

# Driving Engagement on Instagram: A Comparative Analysis of Amazon Prime and Disney+

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose-** This paper dives into the engagement patterns exhibited on Instagram by two streaming heavyweights; Amazon Prime and Disney+. With ever-growing popularity among the younger generation, Instagram is vital for driving engagement in the social media ecosystem. Hence, it is crucial to understand what content posted by streaming services fosters engagement on this platform.

**Design/Methodology-** A combined total of 230 Instagram posts appearing between January 14 and February 28, 2021, were extensively analyzed. The goal was to examine the post objectives, features, and emotional elements accompanying said posts that Amazon Prime and Disney+ uploaded. Special attention was paid to the number of likes on posts since it is a key metric in measuring engagement.

**Findings-** Results indicate that, despite having fewer posts per day, Disney+ drove much more engagement in post likes and comments. The platform made extensive use of hashtags and entertaining content to engage audiences. However, Amazon Prime had a big absence of useful features like hashtags. It also relied heavily on third-party content, unlike Disney+, whose content primarily consists of original programming.

**Practical Implications-** The novel findings have important implications for streaming services, social media practitioners, and researchers.

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## Introduction

It is no secret that social media is a vital tool for TV networks to boost viewership by engaging the audience and keeping them informed (Gong, 2017). In this modern age, such networks rely on social media channels to promote their content and keep the viewers interested (Wang, 2016).

Streaming services such as Amazon Prime and Disney+ have different strategies in terms of releasing and promoting content. While Disney+ follows the traditional TV model of airing a new episode every week, Amazon Prime instantly releases an entire season of their programming (Fernández-Gómez, 2014). Overall, this paper will analyze the different engagement patterns of streaming services on the social media channel Instagram. The comparison will be made between an established player like Amazon Prime and an emerging competitor like Disney+. This study will take a closer look at which message characteristics generate the most engagement.

## Literature Review

Twitter and Facebook are the undisputed kings of the online realm (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). However, there is a new rising star in the hearts of the younger generation; Instagram (Ferguson, 2016). In fact, with a penetration rate of 45%, Instagram was the fastest growing social media site in Spain (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2017). The new sensation has a strong visual-oriented focus that consists primarily of photos and videos. Moreover, Instagram users exhibit a high brand community commitment and engagement (Casaló, 2017). Said engagement creates a robust word-of-mouth network crucial for social media campaigns conducted by audio-visual platforms (Nanda, 2018).

The theory of presentation of self has been employed in this paper (Goffman, 1959). The said theory is instrumental in analyzing how the brand image is projected on Instagram by TV networks (Greer, 2017). This can be done by identifying the type of resources used for self-presentation on Instagram by the two different accounts (Johnson & Ranzini, 2018). Such an analysis is also relevant from practitioners' viewpoint since social media is a vital tool for engaging young audience members (Wu, 2018).

Previous research indicates that 30% of all content is posted on Instagram for promotional purposes by American TV networks. The present study looks to enlighten scholars and practitioners by gauging how international streaming services use Instagram. Followers were seen to engage the most with community-building posts (Greer, 2017). However, the particular study was restricted to local TV stations with a limited market size. With regards to other social media platforms, humor-based content was seen to promote engagement among Netflix users on Twitter (Fernández-Gómez, 2018).

Therefore, the following research questions were developed in line with the existing literature:

RQ1: What is the overall strategy of Amazon Prime and Disney+ on Instagram?

RQ2: What are the characteristics of the Instagram posts uploaded by the platforms?

RQ3: Which emotional elements are found in the posts appearing on Instagram?

RQ4: How do the top Instagram posts fare in terms of engagement?

Essentially, the study will look to determine what type of content is promoted and whether they are original programming or not. Moreover, the various elements accompanying the posts, such as images and videos, will also be scrutinized. Al-Rawi (2017) has identified many emotional and cognitive elements linked to content virality that will also be examined in this paper. Finally, the level of post engagement will be analyzed in terms of likes and comments.

## Methodology

All Instagram posts of Amazon Prime and Disney+ between January 14 and February 28, 2021, were manually cataloged. This was the time frame during which new content was released for the year 2021. Hence, this was an ideal window to collect data from the Instagram account of these streaming services.

Said posts were coded as per the categories and variables illustrated in *Table 1*. Features of Microsoft Excel, such as pivot tables and sorting filters, were extensively used to analyze the results. It also proved invaluable in calculating certain aspects, such as the average number of likes on all posts and the number of posts appearing per day for each platform.

*Table 1: System of coding categories and variables*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Adopted from</b>
<b>1</b>	Post objectives	Greeting, informing, polling, promoting specific content, promoting the platform, encouraging participation, contest, game	Fernández-Gómez (2018)
	Content ownership	The streaming platform itself (Amazon Prime and Disney+), licensed from third parties.	
	Message Orientation	Ask for the suggestion, gives suggestion ask for an opinion, gives an opinion, ask for information, gives information, positive socio-emotional, negative socio-emotional, agree, disagree, shows tension, shows tension release, shows solidarity, shows antagonism	Lin (2011)
<b>2</b>	Formal features	Emoticons, hashtags, links to other social media, links to the platform's website, links to other websites	Auverset (2016); Fernández-Gómez and Díaz-Campo (2014)
	Customization	Usage of imperative verbs, usage of a first, second, or third person	Lin (2011)
	Images	Derivative art, diegetic (movie stills), extra-diegetic (portrayal of actors offset), the actor in character, the actor, face, memes	
	Videos	trailers, teasers, extended content, promotions, making-of, non-diegetic narrator, diegetic narrator	Segado-Boj (2015)
<b>3</b>	Emotional elements	positive tone, negative tone, surprising, elite people, entertainment, social significance, humor, human interest, sexuality, animals, children, usefulness, sadness, anger, anxiety, fear	Al-Rawi (2017)
<b>4</b>	Post engagement	Amount of likes, amount of comments	Ding (2017)

It must be noted that Instagram's social and technological features promote certain post characteristics (Phua, 2017). Hence, features like emotional elements and personalization were considered. In addition, a new phenomenon taking the internet by storm was taken into account; 'memes.' These are objects linked to digital communities that are 'appropriated, re-coded, and slotted back into the internet infrastructures they came from'

(Nooney, 2014). Another feature that was proven to be popular on Instagram posts was also taken into consideration; 'faces' (Manikonda et al., 2015).

The engagement was quantified by the amount of 'likes' on each post since it helps to understand the attitudes of the Instagram audience (Sumner et al., 2018). According to Ding (2017), "likes" are a significant performance index; they can be taken as a sign of TV viewer's behaviors, as happens with moviegoers'. Furthermore, the number of comments on each post was also taken into account. However, the metric is known as 'shares' is not relevant here since Instagram is not focused on redistributing its content (Larsson, 2017).

## Results and Discussion

### The overall strategy of Amazon Prime and Disney+ on Instagram

From the initial analysis, it is clear that both platforms employ a different approach on Instagram. Amazon Prime had more posts per day in comparison to Disney+. However, the latter possessed superior engagement in both likes and comments, as depicted in *Table 2*.

*Table 2I* provides an insight into the objectives of posting on Instagram. Both platforms posted to inform their audience members about recent updates. Amazon Prime had a few polling contests and games that were absent from the Disney+ account.

*Table 2: Number of posts, average likes, and comments*

Platform	Number of posts	Posts per day	Average likes	Average comments	Average likes of top 5 posts	Average comments of top 5 posts
Amazon Prime	130	2.8	39,083	136	523,640	326
Disney+	100	2.2	162,447	619	558,576	1,219

*Table 3: Posts by objective*

Platform	Contest	Encouraging participation	Game	Greeting	Informing	Polling	Promoting specific content	Promoting the platform
Amazon Prime	n: 1 %: 0.8	32 24.6	6 4.6	12 9.2	36 27.7	5 3.8	32 24.6	6 4.6
Disney+	n: 0 %: 0.0	11 11.0	0 0.0	1 1.0	56 56.0	0 0.0	25 25.0	7 7.0

*Table 4: Programs promoted*

Platform	Original programming	Third-party content
Amazon Prime	n: 66 %: 50.8	64 49.2
Disney+	n: 90 %: 90.0	10 10.0

A sharp contrast can be seen in *Table 4* in terms of the type of programming promoted on each platform. While Disney+ concentrated heavily on original marketing programming, Amazon Prime had to resort to third-party content for nearly half of all promotions. Disney's entertainment wing contains many studios like Pixar, Marvel, and National Geographic, which allows it to tap into a wide range of original programming (DuBois, 2020). The results of this study seem to prove this point.

Table 5: Most promoted programs

Amazon Prime	Number of posts	Disney+	Number of posts
The Map Of Tiny Perfect Things	11	WandaVision	31
One Night in Miami	9	Cinderella Musical	8
The Boys	7	Raya and The Last Dragon	7
Coming 2 America	6	The Muppet Show	5
Tell Me Your Secrets	5	The Falcon and The Winter Soldier	4

Table 5 presents the programs that were promoted the most on Instagram. One commonality is that all top posts dealt with original programming minus The Muppet Show. However, most of Amazon Prime's posts focused on movies while Disney+ targeted TV shows. This is part of Disney's strategy to launch more Marvel shows to constantly keep diehard fans on the edge of their seats (Tassi, 2020).

### Characteristics of Instagram posts

Hashtags are vital in boosting the discoverability of Instagram posts. Previous studies have shown that 11 or more hashtags in a post can increase interaction by 80% (Duran, 2017). Unfortunately, Amazon Prime had barely made use of this important element, as shown in Table 6. More than half of the platform's posts did not contain any elements at all. It is one of the main reasons why their number of likes and comments is significantly lower than Disney+. On the other hand, hashtags were used in abundance by Disney+, and very few of their posts lacked key elements. Personalized hashtags like #DisneyPlus went a long way in fostering engagement.

The various types of imagery used by the platforms have been illustrated in Table 7. Amazon Prime was mostly reliant on diegetic images. This refers to still frames from the actual content (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). On the contrary, Disney+ had more 'faces' in its posts. As mentioned earlier, 'faces' were confirmed to be a prevalent feature on Instagram (Manikonda et al., 2015). Perhaps the most interesting observation here is the lack of memes used by both parties. Despite being a widely prevalent phenomenon on the internet, memes do not seem to be a crucial part of their promotional strategy.

Table 6: Different post elements

Platform		Emoticons	Hashtags	Links to other social media	None
Amazon Prime	n	28	1	28	73
	%	21.5	0.8	21.5	56.2
Disney+	n	5	85	8	2
	%	5.0	85.0	8.0	2.0

Table 7: Characteristics of images in posts

Platform		Derivative art	Diegetic	Extra - diegetic	Face	Meme	The actor	The actor in character
Amazon Prime	n	2	24	2	4	7	12	8
	%	3.4	40.7	3.4	6.8	11.9	20.3	13.6
Disney+	n	2	7	3	23	4	4	13
	%	3.6	12.5	5.4	41.1	7.1	7.1	23.2

Table 8: Characteristics of videos in posts

Platform		Extended content	Making-of	Promotion	Teaser	Trailer	Diegetic Narrator	Non - diegetic narrator
Amazon Prime	n	11	7	23	20	10	0	0
	%	15.5	9.9	32.4	28.2	14.1	0.0	0.0
Disney+	n	7	1	3	20	11	1	1
	%	7.0	1.0	3.0	20.0	11.0	1.0	1.0

Strategies for posting videos are somewhat the same for both Amazon Prime and Disney+. Table 8 highlights that uploading teasers and trailers of upcoming content are the top priority. Amazon Prime posted more videos of behind-the-scenes footage in comparison to Disney+. In both cases, the existence of videos termed as 'diegetic narrator' and 'non-diegetic narrator' was virtually absent.

### Emotional elements in the Instagram posts

There are a number of differences that emerged in terms of emotional and cognitive elements. While Amazon Prime leaned towards humor and positivity, Disney+ focused more on entertaining content and programming geared towards children.

In the case of Amazon Prime, they promoted a few horror-based shows like 'Tell Me Your Secrets and The Boarding School that sparked elements of fear and anger. Moreover, posts regarding The Wilds were linked to sadness on multiple occasions. However, no such instances of negativity were found on the Instagram account of Disney+.

Speaking of Disney+, the platform mainly posted regarding WandaVision and The Falcon and The Winter Soldier. Both shows are big names in entertainment that are produced by Marvel Studios. Many instances of children-based content like Flora and Ulysses and Raya and the Last Dragon were also observed.

Overall, it is evident that Disney+ steers away from posting content that is linked to any sort of negativity. On the other hand, Amazon Prime promoted content that encompassed a wide range of emotional elements. According to Table 1X, the platform covered everything from humor to sadness and beyond.

Table 9: Emotional elements in posts

	Amazon Prime		Disney+	
	n	%	n	%
Positive tone	34	26.2	7	7.0
Humor	18	13.8	4	4.0
Human interest	13	10.0	10	10.0
Entertainment	12	9.2	36	36.0
Elite people	10	7.7	5	5.0
Sadness	9	6.9	1	1.0
Social significance	7	5.4	13	13.0
Sexuality	6	4.6	0	0.0
Surprising	5	3.8	3	3.0
Anger	4	3.1	0	0.0
Fear	4	3.1	0	0.0
Children	3	2.3	20	20.0
Others*	5	3.8	1	1.0

\*Negative tone, anxiety, conflict and usefulness

## Engagement of top posts

The most popular posts on Instagram shed some light on how both platforms drove engagement. As per *Table 10*, the most liked posts on Amazon Prime's Instagram account consisted mainly of third-party content like 42. Videos were preferred over images but, formal features like hashtags and emoticons were largely absent. This reconfirms the analysis presented in *Table 6*. Amazon Prime missed out on utilizing hashtags which are vital to increasing post discoverability (Duran, 2017).

The approach for Disney+ was vastly different. Each of the top 5 posts depicted in *Table 11* represents original programming like the repeatedly promoted TV show, *WandaVision*. Moreover, all of the post captions contain a healthy mix of hashtags and links. No images were used as every post was either a trailer or teaser for upcoming content. It is clear that this strategy has yielded a higher number of likes and comments in comparison to Amazon Prime.

With regards to the post captions, Disney+ achieved more clarity. Each of the top posts has a clear message backed by the specialized hashtag #DisneyPlus to increase the platform's outreach. However, the same cannot be said for Amazon Prime as their captions are somewhat vague. The absence of a specialized hashtag to promote the platform does not help either.

Altogether, the strategy for achieving high engagement on Instagram is clear; posting movie or TV show trailers for original programming. Additionally, as demonstrated by Disney+, the posts should have relevant information regarding the upcoming content and avoid vague messages. The findings also reinforce the fact that hashtags are crucial in driving engagement.

Overall, the average likes generated by the Disney+ top 5 posts were 6% higher than Amazon Prime's. However, the average comments were nearly 4 times higher for Disney+. This indicates that the platform has been more successful in terms of driving social interaction with the audience members.

*Table 10: Posts with most engagement for Amazon Prime*

Date	Post caption	Likes	Comments	Original Programming	Hashtags	Images	Videos
February 22	Angela Bassett did what needed to be done.	807,725	325				✓
February 09	For your viewing pleasure. Yes, we'll hold.	654,629	269				✓
February 24	Bestie I'm afraid to tell you this...	444,525	168	✓		✓	
February 22	One legend portraying another legend: Chadwick Boseman as Jackie Robinson in '42.'	438,269	703			✓	
January 27	The Map Of Tiny Perfect Things - Official Trailer. Watch February 12.	273,054	165	✓			✓

Table 11: Posts with most engagement for Disney+

Date	Post caption	Likes	Comments	Original Programming	Hashtags	Images	Videos
February 23	The seventh episode of Marvel Studios' @WandaVision is now streaming on #DisneyPlus!	911,316	2,622	✓	✓		✓
February 08	The Falcon and the Winter Soldier and start streaming the Original Series March 19 on #DisneyPlus. #FalconAndWinterSoldier	517,197	903	✓	✓		✓
February 26	Only two episodes left The eighth episode of Marvel Studios' @WandaVision is now streaming on #DisneyPlus.	479,183	1,089	✓	✓		✓
February 23	#DisneyPlusStar is streaming tomorrow in select international countries with parental controls. Titles vary by territory.	455,620	1,050	✓	✓		✓
February 18	Rest your eyes on this brand-new clip from the seventh episode of Marvel Studios' @WandaVision, streaming *tomorrow on #DisneyPlus!!	429,563	429	✓	✓		✓

## Conclusion

Although there are some similarities, Amazon Prime and Disney+ have considerably distinct strategies for driving engagement on Instagram. The latter is less active but has superior engagement in terms of likes and comments. Regarding the objectives of posting on Instagram, both platforms use the social media channel as an information outlet for upcoming content.

90% of the content promoted by Disney+ happens to be original programming. Even their most popular Instagram posts are about original content like WandaVision and The Falcon, and The Winter Soldier. Besides, they also utilize practical post elements like hashtags and links. However, half of the content appearing on Amazon Prime's Instagram account belongs to third parties. The absence of hashtags on post captions was also a point of concern.

Moreover, the videos posted by both platforms were similar. Promoting teasers and trailers of upcoming content was a popular strategy. As for the emotional elements appearing in Instagram posts, Amazon Prime adopted a 360-degree approach. The platform used a mixture of content that was both positively and negatively themed. On the other hand, Disney+ was only focused on promoting entertaining titles that radiated positivity.

Despite being only 16 months old, Disney+ has already surpassed 100 million subscribers globally. It is rapidly catching up to Amazon Prime's 147 million subscribers. By 2024, it is estimated that the newcomer will overtake Amazon Prime and challenge Netflix in terms of total subscribers (DuBois, 2021). Whichever way the streaming wars go, one thing is for certain; 'cord-cutting has changed the face of entertainment as we know it.

## Research Implications

The findings of this paper have important research implications. For instance, Amazon Prime should note the absence of hashtags in their Instagram posts since this is a key driver of engagement (Duran, 2017). Moreover, it will be difficult for Amazon Prime to boost their original programming amount compared to Disney+. The latter owns many entertainment studios, enabling it to create original content rapidly (DuBois, 2020).

As for social media researchers, this study paves the way for more future research into customer engagement on Instagram. Further qualitative research is needed to understand the profile of people engaging with Instagram (Martín-Quevedo et al., 2019). Additionally, experimentation is an avenue that can be explored. This means that people would need to be exposed to such Instagram posts and asked to react spontaneously.

## Limitations and Future Research Direction

To sum up, the findings presented are limited to the official Instagram accounts of Amazon Prime and Disney+. Social media engagement is likely to differ across other cultural settings like that of India and Mexico. Content and post objectives will undoubtedly vary in emerging markets. Moreover, factors like promoting local content and third-party licensing agreements will produce different results.

Therefore, future studies can dive deeper into other cultural settings and subsequent engagement patterns. In addition, further research is also needed to uncover how other close competitors like Apple TV+, HBO, Hulu and Paramount+ perform in terms of engagement. Another avenue worth exploring is how individuals perceive such posts on social media. Qualitative approaches like focus group discussions are likely to unearth why individuals are compelled to like, comment, or even ignore a certain platform's post.

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