiencies (Steiner & Xu, 2020). Viewers can watch media content anywhere and anytime while managing their ratings and favorite lists. In addition, the technological development of streaming media services enables audiences' to pause, rewind and add captions. Therefore, these opportunities have extended the binge-watching experiences.

Furthermore, studies have shown that marketing activities such as; advertisements, pricing deals, recommendations, and ratings on different platforms also can influence binge-watching (Schweidel & Moe, 2016). Accordingly, social media advertisements during a binge-watching activity are more likely to enhance the watching experience, as a result, leading to an increase in audiences' desire to complete a watching session (Panda & Pandey, 2017). In addition, strategically positioned and published advertisements based on users' searching history and interests might serve as a binge-watching motivation.

Equally important, Steiner and Xu (2020) have mentioned five motives for binge-watching: a sense of completion, catching up, relaxation, enhanced viewing experience, and, cultural inclusion. Some viewers experience binge-watching as a relaxing experience while others refer to it as background noise while multitasking. Consequently, it is expected that the ongoing pandemic restrictions lead to an increase in binge-watching since people tend to use media content as an escape from reality and relaxation. Audiences tend to play episodes while housekeeping, cooking, or studying (Steiner & Xu, 2020). So, binge-watching may increase with the rise of remote working during the pandemic.

Similarly, according to research from Panda and Pandey (2019) binge-watching consists of six socio-cognitive motivations and three marketing motivations. The socio-cognitive motivations are described as; social engagement, escape from reality, relaxation, entertainment, seclusion, and boredom. While the marketing motivations are pricing, advertising effect, and easy access. Accordingly, studies have shown that marketing activities such as; advertisements, pricing deals, recommendations, and ratings on different platforms also can influence binge-watching (Schweidel & Moe, 2016). Social media advertisements during a binge-watching activity are more likely to enhance the watching experience, as a result, leading to an increase in audiences' desire to complete a watching session (Panda & Pandey, 2017). In addition, strategically positioned and published advertisements based on users' searching history and interests might serve as a binge-watching motivation.

Promoting binge-watching is one of the marketing strategies of Netflix since the brand produces multiple shorts series and creates social media content around these series. As people spend more time at home during the pandemic, it is expected a difference in binge-watching activities and their promotion before the pandemic and during the pandemic.

## **2.6 Binge-watching during Covid-19**

The consumption of multiple episodes in one sit has been increased during the Covid-19 pandemic due to the ongoing quarantines (Rahman & Arif, 2021). The pandemic had both positive and negative effects on streaming media services like Netflix. The positive effect is that Netflix's subscribers and views increased because of quarantines and lockdowns. But on the other side, show and movie production had to stop due to the lockdowns (Rahman & Arif, 2021). This was a big challenge for Netflix because online streaming services have to produce exclusive and extensive content in order to compete within the market (Seetharaman,2020). However, despite low production during the pandemic, Netflix owned 34% of the video-on-demand share in USA households (Nielsen,2020).

Indeed, spending more time during the Covid-19 lockdown has increased the motivation for watching streaming services. As people have to quarantine in their homes for a long time, this leads to perfect conditions for watching TV / video-on-demand platforms and engaging on social media. The affordance and easy access to the Internet may result in higher binge watching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Research from Dixit et al. (2020) shows that more than half of the people are working from, consequently, their TV and Internet usage has increased by 73.7%. Covid-19 has led to a significant rise in viewers' watching habits as higher daily time spent binge-watching and higher co-viewing practices. For instance, daily time spent watching media shows per working day increased by 93.8 % and 52.1% per day off (Sigre-Leirós et al., 2022). The opportunity of online screening gatherings (especially Netflix Party extension) has helped to overcome loneliness and stress caused by lockdowns (Sigre-Leirós et al., 2022).

Studies show that the more binge-watching increases, the more show loyalty and streaming service loyalty increases (Jurgensen, 2012). Accordingly, according to research from Rahman and Arif (2021), 85,7 % of Netflix's subscribers were satisfied with the binge-watching experience during the pandemic. The same study shows that the main emotional motivation for binge-watching during the pandemic was an escape from boredom alongside marketing motivations such as social media engagement and advertisement (Rahman &

Arif, 2021). Research from Aghababian et al. (2021) shows that binge-watching habit has increased especially among people with higher Covid-19 related stress. Another cross-sectional research argues that during the first lockdown of Covid-19 in Italy, women had spent more time watching TV shows. (Boursier et al., 2021). Similarly, a study conducted in Germany found a significant increase in video-on-demand consumption, especially among women (Lemenager et al., 2020). In a similar vein, a study conducted among American university students between 2015 and 2020 shows that binge-watching vitally increased over this period, with the highest pick during the Covid-19 pandemic (Rubenking & Bracken, 2021).

Moreover, the positive effects of binge-watching can be social engagement and entertainment while the negative effects are escaping from reality and finding consolation among imaginary characters. Yet, even though escaping from reality might be a negative influence on regular daily life, contrastively, escapism might be a positive motivation during the ongoing pandemic. Considering all the negative news and cases during Covid-19, binge-watching can be comforting for viewers. Binge-watching during Covid-19 served as a recovery strategy to face such a difficult situation. Therefore, a high level of binge-watching activity, shouldn't be considered as a negative effect since it might serve as a powerful coping motivation to deal with stress by enabling audiences to find temporary peace in series and shows while experiencing entertainment, fulfillment, and social needs during the Covid-19 pandemic (Boursier et al., 2021).

The use of social media increased along with binge-watching. Social media can be use as an escape from the stressful pandemic period just like binge-watching. Twitter is one of the main social media platforms used by streaming services to connects with their audiences.

## **2.7 Twitter**

Twitter is an online networking platform that was made available to the public in 2006. Twitter enables people to post updates about their life, share opinions, and interact with other users (Greer & Ferguson, 2011). Users are able to communicate through several tools including tweeting, retweeting, public messages, and hyperlinks (Wang, 2016). The communication contents vary from personal mini-dairies to business purposes (Miller, 2009). Twitter offers many advantages such as; frequent posts and linking to more detailed information on other platforms (Greer & Ferguson, 2011). Users can create public messages by using the "@" symbol which directs the message to other users or brands. Public

messages can be useful to create dialogues between multiple users and companies as the followers are able to see the ongoing activities of the account (Lovejoy et al., 2012). Moreover, the retweeting tool can enhance the visibility of brands (Wang & Zhou, 2015). Users can share companies' updates on their profiles and interact with their followers.

Almost 90% of the users follow their favorite brands on Twitter, consequently, marketers are becoming increasingly aware of Twitter to build consumer relationships (Sook Kwon et al., 2014). Marketing practices on Twitter are more than creating an online presence. Marketers aim to humanize brands to enable interpersonal communication with the consumers (Kwon & Sung, 2011). Twitter provides interpersonal interactivity by enabling the exchange of messages between brands and users, and by referencing other users (Burton & Soboleva, 2011). In fact, high interactivity is a significant aspect of marketing. With its personalized communication with users who follow a brand's Twitter profile, Twitter significantly increases the extent of interactive communication between the brand and its followers (Burton & Soboleva, 2011). Further, hyperlinks are useful to maximize the information about a topic by increasing credibility and engagement (Mamic & Almaraz, 2013). Consequently, hyperlinks that are directed to visual media can lead to fan participation and interaction (Wang, 2016). Hyperlinks are categorized as machine interactivity since they enable users to reach more information by clicking on links (Burton & Soboleva, 2011).

According to research from Sook Kwon et al. (2014) consumers follow companies on Twitter due to four key motivations: social interaction, brand usage, purchase encouragement, and information seeking. Having the opportunity to follow brands' updates on Twitter can be seen as consumer empowerment which leads to brand enthusiasm and positive electronic word-of-mouth marketing. (Muntiga et al., 2011). Users who follow brands do not only consume the brands' content but also engage in WOM form by sharing brand content on their tweet decks (Sook Kwon et al., 2014). Additionally, retweets lead to higher visibility and credibility (Wang, 2016). Therefore, brands can use Twitter as a brand builder, mobilizer, community creator, and promoter. Users who interact with their peers about brands and have more positive reactions toward social media advertising are more likely to communicate with brands on Twitter (Sook Kwon et al., 2014). Therefore, followers take part in both user-to-content and user-to-user interaction. Brands' followers on Twitter are already motivated consumers so developing brand loyalty in consumers' journeys is a significant possibility.

## **2.8 Twitter as social television**

In the age when traditional televisions are adapting to digital platforms, social media networks provide new tools to enhance their connection with viewers (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018). Conventional broadcasts imply having a specific schedule of programs that viewers watch and discuss within their environment. However, this changed significantly in terms of consuming and sharing. The consumption has been changed from conventional broadcasts and shared viewing to individual consumption and subscription-based video-on-demand services. Consumers can reach a wide range of media products on television and mobile devices. Consequently, a more independent and mobile type of media consumption is evolved. In the beginning, people were using social media platforms to connect with family, friends, and other users. However, nowadays social media platforms allow us to follow brands, celebrities, people with similar interests, news, events, political updates, professionals, and so on. In this case, social television has evolved as a new concept (Perez, 2020).

Television has been always a medium for social interaction. With the Internet, the social use of TV has moved from homes and bars to social media platforms and virtual spaces (Guo, 2018). Television industries are increasingly using social media to promote their content and engage with the audience. There is high interaction, especially between Twitter and television networks (Wang, 2016). With the growing digitalization of daily life, social television viewing has become more common.

Social television is the viewers' communication, interaction, and engagement while watching series or shows (Guo, 2018). Social media users are easier to reach and engage than other audiences (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018). Indeed, the high engagement and active use of social media can lead to content going viral. Audiences can communicate and share their favorite shows with other users by using mobile applications. Twitter is the top social media platform that people tend to engage while watching TV and the degree of social interaction is high (Guo, 2018). Accordingly, the combination of social media and television provides new advertising and content opportunities to media industries (Guo, 2018). Hence, social media platforms create a space to engage the audience, market media content, and increase brand awareness. Audiences that are engaged in social media are more likely to remember the marketing messages and be motivated to take an action (Epps, 2011).

Research from Guo (2018) found that audiences tend to develop social interaction with characters who are related to their favorite shows by using mainly Twitter. This engagement is facilitated by three main actions; 1) following the programs' professionals on Twitter, 2) consuming tweets related to the favorite programs, and 3) mentioning and commenting on programs' tweets (Guo, 2018). Therefore, broadcasters tend to be active on Twitter in order to increase the audiences' engagement. One of the significant ways is to use celebrities that audiences want to see on their social media campaigns (Guo, 2018).

## **2.9 Netflix presence on Twitter**

Through social media platforms like Twitter, broadcasters and users gather around content and hashtags to share their opinions about the programs they are watching, interact, start a conversation and attract more viewers (Perez, 2020). In addition, traditional televisions and video-on-demand services are at the center of conversations and discussions while users share their views with their followers, create or consume program related-content and interact with the production (Perez, 2020). Moreover, video streaming services are able to promote their content by connecting with their audiences on social media. Social media platforms not only allow streaming services to connect with a wide range of users but also can be used to build up interests and engagement. Content that is posted on social media platforms can go viral by reaching millions of potential audiences.

According to Kemp (2022), the number of social media users reached 4.62 billion in January 2022 with the addition of 424 million users in 2021. Additionally, Twitter's advertising reach increased to 436 million users. In that case, marketing campaigns on social media platforms play a significant role in brand awareness and brand loyalty for the television industry. Social media communication is one of the main marketing strategies for Netflix. The company has run numerous viral social media campaigns by engaging with audiences during the era when television networks increased their social media communication (Van Es, 2015). Social media platforms like Twitter effects the consumption of media contents (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018). Nowadays, most viewers tend to share comments on social media while watching series or shows. Twitter is especially useful for series as it enables to maintain or increase the ambition to talk about the series between episodes or seasons (Higuera-Ruiz & Alberich-Pascual, 2021). Researches show that most audiences prefer to use Twitter while watching programs (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018). Consequently, research from Wilson (2015) found that media experts use Twitter in order to track audiences' habits and behaviors.

Furthermore, according to research from Van Es (2015), television networks can use social media in four ways: functional, promotional, phatic, and effective. First, in terms of functionality, viewers can share their votes about their favorite programs by using social media. Second, the promotional use of Twitter is that it increases brand awareness by encouraging users to like or retweet. For example, broadcasters can start a conversation about programs on Twitter. Third, the role of phatic communication is to make viewers return to the show. Last, social media offer utilities to measure audience engagement (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018). Hence, social media platforms provide tools for collecting data about viewers' responses to the programs.

Additionally, Netflix tends to post content on social media platforms like Twitter in order to create expectations about events and elaborate story plots before, during, and after shows and series are displayed (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018). One of the most successful Netflix marketing strategies is the series-specific #AskOrange Twitter campaign which was launched eight days before the new season of Orange Is the New Black (DeCarvalho & Cox, 2016). Twitter users had the opportunity to ask questions to their favorite characters by using the hashtag. Consequently, the research from DeCarvalho and Cox (2016) found that Netflix has significantly increased its audience through social media (especially Twitter) and interactive storytelling. Twitter users are exposed to a higher volume of posts compared to other social media platforms (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018). Therefore, Netflix has developed different marketing strategies for Twitter such as; updating the profile two to five times daily, retweeting other accounts' posts, and, sharing content created by other active companies on Twitter (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018).

Research from Burns and Walker (2018) about the Netflix teen show 13 Reasons Why found that Twitter users are mostly interested in content about the plot, characters and actors. Additionally, most of the posts about the show were promotional content targeting people who are interested in the show or are already watching the show (Burns & Walker, 2018).

Furthermore, research from Higuera-Ruiz and Alberich-Pascual (2021) emphasizes that "social activity surrounding an audiovisual product increases its popularity, having a positive effect on consumption and on possibilities of renewal". In that case, for a streaming service media product, being watched is less important than being discussed in a way that encourages users to maintain their sVOD platform subscription or purchase a subscription.

Research from Fernández Gómez and Martín Quevedo (2018) discovered that Netflix Spain's Twitter strategy focuses on contents and viewing options. Additionally, the promotion messages are often related to the shows that it offers. The research also found that with 41% shows promotion is the most used content strategy which is followed by informative content (24 %), Netflix promotion (18%), and greetings (13%). Relevantly, informative messages tend to boost the influence of promotional tweets by focusing on future premiers (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018). Accordingly, research from Higuera-Ruiz and Alberich-Pascual (2021) found that tweets posted by showrunners from Netflix are categorized into six key groups: promotion, participation, help, Q&A, appreciation, and others. More than half of the tweets are related to promotional content that consists of links to trailers, countdowns, reviews, news, or production photographs. Additionally, hashtags related to the series are often used as a part of promotional posts (Higuera-Ruiz & Alberich-Pascual, 2021).

Last but not least, comparative research that was conducted in Spain and the United States found that Netflix Spain engages more in cultural content rather than the United States, on Twitter (Perez, 2020). Moreover, Netflix Spain's posts on Twitter tend to be more humorous and the brand interacts with users by using call-to-action. The common Twitter strategy of both countries is that Netflix promotes and informs about series by using social media language, visuals, and hashtags. However, while both countries focus on promotional content, Netflix Spain's approach is humoristic and call-to-action while United States' strategy revolves around informative content (Perez, 2020).

A recent study about Netflix Turkey's Twitter strategy during and before Covid-19 found that the brand's posting habits changed during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, Netflix Turkey used to share tweets during earlier times, however, posting time shifted to the afternoon during the pandemic (Uluçay et al., 2021). The main reason is that users started to engage on Twitter more during the afternoon because of the change in work and daily life habits. Additionally, there is significant growth in promotional content during the pandemic (Uluçay et al., 2021).

As a result, the importance of Twitter increased even more during the pandemic. Furthermore, a report shows that the media and entertainment industries increased their posting volume by 8.9% since people sought out distraction and inspiration during the restrictions (Arens, 2021). The television industry uses Twitter, more than other social media platforms as a communication tool. Therefore, a change in Twitter marketing

strategies is expected during the pandemic. Further, various researches about streaming services and their Twitter marketing strategies have been conducted. However, there is no research on Netflix France's Twitter account.

This research focuses on Netflix France's Twitter activity by comparing the ongoing Covid-19 period and the pre-pandemic period. The research question for this thesis project is ' "How does Netflix France use Twitter as a marketing tool before and during Covid-19?". Accordingly, two subquestions are asked 1) "What are the characteristics of posted tweets by Netflix France before and during Covid-19?" and 2) "How do these messages engage the audience?".

### **3. Methodology**

This research makes meaningful interpretations about the social media marketing strategies of Netflix France by interpreting the data by using qualitative methods. Further, qualitative content analysis is a suitable method since the researcher explores Netflix France's marketing strategies through the content on Twitter. Accordingly, Netflix France is selected as it forms more than 3% of the total audience and has published successful global series (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). Thus, social media marketing is an appropriate object of analysis as it is widely used by companies, and the ongoing Covid-19 has led to the increasing use of social media. Therefore, brands need to be active on social media to reach their audiences.

#### **3.1 Qualitative Research Method**

Qualitative research is an appropriate method since it focuses on the description and exploration of a specific phenomenon instead of an explicit explanation (Brennen, 2017). Therefore, the researcher interprets meanings from textual data by analyzing the language (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Whereas quantitative research uses numerical data to explain causal correlations, the qualitative method is interpretive, interdisciplinary, and theoretical (Brennen, 2017). So, it aims to interpret meaningful relations among the textual data. For example, media researchers who use the qualitative method can focus on how a particular phenomenon is represented in media instead of its' effect on society. Either how a group of people perceives and interprets media messages. One of the advantages of qualitative research is the large amount of data on the Internet. Therefore, there is enough data to be explored and analyzed by using the qualitative method due to the active presence of Netflix France on Twitter. Netflix France's social media marketing strategy can be interpreted and

identified. Accordingly, the data are sufficient to be compared before and during the Covid-19 period.

### **3.1.2 Qualitative Content Analysis**

Qualitative content analysis is useful for describing and explaining qualitative data systematically (Schreier, 2013). The qualitative content analysis focuses on the use of language within the textual data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Accordingly, qualitative content analysis aims to derive latent and in-depth meaning. In this research, the analyzed textual data consists of visuals and captions that compose the social media post. While conducting a qualitative content analysis, a coding frame is built to derive an interpretation (Given, 2012). Indeed, applying a coding frame helps to reduce the data by following a systematic and flexible approach. The key feature of qualitative content analysis is that it is systematic. A large amount of data is separated into codes, then into categories, and finally, relations between categories are found (Schreier, 2013). Hence, the large amount of textual data is classified into an efficient number of categories that express similar meanings. Accordingly, each category is clearly defined by the researcher. Indeed, the coding frame and the material in textual data always must match with each other.

The researcher does the coding manually by analyzing each tweet. Then the coding frame is built and categories are formed. An inductive approach is adapted to define the categories. The researcher defines categories by deriving meanings from the coded textual data, since there are still gaps in previous studies (Schreier, 2013). The researcher first gets familiar with the collected data; then the data is coded, and finally different variables and categories are defined. While grouping different categories, overlapping categories are removed. Hence, the inductive approach helps to add new findings to the academic field. Further, a trial phase is applied by analyzing 20 posts (10 from pre-Covid-19 and 10 from during Covid-19) and sub-categories and categories derived from the coding frame are tested. Then the textual data is segmented into meaningful categories and the coding frame is continuously evaluated and modified. Accordingly, while interpreting the data, the coder were grouped into sub-sub categories, sub categories and main categories.

Accordingly, qualitative content analysis is flexible and iterative. The researcher continuously checks for matches between the data and categories. The credibility and trustworthiness of the research is assured within an iterative process by seeking contradictory or uncompleted data (Given, 2012). Therefore, the researcher is going through coding steps repeatedly in order to apply new modifications if they are needed. Moreover, qualitative content analysis can involve frequency counts as quantitative analysis. In terms

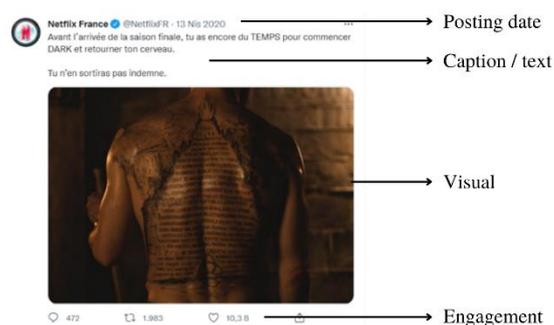
of Netflix France, deriving themes contributes to developing an understanding of its social media marketing strategy and the representations of the messages that the brand communicates with the Twitter audience before and during Covid-19.

### 3.2 Sampling

This section of the research methodology explains the units of analysis. Additionally, the section explains the method and timing of the data collection. Finally, it describes the process of analysis.

#### 3.2.1 Units of Analysis

The units of analysis for this research are composed of Twitter posts published by Netflix France on their account. Tweets on Twitter are selected as units of analysis since Twitter is the most used platform by streaming services and Netflix. Additionally, Netflix France publishes between 2 to 5 posts per day. Which means that there is enough data to be interpreted. The analyzed data consists of the visuals, descriptions underneath the visuals, tags, emoticons, hashtags, likes, shares, and so on. The researcher translated the French tweets into English. As the researcher was fluent in French and English, the translation helped to understand the cultural aspects of the tweets. Moreover, the researcher noted the posting dates, which helped to understand whether Netflix France had a different marketing strategy before or during the pandemic in terms of frequency. The researcher gathered the number of likes and replies in order to understand which categories receive more engagement. Finally, the researcher marked what kind of content is promoted to gain insights about marketing strategies in terms of promotion.



#### 3.2.2 Sampling

This research adopts purposive sampling since the included data is from a specific time frame (Flick, 2007). Therefore, 500 Twitter posts are included in the sample size. 250 posts are gathered from 1st April 2020, since the first lockdown in France started at the end of March and the cases peaked during April (Woods, 2021). So, it's assumed that during this

time companies and individuals started to be more online than before. The second fragment of the data is collected from 1st April 2019, a year before the first lockdown. The decision to gather the data from 1st April 2020 aims to capture the communication and marketing strategy of Netflix France during the increasing pandemic. Then, it is compared to the strategy one year before the pandemic. The researcher collected the data chronologically by starting from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 / 2020 until reaching the desired sampling size. Therefore, subjectivity was prevented and the data wasn't gathered randomly. This method of collection helps to focus on specific time of period and tweeting frequency. For this research, timing accuracy is important since the data comparison is made regarding to the pandemic period.

The posts are collected by using the "Advanced Search" option on Twitter. The researcher is able to reach accounts' tweets by entering a specific period. The tweets are listed on the platform of Twitter. The period of dates is entered to the search option, then the screenshots of the tweets are collected manually and gathered in a file. The screenshots are inserted into a excel file in order to build up the coding frame. Additionally, based on the assumption that Netflix France and the audience might be more active during the lockdown, the engagement rate (likes, shares, comments) and the posting frequency is noted. The researcher noted the dates, number of comments, and number of likes in order to gather insights about frequencies, engagement rates and correlations of the categories.

There was enough data to analyze the marketing strategy of Netflix since they post at least 2-3 times per day. It is expected to collect 250 posts from a shorter period during the lockdown due to change in marketing and communication strategy. The samples are translated from French to English to understand the essence of the language and culture.

### **3.3 Operationalization**

In order to answer the research question, the researcher operationalized various approaches, which enabled finding relevance. The process of operationalization enabled to analyze and interpret the sample. This research primarily focuses on two features of Netflix France's tweets; the visual (images or videos) and the messages in the descriptions. Therefore, the whole tweet is analyzed to discover its marketing approach. Research shows that increasing likes, shares, comments, and retweets are some of the aims of social media marketing (Uluçay, et al., 2021). The post type, the objective of the post, the written description, date, engagement, and frequency are operationalized. Accordingly, the leading concepts of the research are; social media, promotion, and branding. The research by Uluçay et al. (2021) on Netflix Turkey's Twitter strategy and Martin-Quevedo and Fernandez-

Gomez's (2018) study on Netflix Spain's Twitter strategy has contributed to the operationalization. The research by Uluçay et al (2021) discovered that the frequency of posts on Twitter had increased during the pandemic. Therefore, a similar difference is expected in this research. However, due to the engagement difference, a change in language characteristics and post type is expected as well. Furthermore, besides the content type and language, the producer of the content is a significant concept due to the regulations in foreign streaming services in France.

To sum up, the most shared content type, the producer of the content, characteristics of the language, engagement activity, date and the goal of the tweet are included into the operationalization process. Two different coding frames for 2019 and 2020 were created due to the nature and purpose of this research. The tables below demonstrate the coding frames:

**Table 1:** The coding frame of the Twitter account NetflixFR during 2019 (pre-COVID)

Main Category	Sub Category	Sub-sub Category
1. Producer of the content	1.1 Original 1.2 Purchased	
2. Nationality of the promoted content	2.1 France 2.2 Foreign	
3. Type of the promoted content	3.1 Movies 3.2 Series 3.3 Shows 3.4 Documentaries 3.5 Animations 3.6 The platform	3.6.1 New movie 3.6.2 Existing movie 3.6.3 New season 3.6.4 Existing season 3.6.5 Promoting a content list
4. Type of post	4. 1. Image 4.2. Video 4. 3. Text 4.4. GIF	Image 4.1.1 Scene 4.1.2 Poster 4.1.3 Netflix meme 4.1.4 Listing 4.1.5 Celebrity 4.1.6 Character 4.1.7 Designed by Netflix

		<p>4.1.8 Platform screenshot</p> <p>Video</p> <p>4.2.1 Trailer</p> <p>4.2.2 Movie / Series</p> <p>Scene</p> <p>4.2.3 Interviews</p> <p>4.2.4 Behind the scenes</p> <p>4.2.5 Listing</p> <p>Text</p> <p>4.3.1 Reply to a follower by retweeting</p> <p>4.3.2 Textual meme</p> <p>4.3.3 Content related tweets</p> <p>4.3.4 Listing</p>	
5	<p>Characteristics of the tweet</p>	<p>5.1 Use of question mark</p> <p>5.2 Use of exclamation mark</p> <p>5.3 Point of views</p> <p>5.4 Words in capitals</p> <p>5.5 Emotional elements</p> <p>5.6 Use of social media language</p> <p>5.7 Emoticons</p>	<p>5.3.1 1<sup>st</sup> point of view</p> <p>5.3.2 2<sup>nd</sup> point of view</p> <p>5.3.3 3<sup>rd</sup> point of view</p> <p>5.7.1 Humor</p> <p>5.7.2 Amusing</p> <p>5.7.3 Engaging</p> <p>5.7.4 Direct</p> <p>5.7.5 Serious</p> <p>5.7.6 Sad</p> <p>5.7.7 Positive</p> <p>5.7.8 Negative</p> <p>5.7.9 Sarcastic</p> <p>5.7.10 Mysterious</p> <p>5.7.11 Exciting</p>
6	<p>Goal of the tweet</p>	<p>6.1 Promotion</p> <p>6.2 Call to action</p> <p>6.3 Engage the audience</p>	<p>6.1.1 Promote a movie</p> <p>6.1.2 Promote series</p> <p>6.1.3 Promote a documentary</p> <p>6.1.4 Promote the platform</p> <p>6.1.5 Promote multiple series and movies</p> <p>6.1.1 Encourage to reply</p> <p>6.1.2 Encourage to vote</p> <p>6.1.3 Encourage to watch</p> <p>6.1.4 Direct to the platform</p>
7	<p>Engagement rate</p>	<p>7.1 Number of likes</p> <p>7.2 Number of replies</p>	

	7.3 Average likes of top 5 tweets 7.4 Average replies of top 5 tweets	
8 Other	8.1 Posting date	

**Table 1:** The coding frame of the Twitter account NetflixFR during 2020 (COVID)

Main category	Sub category	Sub-sub Category
1. Producer of the content	1.1 Original 1.2 Purchased	
2. Nationality of the promoted content	2.1 France 2.2 Foreign	
3. Type of the promoted content	3.1 Movies 3.2 Series 3.3 Shows 3.4 Documentaries 3.5 Animations 3.6 The platform	3.1.1 New movie 3.1.2 Existing movie 3.2.1 New season 3.2.2 Existing season 3.2.3 Promoting a content list
4. Type of post	4. 1. Image 4.2. Video 4. 3. Text 4.4. GIF	Image 4.1.1 Movie scene 4.1.2 Poster 4.1.3 Netflix meme 4.1.4 Listing 4.1.5 Celebrity 4.1.6 Character 4.1.7 Designed by Netflix 4.1.8 Platform screenshot  Video 4.2.1 Trailer 4.2.2 Movie / Series Scene 4.2.3 Interviews 4.2.4 Behind the scenes 4.2.5 Listing 4.2.6 Explanation videos  Text 4.3.1 Reply to a follower by retweeting 4.3.2 Textual meme 4.3.3 Descriptive texts 4.3.4 Listing
5 Characteristics of the tweet	5.1 Use of question mark 5.2 Use of exclamation mark 5.3 Point of views	5.3.1 1 <sup>st</sup> point of view 5.3.2 2 <sup>nd</sup> point of view 5.3.3 3 <sup>rd</sup> point of view

	5.4 Words in capitals 5.5 Emotional elements 5.6 Use of social media language 5.7 Emoticons 5.8 Tagging 5.9 Descriptive language	5.5.1 Humor 5.5.2 Amusing 5.5.3 Engaging 5.5.4 Direct 5.5.5 Serious 5.5.6 Sad 5.5.7 Positive 5.5.8 Negative 5.5.9 Sarcastic 5.5.10 Exciting
6 Goal of the tweet	6.1 Promotion 6.2 Call to action 6.3 Engage the audience 6.4 Announcement 6.5 Recommendation	6.1.1 Promote a movie 6.1.2 Promote series 6.1.3 Promote a documentary 6.1.4 Promote the platform 6.1.5 Promote multiple series and movies  6.1.1 Encourage to reply 6.1.2 Encourage to vote 6.1.3 Encourage to watch 6.1.4 Direct to the platform
7 Engagement rate	7.1 Number of likes 7.2 Number of replies 7.3 Average likes of top 10 tweets 7.4 Average replies of top 10 tweets	
8 Covid related posts	12.1 Informative 12.2 Humor	
9 Other	9.1 Posting date	

### 3.4 Validity, reliability, and reflexivity

This research adopts a qualitative research method that helps to understand the meanings behind the content on social media platforms. The interpretation is achieved by identifying the most appropriate sample, coding, and categorizing the codes. The categories are identified in line with the theoretical framework. Qualitative research is the most appropriate method to answer the research question "How does Netflix France use Twitter as a marketing tool before and during Covid-19?". The researcher is confident that the scope of the sample is suitable for the qualitative content analysis and that the most appropriate data collection method is selected.

The limited research about Twitter and how it can be used to develop marketing strategies and the research gap on Netflix France's social media presence, especially for Twitter, enabled the researcher to contribute with new and relevant insight into the social sciences. Furthermore, the pandemic is a concept that is not addressed enough in the field due to its currency. Therefore, this research is up-to-date because it gathers insights about the newly emerged concept.

The credibility of qualitative research methods is achieved by avoiding assumptions that might be affected by the collected data (Silverman, 2011). The research question had been asked before the researcher gathered the data, which specifies that it was not biased on interpretations or previous experiences and opinions.

Further, validity refers to the "truthfulness of findings" and reliability refers to the "stability of findings (Silverman, 2011, p.360). The reliability of this research is reached by developing a comprehensive theoretical framework and by adopting a transparent operationalization process. The research is conducted by using reliable and valid data. The data was collected chronologically without making any changes or excluding any unit of analysis. Then, the operationalization process is described in a transparent and detailed way. The clear results which enable to answer the research question and fit with the theoretical framework, indicate the validity of the research. Accordingly, the findings of this study apply only to the marketing strategy of Netflix France on Twitter. Therefore, the answer to the research question could not be applied to the marketing strategies of other brands on other social media platforms, however, the results could be used as guidance.

According to Brennen (2012), reflexivity refers to concepts such as self-critique, experience, and empathy. Problems in reflexivity might emerge because of the researcher's academic background and opinions, which can lead to alternative understandings (Brennen, 2012). Consequently, to enhance the reflexivity of the research, the theoretical framework was constantly developed through new insights and relevant data.

### **3.5 Ethical concerns**

No ethical issues emerged during this research as the topic is not sensitive or personal and does not harm individuals or any social group. The research interprets a social phenomenon. Moreover, concerns related to individuals' privacy did not arise as the researcher only analyzed Netflix France's posted tweets, dates, number of replies, and

number of likes without including any users' tweets or information. As the content is published by an organization with a promotional objective, the social media posts of Netflix France could be considered as a public domain.

### **3.6 Summary**

This section explained the methodology and the process of this research project.

Firstly, the reason and the use of qualitative content analysis was explained.

Secondly, the unit of analysis and the sampling method was justified. Then, the operationalization process was described with transparency. Finally, the validity, reliability, reflexivity and ethical concerns of the research were justified.

## **4. Results**

This section presents the results of the content analysis. In total,  $n = 500$  tweets were analyzed, of which  $n = 250$  tweets are collected from Netflix France year 2019 and  $n = 250$  posts are collected from Netflix France year 2020. The tweets were posted from the beginning of April during both years. The reason of starting from 1<sup>st</sup> of April is because the first lockdown started during the same period in 2020. Therefore, the comparison of marketing strategies during the pandemic and before the pandemic would be highly accurate. During 2019, the posts were published between April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 and July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019. During the first lockdown in 2020, the posts were published between April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 and June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020. As the aim of the research is to analyze and interpret the similarities and differences between the marketing strategies employed on Netflix France Twitter account before the pandemic and during the pandemic, for each main category the results of both periods are presented together. However, the researcher created two coding frames on excel for better understanding. Even though, most of the main categories are the same, there are differences in sub-categories and sub-sub categories.

The coding frame consists of the following categories:

1. Producer of the content
2. Nationality of the content
3. Objective of the tweet
4. Type of the promoted content
5. Type of the post
6. Characteristics of the tweet

7. Engagement rate
8. Covid related tweets (only for year 2020)
9. Other

#### 4.1 Producer of the content

**Table 3:** Summary of the category ‘producer of the content’

<b>Producer of the content (2019)</b>	<b>Producer of the content (2020)</b>
1. Netflix original 76.43% ( <i>n</i> =133)	1. Netflix original 71.71 % ( <i>n</i> =142)
2. Purchased 23.56% ( <i>n</i> =41)	2. Purchased 28.28 %( <i>n</i> =56)
<i>Total 100% (n=174)</i>	<i>Total 100% (n=198)</i>

Netflix France gives importance to the spread of its content; therefore, the results show that the company promotes mainly its original content. In 2019, a total of 76.43% (*n*=133) are coded as "Netflix original". Therefore, the promoted content is produced and distributed by Netflix. Further, 23.56% (*n*=41) of the posts are coded as "purchased", which means that the content is not produced by Netflix. In 2020, 71.71% (*n*=142) of the promoted content is original and 28.28% (*n*=56) is purchased. Hence, the Netflix original content is promoted to a substantial level during both periods. The rest of the tweets don't include any specific content. However, a 4.72% decline is observed during the pandemic for original content promotion. The reason for this decline could be the uncertainty of future production because of the ongoing pandemic.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Netflix used to operate as a distribution service. However, the brand developed into a distributor and content creator (Burroughs, 2018). According to Jenner (2018), Netflix develops its brand identity around its original and exclusive content. Netflix's development into a content creator led to new challenges in the TV and media industries. According to MarketLine (2019), Netflix gained a competitive advantage due to its strong business model that gives importance to original content creation. More than 3% of the platform's subscribers are from France (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). Although France's broadcasting regulations lead to many challenges for foreign streaming services, Netflix aims to become a safe place for exclusive and original content production in the country (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). Therefore, Netflix France's Twitter account is a significant source to attract audiences to the platform. According to Wang (2016), television companies use social media channels, especially Twitter, in order to

promote their content due to the high engagement. Therefore, Twitter creates a platform to engage the audience, promote content and increase brand awareness. Audiences that are engaged in social media are more likely to remember the marketing messages and be motivated to take an action (Epps, 2011).

Netflix France builds its brand identity on Netflix through its original and exclusive content. The most frequently posted promotional contents are the popular Netflix shows. In 2019, the most promoted series were DARK, Sex Education, and La Casa De Papel. In 2020, the most promoted series were La Casa De Papel, DARK, and The Last Dance. Similar to the research on Netflix Spain from Martin-Quevedo and Fernandez-Gomez (2018), Netflix France's Twitter marketing strategy focuses on the original content and its viewing options. Furthermore, Netflix France posts lists of original content weekly and monthly in order to promote current series and movies. Therefore, Netflix uses a global marketing strategy that focuses on the promotion of original content as the key to brand identity.

To sum up, there is a 4.72% decline in posts related to Netflix originals during the pandemic and a 4.72% increase in purchased content which consists of iconic series of movies from Charli Chaplin, Christopher Nolan, Jacques Demy and animations.

#### 4.2 Nationality of the content

**Table 4:** Summary of the category ‘nationality of the content’

<b>Nationality of the content (2019)</b>	<b>Nationality of the content (2020)</b>
1. Foreign 95.45% (n=168)	1. Foreign 98% (n=196)
2. French 4.55% (n=8)	2. French 2% (n=4)
<i>Total 100% (n=176)</i>	<i>Total (n=200)</i>

Results show that a significant portion of the promoted content is foreign. Even though, Netflix invested 15 billion dollars in French media content in 2019 (Keslassy, 2019), more than 95% of the promoted content on Netflix France's Twitter account is foreign. Furthermore, the strategy of Netflix France is to launch at least 12 content per year since French users represent more than 3% of the subscribers (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020).

In 2019 the only promoted series was Family Business. However, although French promotion was still low, a higher diversity is found in 2020. Along with the original Netflix series Family Business, the original French movie Terre Et Le Sang, and nostalgic French

movies were promoted. Yet, only one original French production was promoted in 2019 and 2020. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no difference in terms of original French content before and during covid. However, launching and posting nostalgic French content was one of the marketing strategies during the pandemic.

### 4.3 Objective of the tweet

**Table 5:** Summary of the category ‘‘objective of the tweet’’

Objective of the tweet (2019)	Objective of the tweet (2020)
1. Promotion 54.4% ( <i>n</i> =136)	1. Promotion 58.4% ( <i>n</i> =146)
2. Engage the audience 42.8% ( <i>n</i> =107)	2. Engage the audience 29.06% ( <i>n</i> =74)
3. Call to action 2.4% ( <i>n</i> =6)	3. Call to action 6.8% ( <i>n</i> =17)
4. Celebrate 0.4% ( <i>n</i> =1)	4. Recommendation 4% ( <i>n</i> =10)
<i>Total 100% (n=250)</i>	5. Announcement 1.2% ( <i>n</i> =3)
	<i>Total 100 (n=250)</i>

The researcher assigned an objective to each analyzed post. Even though most of the tweets have an underlying marketing strategy, not all of them aim to promote specific content. According to Kemp (2022), promoted content on Twitter can reach 436 million users. Netflix tends to post content on social media platforms like Twitter in order to create expectations about events and elaborate story plots before, during, and after shows and series are displayed (Fernández Gómez & Martín Quevedo, 2018).

The objective of tweets in 2019 are coded as; promotion (54.4%), engagement (42.8%), call to action (2.4%), and celebration (0.4%). While the tweets during the first lockdown period in 2020 are coded as; promotion (58.4%), engagement (29.06%), call to action (6.8%), recommendation (4%), and announcement (1.2%). Therefore, the study found out that, Netflix France has focused mainly on promotion before and during the pandemic. The study discovered a similar result to the research from Fernández Gómez and Martín Quevedo (2018) which observed that Netflix Spain's Twitter strategy focuses on promotions by 59%. The promotion strategy increased by 4% during the pandemic. Even though the change doesn't seem significant, two extra categories (recommendation and announcement) that can be related to promotion appeared during the lockdown in 2020. These findings correspond with the research about the Netflix Turkey Twitter account. The study observed

that the promotional content of Netflix Turkey on Twitter increased significantly during the pandemic (Uluçay et al., 2020).

**Figure 1:** Netflix France Twitter post (2020)



**Figure 2:** Netflix France Twitter post (2020)



Television and media industries use social media channels like Twitter in order to promote their content by reason of high engagement (Wang, 2016). Therefore, Netflix can

use Twitter in order to promote its content, engage the audience and increase brand loyalty. Figure 1 appears like a direct promotion of the Netflix original series 'The Witcher'. It is a clear poster showing the main character from the back, stating the name of the series. The text of the tweet is clear and direct; " You waited for it? It arrives. The Witcher, soon.". The date is not given; therefore, a sense of expectation and excitement is created. One of Netflix France's promotion strategies is to post several tweets related to the series before announcing the exact date. Figure 2 is a video trailer that promotes a new Netflix original series. The trailer describes clearly the story of the series. However, compared to Figure 1, the text is not direct, but descriptive and personalized; " This mix may seem surprising, but White Line, is a new series created by the producers of la Casa de Papel and... The Crown! It's available on the 15th of May." Even though the content is posted for all of the followers, it attracts specific fans of two popular Netflix original series.

In some tweets during 2020, Netflix France promotes new series by addressing older ones. The study didn't discover a significant change in the number of the promoted content, however, there is a change in the use of language. The texts in 2020 appear longer, more descriptive, and more engaging.

**Figure 3:** Netflix France Twitter post (2020)



**Figure 4:** Netflix France Twitter post (2020)



Figure 4 and figure 5 are examples of long and descriptive text about new series. The first text is translated as ‘‘In Unorthodox, Esther tries to run away from her ultra-orthodox Jewish family. This is why in the series, in addition to English and German, one of the most used languages is Yiddish. The mini series is available’’. The second tweet is translated as ‘‘Better Call Saul is a bit like Breaking Bad. In starts slowly and gains momentum as the seasons go by. According to people who have seen season 5, it is vey very heavy. Incidentally, it’s Wes Anderson’s favorite series, nothing more’’. It can be observed that both of the tweets tend to describe the series and create curiosity.

**Figure 5:** Netflix France Twitter post (2020)



**Figure 6:** Netflix France Twitter post (2020)



**Figure 7:** Netflix France Twitter post (2019)



Another important objective is engagement with 42.8% in 2019 and 29.06% in 2020. The number of tweets that mainly aim to engage the audience decreased significantly during the pandemic. This decrease can be related to the increase in binge-watching during the pandemic. According to research from Schweidel and Moe (2016), marketing strategies like advertisements and promotion can affect binge-watching activities positively. Accordingly, social media contents related to the series result in a higher desire to complete specific series during binge-watching (Panda & Pandey, 2017). For that reason, tweets that promote and recommend series increased, while the tweets aiming only to engage the audience decreased. These tweets mostly include humor, sarcasm, and memes. Figure 5, 6 and 7 show humoristic tweet posted as a meme with the aim of engagement. The first text is translated as "Us to our old followers". The visual, which is a screenshot from a Netflix reality show, is translated as "Don't tell me that I'm stupid again, please". Figure 6 is translated as "Zombies in The Walking Dead: (walking slowly). Zombies in The Kingdom:". The tweet is supported with a scene from The Kingdom where the zombies are running. Figure 7, which is a tweet from 2019, is translated as "Right after discovering the Marie Kondo method. I will tidy up, sort,

and live in the cleanest place in world! Three months later:'. Netflix France creates its own branded memes by using scenes from series and movies. Therefore, the brand is using social media language and humor to engage the audience. The same language use is seen in 2019 too. Similar findings appear in the research from Matin-Quevedo et al. (2019) who observed that Netflix Spain tends to use humor and suspense to achieve higher engagement on Twitter.

**Figure 8:** Netflix France Twitter post (2020)



Lastly, the objective of call-to-action is another notable strategy with 2.4% in 2019 and 6.8% in 2020. The use of call-to-action increased more than double during the first lockdown, which is a significant change. In figure 8, the tweet is translated as " Tell us what did you watch yesterday and we will recommend you something for tonight! We will do that around 1 hour, don't hesitate to respond to others and help us!". The tweet encourages users to reply and communicate with each other. According to Ashley and Tuten (2015) interaction can enhance the relationship between consumers and brands. Therefore, interaction is significant components of social media marketing. The level of interaction can be measured by looking at likes and comments. The likes of the tweet (17.600) are higher than the average likes of the 250 tweets from 2020 which is 15.584. Further, the number of replies (14.300) is significantly higher than the average replies of 881. Therefore, tweets under the category of call-to-action received high engagement even though their quantity was low. Netflix France uses call-to-action in order to invite the audience to reply or start a conversation in the comments. According to Beninnghoff (2020) community building through effective communication is a powerful aspect of social media. Netflix France creates a platform where users can interact with each other with regard to media content.

To conclude, this study discovers several objectives: promotion, engagement, call-to-action, celebration, recommendation, and announcement. More than half of the analyzed tweets are posted to promote the series and movies. The study observed an increase in promotion and a decrease in engagement during the pandemic. Netflix France focused more

on promotion by adopting different strategies such as call-to-action, and longer and descriptive texts in 2020. Moreover, even though the objective of engagement decreased in 2020, Netflix France created longer, more descriptive, and more engaging texts while promoting content. However, humor and the use of social media language are widely used in 2019 and 2020.

#### 4.4 Type of the promoted content

**Table 6:** Summary of the category ‘‘type of the promoted content’’

Type of the promoted content (2019)	Type of the promoted content (2020)
1. Movies 13.97% ( <i>n</i> =19)	1. Movies 20.54% ( <i>n</i> =30)
2. Series 58.08% ( <i>n</i> =79)	2. Series 52.73% ( <i>n</i> =77)
3. Both 13.23% ( <i>n</i> =18)	3. Both 7.53% ( <i>n</i> =11)
4. Documentaries 9.55% ( <i>n</i> =13)	4. Documentaries 10.95% ( <i>n</i> =16)
5. Animations 4.41% ( <i>n</i> =6)	5. Animations 7.53% ( <i>n</i> =11)
6. The platform 0.73% ( <i>n</i> =1)	6. Show 0.68% ( <i>n</i> =1)
<i>Total 100% (n=136)</i>	<i>Total 100% (n=146)</i>

As previously discussed in the theoretical framework, Netflix builds its brand identity around original and exclusive content (Jenner, 2018). The distribution of exclusive content is the main distinctness of the brand (Taillibert & Cailler, 2020). Accordingly, Netflix has developed its marketing strategy around its original content (Jenner, 2018). Research from Panda and Pandey (2017) observed that 88% of Netflix's subscribers are watching at least three episodes of the same show in one sit. Therefore, marketing binge-watching could be a crucial communication strategy. While research from Rahman & Arif (2021) found that binge-watching has increased during the pandemic, other research shows that engagement on social media has increased as well (Uluçay, et al., 2021). Along with social media use, binge-watching on Netflix also has increased (Rahman & Arif, 2021).

This study observes that series are significantly more frequently promoted than movies. In 2019, series 58.08% (*n*=79) were promoted more than series 52.73% (*n*=77) in 2020. Therefore, there is a slight decrease in the promotion of series during the pandemic. A similar change is observed in the category "both" (series and movies), which decreased from 13.23% (*n*=18) to 7.53% (*n*=11). The analysis observed an increase from 13.97% (*n*=19) to

20.54% ( $n=30$ ) in the category of movies. However, Netflix France's movie promotions during the first lockdown differentiate from 2019. The brand mainly promoted purchased and nostalgic sets of movies from artists like Charli Chaplin, Christopher Nolan, and Jacques Demy. Therefore, they changed their strategy from promoting a single movie to promoting a set of iconic movies.

The most frequently posted series are the original Netflix series. During 2019, the most promoted series were DARK, Sex Education, and La Casa De Papel. In 2020, the most promoted series were La Casa De Papel, DARK, and The Last Dance. Therefore, the content choice strategy has not changed during the pandemic. The results are correspondent to the research from Panda & Pandey (2017) which observed that strategical social media promotions increase watching experience and binge-watching activities. Moreover, these promotions are evolving around the new season of the series. Accordingly, Netflix offers more series than movies, which supports the brand's social media marketing strategy. During 2019 and 2020, more than half of the promoted content is series. Therefore, marketing binge-watching activity is the key element of Netflix France's promotional strategies.

#### 4.5 Type of the post

**Table 7:** Summary of the category ‘type of the post’

Type of the post (2019)	Type of the post (2020)
1. Image 36.8% ( $n=92$ )	1. Image 45.2% ( $n=113$ )
2. Text 31.6% ( $n=79$ )	2. Text 32.8% ( $n=82$ )
3. Video 30.4% ( $n=76$ )	3. Video 21.6% ( $n=54$ )
4. GIF 1.2% ( $n=3$ )	4. GIF 0.4% ( $n=1$ )
<i>Total 100% (<math>n=250</math>)</i>	<i>Total 100% (<math>n=250</math>)</i>

The category of "type of the post" consists of images, videos, texts, and gifs. In comparing the Twitter profiles of Netflix Germany from April 2019 and the first lockdown period during the pandemic, the researcher noted that there is no significant change in the total use of visual elements. However, the use of images increased from 36.8% to 45.2% and the videos declined from 30.4% to 21.6%. While the use of texts appears to be almost the same (31.6% in 2019 and 32.8% in 2020).

The most shared posts in 2019 and 2020 are images with 38.5% and 45.2%, respectively. The images included tweets that are coded as "scenes", "posters", "Netflix

memes", "listing", 'celebrity", "designed by Netflix", and "platform screenshots". In 2019 the top three shared image types were "scenes" with 34.08%, "Netflix memes" with 13.04%, and, "posters" with 10.04. While, in 2020 the top three shared image types were "scenes" with 67.25%, posters with "posters" with 8%, and "designed by Netflix with 8%. One can assume that Netflix France changed its' marketing strategies during the lockdown in terms of images. As discussed in the theoretical framework, people's social media activities and binge-watching have increased during the pandemic (Rahman & Arif, 2021). Research from Dixit et al. (2020) shows that more than half of the people are working from, consequently, their TV and Internet usage has increased by 73.7%. Therefore, the researcher assumes that Netflix France focused more on movies and series scene images in order to encourage binge-watching. According to research from Schweidel and Moe (2016), marketing activities such as; promotions and recommendations on social media platforms can affect binge-watching.

Another important sub-category is texts with 31.6% in 2019 and 32.8% in 2020. The texts are coded as; "replies and retweets", "memes", "content related tweets" and "listing". The researcher observed that the content-related texts tend to be longer and more descriptive during the first lockdown, therefore these tweets are coded as descriptive texts. In 2020, Netflix France adopt a new marketing strategy by describing the content in a more detailed and interesting way.

**Figure 9:** Netflix France Twitter post (2020)



In Figure 9, Netflix France describes an upcoming anime by tweeting " Great Pretender is our next anime where we follow Makoto Edamura, the biggest imposter in Japan who has to trap a high-ranking French in the Mafia. It's by the authors of 91 Days, FLCL, and Attack on Titan, just that! It's coming soon." Netflix France describes the overall topic of the series rather than directly announcing the new series. In that way, a more engaging language is achieved.

**Table 7:** Summary of the sub-category ‘type of the video’

Type of the video (2019)	Type of the video (2020)
1. Trailer 46,05% (n=35)	1. Trailer 55.55% (n=30)
2. Scene 32.57% (n=24)	2. Scene 12.96% (n=7)
3. Interview 9.21% (n=7)	3. Netflix content 11.11% (n=6)
4. Listing 6.57% (n=5)	4. List 9.25% (n=5)
5. Netflix content 5.26% (n=4)	5. Interview 5.5% (n=3)
6. Behind the scenes 1.31% (n=1)	6. Behind the scenes 5.5% (n=3)
<i>Total 100% (n=76)</i>	<i>Total 100% (n=54)</i>

The last essential category is videos, which depicted codes such as "trailer", "scenes", "interview", "listing", "Netflix content", and "behind the scenes". Further, the percentage of video content decreased from 30.4% to 21.6% in 2020. One can assume that the content production and events like interviews and behind the scenes decreased because of the pandemic. However, future research could observe this matter in a larger sample, since this research focuses on the first 250 tweets after the first lockdown. In comparing Netflix France 2019 and Netflix France 2020 Twitter accounts, the decline in the percentage of scenes and increase of trailers is visible. The reason could be that Netflix France focused on posting more trailers during the start of the pandemic in order to encourage the audience to watch the newly released series. According to Sigre-Leiros et al. (2022), daily time spent watching media shows per working day increased by 93.8 % and 52.1% per day off. Correspondently, the researcher assumes that Netflix France could increase their promotions of new media content by posting trailers.

#### 4.6 Characteristics of the tweet

The category of "characteristics of the tweet" is derived by analyzing the caption of the tweet. This category is formed from sub-categories such as; use of question mark, use of exclamation mark, point of views, words in capitals, emotional elements, use of social media language and emoticons. In 2020, two more communication strategies were included; tagging and use of descriptive language. These two strategies are useful extra steps to increase the engagement and interaction. During the first lockdown, Netflix France started to use more descriptive language where more information about the media content is given and the tweets are longer. Additionally, tagging led to more engagement and to sense of community building. Mentioning other accounts can increase the exposure of the brand and

attract the attention of the followers of a specific account (Bavaro, 2021). Netflix France is able to reach fans by tagging actors or producers of particular series.

#### 4.6.1 Emotional Elements

**Table 8:** Summary of the sub-category ‘emotional elements’

Emotional elements (2019)	Emotional elements (2020)
1. Humor 28.4% (n=71)	1. Engaging 22% (n=55)
2. Direct 19.2% (n=48)	2. Exciting 21.6% (n=54)
3. Exciting 10.4% (n=26)	3. Humor 20.4% (n=51)
4. Engaging 9.2% (n=23)	4. Direct 12.4% (n=31)
5. Positive 7.6% (n=19)	5. Positive 7.6% (n=19)
6. Sarcastic 7.2% (n=18)	6. Neutral 5.2% (n=13)
7. Amusing 7.2% (n=18)	7. Mysterious 4% (n=10)
8. Mysterious 4.8% (n=12)	8. Sarcastic 3.6% (n=9)
9. Serious 4.4% (n=11)	9. Serious 1.6% (n=4)
10. Neutral 1.2% (n=3)	10. Sad 1.2% (n=3)
11. Sad 0.4% (n=1)	11. Amusing 0.8% (n=2)
<i>Total=100% (n=250)</i>	<i>Total = 100% (n=250)</i>

Table 8 shows the analysis of the emotional elements in the written texts. Brands apply various strategies to their written language in order to reach the desired action from the consumers. According to research from Lee and Hong (2016), creativity and emotional appeal are the keys to effective social media marketing. These emotions include positive feelings such as happiness and negative emotions such as sadness. Correspondently, Netflix adapts a humorous and positive brand voice (Marting-Quevedo et al., 2019). According to Havens (2018), as discussed previously in the theoretical framework, Netflix differentiates itself from the conventional television industry by describing itself as playful and youthful. Therefore, it is expected that Netflix France follows a coherent social media language on Twitter. Twitter is one of the main social media channels for television networks due to its' high interactivity (Wang, 2016). Hence, using emotional appeal in order to reach a wider audience could be a crucial communication strategy for Netflix France.

Within the category of "emotional elements" codes that describe the general tone of the tweets' captions can be found. Based on the sample, the following codes emerged for

both years: humor, direct, exciting, engaging, positive, sarcastic, amusing, mysterious, serious, neutral, and sad. The researcher found out that there is a difference in the overall emotions of the messages before the pandemic and during the first lockdown. According to the dataset in 2019 the most used emotional elements are humor 28.4%, direct 19.2%, and excitement 10.4%. While, in 2020 the top emotional elements are noted as engaging with 22%, exciting with 21.6%, and humor with 20.4%. On the whole, the researcher observed that the codes related to emotions emerged from the positive spectrum of emotions, which confirms the information from Martin-Quevedo et al., (2019), Havens (2018), Wang (2016), and Lee and Hong (2016).

**Figure 10:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2020)



Figure 10 gives an example of Netflix France's Twitter caption that can be described as humor. It consists of a joke about the clothes of the series called Outer Banks. The caption can be translated as "The last money in your account > the costume budget of Outer Banks. Humor emerges in the main three categories of both years. However, the code that appears the most during the pandemic is "engagement". This finding could be related to the additional descriptive language in the sub-categories of the main category "characteristics of the tweet". Descriptive language appears in longer and more engaging tweets. In the dataset of 2019, the code "direct" is one of the main codes, which is opposed to descriptive language and engagement.

**Figure 11:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2019)



**Figure 12:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2020)



Figure 11 gives an example of a tweet that can be coded as direct tone since it is translated as " Jim Carey + Kate Winslet + Michel Gondry = Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind. The film is available now". Whereas, figure 8 gives an example of an engaging caption with descriptive language. First, the caption describes the animated series by asking a question and by highlighting the main topics of the series. Then, it gives the date of release. Furthermore, captions that are coded as "exciting" take part in the main emotional elements during both years. The researcher observed an 11.2% increase in exciting captions during the first lockdown of the pandemic. This increase is related to the rise of binge-watching marketing and content promotion.

**Figure 13:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2020)



Figure 13 gives an example of a Netflix France caption that can be coded as "exciting". It contains an exciting caption that announces that all the episodes of the series are available. Therefore, it can be concluded that the emotional elements and the messages of the captions align with the youthful and playful brand identity of Netflix by using positive feelings. Yet, it should be noted that some of the tweets contain two different tones. The researcher selected the more powerful tone.

**Figure 14:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2020)



Furthermore, in order to reflect on the marketing strategy, the relation between emotional elements and the promoted content was examined. For example, figure 14 is an example of the use of humoristic tone for the series Sex Education. Popular series such as La Casa de Papel, Elite, Lucifer, and DARK are also described by using humoristic tone, exciting tone, engaging tone, and direct tone. Therefore, the researcher observed that the emotional elements are mostly related to the popularity of the series rather than their genre.

**Figure 15:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2020)



For example, in figure 15 the tweet about *La Casa de Papel* contains humoristic elements, although the genre of the series is drama.

#### 4.6.2 Emoticons

Another important component of social media language is emoticons. Research from Martin-Quevedo et al., (2019) about Netflix's US Instagram posts, shows emoticons can be used to strengthen the brand message. However, the researcher observed that only 3.2% of the dataset contains emoticons. Therefore, even though Netflix France uses a positive tone in its captions, emoticons are not part of its Twitter strategy. Another important digital culture component is hashtags. The study of Martin-Quevedo et al. (2019) observed that 23% of the Netflix US's Instagram posts include hashtags. Yet, none of the tweets in this study's dataset includes hashtags. Here, the researcher assumes that the use of elements such as emoticons, tags, and hashtags could differ in different countries and social media platforms. Further research can investigate that matter.

#### 4.6.3 Punctuation

Other observed characteristics of the tweet are exclamation and question marks. The caption of 7.6% (n=19) of the dataset from 2019 included question marks and 6% (n=15) of the dataset includes question marks. Consequently, for the typical use of question and exclamation points usage across Twitter, the results do not demonstrate significant use of punctuations. However, Netflix France increased the frequency of punctuations during the first lockdown of the pandemic. The caption of 11.6% (n=29) of the dataset included

question marks. Asking the followers question can foster engagement, as the audience might get encouraged to reply to the tweet. An example is: "As all of them are available now, according to you, which movie from studio Ghibli should others watch? For us, it's "My Neighbor Totoro", but we can discuss it." The caption includes a screenshot from the animated series. Furthermore, 24.8% (n=62) of the dataset included exclamation marks. An example is: "Imagine Chris Hemsworth. Chases in the streets of Bangladesh. A child who must be saved. And boom! It's Tyler Rake. The movie is going to be available on the 24th of April." The tweet includes the trailer of the movie, and the caption announces that the audience will be able to watch it soon. The exclamation mark indicates an exciting tone and encourages the audience to watch it. The increase in the use of exclamation points goes along with the use engaging and exciting tone, as well as, content promotion. Findings from a study that observed binge-watching activities during the pandemic show that the main emotional motivation for binge-watching during the pandemic was an escape from boredom alongside marketing motivations such as social media engagement and advertisement (Rahman & Arif, 2021). Therefore, announcing upcoming movies and series in an engaging/exciting way with the use of exclamation marks could provoke positive feelings during the pandemic.

#### 4.6.4 Point of view as anthropomorphism

Hudson et al. (2016) define anthropomorphism as attributing human qualities and characteristics to objects. In this case, the attributed object is the Netflix brand. Using a first-person and second-person point of view is a method of anthropomorphism. First-person is considered the most humanlike and convenient way of anthropomorphism. Therefore, the brand seems more like an individual itself. Whereas, the second-person tone is more distant and analogical. Lastly, the third-person tone doesn't attribute human characteristics to the brand (Hudson et al., 2016).

**Table 9:** Summary of the sub-category ‘point of view’

Point of view (2019)	Point of view (2020)
1. 1 <sup>st</sup> point of view 17.69% (n=43)	1. 1 <sup>st</sup> point of view 17.76% (n=43)
2. 2 <sup>nd</sup> point of view 39.91% (n=97)	2. 2 <sup>nd</sup> point of view 27.27% (n=66)

3. 3 <sup>rd</sup> point of view 42.38% (n=103)	3. 3 <sup>rd</sup> point of view 54.95% (n=133)
<i>Total 100% (n=243)</i>	<i>Total 100% (n=242)</i>

This study observes that Netflix France uses first-person and second-person points of view in their Twitter accounts. In 2019, as we can see from table 9, 57.62% (n=140) of analyzed tweets are written by using a first or second tone. Whereas, the use of first and second points of view decreased to 44.53% in 2020. Therefore, the use of language is more distant in 2020.

**Figure 16:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2019)



Figure 16 shows an example of the use of second-tone, which is translated as: "If your last text message becomes a title of series, then it is over...". The tweet gets high engagement due to the use of humor and its approach to the audience by using second-tone.

**Figure 17:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2019)



Figure 17 is an example of the first point of view, which is translated as: "Then, we don't know the exact date of the DARK season 2, but we can tell you the time: DARK season 2, soon at 9h01". The tweet gets high likes as the previous example because of its language use. Therefore, the use of first and second tones along with positive emotional elements aligns with the brand's youthful and playful identity.

Furthermore, the increase of third-point of view during the pandemic could be related to the increase of longer and more descriptive tweets with the aim to promote more series and binge-watching.

## 4.7 Engagement

**Table 10:** Engagement on Netflix France’s Twitter account before and during the pandemic

	Average likes	Average replies	Average likes of top 5 tweets	Average replies of top 5 replies
<b>Netflix France before Covid (2019)</b>	12.947,484	634,644	52.600	8638
<b>Netflix France during Covid (2020)</b>	15.584,752	881,608	71.200	15.948

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, television and media industries actively use social media platforms to engage with their audiences (Wang, 2016). Notably, audiences that engage in social media are more likely to remember the marketing messages and respond to call-to-action (Epps, 2011).

This study observes engagement by gathering the number of replies and likes. The analysis consists of the average of the total number of replies and likes, and the average of the top 5 posts' likes and replies. As is seen in table 10, all the analyzed posts received more likes than replies. Accordingly, the researcher found that the engagement rate is high during both years.

As table 10 shows, the average number of likes in 2020 is slightly higher than in 2019. However, the average of replies in 2020 is 246,695 more than in 2019. Therefore, there is a significant increase with 29% in engagement. This increase could be related to the rise of call-to-action and promotions since the use of call-to-action encourages audiences to reply to the tweet. Moreover, the overall higher engagement in 2020 aligns with the research from Uluçay, et al. (2021) that shows that audiences' engagement rate increased during the pandemic. Correspondently, Mason et al. (2021) found that social media users spend more time on brands' platforms during the pandemic. Another research indicates that using social media during the pandemic has positively influenced companies (Syaifullah et al., 2021).

Furthermore, this study observes a noteworthy difference between the average likes of the top 5 tweets in 2019 and 2020. The average likes of the top 5 tweets increased

significantly from 52.600 to 71.200. Additionally, the research shows that the average replies in 2020 are almost two times higher than in 2019.

**Figure 18:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2019)



**Figure 19:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2019)



Figure 18 shows the tweet that received the highest likes in 2019. Netflix France retweeted a humorous tweet from its audience. The tweet that reached the highest likes in 2019 aligns with the playful and youthful brand image of Netflix. Additionally, as was mentioned in the theoretical framework, the interaction between brands and social media users could lead to higher engagement. Furthermore, Figure 19 is the tweet with the highest replies in 2019. The translation of the post is: "You can add only one movie or series on Netflix, which one would you choose...?". Netflix France applies call-to-action strategy by asking a question to achieve high engagement in the replies. Moreover, Netflix France could analyze the replies to gather information about audiences' favorite series and movies which could lead to future content strategies. For example, Netflix France could determine the most popular series and movies with the help of social media tools.

**Figure 20:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2020)



**Figure 21:** NetflixFR Twitter post (2020)



Figure 20 shows the tweet that received the most likes in 2020. The tweet is translated as: " La Casa de Papel season 4, tomorrow. At 9h01.". Netflix France promotes a new season of one of the most popular original series with direct and clear tone. The reason for the 99.400 likes could be that the series has a large audience. On the other hand, figure 21 is the tweet that reached the highest replies in 2020. It is translated as: " It's time to ask the most difficult question: Among all the series you have watched, we are curious to know your top 3". Similar to the tweet from 2019, Netflix France applies the call-to-action strategy to start a conversation and get to know the most popular series.

As Martin-Quevedo et al. (2019) note, Netflix is actively using Twitter to promote content by using humor and suspense, which leads to higher audience engagement. The results of the engagement rate show that the most popular tweets of Netflix correspond to its' youthful brand image and content promotion strategies. Moreover, brands need to be even more active when physical contact is restricted since people spend more time on social media. As people have to quarantine in their homes for a long time, this leads to perfect conditions for binge-watching and engaging on social media. Correspondently, the analysis shows that Netflix France's Twitter account received significantly higher engagement during the pandemic.

#### 4.8 Posting frequency

**Table 11:** Posting frequency

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Total
<b>Netflix France 2019</b>	13.6% (n=34)	14% (n=35)	16.4% (n=41)	15.2% (n=38)	14.4% (n=36)	13.2% (n=33)	13.2% (n=33)	100% (n=250)
<b>Netflix France 2020</b>	14% (n=35)	14.4% (n=36)	16.4% (n=41)	14.4% (n=36)	16.8% (n=42)	14% (n=35)	10% (n=25)	100% (n=250)

This study analysis the first 250 tweets from the first lockdown in France and the first 250 tweets from a year ago before the lockdown. Therefore, the researcher analyzed 500 tweets from Netflix France's Twitter account.

The tweets of the first sample were posted between the 1st of April 2019 and the 14th of July 2019, while the tweets of the second sample were posted between the 1st of April 2020 and the 14th of July 2020. Consequently, this research observes that Netflix France posts 14% more frequently in 2020. Hence, the tweets from the first lockdown were posted in a shorter period. This finding aligns with research from Uluçay et al. (2021) that discovered an increase in Netflix Turkey tweet posting frequency during the pandemic. Moreover, the average number of tweets is calculated as 2.4 per day in 2019. While the daily posting average in 2020 is 3.3. In 2019 the maximum number of posts in one day is noted as 4. On the other hand, Netflix France posted a maximum of 7 tweets in one day during the lockdown.

Table 20 presents the relation between the days of the week and posting frequency. As can be seen in the table, Netflix France doesn't focus on particular days, quite the contrary, the brand posts frequently each day. In 2019, Netflix France posted the least on Sundays and Saturdays with 13.2% and the most on Wednesdays with 16.4%. Likewise, Netflix France posted the least on Sundays with 10% and the most on Wednesdays during the first lockdown. Therefore, table 20 shows that there is no significant difference in posting days.

## **5. Conclusion**

Traditional television is still a part of people's life. However, the improvement of the Internet and video streaming services changed consumption globally. One of the most popular and successful global streaming services is Netflix. Netflix has become one of the main video-on-demand services by reaching more than 200 million subscribers (Statista,2022). It changed the television industry by offering a wide range of movies, series, documentaries, and shows that can respond to various audiences' preferences. Contrary to traditional media, Netflix users can watch any media content whenever and wherever they want with the use of digital devices and the Internet. Indeed, Netflix brands itself as "the world's leading Internet television network" (Burroughs, 2018).

As Netflix operates as a global streaming service, France is an essential market for Netflix. Even though the French market implements high entry barriers to international companies, Netflix applied a successful business model and marketing strategy that resulted

in a high audience reach. More than 3% of the Netflix subscribers are generated from the French audience. A previous study from Sigre-Leiros et. al (2022) shows that audiences from French-speaking European countries increased significantly during the pandemic.

The shift from traditional television to video-on-demand platforms accelerated during the pandemic. In traditional media, viewers have to follow a schedule and have limited access. However, audiences preferred to reach wider content options to escape from the stress caused by the pandemic. Studies show that 88 % of Netflix viewers are watching a minimum of three episodes of the same show in one day (Panda & Pandey, 2017). The consumption of multiple episodes in one sit has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic due to the ongoing quarantines (Rahman & Arif, 2021). Moreover, daily time spent watching media shows per working day increased by 93.8 % and 52.1% per day off (Sigre-Leirós et al., 2022).

Research from Rahman and Arif (2021) shows that binge-watching during the pandemic was influenced by two main factors: escape from boredom and marketing practices such as social media. Therefore, the researcher decided that investigating the social media marketing strategies of Netflix France could provide significant insights for academics. This research investigated the social media marketing strategy of Netflix France on Twitter before and during the pandemic. This study aimed to answer the main research question, ‘’ "How does Netflix France use Twitter as a marketing tool before and during Covid-19?". Moreover, this study answered two sub-questions, ‘’ How do the characteristics of messages posted on Twitter by Netflix France differ from each other before the pandemic and during the pandemic?" and "How do engagement differ before and during the pandemic". The following section of the study provides answers to the research question and sub-question. Next, the theoretical, scientific, and social implications of the study are discussed. Lastly, limitations and future research possibilities are addressed.

### **5.1 Answers to the research question**

Netflix’s global and local social media marketing strategies have been addressed by many researchers and appear to attract a significant level of interest. Netflix has become one of the most successful video-on-demand platforms due to its user-friendly technology, strong brand identity, and, marketing strategies. Netflix takes various risks while entering new markets since each country applies different entry barriers and regulations. However, Netflix challenges itself and the television industry by adopting new technologies and taking

risks. Currently, Netflix is available in more than 190 countries (*Where Is Netflix Available?*, 2022).

Previous studies investigated Netflix's Twitter social media marketing strategy in Spain (Fernandez Gomez & Martin Quevedo, 2018) and research from Uluçay et al. (2021) examined Netflix's Twitter social media marketing strategies in Turkey during Covid-19. However, there is still a gap in the understanding of the relation between pandemics and social media marketing. Further, Netflix's French Twitter account hasn't been investigated yet. This research provides insights into Netflix's marketing strategies on Twitter by addressing the pre-covid period (2019) and pandemic period (2020) in France.

The pandemic led to advantages and challenges for the streaming industry and social media marketing. One of the most significant changes is consumer behavior since due to the many lockdowns people were obligated to spend time at home. Therefore, social media consumption and binge-watching increased. Clearly, a shift in social media strategies is expected due to the users' new online behaviors during the pandemic.

The study observes that Netflix France mainly posts Netflix original content, with a significant extent of 76.43% in 2019 and with 71.72% in 2020. These findings are similar to previous research from Uluçay et al. (2021). Most of the posts on Twitter are related to Netflix's originals. Therefore, Netflix brands itself around its original content rather than the platform itself. For example, there are no tweets about the use of the platform, pricing, or discounts. Therefore, this finding is similar to previous research from Jenner (2018) which indicated that Netflix develops its brand identity around its exclusive and quality content, which is the main competitive advantage. However, the slight decrease in posts related to Netflix originals can be considered an important change since the production of new series and movies decreased during the pandemic as well. Therefore, the marketing of Netflix originals could decrease even more during the next restrictions and lockdowns of the long pandemic period.

This research finds that Netflix France posts foreign content, with a noteworthy extent of 95.45% in 2019 and with 98% in 2020. There is no significant difference in the origin of the content during the periods. Even though Netflix invested 15 billion dollars in French content due to the market obligations (Keslassy, 2019), it mainly promotes foreign series and movies. According to Taillibert and Cailler, (2020) Netflix France is required to produce 12 contents per year. However, in 2019 only Family Business was promoted on

Netflix's Twitter account. In 2020, only *Family Business* and *Terre et le Sang* were promoted. Further, the study discovers that for the most part, Netflix France promotes series and movies from European countries such as the UK, Spain, Germany, and Turkey. Therefore, the nationality of the content and the pandemic can't be related to each other.

The research finds that Netflix France promotes mainly movies and series instead of the platform itself. In some of the posts, movies and series are promoted together by using a listing method. Netflix France shares weekly and monthly listings with content recommendations. More than half of the promoted content consists of series, with 58.08% in 2019 and with 52.73% in 2020. Accordingly, there is a slight increase in movie promotion during the pandemic. However, a significant amount of the promoted movies are old and iconic movies. These movies are promoted as a set of multiple movies rather than just one. Therefore, Netflix provokes positive feelings in the audience by using nostalgia during the pandemic. The marketing of nostalgia and positivity can be related to the increasing level of stress during the pandemic. Therefore, watching nostalgic content can be used as an escape from boredom and stress during the pandemic. Although the nostalgic content is not that many, the adoption of nostalgic content is a significant change since it hasn't been explored before the pandemic. Streaming and marketing iconic movies can be a solution for the low production during the pandemic. Moreover, since binge-watching is described as watching more than two episodes in one sit, promoting a set of movies could also lead to binge-watching because people have more time during the pandemic. Overall, the promoted content on social media could lead to binge-watching habits during the pandemic.

Furthermore, the researcher analyzed the objectives of the tweets. The study finds that the main Twitter objectives of Netflix France can be indicated as promotion, engagement, and call-to-action. More than half of the tweets were posted with aim of promotion, with 54.4% in 2019 and with 58.4% in 2020. This finding aligns with the research from Uluçay et al. (2018) about Netflix Turkey's Twitter strategy. The main objective of promotion remains the same during the pandemic. Furthermore, engaging posts decreased significantly from 42.8% to 29.06%. This could be related to the increase in binge-watching during the pandemic and to the increase of tweets that encourage to reply rather than only like or share. Therefore, Netflix aims to market binge-watching when people are spending more time in their homes. Additionally, call-to-action increased more than double during the pandemic. Netflix France not only aimed to get likes but also the brand encourages users to reply and interact during the pandemic. The rise in call-to-action

could be related to the increasing online activity of users during the pandemic. Users have more time to interact with brands rather than just scrolling down on social media. Hence, Netflix France improved its interaction with the audience by encouraging them to reply.

Another significant finding of this research is related to the type of the post. Visuals play important role in social media platforms like Instagram. However, Twitter allows users to share posts without any visuals. So that, brands don't have to prepare a visual for each post and they are still able to engage with the audience. This study finds that texts are as important as visuals in Netflix France's strategy on Twitter. Images are the main post type of Netflix France, with 36.8% in 2019 and with 45.2% in 2020. Therefore, there is an important increase in images. This increase could be related to the increase in promotional content during the pandemic. Additionally, promoting binge-watching with the use of series and set of iconic movies is seen more often during the pandemic. Further, the second essential posts are texts, with 31.6% in 2019 and with 32.8% in 2020. Hence, texts compose a significant part of the overall tweets. Netflix France tends to use textual tweets to engage the audience and call-to-action. Additionally, Netflix France usually posts textual and direct tweets to promote a series or movies on the day they are launched.

When exploring the characteristics of tweets (Sub-RQ1: What are the characteristics of posted tweets by Netflix France before and during Covid-19?), different emotional elements appeared in both periods. In 2019, humor (28.4%) , direct tone (19.2%) and exciting tone (10.4%) were the top emotional elements. While, in 2020, the main elements were engaging tone (22%), exciting tone (21.6%), and humor (20.4%). Overall, Netflix France adopts a positive tone as a marketing strategy. Thus, it can be said that the key emotional elements of Netflix France align with its youthful and playful brand identity. Many of the humoristic contents include memes which are an important part of the new generation's online culture. The use of images, which are partly composed of memes, increased by 8.4% during the first lockdown. The shift of memes could be related to the changing consumer behavior during the pandemic since memes can evoke a positive feeling that can reduce the negative impact of the lockdown. By following online trends such as memes, Netflix France can connect with the audience and make it possible for the audience to create a relationship with the brand. Netflix France not only engages the audience with its humoristic content but also promotes the media content in the memes. Another important element is excitement, which increased by 11.2% during the pandemic. Netflix France often uses excitement while promoting new series. It can be concluded that the use of excitement

increased due to binge-watching marketing. The use of excitement could lead to expectations towards promoted series and movies which could result in binge-watching. The increase of excitement during the pandemic is remarkable since it evokes positive expectations during the steady and tedious pandemic.

An important difference between the pre-pandemic and pandemic period is that an engaging tone takes the place of a direct tone. Before the pandemic, Netflix France directly promotes its content. However, tweets seem to be longer, more descriptive, and more engaging during the pandemic. This could be related to the fact that audiences spend more time on social media during the pandemic therefore, the tweets should be more engaging and more informative. In that way, Netflix France can keep the audience longer on its Twitter profile. For example, description and comparison of series is a new strategy during the pandemic. Netflix France, not only suggests series but also provides additional information about the story and other similar series. Hence, as mentioned before, promoting binge-watching increased, yet the approach to the promotion changed as well.

Furthermore, the point of view is also considered a significant part of the characteristics. Using points of view enables marketers to add human qualities to the brands. This study observes that the use of third-person increased by 12.57% during the pandemic. More than half of the tweets are written in first-person or second-person before the pandemic, while Netflix France uses third-person in half of the tweets during the pandemic. The increase of third-person is due to the longer and more descriptive tweets which focus on providing information about the promoted series. The tweets that encourage call-to-action are created by using first-person or second-person. In that way, the brand appears to be more friendly and sincere. The double increase in call-to-action is a significant shift. Netflix France is aware that its audience spends more time on social media, therefore the company benefits from the pandemic by asking questions related to the series. In that way, Netflix can collect information about the audience's watching habits.

Netflix France applies different strategies such as positive feelings, promotions, points of view, call-to-action, and descriptive tweets to foster engagement. This research finds a difference in engagement rate before and during the pandemic. Overall, the engagement rate is much higher during the pandemic. This can be related to the higher posting frequency and to the fact that people spend more time on social media platforms during lockdowns. For example, the increase in the top five replies is almost double, from 8638 to 15.948. The increase in replies is also related to the increase in call-to-action and

questions. Accordingly, Netflix France posts 14% more frequently in 2020 than in 2019. Netflix is aware that users spend more time on social media during the pandemic, therefore it increased posting frequency due to the changing user behavior. Overall, the circulation of new content on social media must be higher because of its higher reach during the days of the pandemic. However, there is no significant difference in posting days, and Netflix France posts every day on Twitter.

The main social media marketing strategy of Netflix is positive and young brand identity. Netflix knows its young audience and follows the online culture trends. Therefore, Netflix is not just an observer but also one of them. Another key point is that Netflix is a successful analyzer. The brand focuses on the most popular series and movies that the audience prefers to watch. Then, it creates various types of posts with different objectives around these series and movies. Further, Netflix communicates with the audience by asking them questions and replying to their replies. Sometimes Netflix even retweets the tweets of its followers. Hence, a friendly and young brand image remains during the pandemic.

This research discovers multiple new marketing strategies during the pandemic. These new strategies can be listed as longer tweets, descriptive language, recommendations, comparison of series, and nostalgia. As mentioned before, Netflix knows its audience. The pandemic led to behavioral changes in the audience such as binge-watching, higher social media engagement, and spending more time at home. Accordingly, the marketing strategies must be improved. Firstly, Netflix posts much more frequently during the pandemic. Then, a change in the language is observed. The tweets are more engaging, exciting, and humorous. The direct tone from 2019 is not in the spotlight. Netflix tends to promote more content due to the increase in binge-watching. Additionally, Netflix gives more information about the media content by using descriptive language and comparison. The last key difference is that Netflix encourages people to reply by using call-to-action. In that way, Netflix is able to collect more information about its' audience and develop new posts according to that information. This can result in higher engagement in social media and the platform.

## **5.2 Scientific and social implications**

The scientific contribution of this research lies in the examination of the theoretical framework and the exploration of new findings in this project. The study explores the existing researches on Netflix and its marketing strategies on social media platforms. Moreover, the study looks through the literature on the pandemic, which is a new phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher addresses an important global and trending topic in

terms of social sciences. This study proves how a pandemic, behaviors of individuals, and marketing can be related to each other.

Exploring previous studies on marketing strategies and applying them to Netflix France, results in significant findings on what and how the brand implies them. The study covers numerous types of social media content and their characteristics. Most importantly, the research goes through pre-pandemic and pandemic findings by comparing them to each other. Based on the conducted analysis, Netflix France implies different marketing strategies before and during the pandemic. Additionally, the responsiveness of the audience differs as well.

The importance of emotional elements was explored in the theoretical framework and proven to be a key strategy in Netflix France's marketing strategy on Twitter. The part of the research focused on positive feelings and their contribution to Netflix's brand identity. Previous researchers found that Netflix adopts a playful and youthful brand identity. The results of this research align with these findings by exploring Netflix France's Twitter strategy.

This research focuses on concepts related to marketing and its improvement during the pandemic. This study can serve as practical guidance for marketers and social media specialists in terms of how to manage Twitter in their social media marketing strategies and the researcher provides useful insights about pre-pandemic and pandemic periods. The ongoing pandemic leads to new consumer behaviors; therefore, this research offers new understandings that can be applied in the future. Lastly, the theoretical framework, the analysis, and the comparison to previous studies provide new insights into this not widely addressed part of Netflix's brand identity: Netflix France and its' pandemic strategies.

### **5.3 Limitations and future research**

Despite the aforementioned findings and contributions to the social sciences, this project comes with certain limitations. Qualitative content analysis is the most appropriate approach to this research's objective. However, qualitative analysis depends on the coding and understanding of the research. Therefore, the background of the researcher and personal opinions could influence the research. Even though each step of the research is as transparent as possible, other researchers might adopt slightly different analyses.

Moreover, it is not possible to access deeper data since Netflix doesn't publish any reports in terms of marketing. This study analyzed only the tweet without looking at Netflix

France's replies. Further, this research uses purposive sampling and the data was collected chronologically. The researcher collected 250 tweets from 2019 and 250 tweets from the first lockdown in France. Therefore, the results reflect a specific period. There would be changes in the social media marketing strategies over a longitudinal period. The research focuses on the beginning of the first lockdown in France. The pandemic lasted more than two years, therefore further improvement and changes are possible. Accordingly, the research suggests further investigations about other lockdowns in 2020 and 2021. Thus, the approach of this study can be applied to other countries and social media platforms.

The engagement rate was measured through the number of likes and replies. For future research, it could be interesting to include interviews with followers and marketing specialists working in Netflix. It could be examined how the followers engage with the content and how they perceive the brand image. Additionally, the researchers could examine the communication strategies and objectives of the experts and the responses from the users.

Furthermore, another interesting research could be a comparison of different social media platforms of Netflix France. This study observes that texts and descriptive language are significant strategies on Twitter. However, an analysis of Instagram or Netflix could derive different results.

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