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Streaming Video Content in the Time of COVID-19

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Streaming Video Content in the Time of COVID-19

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When the COVID-19 pandemic led to quarantine, isolation, and distancing protocols in the U.S., audiences turned to Subscription Video On Demand (SVOD) platforms to cope. While the use of SVOD platforms increased during the pandemic, the pandemic also challenged the entertainment industry's ability to satisfy increased demand for content. A mixed methods approach was used to investigate the motivations that led to widespread use of SVOD platforms by U.S. audiences during the pandemic and the methods used by media companies to adapt to audience demand for streamable content during the same period. A literature review was used to understand the development of the SVOD industry, its role within the entertainment industry as a whole, and its influence in everyday life prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. A secondary literature review was conducted on media uses and audience motivations. A timeline analysis was used to compare the developments of the COVID-19 pandemic to the effects on production and distribution strategies in the entertainment industry. Pre-existing SVOD companies were uniquely advantaged at the start of the pandemic period when theatrical release and broadcast television production schedules were disrupted by pandemic related shutdowns. Overall, the effects of the pandemic catalyzed the entertainment industry's transition from traditional release formats to digital based subscription and streaming models. The widespread use of SVOD platforms during the pandemic is indicative of the value of media in modern life as well as the value of new technologies and distribution models.