The Rise of Right-Coast Netflix

Spotify Comes Public as the Entertainment Media Industry Shifts to Silicon Valley

By SEAN LANGE

Cable television will die with Jim Cramer.

Talk about the fate of media companies intensified during the past year, with television channel and movie theater providers bracing themselves against the future foretold by streaming. The rise of Netflix, Amazon, and Apple has encouraged the migration of viewers to the streaming services offered by the titans of Silicon Valley — which eschew the traditional “small screen” and the silver screen for the even smaller, more lacqueried ones of laptops and iPhones — has left media’s largest corporations to pursue opposing extremes of M&A. Some companies have opted to slim down greatly, like mass media provider 21st Century Fox, which in 2017 sold off all of its assets, save its sports and world news core. Other companies have successfully expanded, like studio stalwart Disney, which preliminary purchased $71.4 billion in Fox’s assets, partially bridging the content void left by its ended collaboration with Netflix.

The asymmetry built into a deal like this one is deliberate. In the past year, Facebook, Netflix, and Amazon each announced updated plans to produce proprietary entertainment content, including news shows, through their already-imposing channels of user interaction. Concentration (on core, non-entertainment media segments) or conglomeration (of content ventures with new delivery avenues) have been the consensus actions against the ascendancy of Silicon Valley studios. More than not, Disney’s pursuit of 21st Century Fox’s FX and 20th Century Fox studios demonstrates its commitment to challenging the tech titans with digital material on its forthcoming DisneyNow app. As linear TV broadcasting erodes in favor of media that can be streamed on mobile devices, the solvency of independent cable news stations becomes greater in question. In the past few years, Disney-owned ESPN has lost over 10 million subscribers, precipitating the sport channel’s November 2017 layoff of 150 of its visible network personalities.

If that take-pushing trend were to continue across the spectrum of top cable channels, the last anchor left standing may be CNBC’s Jim Cramer. His opinions, in contrast to those of the prognosticators on ESPN, NBC, or, E! Network, influence real-time, quantifiable life choices — that is, viewers’ risk-exposed investments of their personal wealth. The Mad Money and Squawk on the Street host has made a career out of interpreting companies’ relevance to the popular human experience, an aptitude that appeals to investors on main street and Wall Street alike. Besides being hoisterous and distinctly amusing for a finance pantomime, the 62-year-old is successful at delivering educational material in incisive, memorable doses. Among his most well-known investing maxims is FANG - a mnemonic he coined in 2013 that originally comprised Facebook, Amazon, Netflix, and Google (Google has since been renamed to Alphabet). Since then, those tech stocks have dominated financial and consumer markets, with Facebook, Amazon, and Alphabet rising to become three of the four highest-valued companies in the world, thanks possibly in part to the cachet of their unified acronym. In 2018, those three corporations wield numerous platforms that attract consumers to their core internet services, including for each some sort of entertainment media venture.

So where does this leave Netflix, the one company among the FANG “media” providers whose primary service actually is movies and shows? Facebook, Amazon, and Alphabet are involved in a variety of fast-growing business sectors, from artificial intelligence, to self-driving cars, to e-commerce, to life sciences technology Netflix, meanwhile, has no such “ecosystem.” But while its business model appears stark in comparison to its counterparts, Netflix’s investors have been routinely encouraged: after announcing that it had added a record 8.33 million subscribers in the fourth quarter of 2017, Netflix’s stock jumped from $220 to a high of $286 in January 2018. The company’s staying power is demonstrated not only by persistent $1 increases in its monthly fee without suffering subscriber losses, but also by its preferability in a market that includes worthy competitors like Hulu, Amazon Video, and HBO Now. Despite a global commercial climate that has recently heralded “the death of big brands” in favor of niche producers, Netflix, with its FANG connotation and its single, superior streaming service, is a brand name that is thriving.

What has prevented Netflix from being more closely rivaled by new-and-improved labels m be the consumer segment that it operates in. Within the clothing, grocery, and appliance industries, today’s buyers are balancing at the pricing and manufacturing practices of large companies, thereby paving the way for simpler, sleeker alternatives to cut into market shares. However, quality entertainment material is expensive to license or to self-produce (Facebook will spend over $1 billion this year to launch its original content
H&M Stores See New Level of Customer Backlash

By Vivian Louie

H&M’s green hoodie has added fuel to the fire, the worldwide discussion on the issue of modern racism, regarding how the fashion industry and its consumers have become tone-deaf to cultural and social nuances. This green hoodie, modeled by a black child, bearing the words “coolest monkey in the jungle," and debuted on H&M’s European website in the Lake Hopatcong section of Jefferson Township while another is just 14 miles north along Route 15 at the site of the Chatterbox Drive-In in Frankford Township. Further south, new Wawas are planned for the site of several buildings along Morris Turnpike in Springfield and at the corner of Routes 1/9 and Park Avenue in Linden. Red Bank is also slated to gain a second Wawa since the company is seeking to open a location at the former Auto Exotica site at the corner of Route 35 and Newman Springs Road. Finally, just a few blocks away from Rutgers University’s Livingston Campus, a Wawa is planned for the corner of Bruns and Plainsfield Avenues in Edison Township.

PENNROSE

At least 100 people will soon be living across the street from one of New Jersey’s oldest and largest correctional facilities. Pennrose Properties of Philadelphia will construct the Cedar Meadows Supportive Housing Apartments at 1426-1468 Rahway Avenue in Woodbridge Township’s Avenel section. The 16-acre property is just across the street from the East Jersey State Prison and previously contained the New Jersey State Reformatory Staff Housing Complex for prison employees such as the warden. The new community is expected to include 100 rentals, community rooms, a library, a courtyard, and supportive services. The project is receiving $4.2 million in financing from the Superstorm Sandy Special Needs Housing Fund, and 25 of the units will be reserved for residents who are elderly or have a disability.

Finally, while residents of Mercer County may regularly visit Tropical Smoothie Cafe since it operates locations in Hamilton and West Windsor, there are currently no locations in northern New Jersey. Now, a franchise will open at the corner of Route 10 and Eisenhower Parkway in Livingston in mid-March. The new store will be within a recently completed plaza called The Corner at Livingston Circle that also contains locations of Shake Shack and The Container Store. Tropical Smoothie Cafe is based in Atlanta and serves 33 flavors of smoothies, in addition to making lunch bowls and sandwiches.
Where did you grow up?
I grew up in the Philadelphia area, in Delaware County.

How did your childhood shape your choice of major?
So, I grew up in Delaware County, Pennsylvania — but in high school, I moved to Flint, Michigan, so I think by living there I really saw the direct impact that economic policy, good or bad, can have on people’s lives, and I think that’s what really sparked my interest in Economics.

How did your education impact your studies in Economics?
I got a great foundation for my graduate studies [as an undergraduate]; and Minnesota was also really good. It’s really interesting; I got in [macroeconomics], and I think there are a lot of political and theoretical divisions among macroeconomists, more so than among macroeconomists. Schools really fall into camps along these political spectrums, and Minnesota is really on one far end of the spectrum. I think it was a positive experience having my political opinions challenged by my professors. There was also an expectation that you would be teaching and sharing your research all the time, and I think that really prepared me for being in front of the classroom.

Did you work somewhere else before TCNJ?
I didn’t have a full-time job but I worked as a graduate instructor when I was at Minnesota. I also worked at the Federal Reserve Bank in Minneapolis while I was there.

How were those experiences?
I really liked working at the Fed, and it felt like my work was having a direct impact on economic policy. I like teaching a lot better though. I had liked helping students, and I felt like teaching also made my research a lot better too. In Economics, more so than a lot of other disciplines, there’s a huge disparity between how much math and other complications you have to add to your thoughts between grad and undergrad. I think being forced to think about your research in both abstract terms and in terms of fundamental theories is important.

What tips do you have for students studying Economics?
I think that if you’re really interested in pursuing [graduate school], you need to build a strong math and statistics foundation. I would, if you could, consider a double major in either math or statistics. I think that after you graduate there is a lot of good internship opportunities; and for people considering graduate studies, an internship is a good halfway point between being an undergraduate and a graduate student. There’s a big disparity between how formal and how mathematical your work is in the two environments, so I think having a transition between the two through an internship where you’re interacting more closely with economists can help with that.

Dr. Matthew Greenblatt is a new professor in the School of Business at TCNJ. Last fall, he taught Intro to Microeconomics; and this spring, he is teaching Intro to Macroeconomics, as well as European Economic History. Dr. Greenblatt studied History at the University of Pennsylvania before earning his Ph.D. in Economics at the University of Minnesota. He sat down to share a bit more about his life and experiences.

Do you have any tips for students who are studying business in general?
We try to teach students in Econ that economics is a philosophical system — that it’s a way of thinking about the world. So what we want to teach business students is how to apply that way of thinking to any question in order to find an answer. We want to teach them to apply that system of thinking to any questions they may ask. I think there’s a broader skill there in how to apply a general philosophical system to questions, and I think one way to build that skill is to take a logic class.

What is your favorite part about teaching?
Seeing students thinking about the issues that I’m trying to teach them about. In grad school, I really enjoyed having my thoughts challenged and being forced to do more self-analysis and thinking about how the world works. I really like seeing my students do that now.

What is something you want TCNJ students to get out of your class?
Critical thinking skills, being able to analyze questions. I would like students to see the ways that economics can be applied and its potential to influence who we are as people and what we believe. I hope they leave with critical thinking skills that will help them in their future careers.

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Jared Kofsky, ’20
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Vivian Louie, ’20
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Kim Tang, ’20
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Finance major
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Spotify, from Page A1
Spotify is currently the largest paid music platform in the world, with 70 million subscribers against Apple Music’s runner-up 36 million. Recently, the company made headlines for its unconventional plan to go public, which will involve bypassing IPO protocol and directly listing on the New York Stock Exchange. If the opening trading goes off successfully, the support of public investors could vault the company into new business territory. Currently, Spotify is not profitable, a result of the licensing payouts to compile its vast song library. Covering those costs, however, could allow the service to capitalize not just on a growing number of listeners that pay its $10/month subscription, but also on the advertising revenues from an additional 70 million users who accept periodic 30-second commercials to enjoy a Spotify account for free. Moreover, according to Jim Cramer, the company’s proven expertise at harnessing artificial intelligence to generate recommendations and enhance user experience, versus index-listed competitors like Pandora, will amount to, “Spotify game, set, match!” when it ultimately goes public.

While there will only be one Jim Cramer, his trademark acronym may soon be plural.

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Cultural appropriation” normally refers to a dominant group adopting elements of a minority culture and profiting from it, mocking it, and/or failing to fetishize it. When used to venerate certain people, it becomes too silly of an idea to even begin to take seriously. A definition of culture itself is rarely offered, because it is a uniquely vague and nebulous word that is easy to abuse. Those who argue “culture is not a costume” do not specify what “culture” actually means to them, and how it might exclusively belong to some human populations but not others. By implication, they suggest the existence of racial and cultural essentialism, or that there are intrinsic and clearly defined differences between groups and “cultures.” In order to believe this, you are required to forget the variation of practices within populations and across time, as well as overlapping populations and population identities. You must accept that there is one “Mexican food” to be appropriated, when of course there is not. There are family recipes, personal takes, and adaptations.

Concern over appropriating a culture also misses the gains that have come from cultural appropriation and borrowing. This list has to include mathematics, language, sports, music, and even political tactics and systems such as social movements and democracy. The common response to this is to make a distinction between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. At a minimum, this distinction makes the same mistake as seeing a “culture” as being fixed in its nature, and as being solely possessed by “members” of that “culture.” It also leads to a bizarre fetishization of particular cultural units and artifacts by Starbucks liberals that know as much about the culture in question as those accused of appropriating it.

All culture, by which I mean learned behavior, is necessarily available to others because it is learned. There are no outsiders, or those that may be justly excluded if they do not perform the required rituals. There are no copyright laws for cultures and populations, because the origins of cultural units cannot be attributed to populations the way a book can be to its specific author.

Cultural units are constantly being appropriated and altered, and for the better (note the spread of technology and medicines, among countless other examples). And, the sharing of culture will always take place in a context of unequal power, because there are no equal human societies. Arabic numerals, for instance, were adopted during The Crusades and then spread globally by European colonization. Should we revert to Roman numerals?

If you believe cultural appropriation is a problem, then design a definition of culture that makes it uniform across time and space and rightfully belonging to a population whose individual members had no direct role in producing it. Then see if there is actually anything in the world that corresponds to what you’re talking about. When you realize nothing does, you will see why no one is taking you seriously.

To deny that culture exists or that there is just one unifying culture is just a cop-out for another method of preventing people from being comfortable with their heritage. There is no “one definition” of culture because, newsflash: like most things in life, culture is a shared human experience that is as complex as humans are. The actual, book definition of culture has several different versions in and of itself. Culture may be a thing that exists because it has been interpreted by people; but realizing that universally humans live by rules they’ve created themselves, culture is as real as anything else on this planet.

To deny that culture exists is harmful. People who immigrated to America often times neglect entire aspects of their culture to fit in to American culture (which exists: ask literally any person living outside of America what American culture is, and you’ll get an answer). Culture is being erased and already has been in the past; and further erasure only harms the relinquishing people more.

Moreover, counterfeiting the state, overdone argument (if it can even be called that) of one shared culture is easy: Yes, culture should be shared. In fact, it often times is. It’s shared all the time. “Appropriation” and “sharing” are — spoiler alert — not the same thing. If the argument is that culture is ultimately spread, then we shouldn’t be denying that it had origins. Neither should we be promoting condescending stereotypes that cause people to reject what they had in the first place.

Let’s break this down. Appropriation of a culture is to make a mockery of it, to take it and not respect it, is to subject it to erasure and promote it as a stereotype, is to refuse to learn it, and is to re-perform ignorance. The person who decides to dress up caricaturing another person’s culture probably doesn’t care at all about the culture they’re using as a costume. They probably don’t have any intent on learning about the culture or sharing it with others. That’s the difference between sharing and appropriating. When cultures are shared, both parties are being respected. When some people travel to Japan, they dress in kimonos. That custom isn’t an issue; and it isn’t an issue because the Japanese culture is being shared and experienced with integrity.

Ultimately, culture is a massive part of the overall human experience. The ability to meet and connect with people from different walks of life is one of the greatest learning experiences that people have. Denying culture stifles this growth. Appropriation can stunt growth or cause people to promote incorrect information. No one is saying, “Stop sharing culture.” People are saying, “Stop treating my culture as a joke, and stop using my culture as a prop.”

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