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Self-determined or controlled, seeking pleasure, or meaning? Identifying what makes viewers enjoy watching television on streaming services

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ABSTRACT

Television streaming services afford experiences that align with and go beyond what linear television affords. These experiential differences relate to self-scheduling opportunities and how on-demand services are organized as libraries of content. The aim of this article is to conceptualize and investigate how conditions related to streaming and agency are associated with the enjoyment of watching on-demand television. The article first conceptualizes and develops measures that reflect how audiences experience watching on-demand television, and secondly validates and tests how these measures predict enjoyment. Results suggest that enjoyment is primarily explained by social significance, immersive viewing, lower levels of deliberate viewing, and positive perceptions of programmed paths. The article argues for the need for analytical approaches where viewers are neither treated as gullible targets of media power nor all-empowered subjects.

1. Introduction

Television streaming services afford viewing experiences that depart from linear television experiences. Such differences relate to how on-demand services are organized as libraries of content instead of the scheduled programming of linear television (Lotz, 2018). These material-level distinctions next facilitate self-determined viewing experiences (Bruun, 2020; Enli & Syvertsen, 2016). Recently, however, scholars have questioned the common framing of on-demand viewers as in control, arguing instead that viewer agency is circumscribed: the viewing experience remains structured, but by other types of steering mechanisms compared to linear programming (Cox, 2018; Johnson, 2019; Van Esler, 2021). This unsettled conception of the status of the viewer represents a vibrant field of research. This article aims to locate a constructive theoretical space between these opposing positions and to empirically investigate how conditions related to streaming and agency are associated with the enjoyment accrued from watching television on streaming services.

In this context, a substantial and expanding body of research has investigated the multifaceted phenomenon of marathon- or binge-viewing, denoting the relatively common practice of sequential viewing of several episodes in one session (see e.g., Flayelle et al., 2019; Granow, Reinecke & Ziegele, 2018; Merikivi, Salovaara, Mäntymäki & Zhang, 2018; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). Binge-viewing is conceived as made possible exactly by new levels of control, agency, and engagement (Pittman & Sheehan, 2015). My objective, however, differs from this field of research in two substantial ways. First, I posit that understanding on-demand television experiences

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merely through the lens of binge-viewing is insufficient (Turner, 2021), and that viewing experiences are likely much more varied. This is not to dismiss how binge-viewing is relatively prevalent, or to suggest that studies of motives for such viewing practices are not needed. Symptomatically, however, the literature on binge-viewing tends to focus on TV-series (Flayelle et al., 2019; Granow et al., 2018; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015), whereas streaming services offer a multitude of genres and types of content. Moreover, even for TV-series, viewers do not always watch several episodes in succession (Lüders & Sundet, 2021). Second, unlike prominent contributions to the literature on binge-viewing, this study does not apply uses and gratification theory (Flayelle et al., 2019; Pittman & Sheehan, 2015), or the related expectation-confirmation theory (Merikivi et al., 2018) as frameworks for investigating what makes viewers enjoy streaming television. My interest is not primarily in the motivations viewers have for watching television, or the extent to which the use of television streaming services gratifies those interests and motives. Instead, I argue that streaming affords experiences that align with and go beyond what linear television affords. My objective is thus not to investigate motivations per se, but rather to examine how the enjoyment of watching relates to conditions and opportunities that shape viewing experiences.

The article presents findings from empirical studies conducted in Norway. The Norwegian market has served as a strategic test market for television streaming services (Sundet, 2016), and streaming has become a common mode of accessing television content (Lüders, Sundet, & Colbjørnsen, 2021). Drawing on a qualitative study of the experiences of television streamers, I develop constructs that reflect how audiences experience watching on-demand television. Next, with data from a cross-sectional survey, these constructs with adhering items are tested and measured in terms of their relationship with enjoyment.

2. Self-determined entertainment experiences

The present study builds on a conception of enjoyment as a multifaceted experiential state that is not specifically related to pleasure-seeking (Bartsch, 2012; Koopman, 2015; Oliver & Raney, 2011; Tamborini, Bowman, Eden, Grizzard & Organ, 2010). Humans consume entertainment to seek pleasurable experiences, but also to fulfil needs for meaningfulness. Media enjoyment can hence be conceptualized in terms of how it relates to affective needs for hedonic happiness on the one hand, and, on the other, to eudaimonic needs for reflection, introspection, and meaningfulness (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Since streaming services offer libraries of content that presumably present viewers with the agency to choose content that fits their preferences, this paper broadly investigates motives for seeking pleasurable and meaningful experiences. We may expect that viewers watch television on streaming services for other purposes beyond "having fun", yet few, if any studies, examine the use of streaming services from dimensions of hedonic happiness and eudaimonic meaningfulness.

Within the framework of self-determination theory (SDT), studies have likewise conceptualized enjoyment as a state of well-being that relates to innate psychological needs in addition to hedonic pleasure seeking. Regarding psychological needs, SDT posits how needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness help explain variance in enjoyment from using various entertainment media (Oliver et al., 2016; Ryan, Rigby & Przybylski, 2006; Tamborini et al., 2010). Of these needs, autonomy and relatedness are particularly relevant in the context of this study. Autonomy denotes a sense of volition or being in charge. Conditions that enhance people's sense of autonomy are conceived as supporting people's intrinsic motivation and hence ultimately how an activity relates to enjoyment (Ryan et al., 2006). The notion of autonomy hence ties in directly with current debates about the status of the viewer, to which I will return in Section 3. Relatedness refers to feeling connected with others and is conceived as associated with motivational and well-being enhancements (Ryan et al., 2006). Here, relatedness conceptually links with television viewing as an activity catering to a sense of community amongst peers (Lull, 1990; Tse, 2016). These experiential dimensions concern how agency and the sociability of watching play out when viewers are presented with libraries of content instead of the programmed schedules of linear television.

Instead of adapting standardized SDT-measurements for autonomy and relatedness, this study offers a novel conceptualization of enjoyment as associated with what streaming affords viewers. This implies that I focus on actions and behaviours rather than the innate human needs that are core in an SDT-approach. To understand the streaming experience, we need to explore how viewers act upon the technical opportunities to shape their own viewing experiences. This entails critically considering viewer agency without succumbing to the simplistic notions of agency typical of the branding rhetoric of streaming providers (Burroughs, 2019; Van Esler, 2021).

3. The contested status of agency in the context of on-demand television

If primarily addressing streaming services in terms of how they provide viewers with self-scheduling opportunities, the contrast to the scheduling structures of linear television seems to suggest that streamers have the autonomy and freedom to choose what, when and how to watch (Enli & Syvertsen, 2016; Jenner, 2017; Lotz, 2018; Tryon, 2012). It is hence tempting, if not accurate, to depict a development towards "total viewer control coupled with a long tail of endless choice and a multiplication of viewing platforms" (Robinson, 2017, p. 18). Streaming services here also align with a longer history of how cable television (Heeter, 2006), the remote control (Uricchio, 2004) and VCRs and DVDs (Kompare, 2006) all appear to have increased viewer choice and control.

This viewer-centred notion of agency and control may be an accurate depiction of how users are positioned to adjust television viewing to their own pace of life (Lüders & Sundet, 2021) , but the status of viewer agency is disputed. The sequenced scheduling-flow of linear television (Williams, [1974], 2003) no longer dictates viewers, but streaming services may replace those with other mechanisms to structure and guide viewers through their content libraries (Gray & Lotz, 2019). A central tenet within critical approaches has hence been to delineate how interfaces, categories of content, menus, and use of data-tracking for personalization all contribute to structure viewing experiences (Cox, 2018; Johnson, 2019, 2020; Van Esler, 2021). Search functions are downplayed in favour of pre-organized content catalogues and "interfaces function to create an *illusion of content abundance and user agency* that belies the highly structured nature of online TV services" (Johnson, 2019, p. 108). Viewers might experience a sense of agency, but it is a

circumscribed agency, where interfaces device mechanisms that shepherd viewers towards "a fraction of their libraries at any point in time" (Van Esler, 2021, p. 733).

All types of television streaming services device paths through content libraries by way of categorising content. Some additionally rely on the behavioural traces of viewers to provide personalized content. Data and algorithms work as "invisible frames that sit behind the visible surface of online TV interfaces" and as performative agents, algorithms "exert control over user behaviour (Johnson, 2019, p. 133, p. 140). The sense of agency and interaction represents an individualized lure, efficiently inducing viewers to remain with the personalized flow of online TV services (Cox, 2018, p. 444). Within all cultural domains, algorithms impact what content we encounter online (Beer, 2013; Fisher & Mehozay, 2019). Algorithms may influence what users choose to consume, but as invisible frames, they do so in rather opaque ways. Algorithms hence represent an important, but challenging dimension to study in terms of how people encounter these or their awareness and understanding of how algorithms influence behaviour (Hargittai, Gruber, Djukaric, Fuchs & Brombach, 2020).

Considering how viewers find themselves in a situation characterized by self-scheduling opportunities combined with the shepherding strategies of service providers, viewers are positioned between being in control and being controlled. While existing research on interfaces, branding strategies and the role of algorithms as cultural intermediaries has substantiated how on-demand access to content may not equal user agency and control, the present research addresses these issues from a viewer perspective. This implies countering a tendency in much critical scholarship to downplay the need for empirical studies of audiences and instead assume or naturalize a general pejorative view of them as gullible targets of media power and logics (Livingstone, 2019).

4. Hypotheses: predictors to enjoyment of watching television on streaming services

This study starts from a premise that some predictors will be applicable to watching television across formats, whereas others reflect streaming services specifically. The former are hence predictors that apply to watching linear television, but which are also (or even particularly) relevant for streaming services. The second group of predictors concern what I argue are streaming-specific conditions and how viewers act upon those conditions. I expect the latter to contribute substantially to the variance in enjoyment, but not to eradicate the effect of the former types of predictors. While enjoyment is likely partially associated with streaming-specific features and possibilities, streaming does not completely transform what watching television entails.

Television is one of the most prevalent and prominent sources of entertainment, and people are affected by television entertainment in multifaceted ways (c.f., Vorderer & Reinecke, 2015). Regardless of format, television may hence be considered to provide pleasurable as well as meaningful entertainment experiences. Previous studies have tended to investigate hedonic and eudaimonic motivations by asking respondents to name a "favourite film" (Oliver & Raney, 2011) or a favourite "sad book" (Koopman, 2015) and next rate affective reactions to these. In Oliver et al.'s (2016) study of video games, respondents were likewise asked to name a game they had found either fun or meaningful. In their final model, meaningful game was used as an exogenous variable associated with higher ratings on the eudaimonic-derived insight-construct, which in turn was the strongest predictor for appreciation. In the present study, respondents were not asked to name programmes they had found fun or meaningful. Since television streaming services present viewers with content-libraries and the opportunity to explore these according to preferences, we might also expect that they are well suited to give viewers the experiences they skew towards preferring. Regardless of whether people intentionally seek and watch programmes that correspond to their preferences, these viewer motivations are expected to be reflected in the enjoyment of watching. My first hypothesis is therefore,

H1: Hedonic viewing motivations (H1a) and eudaimonic motivations (H1b) positively predict enjoyment.

Continuing with conditions from linear television that are expected to be important for viewers of streaming services, I expect television viewing to be an important social activity, lending itself well to pursuit feelings of relatedness and togetherness (Livingstone, 2003; Lull, 1990; Tse, 2016). While streaming services are often considered to encourage individual viewing patterns (Enli & Syvertsen, 2016; Jenner, 2016; Tryon, 2012), the social position of television remains important: watching in the company of others, talking about television (or specific programmes), and sharing recommendations could be considered particularly vital in a context where scheduled programming has become less of a norm (Lüders & Sundet, 2021; Simons, 2015). The social role of watching and talking about television conceptually links with relatedness within the context of SDT, that is, the intrinsic need to feel connected with others (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Tamborini et al., 2010). Hence viewers for whom watching television is an activity that expands beyond the act of watching to also include a component of togetherness may find watching television more meaningful. My second hypothesis is therefore,

H2: Social significance of watching television positively predicts enjoyment.

I next turn to predictors that relate to the specific opportunities and constraints of streaming services. Self-scheduling contrasts with the linear flow-model of broadcasting. The programming mechanisms of the latter are conceived as enticing viewers into an evening of watching what they are being served (Lotz, 2017; Williams, [1974], 2003). Accepting the premise that streaming offers viewers the opportunity to choose what programmes to watch when (and where), the subsequent question is how viewers employ these self-scheduling opportunities. Research suggests that self-scheduling is employed to ensure time is well spent. Rather than watching random programmes, viewers convey sentiments suggesting that they watch programmes worth their time (Lüders & Sundet, 2021). I conceptualize such practices as deliberate viewing, signalling how viewers experience being in charge to make considered decisions on when to tune in to watch specific programmes. This notion relates to autonomy within the framework of SDT, depicting a sense of volition, denoting activities where the individual experiences being in charge (Ryan et al., 2006). Aligned with SDT, deliberate viewing is an expression of autonomy, which next is expected to relate to enjoyment.

H3: Deliberate viewing positively predicts enjoyment.

Streaming services afford viewers with opportunities for largely undisturbed viewing settings (Steiner & Xu, 2020) contrasting with how the viewing experience of scheduled TV is stitched together by programmes and within- and between-programme interruptions (Bruun, 2020; Ihlebæk, Syvertsen & Ytreberg, 2014; Williams, [1974], 2003). Self-scheduling combined with the uninterrupted viewing experience of streaming television appears well suited for modes of viewing characterized by attentive engagement with what happens on the screen (Lüders & Sundet, 2021). I refer to this as immersive viewing, which conceptually relates to focused immersion, defined as "the experience of total engagement where other attentional demands are, in essence, ignored" (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000, p. 673). In Agarwal and Karahannal's study, this is one of five dimensions for cognitive absorption, an underlying determinant influencing behavioural intentions to use information technology. In the context of streaming services, focused immersion has been applied to examine binge watching behaviour (Merikivi et al., 2018). For this study, I conceptualize immersive viewing as the experience of attentive and engaged viewing where other distractions are avoided to optimize a sense of presence and involvement. I propose that these intensified levels of involvement result in higher levels of enjoyment:

H4: Immersive viewing positively predicts enjoyment.

Finally, service providers employ mechanisms to steer viewers towards content they are likely interested in watching. These mechanisms include how interfaces are structured with certain titles occupying the most visible position; downplaying search functions in favour of browsing functions and categories of content; and for services that rely on behavioural data, by personalized recommendations (Johnson, 2019). This study introduces the construct programmed paths, conceptualized as the mechanisms service providers employ to guide or shepherd viewers through content libraries towards content they might like watching. Viewers who find these paths and recommendations helpful or useful likely report greater enjoyment with watching TV streaming services, hence:

H5: Positive perceptions of programmed paths positively predict enjoyment.

While this hypothesis is positively framed, it also denotes that for viewers who are critical to programmed paths, a negative association with enjoyment could be expected. For example, viewers who react negatively to being categorized as viewers, or who react

Table 1
Sample respondent comments.

Theme	Illustrative comments
Social significance	• It's like you exchange recommendations back and forth. If I've been watching a series. • It's a bit like, "oh, have you watched the last episode. Are you up-to-date on what happened?" Those kinds of conversations. • It's a way of knowing them, right? If I have no insight into their life, then they have this community where I'm lost. • When people you know watch the same show, it gets this social function. Watching the same as your friends becomes a social thing. • You share the same references. It becomes this common culture, or culture bubble.
Deliberate viewing	• You sit down to watch a series or a film. You don't sit down to watch TV, like random crap. It becomes the activity. • [Linear] TV is more like; you just keep in on in the background… • There's so much content, so you need to make some decisions for how you want to spend your time. • [With linear TV] I sometimes end up watching something completely random like *Teenage Pregnancy* or *Teenage Mom*, and then afterwards, I'm thinking "what did I just watch?" • I try to, well since screen time adds up to quite an amount, I try to be critical to what I'm watching, compared to 'oh well, this is what's on TV2 at the moment." • I've just completed watching *Handmaid's Tale,* unfortunately. And *Girls.* So, I'm waiting for *Homeland* season 6.
Immersive viewing	• I usually pay close attention when I watch TV and prefer to have something I really like watching. Because it needs to be something worth paying attention to. • I'm strict and pause the video if I need to pay attention elsewhere. I can't do other things while watching, because then I miss out on what's happening in the series. • Like, if I sit there with my phone, I get much less interested in what I watch [on the television screen] and figure I can just as well not watch. So, I try to focus on what I'm watching. • Often, I just want to disconnect because I have so much to do. And to find, or it becomes some sort of mediation, to just be immersed in your own separate world [watching television]. • I've watched *True Detective* two-three times. I still find it fantastic. Scenographically, and yes, you discover new patterns all the time. I don't mind watching series that don't talk to me in the same way, but that's more entertainment and feels more like a waste of time.
Programmed paths	• I think Netflix is a bit too aggressive with categorizing content. It's more difficult to just browse than to be served what Netflix believes you want to watch.... What they push you towards in the first ten categories is really just a small spectre of what they have. • When HBO and Netflix try to tell me what I like, I'm like, 'no, I won't, I'm certainly not watching that. • What I miss is like, "try something new", right? It's not the amount of content, which is the problem, it's the sorting of content… It's comfortable to get what you expect and what fits with your perspective. But you lose the opportunity to widen your horizon. • There's more variety [in content I watch]. Because I follow what's recommended. It becomes quite varied. • They [Netflix] also changed to percentage match, how well they believe this series or film match your preferences. It actually works pretty well. And sort of made me understand why they recommended stuff for me. • I watch TV to wind down. And if I need to work hard to find something to watch, it won't happen. It should be easy to find content worth spending time on.

negatively to how they are categorized as viewers, might find programmed paths an undesirable component of watching TV streaming services.

These hypotheses include predictors where no validated scales exist (social significance, deliberate watching, perceptions of programmed paths). The purpose of Study 1 (see Section 5) was therefore to develop scales that reflect these conditions of viewing and to provide richer data that explains how the hypothesized associations play out. Study 2 (see Section 6) was designed to confirm the factor structure of the items and to examine how these predict enjoyment of watching television on streaming services.

5. Study 1: qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews were conducted to explore and investigate audience experiences of watching television on streaming services. This explorative purpose informed the thematizing of the interview study. Participants were thus asked questions related to the role of television in their everyday lives; experience with streaming services; content preferences; the social and cultural value they ascribed to televisual content; ways of watching television; and how they perceived and acted upon key features of streaming services.

A variation sample was employed with a heterogenous distribution of age and gender. Between 2017 and 2019, twenty Norwegian-speaking participants (ten male, ten female) who were 21 to 72 years old (median age 33.5) took part in the study, with interviews lasting between 60 and 90 min. Participants were recruited using printed fliers, sharing of a Facebook-post, and snowballing from personal and professional networks. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and were next coded in NVivo 12. I have elsewhere relied on the same qualitative dataset to explore and explicate experiential dimension of watching online TV (Lüders & Sundet, 2021), though not with the explicit objective to develop a sample of items to reflect predictive constructs for what makes viewers enjoy watching television on streaming services.

5.1. Scale and item construction

The analysis of interviews attends to how social and material-specific conditions of watching television on streaming services appeared linked with enjoyment. In addition to what is revealed in this analysis, it should be noted that both hedonic and eudaimonic motives were clearly present in the accounts of the participants. Social conditions relate to the larger social significance of television in the everyday lives of participants. Material-specific conditions relate to (1) how participants employ the self-scheduling opportunities to make deliberate choices regarding how to spend their screen-time, and (2) create secluded spaces where watching becomes the primary activity; and (3) varied sentiments related to the control online TV providers retain regarding guiding viewers towards certain types of programmes. Table 1 provides examples of how study participants relate to these four conditions.

Social significance. The interviews suggest that individualized viewing is quite common, but not to the extent that watching in the company of family and friends has lost its significance. Quite the contrary: watching together comes across as an activity with a continued social and ritual significance. Yet it is a mode of watching contingent on sharing the same preferences. Moreover, enjoyment of watching does not seem related with whether participants tend to watch alone or in the company of others. More demarcated patterns emerge regarding the broader social significance of watching television. Popular culture and television content have always been important as shared references (Simons, 2015), and the continuities to pre-streaming are here evident. The accounts of the participants depict how sharing recommendations (largely face-to-face) is a way of navigating content libraries and finding programmes of interest. Participants also point to how watching the same shows constructs a sense of belonging and a sense of being part of a shared culture. The togetherness of sharing the same references seems to strengthen why participants find watching meaningful, extending the enjoyment of watching beyond the act of watching.

Deliberate viewing. Self-scheduling appears connected with being more determined regarding what to watch. Randomly "watching what's on" is considered much less interesting, and instead, participants depict how they make cognisant decisions on what they want to watch and what is worth their time. Symptomatically, participants refer to specific programmes they are currently watching. Deliberate viewing thus also includes the repertoire of programmes (most often series) they follow until completion of season.

Immersive viewing. Closely connected to deliberate viewing, participants depict how they try to focus primarily on what they are watching, leave distractions aside, and make the most of the time they spend watching television. Immersive viewing depicts viewing patterns where participants find an increased sense of reward from the time spent watching if their attention is directed at what happens in the programmes. This does not imply that they do not also sometimes just keep the programme running in the background. Yet, allowing oneself to be immersed in what unfolds in a programme, or traversing to an alternative story world, appears to tie in with what makes watching particularly rewarding.

Programmed paths. Conditions related to how streaming providers guide and shepherd viewers towards certain content can be considered to work against the agency of viewers, interfering with the individual experience of being fully in charge (Ryan et al., 2006). Critical sentiments amongst participants here reflect perceptions of being directed towards a small spectre of available content, and a nagging sensation that the interface and personalization work against content diversity and being challenged as a viewer. However, participants were not necessarily critical to the idea that large libraries of content need to be structured and curated, but rather to *how* service providers exercised their controlling mechanisms. The same participants could hence be positive towards the need for programmed paths, but negative to what types of content their attention as viewers were directed towards. By comparison, participants who experienced sorting of content and personalization to help them find relevant and interesting content were content both with the need for such mechanisms and how these mechanisms work.

These four conditions comprise 19 measurement items obtained from coding the interviews. The next part reports from Study 2, where the reliability of the scales is examined and where the hypotheses are tested.

6. Study 2: predicting enjoyment of watching television on streaming services

The goal of this study is two-fold: First, I employ principal axis factoring on the items obtained from the interviews combined with the hedonic and eudaimonic items. Second, I examine how hedonic and eudaimonic motives (H1), social significance (H2), deliberate viewing (H3), immersive viewing (H4), and perceptions of programmed paths (H5) serve as predictors for enjoyment of watching television on streaming services. In line with the SDT-framework, enjoyment is conceptualized as an affective state not limited to a mere pleasure response. Instead, enjoyment is conceived as a process of psychological well-being.

6.1. Method and data

This study is based on data from a cross-sectional online survey, conducted by Kantar TNS in October 2020. A stratified probability sample was employed to recruit 1015 respondents from Kantar's web panel of 46,000 participants. Despite efforts to recruit a sample representing the Norwegian population on age, sex and education, younger respondents are underrepresented in the final sample (see Table 2). The hypotheses are tested with a sub-sample since these concern actual experiences with streaming services. Only respondents who report to stream television at least monthly are included in this sub-sample ($N = 867$), excluding 148 respondents from further analysis. On average, monthly TV-streamers are younger ($M = 50.1$/SD=15.43) than the non-streamers ($M = 67.64$/SD=11.12). Non-streamers also include a larger share of respondents with lower education (Table 2).

Data were processed using SPSS (version 27). Principal axis factor analysis was used to identify clusters of variables (see Section 6.3), and the research hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression analysis with enjoyment as the outcome variable (see Section 6.4).

6.2. Measurements

Table 3 includes items (in condensed form compared to questionnaire) for measured constructs. Respondents indicated whether they agreed with statements on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

Enjoyment. Items for enjoyment of watching television on streaming services were adapted from prior research (Patwardhan, Yang & Patwardhan, 2011; Ryan et al., 2006; Tamborini et al., 2010). These questions were adapted to television streaming services, and were phrased to encompass anticipation before watching, and enjoyment/feeling good during and after having watched television on streaming services. The enjoyment items were included early in the questionnaire to elicit immediate responses from respondents before answering subsequent questions, which could potentially inform their reflections on enjoyment.

Hedonic and eudaimonic motivations were adapted from Oliver and Raney (2011). Respondents answered the 11 included items in randomized order, implying they were not first presented with hedonic motivation items and next eudaimonic motivation items. These items were phrased as preferences for television programmes in general and regardless of mode of distribution.

Social significance. To account for the social role of watching television, five items were developed based on the findings from Study 1. These items cover whether respondents like to talk about programmes with others, the extent to which they share recommendations for what to watch, and whether keeping track of what friends and acquaintances watch creates a sense of community.

Deliberate viewing. Five items were developed to measure the extent to which respondents make considered decisions on what to watch, and the extent to which those decisions reflect what programmes they end up watching. These items reflect how participants in

Table 2
Demographics full sample ($N = 1015$), monthly TV-streamers ($N = 867$), and non-streamers ($N = 148$).

	Full sample	Monthly streamers	Non-streamers
Gender			
Male	49%	49%	48%
Female	51%	51%	52%
Age			
Mean age/SD	53/16.1	50/15.4	68/11.1
Below 30 years	9%	10%	0%
30–49	26%	29%	5%
45–59	31%	33%	19%
60 years or older	35%	28%	76%
Education			
Primary school	5%	5%	9%
Upper secondary school	34%	33%	43%
Higher education $\leq$ 4 years	33%	34%	29%
Higher education 4 years $>$	27%	29%	20%
Income before tax			
Less than 299 999	15%	15%	15%
300 000 – 499 999	34%	32%	48%
500 000 – 699 999	25%	27%	15%
700 000 or more	16%	17%	9%
Don't want to answer	10%	9%	14%

Note: Some variables do not add to 100% due to rounding. Income in NOK (1 NOK $\approx$ 0.12 USD).

Table 3
Factor loadings, principal axis factor analysis ($N = 867$).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Enjoyment							
I like to watch TSS	**.840**						
Watching TSS is interesting	**.762**						
I always look forward to watching TSS	**.706**						
I'd miss it if I couldn't watch TSS	**.689**						
I feel good after having watched TSS	**.665**				−0.152		
Eudaimonic motivations. I like programmes that							
…make me more reflective		**.750**					
…challenge my way of seeing the world		**.733**					
…convey a profound message		**.711**					
…make me think		**.699**					
…focus on meaningful human conditions		**.613**					
Immersive viewing. When I watch TSS							
…my attention is directed towards what happens on the screen			**−0.776**				
…I follow what happens in the programme			**−0.677**				
…I'm seldom distracted			**−0.563**				
…I feel totally immersed in it	.197		**−0.495**				.109
Hedonic motivations							
Programmes that make me laugh are amongst my favourites				**.741**			
My favourite kind of programmes are happy and positive				**.591**			
It's important to me to have fun when watching				**.568**			
The best programmes are ones that are entertaining				**.544**			
Uncomplicated programmes can be entertaining				**.504**			
I like programmes that can be considered "shallow" or "silly"				**.466**		.193	
Programmed paths (invented)							
Programmes most visible on the frontpage is good selection of available content					**−0.754**		
TSS usually recommend content that is relevant for me					**−0.699**		
Recommendations usually include content I like					**−0.641**		
Recommendations help me discover content I want to watch					**−0.633**		
Programmes are categorized in a way that makes it easy to explore available content					**−0.591**		
Social significance (invented)							
I like to talk about programmes with others						**.827**	
I like to recommend what others should watch						**.721**	
I like that people recommend what I should watch						**.711**	
Keeping track of what others watch creates a sense of community						**.682**	
I like to keep track of what people I know watch						**.652**	
Deliberate viewing (invented). When I'm watching TSS							
…I end up watching programmes I didn't plan to watch (reversed)							**.625**
…I usually know what to watch before I start watching			−0.204				**.589**
…I usually watch what I intended to watch			−0.303				**.519**
…I often watch other programmes once my programme has ended (reversed)				−0.171			**.462**
…I browse through available programmes to find something to watch (reversed)	−0.152		.212				.351
Variance explained	20.64	10.22	7.53	6.25	5.29	4.69	3.90
Cronbach's alpha	.88	.83	.72	.78	.83	.86	.67
M	3.66	3.80	3.52	3.43	3.24	3.43	3.55
SD	.82	.64	.64	.64	.68	.84	.68

Note: Factor loadings below .15 suppressed. Wording of items condensed compared to questionnaire. Television streaming services shortened to TSS in the table, but not in the questionnaire.

study 1 express needs for spending television-time prudently, that is, not necessarily trying to reduce time spent watching, but to ensure that time is spent on worthwhile content.

Immersive viewing. Items measuring attentive viewing experiences characterized by a sense of presence and involvement were partly adapted from Merikivi et al.'s study (2018) and partly constructed based on study 1. These items encompass viewing as attentive and focused activities where what unfolds on screen represents the primary universe for viewers, and where distractions are avoided.

Programmed paths. The final construct concerns how service providers device paths through content libraries regarding how interfaces are structured, by categorizing of content, and by recommending content for viewers. Five items were developed, covering categorization of content and recommended content. Items were deliberately phrased without specifying recommendations as algorithmically calculated. Respondents were asked to consider television streaming services overall. Not all of these provide recommendations based on behavioural data traces, but they could all be considered to recommend content by giving certain programmes a more prominent position.

6.3. Factor analysis

A principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation (direct oblimin) was conducted on the measured items (Table 3). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = 0.876. Factors that loaded with an eigenvalue of 1 or

greater and had at least three loadings above 0.40 were retained. The resultant factors explained 58.52% of the total variance after rotation. The scree plot showed inflections that justify retaining seven factors. Structure coefficients were also inspected and align with the pattern coefficients.

Items that loaded on each factor were summed and averaged. Cronbach's alpha was above the recommended value of 0.70 for all factors except for deliberate viewing (α= 0.67). Reliabilities below 0.70 are, by some, characterized as adequate, particularly considering how coefficient alpha is partly a function of number of items (Clark & Watson, 2016). For scale development, Clark and Watson (2016) recommend inspecting the average interitem correlation in order to assess the unidimensionality of a scale (which Cronbach's alpha does not measure). Average interitem correlations in the range of 0.15–0.50. are indicative of unidimensionality. The average interitem correlation between the four deliberate viewing items is 0.33. The construct is hence included in the subsequent analysis, though additional iterations in developing the scale are needed.

6.4. Results

Correlation coefficients between predictor variables were below the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Table 4), and variance inflation factor values were all below 10 (Field, 2018), suggesting multicollinearity is not an issue.

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses (Table 5). In the first step, hedonic and eudaimonic motivation were entered as predictive constructs. In the second step, social significance was entered. In the third step, the material-related constructs were entered: deliberate viewing, immersive viewing, and programmed paths. The first and second step hence refer to motives and conditions from linear modes of watching, which are expected to remain important also for television streaming services. With the addition of the streaming-specific constructs in the third step, the analysis allows for assessing the significance of the latter constructs when controlling for the legacy linear-constructs.

In model 1, hedonic and eudaimonic motives account for 10% of the variation in enjoyment ($R^2 = 0.096$). After entry of social significance in Model 2, the total variance explained by the model was 28%, with a significant F (3, 834) = 111.16 ($p < .001$). Social significance explained an additional 19% of the variance in enjoyment after controlling for hedonic and eudaimonic motivation, R squared change = 0.19, F change (3, 834) = 221.05 ($p < .001$). Model 3 entailed the entry of deliberate viewing, immersive viewing, and programmed paths. After including these predictors, the total variance explained by the model was 38%, F (3, 831) = 85.89 ($p < .001$). The increase in the total variance explained was 10%, F change (3, 831) = 43.6 ($p < .001$).

Hedonic (H1a) and eudaimonic motivations (H1b) positively predict enjoyment in the first model ($\beta = 0.28$ and $0.15, p < .001$), but in the second and third model, the association between eudaimonic motivation and enjoyment is no longer significant, and while the effect of hedonic motivation remains significant, the effect is small ($\beta = 0.08, p < .05$ in model 3). These results align poorly with the common portrayal and branding of streaming services as offering abundant catalogues of content available for viewers at their own convenience (for critical perspectives, see Johnson, 2019; Stewart, 2016). The branding rhetoric of streaming services implies viewers can indulge in exactly the type of content they prefer. Overall, respondents report high levels of eudaimonic motivation ($M = 3.8$, SD = 0.64, see Table 3). Hence, when eudaimonic motivation does not predict variation in enjoyment, this may be interpreted as a certain level of discontentment with the content libraries available.

Instead, variance in enjoyment is largely explained by the remaining predictors. Social significance (H2) positively predicts enjoyment ($\beta = 0.33, p < .001$ in model 3). Both the R-squared increase in model 2 and the standardized coefficient in model 3 suggest that social significance is the most important predictor for enjoyment. This result runs counter to common assumptions related to television streaming, narrowcasting, and personalization (see Tse, 2016 for a discussion), and instead reiterates a depiction of togetherness as part of what makes television viewing meaningful and worthwhile.

The final step in the regression analysis concerned the extent to which enjoyment was associated with predictors related to what streaming services afford: deliberate viewing (H3), immersive viewing (H4), and programmed paths (H5). Deliberate viewing predicts enjoyment, but the effect is negative ($\beta = -0.15, p < .001$). The final two hypotheses are supported, with immersive viewing ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < .001$) and perceptions of programmed paths ($\beta = 0.17, p < .001$) positively predicting enjoyment. The pattern regarding how these three constructs predict enjoyment is clear: viewers who have not necessarily made up their minds, who follow the leads of service providers and who enter a state of immersion appreciate their viewing experiences the most.

In forming the hypotheses, I posited that the streaming-specific predictors would contribute to explain variance in enjoyment, but not to eradicate the effect of hedonic motivation, eudaimonic motivation, and social significance. The results can hence be interpreted to indicate the relative importance of predictors. The effect of hedonic motives remains significant but is substantially affected by the introduction of social significance and the streaming-specific predictors. The effect of eudaimonic motives do not hold once social significance is included in the model. The streaming-specific predictors modify the effect of social significance, but it remains the most important predictor for enjoyment.

7. Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to investigate and theorize how conditions related to streaming and agency are associated with the enjoyment of watching on-demand television. Increased viewer agency and control was, on the one hand, theoretically positioned as an accurate depiction of how viewers adjust television viewing to their own pace of life and content preferences (Lüders & Sundet, 2021) . On the other hand, the ways in which service providers device paths through content libraries was acknowledged as structures that limit viewer agency and control (Cox, 2018; Johnson, 2019, 2020; Van Esler, 2021). My approach also encompasses how watching television on streaming services does not negate old practices of watching television. Hence, while viewers access television as libraries

Table 4
Correlation coefficients.

	HM	EM	SS	DV	IV	PP
Hedonic motivation (HM)	1					
Eudaimonic motivation (EM)	−0.05	1				
Social significance (SS)	.31**	.19**	1			
Deliberate viewing (DV)	−0.24**	.07*	−0.23**	1		
Immersive viewing (IV)	.03	.14**	.20**	.20**	1	
Programmed paths (PP)	.29**	.11**	.42**	−0.20**	.19**	1
Enjoyment (E)	.27**	.13**	.51**	−0.23**	.33**	.41**

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 5
Results from the hierarchical regression analysis.

	Dependent variable: enjoyment			
	b	***SE B***	***β***	***p***
Model 1				
Constant	1.77	.22		<0.001
Hedonic motivation	.35	.04	.28	<0.001
Eudaimonic motivation	.19	.04	.15	<0.001
Model 2				
Constant	1.33	.20		<0.001
Hedonic motivation	.16	.04	.13	<0.001
Eudaimonic motivation	.07	.04	.06	.068
Social significance	.45	.03	.47	<0.001
Model 3				
Constant	.98	.25		<0.001
Hedonic motivation	.10	.04	.08	<0.05
Eudaimonic motivation	.05	.03	.04	.193
Social significance	.32	.03	.33	<0.001
Deliberate viewing	−0.18	.04	−0.15	<0.001
Immersive viewing	.31	.04	.25	<0.001
Programmed paths	.20	.04	.17	<0.001

Note: $R^2 = 0.10$ for step 1 ($p < .001$); $\Delta R^2 = 0.19$ for step 2 ($p < .001$); $\Delta R^2 = 0.10$ for step 3 ($p < .001$.

of content, enjoyment was expected to remain related to hedonic pleasure and eudaimonic motivations for meaningful content (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Likewise, I expected human needs for relatedness (Ryan et al., 2006) to tie in with a continued importance of watching television as an activity that lends itself well for pursuing a sense of togetherness and community with peers (Livingstone, 2003; Lull, 1990). Television as social could hence be conceptualized to counteract simplistic notions of individualized and personalized viewing.

Crudely summarized, the results from study 2 depict the blissful streamer as a person who follows the flow of streaming providers and immerses her/himself in what unfolds on the screen, and for whom television content lives on as part of the social fabric that makes up peer communities. I will discuss the implications of the findings and delineate how they contribute insights to scholarly discourses of media power versus audience power.

Deliberate viewing, immersive viewing and programmed paths help delineate how agency operates at different levels and in ways that contrast with the flow experience of scheduled television. Raymond Williams' notion of flow leaves the viewer with limited agency and positions the viewer as submissive to programme schedules: "even when we have switched on for a particular 'programme', we find ourselves watching the one after it and the one after that" (Williams, [1974], 2003, p. 94). The viewing experience is consequently inherently interwoven with the sequencing of programme items, to the extent that flow defines the viewing experience.

By contrast, if streaming services replace the scheduling flows with other mechanisms for guiding and capturing viewers (Gray & Lotz, 2019), then their structuring flows appear to operate differently compared to the scheduled flow or seem to require distinguishing between the interface experience and the viewing experience (Lüders & Sundet, 2021). Programmed paths relate to the interface experience and how some programmes are made more visible by way of how programmes are sorted, organized, and recommended. Deliberate viewing is conceptualized and measured to depict a viewing experience that is close to the opposite of Williams' account of scheduled flows as defining the television viewing experience. The interviews in Study 1 portray a common conception of how self-scheduling relates to making considered decisions for what to watch. Relatedly, scheduled flows operate by interruptions quite different from the experience of watching shows on subscription-based on-demand services. Once the viewer presses play, no breaks interfere with the storytelling. As a result, streaming facilitates immersive experiences for viewers who can focus on what takes place on the screen. The construct development and results reported in this paper thus open new directions for investigating viewer agency in ways that oppose a binary distinction between media power and audience agency (Livingstone, 2019). Television streaming services may hence be conceived to steer and guide viewer attention at the interface level, but viewers might see themselves as having planned their viewing session prior to opening the service application.

Study 2 tests whether these three constructs predict the enjoyment of watching television on streaming services, and not the extent

to which they characterize the streaming experience. However, the means of the summed and averaged items for each predictive construct provide some indication. With a five-point Likert scale, means of above 3.5 for deliberate viewing (SD = 0.68) and immersive viewing (SD = 0.64) (see Table 3) suggest that they relatively well capture a tendency for how viewers watch television on streaming services. Yet, while deliberate viewing may capture how viewers watch, such planned viewing negatively predicts enjoyment. People may plan what to watch and stick with those self-schedules, but it is notable that such "self-discipline" is not associated with the enjoyment accrued from watching. By contrast and as predicted, immersive viewing positively predicts enjoyment. Viewers hence tend to present themselves as focused and engaged viewers, and those who consider their viewing experiences as immersed, also report higher levels of enjoyment. While positive perceptions of programmed paths predict enjoyment, a mean of 3.24 (SD = 0.68) for this construct (Table 3) indicates that viewers are quite neutral in their assessment of the value of these recommendations.

To some extent, the results could be interpreted to question the pertinence of an SDT-approach to studying enjoyment and television streaming services, or at least to problematize the link between agency and enjoyment. The common notion that the use-value and attraction of on-demand services pertain to how these services put users in a position of control (regardless of whether this status is real or merely a false perception) obscures what may be equally true: how experiences of enjoyment and meaningfulness might well be outcomes of letting go of contemporary expectations for self-discipline (Madsen, 2015) in return for rewarding experiences and serendipitous surprises.

Regarding programmed paths, the results do not explicate the extent to which these paths influence viewer behaviour. The mechanisms at play are moreover subtle (Johnson, 2019; Van Esler, 2021) and, for many viewers, likely rendered quite invisible. People's awareness of personalized recommendations varies substantially (Gran, Booth, & Bucher, 2021), and different levels of awareness probably also characterize attentiveness to how programmes are made visible and invisible by way of how interfaces are organized. However, few studies have investigated the structuring forces of service providers in combination with what we may term the structuring forces of social connections. The social and ritual role of television remains substantial, and the results depict social significance as the strongest predictor for enjoyment. It is also worth noting that social significance and programmed paths are the two predictor variables that are most strongly correlated (Table 4). Both peer communities and online TV providers can be considered as cultural intermediaries, and likely as intermediaries with overlaps in terms of what programmes are recommended. There is hence a need to understand the larger social context for television viewing, and how both programmed paths and peer communities act as centripetal forces guiding the attention of viewers towards certain content (see also Lüders & Sundet, 2021).

For audiences it might therefore be difficult to delineate the influence of programmed paths on viewer behaviour. While interfaces are organized with selected programmes prominently featured, the path chosen is influenced also by what programmes are featured in social talk of television. Since cultural taste preferences for television content tend to be less individualized than in other cultural fields (Bennett, 2006, p. 194), social recommendations likely play a substantial role for television audiences. Programmed paths may operate in subtle and opaque ways, implying some viewers do not "see" how interfaces and recommendations operate. However, the intermingling of recommendations from social connections indicates that viewers who are aware of these mechanisms may still reason that they would rather follow leads from friends and acquaintances (or by media coverage and how cultural critics review and recap shows worth watching). Consequently, while critical studies of interfaces and algorithms contribute insights that counter brand rhetoric of the individualized and empowered media user (Cox, 2018; Johnson, 2019, 2020; Van Esler, 2021), audience studies are needed to address what these studies cannot: how viewers are acting and relational subjects, and how their experiences defy explanatory models where viewers are considered either in-control or being-controlled.

8. Limitations and conclusion

The full research model tested in study 2 suggests that the variation in enjoyment is primarily explained by social significance, immersive viewing, and programmed paths. The effect of hedonic motivations remains significant but small, and the association between eudaimonic motivation and enjoyment is no longer significant. However, a limitation of the study concerns whether motivations can be considered to directly predict enjoyment. Unlike related studies (Koopman, 2015; Oliver & Raney, 2011; Oliver et al., 2016), the present study did not ask respondents to name a favourite fun or meaningful programme. Instead, this study was predicated on the conceptual shortcut that self-scheduling viewers will seek to fulfil their hedonic or eudaimonic motivations, which would consequently predict enjoyment. A possible direction for future research is to consider hedonic and eudaimonic motives as exogenous variables associated with the predictive variables included in this study, which might subsequently predict enjoyment[1].

A second limitation relates to the low reliability of the deliberate viewing measure. Theoretically, deliberate viewing represents a contribution by depicting a mode of planned viewing different from the flow-model of broadcast schedules. However, the issue of low reliability should be addressed through continued efforts to develop a distinct and reliable scale. Deliberate viewing is comparable to autonomy in SDT-research, a measure for which low reliability has been reported also in previous research (Tamborini et al., 2010). Though, whereas autonomy in SDT refers to an innate human need, deliberate viewing in this study refers to the notion that viewers employ self-scheduling agency to plan their viewing sessions. Tamborini et al. (2010), p. 771) suggest that "any form of media activity that gives the user choice over the media environment should satisfy autonomy needs" and encourage future research to address this empirical question. Television streaming services represent complex media environments which might certainly be investigated with research models typically employed in SDT-studies. This implies including the original and trait-like personality constructs not

[1] Attempts to specify and estimate a structural equation model gave promising results in terms of fit indices and parameter estimates, but with a significant Chi-square, indicating inadequate model fit (Kline, 2011).

included in this study.

A third limitation concerns whether it makes sense to investigate television streaming services as a general category of services without considering how these services include a variety of providers (subscription-based, ad-funded, online players from legacy broadcasters) that differ for example regarding content libraries and reliance on behavioural data to provide personalized recommendations. The included measures are relatively crude and general to be applicable to different types of streaming services. For studies with an aim to investigate the specific role of algorithmic recommendations, survey-based approaches might consider limiting the object of study to specific providers.

With these limitations in mind, the findings contribute insights to scholarly discourses about user agency in on-demand media environments. Findings defy a media power thesis and an audience power thesis and indicate the value of an analytical approach where audiences are neither treated as gullible targets nor all-empowered subjects. To some extent the media power thesis undergirds critical interface and algorithm studies, often disregarding audience practices (Cox, 2018; Johnson, 2019, 2020; Van Esler, 2021). Conversely, a needs-centred SDT-approach (and uses and gratification) risks missing components representing how human agency is circumscribed. While enjoyment of entertainment media certainly relates to variables beyond those included in this study, I hope the conceptualization and operationalization of agency-orientated variables offered here open future directions of research where agency is not positioned as an either-or position.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None

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