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Streaming with the Mouse: Disney's Entrance into Direct-to-Consumer Streaming and Implications for the Future of Entertainment

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Abstract: *Throughout its one-hundred-year history, The Walt Disney Company has utilised many innovative tactics for promoting their products and engaging with consumers. This article highlights the use of direct-to-consumer streaming by the company as a way to reach consumers, and discusses the company's potential future in consumer entertainment. A brief history of consumer engagement is provided, and then Disney's strategy in the streaming marketplace is discussed along with how it may influence the future of consumer entertainment.*

For All Who Come to This Happy Place, Welcome: An Introduction[1]

On 12 November 2019, the Walt Disney Company formally launched their premier direct-to-consumer streaming service Disney+ (Kain). The launch had been announced earlier in 2019 at an investor event and was a much-anticipated addition to the growing direct-to-consumer entertainment landscape (Thorbecke). Using lessons learned from its involvement in Hulu in 2008 (Lamare), and ESPN+ in 2018 (Ha), the launch of Disney+ signalled that the Walt Disney Company was planting their flag and stating their case for competing with the likes of Netflix and Amazon Prime Video (Havard, "Disney, Netflix" 38). Its launch also fulfilled a consumer strategy that had started many years before, bolstered by a belief of CEO Bob Iger that Netflix was building their service using beloved Disney content (Weprin, "Bob Iger"). This essay discusses the attempt by the Walt Disney Company to use Disney+ and its streaming strategy to engage with its consumers and remain competitive in the rapidly evolving consumer entertainment landscape.

Throughout the company's history, Disney has used various practices to engage with consumers (Havard, "Disney, Netflix" 41). Early comics and characters such as Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, introducing synchronised sound and music with *Steamboat Willie* (Ub Iwerks and Walt Disney, 1928) and producing the first full-length animated film in sound and colour (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (William Cottrell, David Hand and Wilfred Jackson, 1937)) made Disney a household name to people around the world. This relationship with their audience was maintained in numerous ways over time. First, Disney was the first Hollywood studio to embrace television as a medium to reach the public rather than fear it as competition. The studio produced two Christmas specials (in 1950 on ABC, then in 1951 on CBS), then in 1954 launched their first weekly series, originally titled *Disneyland*, on ABC. Next, Walt Disney and WED (later renamed

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Walt Disney Imagineering) became involved in large-scale international events such as the 1960 Winter Olympics and 1964 New York World's Fair. Disney was also excellent at engaging in synergistic strategies such as the use of themed lands and attractions at Disneyland to cross-promote the studios' animated and live-action films as well as their television offerings. Such strategies cemented the company as a constant force in people's regular entertainment consumption. While taking the history outlined above into consideration, this article focuses mainly on the use of digital and streaming entertainment to engage with and remain relevant in consumers' minds as the Disney company moves into the next one hundred years of its operations.

Homeward (Video) Bound: VHS and the Disney Vault

Following a hostile takeover attempt and shareholder movement that ultimately ousted CEO Ron Miller, Michael Eisner was hired from Paramount to lead the Walt Disney Company. Along with increased interest in theme park expansion, the early tenure of Michael Eisner brought important consumer engagement practices. Eisner hired Jeffrey Katzenberg to oversee The Walt Disney Studios, and Bill Mechanic was placed in charge of marketing and consumer products. Under Katzenberg and Peter Schneider, who was president of Disney's Feature Animation Department from 1985 to 1999, Disney animation experienced a renewed success, leading to the period being referred to (somewhat ahistorically) as the Disney Renaissance. The popularity of releases such as *The Little Mermaid* (John Musker and Ron Clements, 1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, 1991), *Aladdin* (Ron Clements and John Musker, 1992), and *The Lion King* (Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff, 1994) brought another important change in the consumer engagement practices of the Walt Disney Company. Namely, the company started mass marketing Disney classic animated features on VHS for home video consumption.

Previously, Disney would release features in theatres for their initial run, then re-release the products on a limited basis. This marketing practice became known as the Disney Vault, and allowed the company to re-release features on a limited schedule to make money beyond their initial cinematic runs by returning them to cinemas periodically with the goals of both earning more revenue and finding new generations of viewers. As the VCR began to find its way into American homes during the early 1980s, the company believed that the release of their classic animated films on home video would hurt the profitability of these cinematic re-releases. However, this belief began to change in the mid-1980s when the company released new and old theatrical productions for mass home video consumption. Disney initially released a selection of their animated classics on VHS at a price-point high enough that it was primarily video rental chains who could afford them, thereby prompting families to rent rather than purchase Disney films on video. In 1985, however, Disney began selling VHS copies of their films (beginning with *Pinocchio* (Norman Ferguson, T. Hee and Wilfred Jackson, 1940)) directly to consumers, albeit initially at the rather hefty price tag of $79.95 (Shales). As can be seen in the 25 October 1986 issue of *Billboard*, more Disney animated classics were being released and selling well, this time at the more widely affordable price of $29.95 each ("Top Kid Video Sales" 43).

By the early 1990s, the Walt Disney Company also entered into a creative relationship with the young Pixar Animation Studios. Born out of work from the computer science department at the University of Utah (Catmull and Wallace, Loc. 473), the small company that was once part of

Lucasfilm's Industrial Light and Magic had previously created computer-generated backgrounds for productions ranging from *Star Wars* to *Star Trek* (Laman) and would work with Disney to produce limited backgrounds for *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast* (Price). In 1995, Pixar Animation Studios released the first computer generated feature-length film through a promotion and release agreement with the Walt Disney Company. The success of Pixar's first feature film, *Toy Story* (John Lasseter, 1995), meant Disney was able to use the relationship to bring in additional revenue and further engage with consumers through theme park and home entertainment initiatives based not only on Disney's own animated features, but also on Pixar's films. This extended to Disney overseeing (and earning money from) the home video releases of Pixar films.

The home video and mass release strategy undertaken by Disney allowed the company to sell their movies through initial and periodic release much the same as they previously did through theatrical release and introduced many new consumers to the Disney Vault (Eller and Bates; Rowe). This type of consumer engagement practice brought financial resources into the company that allowed for reinvestment in animated productions, live-action film and television releases, tie-ins with the various Disney theme parks, and the acquisitions of other companies. The strategy also provided Disney the ability to engage with consumers on a more regular basis than previously available through periodic theatrical release.

Onward Expansion and Chasing Mavericks for One Little Spark: Entering the Direct-to-Consumer Streaming Market

In 2007, the entertainment industry experienced a large disruption when the mail service video provider Netflix first launched its online streaming platform. With the launch, consumers were able to watch popular movies and shows online rather than via physical media such as DVD or Blu-ray. Almost immediately, studios began negotiating with Netflix to have content featured on the platform because they saw the benefit of giving consumers the ability to stream movies and television productions conveniently in the comfort of consumers' homes. However, even as major studios were featuring their content on Netflix, several also worked together to launch a service meant to compete with the streaming platform. Thus, in 2008, Hulu was launched to compete with the new streaming service being provided by Netflix (Lamare). Disney was one of the major studios to provide financial backing for Hulu in hopes that it would soon become a reliable product in the direct-to-consumer streaming space. Just as it had shared a rivalry with Comcast Corporation throughout its history (Havard, "Disney vs. Comcast"), Disney now had a new competitor in consumer entertainment. When Netflix launched the platform's firsts original programming in 2013, many studios and entertainment companies were put on notice that the service was not just reliant on the libraries of others, and traditional media companies would have to change strategies in order to keep up.

While Disney continued their relationship with Netflix by showing their products on the platform as well as their financial backing of Hulu, they also began looking for ways to reach consumers directly. In order to do this, they looked to the many properties they had acquired to supplement their already vast library of original content. Such acquisitions that would be relied on for added content included the 1996 purchase of Capital Cities/ABC, which bought them the

coveted channels ESPN and ESPN Milestones (Fabrikant), and the purchases of Pixar Animation in 2006, Marvel Studios in 2009, LucasFilm in 2012, and much of the Fox properties in 2019. Through such acquisitions, the company had entered into live sports entertainment, including ownership of the National Hockey League's Anaheim Mighty Ducks, and Major League Baseball's Anaheim Angels, which allowed them to produce theatrical and television content. As a further example of their cross-promotional tactics, Disney's *The Mighty Ducks* film franchise (Stephen Herek,1992; Sam Weisman, 1994; Robert Lieberman, 1996) and *Angels in the Outfield* (William Dear, 1994) were used to cross-promote attendance at live games and home entertainment consumption. The company has also hosted the Atlanta Braves and Tampa Bay Rays spring training at their Wild World of Sports complex at Walt Disney World, along with the National Basketball Association's end-of-season schedule and Major League Soccer's kick-off tournament during the summer of 2020 amid pandemic protocols (Havard, "Basketball"; Quinn and Wimbish). Further, they used various properties from Pixar, Marvel, LucasFilm, and Fox to cross-promote attendance at their theme parks along with theatrical and home consumption. The themed attractions and lands used to increase attendance at their theme parks include *Star Wars*–themed lands in Disneyland and Walt Disney World, Marvel-themed lands in Disney California Adventure and Walt Disney Studios, Pixar-themed lands in parks around the world, and Pandora:The World of Avatar at Disney's Animal Kingdom, with a similar experience planned for Disneyland in California.

Through their acquisitions and cross-promotion, Disney had built a large library of popular intellectual property that would provide content for a standalone direct-to-consumer streaming product. For example, their purchase of Fox properties provided Disney with access to the popular *Simpsons* franchise, along with Marvel properties such as the X-Men and Fantastic Four. Further, shortly after the 21st Century Fox acquisition, Disney inked a deal with Comcast Corporation to gain creative control of Hulu (Bradley), and full ownership of the streaming service in 2023 into 2024 (Bradley; Moses). Thus, Disney built a large library of content. However, they needed to test the direct-to-consumer streaming market to ensure they would be able to navigate its many challenges.

In 2015, Disney launched DisneyLife in the United Kingdom (Perez) and in the Philippines in 2018 (de Leon) as well as, briefly, in China, before it was taken off air by Chinese government regulators (Frater). DisneyLife was an online subscription service that allowed consumers to watch select shows and movies from the Disney library. Specifically, fans of Disney could stream movies, television shows, animated shorts, and music (Abgarian). DisneyLife was used to test the streaming market for the company, and also acted as a way to monitor consumer behaviour regarding their entertainment products.[2] Disney also tested the ability to allow consumers to download content from DisneyLife to watch while offline, which was not a common practice at the time (Perez). Upon the launch of Disney+, the company announced that DisneyLife would cease operations, and thus closed 1 April 2020 in the Philippines and 24 April 2020 in the United Kingdom (Palmer), one month after the company launched Disney+ in the UK. DisneyLife provided some of the research and lessons needed to allow Disney to take the next step into streaming entertainment competition.

The Walt Disney Company officially launched Disney+ on 12 November 2019 in the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands, with rollout in international markets over the next year and a half. Using the video streaming technology from BAMTech, a company they acquired majority ownership of in 2017 before going onto by the entire company in 2022 (Weprin, "Disney"). Disney

first tested full live streaming with the launch of ESPN+ in April 2018 (Ha). ESPN+ offered subscribers the opportunity to stream live sporting events and acted as a testing ground for the company to work out logistical issues before the launch of their premier streaming service.

In preparation for the launch of Disney+, the company started removing titles from Netflix (Castillo), thus signalling their intention to compete with Netflix in the streaming marketplace. This step by Disney is significant because competition and rivalry are important for companies and organisations seeking relevance in a marketplace (Havard, "Glory") as they can push decision makers to produce a better product (Kilduff, el al.).[3] To keep up with industry leaders, many traditional studios launched streaming services; as of May 2020, forty-three major and niche streaming subscription services existed (Adajian). This resulted in a very competitive market, encouraging rival companies to employ various tactics to reach potential customers (Havard, et al., "Prime Video"). Thus, competition over content and pricing became important for companies trying to differentiate their products in the eyes of consumers.

Regarding pricing, companies took many approaches, from entering strategic agreements to offer subscriptions to mobile phone and other streaming service users (Havard, "Disney, Netflix"), to bundling services in order to attract new consumers in the US, such as Disney did with Disney+, Hulu, and ESPN+ (Garcia). As of May 2024, Netflix had 296.6 million subscribers, followed by Amazon Prime Video at 200 million (Prime Video is included with an Amazon Prime subscription, however, making it difficult to determine number of subscribers that regularly use the streaming service) (Nickinson). Likewise, as of the time of writing in May 2024, Disney reports a total of 228.6 million streaming subscribers across their three services of Disney+ (153.6 million), Hulu (50.2 million), and ESPN+ (24.8 million) (Nickinson). Another competitive battlefront was for content, with many studios using the strategy of removing studio-produced content from services like Netflix and Hulu to reserve for *in-house* platforms while also paying large sums of money to feature *out-of-house* content in an effort to attract more viewers (Katz, "TV shows"). High-profile examples include NBCUniversal paying $500 million for *The Office*, WarnerMedia spending over $400 million for *Friends*, and Netflix acquiring the rights to *Seinfeld* for over $500 million (Katz, "TV shows"). Early on, Disney did not have to engage in this practice as they enjoyed an extensive library built both on studio content to attract families and consumers and on the popularity of their newly purchased rights (Snierson). It is important to note that the inclusion of acquired properties has allowed Disney to begin integration of content ranging from child appropriate to adults only. Such a strategy is important for Disney to compete with leading streaming providers.

In March 2020, much of the world population was placed under mandatory lockdowns amid the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, companies competed for streaming subscriptions and viewership using various release strategies, Disney included. For example, Disney made the strategic decision to release *Frozen 2* (Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, 2019) on Disney+ the first weekend of mass-lockdowns in the United States and those international territories where the service was available. Additionally, the Disney/Pixar feature *Onward* (Dan Scanlon, 2020) was released on the platform early after movie theatres closed for an extended period of time. Disney+ saw a large increase in the number of viewers during the early days of the pandemic, and at one time in 2021 even surpassed Netflix for number of subscriptions when accounting for the companies three streaming services (Maglio). Another tactic employed by

Disney and other studios during the early days of the pandemic became known as *day-and-date* release, where movies would be released on their streaming platforms the same day they debuted in movie theatres. In fact, in late 2020 Warner announced that their entire theatrical schedule for the upcoming year would be released on their streaming service the same day as in theatres (Couch and McClintock).

Disney used a mixed strategy, releasing some productions that were slated for theatrical releases in 2020 straight to Disney+, while giving subscribers the option to pay extra for Premier Access releases such as *Mulan* (Niki Caro, 2020), *Cruella* (Craig Gillespie, 2021), *Black Widow* (Cate Shortland, 2021), and *The Jungle Cruise* (Jaume Collet-Serra, 2021). Disney Premier Access, which offered consumers early access to a film that would become part of the normal subscription eventually, cost an additional $29.99, and gave consumers the ability to watch the movie at home as many times as they desired as part of that early access (Pateman). Disney had already announced that their streaming platform was of great importance to the future of the company, so when Bob Chapek became CEO in February 2020, he continued and, in many ways, increased that strategy. A major example of Disney+ being at the forefront of corporate strategy was the pro-shoot release of the popular musical *Hamilton* (Thomas Kail, 2020) to the platform over the July 4th weekend. The company paid $75 million for the rights to *Hamilton* in early 2020 (Katz, "Disney's $75 m *Hamilton*"), and the release of the production on Disney+ brought goodwill to the company while also allowing them to eliminate their seven-day free trial leading up to its premier.

Another example of placing Disney+ subscription numbers at the forefront was the decision to release three Disney/Pixar productions straight to the platform rather than in cinemas. *Soul* (Pete Docter and Kemp Powers, 2020), *Luca* (Enrico Casarosa, 2021), and *Turning Red* (Domee Shi, 2022) were all released straight to Disney+ without Premier Access pricing. This strategy was later criticized when releases such as *Lightyear* (Angus MacLane, 2022) and *Elemental* (Peter Sohn, 2023) underperformed expectations when released in theatres but saw large viewership numbers on Disney+.

In early 2022, Netflix reported a drop in number of subscriptions (Sherman, "Netflix"), which prompted the investment community to change its metrics of success in the direct-to-consumer streaming space. From 2019 to late 2021, the agreed metric of success in streaming was an increase in number of platform subscribers. During this time, studios and companies made several strategic decisions in an effort to grow the number of reported users of their platforms. This was also the time when Disney was releasing movies straight to their platform, producing several high-cost projects for Disney+ from the Marvel and Star Wars brands, and placing preference on streaming performance in lieu of theatrical box office. However, following the poor First Quarter reporting by Netflix, the entertainment industry changed its view of direct-to-consumer streaming, and took on the investor metric of profitability per project over adding new subscribers (Sherman, "Netflix").

This period also coincided with more consumers, particularly in the United States, deciding to begin travelling, eating out, and patronising movie theatres again. These factors and more combined to create a situation of fiscal conservancy among studios amid declining subscriber numbers. This is what became known as the "retrenchment era" in direct-to-consumer

entertainment. The Walt Disney Company responded by cutting costs in the company and placing pressure on associated brands to perform fiscally (Delouya). Bob Iger returned as CEO of Disney in November 2022, and by early 2023 had announced that the company was trying to cut over $5 billion in expenses. Part of the cost cutting saw many titles removed from the Disney+ platform, with some other shows' production being cancelled; Disney even began looking for strategic investors in ESPN (Mehta). Analysts also started to question Disney's decision to acquire 21st Century Fox and the elevated price they paid for the property in response to a late Comcast bid based on the short-term financial burden it placed on the company's bottom line (Falcone). It is important to note, of course, that the perceived success of Disney's purchase of 20th Century Fox may not be visible for many years.

All combined, the Walt Disney Company, along with many other entertainment studios, found themselves in a precarious situation trying to navigate the future of the entertainment industry at a very unusual and unpredictable time thanks to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Adding to pressure, writers and actors in Hollywood went on strike in June 2023, a standoff that lasted approximately six months (Jarvey and Press). Disney made several decisions to try and wade the negative tide that retraction and the strikes presented by announcing that fewer projects would be released in 2024, and that Marvel Studios would produce fewer projects so they could focus on quality over quantity (Whitten). Amid lower than anticipated box office performance, the so-called "culture wars" touted by the political far rights of various nations, retraction, and production strikes, Disney ended 2023 at a point of reflection and faced with decisions that would shape the future of the company and its place in the entertainment industry.

A (Hopefully) Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow: The Future of Direct-to-Consumer Streaming and Implications for Disney Entertainment

As we move into the future of consumer entertainment, Disney and other companies are faced with many challenges from shifting paradigms, discussions about the use of Artificial Intelligence in entertainment, expansion and retraction of streaming competition, and the role of live entertainment, and live sports entertainment. First, even with the recent retrenchment among studios, the future of entertainment is direct-to-consumer content. For example, as studios struggled with how to handle the financial shortfalls of streaming and the increased pressure of streaming platforms' performance, Netflix has rebounded from its poor quarter of early 2022, bolstering its place as the dominant brand in streaming entertainment (Belloni). This is evidenced by many traditional studios beginning to feature productions on the streaming service once more.

The emergence of ad-supported services is important for studios like Disney to navigate in the future. Upon launch, neither Disney+ nor Netflix offered ad-supported tiers; however, both started doing so in 2023 amid pushes to make platforms more profitable (Thomas). To this end, companies have started to push heavily their ad-supported tiers, and it is yet to be seen how profitable, year over year, such a strategy will be. Rebounding from the poor first quarter reporting Netflix experienced in early 2022, one tactic they employed was to begin monitoring and cracking down on password sharing among subscribers (Roth). Though the company had once tweeted that "Love is sharing a password" (McCallig) and had said repeatedly they had no issue with subscribers who wanted to share their password with others because doing so typically led to

increased sales, in 2023 Netflix reversed course and started prompting subscribers who regularly logged onto the service from different addresses to pay a higher rate in order to include others on their subscriptions (Roth). Other services have pondered whether to follow Netflix in this strategy, with Disney starting to do so on a test basis in Canada (Reichert). To date, Netflix has not experienced substantial consumer backlash for cracking down on password sharing, actually seeing an increase in subscriptions (Duffy and Delouya); it is yet to be seen whether platforms like Disney+ will be as lucky with this strategy.

Aside from Netflix, Disney also has to navigate the increased presence of technology companies in the streaming entertainment space. For example, Amazon Prime Video maintains the second largest subscriber base since the platform is included in consumers' Amazon Prime membership. Additionally, Apple launched Apple TV+ on 1 November 2019 (Alexander) and has experienced critical success with acquired movies such as *Coda* (Sian Heder, 2021) winning an Academy Award (Chan). Apple TV+ currently reports an estimated 25 million subscribers (Welk), but the cultural popularity of shows such as *Ted Lasso* and *The Morning Show* have grabbed the attention of streaming consumers. The presence of technology companies in the entertainment landscape has called into question what the future of the industry may look like. For example, as of 14 May 2024, the Walt Disney Company is worth a reported $193.34 billion, making it the most valuable entertainment conglomerate. However, the current worth of Apple ($2.87 trillion) and Amazon ($1.95 trillion) dwarfs Disney, which is important information when considering the ability of Disney to compete for content with such companies in the future.

One area of great importance to the future of direct-to-consumer entertainment is the inclusion of live entertainment and live sports entertainment in the marketplace. Live sports entertainment has often been treated as a loss leader (Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton), with providers spending large amounts of money for broadcast rights in order to attract large audiences in which they can sell advertisement and promote their own products. Therefore, live sports entertainment is a vital source of revenue for traditional entertainment providers, and the same is expected for streaming services. Streaming platforms have so far tested the viability of including live sports entertainment either for additional or no additional cost to subscribers. For example, in the United States, Amazon Prime Video broadcasts the NFL's Thursday Night Football (Bumbaca), and Apple TV+ distributes Major League Baseball (MLB) and Major League Soccer (MLS) (Blumenthal; Brikerhoff). In a first for the platform, Netflix will begin airing live NFL games on Christmas Day in 2024 (Spangler). Disney has experienced success with college and professional sporting events on ESPN+, and in 2023 the company produced two computer-generated alternate broadcasts of a National Hockey League (NHL) game and NFL contest (Reedy; Sim, NHL).[4]

In 2023, Disney lost out on the contract to live broadcast Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket contests (Ramachandran), leading to losses in subscribers in the region. However, the news that Disney and Reliance Industries are working toward a merger may signal a renewed effort once current media rights expire (Frater and Ramachandran). The NBA is the next major sport league in the United States to renegotiate media rights, and streaming services are expected to play a major role. With the state of entertainment in 2024, providers may be reluctant to pay large media rights; however, the competition among streaming services, especially Apple and Amazon, may require that Disney and other traditional studios enter the negotiations. Industry analysts predict that Disney will continue its relationship with the NBA through its ABC and ESPN properties

(Steinberg); the company aired the first live, non-alternate broadcast of a sporting event on Disney+ in the US on 14 May 2024 when Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) star rookie Caitlin Clark made her debut with the Indiana Fever facing off against the Connecticut Sun (Yildirim). Further, Disney has announced that ESPN programming will be added to Disney+ by the end of 2024 (Sim, "Disney+").

In late 2023, the Walt Disney Company officially entered the sports betting landscape when they launched the ESPNBET service (Dart) using the Penn Entertainment platform (Smith). Under pressure to capitalize on the gambling market, one estimated to reach as high as $288.2 billion by 2032 (Lukas), Disney decided to enter the marketplace through their ESPN subsidiary. To date, aside from an announcement from the Walt Disney Company about the launch of ESPNBET, the company has remained relatively quiet about their venture into sports gambling. As previously discussed, for a company with a family-friendly perception, it will be interesting to see how much publicity Disney gives their sports gambling pursuits beyond investor calls and end of year reports.

Disney has also announced they will launch an all-inclusive ESPN streaming service that could someday replace the need for sports fans to watch events over linear television (Sherman, "ESPN") and has announced a joint venture with Warner Discovery and Fox Sports, named Venu Sports (Coryell), to offer sports programming to digital subscribers (Szalai). Finally, in May 2024, the company announced that consumers would be able to bundle Warner Discovery's Max streaming service with Disney+ and access it through the Disney+ platform (Coblentz). The way Disney has utilised streaming has placed the company in a favourable position related to other legacy studios, and future decisions will determine their ability to remain relevant in consumers' minds.

The Circle of Life: A Conclusion

Throughout its history, the Walt Disney Company has experienced highs and lows much like any legacy studio, but their innovative ways of engaging with consumers have paved the way for the company to last one hundred years to date. From producing cartoon shorts to full-length animated features, cross promoting their products through merchandizing, television, and theme park attractions, Disney has long proven a worthy competitor in the entertainment industry. Direct-to-consumer streaming is no different for the company, as the almost five years since the launch of Disney+ have seen substantial subscriber growth, along with retraction, cost-cutting measures, and strategic decisions that will shape the future of the Walt Disney Company and the entertainment industry. As it moves into its second century of operation, Disney is faced with both challenges and opportunities as it navigates the direct-to-consumer streaming market.

Notes

[1] As we are sure everyone has experienced, the landscape of direct-to-consumer streaming entertainment is rapidly changing, so much so that, depending on when you are reading this, information may be very different amid advancing corporate strategies. For example, in the copy-editing process for this article, multiple new items had to be added in an attempt to provide the most updated information. For that reason, it should be noted that information is current as of May 2024, and we wish you both joy and luck in keeping up with the ever-changing streaming marketplace.

[2] This is similar to the way Disney collected data via Internet and television providers on early residents of Florida's Celebration development when the company owned the property. For example, residents were provided with advanced communication technology at the time in exchange for allowing the company to monitor and analyse how they utilized such products (Goldberg).

[3] Rivalry can also help lead to consumer loyalty of favorite brands (Havard, et al., "Development"), and identifying others as rivals in which favorite brands or groups can be compared (Havard and Eddy; Havard, et al., "Investigating").

[4] *NHL's Big City Green Classic* was an alternate broadcast set in the fictional city of Big City, and the NFL's *Toy Story Football Funday* featured a computer-generated broadcast of an international game set in Andy's room from the *Toy Story* franchise.

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