
Cultural Daily

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When Will Streaming Services Completely Take Over?

Our Friends · Monday, June 8th, 2020

Whatever streaming service you choose to use, it doesn't change the fact that you've likely used one. And even though 15 years ago we couldn't even imagine how video content on the internet would take off, it's hard to imagine a world without it. Now people are using them to entertain themselves through a global pandemic, spur conversations with each other, and even replace previous forms of content distribution.

And that last part is what we want to talk about here. While you might have heard about "cutting the cord" completely when it comes to cable, many household have a hybrid setup of a normal TV service and a few streaming services of their choice, often subscribing or unsubscribing to them as something interesting pops up.

Yet over the years, we can only wonder whether streaming services will continue to gain ground and become the default as opposed to the exception or the supplement. Here are the main reasons and talking points on the matter:

Whatever, Whenever, Wherever

Do you want to watch your favorite show at three in the morning at a bus stop in the middle of Kansas? With a data plan or a WiFi hotspot and a charged-up phone battery, there's nothing stopping you. Some people even just watch Netflix on their phone in bed because it's more comfortable or convenient for them.

The TV is limited to the room it is installed in, and the programs to their timeslots. Streaming services are not limited in that regard, and not only that, but the content is mostly ad-free and available on-demand (without the need for a DVR setup and instructions). For most people, it is simply a better deal, and cable companies are going to need to try and keep up.

If you [look at cord-cutters](#) (or never-corders), they're generally young and used to technology. The cable market relies on an older audience. What will happen as the current cable audience ages and there are fewer people to replace them?

A Service for Every Interest

While there are the main services such as [Hulu](#), [Netflix](#), and [Amazon Prime Video](#) that compete with each other and serve general needs, there are also far many more streaming and content services that you can subscribe to that can meet your niche needs, whether you're looking for a

curated collection of classic movies, are more interested in anime and manga, want a service that is exclusively kid-friendly content, filmed Broadway shows going back decades, or something entirely different, there's a service for you.

On top of this, many networks and companies could be going the route that Disney did with [Disney Plus](#) and launching individual streaming networks and channels, hoping to increase their own revenue. This can lead to a decentralization of the major services (think about how Disney pulled most Marvel movies from Netflix over time as licensing deals ran out) and perhaps a lower value from some services.

While this might not be great for the consumer who will have to pick and choose much like they did cable channel packages previously, it does show that more providers and companies are taking streaming seriously, or are at least willing to gamble on it.

There Are Few Hurdles to Getting Service Now

With all the potential advantages streaming had over cable and other forms of content distribution, what prevented it from completely taking over earlier? What hurdles did companies have in taking their market share?

Well, there were a few main reasons:

- Internet connections that could handle the download speeds streaming required were not as common back then. While it is mostly forgotten today, "buffering" screens were the butt of many jokes and the symbol nationwide for subpar internet.
- There wasn't as much content available on streaming services. While there could be a thousand launch titles with a service, how many television programs are there airing now that you don't watch and wouldn't be the least bit interesting? Now there's even more content, with original content that remains on a platform and relevant for years.
- People are naturally liable to stick with what they know and love (or know and begrudgingly tolerate). They aren't going to try something new just because it's there, and especially if there are other hurdles to go through, even if it is relatively inexpensive. Now streaming services are the mainstream and effectively built into every device under the sun.

With these hurdles cleared or mostly cleared, streaming is getting the green light to move forward and dominate entertainment.

Is There Still a Place for Cable?

There might always be a place for broadcast TV, especially for those interested in the news and basic programming to keep rolling in the background, and cable will be there to provide for them.

There are a few last bastions of content where cable still has a general advantage, especially when paired with DVR. These are sports and cable news, with special events on occasion (although these might also just be streamed online or on broadcast TV). We can expect cable companies to fight tooth and nail to remain the best option for people who cannot do without either.

So yes, there is still a place for cable, so long they have some reason to stick around and can provide a greater breadth of content than most streaming services (or combinations of them).

What we can expect, however, is that cable companies will have to strive to become more competitive, and we have already seen this in some limited ways. Even though you probably don't use on-demand services provided by a cable company, they do exist and are improving, as convenience will be key in the coming decade. It's quite possible that television providers will adapt and effectively become a hybrid of the traditional model and the streaming model. It all depends on how quickly certain technologies are adopted and whether consumers will buy-in.

Conclusion

None of us can predict what will happen or how fast it will happen, especially with the world as strange as it is right now. However, what we can rely on is the technology and viewing habits will forever keep moving forward, as people both crave more and better content as well as new forms of convenience. We hope that you will experiment with different options in the future and that no matter what, you won't feel held back.

Photo by Glenn Carstens-Peters via Unsplash.

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