Disney+ surpasses 50 million subscribers in just 5 months

Enlarge / Pedro Pascal as The Mandalorian on Disney+.

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This week, Disney announced a new milestone for its Disney+ streaming video service: 50 million subscribers just five months after the service's initial launch.

That seems to be many more subscribers than Disney's own Hulu service, which as of the end of last year clocked in at just over 30 million, and three times the combined subscribers for CBS All Access and Showtime as of January—though none of those services are available in as many countries and regions as Disney+. You might compare Disney+ instead with the more global Netflix, which has 167 million subscribers.

Still, Netflix has been building that subscriber base over many years. Disney has reached 50 million in just a few months. In February, Disney reported 29 million, so those subscribers have nearly doubled in just a few short months. The service may have gotten a boost from users who are consuming more home entertainment amid shelter-in-place orders right now—and that might suggest that the above numbers from a few months ago for CBS, Netflix, and Hulu might be notably behind current figures.

Disney recently released some films that were supposed to be getting theatrical releases on Disney+ instead as a way to

distribute them as movie theaters closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Deadline, Disney's target is 60 to 90 million subscribers worldwide by 2024. Disney+ initially launched in the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands. As of today, it's available in all of the following countries and territories:

- Australia
- Austria
- Canada
- Channel Islands
- France
- Germany
- India
- Ireland
- Isle of Man
- Italy
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Puerto Rico
- Spain
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom
- United States

Clearly, there are many regions left for Disney+ to expand into, and since the service has reached 50 million subscribers in just the above, it now appears possible that we'll learn before long that Disney itself underestimated the service's potential when it set that 60-to-90-million-by-2024 goal.

However, we should note that more competition is on the horizon. NBC Universal plans a streaming service called Peacock, and another major content conglomerate (WarnerMedia) plans to launch HBO Max next month.

Whereas early streaming service successes like Netflix and Hulu first looked like aggregators of content from the companies that produced and distributed that content in more traditional channels, the industry now demonstrates a clear trend towards content owners banding together into conglomerates that run their own streaming services rather than licensing said content to Netflix or its ilk. And to that point, Netflix has seen that writing on the wall and increasingly pivoted toward making its own content to eventually replace licensing and distribution agreements.

The apparent endgame seems to be shaping up to be something not unlike traditional cable but distributed over IP and unbundled, with far fewer ads, no or decidedly different dedicated hardware, reduced live content, and less financial emphasis on sports network subsidies.

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