From Streaming to Evoking That Extra Feeling:

Capturing the hearts and minds of consumers through brand extensions

by

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate how brand extensions within streaming services affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to the parent brand. Beyond fit and quality, we provide an explanation of the connection between brand extensions, emotional attachment, and consumer attitude.

This research adopts a critical realist ontology, interpretivism epistemology, and abductive approach through a qualitative research design by collecting data from semi-structured interviews where participants shared their perceptions and opinions of the brand extensions of Netflix and HBO Max towards mobile games and podcasts respectively, which were chosen as the empirical context. This study contributes to the identified research gap regarding the effect that brand extensions have towards the parent brand, as past studies have concentrated on the reverse effect through fit and quality, as well as contributing to research regarding streaming services that pushes for more studies on marketing and consumer behaviour rather than the technical aspects of the industry.

We discovered through empirical and theoretical analysis that brand extensions have a positive impact on the parent brand by acting as experience enhancers; they foster a connection between content and the self, which in turn fosters an attachment to the parent brand; and they have a positive impact on consumers' attitudes toward the parent brand, providing more opportunities than risks for the latter.

As a result, the study adds to the body of knowledge regarding how brand extensions have an effect on their parent brands in industries with high levels of emotional involvement, as well as to that of brand extensions and emotional attachment (not just to the parent brand but also to the product), and to the empirical research field of streaming services. By staying true to the brand's core, the practical implications offer marketers and brand managers insightful information on how to employ brand extensions as a strategy to harness emotional connections with consumers and gain a competitive advantage.

Keywords: Brand Attachment, Brand Experience, Brand Extensions, Consumer Attitude, Streaming Services

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1   Introduction

This first section of this study provides the reader with relevant background information for the field. Subsequently, a problematization is presented which leads to the presentation of the purpose and research question. The section is also concluded by presenting the intended contributions and a section explaining the outline of the study.

1.1   Background

From creating brand loyalty to driving purchasing decisions, focusing on the emotional aspects of branding has the power to transform a company's marketing efforts into a meaningful and impactful experience for consumers (Gobé, 2001). Emotional content can be considered one of the most important features in developing strong relationships between the consumer and the brand (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967). Therefore, marketers have started to put immense focus on creating an emotional bond or attachment and finding the right strategies to succeed with this emotional connection with the consumers (Akgün, Koçoğlu & İmamoğlu, 2013). In order to understand which strategies are most successful, marketers need to understand the attitudes, loyalty and engagement of consumers (Park, MacInnis & Priester, 2007). This is to be understood by not only examining consumers' perceptions of brands but also by diving deeper into the emotionally connected concepts of brand attachment and brand love. From a consumer perspective, brand attachment is the link between the brand, their feelings, and the emotional connection to the brand, which can vary in strength, while brand love is rather the intimate positive experience and relationship with the brand (Fournier, 1998; Gómez-Suárez, 2019; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich & Iacobucci, 2010).

There are certain brands with a particular focus on emotions and brands that make consumers' emotions more accessible. These types of brands can be named in various ways, for example, iconic brands or passion brands, putting an emphasis on the emotional connection between the consumer and the brand, or even to the peers of the community of the brand (Kapferer, 2012; Swimberghe, Astakhova & Wooldridge, 2014). Looking at specific industries, media & entertainment, automotive, and tech & telecom industries have shown significant performance when measuring emotional brand connections (MBLM, 2022). The entertainment industry outperforms most industries when it comes to emotional attachment, which is not surprising since it is an industry that has been a source of all sorts of emotions such as joy, love, sadness, empathy and anger for centuries (Tan, 2008; Vorderer, 2001).

At the same time, as emotional connections towards entertainment brands have been increasing, the landscape of media and entertainment, as well as many other industries, has

entered a digital era. One example of a shift in the field of entertainment is the introduction of streaming services or OTT (over-the-top) media services delivering videos, music or other content immediately to the consumer via the internet (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d). The shift towards streaming services has mainly been caused by technological advancements, but also by changes in the demands and behaviours of consumers. This shift requires the brands to plan new strategies for creating emotional attachment and, as the industry is growing, the competition becomes a battle of emotions.

1.1.1   The streaming service industry

The streaming service industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry with a massive expected growth of almost double the revenue from 2021 to 2028 (Statista, 2022). Trends, increases in income, gamification features and content diversity are some of the causes impacting this expansion (Singh, Arora & Kapur, 2022). Furthermore, COVID-19 enabled many opportunities for the streaming service industry to expand further due to the increased demand for entertainment at home (Sharma & Lulandala, 2023). However, with a growing market comes increased competition. Today, there are over 200 available streaming services and the most popular ones have around 200-230 million users (FlixPatrol, 2022; Terrones, 2020). Among the most popular streaming services worldwide are Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+, Tencent Video, iQIYI, and HBO Max (FlixPatrol, 2022).

The competitors in the market are all aiming for the same goal – the attention of the consumers (Berman & Espada, 2021). Competition in the streaming service industry has for years been defined by different factors such as content quality, content diversity, price, or licence to popular shows, but recently the competition has also added features such as the streaming services' ability to adapt expansions (Cho, 2022; Greenwoor, Kennard & Mowry, 2022). With the growth of competition in the industry, there is a need for streaming service companies to manage their brands in a way that creates a unique differentiation, meaning they have to seek innovative strategies to attract and retain customers (Berman & Espada, 2021).

1.1.2   Brand extensions

One strategy widely used in the streaming service industry to differentiate, retain consumers and capture market share is brand extensions (Kapferer, 2012). Brand extension refers to the practice of using an established brand name to enter a new product or service category (Kapferer, 2012). In streaming services, the strategy has been used in many different ways, for example, Netflix extending towards mobile games and a gym (including workout video content), and HBO Max and Amazon Prime Video launching podcasts. The strategy of brand extensions is a commonly used strategy within brand management in most industries and, when executed properly, the brand extension can contribute to growth and profitability (Kapferer, 2012).

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However, brand extensions are not always successful, and consumers' perceptions are crucial in order to decide about brand extension as a strategy. From a consumer perspective, the brand extension is usually reviewed through the perceived fit with the parent brand, but it could also be reviewed from the perceived quality (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Hem, de Chernatony & Iversen, 2003; Ranjbarian, Fathi & Mohammadi, 2013). In addition, the consumer's brand attachment and other emotional factors towards the parent brand have also been shown to have a significant impact on the perception of a brand extension (Vahdat, Hafezniya, Jabarzadeh & Thaichon, 2020). Commitment, loyalty and customer satisfaction are all related to the consumer's relationship with the brand, and they have a positive impact on the attitude toward brand extensions (Vahdat et al. 2020). However, little is known about the effect that brand extension as a strategy has on the emotional attachment to the parent brand, and if brand extensions can help brands become even more emotionally connected with their consumers. Furthermore, the knowledge of how brand extensions affect the attitude towards the parent brand is also vague.

1.2   Problematization

To understand the problem that this study wants to focus on, we need to recognise that brand extension is a strategy used to expand a brand's initial product offering, increase brand visibility and reach new customer segments (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013). This means that brands look to reach new areas of the consumer's environment and integrate them into their own, creating excitement for the parent brand (Aaker, 1991). Having that in mind, it becomes comprehensible that past research on brand extension has widely focused on the rational aspect of it: how brand extensions can be evaluated through the perceived fit with the parent brand, and the perceived quality of the extended brand (Aaker, 1990; Deng & Messinger, 2021; Jain, Mathur, Isaac, Mao & Maheswaran, 2023; Keller & Aaker, 1992; Osorio, Centeno, Cambra-Fierro & del Castillo, 2022). Past literature has not only focused on that but also on the effects that brand extensions have on different aspects of a brand, be it their effect on the competitive advantage of a company or the factors that can determine its success or failure (Ranjbarian, Fathi & Mohammadi, 2013; Hem, de Chernatony & Iversen, 2003). Other researchers state that beyond fit and attitude there is the emotional attachment that consumers have to brand extension (Fedorikhin, Park & Thompson, 2008). The findings suggest that high levels of brand attachment to the parent brand can make consumers forgive mishaps, even if the fit is moderate, with further research pushing to validate that brand attachment has more strength in shaping consumer behaviour than behavioural intentions. (Fedorikhin, Park & Thompson, 2008). Vahdat et al. (2020) mirror these findings with the results of emotional brand attachment having a positive relation to loyalty, commitment and customer satisfaction.

What there appears to be a lack of, through our research on the concept of brand extensions, is an understanding of how brand extensions as a strategy have an effect on emotional attachment to the parent brand, or the attitude of consumers towards it. There are a few exceptions, of course. Some past research has focused on positive attitudes towards brand extensions, how the success of brand extensions can contribute to enhancing the parent brand's value by increasing their sales, or how brand extensions can dilute the parent brand (Martínez & Pina,

2003; Pina, Iversen & Martínez, 2010; Kapferer, 2012). Others have focused on the negative impact brand extensions can have on the parent brand, such as by studying how the experience of brand extensions of fast-moving consumer goods affects parent brand knowledge (Sheinin, 2000). Additionally, there is the idea of feedback effects, meaning the effect that implementing brand extensions can have on the parent brand (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013). Feedback effects are said to materialise due to a reciprocal transfer of consumer attitude from a brand extension to a parent brand (Ahluwalia & Gürhan-Canli, 2000; Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013). But all in all, the extant literature does not cover how brand extensions can shape the emotional connection between consumers and the brand, how emotions can be evoked through the experience with the brand extensions, and how brand extensions can shape the attitudes of consumers towards the parent brand.

To understand the importance of brand attachment, we have to turn to previous research on the concept, where it is seen as a critical component for building strong brand-consumer relationships, which in turn promotes brand profitability, brand love, brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction (Japutra, Ekinci & Simkin, 2019). However, there is a line of thought followed by scholars that talk about the often lack of attachment consumers have to specific brands (Tobon, Ruiz-Alba & García-Madariaga, 2020). Other researchers also suggest consumer experience and coordinated communication strategies can be used in combination with traditional mass campaigns and personalisation to develop a strong link between attachment and engagement (Gómez-Suárez, 2019; Rather & Sharma, 2018; Wali, Wright & Uduma, 2015).

Therefore, the extant literature highlights the idea that a strategy is needed for marketers to leverage the emotions evoked by the consumers' interactions with the brand and by the experience in itself. In this case, we propose that brand extensions can be one of those strategies, which is the reason why we believe there is a need for a better understanding of how they can be used. This study, therefore, attempts to provide a more thorough knowledge of the function of brand extensions as a means for creating emotional attachment by examining consumers' perceptions of the brand extensions and their effect on the attachment and attitudes to the parent brand.

The use of streaming services as an empirical case is relevant in this study because of its status as a highly competitive environment, which past studies on emotional branding suggest that building a strong brand relationship is essential for its success (Akgün, Koçoğlu & İmamoğlu, 2013). Moreover, Shimul (2022) suggests that further research on brand attachment should focus on different industries, including streaming services, as it provides empirical evidence of how consumers' attachments can vary among industries, and how these emotions come as a result of brand experiences.

Furthermore, past research conducted on the streaming service industry is still in its early stages, although it has begun to gain some traction because of the impact COVID-19 had on the growth of the industry (Singh, Arora & Kapur, 2022). Prior studies have focused on the change in the viewing habits and perceptions of consumers from a market dominated by TV to

one where streaming services are taking the lead (Singh, Arora & Kapur, 2022; Sowbarnika & Jayanthi, 2021). The majority of the research on streaming services has focused on Netflix (which, until recently, was one of the only competitors in the industry) from a case-study perspective, and information technology and streaming-related issues (Singh, Arora & Kapur, 2022). This leads us to identify a gap in the empirical field on the perspective of consumers. More importantly, the highly competitive nature of the industry has pushed companies to differentiate themselves, which leads them to find new ways to attract the attention of their consumers. Researchers agree when mentioning how further research in this domain should centre on the investigation of consumer behaviour, brand loyalty, marketing strategies and other socially relevant topics (Singh, Arora & Kapur, 2022).

1.3   Purpose

On the basis of the problem formulation, the broad purpose of this research is to investigate brand extension as a strategy and its effect on the parent brand. Furthermore, we want to provide an in-depth understanding of consumers' perceptions of brand extensions within streaming services and explain how brand extensions affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to the parent brand. By studying the relationship between brand extension, consumer attitude and emotional attachment, this study aims at providing an understanding of the mediating effects of brand extension and adds to the current research gap on brand extensions' effect on consumer emotional attachment. Additionally, the study aims at going beyond fit and quality and examining the consumers' experiences, emotions and behaviours by applying an in-depth qualitative research method. To fulfil the research purpose, the study examines the following research question:

1.3.1   Research question

- How do brand extensions affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to the parent brand within streaming services?

1.4   Intended Contribution

The intended contribution of the research can be seen as two-folded – one theoretical contribution to the literature on brand extensions, and one practical contribution to the field of streaming services. The theoretical contribution aims to add to current research on brand extensions by exploring the perceptions beyond fit and attitude and rather focusing on emotional attachment (Fedorikhin, Park & Thompson, 2008). Furthermore, it aims at filling the gap in consumers' emotions as a result of brand experience and capturing emotional aspects and behaviours regarding brand attachment (Campagna, Donthu & Yoo, 2023). In addition, the

research flips the coin around by looking at how brand extension contributes to emotional attachment and consumers' attitudes rather than examining how emotional attachment and consumers' attitudes affect the success of brand extensions which has been studied before.

Moreover, the practical contribution aims at broadening the knowledge of the field of streaming services by exploring behaviours and marketing rather than technological and functional aspects (Singh, Arora & Kapur, 2022). Additionally, the research will provide a practical contribution for managers to understand brand extension as a strategy and its connection to shaping emotional attachment and changing consumers' attitudes. In addition, it will also contribute to an understanding of how this shaping is carried out and what aspects are essential to leverage.

1.5   Outline of Thesis

The thesis will be outlined in six main chapters. The first chapter introduces our research topic by providing background information, a problem formulation, purpose and intended contribution. The second chapter gives an overview of the theoretical concepts relevant to the study which have been developed through a comprehensive literature review. This chapter focuses on explaining theories within brand experiences, emotional attachment and brand extensions which is essential for the analysis. In the third chapter, we describe and argue for our methodological choices including research approach, research philosophy, data collection, sampling and analysis method. Moreover, the fourth and fifth chapters include presenting the empirical findings and discussing them by contrasting them to the theory presented in chapter two. The sixth chapter concludes the study by answering the aim and presenting the research findings, providing theoretical and managerial contributions as well as suggesting further research and arguing for the limitations.

2   Literature Review

In this chapter, the relevant literature and theories will be presented in order to provide comprehension of certain theoretical constructs related to the aim of this study. The chapter will describe the conceptual frameworks of brand experience and brand attachment in order to give an overview. Subsequently, brand extensions will be thoroughly explained in general terms, but also in specific relation to consumer perception and emotional attachment.

2.1   Brand Experience

Brand experience is the internal and subjective response people have to brand-related stimuli as a result of their interaction with the brand (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009; Iglesias, Markovic & Rialp, 2019). The brand-related stimuli can be broken down into four dimensions - sensory (those related to sensory perceptions and aesthetics), affective (emotions and affect), intellectual (intelligence and creative thinking) and behavioural (behaviour and lifestyle aspects of consumption) (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). These interactions enable customers to connect with the brand's personality, build attachments, and create emotionally powerful bonds with the brand (Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014).

Brand experiences can also have different outcomes. Positive brand experiences may result in brand engagement and positive word-of-mouth, whereas poor brand experiences can result in disloyalty and negative word-of-mouth (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). Brand experience and brand image have been found to contribute to brand equity, which can result in financial and strategic benefits for the company (Aaker, 1991). Therefore, in the interest of gaining customer preference, brand loyalty, and distinction amongst competitors, brands need to provide engaging and satisfying brand experiences (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). In a similar vein, the brand experience that consumers have strengthens the brand image since it reflects the feelings or emotions that link people's cognitions to their senses (Pezoldt, Michaelis, Roschk & Geigenmueller, 2014).

There are several strategies for creating brand experiences that contribute to stronger associations. For example, brand storytelling is a dominant strategy to create unforgettable experiences at several touchpoints for consumers (Moin, 2020). Furthermore, the story is also a crucial driving force for the bonding between consumers and the brand (Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette, 2010). Storytelling can be used for various purposes such as strengthening the core values of the brand, it can be used as a communication tool or to share knowledge (Fog et al. 2010). In this digital age, the key is to foster authenticity and passion in order to connect with the consumer on a deeper level (Moin, 2020). Therefore, the essence of storytelling is to

form emotional relationships and not only provide information (Moin, 2020). These emotional relationships help the consumer with co-creating an experience and also understanding the brand values at a deeper level (Moin, 2020). In order to succeed in creating a signature story, the story should be authentic, intriguing and involving (Aaker, 2018). Authenticity is important in order for the story to appear transparent and honest which contributes to trust (Aaker, 2018). Intriguing is important in order to catch the attention of consumers (Aaker, 2018). Finally, involvement creates emotional elements and meaning that foster behavioural action and touch feelings (Aaker, 2018). With these three elements, a story fulfils the needs of the consumer to create an emotional relationship with the brand and see the value of consuming and involving in the brand (Moin, 2020).

Concepts such as storytelling have also evolved during the past years towards an increasingly interactive process where stories enable consumers to participate in a dialogue or community (Fog et al. 2010). Brand communities are defined as "enduring, self-selected [sic] groups of consumers, who accept and recognize bonds of membership with each other and the brand" (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009, p.316). They are more than just consumers; they are part of a community that supports a brand. This community is not geographically constrained and is united by a set of social linkages, which gives businesses new chances to engage with its members (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Communities play a bigger role in the brand-building process, even if identifying and defining segments is still a crucial step in the process. In the end, communities are a living collective whereas segments are predetermined, measurable, and specified in advance. Segments group people with ideologies, characteristics, or aspirations; communities forge bonds with one another and actively engage with the brand (Kapferer, 2012).

Apart from storytelling and communities, the brand experiences can be highlighted in interactive elements offered by the brand. One example is gamification, the practice of providing a gaming experience in a service to improve their services and at the same time give an enjoyable experience to users (Huotari & Hamari, 2012). Previous research has looked into the potential of gamification as a motivator to promote content consumption, behaviour change, and goal achievement (Eisingerich, Marchand, Fritze & Dong, 2019). We may also infer that gamification has a positive impact on the intention to interact with brands, enhance brand attitude, and even increase consumer loyalty (Spais, Behl, Jain, Jain, & Singh, 2022; Yang, Yang & Feng, 2021). With gamification, brands can create added value for consumers, fostering repeat usage and increasing word of mouth (Eisingerich et al. 2019). Therefore, gamification can be used as a tool to stimulate consumers' attachment to the brand through intrinsic motives such as building connections via brand communities (Yang, Yang & Feng, 2021). Additionally, since it becomes a driving factor that can affect consumers' decisions, it can be implemented as a way to satisfy the needs and desires of consumers and differentiate them from competitors (Tobon, Ruiz-Alba & García-Madariaga, 2020). In conclusion, gamification can be used in an effort to produce pleasant game-like experiences that will encourage participation and have an impact on consumer behaviour (Sailer, Hense, Mayr & Mandl, 2017; Xi & Hamari, 2020).

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2.2   Brand Attachment

The brand experience has in many ways an effect on emotions since it involves emotional and sensory interaction. By evoking emotions through experiences, brand attachment can be created (Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi, 2012). Brand attachment is the term used for the emotional connection or relationship consumers have with brands, linking the brand to their self, and incorporating thoughts and feelings about the brand (Fournier, 1998; Park et al. 2010). Brand attachment goes beyond the brand's physical attributes, it identifies the memories, thoughts and feelings that consumers identify with the brand and also contributes to brand personality and brand loyalty (Fournier, 1998). When consumers feel very close and attached to the brand, which is indicated by the brand-self proximity concept, positive emotions such as happiness and comfort can be evoked; a break from this attachment, denoted by the idea of brand-self separation, can elicit negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety and loss of self (Park et al. 2010). In addition, brand-self display can evoke emotions such as pride, as this idea represents how the connection between consumers and the brand exists because the brand brings out their self for others to see (Mittal, 2006; Park et al. 2010). It is this closeness and emotional connection to a brand that makes customers more likely to think favourably of a brand and be pleased with it (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005). Therefore, brand attachment can be used as a predictor of brand attitude strength, which in turn affects brand loyalty and purchase intentions, as customers show high levels of satisfaction when there are attachment feelings involved (Vahdat et al. 2020).

The emotions elicited from brand attachment can be divided into a three-factor model: affection, for emotions like loving and friendship; passion, for emotions like delight and captivation; and connection, for emotions like bonding and attachment (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005). They can also include "joy, excitement, pride, contentment, relief and any other feeling retrieved from brand-self memories" (Park et al. 2010, p.3). These feelings do not necessarily have to be constrained by this model, as they can be linked among each other and their prominence (Park et al. 2010). They are evoked through the experiences that customers have when interacting with the brand, and as time passes, the passion for the brand varies (Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi, 2012). However, the more brand-self experiences customers have, the deeper their brand-self bond is with the brand, thus meaning a stronger attachment (Park et al. 2010). Therefore, it is not the emotions that indicate the attachment to the brand, but the key factors of brand-self connection and brand prominence, which captures the emotions, that does (Park et al. 2010).

2.2.1   Brand-self connection: the bond between the brand and the self

We first need to understand that brands, consumption and consumers are all connected. As Bagozzi (2013, p.255) puts it, "It might be said that consumption begins and ends with the self". This connection can be to brands or even their products, bringing either together with the self so that the consumer feels as if they are one (Belk, 1988; Fournier, 1998; Park et al. 2010). The traits of the object that the self is connected to do not necessarily have to align with the

traits of the self, but this does not take away the relationship that the consumers have with a brand (Belk, 1988). A stronger and more close relationship with a brand denotes a stronger attachment to a brand, while a more casual relationship with a brand tends to involve less attachment (Fournier, 1998). This bond between the consumer and the brand comes from the experience of how the brand embodies who they are, or from the significance in relation to their goals, personal concerns or life projects (Mittal, 2006).

Therefore, the connection between the consumer and the brand, which is called the brand-self connection, is a factor that can be used to identify brand attachment in consumers. As Belk (1988, p.160) states, "We are what we have". This is because the connection of the self with the brand, although it can be cognitive, is inherently emotional (Park et al. 2010). "We are what we drive, what we wear, what we eat, what we read, what we post, what we listen to, and where and how we live and consume" (Belk, 2016, p.175). The connection between the consumer's self and the brands is part of their everyday life. It can then be argued that the closer the consumer is to the brand-self connection helps consumers construct their identity, it constructs who they are, either publicly or privately (Escalas, 2004). It takes their perceptions of the brands, those that are mirrored by brand associations, including thoughts and feelings, and appropriates them to their self (Escalas, 2004; Keller, 1993; Roy & Banerjee, 2007). In doing so, it creates an attachment to the brand, as these associations become more significant the closer they are linked to the self (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). And the more prominent the associations are, the more precise the connection to the brand can be understood (Park et al. 2010).

2.2.2 Brand prominence: the salience of brand associations

When the thoughts and feelings associated with a brand become more accessible for the consumer, the brand becomes top of mind for the consumer (Park et al. 2010). It is simpler for customers to recall and recognize a brand when they are more familiar with it since it verifies their previous exposure to that brand (Keller, 1993). One way for this to happen, for brands to become part of the self of consumers and for the associations to become more salient, is through the process of habituation (Belk, 1988). The interaction between the consumer and the brand on numerous occasions, both ordinary and special, creates a setting where many memories and emotions are appropriated to the brand (Belk, 1988).

It is through brand prominence that these memories and emotions, which are innate to the connection between the brand and the self, are evoked with more ease (Park et al. 2010). The more prominent and accessible these associations, thoughts and feelings are to the consumer, the more likely customers are to participate in activities and create a relationship with the brands (Park et al. 2010). Therefore, brand prominence becomes an important factor that can be used to identify brand attachment. Through this relationship with the brand, consumers participate in activities such as positive word of mouth, and they also invest more money, energy and time to sustain their connection with the brand (Park et al. 2010).

2.2.3 Brand love: beyond brand attachment

Although not a factor that can be used to identify brand attachment, brand love is an important concept to understand when looking into brand attachment. This is because brand attachment and brand love can be considered two sides of the same coin (Moussa, 2015). Brand love is a relatively recent concept that involves passion, attachment, a favourable assessment, positive emotions, and expressions of love for the brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Joshi & Garg, 2020). Although early research on brand love can be attributed to the articles of Belk, who proposed that possessions may serve as an extension of the self, and Fournier, who demonstrated the potential of profound connections being elicited with brands, as equivalent to personal relationships between individuals (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010). Brand love can then be defined as "the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name" (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006, p.2). It is a higher-order construct that comprises a variety of cognitions, emotions, and behaviours that extends beyond brand attachment (Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi, 2012).

Brand love differs from interpersonal love because brand love is unidirectional, whereas interpersonal love is bidirectional (Whang, Allen, Sahoury & Zhang, 2004). The love is only from the consumer to the brand, and not the other way around. This love towards a brand can influence consumers by encouraging them to recommend it to other individuals, which is why it is highly associated with brand loyalty and word of mouth (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Therefore, as it fosters emotional connections with the brand and encourages brand loyalty, it is through brand experiences that consumers are able to develop brand love (Joshi & Garg, 2020). Despite claims in the literature that brand satisfaction precedes brand love, it is not necessary for all satisfied customers to also love a brand (Joshi & Garg, 2020).

Additionally, studies have indicated that products with a focus on hedonic benefits are linked to better brand loyalty than products with utilitarian benefits (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Furthermore, consumers love brands more than they love companies that don't enhance and/or represent their social or inner selves (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Although it is not necessary for all satisfied consumers to love a brand, brand identity, a sense of community, and brand satisfaction have been recognized as precursors of brand love (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Joshi & Garg, 2020). In terms of outcomes, brand love typically results in brand loyalty and active engagement due to the hedonic value associated with it that results from pleasure or attachment to a brand (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Joshi & Garg, 2020). Consumers' emotional and cognitive behaviours toward a brand may also foster brand love and improve the brand's image and loyalty (Albert, Merunka & Valette-Florence, 2008).

2.3 Brand Extensions

Brand extension is a widely used strategy in brand management (Kapferer, 2012). It refers to the strategy of using a current brand name to enter a new product or service category (Kapferer, 2012). Brand extensions come with many advantages such as an opportunity to differentiate

from competitors, growth in profitability and an increase in market shares (Kapferer, 2012; Roper & Fill, 2012). Since a brand extension uses the current brand name, the strategy allows the brand to leverage the existing brand awareness to the extension (Roper & Fill, 2012). The strategy is also advantageous since the consumer is more likely to accept the extension in a new market because of their prior knowledge and connection to the parent brand (Martínez & Pina, 2003). Therefore, the ability of the brand to introduce brand extensions can be a used measurement for brand equity (Roper & Fill, 2012).

However, there are also risks with brand extensions. Since the brand extension is related to the parent brand, there is a risk of brand dilution if the extension is too far from its original products (Martínez & Pina, 2003). In addition, the brand extension can also create confusion about the brand in general if the extension does not live up to the perceived quality of the brand, which can create issues in positioning and communicating the brand in the future (Aaker & Keller, 1990). Because of both the opportunities and the challenges of brand extension, it is important for the brand to consider a holistic approach when evaluating the options, including the identity, the image, the attitudes and attachment (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Kapferer, 2012).

Brand extensions as a strategy can be used by companies for various strategic reasons. For example, one reason behind the choice of strategy can be to create excitement for a brand that has been around for a while (Aaker, 1991). Similarly, a brand extension can operate as a strategy for staying relevant by developing and innovating products in new categories towards new target audiences (Kapferer, 2012). The brand extension as a strategy can also function as a competitive advantage in the market if the extension delivers strong consumer benefits and inspires increased trust in the brand (Kapferer, 2012). For instance, the company can innovate towards more experiential benefits for the consumer to create consumption where more senses are stimulated, and where the consumer gets to be a part of a community (Kapferer, 2012).

When extending a brand, care must be taken into the attributes or feelings related to the extension (Martínez & de Chernatony, 2004). The reason for this is that a brand extension can dilute the brand image and change the consumers' associations with the brand (Martínez & de Chernatony, 2004). In terms of the consumers' perceptions or associations with the brand, they can vary in strength, meaning that some are more likely to transfer to the brand extension than others (Aaker & Keller, 1990).

2.3.1   Parent brand's effect on the brand extension

In past research, it has been claimed that perceived fit between the extension and the parent brand is the most dominant factor of the consumer perception of brand extensions (Hem, de Chernatony, Iversen & 2003; Völckner, Sattler, Henning-Thurau & Ringle, 2010). This means that the consumers are more likely to have a favourable attitude towards the extension if there is a fit between the parent brand and the extension (Völckner et al. 2010). Furthermore, the perceived fit can be divided into three dimensions: transfer, complement and substitute; among

them, transferability and complementary are the most important for brand extensions (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Bottomley & Holden, 2001).

Another factor influencing the perception of a brand extension is the consumers' view of the quality of the parent brand (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Bottomley & Holden, 2001). The quality aspect evaluates the perception of the quality of the parent brand and has an interactive effect on the evaluation of the brand extension (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Bottomley & Holden, 2001). More specifically, perceived interaction quality, outcome quality and environment quality of the parent brand have shown to also have effects on the perception of the brand extension (Völckner et al. 2010). Looking specifically at the service industry, the outcome quality, referring to what the consumer is left with after the service, has the strongest influence on brand extensions (Völckner et al. 2010). Furthermore, it is also important for service brands to emphasise the quality benefits of the parent brand in communication (Völckner et al. 2010).

Moreover, the emotional consumer relationship with the parent brand has a significant impact on their perception of an extension. For example, the consumer interaction with the parent brand and the interaction with quality has an effect on the transferability or the difficulty to launch the extension (Bottomley & Holden, 2001). In addition, commitment, loyalty and customer satisfaction of the consumer can influence the perception positively (Vahdat et al. 2020). Loyalty in this case refers to the attitudinal behaviours and the longevity of the emotional brand attachment from the consumer (Vahdat et al. 2020). Commitment has its foundation in emotional attachment such as identification, trust and shared beliefs (Vahdat et al. 2020). Finally, customer satisfaction is more practically related to the experience and expectations of the products (Vahdat et al. 2020). These three factors all have different effects on the perception of a brand extension, and attitudinal loyalty has the strongest positive effect because of the attitudinal effect and attachment (Vahdat et al. 2020).

In sum, there are many aspects contributing to the perception of a brand extension, and they can be concise into both functional attributes and relational attributes. Although it is of significant importance to have in mind when viewing consumers' perceptions of brand extensions cultural differences can influence the importance of these different factors (Bottomley & Holden, 2001). Moreover, personal experiences and attachment can also have importance in consumer perception, making an in-depth understanding of consumers' perspectives important for the strategy of brand extensions (Spiggle, Nguyen & Caravella, 2012). Thus, customer assessments of brand extensions take into account both their brand loyalty and the consistency of the parent brand's meanings as they are expressed in the brand extension (Spiggle, Nguyen & Caravella, 2012).

2.3.2   Brand extension's effect on the parent brand

Looking reversely, the brand extension itself can also have an impact on the general perception of the parent brand and the performance of the parent brand. Positive attitudes towards brand extensions and success with brand extensions can contribute to enhancing the value of the parent brand by, for example, the increase of sales of other products (Kapferer, 2012; Pina,

Iversen & Martínez, 2010). The brand extension can also affect the perception of the parent brand towards a more innovative brand with a wider brand meaning (Kapferer, 2012). The brand meaning is closely related to the brand equity of the parent brand which brand extensions can have an effect on (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013; Martínez & Pina, 2003). The concept of feedback effects, meaning how the attitude elicited by brand extensions could transfer to the parent brand, is a significant factor in determining the attitude of the parent brand over time (Dwivedi & Merriless, 2013). This is one of the few instances where it has been demonstrated that brand extensions may reciprocally affect consumers' perceptions of the value of parent brands (Dwivedi & Merriless, 2013). However, as mentioned before, there are also risks for the parent to be diluted because of the brand extension (Martínez & Pina, 2003). If the brand extension is too distant from the parent brand's original products, the image of the parent brand will be affected negatively (Martínez & Pina, 2003). In addition, the quality of the brand extension can also have a negative effect on consumers' perception of the parent brand, meaning that poor quality in a brand extension can have dreadful effects on a parent brand that is established as high-quality (Martínez & Pina, 2003). Furthermore, the parent brand's perception can also be affected by general confusion from the consumers about what the brand stands for and how the brand delivers it (Aaker & Keller, 1990).

2.3.3 Brand attachment in relation to brand extensions

As a complement to the perception of the parent brand, researchers suggest looking beyond the fit and quality and examining consumers' emotional attachment to the brand and to the brand extensions (Fedorikhin, Park & Thompson, 2008; Spiggle, Ngyuen, Caravella, 2012). The concept of brand attachment puts an emphasis on the relationships between the brand and the consumers and it is strongly connected to commitment, loyalty and trust (Vahdat et al. 2020). With a higher brand attachment, consumers are more likely to associate the extension with the parent brand, and therefore transfer both awareness and loyalty (Fedorikhin, Park & Thompson, 2008). For instance, if a consumer is in a good mood when they encounter a brand extension, they are more likely to think favourably of the extension; if they are in a bad mood, they are more likely to think adversely of the extension (Barone, 2005). Furthermore, brand attachment contributes to the enhancement of commitment, customer satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty (Vahdat et al. 2020). Accordingly, these three concepts have a positive impact on the perception of a brand extension, the reason for this being the minimised risk of failure or the transferring of positive associations from the parent brand (Vahdat et al. 2020). The brand attachment's connection to brand extension has also been studied within the football club community where strong connections between emotional brand attachment and support of brand extensions were shown (Abosag, Roper & Hind, 2012). The research highlights the importance of being careful when extending the brand in order to still represent the heritage of the brand and take the supporters' emotional involvement into consideration (Abosag, Roper & Hind, 2012).

A concept closely related to consumers' brand experiences and brand attachment is nostalgia. Nostalgia can be summarised as the whole experience with different emotions related to a certain time or memory of a brand (Jun, Park & Kim, 2022). Brand nostalgia can evoke pleasant

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emotions including warmth, desire, and youth, or it can foster negative emotions such as loneliness and sadness (Holak & Havlena, 1998). There is an importance of focusing on nostalgia in brand extension since it contributes to a positive perception of the brand extensions (Jun, Park & Kim, 2022). Research shows that collective nostalgia contributes more to a positive perception of brand extension than personal nostalgia, the reason being the collective inspiration on consumer relations (Jun, Park, Kim, 2022). Knowledge of the influence of nostalgia is important for marketers in order to understand how nostalgic elements such as stories, music, advertisements and experiences can help the company to succeed with a brand extension (Jun, Park & Kim, 2022). Furthermore, brand nostalgia also drives the intention to purchase the brand extension and drives brand trust (Banerjee & Shaikh, 2022).

Connected to the purchase intention is also brand loyalty and how loyalty can be transferred across the brand extensions. As explained earlier, brand attachment has a strong connection between brand loyalty and purchase intentions because of the emotional connections between the brand and the consumer (Vahdat et al. 2020). Emotional brand connections or brand attachment fosters an increasing brand loyalty that reduces negative associations with the brand (Vahdat et al. 2020). In addition, research shows that buyers of the parent brand are more likely to purchase the brand extension than non-buyers, arguing for how loyalty extends across categories of a brand (Grasby, Corsi, Dawes, Driesener & Sharp, 2021). The transfer of loyalty is also more probable if the extension is similar to the parent brand, which connects with the importance of the perceived fit (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Grasby et al. 2021).

2.4   Chapter Summary

As outlined by the problematization and specified in the research question, in this study we aim at exploring the effect that brand extensions have on emotional attachment and consumers' attitudes. Therefore, with the literature review we have laid a theoretical foundation that will be used as a basis when analysing the empirical data that will be gathered for this study.

Regarding brand experience, the literature provides an overview of the concept of brand experience with an explanation of the different outcomes that brand experiences can have (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). Word of mouth (positive and negative), brand engagement, brand loyalty, attachment, differentiation, satisfaction and brand image are the relevant outcomes in regard to this study (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009; Pezoldt et al. 2014; Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014).

Additionally, there are several strategies that can be used to create brand experiences. For this study, we have focused on brand storytelling because of its force as a way of bonding with consumers; on brand community, as they are the ones that support the brands and create a way to share and form bonds; and on gamification, as it can promote content consumption, behaviour change, repeat usage, and word of mouth, among many others (Eisingerich et al. 2019; Fog et al. 2010; Kapferer, 2012; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Moving onto brand attachment, the literature explores the meaning of emotional attachment, the emotions and different attitudinal aspects that can be elicited from the attachment, and the factors that can be used to identify emotional attachment: brand-self connection, meaning the connection between the consumer and the brand, and brand prominence, meaning how prominent associations can contribute to attitude as they can make the brand top of mind (Park et al. 2010; Vahdat et al. 2020). Additionally, the concept of brand love is discussed because of its relationship with brand attachment, as they are two sides of the same coin, although brand love goes beyond brand attachment (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Moussa, 2015).

Lastly, but not less importantly, the literature dives deep into brand extensions. The base of brand extension primarily focuses on the effects that brand extensions can have on the parent brand. The perspective of this literature comes from its connection to the research gap, therefore we first looked at the parent brand and its effect on the brand extensions to understand the different variables affecting its evaluation before turning it around (Hem, de Chernatony, Iversen, 2003; Völckner et al. 2010). Reversely, there is some literature in regard to the effect that brand extensions have on the parent brand, with the main idea being suggested as the concept of feedback effects, which can transfer attitude from the brand extensions towards the parent brand (Dwivedi & Merriless, 2013).

3   Methodology

This methodology chapter aims at increasing the trustworthiness and transparency of the study by arguing for methodological choices, actions and measures. First, the research philosophy and research design will be discussed in order to provide a general overview. This is followed by an in-depth description of interviews as a method, as well as how the interview data was collected and analysed. The chapter is concluded with a reflection on the quality of the research.

3.1   Research Philosophy

In order to be able to conduct the research and explain our methodological choices, it is important to clearly state our research philosophy. In the following section, we are presenting our underlying beliefs and assumptions by explaining our ontological and epistemological standpoints. These standpoints guided us through the whole process, allowed us to be reflective on our methodological choices and ensured coherence.

3.1.1   Ontology

In regard to the ontological aspect of this research, we adopted the critical realist philosophy as we need to understand nature, reality and existence from a philosophical perspective (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jaspersen & Valizade 2021). This type of ontology considers that the world exists independently of subjective experiences and perceptions (Gorski, 2013). There is only one reality, but we were critical because this reality is inevitably mediated by human language and social power, and because it can never be fully comprehended (Tracy, 2019; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). In the matter of this study, this means that our reality is the actual effects that brand extensions have on consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to the parent brands. This effect exists regardless of whether or not they are observed or perceived by any individual, hence why the aim of this study was not to validate or prove its existence but rather uncover how the underlying mechanisms of this reality shape emotional attachment and consumers' attitudes towards the parent brand (Bhaskar, 2008).

Because we have a critical realism approach, we did recognise while analysing that time, space and culture can have an influence, however, we did not include the cultural characteristics of participants as influencing factors of their perceptions in the empirical findings and analysis of the study as it did not pertain to our research question (Gorski, 2013). In order to find the mechanisms involved in the brand extensions' effects on consumer emotional attachment to

streaming services, a dialectical critical realism approach was applied as we also recognised that change occurs through interactions with the phenomena (Gorski, 2013).

3.1.2   Epistemology

We adopted an interpretivism epistemology in this study in order to inquire into the nature of the world and understand the nature of knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). This view sees nature as governed by laws, but social life as governed by meanings (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). As we followed a critical realist philosophy in our ontology, it fit this study with the idea that the knowledge that we are trying to understand is mediated by those interacting with it, which is part of the critical aspect of critical realism (Gorski, 2013; Tracy, 2019). With this study, we were asking 'how' our phenomena happens, as we are looking to understand it (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019; Tracy, 2019). Additionally, we drew from hermeneutics not only by going back and forth between the empirics and the context but also by taking into account our own view of the world (Tracy, 2019). This kind of epistemology recommends we be empaths, aligning with the study as we tried to understand the emotional aspects that brand extensions can bring up in consumers (Tracy, 2019). Although the effects, as per the reality aspect of the ontology, exist regardless of observation, the way that brand extensions can affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to parent brands may differ based on the different experiences of those affected by this phenomenon.

3.2   Research Design

In order to answer our research question regarding how brand extensions can affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to the parent brand within streaming services, we adopted a qualitative research method through semi-structured interviews showcasing examples of Netflix mobile games and HBO Max podcasts. Past research has shown that a quantitative approach has been the predominant research method in the field of brand attachment in top-ranked journals (Hemsley-Brown, 2023). Nevertheless, the first reason behind choosing a qualitative approach stems from the push of past scholars into driving away from these quantitative studies on brand attachment and streaming services, and more into a qualitative approach that expands more on understanding the social and behavioural implications of users of streaming services (Shimul, 2022; Singh, Arora & Kapur, 2022).

With a qualitative approach, we could provide an understanding of how brand extensions affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to the parent brand within streaming services, and their relationship in more detail (Tracy, 2019). A qualitative study helped us identify factors and patterns and set a precedent that can be then used subsequently for a quantitative study, as it has been done in the past (Hemsley-Brown, 2023; Tracy, 2019). We were aware that the research question examines the effect that brand extensions have on consumers'

attitudes and emotional attachment, which typically would be proven through quantitative methods. However, since we were not trying to confirm the impact but rather explore how this effect is carried out, a qualitative study was more suitable than a quantitative one.

The interplay of the different concepts identified for this study could also be better understood through a qualitative research approach as it enabled us to discover the opinions and perceptions of the participants (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Therefore, it was pertinent for us to apply this type of methodology as we wanted to identify the novel factors and perceptions that the participants have when experiencing or discovering the brand extensions of the streaming services (Shah & Corley, 2006). In that way, a qualitative approach allowed us to highlight the significance of the participants' perception and interpretation of reality through the analysis of their words (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). For that reason, it was also an added benefit that a qualitative approach allows for a structure that does not contain pre-coded questions and answers that can restrict the information we can obtain from the participants, making it more appropriate than a quantitative approach (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021).

Lastly, we were also aware that applying a qualitative approach could bring views that are personal and biased from the participants (Charmaz, 2014). But it is also contended that a high-qualitative method can have a significant contribution to knowledge, which is why we decided to follow this approach (Hemsley-Brown, 2023).

3.2.1   Research approach

To comprehend the research question and investigate how brand extensions affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to the parent brand within streaming services, we used an abductive approach in this study, alternating back and forth between the theory and the empirical data (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). This approach takes into account the two parts of the story as they amplify each other (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). From one side, it takes the empirical data, meaning the perceptions and opinions from the participants in regard to the brand extensions, pushing the theory in unexpected directions; from the other side, it takes the theoretical propositions, meaning the thorough literature review carried out in the start to set a base for the study, and it allows us to see in the empirics what is unseen by the untrained eye (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014).

This approach also overcomes the weaknesses of an inductive and deductive approach (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). It stops the research from getting trapped in a lack of new theoretical explanations and into a tiresome and endless description of the perceptions and opinions of the participants around the brand extensions (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). It also avoids using a technique when analysing the data that can only be understood in the context of the theoretical presumptions that could potentially be uninteresting and unsuitable for the data observed (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014).

Therefore, an abductive approach enabled us to fill the gap that was identified and argued for in the problematization. The theoretical presumptions were therefore never rigid but flexible, allowing us to adapt and modify them in accordance with our observations of the empirical

data. For example, in the beginning, the literature review included brand authenticity, as past research showed a connection to brand extensions, but we ended up taking this brand concept out and adding theory on brand community and brand love because of our findings. Herewith, we were able to identify observations that aligned with past theories, but also ones that defied and challenged the established theories, and hypothesised on what the data may be a case of, making our contributions more valuable to the knowledge of the field (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). For this reason, the abductive research approach was consistent with our research philosophy of critical realism and interpretivism.

3.3   Sampling

To collect data that was relevant to answer the research question proposed in this study, we applied a non-probabilistic purposive sampling approach to find and select potential participants for the interviews. We opted to use a sampling approach since it was suitable to draw a sample for this research because of the fact that it is not possible to explore the full set of subjects that are relevant to the research question (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Since the study investigates consumers' perceptions of brand extensions of streaming platforms and their impact on consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment, we decided that purposive sampling was the best approach for our research. Additionally, this sampling approach allowed us to select specific criteria to apply to the participants so that their answers were relevant to the research question (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). This means that we had the opportunity to verify the participants' eligibility to answer our research questions (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Furthermore, by applying these criteria, we gained a sample of participants that were illustrative of consumers that actively engaged with the platforms.

The first criterion was related to knowledge and behaviour. The participants had to have at least one of the streaming platforms that were selected as examples for the interview as of April 2023. In this way, we ensured that the participants would have some knowledge of how streaming services work, but also that they could go back to their experiences and past perceptions when answering the questions.

The second criterion applied was related to age because of the usage of streaming services and generational behaviours. In this study, we targeted people between the ages of 18 and 42 years old. The people ages 18 to 42 (as of April 2023) are born between 1981 and 2005, which means that they belong to either the generation of millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) or the generation of Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) (Dimock, 2019). The decision to limit the sample to above 18 was because of practical reasons of only including adults. Furthermore, we decided to exclude ages above 42 because of generational belonging.

For starters, as seen in Table 1, individuals between the ages of 16 to 44 were the combined group with the highest usage of internet-streamed TV or videos in Europe in 2022 (Eurostat, 2023). Particularly, 83% of individuals in this age group watched internet-streamed TV or

videos (Eurostat, 2023). More specifically in the empirical setting of this study of streaming services, 63% of them watched video-on-demand from commercial services. Similarly, in the US people between 18-44 were the bigger age groups to be currently subscribed to a streaming service in 2020 (Statista, 2020). More specifically, 70% of individuals aged 18 to 34, and 72% of individuals aged 35 to 44 were the bigger age groups to be currently subscribed to a streaming service in 2020 (Statista, 2020).

Table 1 Usage of Internet-streamed TV or videos, and VOD from commercial services (Eurostat, 2023)

Ages	Internet-streamed TV or videos	VOD from commercial services
16-24	87,6%	70,8%
25-34	82.7%	64,4%
35-44	77,3%	54,3%
45-54	67,7%	42,3%
55-64	53,6%	28,7%
65-74	34,7%	14,1%

In relation to generational behaviours, millennials are relevant in their behaviours since it is a generation that responds to fun, interactivity and experiences which aligns with our cases (Gobé, 2001). Furthermore, millennials have shown high emotional connections within the media entertainment industry (MBLM, 2019). Emotional attachment is fostered within the millennial crowd by allowing escape from reality, pleasure, fantasy and creativity (MBLM, 2019). In terms of Gen Z, they value digital engagement options and want to feel included, but they also count on brands to be transparent and trustworthy (OliverWyman Forum, 2023). Additionally, Gen Z is also especially interesting since they have been growing up with technology which has caused a more developed emotional connection to the internet and digital services than other generations (Turner, 2015). Both Millennials and Gen Z are also among the biggest users of both the examined extensions, namely podcasts and mobile games, making them more experienced with the services. Millennials and Gen Z were the generations with the highest penetration rate of podcast consumption in the US in 2022, with 59% and 63% respectively (Statista, 2023). Furthermore, 83% of Millennials and 90% of Gen Z are considered enthusiasts of gaming, making them the generation with the highest penetration of gaming (Newzoo, 2022). In sum, the generations of Millennials and Gen Z show patterns of high emotions and connections to entertainment and their attitudes and demands of interactivity at the same time as they are the target audience for the specific services of games and podcasts.

As we did not do a focus group, but individual interviews, there was no need for homogeneity in the participants as there was no interaction between them apart from with the interviewers

(Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug, 2001). Therefore, apart from the criteria on knowledge and age, we made sure that we had a diverse sample of participants in terms of gender and nationality. This focus on heterogeneity in the participants was because streaming services are a global phenomenon thanks to their worldwide availability, which pushed the need for the study to include different perspectives. From one side, these diverse perspectives ensured that the responses were not biased from one single group as it allowed us to have a wider perspective of the phenomena. On the other, it gave us the opportunity to not limit the sample by their geographical location, thus expanding the reach of our personal networks outside of our current location. Even though the diversity of the sample ensured a diversity of perspectives, it was also a risk that our results could be affected by the differences in culture. Because of the risk, we decided to only include participants who were currently residing in Europe during the time of this study, meaning that they, in some sense, were set to a similar culture at that moment.

In order to gather the sample, we used our personal networks and created a list of potential participants who were later contacted initially via a message or email requesting their interest in participating. After requesting their interest to participate, we ensured the participants' relevance by asking about their usage of streaming services in accordance with our criteria. In total, we had 14 participants and conducted interviews in a lapse of about two weeks, between the 10th of April and the 25th of April. The information on the participants can be seen below, with their names substituted with pseudonyms of European top 10 names for males and females to ensure anonymity (Jamet, 2023). The anonymity boosted the participants' chances of trusting us, and their ability to express themselves freely (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). As seen in Table 2, we ended up with a sample with an age range between 22 and 36 (as of April 2023) which we believe was covering our criteria on ages between 18-42 years old enough.

Table 2 Information on participants and interviews

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Nationality	Duration	Place
Sofia	25	Female	Swiss	27 minutes	In person
Alexander	23	Male	Swedish & Swiss	27 minutes	In person
Lucas	23	Male	Turkish	28 minutes	In person
Hanna	25	Female	Mexican & American	25 minutes	In person
Maria	23	Female	Mexican & Spanish	36 minutes	In person
Isabella	24	Female	Swedish	45 minutes	In person
Amelia	31	Female	Colombian	36 minutes	In person
Oliver	22	Male	Portuguese	35 minutes	In person

Jasmina	24	Female	Swedish	39 minutes	Zoom
Emma	25	Female	German	28 minutes	In person
Emilia	22	Female	Spanish	32 minutes	Zoom
Noah	33	Male	Bangladeshi	43 minutes	In person
Sara	28	Female	American	33 minutes	In person
Elias	36	Male	Brazilian	30 minutes	Zoom

We considered 14 interviews appropriate regarding the scope of the study taking into account the fact that we were reaching saturation with the last interviews, which is a clear sign that there is no more variation in the data collected (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). In addition, at the point of 14 interviews, there were categories established and patterns started to be very clear (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). The saturation meant that no new extensive themes would be developed through a continuation of data since the collection of data already showed clear patterns of topics and codecs which was a clear sign for us to move on to analysing the data.

3.4   Data Collection Method: Interviews

As mentioned before, we used interviews as our data collection method. Interviews are a method that provides an in-depth examination of a topic in order to capture meaning and gain an understanding of the participants' views (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). We decided on interviews as a method since it allows for guided conversations with questions in order to understand perceptions of brand extensions and consumer emotional attachment to streaming services (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). As the topic examines the perceptions and attitudes, interviews let the participants open up about their ideas that might be held privately otherwise, which would not, for example, be possible with observations (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Furthermore, the method provided rich and detailed answers on consumer behaviours and attitudes in order to answer our research question (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). In addition, the conversations with participants allowed us to understand their feelings and experiences in order to understand their world (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Interviews are also appropriate for research into feelings, attitudes, intentions and motivations of behaviour, and for situations that are very emotional for respondents (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993). Moreover, a qualitative approach that uses face-to-face semi-structured interviews to capture consumers' emotional aspects and behaviours regarding brand attachment is needed as there seems to be a lack of in regard to brand attachment research (Shimul, 2022). Although it was critical for us to reflect on that, interviews as a method only gave us insights into what the participants are saying that they are doing and not always what they are actually doing.

The reasoning behind the decision of having semi-structured interviews was that the less structured interviews, the more flexibility offered by the method (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993). As any research starts with presuppositions and some key questions that need to be answered in order to solve the puzzle posed by the research question, semi-structured interviews offer the possibility of tailoring the questions based on the participant's responses (Jones, 1985). In that way, choices can be made on which questions to further explore and which to discard, giving participants the opportunity to expand on their ideas (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021).

3.4.1   Selection of examples

As mentioned before, in this qualitative research study we focused on brand extensions of streaming service brands in order to get our empirics. In order to find an empirical setting to study and understand the phenomena, we decided to select two specific examples of brand extensions within streaming services to explore our research question. The examples were used during the interviews as an empirical setting for the studied phenomena. There were many examples to pick from, such as Netflix's mobile games and gym/workout video content, and Amazon Prime Video and HBO Max's podcasts. Nevertheless, we decided to go with the brand extension of Netflix to mobile games, and the brand extension of HBO Max to podcasts.

We chose the brand extension of Netflix to mobile games mainly because this offering is a more organic expansion of their already existing business model and its connection to their core business: the content. As most of Netflix's mobile games are related to their shows, these mobile games can evoke a bigger emotional connection with their consumers. Additionally, this brand extension was chosen over for example the Netflix gym as the latter has a bigger focus on sports and health, in addition to being a partnership with another brand, Nike, unlike the games, which are solely made by Netflix.

In regard to the brand extension of HBO Max to podcasts, we selected this example because, just like mobile games, it feeds entertainment to its consumers, therefore delimiting our study to the industry in focus. In addition, this extension is more specific and targeted than the brand extension of Amazon Prime Video to podcasts, which is more general and broader.

3.4.2   Interview structure

Before conducting the interviews, a 45-minute pilot interview was conducted with a participant similar to our targeted sample. The reason for conducting a pilot interview was to get insights about the topic, the participant and about us as interviewers (Mikuska, 2018). Additionally, the purpose of conducting the pilot interview was to understand which questions allowed the freest discussion for the participants, and which questions were unnecessary for examining our topic. The pilot interview gave insights into how to adjust our topic guide for more in-depth answers, for example adjusting for more why and how questions. Additionally, the pilot interview gave many practical understandings, for instance how long the interview took and how our

equipment such as voice recording worked. Finally, the pilot interview was helpful to understand our role as researchers when collecting data. The pilot interview made us think reflexively about acting as a moderator and co-moderator, for example how to phrase questions and how to be flexible. According to our learnings from the pilot interview, a few of the questions in the topic guide were deleted or rephrased after the pilot interview. Additionally, some interview techniques in order to get longer answers were also adopted.

As aforementioned the interviews were semi-structured and the moderator had a topic guide (see Appendix A) which was used as a tool for outlining and structuring which topics that would be covered (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018). However, the topic guide can also be seen as limiting the conversation and not allowing the participant to speak freely about the topic (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Therefore, the topic guide was meticulously developed to include thoughtfully crafted open-ended questions that were carefully aligned with the research topic (Charmaz, 2014). Additionally, probes were strategically incorporated to facilitate a focused exploration of the participant's responses, instead of prematurely shifting to subsequent topics (Charmaz, 2014). The topic guide included several different types of questions. For instance, the topic guide had a mix of indirect and direct questions to both get the participants' general attitudes and knowledge and to get more specific emotions and experiences (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018). Furthermore, the interview guide also included probing questions to probe the content of the replies without expressing which dimensions that are measured (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018). In addition, the moderator also used follow-up questions, interpreting questions and silence in order to get more detailed answers from the participants (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018). The technique of asking questions to follow up on the participants' answers can also be called using laddering up and laddering down techniques.

During the interviews, both pictures and videos were used to enhance the participants' understanding of the topic. The first video was a trailer of Netflix games showcasing brand extensions of video games for Netflix and the second video was a trailer for a podcast of HBO Max giving an example of how the brand extension of podcasts is carried out by HBO Max. In addition, the participants were shown pictures with examples of the games and examples of the podcasts. The usage of pictures helped the participant to demonstrate emotions, think of experiences and express abstract ideas (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). In addition, the pictures and videos worked as an aid to make the interview situation more comfortable and encourage detailed and deep answers (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

The majority of the interviews, more specifically 80%, were conducted face-to-face, and the remaining 20% were conducted via the digital communication platform Zoom. The reason for doing the majority of the interviews in person was because of the advantages of in-person connections in capturing non-verbal communication and depth (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). However, the reason for doing some interviews online and risking some of this immediate connection was to enable a broader and more diverse sample without having to travel for the interview (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Although, in both types of interviews a great focus was put on developing a comfortable situation and relationship between the participant and moderator to gain trust (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). This, in combination with the open-ended topic guide with several types of questions, allowed the

participants to express their thoughts in depth. All interviews were recorded with the vocal consent of the participants. All interviews were later transcribed, which was helpful to code the material and to avoid the influences of our perceptions and biases as far as possible (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). The recordings and transcription also gave us an understanding of how the participants said it and not just what they said (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019)

3.4.3   Role of the moderator

In regard to conducting the interviews, one of us acted as a moderator while the other acted as a co-moderator. The moderator was in charge of asking the questions and applying laddering up and down techniques as the interview progressed to move the conversation forward while participating as little as possible (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). The co-moderator was in charge of managing the time, observing non-verbal cues, assisting the interviewing in probing interesting areas that emerged, taking notes and being responsible for the visual aids (Charmaz, 2014). The role of the moderator was to enable rich, spontaneous, specific and relevant answers from the participant (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). It was important that the moderator was carefully listening and encouraging the participant to speak about their experiences and attitudes (Charmaz, 2014). In order to enable the participant to open up and to do most of the talking, the moderator used laddering-up and laddering-down techniques (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). The laddering-up technique was mostly used by asking 'why' questions and the laddering-down technique was mainly used by asking for examples of experiences (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). In addition, the moderator focused on going beneath the surface of the experiences, asked about feelings and emotions and rephrased the answers for accuracy and validation (Charmaz, 2014).

3.5   Analysis Method

The data was analysed by using the three steps to make sense of data, namely sorting, reducing, and arguing. The three-step processes enabled us to comprehend the data and create a compelling and nuanced understanding of the topic to advance the area of research (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Before starting with the three-step process it was important for us to prepare and manage our data. As a preparatory step we, as mentioned before, transcribed the audio files in order to get an idea of the participants' exact world (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Additionally, the material was also formatted in a consistent way in folders in order to create a structured overview of the material (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Subsequently, we put effort into familiarising ourselves with the material in order to enhance our understanding of the material and the participants' ideas (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). It was also crucial to have a clear understanding of what a code is and what a theme is in order to have a mutual understanding of the process (Tracy, 2019). We decided to define codes as descriptive words of the data and themes more as the overarching theoretical labels on the codes (Tracy, 2019).

Furthermore, the process of coding was defined as interpreting what the data was a case of and interpreting the phenomena (Tracy, 2019).

In order to create a structure of all our material we began with sorting our material thoroughly (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). An open interpretation was used in the initial coding, and labels were allocated in close compliance with the data (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). During the coding we looked for recurring content and keywords that could be categorised in initial codings (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). When coding the data we used both descriptive coding and in-vivo coding. Descriptive coding means summarising the content in a code, and it was helpful to identify core topics (Saldaña, 2015). The in-vivo coding rather uses the language of the participants and allows perspective, stories, ideas and meanings directly from the participants (Saldaña, 2015). The combination of the two types of coding was helpful for our abductive approach since we were both able to find general topics but also discover new topics and theories in close accordance with the research participants. During this step, we coded the data both individually and collectively and engaged in extensive discussions to develop a comprehensive understanding of the data (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). The discussion about the data contributed to sensemaking and also understanding different perspectives on interpretation (Tracy, 2019). The coding was not only helpful in order to make sense of the data but also to understand the main concepts of our study and create a comprehension of how they can uniquely contribute to the research field (Tracy, 2019). The coding ended up with 186 initial codes which were later grouped together into 24 focused codes. The 24 focused codes were later categorised into 5 overarching themes (see Appendix B).

In order to scale down the amount of data to be able to highlight the relevant data for the research, we decided to reduce parts of the data. The reduction helped us get an overview of the material and find the relevant sets of data to lay a foundation for our argumentation (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). We used categorial reduction, meaning that we reduced certain categories because of theoretical relevance (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Therefore, we decided to reduce data related to business strategy and targeting since they were not directly related to answering the research question. However, the reduction of the empirics can be seen as constructed by us, since we used it as a tool to find the data that pleases our research (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Because of this risk of biases, we decided to only reduce themes that were not directly responding to the research question, since our coding was very open with different types of data. We kept the rest of the themes to open a reflexive dialogue in the analysis of both arguments for and against our theory.

The last step of our analysis method involved arguing and theorising on our empirical findings. The theorising was important in order to create an authority in relation to the importance of our study (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). We continuously attempted to support our empirical findings with or contrast them with existing theories in order to ensure that we were effective in arguing for our findings. By theorising both with and against the previous knowledge we were able to propose new perspectives to the theoretical field which proves our contribution to research findings (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018).

3.6   Quality of Research

In order to determine the quality of the study, the trustworthiness can be analysed through the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, cited in Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). The four criteria suggest a way of assessing qualitative research that is equivalent to assessing a quantitative study with reliability, validity and objectivity (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

To conduct research in a credible manner, it is crucial to follow guidelines for good practice and make sure that the participants' data is appropriately presented in the study (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). To achieve credibility and make sure that we had an understanding of the social world that was being studied, we occasionally used interpreting questions in order to get validation of our interpretations during the interviews. Additionally, we applied guidelines for good practice by being transparent in our study, but also by being meticulous with recording the interviews, taking notes directly and transcribing word for word in order to make sure nothing was mistranslated or misinterpreted. In addition, the fact that we were two researchers allowed us to interpret the data individually and subsequently discuss it together to ensure our mutual perspectives, and that the participants' perspectives were shown accurately in the analysis. Although, there is still a risk of interpretations and biased assumptions affecting the coding of the empirical material (Morgan, 1997). However, we attempted to reduce our prejudiced assumptions about the empirical data by adopting an open-minded interpretation, being conscious of our possible bias, and initially looking at the empirical material separately (Morgan, 1997).

In order to ensure the criterion of transferability we developed so-called rich descriptions of the details of the culture of the group and an in-depth understanding of the context of the research throughout the study (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Even though we provided thick descriptions of our participants' common traits and cultural settings, we still had a small sample size for our study, which affects the ability to apply the results in other contexts. It is therefore important to note that the sample size makes it difficult to argue for the sample being illustrative enough to apply it in other contexts. Although, this study can serve as an inspiration and guide for further research or managers in understanding brand extensions' effects on attitude and emotional attachment for brands in the entertainment industry or other emotionally driven industries.

Moreover, the third criterion of dependability concerns our demonstration of trustworthiness which is assessed by how our analysis process is reported, the transparency of transcripts and accessibility to externals (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). We have, during the research process, enhanced our dependability by constantly documenting our progress. As evidence of our efforts, all the data we gathered was written down, recorded, transcribed, and copied into a specific folder. Additionally, we have made sure to have all these documents available for peers such as examiner, supervisor or opponent to review and audit if needed (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

The last criterion of trustworthiness is confirmability, which refers to ensuring our objectivity (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). As mentioned before, we were always conscious of our own biases during the process, therefore we tried to avoid our feelings and kept our opinions and beliefs hidden to not affect our interpretations of the empirics, and the results. In relation to being aware of biases and obtaining transparency and quality in the study, we have during the process been reflexive and critical in how we possibly have affected the results and how other factors can play a role in our results (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). For instance, we were aware that our presumptions on theory and experiences in the field, as well as our perceptions of the brands and brand extensions, could have potentially influenced the results. However, by being aware of possible biases and discussing how to avoid biases, we constantly worked on putting our presumptions apart from our study, only focusing on the participants and their perceptions.

3.6.1   Ethics

During the collection and analysis of the data, potential ethical issues have been taken into consideration. One of the main ethical considerations was to ensure the avoidance of harm to the participants (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). This was ensured already at the beginning of the interviews by explaining the purpose of the study and how the aim was only to examine the perceptions of consumers and not point out rights or wrongs. Additionally, we made it clear to the participants that their participation and answers to the questions were voluntary, and we made clear their right to refuse to answer questions (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). In addition, we ensured full informed consent from the participants before starting the interviews, and we protected the participants' privacy by giving them anonymous pseudonyms (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Since the topic involved personal experiences and emotions, we made sure that the questions asked were not forced in a way that could invalidate their personal space, rather the questions surrounded the general topics and allowed the participants to express their deep emotions if they felt comfortable. Furthermore, we did not ask the participants about intimate or personal questions such as their financial situation, religion or love life in order to once again avoid harm to the participant. It is also important to mention that this study was independent of the companies which are being used as examples in our interviews. In relation to ethical concerns, this means that the companies of Netflix and HBO Max are not aware of our usage of them as examples for our interviews. However, since the examples were only used to illustrate the phenomenon and since the study was not examining any sensitive topics, the companies would not have any harm from the results of the study.

4 Empirical Findings and Analysis

This chapter is an illustration and analysis of our empirical findings. The empirical findings are structured according to our main themes that were developed from coding. The first theme discusses the consumer experience in how extensions can enhance the experience of a brand. Subsequently, the second theme analyses how emotional attachment can be affected through brand extensions. Lastly, the theme of consumer attitude is analysed by examining examples of attitudinal behaviours of consumers in relation to brand extension.

4.1 Factors Influencing Consumer Experience

As directed by our codes, many of the topics during the interviews evolved around meeting a certain expectation for an experience. One recurring theme during the interviews was different aspects of brand experiences, meaning how the consumer can get a new experience or extend the current experience. Experience is something that is valued highly by consumers participating in our interviews and it is also something that to a certain extent is required in the brand extension. Looking in general at both brand extension examples of Netflix and HBO Max there is a general perception of the brand extensions as experience enhancers.

> *"I would say that it's overall positive for those who really use it because it's an enhanced brand experience in general." – Isabella*

The quote implies a positive attitude towards the strategy because of its enhanced values and the experience. Isabella also implies that there are several parts to the experience such as education, joy or community which argues for the broadness of an experience. In relation to the attitude of brand extensions as an experience enhancer, several participants put the value of an experience at such a high level that it almost becomes a prerequisite for their consumer satisfaction. When asked about what needs are expected to be satisfied with a brand extension in the industry we among others received the following answers:

> *"It should contribute to my experience, I guess the podcast would really contribute to my experience with the productions from HBO, so having a greater overall experience, yes." – Emma*

> *"But it also of course has to add to the experience. So I think there's like a really fine balance there of maintaining the same feeling that one would get from using the streaming service, but also adding to it." – Jasmina*

These quotes manifest how the industry is highly connected to experiences and entertainment which also is a value that is relevant when extending the business. Both participants suggest that any additional content or feature should be purposeful and add value to the overall consumer experience. This suggests that consumers today are looking for a more personalised and immersive experience that adds real value to their consumption of media. In addition, there is also the importance of creating a balance between maintaining the core experience and adding to it. This means a balance of continuing the values that are represented in the core experience and continuing the experience of the content from the platform in the brand extensions. For example, the games as an extension are viewed as an opportunity to extend the experience and create a complete experience with the content.

> *"Given that mobile games, it's like a huge business and a lot of people use it. I can just imagine that people really like this and also, I guess, extend the experience of watching these shows." – Jasmina*

> *"But games are a different branch for me in that sense, so it will definitely extend my whole experience with the whole series or content." – Lucas*

> *"If I could choose one of those games to play, I would for sure choose the one that is more related to the series that I like ... So you know, for me it feels that I'm extending the same feeling that I have while watching that specific content." – Elias*

They all express the idea that mobile games can enhance the consumer experience by extending the enjoyment of a particular media or content. Specifically, they suggest that playing games related to a particular TV show or series can help to deepen the connection and engagement with that content. Thus, the experience is not only seen as a demand from the consumer but also it can be seen as an opportunity for extending the brand experience.

> *"Definitely more opportunities, I would say, I think it's a really nice way to guide the user to like another experience or service of the brand." – Jasmina*

This introduction gives an understanding of the opportunities of brand extensions for creating a brand experience, but in order to understand more deeply on how the consumer experience is affected by brand extensions it is important to understand the different aspects that contribute to the consumer experience. Therefore, the following subsections aim at explaining and showcasing consumers' evaluation of the experience and potential outcomes of an experience. By outlining the different aspects of consumer experiences in relation to brand extensions we can understand the needs and values that consumers expect from brand extensions of streaming services. Furthermore, it contributes to the understanding of potential effects, both positive and negative, that brand extensions have on consumers and their attitudes towards the brand.

4.1.1   The role of perceived quality in shaping consumer experiences

An aspect of the experience of the brand extensions that was mentioned numerous times during the interviews was quality and quality expectations. There is a general perception that if the

quality of the extensions is poor, it can have a negative impact on the brand's image, and conversely if the quality is high, it can positively enhance the brand's image, which is supported by the following quotes:

> *"I guess for all brand extensions, that if they do the game in bad quality or it isn't working or it's boring in general, I think that people maybe will have a more negative connotation to the series in general." – Isabella*

> *"If the quality is not up to my expectations, if there is something not working out or something that I feel they just did it to do it, you know, and not like really doing it properly. Then I think it would impact my image, but like also, the way around if it's awesome, I would say – oh, they did a great job, I would feel that Netflix is better than what I thought." – Sofia*

Although when investigating more deeply it shows that the quality aspect may not be as important as talked about since it does not really affect the attitude towards the brand but only the user behaviour and experience.

> *"It really depends on the experience of using the games, because if I were to try, maybe the Queen's Gambit game and I didn't initially like it, I would probably just delete the app and not feel as excited to try something else from Netflix. I would just stick to their streaming services." – Jasmina*

Jasmina implies that quality for sure has an impact, although the impact is rather on her behaviour to not use the extension again and not on her general brand perception. Similarly, Amelia portrays the quality of the brand extension as a minor factor in relation to the general experience. For example, it is mentioned that the quality would not necessarily crash the general experience with the streaming service brand.

> *"So I guess a game will give you a continuation of that program, but it's not necessarily something that is going to crash the experience." – Amelia*

While games can provide an additional layer of engagement with a program, they are not essential to enjoying the series. Amelia highlights the importance of brand extensions like games being additive to the overall brand experience, rather than taking away from it or being perceived as a necessary component.

In addition, the quality as an influencing aspect of the experience has a connection to the engagement that the user feels to either the brand or to the experience of the extension. The findings indicate that the importance of the extension's quality may vary depending on the investments made and the attachment to the brand.

> *"I could imagine that because HBO is more, for me, a niched producer, the superfans might not go to the HBO Max podcasts. They might go for external ones that talk about them. It could be a risk. I would say it could be a risk of quality here as well like - who's hosting it? Are they serious people? Is it just*

like a small talk about what happened in the episode? Or do they dig into it?
So yeah, I think it's a risk for some viewers." – Isabella

Thus, more niched and invested consumers might have bigger demands when it comes to quality. If the quality does not live up to the expectations, there is a risk of turning towards other types of experiences instead. This highlights the importance of creating high-quality brand extensions that are tailored to the interests and preferences of the target audience, as well as meeting their expectations in terms of the level of discussion and analysis offered in the podcasts. In contrast to superfans and podcast enthusiasts, another participant highlights the opposite – meaning that quality is not an important factor for him:

> *"I don't really have any expectations from it in terms of quality. I see them as filler for when I'm travelling or when I'm on the train, I'll probably listen to a podcast. But I wouldn't go home and watch a video of how it was made, or listen to our podcast during my entertainment time and I'd rather watch something more entertaining." – Noah*

Overall, the statement highlights Noah's lack of interest in the specific brand extensions and for the specific type of content. It also emphasises how less interest results in less quality expectations, which together with previous quote theories on expectations in relation to attachment. Even though the quote implies a low investment and low expectations, it also highlights the importance of creating engagement and entertainment in order to capture a broader audience. To capture the attention of less engaged consumers there is an importance of assuring the quality aspect of ensuring that the content is not purely informative but also enjoyable and entertaining which captures the experiences aspect of it.

4.1.2 Interactivity: amplifying an active engagement

Another layer of the experience is the level of interaction and engagement the brand extension offers. Emma mentions that engagement with the brand is enhanced because of the interactivity that the extensions offer.

> *"Yeah, that I would interact more, I am more active on the platform maybe so to say, even enhance my addiction, which I already have. So becoming even more active, more screen time with the streaming service." – Emma*

Emma implies the advantages that interactivity can bring to the brand experience which also affects the time spent with the brand. Further, she also describes how the streaming service usually only offers a passive experience of just watching a show or movie but the extensions such as games offer new ways of becoming an active member.

> *"Because you're engaging people even more. Like as a streamer, you're mostly passive, you're just watching. You're not interacting with the platform, but I guess with games you can engage people even further and make them you know, invest it more by playing and becoming an active member, so to say with Netflix." – Emma*

In terms of interactivity that games offer, there is a general perception that the games as an extension offer more interactivity and engagement than podcasts. The perception is based on the idea that games provide a more active form of engagement, requiring the user to use multiple senses and be more physically involved with the content. Unlike podcasts, which are primarily audio-based and typically require little interaction beyond simply listening, games often involve more complex and dynamic interactions between the user and the content.

> *"Obviously games are more engaging because they're able to engage, they're able to play with a lot of your senses. You use touch, you use eyes, audio, video and everything, right? So it's more engaging." – Noah*

> *"I think maybe gaming has more of an impact because it's more engaging, I have to do something active myself and this is again being a passive consumer." – Emma*

Both quotes emphasise the idea that games are more engaging because they require active participation from the user. This can create a more immersive and impactful experience that is both rewarding and fulfilling. In contrast, the podcast is not viewed as an interactive format.

> *"I guess because a podcast is not like an interactive form. I'm sure there are groups on various social media sites where you can, like, discuss it and everything, but then you would once again have to find it yourself. I don't think it's ideal if you want to create engagement and the interactiveness among users that don't know each other already but I think it's more for the individual user spontaneously." – Jasmina*

Jasmina implies that because podcasts often feature a one-way flow of information from the speaker to the listener, they are not by nature a participatory form of entertainment. Furthermore, the quote can imply that podcasts are more geared towards individual consumption.

4.1.3   Extra content and information: balancing involvement and the narrative

Even though podcasts do not offer the same added value of interactivity as mobile games, podcasts have another added value that was mentioned numerous times during the interviews, namely extended content and content information. The added value of extra content and information was mentioned during all interviews and can therefore be seen as one of the most distinguished advantages of podcasts as a brand extension.

> *"I feel like they can add a lot ... so I think if I would have a series and knowing that there is like extra material they would add some spicy content. I would definitely listen to it, yeah." – Emma*

"Most probably there are some parts that I missed out on, or would think about in a different way that the writer or the cinematography showed me in a different way that actually is on the other side, so maybe learning about those and having the full experience again." – Lucas

"It's like a content extension and you get more bits and like information of what you are actually like engaging with." – Maria

"So we're talking about a streaming service. So I would like it if it is about my favourite shows and I will probably really want things like insights, the actors' and actresses' perspectives because that's what I look for the most when I watch the show. Or maybe more information about the background of the characters to get to know them more." – Emilia

The quotes highlight the added value of additional content and extra information. There is an enriched experience with the content since it offers deep insights, more comprehensive information about characters and stories and longer time spent with the content. The participants imply that there might have been details during the watching of their series that might have been missed, hence this extension offers an opportunity to explore them or to see a different perspective. Additionally, it is also explained how the availability of information creates a desire and curiosity to create a deeper knowledge about the characters in order to create a stronger connection to the content.

In addition, Amelia also mentions that different people with more or less interest in filmmaking might have different desires for this additional information. She mentions that she in general would not be very interested in additional information but people in her surroundings are more interested in this type of information.

"So he will check all the characters and the story and their lives - and how did they make the movie, and why did they make it, and what happened, the gossip, and whatever." – Amelia

Amelia means that for consumers that are highly interested in this type of information the brand extension will provide an opportunity for creating an even more engaged audience. By using the brand extension, the consumer will have a full experience by interacting with both the content itself but also the context of its creation. This demonstrates even further that there is a desire for particular consumer segments to engage further with the content and explore more aspects of the content, which potentially highlights the reasons behind the brand extension of podcasts.

Looking at what the additional information could provide for the consumer experience there is a general positive perception of how the brand extension of the podcast can contribute to the general experience and also emotional attachment.

"They're having really good shows that people are really enjoying that the people are getting obsessed over. Then it's a smart move because people are going to want to know more about the cast." – Emilia

"I think it would help me appreciate the content a little more, yeah." – Sara

Thus, the extended content information creates many emotions to the experience such as appreciation and obsession of the content. The first quote also implies that the additional information is especially an effective strategy when it is a series with highly involved users. This means that the investment in the series is already very high meaning that the brand extension will further foster this involvement and interest by supplying more content. In addition, the increased engagement is also further explained by using words such as love and devotion by another participant.

"If the podcast is about a series that has had something like an alternate universe or something for example, and they would give me more information that could go deeper into my love for it. So it could be great and I become even more loyal or more devoted to it. But of course, you could start taking away some of the magic if it comes to the real world." – Alexander

Alexander highlights how the extra information on the content provides an opportunity to create a stronger love for the content. Furthermore, he explains how that would make him feel more loyal and devoted to it. However, he also mentions a negative side with the added information, namely the risk of taking the magic from the story away. This was mentioned during some of the interviews as a potential risk since the usage of streaming services is by them used as a way to escape reality and enter another world. Hence, revealing details about the making of the series and thoughts behind the scenes can ruin this experience of being in another world.

"I guess I'd like to believe in the story and the narrative. When you know so much about the behind the scenes, everything just falls down to earth and it's like - oh, so dragons don't exist?" – Amelia

This quote also implies the desire to stay in the world or narrative of the series and how behind the scenes stories can diminish the sense of escapism and wonder of immersing in the story by yourself. Although this is very individual from consumer to consumer, Emilia, for example, highlights how she believes it is an advantage of being engaged with the content in between the seasons and hence get the full experience. In addition, she also mentions how others might see it as a risk of overdoing the content and ruining the mystery of it.

4.1.4   Community: cultivating a sense of belonging

As the final aspect of a brand experience, the topic of community was brought up several times during the interviews. Unlike interactivity and added information, the community aspect is mentioned as a potential experience enhancer for both the games and the podcasts.

"People discussing shows …. I don't see any loss. I think they can only gain and then it can only improve community engagement around these shows." – Noah

"Yeah, since it's an official podcast, I think people who are in love with the series or that are real geeks who read all the books of, for example, Game of Thrones and then watch the series on HBO ... I think that's a really good way of getting that community again, and I think it has a value, it's a good value."
– Lucas

"I can imagine that around every game they are building a community. So I guess it could be a possibility for Netflix to build a gaming community behind this." – Emma

The quotes underscore both the opportunity of creating a community around the content but also highlights the importance of creating mediums for the audience to further engage with the shows that they love. The additional content encourages the consumers to further engage and interact with the content. Serving more content to discuss the brand extensions of the streaming service works as a strategy to cultivate a sense of appreciation and devotion within the created community. In addition, the community is also seen as a part of the experience since it creates a new step in the consumer journey.

"I would say that it is really good for the brand community, so kind of like a customer journey." – Isabella

The quote implies that being a part of the community and discussion allows you to follow up on the content you just watched on the platform meaning that you have added a new way of interacting with the product. The community can be seen as a new touchpoint for creating a more comprehensive and engaging consumer journey. The community also creates a space where the fans can come together and discuss all details and create a shared experience. Alexander similarly describes it as being a part of a unique group where you are able to share your love with others.

"It's just belonging. You are part of a tribe. You are part of this unique group that knows so much about it. I always loved Lord of the Rings when I was younger and I still do, and so I always love meeting someone who has the same love for it. We can just talk about all these like very niche subjects in the movie and I guess that's why you have a connection." – Alexander

By being a part of a group that shares your excitement and love for the content creates a more intense connection and unique experience with the content. The community is based on discussions about the content that creates the extended experience. In relation to the discussion, the brand extensions can also work in the same way as creating a discussion of the podcast or game.

"It could also generate more online discussions and stuff like that." – Maria

"So creating a lot of discourses, which they can control. For example, podcasts are something that they can control. So they can control the discourses around it or the conversations around these shows and so they can engage more with the audience about these shows. So I think it can only

increase their engagement and it can help them to have better more information on the audience and better control over the audience." – Noah

The discussion aspect is explained as an opportunity in the sense that the brand will be noticed more in for example online media. Furthermore, Noah mentioned the opportunity for the brand to control this discussion by being the producer of the brand extension. He underscores the opportunity of creating a discourse in a direction they want that creates an increased engagement. Additionally, the increase in engagement also contributes to the accessibility of information about the streaming services' audience. This discussion aspect of the community is also closely related to spreading the topic via word of mouth.

"I mean adding in just increased engagement and content and people talking about it and tweeting about in word of mouth." – Sara

Sara also continues by explaining how word of mouth increases engagement by having more time spent with the brand and being reminded of the content in other forms.

"It's just more word of mouth and potentially more engagement or keeping viewers engaged in whatever show or reality for even more than a second for them to go back and rewatch. So I think it's mostly a possibility." – Sara

By offering additional content that the consumers can continue to discuss with other consumers the awareness of the content and the platform is increased. Furthermore, by opening up for more conversations the consumers are also more likely to feel engaged with the content. As Sara puts it, this engagement is also an opportunity to go back once again to the content and repeat the experience which is also connected to the consumer journey as mentioned above.

4.2   Unlocking Emotional Attachment

Multiple elements of emotional attachment —that is, how brand extensions are able to create an attachment to the parent brand— recurred throughout the interviews, making it another theme that arose. This attachment is an outcome of the consumer's experience with the brand extension, although their prior investment and experience with the brand have an effect on it. Shared among the participants is the idea that an investment has to exist beforehand in order for them to use the brand extensions.

"I don't think people would choose to start with a podcast. I think they would choose to start watching the shows instead." – Jasmina

What can be gathered from this quote is that, for participants to dare and try the podcasts, they have to have some kind of investment or interest in the content being used on the brand extension. Maria, for example, does not feel generally invested in either of the platforms, seeing one of them, Netflix, as a platform with content that works as background noise. Thus, in her case, when it comes to the games, she is not interested in them. Therefore, it becomes possible

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that the investment in the parent brand and the interest in the content are what allow the brand extensions to create an attachment back to the parent brand. One of our participants confirms it with the following quote:

> *"I think it's a brilliant way for us as customers and people viewing to get closer with the brand." – Alexander*

As Alexander mentions, brand extensions can be used to bring consumers and the brand together, which translates to the brand extensions being able to create an attachment to the parent brand. Alexander further emphasises it when talking about the podcasts, and how it is a way for people to get closer to the series and therefore get closer to HBO Max, which aligns with Hanna when she mentioned that playing a game of a show consumers liked can help them connect more with the show, and with the parent brand. Both Jasmina and Sofia agree on this but add that it is the connection to the content that motivates their interaction with the brand extension. This lets us believe, as we will see further in the analysis, that it is through the content that emotional attachment can be created.

But emotional attachment is not the only outcome of the experience with brand extensions. Brand extensions can also evoke two more things: a wide range of emotions, and a desire to explore, creating interest and awareness not only for the content but also for the parent brand.

4.2.1 Evoked emotions: the power of feelings

The emotions that are evoked through the experience with the brand extensions are one of the common sub-themes found multiple times throughout the interviews. Sofia puts it well when talking about the games.

> *"Yeah, I think games, in general, will bring up a lot of emotions like you want to win … So I think maybe the goal of the game is to bring some kind of emotion through it." – Sofia*

Sofia implies that the goal of the brand extensions as a strategy is to evoke certain types of emotions throughout the interaction of consumers with, in this case, the games. She also adds that these emotions that are evoked are personal to her, thus suggesting that the experience consumers have with brand extensions in an industry like streaming services is personal. We could then assume that this personal relationship with the brand extension, through the emotions that are meant to be evoked, is what creates an emotional attachment to the content and the brand.

When talking about the specific emotions that the brand extensions can evoke, some answers vary per participant and type of brand extension, but a trend can be found among them.

> *"First of all, excitement about the actual show and the behind the scenes and getting access that other people won't." – Sara*

Excitement is one of the emotions found more from most participants. This excitement comes from different sources: it can be excitement about the content of the brand extension, which is the case of the quote above on podcasts. It can be exciting to wait for what comes next, as Amelia mentions when waiting for the episodes of the podcasts every week. It can also be exciting from having a game that has a connection to one of your favourite shows, as brought up by Jasmina, which in turn also creates comfort as it gives consumers a safe space to enjoy something that they relate to and is close to them. Positive feelings like excitement are not only a way to reinforce the perception and image that consumers have of the parent brand, but they can also create interest to learn more about the brand's content or the brand extension itself.

> *"I love podcasts. I'm not really into the gaming thing, but because of the content of it, I would prefer gaming because it will bring me distraction and joy, and just like, I guess, just superficial pleasure." – Amelia*

> *"I think well, there's a lot of stress in life with work, and with everything else in reality right now in the world … So I guess to me, entertainment has always been one of the ways that I could relax, I could literally transport myself into a different reality. So for me, it has always been very important."*
> *– Noah*

There are also some related emotions such as pleasure and relaxation, as seen from the quotes above. What we can see from them is that, when deciding to engage with the brand extensions, consumers do not only look for very strong positive feelings out of them. Sometimes, what they seek is a sense of relaxation and peace of mind – an escape from reality, as we have mentioned before— and the extensions can do just that. They can bring superficial pleasure, distraction, or just make consumers feel relaxed. Or even curiosity, as Alexander mentions in his interview, where the extensions create a desire in him to explore what else is Netflix doing.

This shows us that there is a wide and varied range of emotions that can be evoked and that those emotions are not skewed to one side only. There are negative emotions that can also be elicited from the brand extensions, which can have a negative effect on the emotional attachment of consumers as it becomes a risk.

> *"If I would, for example, listen to the Succession podcast and it would, in my opinion, be bad, I would be kind of disappointed because I respect the series very much and respect most of the things that HBO does … I would be like - oh my god, they totally screwed up!" – Isabella*

> *"But, of course, like any time that you step away from your original product or service, there is a risk of people getting disappointed." – Jasmina*

Disappointment is the biggest of the negative emotions that can be evoked from the brand extensions. With the quotes, what the participants are telling us is that it becomes a risk when the streaming services extend their brand. And this extension, if done wrong, can create this sense of disappointment, as if the parent brand was a person that did not live up to the

consumer's expectations. But this disappointment, as we will see in the next section, is not as strong as one might believe.

Lastly, one of the emotions evoked through the interaction with these brand extensions is nostalgia. In this case, the feeling of nostalgia is brought up from two different sources, and the importance of it is evident.

> *"So maybe nostalgia is the emotion that maybe they're trying to evoke here ... So it shows that they're maybe trying to connect people with a lot of nostalgia as well." – Noah*

When talking about the games, Noah believes that nostalgia is the emotion that Netflix tries to bring up in consumers when they engage with their games. In this case, it is suggested that a way to create a connection, to create an attachment with the brand, is by playing with a feeling that elicits memories from the past, specifically from certain types of games that have been adapted by Netflix to fit with their content. Other participants also agree as they mention how some of the games seen in the trailer or on the images remind them of old games they used to play when they were younger.

> *"That was my longing for my need for nostalgia ... So I think they would have to create something that would give me a feeling that I want to come back to and feel again." – Alexander*

The nostalgia in this case does not come from the resemblance of the Netflix-adapted games to games from their youth, but from the nostalgia of content that consumers watched. This type of nostalgia is thus more focused on the content, which can then build back the interest that consumers had in said content and possibly influence their behaviour to watch it again. As Alexander puts it, that is the way how brands can create love towards them from their consumers in the long term – by eliciting feelings such as nostalgia, thus making their relationship with the brand more personal. Why? Because of the connection consumers have to the content.

The idea of the emotions that can be evoked from brand extensions, therefore, gives us an understanding of what the aim should be when developing them. As seen from the various types of emotions evoked above, when creating a brand extension, what needs to be kept in mind is what type of needs the brand extension is satisfying, with a special emphasis on satisfaction. When interacting with the brand extensions, it seems consumers tend to look for positive emotions, as agreed by most participants. Sara puts it well together when saying how the games can improve how consumers feel.

While there are some neutral emotions that are also evoked from engaging with the brand extensions, such as distraction and trust, more passionate emotions such as happiness or enjoyment can have a positive impact on the parent brand, which is one of the ways that an emotional attachment to the parent brand can be created. In regard to the negative emotions, this section of the findings aligns with the previous in suggesting that this type of emotion, such as disappointment, only has an effect on the perception of the brand extension in itself,

barely scratching the perception of the parent brand. This, as we will see now, is due to the connection of consumers to the content rather than to the brand.

4.2.2 The connection to the content: the heart of the attachment

Another of the most commonly recurring topics found during the interviews is the connection of consumers to the content. All participants mention at some point their connection, not to the brand, but to the content of the brand, making the extensions thus dependable on the content.

> *"If I'm really interested in the story - like, if Game of Thrones was still here, maybe I would (use the podcasts)." – Noah*

> *"I would for sure choose the one (game) that is more related to the series that I like. So it's not about the game or how good the game is, it's about how I am related to the content." – Elias*

Both participants mention in their quotes that they would choose to engage with the brand extensions, be it mobile games or podcasts, based on the content that they like and relate to. Elias goes into more detail when saying that it is not the format of the brand extension, nor the quality (which aligns with the findings regarding quality priorly mentioned) the biggest influencers on consumers using a brand extension, but the content. Thus, the connection of consumers to the content becomes the motivation behind it. Although, as mentioned by Isabella, this influence over the use of the brand extension is not definitive, as she would most likely not play the mobile games even if she liked the series as it felt "like a big step to play them".

Following that idea, we can then assume that the attachment that brand extensions are able to create in consumers is more to the content than to the parent brand. It is because of the content that consumers use the extensions, and it is because of the extensions that consumers enhance their attachment to the content. Maria solidifies it when she says that, when watching a show such as 'The Last of Us' and talking about it, the show is mentioned by its name and not by where it is found, thus showing a dependency on the content over the brand. The connection to the content, as always, can come from different sources.

> *"They (consumers) feel more connected some neutral emotions are with one of their favourite TV shows, or with the characters that they like." – Hanna*

> *"I think you can even just get further engaged with the series with the actors, with, you know, even getting more invested in it." – Emma*

> *"It's probably in that kind of connection, and making sure that we keep watching and we keep feeling as if we're part of the stories." – Alexander*

From one side, the brand extensions being created around their favourite TV show or including the characters or actors of the show are one of the reasons that a connection to the content can

be elicited, or how it can be seen as a motivator to engage with the brand extensions. This is further explained by Alexander's point, as what the brand extensions do is keep the consumers engaged, bringing them into their stories, and thus bringing them closer to the content. Similarly, Oliver explains in regard to the proximity to the content and the emotions evoked.

> *"Being more near, more close, more related, will bring more positive emotions" – Oliver*

It is the connection to the content that allows the positive emotions seen before to be evoked, as they are, most times, the continuation of the feelings that were evoked while watching the shows. Therefore, the connection to the content becomes a strong variable when talking about brand extensions of the streaming services and their potential use.

> *"When you're already in love with the content, it's harder (for the games) to let you down ... In a way, having some storyline and so on, it's cooler than just playing chess, so in that there's a lot of opportunities, but I don't see a lot of risk. If the games are bad, you know, it's bad, but it's still attached to the content." – Elias*

This quote hence implies what we have seen so far: this connection is also the outcome of the brand extensions, as what they are creating is an attachment to the content which, in turn, would likely create an attachment to the parent brand. Nevertheless, as Elias mentions, it is because the attachment is so high towards the content rather than the brand, that the risk of creating a separation between the consumer and the brand is unlikely. As long as the story and the themes of the mobile games are connected to the content, there are more opportunities for the brand extensions to have a positive impact on the consumers and the parent brand.

4.2.3 Desire to explore: nurturing curiosity and encouraging interest

Lastly, in regard to the emotional attachment that can be created through brand extensions, we found curiosity as one of the recurring emotions evoked through consumers interacting with the brand. This desire to explore elicits consumers to know more about the brand extensions, mainly because of their relation to the content.

> *"You have to do it the right way. You really have to get people in there, catch their attention and, if it's not giving anything to the consumer, people would get bored." – Emma*

> *"I have a lot of streaming services, so I usually churn ... So, if there is some parallel interaction that could, you know, keep me aware or valuing that brand, probably it would reduce my churn risk." – Elias*

The quotes imply two relevant ideas. From one part, we have the notion that brand extensions need to evoke curiosity in the consumers of the parent brand to catch their attention. We already know from the previous subsection that, for that to happen, brand extensions of streaming services must have a connection to the content. Therefore, it is this relationship between

consumers and the content that allows brand extensions to create curiosity back towards them. On the other, we have the idea that brand extensions not only create curiosity in consumers towards themselves but also the parent brand. The extensions create and keep an interest in the parent brand, keeping consumers aware of the parent brand in parallel to the interactions that consumers already have with them when watching the content on the platform. And we can argue that Netflix and HBO Max do exactly that with their mobile games and podcasts, respectively. However, a common argument found in most participants is the lack of awareness created around the extensions.

> *"However, I haven't seen any of these anywhere, so I think that's a shame."*
> *– Jasmina*

Jasmina encompasses what most participants shared in regard to how none were aware of the existence of the brand extensions, neither for Netflix's mobile games nor for HBO Max's podcasts. It was only in the interviews when they were shown the brand extensions, that they had any idea or grasp about them. The only exceptions were Amelia, Elias and Noah in regard to Netflix's mobile games, as they saw them once on the app, with the last two being the only ones who had tried them before the interviews. Nevertheless, the common sentiment of participants was that there was a lack of how the brand extensions were made to create awareness about themselves and towards the parent brand.

What needs to be understood from this is that, in order for consumers to engage with the extensions, to create an experience out of them, and become more attached to the parent brand because of it, they have to first be aware of them. Without awareness, without keeping the interest of consumers, the emotional attachment to the parent brands will not change in any way. If anything, the perceived lack of creativity and innovation (because there seems to be nothing to be going on) could worsen the perception consumers have of the parent brands, even if it is the case that they are actually doing something. Anyhow, once consumers become aware of the brand extensions and engage with them, the second part of the already mentioned emotion of curiosity begins to be evoked.

> *"Yes, I mean, I think I would try it (mobile games) just to know how, and to just see how it is." – Sofia*

> *"For example, I'm a heavy fan of Stranger Things. I would, just out of curiosity, use it if Netflix would suggest it to me. I was like, yeah, let's check. That would be my motivation." – Emma*

> *"Today there's a podcast, but maybe they are going to have video podcasts? Are they going to have guests on the podcast? What are the ideas? Are they going to do a live podcast one day? So yeah, I will be interested to know what else they are working on." – Amelia*

The quotes outline how the extensions can create a feeling of curiosity and intrigue in consumers. This curiosity, as the rest of the emotions evoked through the brand extensions, is not one-sided. There is curiosity to try them just because the parent brand recommended it to

them, or because it relates to content that they enjoy and are a fan of. But there is also curiosity to know more about how the extensions are going to be done, or what else the parent brand is venturing off into, something that is also supported by other participants. Obviously, this curiosity that is evoked does not stop there. Some participants take it a step further to talk about how it connects to engagement.

> *"I think I would engage more knowing more about, for example, House of the Dragon. They also interview the actors; you don't only engage with the brand itself, but also with the cast. I don't know, I feel that sparks more interest to keep watching the TV show."* – Hanna

> *"I believe when I listen to podcasts, especially about series and movies, that I could really get interested in digging into everything. So they will probably get people more engaged in the series after they listen to this, if they are good."* – Isabella

What we can gather from these quotes is that the engagement with the brand extensions creates a sense of curiosity that circles back towards the shows that the extensions are related to. As Elias mentioned at the start, the extensions need to keep them aware of the parent brands. And the extensions seem to do so, as they create an interest to go back to the content.

But that's not all. As Isabella and Lucas mention, their engagement with the brand extensions also creates an interest to know more about the content. This interest in knowledge is not directly given in the original content, but extra content that can enhance their experience, as we have seen in the previous section of the findings. Jasmina adds to this point by saying how the brand extensions also feed and satisfy her curiosity evoked not by the extensions but by the content. Therefore, we can argue that brand extensions not only create curiosity, but feed off it to satisfy the need brought by it and, at the same time, create more. But not everything is sunshine and roses.

> *"If I go in and I'm looking for a series, but then I see a game that seems interesting, maybe instead of watching something, I'll play the game."* – Oliver

Oliver rightfully points it out, as his argument is for extensions evoking entertainment and curiosity. Nevertheless, the implicit idea found here is that the extensions can become a distraction from the core. And, if the focus of the parent brand falters too much outside their line, there is a possibility for it to become a risk, and for the attitude of consumers towards the parent brands to change, as we will see in the next section.

4.3   Dynamics of Consumer Attitude

If we move beyond the experience and attachment and look at how the brand extension actually influences the general consumer attitude of the brand, there are many layers to it. As mentioned

in the subsection on quality there are some interesting findings related to how the quality of the brand extension affects the perception of the consumer. Although, the findings also showed how the actual attitudinal changes because of the quality were small or non-existent in relation to the general brand perception. In order to understand the consumer attitude and their affected perception, opportunities and risks from the consumers' point of view will be outlined. Furthermore, the changes in attitude will also be examined deeply in order to understand if and how the brand extension changes the perception and how the emotional attachment changed.

4.3.1   The duality of brand extensions: opportunities and risks

Brand extensions give the parent brand multiple options to influence the consumers' attitudes and change their perception and attachment. One of the perceptions is related to how HBO Max podcasts can reinforce the parent brand's image.

> *"I think I feel this just reinforced my image of like HBO." – Maria*

Implied in this quote is the idea that the brand extensions can reinforce the previously existing image that consumers have of HBO Max. Jasmina also argues for this idea, mentioning how the success of the brand extensions can make consumers appreciate the brand more. Therefore, it can be said that brand extensions create an opportunity for the parent brand to change how consumers see and act towards a brand. Similar to this case, other participants argue that the extensions don't need to succeed for their perception or attitude to change.

> *"Well, I already think better of HBO Max. I mean, I didn't really have too much about them before, but just the fact that I love it when a company, especially an underdog, is trying to be creative and trying to do something new, and that's what drives the world forward is innovation. So I like that HBO Max did this." – Alexander*

> *"I don't really see how it would subtract from the brand at all. Because even if you don't want to listen to the podcasts, seeing this just makes you feel like – oh, they're trying to inform and entertain their users! ... Makes me feel like they are really thorough, and high quality, I would say." – Jasmina*

Just the fact that the parent brands venture into an extension of their brand, as both Netflix and HBO Max have shown, seems to be enough for them to appreciate the parent brand more and reinforce the image that they had of the parent brand. This is a clear example of how just by doing brand extensions can a parent brand create opportunities to enhance the perception that consumers have of them, to the point that the success or failure of a brand extension is not totally necessary for opportunities to arise, as we will see further down in this section. In a sense, it is brand extensions being seen as an added value, and not part of the core, that can reinforce the image consumers have of the parent brand.

Finally, in regard to the opportunities, Sofia mentions that the brand extensions are also an opportunity for the parent brand to broaden their audience, and not just enhance the brand image that current consumers have of them.

> *"But this is probably good because it appeals to other different types of people, and everyone would find their match. Also, I feel like the different games are related to different TV shows or movies, so I think everyone would find their thing." – Sofia*

As we can understand, brand extensions allow the parent brand to create complementary work that satisfies niche needs found in their target audience. This enhances the experience that consumers have with the parent brand and influences them to engage more with the parent brand, as the brand extensions give more options for consumers to interact with.

However, the coin has two sides, and the border audience can also create a risk of disappointing or confusing the core target audience by adding new features. In relation to games as an extension, there is a general concern about the target audience being younger than the original target.

> *"If I'm just being honest, for someone who doesn't like to play mobile games, I would think that it feels a bit childish, potentially. It doesn't feel as serious as the original content." – Jasmina*

> *"I am a bit worried for Netflix, if I'm honest. The games all seem quite… they're geared towards children, which of course is somewhat understandable, because I also don't play as many mobile games. They also seem quite… not cheap, but they are very colourful and for children … Is that going to make it seem less for adults? That's interesting, and maybe it will dilute the value of Netflix overall." – Alexander*

> *"It could get a glance of becoming a bit childish. So yeah, that might change my perception unconsciously." – Emma*

This implies that the perception of the parent brand might be negatively impacted if it is associated with something that is perceived as less serious or targeted towards a younger audience. While the extension may benefit the brand as mentioned before, it also has the risk to change the perception of the brand and confuse consumers. It is important to ensure that any new product or service aligns with the core identity of the parent brand and does not negatively impact its reputation.

> *"Like I said before, it could benefit the brand, obviously. The risk in that case, is that it could change the perception. For example, me now with Stranger Things: it could put the productions in a different light as well. For me, Netflix, its core is streaming, so it also represents a risk to lose that core, or that people get confused about the brand identity of Netflix. So that could be a potential risk." – Emma*

Emma highlights the risks of changing the perception and also losing the connection to the core identity of being a streaming service and confusing the consumers. When asked if the brand extension of games matches the perception of the Netflix brand, a majority of the participants agree on it being far from the original idea.

> *"Netflix is entertainment. But for me, it is only like streaming and things like that, so it's really something different for me."* – Sofia

> *"Since they're not really paying much attention, or their main platform is just not as good anymore, and at the same time there's not that big of a target for video game players. Then, you're kind of losing on both sides because you're not going to get as much engagement as you're expecting from the video games and, at the same time, since you're not taking really good care of your main platform, then you're also losing people from that side. So I would say that's the risk."* – Emilia

The participants are presenting a perception that brand extension can create a risk of stretching the brand too far away from the core. This is also related to the challenge of maintaining user satisfaction and engagement at the same time they are trying to stay relevant. What the quotes suggest is to focus on in this challenge is continuing to invest the majority in the core business to ensure quality and engagement but also aligning the expansion with the core values of the brand. If this is not done properly there is a risk that the brand will be diluted as suggested in our interviews.

> *"As the content is great, they have to be careful not to dilute the brand, that they're doing something else that is not so good."* – Sofia

> *"Like if you're spreading your branch too much to the point that you cannot recognize the main thing you were doing because it's not good anymore."* – Emilia

Thus, it is important not to expand too far away from the original offer. This has value in order to maintain a strong brand image from the consumers. The importance of the core also lies in ensuring quality in the core offerings in order to remain and attract consumers to the core business. The perceptions once again highlight the challenge of maintaining the core at the same time as they are expanding.

Even though many participants mention the risk of dilution of the brand, Noah expresses that there is no such risk. When discussing the game as an extension he mentioned that he does not think that it would dilute the brand which could imply either that the brand extension is not a big enough change to dilute the whole brand or that the brand extension is actually perceived as a fit, hence no risks are related. These two different points of view highlight the complexity and nuance of the topic and visualise that different consumers have different perceptions of the topic. While one consumer may not see a risk, others may have different perspectives based on their own experiences and perceptions of the company's brand and offerings.

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Even with different perspectives on perceived risks, there is one general perspective that was brought up during many interviews. The perspective is that no matter extensions, changes in business models etcetera the core of a streaming service will always be and always have to be the content.

> *"At least for me, I will keep looking at them as content platforms." – Amelia*

> *"It's not the core, so I value them for the content. So anything they want to do with the content that could improve my consumption of that specific content, for me it's good and if it doesn't work, it's all fine, the content is there." – Elias*

> *"I see the series as their best and biggest sellers, and that's where it all starts. These extensions are like try-outs for me." – Lucas*

The participants suggest that their perception of the streaming services mostly lay in the content. This means that the value and appeal of the streaming service are primarily based on the quality and variety of the content it offers, which also aligns with the findings from the subsection about connection to the content. Even though there is an open-minded attitude for potential extensions the participants underline the importance of maintaining the quality of the content. Furthermore, the extension is also seen as an opportunity to improve the quality of the consumer experience of the content as it is as mentioned before a continuation of the story. The quotes also suggest that brand extensions can be seen as supplementary to the brand and its overall values. The idea of the content as the core of the business is therefore something that could influence the consumers' attitude to the streaming service. In order to illustrate these consumer attitudes, we have to understand what the changes in attitude can be caused by and how the changes happen, this will be examined in the next subsection.

4.3.2   Unveiling the influence of brand extensions on attitude shifts

As mentioned before, brand extensions have the capability of influencing change in consumers. The change that we have seen before this subsection was focused on the emotions evoked from engaging with the brand extensions, and how it can strengthen or weaken their connection to the content. Nevertheless, another change that has been found recurring in the data collected from the interviews is the little to no effect of the failure of a brand extension on the perception of consumers.

> *"I don't think there is a risk if they fail. I don't think it's going to influence my perception of Netflix or HBO Max in that way." – Noah*

Implied in the quote above that, if the brand extension of one of the streaming services fails, the attitude of consumers toward the parent brands will not change. This claim was supported by other participants, such as Alexander, Emilia and Hanna, with the latter emphasising how the failure of the brand extensions would not only not affect their perception and attitude towards the parent brand, but also towards the content too. Hence, we can suggest, from connecting this idea to the one about the content being the core of the streaming services, that

the failure of brand extensions, as they are but a complementary aspect to the whole of the parent brand, does not harm the perception and attitude of consumers. In this, Isabella builds on it by saying that the strength of the parent brand can also influence minimising the risk, thus minimising the change in attitude. Emilia adds too by mentioning how brand extensions are not a big deal in comparison to the offering of the parent brand,

Sara adds to this point when talking about how failure can even help companies know what works and what doesn't, showing that even that creates more opportunities than risks. This is not shared by all participants, with Jasmina arguing for the other side, saying that a failure in the brand extensions can have a negative effect on the perception and attitude of consumers. This is because there would be a perception of bad quality and low effort put into the brand extension. What they all agree on, however, is that if there is any negative effect, it would be minimal.

On the other hand, the success of brand extensions can actually influence consumers to have a positive change in their attitude. Noah mentions it when he says that success can help people know more about brand extensions. This comes from his suggestion that brand extensions are targeted at a niche group, hence why a success could expand the reach of the extension towards other consumers of the parent brand that do not fit the initial target audience of the extension. Other participants such as Jasmina agree with this, saying that they would appreciate the parent brand more if the brand extensions were a success. In addition, and as mentioned previously in the findings, a positive aspect of the success of the brand extensions is that their relation to the content can change the attitude of consumers towards the brand and increase their engagement, as Elias notes.

4.4   Chapter Summary

To summarise the findings there are many layers to how consumers change in attitude and emotional attachment towards the parent brand. This is primarily outlined by our themes derived from the coding where experience can be illustrated as the first layer, attachment as the second layer that leads up to attitude as the third layer. The main findings are summarised in Table 3 which is further discussed and theorised in the next chapter.

Table 3 Summary of findings and analysis

Theme	Summary of Findings and Analysis
Experience	The analysis highlights three different ways to create consumer experience, namely through interactivity, community or by providing added content and information.

	The essence of these experiences is active engagement, belonging and involvement. In general, the findings implicate that brand extensions function as an enhancer of the experience.
Attachment	The findings on attachment imply how brand attachment is fostered by evoking emotions from consumers. Furthermore, there is also a desire to explore developed by the brand extensions. Finally, the analysis suggests how the attachment from consumers is primarily based on the connection to the content.
Attitude	In the final theme the findings imply both opportunities and risks in relation to the brand extensions. Furthermore, the brand extensions are explained as mediators for positive attitudes towards the brand, while negative attitudes are not as evident.

5   Discussion

In the following chapter the themes analysed in the empirical findings will be theorised and discussed. The chapter gives an understanding of brand extensions as experience enhancers, emotional attachment and its connection to content and attitudinal changes towards the brand from consumers. By understanding this the chapter provides deep insight into consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to streaming services. Additionally, the discussion provides a further understanding of the findings by resembling and contrasting them to previous research.

5.1   Igniting Experiences: Brand Extensions as Experience Enhancers

In order to capture the hearts and minds of consumers, streaming services try to go beyond the massive content catalogue and capture the essence of the business by expanding the experience. With streaming services entering the realm of brand extensions, they have an opportunity to create a world beyond the screen – a world where consumers can have a fully immersive experience with their favourite stories. In order to understand how brand extensions are related to experiences we have to uncover all the secrets behind the consumer experience.

From previous literature, we know that the quality of the parent brand has an interactive effect on how consumers evaluate the brand extension (Völckner et al. 2010). Furthermore, it has also been proved that customer satisfaction in relation to an experience with the parent brand also has an impact on the evaluation of the brand extensions (Vahdat et al. 2020). These two factors are both related to the consumer experience, however, they both look at from the parent brands' perspective. Since our study problematizes how brand extensions per se affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment, we wanted to uncover all layers of the brand extensions, starting with how they affect the consumers' experience.

In analysing the impact of brand extensions on brand perception and consumer experience, it is essential to consider the influence exerted by the quality of the extensions. Our findings suggest the quality of the brand extension can have an impact on the perception of the brand. This aligns with the idea Martínez and Pina (2003) suggest about brand extensions' negative impact on the brand image. The idea that the researchers present is that if the brand extension has a poor quality that does not align with a previous perception of the brand as high quality, there is a risk of negative impacts on the perception (Martínez & Pina, 2003). This was

something that is also expressed in our empirics. Additionally, our empirics also express the reverse way, meaning that high quality in the brand extension can have positive effects on brand perception. However, our findings also show that the quality aspect of the brand extension is rather aimed at the particular experience than the whole perception of the parent brand, meaning that it is relatively small in comparison to the general brand image. This will be further discussed in chapter 5.3 when theorising on the attitudinal change of the consumers.

As suggested by both our findings and previous literature there are many different types of strategies for creating experiences. As the market and the behaviours of the consumers are changing there is also a need for companies to increase the interactivity and experience where the senses are stimulated (Fog et al. 2010; Kapferer, 2012). The first way for creating such experiences that were uncovered during the interviews was interactiveness and as our findings show: interactivity was more related to the brand extension of games than podcasts. This perception is both related to the usage of many senses and active participation in playing the game. Previous studies have identified several advantages of incorporating gaming experiences into the brand. Among the advantages is a positive effect on engagement and brand attitude (Spais et al. 2022; Yang, Yang & Feng, 2021). By using game experiences participation and interactivity are stimulated which has a proven effect on consumer behaviour (Sailer et al. 2017; Xi & Hamari, 2020). As shown in our findings the dynamic interactions with the brand extension of games creates active participation and creates an experience that is both fulfilling and rewarding. These experiences can enhance both loyalty to the brand and strengthen the brand attachment. Because of the added value, repeat in usage and word-of-mouth features as gamification increases brand loyalty (Eisingerich et al. 2019). Additionally, the attachment is fostered by gamification because of the game-like experiences that encourage participation and differentiate the brand from competitors (Sailer et al. 2017; Xi & Hamari, 2020).

As a second way of experience, the findings suggest an enriched experience in another type of way for the podcasts, namely added content and additional information. This type of experience is connected to storytelling and how stories create unforgettable experiences on several touchpoints (Moin, 2020). The podcasts are seen as enhancing the experience by offering the availability of information that fosters more knowledge about the content and creates a full experience with both the content and the creation of the content. Because of access to more content, there is also an opportunity for the consumer to create more associations with the brand and recognize it more easily (Belk, 1988; Keller, 1993). These associations create a point of interaction which creates a setting where memories and emotions are being fostered (Belk, 1988). Furthermore, the additional information in the podcasts provides the consumers with the possibility to connect deeper with the content. Thus the podcast can be seen as an additional story for the consumer to create a deeper bonding (Fog et al. 2010). The findings suggest that consumers value the additional information since it evokes curiosity in knowing more and creating a stronger connection to the content.

Fog et al. (2010) express the sharing of knowledge as one of the advantages and purposes of using storytelling as a strategy. However, it is important that the story not only includes information but also fosters emotional relationships in order to make the consumer connect at a deeper level (Moin, 2020). Likewise, our findings suggest how the brand extension fosters

emotions such as appreciation and even obsession with the content. Additionally, the findings show how the podcast can create a stronger love and devotion to the content which is connected to several aspects such as how emotional the industry is, how attached the consumers are to the content but also how the podcast provides an extension of these emotional attachments. In order to create a story that fulfils the need of the consumer in order to create an emotional relation to the brand, the story has to be authentic, intriguing and involving (Aaker, 2018). The data from the interviews indicate that intriguing and involving are the most important factors in the case. The intriguing part is evident because of the expressed curiosity to gain more knowledge and create a deeper connection. Furthermore, the involvement is showcased by as earlier mentioned the need for touching emotions and not only delivering information. To some extent authenticity is also valued since the consumers valued the brand to deliver according to their expectations, however, the authenticity is not as evident as the involving and intriguing part. On the other hand, it can also be argued that the brand extension of the podcast can be seen as a different type of storytelling since it provides additional information to the story and reveals details behind the story to create a more exciting experience. Nevertheless, our findings show that this type of extension can also affect the connection to the content negatively since it breaks the narrative and the magic of the story by revealing details from behind the scenes.

The third way of enhancing the experience through brand extensions that are suggested by our findings is the opportunity of creating a community. As suggested by previous literature communities can forge bonds between the consumer and the brand because of the active engagement with the brand (Kapferer, 2012). The community is also a part of the experiential benefits where consumption is created and senses are stimulated (Kapferer, 2012). Our findings suggest that the community is another touchpoint where the consumers can create a shared experience and bonding with others. Looking at it concerning brand attachment, the connection, meaning emotions such as bonding, is one part of the brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005). These groups with shared experiences also forge an increased engagement with the brand (Kapferer, 2012). There is also a strong connection to influencing others and spreading the word about the brand extension. The love towards a brand can influence consumers by encouraging them to recommend it to other individuals which are also named by word of mouth (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Ismail & Spinelli, 2012). Our findings suggest that word of mouth increases the awareness of the brand, but the conversation also creates an engagement that can influence the connection to the content.

As a summary of how brand extensions are related to consumer experience, our findings represent a perspective of brand extensions within streaming services as experience enhancers. From the experiences of the brand extension, depending on the satisfaction of it, they can contribute to both positive and negative word-of-mouth (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009). In addition, an enhanced experience also has an opportunity to contribute to the brand equity and strengthen financial results and strategic benefits for the brand (Aaker, 1991). If we go beyond the strategic and business-related benefits of brand experiences and look at them from the viewpoint of the consumers, brand experiences also affect the connection between the brand and the consumer. By consumers investing more time in the brand experiences the brand-self bond will become stronger and deeper (Park et al. 2010). Subsequently, this stronger and

deeper relationship with the brand will create a stronger attachment (Fournier, 1998). However, as reviewed in the empirics not all perceptions of the brand extension viewed them with an added value to the experience. If the brand extension only results in a more casual relationship with the brand, meaning that it might be the same as before using the brand extension or a bit stronger or less strong the attachment will also be less affected. As Fournier (1998) argues, a more casual relationship with the brand will involve less attachment to the brand.

5.2   The Power of Content: Emotional Attachment Through Content

Building on the impact of brand experiences, streaming services can utilise the experience of the brand extension to potentially cultivate connections and attachment. Just as a beloved character steps out from their original story to embark on a new adventure in a series, these extensions provide the audiences with an opportunity to explore different aspects of the streaming universe. They offer a chance to delve deeper into beloved worlds, to uncover hidden secrets and untold stories, all while preserving the emotional attachment that initially captured the consumers' hearts. Hence, there is significance in understanding the core of the attachment and the factors influencing it.

One main finding from the data is the idea that to create an emotional attachment to the parent brand through brand extensions, said extensions must have a close connection to the content. It is through this that a different range of emotions can be evoked from the brand extensions, which was not only found in the empirics but also past literature, as they can be used to elicit certain emotions for a brand, such as excitement (Aaker, 1991). Therefore, in this section, we will discuss how the findings can explain how brand extensions can create an emotional connection to the parent brand through the content. We will draw from existing literature through concepts such as brand-self connection, brand prominence and brand love to examine their influence on brand attachment and changing attitudes.

The primary idea of how emotional attachment is created by brand extensions comes from the emotions that are evoked through them. As per the findings, consumers go through a wide range of emotions when engaging with brand extensions. Joy, excitement, pleasure, curiosity, comfort, nostalgia, disappointment and satisfaction are but some of many. While these emotions can be categorised using the three-factor model (affection, passion and connection) suggested by past literature, their relevance comes from them being examples of the outcomes of the attachment of consumers to the brands that are retrieved through their brand-self memories (Park et al. 2010; Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005).

One emotion that has become common in the findings and relevant to this part of the discussion is the sentiment of longing for nostalgia. Two types of nostalgia are evoked through the brand extensions. One is more related to the extension of mobile games, and the nostalgia that is brought up by the similarities that these mobile games have to games consumers played when they were younger. More general to either extension is the nostalgia for the content that

consumers enjoyed in the past, and that is now being used in the extensions. In both cases, the nostalgia has only evoked positive and pleasant emotions, aligning with a part of the past literature on brand nostalgia (Holak & Havlena, 1998). Negative emotions have not been seen as an outcome of the nostalgia created through the brand extensions, but the lack of findings cannot be used to disprove the literature, as it does not necessarily mean that they do not exist. Nevertheless, because of our findings that nostalgia in streaming services elicits positive emotions, align with the literature on brand extensions as they state the relevance of nostalgia in regard to how it can help elicit memories or certain knowledge of the parent brand, and how that contributes to positive perceptions of the extensions to the parent brand (Jun, Park & Kim, 2022). Additionally, as nostalgia is used to create a long-standing relationship with consumers, it could be possible for it to drive brand trust and influence purchase intention, as the literature suggests (Banerjee & Shaikh, 2022).

We also know from past literature that emotions evoked from engaging with brands do not necessarily indicate an attachment to the brand (Park et al. 2010). The emotional attachment that can be created is, as we have said before, through the connection that consumers have with the content. From the literature, we know that brand-self connection is one of the indicators of brand attachment (Park et al. 2010). In the case of this study, this connection between the brand and the self actually becomes a connection between the content of the brand and the self of the consumer. It aligns with the literature on attachment as it can be developed not only towards brands but also toward possessions or the product of the brands (Fournier, 1998). Therefore, based on the findings, the literature could be developed to explain this phenomenon further and better by redefining the connection as a content-self connection. In addition, it matches that the emotions evoked from engaging with the brand extensions are associated with the relationship that they have with the content and the connection that consumers have with it. As the product of the streaming services is their content, this concept could also be re-defined as a product-self connection when applied to other industries.

We could go even further and say that this connection between consumers and the content is not just an attachment but is actually love for the content. This is because, rather than being a passionate emotional attachment to a particular trade name, as the literature goes, the passionate emotional attachment is to the content (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). This aligns with past research regarding brand love, as they talk about the deep and intimate connections to the brands, and how the brands are an extension of the self (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010). But due to the nature of this study, the idea of brand love becomes content or product love. The findings have shown us that content produces enjoyment, entertainment and pleasure, among other positive emotions, in consumers. These hedonic benefits, as per the literature, become a better way to evoke brand loyalty and attachment to the brand (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Joshi & Garg, 2020). Therefore, it can be argued that it is the love for the content that is used in the brand extensions that creates an emotional attachment to the parent brand. Additionally to this is the fact that the literature talks about love being unidirectional, which fits the empirics as the love is only from the consumer to the content, and not the other way around (Whang et al. 2004).

The relevance of the connection that consumers have to the content can be used to explain how the brand extensions of streaming services can affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment. The content, in this case, becomes the tool to do so. Consumers are motivated to engage with the extensions because of this connection, and it is through it that emotions are evoked. Their relation to the content then becomes personal, which is supported by Belk (2016) when mentioning how people are what they consume. For streaming services, consumers were only what they watched, as that was the only product being offered by them. But with the introduction of the brand extensions, the self of the consumers expands – when looking at mobile games, consumers are what they play; and when looking at podcasts, consumers are also what they listen to.

Therefore, it can be said that brand extensions keep consumers engaging with the brand and creating new experiences. It becomes a constant reminder, a part of their everyday life. This process is defined in the literature as habituation – in it, the content becomes part of the self of consumers, and memories and emotions elicited from engaging with the extensions are associated with the content (Belk, 1988). This brings into play brand prominence, the second variable that can be used to indicate brand attachment (Park et al. 2010). The brand extensions become a way to remind consumers of the content that can now be found in the extensions, and not just the parent brand. These reminders make the memories and emotions appropriate to the content easier to be evoked. For example, for consumers that are fans of Stranger Things, waiting two or more years for a new season can be exhausting. So while they wait for the production of the new and final season to wrap up, they can now immerse themselves in the world of the show by joining Eleven and her friends to battle the Demogorgon in a game similar to Candy Crush, or by reliving the stories of the third season of the show in a pixelated version of Hawkins. Successively, because the original content used in the extension is found in the parent brand, associations with the latter can become more accessible, thus making the parent brand top of mind for consumers (Park et al. 2010). This is a clear example of awareness being transferred from the brand extension to the parent brand (Fedorikhin, Park & Thompson, 2008).

Brand extensions do not limit themselves to just creating emotional attachment through the content. It is through the creation of this attachment that consumers change their behaviour. As we have seen in the findings, it is thanks to the brand extensions that consumers decide to invest more time into the parent brand and, in some cases, even money. The reminder created by the brand extensions seems to be a motivator for consumers to go back to the content, meaning going back to the parent brand. The empirics then align with the literature, as we know that brand attachment enhances the commitment and loyalty that consumers have to the parent brand (Park et al. 2010; Vahdat et al. 2020). Not only that, but it also influences consumers to talk to others about it, meaning participating in word of mouth, another of the outcomes of brand attachment outlined in the literature (Park et al. 2010). In this case, we can see the example of HBO Max's podcast about Succession. As Succession is now in its last season, and it is one of the top shows currently on HBO Max, a lot of people are talking about it. The podcasts therefore not only enhance the experience of consumers by giving them more information behind the scenes of the show, as we have seen before, but it also allows consumers to talk about it with others and spread the word every week with an episode that comes out for both the show and the podcast.

Finally, we can summarise that, regarding how brand extensions can create an emotional attachment, our findings suggest that it is created first to the content, and then to the parent brand. The importance of the content thus becomes clear, showcasing the high dependency that consumers have on the content, as the positive emotions evoked from the connection and proximity to the content are transferred to the parent brand. Nevertheless, and going against the literature, is the idea regarding negative emotions. Disappointment was found as being one of the common positive emotions that consumers can feel regarding how the brand extensions are done. But, unlike positive emotions, negative emotions are not elicited towards the parent brand due to a brand-self separation (Park et al. 2010). Rather, we can redefine the theory once again based on the findings and say that it is the content-self separation that evokes negative emotions, but these emotions are only transferred to the extension, and not to the parent brand.

5.3 Unleashing the Power: Brand Extensions' Unidirectional Impact on Attitudes

Once the hearts and minds of the consumers are captured, once that attachment is created or enhanced towards the parent brand through the experiences, a change in their attitude comes naturally. Similar to a character's backstory captivating the audience and adding depth to the overarching story, brand extensions breathe new life into the parent brand, reshaping consumers' attitudes towards them and strengthening their bond.

One of the takeaways from the findings is the common idea that brand extensions bring more opportunities to the parent brand than risks. These are opportunities for brand extensions to affect the attitudes of consumers towards the parent brand. For example, even without taking into account the success or failure of the brand extensions, consumers' perceptions have been seen to be positively affected by the idea of both Netflix and HBO Max extending to mobile games and podcasts respectively. This is due to the extensions exemplifying how both brands are working and innovating to stay modern and keep up with the trends, which aligns with the principle of brand extensions affecting the parent brand's perceptions (Kapferer, 2012).

Other opportunities can also be put forward from the engagement of consumers with the brand extensions, as they become a way in which the parent brand can reinforce and enhance the image that consumers have of them. In turn, this can be the source that originates change in the purchase intention of consumers, and an increase in the value of the parent brand, as the literature states (Kapferer, 2012; Pina, Iversen & Martínez, 2010). Brand extensions can therefore be seen as a mediator in creating an emotional attachment to the parent brand, thus referring back to the literature on brand extensions in regard to how positive attitude can be transferred from the extensions to the parent brand, which are categorised under the concept of feedback effects (Ahluwalia & Gürhan-Canli, 2000; Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013). In this case, success in the brand extensions, as seen in both the findings and the literature, can be transferred to the parent brand, thus improving the attitude that consumers have toward it.

In contrast to the opportunities of the brand extension, the participants also expressed some concerns related to the risk of a changed perception of the brand. This perception aligns with the findings of Martínez and Pina (2003) where the brand extensions have a risk of diluting the brand. The findings highlight the importance of maintaining the core values when expanding the business. The findings also implicate that there could be a risk of a negative association if the target audience is different or if it is too far from the core of the brand - which as mentioned before is the content. This aligns with Martinéz and Pina's (2003) idea on a brand extension that is too far from the original image of the parent brand the image will be affected negatively. Our findings pinpoint the importance of ensuring the match between the brand extension and core of the parent brand and not stretching it too much to not create confusion about the brand. This supports the literature on brand perception being affected by the confusion of brand values (Aaker & Keller, 1990). However, as mentioned before our findings also indicate that the brand extension is also seen as a relatively small part of the brand since the content is viewed as the core of the streaming services. Therefore it contradicts the literature to some extent since the specific industry is very focused towards the content itself making the brand extension as just an addition to the brand rather than a substantial evaluation point. Additionally, as mentioned in the subheading on experiences, negative perceptions such as disappointment in quality do only affect the evaluation of the experience and not the general attitude to the brand.

Concerning the core of the streaming services, the findings also implicate the importance of staying close to the core when extending the brand. As mentioned, numerous times, the content is seen as the core of streaming services, therefore the consumers are viewing the connection to the content in the brand extension as an important evaluation point. As suggested by our findings, a strong connection between the content and the brand extension can also contribute to an enhanced experience, however, this is viewed as a supplement to the overall brand experience. Additionally, if the extension is closer to the core, it will also be easier for the consumer to recognize the brand and recall the brand values (Keller, 1993). Conversely, there is as mentioned before a risk of changing the consumers' associations with the brand if the connection is not clear (Martínez & de Chernatony, 2004). As literature suggests it is important to have feelings and attributes in consideration when extending the brand (Martínez & de Chernatony, 2004). Because of the emotions connected to the industry and the content, there is therefore an importance of delivering the same feeling as making a clear connection to the core in the brand extension. A similar finding was also identified in a study about brand extensions for football supporters, where the main conclusion was that the brand has to consider the supporters' emotional involvement and represent the heritage (Abosag, Roper & Hind, 2012). Similarly, our findings support this but within another industry, since the content can, to some extent, be seen as the heritage of the streaming service that is important to represent. Additionally, the findings of emotional involvement must also be taken into consideration through representing the same values, evoking similar emotions, extending the experiences and building new stronger attachments.

We have seen before that the success of the extensions can create positive emotions towards the parent brand. In regard to the failure, we know from the literature that a separation from the brand would mean evoking negative emotions (Park et al. 2010). Nevertheless, the findings show the contrary: the failure of the extensions has little to no impact on consumers' attitudes,

at least in the negative sense. Part of this can be attributed to the attachment that consumers have with the content of the brand extension, and their perception of the extensions as something extra and not fully part of the core of the parent brand, which we have stated before. Therefore, it is this closeness that, according to the literature, helps consumers have a more favourable perception of the parent brand and less negative associations (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005; Vahdat et al. 2020). For consumers, passion is involved in their relationship with the content, positive emotions are evoked from engaging with the brand extensions, attachment is created with the parent brand and favourable associations towards the parent brand are elicited. This, which is all-encompassed within the concept of brand love, suggests not only its probable existence in the industry but also its influence over consumers' attitudes (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Josh & Garg, 2020).

To summarise the attitudinal change from the brand extensions to the parent brand our findings suggest that attitude can be transferred to the parent brand to some extent. Past literature proposes that this transfer is theorised under the concept of feedback effects, which in turn becomes a way to determine consumers' attitudes toward the parent brand in the long term (Dwivedi & Merriless, 2013). From the findings, we know that whereas the positive perceptions of the brand extensions are affecting the general perception of the parent brand positively, the negative perceptions do not seem to influence the perception of the parent brand. Positive emotions, which have been the common emotions found to be evoked from consumers' interactions with the brand extensions, are the ones appropriate to the parent brand. Meanwhile, negative emotions have little to no effect on the attitude that consumers have towards the parent brand. Thus, the results show how attitude can be transferred to the parent brand, which aligns with past literature, although as proved it is only positive attitudes that transfer and negative attitudes remain the perception unaltered.

6 Conclusions

In this final chapter, we aim to summarise the findings on how brand extensions affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to streaming services. Subsequently, the theoretical and managerial implications will be discussed, followed by a discussion of the study's limitations, and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Research Findings

This study aimed to respond to the research question *"How can brand extensions affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to streaming services?"*. Several key conclusions can be derived from the findings and the analysis of the data in comparison to the theoretical background that laid the foundation of this study.

First, we discovered that brand extensions play a role as mediators in their relationship with consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment towards streaming service brands. Brand extensions act as a mediator because of their ability to improve the overall experience of consumers by offering interactivity, extra content and added information and by building a community; basically, they are experience enhancers. Additionally, it was observed that these characteristics that brand extensions can offer often resulted in positive experiences and favourable associations in consumers' minds towards the parent brand. On the other hand, negative experiences resulting from brand extensions were found to destroy the magic of the story, thus leading to negative associations. Nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasise that these negative associations were not found to be transferred to the parent brand.

Second, we uncovered that content emerged as a key tool used by brand extensions to develop engaging experiences for consumers within streaming services. The findings suggest that the connection that consumers have to the content, content-self connection as we call it, is actually the key driver for their engagement with the brand extensions, and for the attachment to the parent brand. Therefore, the content becomes the source of the emotions that can be evoked from interacting with the brand extensions, which can then have the potential to foster emotional attachment in consumers and a positive attitude towards the parent brand. In regard to the content-self separation, this effect is only towards the brand extensions, and it is not transferred to the parent brand.

Finally, we can conclude that it is these two characteristics of brand extensions how it can affect consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment to the parent brand within streaming services. Therefore, the findings demonstrate how brand extensions can actually increase

emotional attachment, or remain the same, and most probably not decrease. They also underline the significance of creating meaningful connections with consumers through brand extensions, and how they can establish a long-lasting bond with the parent brand, thus answering the first part of the question regarding the effect on emotional attachment. The results of this study also support the second element of the research question: brand extensions can have a favourable impact on consumers' attitudes. This implies that brand extensions are but an opportunity for streaming services to enhance their consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment without taking on too many risks.

6.2   Theoretical Contributions

This study has several different theoretical contributions that are all added in different research fields. The first one is related to the brand extension theory since this study adds to the limited research that has been done about the brand extension's effect on the parent brand. As mentioned in the problematization an immense focus has been placed on the parent brand's effect on the evaluation of the brand extension (Aaker, 1990; Deng & Messinger, 2021; Jain, Mathur, Isaac, Mao & Maheswaran, 2023; Keller & Aaker, 1992; Osorio, Centeno, Cambra-Fierro & del Castillo, 2022). Therefore this study contributes to the limited research on brand extensions' effect on the parent brand. Additionally, to the limited existing research on the brand extensions' effect on the parent brand, this study adds by shedding light on an industry that showcases different impacts. In previous research, there has been a focus on how the brand extension impacts the parent brand negatively by for example diluting the brand (Martinéz & Pina, 2003; Sheinin, 2000). By investigating an industry where consumers are highly emotionally involved, we managed to discover the positive effects that brand extension can have on both attitude and brand attachment.

As the study has a focus on the consumers' emotional attachment the study adds to the knowledge of the connection between brand extensions and increased emotional attachment. Besides this, the study also contributes to the research field of emotional attachment in general by suggesting that the attachment does not necessarily need to be connected to the brand but to the product itself, in this case, the content. Previous research has suggested that emotional attachment is fostered by the connection between the self and the brand (Belk, 1998). Furthermore, researchers have also investigated the lack of attachment to specific brands (Tobon, Ruiz-Alba & García-Madariaga, 2020). However, these previous studies are focused on the connection to the brand itself, while our findings suggest that, in the case of streaming services, the attachment is related to the content and not necessarily to the brand. This is also represented by our theoretical contribution of the product-self (content-self) connection, an adapted concept that can be further examined.

The final theoretical contribution adds to the empirical research field of streaming services. As suggested by previous research, there is a need for further research on brand attachment in different industries, specifically in the streaming service industry (Shimul, 2022). The industry

also lacks research on consumer behaviour, brand loyalty and marketing strategies since the majority has been focused on technological and functional aspects (Singh, Arora & Kapur, 2022). By providing valuable insights from a consumer's perspective with perceptions on consumer experiences, emotional attachment and consumers' attitudes to the brand this study contributes with new perspectives. Additionally, by understanding that consumers' connection to the streaming services is based on the content a new insight on consumer behaviour and brand attachment is therefore added to the research field.

6.3   Managerial Contributions

From a managerial point of view the research findings create an opportunity for an increased understanding and knowledge about brand extension as a strategy that can be used for many different purposes as a practitioner of marketing and brand management. One key managerial contribution is the understanding of how brand extensions can be leveraged to create emotional connections with consumers. By identifying and leveraging emotional drivers, managers can develop brand extension initiatives that resonate with consumers on a deeper level, thereby fostering a strong emotional attachment. These strategies can be used to retain consumers and create a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, this research emphasises the significance of considering the diverse needs and expectations of different target consumer segments. Managers should recognise the differences in their target audience and create varied brand extensions in accordance with the varied expectations. By conducting thorough market research and segmenting the target audience based on their preferences, managers can develop tailored brand extension strategies that address specific consumer needs. For example, it could be related to what needs different consumers expect them to satisfy – for instance if added information gives an enhanced experience or if it breaks the magic of the story.

As a final managerial contribution, this study provides valuable insights into the importance of staying close to the core, which in this case is represented by the content. By staying true to the brand's foundations, managers can strengthen consumer trust and minimise the risk of diluting the brand. This managerial insight emphasises the need for careful strategic planning and execution when extending the brand. In addition, the finding of the core of the industry being content gives valuable insights for managers to have in mind when making this strategic planning. It is therefore important for managers within the industry to always put the content in the first place when reviewing new strategies.

In sum, the findings of the study provide managers with actionable insights on brand extensions as a strategic tool for attitudinal change and emotional attachment. By applying the knowledge from the study, managers can incorporate different ways of experiences, using the content as a tool and evoke emotions to foster emotional attachment and affect consumers' attitudes to the brand positively. This managerial contribution will enable organisations to make informed

decisions and effectively extend their brands in a manner that drives emotional attachment and loyalty.

6.4   Further Research and Limitations

Despite the valuable conclusions obtained from this qualitative research study, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The study's exclusive emphasis on the streaming service industry to gather the data may affect the transferability of the findings when applying them to other industries. Therefore, future studies could have a look into for example the product-self relationship in other industries beyond streaming services, and how they affect emotional attachment and consumers' attitudes. They should also explore the effect across other brand extensions within the industry to determine if any recurring trends emerge.

The research study only included participants from our personal networks that reside in Europe. Therefore, because the study was conducted within a *specific geographical location* it could limit the applicability of the findings in other contexts. A more thorough study that expands the diversity of participants could be conducted. Additionally, it could take into account different cultures, countries, age groups and gender, to provide more valuable insights and how these variables can modify the effect that brand extensions have on emotional attachment and consumers' attitudes. Understanding these variations could enable streaming services to tailor their brand extension strategies to target the right segment.

There are other certain limitations due to the qualitative nature of the research design of this study. By doing a qualitative research study, we provided insightful details regarding the proposed research question. Therefore, conducting a quantitative study as a continuation of this qualitative research might be useful to expand upon the patterns and trends identified from the qualitative study, allowing for generalisation and validation (Hemsley-Brown, 2023; Tracy, 2019).

In regard to further research, we believe that the study should include the participants having a chance to fully experience and engage with the brand extensions. This would make it possible to examine brand extensions' effect on consumers' attitudes and emotional attachment and, in greater detail, give researchers a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms at play. Another fascinating phenomenon for further research is the relationship between the emotional component of the entertainment industry and the strength of emotional attachment.

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Appendix A - Topic Guide

Topic 1 - Perception of the brands

- Do you use the services of Netflix and HBO Max?
  - How often?
- Do you feel invested in the platforms and content of Netflix and HBO Max?
  - Why/why not?
  - How does using the platforms make you feel?
  - Can you give an example of when you felt invested in the platforms?

Topic 2 - Brand extensions of Netflix

- Do you play mobile games regularly?
- Have you heard of Netflix releasing mobile games?
  - What was your reaction then or now?

Show a video of the mobile game - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zSvixpnfE0

- What is your instant reaction to the mobile games of Netflix?
  - Why do you feel like that?
- Does the mobile games match with your perception of the Netflix brand?
  - Why or why not?
  - Does the game live up to your expectations on Netflix's quality?
- Would you potentially use Netflix mobile games?
  - What would be your motivation for using or not using the games?
  - If yes, would you talk about the game to others or engage with people that play the game and how would you do it?
- How do you think the games can add or subtract to the Netflix brand?
  - Are there any emotions that the games can bring up?
  - Could a game change what you feel about the original content from Netflix?
- How do you think using mobile games could change your engagement with the brand?
  - Can you think of an example of an engagement that the games could bring?
  - Could the games potentially influence you to explore more about the brand?
- Do you think there are any risks if Netflix keeps creating mobile games related to their shows?
  - If yes, why do you think it is a risk?
  - For this extension are there more opportunities or risks? Why?

Topic 3 - Brand extension of HBO Max

- Do you listen to podcasts regularly?
- Have you heard of HBO Max releasing podcasts?
  - What was your reaction then or now?

Listen to the trailer of a podcast - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-b6Zad-qqAI

- What is your instant reaction to the podcasts of HBO Max?
  - Why do you feel like that?
- Do the podcasts match with your perception of the HBO Max brand?
  - Why or why not?
  - Do the podcasts live up to your expectations on HBO Max's quality?
- Would you potentially use HBO Max's podcasts?
  - What would be your motivation for using or not using the podcasts?
  - If yes, would you talk about the podcasts to others or engage with people that listen to the podcast and how would you do it?
- How do you think the podcasts can add or subtract to the HBO Max brand?
  - Are there any emotions that the podcasts can bring up?
  - Could podcasts change how you feel about original content from HBO Max?
- How do you think listening to podcasts could change your engagement with the brand?
  - Can you think of an example of an engagement that the podcasts could bring?
  - Could the podcast potentially influence you to explore more about the brand?
- Do you think there are any risks if HBO Max keeps creating podcasts related to their shows?
  - If yes, why do you think it is a risk?
  - For this extension are there more opportunities or risks? Why?

Topic 4 - How brand extension can affect brand attachment

- Could an extension such as games or podcasts change how you feel about a streaming service brand?
  - If so, how?
  - Is there one that could have a bigger impact on your feelings than the other?
  - Would your feelings towards the brand change if you have to pay extra for the games or podcasts?
- Overall, do you feel that the extension towards games and podcasts are positive or negative development for these brands?
  - Why?
- If a streaming service does an extension in a new product category, what needs do you expect them to satisfy?
  - In an extension what do you value the most between entertainment, social, informational?
  - Where do you expect to hear about extensions such as games or podcasts?
- If the games or podcasts fail, would your perception of Netflix or HBO Max change?
  - Why?

Appendix B - Coding Scheme

Experience	Attachment	Attitude	Business	Targeting
Engagement	Engagement	Fit	Business offer	Target
Quality	Emotions	Core Idea	Business strategy	Superfans
More content	Attachment to the brand	Dilution of the brand	Business control	
Expectation	Connection to the brand	Perception	Innovation	
Content information	Awareness			
Community	Interest			
Extended feelings				
Experience				
Stay in the world				