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Prime Video vs. Netflix vs. Disney+: Investigating Fandom and Rivalry among Direct-to-Consumer Streaming Services and Sport

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Abstract

The current study investigated differences in perceptions and likely behaviors toward rival out-groups among sport and direct-to-consumer streaming services. Results indicated that fans of sport reported higher identification with their favorite team and more negativity toward their rival team than did fans of streaming services. Further, being a fan of *both* sport and streaming services was correlated with more negativity toward the sport rival and more positivity toward rival streaming services. Finally, fans of streaming did not differ in their perceptions and likely behaviors toward rival groups among streaming platforms. Discussion focuses on implications and avenues for future research.

Keywords: Streaming Services, Sport, Brand Perceptions, Consumer Behavior, Rivalry, Group Membership

The fast-growing popularity of direct-to-consumer streaming services continues to grow in our consumer culture (Coates, 2020). The *cord-cutting* trend-cancelling terrestrial cable television-for more *al a carte* entertainment offering that started in the mid-2000's has been escalated in the past two to three years, with many companies launching services to compete for consumer subscriptions (Adalian, 2020). The competition among streaming services for new and continuing consumers, along with existing relationships among companies (Havard, 2020), can push many brands to treat each other as rivals (Havard, 2021).

As the companies themselves compete as rivals, it is important to evaluate how fans and users of streaming services view relevant brands. The current study investigated this by first asking fans to identify favorite and rival streaming brands and measuring participants perceptions and likely behaviors toward their identified favorite and rival brands, particularly out-group derogation. In order to determine intensity of feelings of rivalry and out-group derogation, responses from streaming fans were compared to responses from sport fans. Therefore, the current study further added information to the literature on rivalry and group member behavior by comparing perceptions and likely behaviors toward a rival in a sport and non-sport consumer setting.

Background

The study of group membership and rivalry is greatly influenced by the Social Identity Theory (SIT), which states that people will choose groups in which to affiliate that will reflect positively on themselves (Tajfel, 1978). For example, people want to affiliate with a successful team in hopes of gaining the vicarious achievements of the focus group (Bandura, 1977; Cialdini et al., 1976). For this reason, people will also distance from groups that experience a form of perceived failure (Snyder, & Fromkin, 1980; Snyder Lassegard, & Ford, 1986) in order to protect their self and public image (Madrigal, 1995; Wann & James, 2019).

One outcome from group affiliation is that people begin to adopt the identity of the collective (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004), and when that occurs, they draw comparisons between in-groups and out-groups in an attempt to elevate stature (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1978). These comparisons can be amplified when a rival out-group is involved, such as more negative views of out-group member behavior (Wann & Dolan, 1995; Wann & Grieve, 2005), out-group participant performance (Wann et al., 2006), negativity stories about out-groups (Havard & Eddy, 2019), and even willingness to consider anonymous aggression toward out-group members (Havard, Wann, & Ryan, 2013, 2017; Havard, Wann, Ryan, & O'Neal, 2017; Wann, Haynes, McLean, & Pullen, 2003; Wann, Peterson, Cothran & Dykes, 1999; Wann & Waddill, 2013).

Rivalry can begin based on many characteristics (Havard, 2014; Kilduff, Elfenbein, & Staw, 2010; Tyler & Cobbs, 2015), and once established can remain constant with increased animosity between groups focused around competitions and comparisons (Converse & Reinhard, 2016). As rivalry intensifies (Havard & Reams, 2018; Tyler & Cobbs, 2017; Wann et al., 2016), negativity and perceived violence among rival groups also grows (Raney & Kinally, 2009). Competition can also influence group members to cheer for and experience joy when out-group fail in indirect settings (Cikara, Botvinick, & Fiske, 2011; Ciakara & Fiske, 2012; Heider, 1958). Specific to rival out-groups, in-group members can celebrate the failure of out-groups in direct situations because the outcome reflects positively on their in-group, and thereby on themselves (Havard, 2014; Havard, Inoue, & Ryan, 2018; Havard, Ryan, & Padhye, 2020). The relationships rival groups share is the focus of the current study, and determining how those relationships differ between the sport and straight-to-consumer streaming setting is important in further understanding group behavior in consumer products.

The Current Study

The current study investigated fandom and rivalry in the direct-to-consumer streaming services and sport settings. In particular, we compared identification, attitudes, perceptions, and likely behaviors toward favorite brands in the streaming and sport settings. First, based on previous research into sport and consumer products/services (Havard, Grieve, & Lomenick, 2020; Havard, Wann, Grieve, & Collins, 2021), we anticipated that setting would influence rival perceptions and likely behaviors. Further, we anticipated that the common in-group theory (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993) would influence views and behaviors toward the out-group. Therefore, the following hypotheses were offered:

H1: Perceptions and likely behaviors toward rival groups will significantly differ between fans of sport and straight-to-consumer streaming services.

H2: Perceptions and likely behaviors toward rival groups will significantly differ between fans of *only* sport and fans of *both* sport and streaming.

H3: Perceptions and likely behaviors toward rival groups will significantly differ between fans of *only* streaming and fans of *both* streaming and sport.

Finally, we also investigated if differences in rival perceptions and likely behaviors existed between fans of various streaming services. The following research question is offered:

RQ1: Do perceptions and likely behaviors toward rival groups differ among fans of direct-to-consumer streaming services?

Method

Participants responded to an online survey built using Qualtrics Software and distributed through Amazon MTurk. The survey contained a total of five sections, with participants completing a minimum of three and maximum of seven depending on their fandom[1]. After identifying their chosen fandom, participants completed questions regarding identification and attitudes toward the favorite brand (#1 for sport fans, #3 for streaming fans) using the Sport Spectator Identification Scale-Revised (SSIS-R; James, Delia, & Wann, 2019)[2]. Brand Attitudes were measured using a five-item semantic differential scale (Spears & Singh, 2004)[3]. Next, participants reported their attitudes, perceptions, and likely behaviors toward rival brands (#2 for sport fans, #4 for streaming fans) using the Rivalry Perception Scale (RPS; Havard, Gray, Gould, Sharp, & Schaffer, 2013) and Glory Out of Reflected Failure (GORFing) measure (Havard & Hutchinson, 2017)[4]. Finally, participants provided demographic information in section #5.

A total of 117 participants provided usable responses and were included in the analysis. Participant gender was majority male (65.8%) and 34.2% female ranging in age from 19 to 70 (M = 34.41, SD = 10.309). Majority of participants identified as Caucasian (53.8%), followed by African American and Asian (17.1% each), Hispanic (10.3%), and 1.7% not disclosing. Regarding fandom, 38.5% reported being a fan of sport, 31.6% a fan of streaming services, and 29.9% a fan of *both* sport and streaming services.

Among fans of streaming services[5] (Table 1), 48.6% reported Netflix as their favorite service, followed by Amazon Prime (18.1%), Disney+ (13.9%), HBO Max (9.7%), Hulu (5.6%), and Apple TV+ (4.2%). Regarding the streaming services they consider to be the biggest rival to their favorite brand, 34.7% identified Amazon Prime, followed Netflix (22.2%), Disney+ (16.7), Hulu (12.5%), HBO Max (6.9%), Apple TV+ (5.6%), and Peacock (1.4%).

Table 1
Favorite and Rival Direct-to-Consumer Streaming Services

Favorite Service	***N***	**%**	**Rival Service**	***N***	**%**
Netflix	35	48.6%	Amazon Prime	25	34.7%
Amazon Prime	13	18.1%	Netflix	16	22.2%
Disney+	12	13.9%	Disney+	12	16.7%
HBO Max	7	9.7%	Hulu	9	12.5%
Hulu	4	5.6%	HBO Max	5	6.9%
Apple TV+	3	4.2%	Apple TV+	4	5.6%
			Peacock	1	1.4%

Out of 72 responses

Results

Responses were averaged so that a single number represented a participant data point for each scale used in the current study. All scales displayed reliability, with alpha ranging from .705 to .964. Reliability along with overall descriptive data is available in Table 2.

[1] First, participants were asked to identify if they were a fan of a sport team, a streaming service, or *both.* A Sport fan completed sections 1, 2 and 5; a Streaming fan completed sections 3, 4, and 5; fans of *both* Sport and Streaming completed all sections.
[2] A modified version of the SSIS-R was used for streaming fans.
[3] Participants completed the attitudinal questions for *both* their favorite and rival brands in sport and streaming.
[4] Modified versions of the RPS sub scales and GORFing measures were used for streaming fans.
[5] A total of 72 participants.

Table 2
Descriptives and Reliability of Scales Used in Study

Item	*M*	*SD*	α
Sport Favorite Team Identification (SSIS-R)	6.28	1.54	.861
Sport Favorite Team Attitude	6.41	1.02	.894
Sport Rival Team Attitude	6.03	0.92	.964
Sport Rival Team Support (OIC)	3.90	1.77	.894
Sport Rival Team Fan Behavior (OB)	4.66	1.47	.809
Sport Rival Team Prestige (OP)	4.35	1.75	.883
Sport Rival Team Sense of Satisfaction (SoS)	5.30	1.26	.705
Sport Glory Out of Reflected Failure (GORF)	5.12	1.16	.766
Streaming Service Favorite Brand Identification (SSIS-R)	5.38	1.49	.872
Streaming Service Favorite Brand Attitude	5.90	1.07	.930
Streaming Service Rival Brand Attitude	4.83	1.43	.955
Streaming Service Rival Brand Support (OIC)	3.75	1.93	.730
Streaming Service Rival Brand Fan Behavior (OB)	4.66	1.48	.917
Streaming Service Rival Brand Prestige (OP)	4.35	1.75	.812
Streaming Service Rival Brand Sense of Satisfaction (SoS)	5.30	1.26	.869
Streaming Service Rival Brand Glory Out of Reflected Failure (GORF)	5.12	1.16	.891

Investigating the Hypotheses and Research Question

Hypothesis 1 stated that significant differences would exist between fans of sport and streaming services regarding their perceptions and likely behaviors toward rival groups[6]. A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) revealed that significant differences were present Wilk's Lambda .749(8, 73) = 3.06, p = .005. Specifically, sport fans reported higher levels of identification with their favorite teams (F(1, 80) = 11.12, p = .001) and greater satisfaction from defeating the rival in direct competition (F(1, 80) = 4.97, p = .029) than did fans of streaming services toward their rival brands. Hypothesis 1 was thus supported (Table 3).

Table 3
Fan Identification, Attitude, RPS, and GORFing by Sport vs. Streaming

	Sport		Streaming	
Item	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
Brand Identification	6.28^	0.99	5.31^	1.60
Attitude toward Favorite Brand	5.87	0.98	5.63	1.27
Attitude toward Rival Brand	4.59	1.72	5.16	1.27
Out-group Indirect Competition	4.27	1.89	4.87	1.28
Out-Group Prestige	4.41	1.82	4.26	1.87
Out-Group Behavior	4.69	1.61	3.94	1.87
Sense of Satisfaction	5.30*	1.16	4.64*	1.54
Glory Out of Reflected Failure	5.10	1.14	4.44	1.91

*Significant at .05 level; ^Significant at .01 level

Hypotheses 2 tested the influence of the common in-group (Gaertner et al., 1993) on the perceptions and likely behaviors toward out-group members. A significant MANOVA (Wilk's Lambda.766(8, 71) = 2.71, p = .012) revealed that being a fan of *both* a sport team and streaming service influenced significant differences from fans of *only* sport. In particular, being a fan of *both* a sport team and a streaming service was correlated with greater negativity regarding attitude toward the rival sport team (F(1, 78) = 19.19, p < .001) and less likelihood of supporting the rival team in indirect competition (F(1, 78) = 8.42, p = .005). Hypothesis 2 was supported (Table 4).

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[6] For analysis purposes in H1, H2, and H3, the specific favorite or rival group was not the focus, rather, the way someone viewed a member of a relevant out-group.

Table 4
Fan Identification, Attitude, RPS, and GORFing by Sport vs. Sport/Streaming

	Sport		Sport/Streaming	
Item	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
Brand Identification	6.28	0.99	6.59	1.04
Attitude toward Favorite Brand	5.87	0.98	6.22	0.81
Attitude toward Rival Brand	4.59^	1.72	3.01^	1.41
Out-group Indirect Competition	4.27*	1.89	3.07*	1.79
Out-Group Prestige	4.41	1.82	4.28	1.68
Out-Group Behavior	4.69	1.61	4.62	1.31
Sense of Satisfaction	5.30	1.16	5.30	1.40
Glory Out of Reflected Failure	5.10	1.14	5.14	1.20

*Significant at .05 level; ^Significant at .01 level

Table 5
Fan Identification, Attitude, RPS, and GORFing by Sport vs. Sport/Streaming

	Streaming		Streaming/Sport	
Item	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
Brand Identification	5.32	1.60	5.44	1.38
Attitude toward Favorite Brand	5.63*	1.27	6.19*	0.73
Attitude toward Rival Brand	5.16*	1.27	4.49*	1.52
Out-group Indirect Competition	4.87	1.28	4.79	1.13
Out-Group Prestige	4.26	1.87	3.74	1.45
Out-Group Behavior	3.94	1.87	3.35	1.76
Sense of Satisfaction	4.64	1.54	4.29	1.68
Glory Out of Reflected Failure	4.44	1.91	4.23	1.52

*Significant at .05 level; ^Significant at .01 level

Hypothesis 3 stated that the common on-group would also influence rival perceptions and likely behaviors. A significant MANOVA (Wilk's Lambda .750(8, 63) = 2.63, p = .015) revealed that people who identified as a fan of *both* a sport team and a streaming service reported significant differences regarding perceptions and likely behaviors toward a rival streaming service from a fan of *only* a streaming service. In this situation, fans of *both* a sport team and a streaming service was correlated with more positive attitudes toward the favorite (F(1, 70) = 5.34, p = .024) and more negative attitude toward the rival streaming brand (F(1, 70) = 4.14, p = .046). Hypothesis 4 was supported (Table 5).

Finally, the current study investigated if significant differences regarding perceptions and likely behaviors regarding rival streaming services existed among fans of streaming services. A MANOVA failed to reach significance (.541(40, 259) = 0.98, p = .505), revealing that differences in rival behaviors toward rival streaming services were not present in the sample.

Discussion

The current study investigated perceptions and likely behaviors toward rival out-groups in sport and direct-to-consumer streaming services. Findings revealed that sport fans reported more identification with their favorite brand and more negativity toward their rival brand than did fans of streaming services. Being a fan of *both* sport and streaming services was correlated with more negativity toward the rival sport team, more positivity toward the favorite streaming service, and mor negativity toward the rival streaming service. Finally, significant differences and likely behaviors toward rival brands were not present between fans of various streaming services.

Sport fans reporting stronger negativity toward their rival teams than streaming fans toward a rival brand is consistent with previous research regarding out-group behavior in consumer products (Havard, Grieve et al., 2020; Havard, Wann et al., 2021). Additionally, the current study suggests that the competitive nature of the sport context may be more present for group members than in a consumer product like direct-to-consumer streaming. The finding that streaming fans do not significantly differ regarding rival perceptions and behaviors by favorite brand is also consistent with the comics setting (Havard, Grieve et al., 2020).

The presence of the common in-group is consistent with previous research (Havard, Fuller & Padhye, 2021; Havard, Grieve et al., 2020; Havard, Wann et al., 2021), however the findings were very interesting. Specifically, being a fan of *both* sport and streaming was correlated with more negativity toward the rival brand in both settings. Additionally, the common in-group influenced more positive attitudes toward the favorite streaming service. These findings are somewhat contradictory from previous studies, and deserve more investigation to provide more understanding regarding the outcomes.

Regarding streaming services, it is also interesting to see the favorite and rival brands reported by participants. Descriptive data is available in Table 5 for reference. It is not surprising that the top three brands identified as both favorite and rival brands were Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+. These brands rank as the top streaming services subscriptions, so it is expected that participants would indicate these brands. The longevity of Netflix on the consumer market, Prime Video's inclusion with Prime memberships, and Disney+'s fast start in the streaming space mean the brands are consistently considered premium among streaming consumers.

Implications and Future Research

The current study provides important findings to academics investigating group member behavior. Specifically, the current findings join other investigations of rivalry in sport and non-sport settings to give a greater picture of how group behavior differs among various consumer settings. Future research should focus on other consumer and group settings such as food and beverage brands, hotel brands, and religion to better understand group identity and its influence on group member behavior.

The current findings also provide important lessons to practitioners working in consumer settings and with group members. Namely, having empirical evidence to suggest the being a fan of *both* sport and streaming actually influences greater negativity toward the relevant rival out-group is important in that practitioners should understand that a setting such as sport potentially encourages greater negativity toward out-groups. Additionally, practitioners working on the marketing and promotion of direct-to-consumer streaming services should display care if and when brands start comparing to others in official advertisements. Using overly negative promotional messages can influence greater negativity toward a rival out-group (Havard, Wann, & Grieve, 2018), and negativity among rivals that lead clashes between group members can hurt both the rival and favorite brand in the eyes of consumers (Havard, Ferrucci, & Ryan, 2021).

Future study should also replicate the study with a larger sample size. Further, targeting groups of consumers based on consumption preferences is another future line of research. For example, recruiting participants from social media groups focused on straight-to-consumer streaming and/or particular streaming services may yield interesting insights. Finally, qualitative investigation is encouraged to gain in-depth analysis on participant-level views of the relevant streaming services.

The current study investigated perceptions and likely behaviors toward rival out-groups in the sport and straight-to-consumer streaming settings. Findings provide important lessons for academics and practitioners, while also give further insight regarding group member behavior in various consumer settings. It is important that researchers and practitioners seek further understanding of group member behavior in society, and the current study provides an important step in gaining more insight regarding behavior among various group and consumer settings.

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