

TelevisaUnivision's Acquisition of ViX: An Insight Into The Latino Media Landscape

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1 Introduction

For decades, Spanish speakers have faced a significant gulf in accessing a broad library of quality content within the streaming market. Over the last 2 to 3 years, streaming services have focused their efforts on winning over this vastly underrepresented group. This paper details and analyzes the history and rise of ViX, TelevisaUnivision's dedicated Spanish-language streaming service. It examines the broader media landscape for the growing Hispanic market and evaluates ViX's success in capitalizing on its position as an early entrant in the streaming surge.

2 Background

Created in 2013 under the name GOTV (Graniero Otero TV), ViX TV was intended to move all the programming from Radio Caracas Television of Venezuela into digital format. By 2014, the entire content of RCTV had been made available in video format in the form of novelas such as *Juana la Virgen*, *Betty La Fea*, *Kassandra* and many other programmes. During 2014-2017, the service was known as Pongalo until it was dissolved due to mismanagement.

Following this, the service was acquired by Batanga Media, an independent digital media powerhouse serving the U.S. Hispanic and Latin American markets. Their content reached an audience of more than 50 million social media followers, with videos amassing more than 1 billion views monthly. As a significant independent provider of digital media material to the Hispanic communities in the United States, Latin America, and Brazil, their content was available on several social media sites in Spanish, Portuguese and English.

In early 2017, Batanga Media was renamed to ViX.com, with a new editorial line and approach. CEO Rafael Urbina saw growth opportunities in their media offerings, noting how users were increasingly turning to mobile devices as their primary screen. The company launched their own video production facilities across their varied markets, described as 'video factories'. Urbina touted

their ability to “produce content on a massive scale that is customized to the unique requirements of different social platforms,” a sentiment that drew interest from TelevisaUnivision.

3 Acquiry by TelevisaUnivision

TelevisaUnivision, the joint venture of Spanish speaking media titans Televisa and Univision, acquired Vix.com in January 2021. The company recognized the need for a streaming service as Hispanic viewers (like many other US households) accelerated the cord-cutting trend from cable networks to streaming. It was combined with another recently acquired service, PrendeTV, to produce the first dedicated free streaming service for Hispanic viewers.

In an effort to improve its competitive position, TelevisaUnivision combined all streaming services under one name, ViX, on March 31st, 2022. The service’s library now contains over 70 original programs, ranging from reality, comedy, docuseries and dramas, original films and exclusive international distribution rights to international media. The service has expanded to include sports coverage, streaming the 2022 World Cup, the Mexican league, South American cups and European cup competitions. The service’s main competitors include Spanish-language streaming services such as NBC Universal’s Peacock Latino, ViacomCBS’s Pluto TV and Fox’s Tubi.

4 Price

ViX’s pricing strategy consists of a tier-based streaming plan, like its competitors, Peacock. In this plan, 40,000 hours of content are free to watch and available with commercials, whilst several original programs and 10,000 hours of additional content are accessible via a 8.99 ad free subscription. This monthly price is intended to be a low-cost leader, especially in comparison to leading streaming services such as HBO Max (16.99) and Netflix (17.99).

5 Outcomes

By February 23rd, 2023, the free service reached 25 million monthly active users. More than half of ViX’s subscribers had tried the free service through that financial quarter, with it becoming a major funnel for their premium subscriptions. CEO Wade Davis noted that “since we’ve launched ViX in March, on a global basis when you look at it across the U.S., Mexico and ROLAC [Latin America and the Caribbean], we’re seeing total streamed hours grow 20-30 percent month to month,” a positive sign that their significant investment in the success of the service as an arm of

Televisa Univision is working. Meanwhile, their app gained praise and recognition by Apple Apps in being named app of the year for 2022, showing that the U.S. market is seeing ViX as a useful addition to the media landscape.

Full year subscription and licensing revenue increased 20 percent from 2021-22 to 1.7 billion, reflecting the launch of ViX's subscription tier and nearly 150 million from sublicensing World Cup rights in Latin America. For the quarter, subscription and licensing revenue rose 47 percent year-over-year to 567.9 million. The World Cup was able to bring exposure to ViX due to the audience it attracted, mainly Spanish speaking Americans who wanted to access Spanish commentators from their screens in the U.S. The placement of the next World Cup will also surely be a major draw for the streaming service as it will be jointly hosted by the U.S., Mexico and Canada.

6 Demographics

The target crowd of ViX is inherently broad, a major part of their service's draw. With such a large collection of television shows that cater to their audience, it is difficult to point out to any one demographic. As an example, hit series *El Señor De Los Cielos* had 1.6 million viewers within the 18-49 age range out of 2.8 million viewers for its season 4 premiere, irrespective of gender. That expands to 3.1 million viewers out of 5.7 million average weekly telenovela viewers in this age demographic.

Nonetheless, the company is investing in better understanding their audience and growth opportunities, partnering with Omnicom Media Group to leverage their access to data about Hispanic households. So far, the data has shown significant market penetration for streaming services in the U.S. but a large untapped market in urban centers of Latin America. This population is quickly making the change from multichannel video programming distributors (MVPDs) such as Xfinity and Dish to streaming services.

Armed with this data, ViX is modifying its approach for this newly emerging market by providing 24/7 news and sports services reminiscent of MVPDs whilst also providing all the benefits of a streaming service- on-demand original content and readily available programs. ViX is also pending a hard launch in the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, which could greatly benefit the sizable community of viewers from these countries, who were not part of the original target market, and are susceptible to being enticed by other video services such as Tubi and PlutoTV.

7 Strategy

ViX has made several key acquisitions of exclusive U.S. rights for popular shows in a bid to maintain their market leadership. This includes programs such as *Antidisturbios* and *Hierro*, both

produced by Spanish network Movistar+. Spain has been seen as a major producer of content for streaming services, mostly due to its healthy media ecosystem (Atresplayer and Movistar producing several of the original shows ViX bought) and big budget shows which have attracted attention from streaming services, such as *Money Heist* and *Elite*. Mexico has seen similar attention with the recent success of its narconovelas such as *La Reina Del Sur* and *El Señor De Los Cielos* in the wake of the major English and Spanish coproduction, *Narcos*. ViX has developed strong relationships with the production companies in both countries to ensure that they can maintain the rights to major series coming from these countries.

ViX has also secured deals with top Latino personalities and media figures. Two major deals were signed with stars Eugenio Derbez and Selena Gomez, with Gomez producing *Mi Vecino, El Cartel* and Eugenio Derbez giving the rights to *Instructions Not Included* and two of his sitcoms, *Al Derecho Y Al Derbez* and *La Familia P Luche*. The common branch between the two performers is the way in which they have been able to branch out to success outside of the Hispanic market. Eugenio Derbez, one of Mexico's most popular comedians and filmmakers, directed *Instructions Not Included*, an international box office success, and appeared in films *How To Be a Latin Lover* and *Dora and the Lost City of Gold*. Selena Gomez has risen to stardom from her beginnings in the Disney Channel to her music career, with an ardent global following. These deals spike interest in Spanish-speaking content because fans of both performers are eager to view their next projects irrespective of language barriers.

8 Criticism

However, despite its expansive catalog, ViX has faced criticism for limited diversity within its original programming, with white Hispanic actors dominating leading roles. While select programs address social issues such as gender inequality, sexual identity, and injustice, these remain exceptions rather than the norm. Comparatively, other Spanish-language productions on competing platforms have achieved broader representation and cultural resonance. For example, *Club De Cuervos* explores the storyline of openly pansexual footballer Aitor Cardone, as well as the challenges for women in a male dominated workplace for Isabel Iglesias. *Elite* explores class relations and socioeconomic diversity, featuring Latino, Afro Latino and Middle Eastern characters who have to navigate Spanish society. Both shows have been praised for having meaningful representation of marginalized communities and have enjoyed a wider appeal as a result. This aligns with audience polling data within U.S. households that signals over 79 percent of respondents believe more on-screen diversity is needed in film and tv.

9 Findings

The future of ViX's success depends on how it will be able to create a unique space for itself in the crowded streaming market, especially through its access to Spanish language content and original programming. The unique placement of TelevisaUnivision, connected both to the U.S. Hispanic audience and a wider audience in Mexico and Central America, provide growth opportunities to capitalize on an underrepresented market.

ViX occupies a unique position within the global streaming market through its connection to U.S. Hispanic audiences and broader Latin American viewership. Its early investment in Spanish-language streaming and sports broadcasting has yielded strong growth and market penetration. Its original programming has been widely successful, with strategic plays in acquiring U.S. rights for major series and securing deals with Hispanic stars bringing in strong year over year results. Their pivot towards mobile streaming has also been successful, named a top app and presenting hesitant adoptees of streaming services with a convenient way to watch their favorite shows on demand.

The platform's long-term success will depend on its ability to adapt to evolving audience expectations, particularly regarding representation. If it is trying to grow in the Caribbean and globally, it will need to better reflect the diversity of its audience. Expanding talent pipelines, broadening casting practices, and investing in inclusive storytelling can signal their commitment to a growing global audience.

What is clear is that there is demand for the unique and original Hispanic programming that ViX offers. It is now up to the company to capitalize on the growing Hispanic market share as competition closes in.

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