

Accepted Manuscript/Postprint of

Rahe, Vanessa, Buschow, Christopher & Schlütz, Daniela (2021). How users approach novel media products: Brand perception of Netflix and Amazon Prime Video as signposts within the German subscription-based video-on-demand market. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 18(1), 45-58.

The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is available in Journal of Media Business Studies 17 Jun 2020

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/16522354.2020.1780067>

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How users approach novel media products:

Brand perception of Netflix and Amazon Prime Video as signposts within the German subscription-based video-on- demand market

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Abstract

Today, subscription-based video-on-demand (S-VoD) streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video are relevant players within the video content value chain by number of consumers and sales volume. These services represent a rich research context to examine users' brand perception of novel media products. This study investigates Germany's most popular S-VoD services Netflix and Amazon Prime Video from a perspective of the Function-oriented Media Brand Model. The model is applied to both services in a quantitative online survey ($N = 1267$). Overall, the results indicate a more favorably media brand perception of Netflix compared to Amazon Prime Video. Findings are discussed with regard to media brand theory and implications for media companies and potentials for future media brand research are outlined.

1. Introduction

In recent years, subscription-based video-on-demand (S-VoD) streaming services have become relevant players within the video market (e.g., Abreu, Nogueira, Becker & Cardoso, 2017; Evens & Donders, 2018; Martens & Herfert, 2013; Robinson, 2017; Wayne, 2018). S-VoD services provide their subscribers with a specific repertoire of video content at a fixed monthly rate (Martens & Herfert, 2013). Since 2008, Netflix has been the dominant provider with approximately 130 million subscriptions (Netflix, 2019) followed by Amazon Prime Video. This is possibly about to change as its position is challenged by contenders like The Walt Disney Company, WarnerMedia and Apple. These major players are entering the S-VoD market with huge content archives introducing novel brands like Disney+ or Apple TV plus (Anderson, 2019). They all compete for attention and, more importantly, for subscribers. They do so by virtue of their content but also – and this is the focus of our study – by brand perception. Generally speaking, brand perception supports recipients in approaching (novel) media products and proves to be key in terms of customer loyalty and satisfaction (Doyle, 2015; Förster, 2014; Krebs & Siegert, 2015; Malmelin & [Page Nr. 46 starts here] Moisander, 2014; Singh & Oliver, 2015). Thus, unique media brands are considered a competitive advantage as well as a differentiating factor within the market.

The importance of brand perception makes it a relevant object of scientific investigation within media management research (Siegert, Förster, Chan-Olmsted & Ots, 2015). Although extensive research has already been carried out in this area, a knowledge gap persists with regard to the specifics of novel media products: In this regard, the S-VoD market is a particularly rich research context as streaming differs profoundly from, for instance, linear television. This is, among other things, due to individualized media selection and consumption habits of its users (like binge-watching¹). Therefore, the focus of our paper will not be on the German S-

¹ We understand binge watching as a positively connotated term that designates a viewing practice of watching consecutive episodes of the same show for at least 2-4 h in succession (Steiner, 2017; Steiner & Xu, 2018).

VoD market in general, as current research is available in this area (e.g., Beisch, Koch & Schäfer, 2019; Lindstädt-Dreusicke & Budzinski, 2020). Rather, our study focuses on recipients' brand perception of Germany's leading S-VoD streaming services Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, which so far have only been given little attention in media management research.

We raise the following research question:

How do recipients perceive the brands of subscription-based video-on-demand streaming (S-VoD) services Netflix and Amazon Prime Video?

Our empirical investigation adds to the growing body of literature on brand perception in the media industry (Krebs & Siegert, 2015). We chose Germany because in terms of sales volume, the German TV market is the second largest in the world behind the USA (VPRT, 2013). As opposed to the global trend, however, Amazon is at least as strong a player as Netflix, which makes a comparison between the two providers more significant (Kupferschmitt, 2017; Wenzel, Mahle & Pätzmann, 2016).

As a theoretical framework we refer to a model by Berkler (2008), that regards brand perception from a customer centered perspective (cf., Förster, 2014; Sommer & Marty, 2015). According to this model, consumer success of a media product is linked to the fulfilment of specific brand functions. The model is applied to Netflix and Amazon Prime Video using an online survey approach ($N = 1267$). Findings are discussed with regard to media brand theory and implications as well as potential for future research pathways are outlined.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 The Function-oriented Media Brand Model (FoMBM)

We define brand as a “name, term, design, symbol, or any feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (American Marketing Association dictionary, 2017). We take a customer centered perspective in assuming that brands are essentially concepts in customers' minds (Bentele, Buchele, Hoepfner & Liebert, 2003): A brand does not

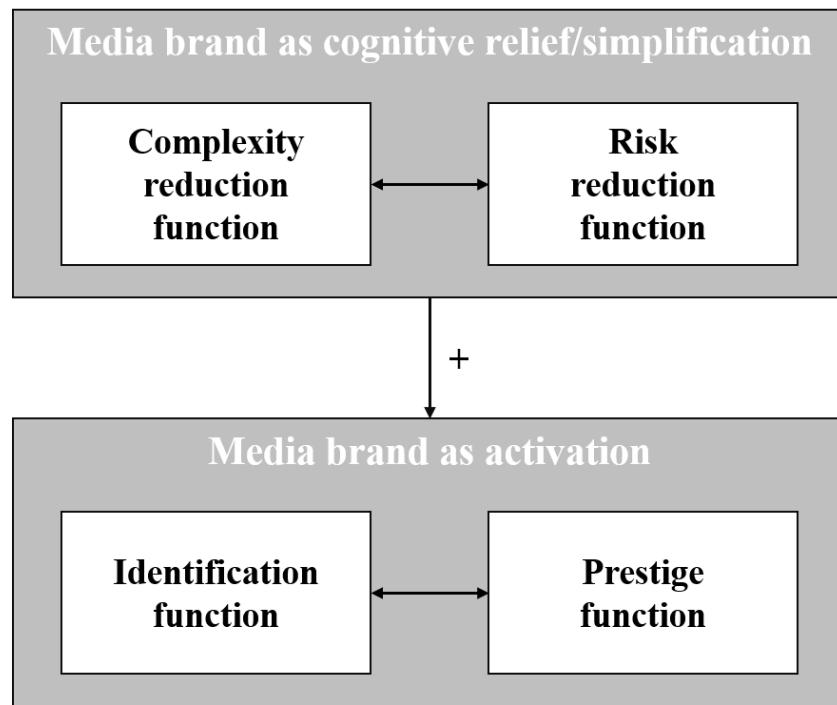
consist of objectively determinable characteristics, but is composed of social psychological effects (Berkler, 2008). This argument is in line with Siegert et al. (2015) who state that media brands carry “all the connotations of the audience in terms of the emotional, stylistic, cognitive, unconscious or conscious significations” (p. 1). This they have in common with other brands. However, media brands differ from traditional consumer goods in some respects. For instance, they hold specific uncertainties for the consumers (e.g., Baumann, 2015; Bode, 2010; Siegert, 2001a, 2001b). Further, media brands have a dual character: they are both economic goods and cultural assets. As opposed to consumer goods, media brands might[47] thus be more culturally relevant (for instance with regard to societal opinion-forming processes). Finally, media brands are often immaterial and therefore not as perceptible as physical products (Bode, 2010).

In order to fully include the peculiarities of media brands within our study, we dwell on Berkler’s (2008) ‘Function-oriented Media Brand Model’ (FoMBM). The FoMBM is rooted in both economic and sociological theory. It models the functions of a brand within a framework of moderating constructs and certain brand objectives. Furthermore, the model combines supply-oriented and effect-oriented perspectives by equaling causal relations with functions. This multi-perspective view distinguishes it from other approaches. What is more, as opposed to other models the FoMBM has already been tested empirically with special regard to TV brands. This focus on the television market renders it particularly suitable for our research question and the empirical approach.

The FoMBM states that a media brand must fulfill two general functions in order to be perceived as particularly relevant by the user. These central functions are *cognitive relief/simplification* and *activation* (Berkler, 2008, p. 102). Both functions are subdivided even further: With regard to *cognitive relief/simplification*, media brands reduce complexity and evoke a certain brand image in the consumers’ minds (*complexity reduction*; Berkler, 2008). Additionally, they help recipients to orient themselves and provide a framework for interpretation, which minimizes the risk of choosing the “wrong” brand (*risk reduction*). The more palpable and

precise a media product's promise of performance is, the more it fulfills its *cognitive relief/simplification* function (Berkler, 2008). Besides characteristics that affect functional utility, media brands also have symbolic functions (Siegert, 2001a): With respect to *activation*, they support personal and social self-definition of a consumer (*identification*) (Berkler, 2008; Bourdieu, 1986; Förster, 2015; Ots & Hartmann, 2015). Furthermore, they also play a relevant role for one's self-presentation and self-confirmation in a social environment (*prestige*). The more functions a brand fulfills and the better it fulfills them, the more valuable and unique it is from a customer's point of view and, at the end of the day, for the brand holders (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Dimensions of the Function-oriented Media Brand Model (FoMBM)



Source: Own diagram based on Berkler (2008)

The FoMBM postulates that the factors are interconnected (see Figure 1). They interact in a specific way that reflects the recipient's decision-making process: In the pre-selection phase the *complexity reduction* function is paramount while the *risk reduction* function supports the consumer's decision. Once the recipient has made his/her choice, the symbolic benefit (Siegert,

2001a) of a media brand is perceived both from the inside (*identification*) and the outside (*prestige* by self-presentation to others). The model postulates that the functions of *cognitive relief/simplification* and *activation* are interrelated and that the degree to which the first function is fulfilled determines the fulfilment of the second (Berkler, 2008). The model is applied to the German S-VoD market, which offers a particularly rich research context for the empirical investigation of novel media products' brand perception.

2.2 Research context: market for S-VoD in Germany

A representative study of German Internet users (14 years and above) has shown that online video use is part and parcel of the everyday life (Beisch, Koch & Schäfer, 2019). 61 percent of the population use online videos on a weekly basis (Beisch et al., 2019). Video streaming services such as Netflix or Amazon Prime Video are used at least once per week by 37 percent[48] (Beisch et al., 2019). By comparison, the weekly use of time-shifted TV programs is 35 percent (Beisch et al., 2019). Youtube, possibly the most popular video platform in Germany, was used weekly by 40 percent of Germans (Beisch et al., 2019). Altogether, data show that streaming services are highly relevant for German audiences. What is more, consumption has risen steadily in recent years and the trend faces upwards (Lindstädt-Dreusicke & Budzinski, 2020).

From a global perspective, the German TV market is the second largest in the world following the USA (VPRT, 2013). Its digital realm is dominated by Amazon Prime Video and Netflix; legacy services such as Maxdome or Sky only play a minor role in Germany (Goldmedia 2016; Kupferschmitt, 2017). Contrary to the global trend, however, Amazon is the market leader in Germany (Kupferschmitt, 2017; Wenzel et al., 2016). As Netflix and Amazon apply different strategies with regard to their S-VoD products (e.g., Anatomy, 2017; Pfister, 2017; Wenzel et al., 2016) this makes for an interesting research case. Thus, Germany is particularly suited to examine questions like the following: Does the market shares indicate

that Amazon Prime Video better meets the needs of German recipients? Or is Netflix's role as a streaming pioneer and disruptive innovative player (e.g., Christensen, Raynor & McDonald, 2015; Stiegler, 2016) reflected in a stronger brand perception by its recipients? Answers to these questions can be conferred to other markets where[49] equally strong but strategically different positioned brands compete with each other. However, the German S-VoD market is obviously special in some respects, which can hinder comparisons with other markets and forbids global generalizations of the study's findings.

Our study addresses a desideratum by dealing with these questions. To our knowledge there are only a few studies on media brand perceptions of Netflix and Amazon Prime Video (e.g., Anatomy, 2017; iModerate, 2015; Pfister, 2017; Wenzel et al., 2016). Existing research suggest that Netflix and Amazon Prime Video fulfil different brand functions. As discussed above, complexity and risk reduction functions aim at cognitively relieving recipients. A brand rationalizes the cognitive search processes, shortening and simplifying the perception and assessment process (Berkler, 2008). In the case of Netflix, information processing is simplified by the individual operation of the platform (individualization), the functionality of the simple and consistently designed portal on all devices (usability) and the focus on original content (Wenzel et al., 2016). Users of Amazon Prime Video, on the other hand, have to adapt to different user interfaces depending on the device used (Wenzel et al., 2016), which could be cognitively more challenging. In contrast, Amazon's bundling strategy (streaming service and prime shipping; iModerate, 2015, p. 20) may have relieving effects for costumers. Also, the financial risk of subscription is lower for Amazon Prime Video consumers than for Netflix. The literature also suggests that *identification* and *prestige* functions are served better by Netflix. This presumption can be explained by the awareness of the brand as a streaming pioneer and the identity-

creating and distinctive effect of quality TV² (Schlütz, Emde-Lachmund, Scherer & Wedemeyer, 2018). Based on the underlying theoretical model and the (sparse) empirical findings we formulate the following research questions:

RQ1: *To what extent do Netflix and Amazon Prime Video fulfil cognitive relief/simplification functions, that is reduction of both complexity and risk?*

RQ2: *To what extent do Netflix and Amazon Prime Video fulfil activation functions of identification and prestige?*

RQ3: *Which brand (Netflix vs. Amazon Prime Video) does better fulfil these functions?*

3. Method

To address the research questions, we conducted an online survey with a convenience sample from November 22 to December 7, 2017 (Bandilla, Kacmirzek, Blohm & Neubarth, 2009). Because German market data indicated that S-VoD services were primarily used by people 30 years or younger with pronounced online affinity (cf. Frees & Koch, 2018; Kupferschmitt, 2017), our recruitment strategy was mainly based on social media postings (e.g., in series fan groups). By this we reached 1.500 participants, of whom 90 percent followed up with the survey. For the analysis, however, we deleted all cases with missing values (item non-response). After cleansing, a total of 1.267 cases remained. For methodological reasons³ the sizes of the two sub-samples varied ($n_{Amazon\ Prime\ Video} = 219$; $n_{Netflix} = 1048$). The[50] group membership

² Quality TV is defined as “complex in terms of storytelling, cast, narrative ambiguity, and intertextuality. Due to realistic execution, controversial subjects, and ambiguous characters quality series appear authentic. Moreover, they stand out because of a signature style composed of high production values, distinctive visual style, and techniques fostering reflexivity. Quality TV addresses a special, highly autonomous audience segment. As a meta-genre it supports selection, frames comprehension, and channels interpretation. Quality serial television offers a cognitively and affectively challenging entertainment experience with added symbolic value” (Schlütz, 2015, p. 101).

³ To keep the questionnaire as short as possible, participants only reported on their most frequently used streaming service, i.e. either on Netflix or Amazon Prime Video. Due to the fact that Amazon was the leading S-VoD service at the time of the study, this rather large group differences were surprising. However, it sheds a first light on the particularities of the two brands.

(Amazon Prime Video and Netflix, respectively) forms the dichotomous, independent factor for the analyses of variance (ANOVAs).

3.1 Measures

The questionnaire comprised 21 questions primarily addressing the fulfilment of media brand functions, frequency of S-VoD use, motives of use as well as socio-demographics (see Table 1). Dimensions of the function-oriented media brand model were operationalized primarily based on Berkler (2008) who used scales and items from various sources which he applied to the TV market. The questionnaire was pretested and adjustments were made accordingly.

All dimensions were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 [*strongly disagree*] to 5 [*strongly agree*]) in line with Berkler (2008). As shown in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha values for all dimensions were sufficient.

Table 1. *Measures of brand functions*

Dimension	Items	Descriptives	Sources
“Netflix/Amazon Prime Video...”			
<i>Complexity reduction</i>	• [...] distinguishes itself from other competing video streaming providers.	$\alpha = .821$ $(M=3.86, SD=0.68)$	Berkler (2008),
<i>function</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The image of [...] is unique. • [...] is a copy of competitors, i.e. other video streaming providers.* • [...] is very different and more individual than competing video streaming providers. 		Matthes (2009), Schallehn (2012)

- With [...] I don't have to inform myself about the contents beforehand, there is always a suitable show for me.
- I often don't even think about it when I want to watch TV, but choose [...] first.
- When I want to watch television, I often choose [...] because I know that I will like the content.
- If you turn on [...], you can't do anything wrong.
- At [...] I feel well entertained.

<i>Risk reduction function</i>	• [...] is a video streaming provider you can trust.	$\alpha = .676^a$ $(M=3.64, SD=0.69)$	Berkler (2008), Erdem & Swait (1998)
<i>Identification function</i>	• [...] is at the forefront when it comes to technological performance. • [...] reminds me of someone who's competent and knows what he or she is doing.		

<i>Identification function</i>	• [...] is a video streaming provider for people like me.	$\alpha = .761$ $(M=4.29, SD=0.73)$	Berkler (2008)
	• [...] suits me.		

<i>Prestige function</i>	• I like to tell others that I watch shows at [...].	$\alpha = .708$ ($M=4.04, SD=0.77$)	Berkler (2008)
	• I recommend [...] gladly to my friends and acquaintances.		
	• The video streaming provider [...] is often a topic of conversation in the circle of my friends.		

Note. [...] = Netflix or Amazon Prime Video; *item reversed; ^aExcluding items does not improve Cronbach's alpha, therefore index is used as shown; Cronbach's Alpha of general functions⁴: Cognitive relief/simplification ($\alpha = .739, M = 3.75, SD = 0.61$), Activation ($\alpha = .738, M = 4.16, SD = 0.67$). All items translated from German.

3.2 Sample

In both sub-samples – Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, respectively – gender distribution was similar ($n_N = 70\%$ female, $n_A = 64\%$). With an average age of 29 years [51] ($M = 29.46, SD = 9.13$), Netflix users were slightly younger than those of Amazon Prime Video ($M = 31.34, SD = 10.47$). The overall level of education in both sub-samples was very high as is to be expected for an online sample ($M_N = 4.33, SD = 1.30$; $M_A = 4.33, SD = 1.32$). Approximately one fifth of the interviewees were students (Netflix: 19%, Amazon Prime Video: 24%).

On a scale from 1 [*not good at all*] to 5 [*very good*], Netflix was rated more favorably than Amazon Prime Video in our sample ($M_N = 4.36, SD = 0.67$; $M_A = 3.95, SD = 0.78$;). Netflix was also used more frequently than Amazon Prime Video. On a scale of 1 [*daily*] to 5 [*less than once a month*], average usage frequency for Netflix was $M = 1.53$ ($SD = 0.63$), for Amazon

⁴ Following the Berkler's (2008) model, we compiled the items of both dimensions into a mean index. This approach was warranted as the two dimensions are both theoretically and empirically strongly related, as shown in Section 2. Before we turned to the research questions, we empirically examined the interrelations between the media brand functions postulated by the FoMBM. Our empirical analysis shows that the correlations between media brand functions postulated by Berkler (2008) are confirmed in both subsamples.

Prime Video it was $M = 2.05$ ($SD = 0.97$). 53 percent of the Netflix Group used Netflix daily and 42 percent several times a week. The daily use for Amazon Prime Video was only 32 percent, the weekly use 43 percent. In terms of media brand functions, both groups reported a higher fulfillment of the *activation* functions ($M_N = 4.24$, $SD = 0.61$; $M_A = 3.78$, $SD = 0.78$) as compared to functions of *cognitive relief* ($M_N = 3.83$, $SD = 0.56$; $M_A = 3.40$, $SD = 0.71$).

4. Results

In order to answer the research questions, univariate ANOVAs⁵ were calculated to validate whether and to what degree Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, respectively, fulfilled the presumed functions (RQ1) and how this varied between the two brands (RQ3). Table 2 shows the results with regard to RQ1 and RQ3 (*cognitive relief/simplification* functions).

Table 2: Cognitive relief/simplification functions (ANOVAs)

Brand functions	Amazon							
	Netflix		Prime Vi-		<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	η^2	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Complexity reduction	3.97	0.61	3.33	0.76	182.728***	1,1265	.126	
Risk reduction	3.68	0.67	3.47	0.79	16.708***	1,1265	.013	
Cognitive relief/simplification	3.83	0.56	3.40	0.71	93.320***	1,1265	.069	

Note. Statistically significant differences (ANOVAs) are indicated: *** $p \leq .001$;

Scale: 1 [*strongly disagree*] to 5 [*strongly agree*]; Netflix $n = 1048$, Amazon Prime Video $n = 219$

⁵ Although ANOVAs are robust in this respect, the interpretation of the following results should take into account that significant Levene's test indicate a heterogeneity of variance. This violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance in combination with the fact of unequal sample sizes, however, might lead to misinterpretations. When the groups with larger sample sizes have smaller variances than the groups with smaller samples sizes (as in this case), the resulting F-ratio tends to be liberal (Field, 2009, p. 360). Significant effects then need to be treated with caution.

Table 2 shows the results of the ANOVAs with regard to the function of cognitive relief/simplification: Both brands are perceived to reduce complexity and risk to a medium degree ($M_N=3.83$; $M_A=3.47$ on a 5-point scale) (RQ1). Netflix is perceived more favorably with regard to both complexity ($M_N=3.97$; $M_A=3.33$) and risk reduction ($M_N=3.68$; $M_A=3.47$) (RQ3). Interestingly, Netflix is graded higher with regard to its capability to reduce complexity than risk, while it is the other way around for Amazon Prime Video. Table 3 shows that the two brands are rated higher with regard to their capacity to activate ($M_N=4.24$; $M_A=3.78$ on a 5-point scale) (RQ2) as opposed to simplify. Netflix again offers more identification ($M_N=4.35$; $M_A=3.96$ on a 5-point scale) and prestige than Amazon Prime Video ($M_N=4.13$; $M_A=3.59$ on a 5-point scale) (RQ3).

Table 3: Activation functions (ANOVAs)

Brand functions	Amazon				<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	η^2			
	Netflix		Prime Vi-							
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>						
Identification	4.35	0.68	3.96	0.88	53.328***	1,1265	.040			
Prestige	4.13	0.71	3.59	0.86	96.742***	1,1265	.071			
Activation	4.24	0.61	3.78	0.78	94.310***	1,1265	.069			

Note. Statistically significant differences (ANOVAs) are indicated: *** $p \leq .001$;

Scale: 1 [*strongly disagree*] to 5 [*strongly agree*]; Netflix $n = 1048$, Amazon Prime Video $n = 219$

5. Discussion and Outlook

The aim of this paper was to apply the Function-oriented Media Brand Model by Berkler (2008) to a novel media product in order to test its viability in a changed environment[52]

where consumers have much more agency with regard to media choice. To do so, we explored brand perception of the S-VoD players Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. We focused on the German market where Amazon and Netflix have been strong contenders for a long time to provide insights regarding future challenges in the fast-paced video streaming industry. The central findings of the empirical study are discussed below.

The first research question concerned the *cognitive relief/simplification* function of media brands, one of the dimensions of Berkler's model. Within our sample, Netflix as a brand better fulfilled its function as a mental short cut than Amazon Prime Video (cf. Förster, 2015). Apparently, Netflix' signaling competence as a prerequisite for brand perception is perceived as being more prominent by its users. One explanation might be its advantage in terms of *risk reduction* as opposed to Amazon (whereas the influence of complexity reduction was considerably lower). It appears that Netflix, unlike Amazon Prime Video, is better suited to simplify the gathering of information while preparing a decision (Berkler, 2008). From the respondents' point of view, Netflix seemingly delivers a clearer performance promise. This corresponds with Berkler (2008) own study, who finds that TV programs with a clear performance promise are perceived as a stronger brand than TV channels with a less clear offer. Maybe Netflix' focus on high-quality original content adds to this effect: As described by Schlütz (2016), the meta genre quality TV might function like a brand simplifying selection. It might then carry the required cognitive signaling competence. In addition, Berkler (2008) identifies another crucial factor, i.e. the differentiation from the competition. In line with Stiegler (2016) and Schallehn (2012), Netflix might individualize media consumption significantly better and more clearly than its competitor Amazon Prime Video. This seems plausible in the light of extant research (cf. Anatomy, 2017; Wenzel et al., 2016). According to Berkler (2008), habit-forming is key to simplification. Thus, Netflix' endeavor in creating and facilitating usage habits like binge watching (Pfister, 2017; Snider, 2016) might add to this function. Moreover, brand knowledge seems to be processed more actively for Netflix than for Amazon Prime Video, which

significantly simplifies the cognitive selection process (Berkler, 2008). In our sample, this might be a result of the more frequent use of Netflix as compared to Amazon Prime Video. Furthermore, differences can also be explained by recipients' varying quality assumptions (Berkler, 2008). The respondents' favorable assessment of Netflix seems to confirm the relevance of quality in competition, as described by Schlütz (2016). The content strategy of Amazon Prime Video is perceived slightly less positive by the respondents. Maybe, Amazon Prime Video is considered more of a free add-on to the Prime package (cf. iModerate, 2015). Wayne (2018) argues that the Amazon Prime Video brand has to be understood in the context of the company's commercial interests: Prime Video exists to[53] attract customers to the umbrella brand's e-commerce business. We recommend to investigate the reasons for significant differences in the fulfilment of this function in further studies.

Research question 2 deals with the extent to which the *activation* functions are fulfilled by the S-VoD brands. Apparently, Netflix is more suitable as a lifestyle product for young users than Amazon Prime Video. Although, results indicated that both brands fulfil a function in social identity work (cf. Förster, 2015), Netflix seemed to be more effective in helping consumers to express their identity. According to Berkler (2008) a brand can only fulfill its *identification* function if a recipient deals with it and its content repeatedly. Thus, the reported differences in frequency of use support our argument that Netflix facilitates identification via daily viewing and the classification as quality TV. Furthermore, the recorded results with regard to the *prestige* function point to media's role as "social glue" (Förster, 2015, p. 286): In our study, those respondents who preferred Netflix made more demonstrative use of the brand than users of Amazon Prime Video. The preference for quality series and the associated taste suggest a certain endowment with cultural capital. Thus, a demonstrated preference for a certain genre like quality TV can function as a distinctive sign and, consequently, offer symbolic benefit (Schlütz et al., 2018). This benefit works for the audience, but also for the brand distributing distinctive content (Dellwing, 2017). Thus, Netflix (as opposed to Amazon Prime Video) could be an

expression of the recipient's postmodern differentiation (cf. Dellwing, 2017). We recommend to further explore explanations for the differences in *activation* in future research.

Due to its primary focus on media brands' fundamental functions, Berkler's FoMBM (2008) has proven to still be relevant in the empirical investigation of digital media's brand perceptions. However, in order to increase its explanatory power in further empirical studies, qualitative, exploratory research with brand users (e.g., focus groups, problem-centered interviews) should be conducted to determine whether Berkler's model must be expanded to adequately capture today's media selection processes. Additionally, in follow-up research more attention should be paid to the relationship between brand perceptions and users' consumption practices (e.g., binge watching) as well as content preferences (e.g., quality TV).

Despite conclusive results, we have to address some limitations of the study. They mainly result from the methodological approach. First, the sampling strategy (convenience sample, self-selection, geographical focus) does not allow for the results to be generalized – neither to the entire German population nor to other markets. As our goal was to gain first quantitative insights into brand perception of competing S-VoD services, we still think our endeavor was worthwhile and suitable to spark further investigation and more detailed analyses.

Although this paper was primarily concerned with expanding media brand research to S-VoD streaming services, it also bears some implications for media management practice. Overall, findings showed a stronger brand perception of the market pioneer Netflix. In general, Netflix better fulfilled the function of *cognitive relief/simplification* than Amazon Prime Video. This suggests that Netflix serves personal and social self-definition needs more effectively. For media managers who are building and leading media brands today, Netflix' marketing strategy can serve as a fruitful source of inspiration: These managers may, for instance, try to couple new or existing media brands with unique content genres (in the case of Netflix, its association with quality TV) or even strive to pioneer new platform-bound usage patterns (e.g., binge watching). The reported perception of Netflix's[54] capacity to offer *identification* and *prestige*

indicates that the media brand is part of a new culture of video usage. In contrast to Amazon Prime Video, Netflix as a media brand is less complex and, from the respondents' point of view, answers the demands in a more individualized manner. Netflix' brand management points to the fact that economic products always need to be connected to certain social worlds (in the case of Netflix, a world of young viewers' on-demand media engagement; cf., Matrix, 2014). Brand management is thus always a management of more than only economic capital – for instance, cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) play a major role as well.

Going back to our initial observation that new market entrants such as The Walt Disney Company, WarnerMedia and Apple are entering the S-VoD business, findings from the German market indicate that Netflix, judging by its brand perception, seems to be better positioned against these new competitors than Amazon Prime Video. Maybe Amazon's umbrella brand represents a much greater value proposition than Prime Video influencing user's evaluation. We recommend to consider this aspect in future research. Finally, since the competitive situation does not only affect S-VoD providers (Goldmedia, 2016), it would also be interesting to further compare them to linear TV content providers in terms of brand perception.**[55]**

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