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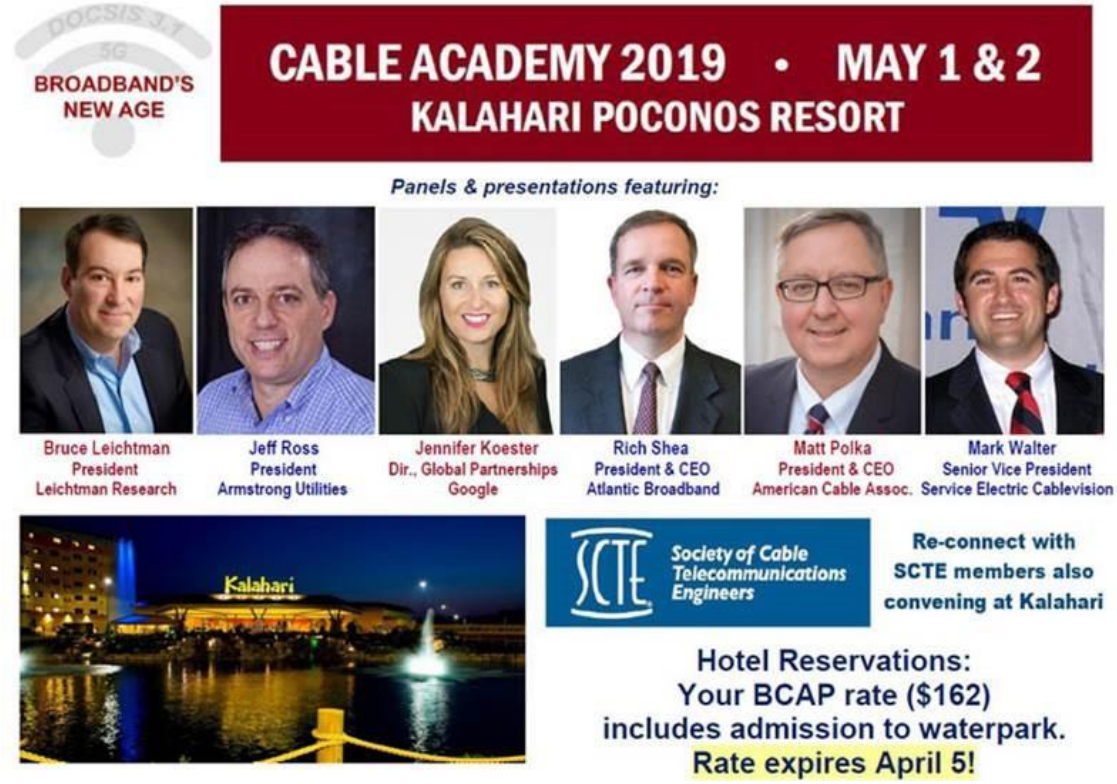

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Apple Inc. has entered the streaming-television arena. But who exactly is it competing with? There isn't just one race in the streaming-media world. In the U.S., there are at least five distinct categories where Silicon Valley heavyweights and traditional media companies are competing for users' attention and money.

Some, like Netflix Inc., are building subscription entertainment services with large stockpiles of original and licensed programming. Others, like Dish Network Corp.'s SlingTV, are creating **slimmed-down, online versions** of the cable-TV bundle. Still others, such as Roku, are looking to be streaming-TV hubs in the living room, providing hardware and services that let consumers connect to and sign up for all sorts of streaming offerings. So where does Apple fit in?

It is among the many companies that are playing in multiple categories. Its **Apple TV+ service**, announced last week, aims to create original programming, such as "The Morning Show," a drama about a talk show featuring Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon, and the space drama "For All Mankind." It also has a separate Apple TV Channels service, which is more of a streaming hub, letting users sign

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Editorial: The PA. Statehouse is not the setting for a sermon

Pennsylvania Capital Star
Op-ed: It's not enough to update voting machines. Pa. needs to update its election law, too

up for HBO, Showtime and Starz, among other on-demand video options. All of this is quite different—and less ambitious—than Apple's **initial hopes** of building a replacement to cable TV that would allow ad-free viewing.

In some ways, Apple is emulating Amazon.com Inc., which competes with Netflix in original streaming entertainment but also runs **Amazon Prime Video Channels**, not unlike Apple TV Channels. Google's YouTube is also a player in multiple categories. Among traditional media players: AT&T Inc. has its DirecTV online skinny bundle and plans to enter the Netflix entertainment race **later this year**, building off its HBO and Warner Bros. programming. AT&T's Bleacher Report live-streaming service is part of a crowded sports arena that includes Disney 's ESPN+, Amazon and the major sports leagues, as well as DAZN, a startup chaired by a former ESPN president. Disney also is a subscription-entertainment player through its control of Hulu and the forthcoming Disney+ service.

Cable giant Comcast Corp. , for its part, is offering **a Roku-like service** to its internet-only customers, and its **NBCUniversal** unit has a streaming-video business in the works to push its own content. With multiple races, there is room for more than one winner. – ***Wall Street Journal***

Talk about too much of a good thing.

Apple's entry into the streaming-video business Monday gives consumers another impressive choice for online movies and TV shows — a high-profile, deep-pocketed competitor for the likes of Netflix, Amazon and Hulu. It also is sure to prompt some people to rethink which services they want to keep paying for.
"Consumers may be entering a time of subscription fatigue," said Kevin Westcott, vice chairman of the consulting firm Deloitte, which last week released its latest Digital Media Trends survey highlighting industry developments.

It found that 47 percent of streaming-video subscribers feel there are too many services, too many choices, too many ads and too many monthly fees. Westcott said that as media companies jockey for streaming-video market share, they also need to "keep a close eye on consumer frustrations, including advertising overload and data privacy concerns."

Apple's service, dubbed Apple TV+, arrives as the streaming-video market marks a major milestone: For the first time, there are more subscriptions to streaming services than there are subscriptions to traditional pay-TV services such as cable and satellite. This is a very big deal, signaling an irreversible shift away from the fat bundles of channels that once defined the pay-TV industry and the arrival of a new business model focused on narrower programming choices. It's also an example of being careful about what you wish for.

For years I've been pounding the drum for a-la-carte TV — allowing consumers to pay only for the channels they want, rather than hundreds they don't want. Streaming video isn't that. But it's closer. And now cord cutters have choices to make. A report Monday from CompareCards.com, a credit-card comparison site, found that people

with online subscriptions spend an average of $38 a month. Apple hasn't revealed how much its service will cost, but it seems sure to drive that total higher. The Deloitte report, meanwhile, makes clear (and my own experience as a cord cutter backs up) that it's just not feasible to subscribe to everything.

Some other takeaways from the Deloitte report: While 65 percent of people have a traditional pay-TV service, 69 percent have at least one streaming-video subscription. The typical streaming-video subscriber pays for three services. Consumers will choose a particular streaming service based primarily on the movies and shows available. Fifty-seven percent of consumers overall said they seek out original content. Seventy-one percent of millennials said original content is king.

Apple TV+ will pull together content from a variety of providers, including, at an added cost, HBO and other premium channels, and offer recommendations based on your viewing habits. It also will feature original content, including a resurrected "Amazing Stories" anthology series from Steven Spielberg. While pricing remains a question mark, Apple said Monday the service will be ad-free and available on demand. Importantly, Apple TV+ will be accessible beyond the Apple ecosystem, meaning you'll be able to access it via a Roku or Fire TV streaming device.

Apple also unveiled an expanded news app called Apple News+, costing $9.99 monthly. The Los Angeles Times is part of the mix. All these developments — the Apple streaming-video service, the changes revealed in the Deloitte report — are hugely important, indicating that people have more control over their TV viewing than ever before, despite decades of resistance from pay-TV companies determined to maintain their bloated profit margins.

But this notion of "subscription fatigue" is real and suggests that an industry shakeout is coming. Deloitte says consumers now have more than 300 streaming-video services to choose from. The vast majority are small, specialized services such as Fandor, which charges $10 a month for access to independent or hard-to-find movies. The big guys — Netflix, Amazon, YouTube, HBO, etc. — vary in price for high-definition streaming from about $12 to $40 monthly and provide lots of viewing options. A gotta-have-it Disney streaming service is coming soon.

Each counts on original or exclusive content to attract subscribers, which means someone who wants access to all the shows and movies people are talking about can easily spend well over $100 a month on streaming subscriptions. And suddenly we're back where we started, with monstrous monthly bills for tons of content we may never view. "Consumers are tiring of the friction of managing multiple subscriptions and the hassles that come with it," the Deloitte report concludes. "This friction will likely rise as more networks and studios go direct with their own streaming services, pulling content from rivals and fragmenting the market. "Costs for content may go up, and if they do, consumers and services lacking critical mass may put pressure on the industry to reaggregate."

That's the next phase of pay TV's evolution. The various streaming services will struggle for audience and dominance. Ideally, this level of competition would push prices down, but don't hold your breath. The

investments being made in original content mean subscription fees likely will keep growing. Last fall, Netflix said it planned to borrow $2 billion more to cover its increasing production costs, adding to nearly $12 billion in existing debt. In January, the company said it was raising monthly fees by as much as 18 percent.

The fact that Netflix movies earned 15 Academy Award nominations this year and took home four Oscars tells you the big streamers are in it to win it. I imagine that instead of three or four big TV networks, we'll end up with three or four big streaming services, and content that's now on niche services will be absorbed by the industry leaders or disappear. At the same time, all this streaming will create ever-stronger demand for broadband internet access, which means the top providers such as Charter/Spectrum, Comcast, AT&T and Frontier Communications will keep jacking up prices.

They'll say (as they already do) that frequent rate hikes are needed to cover network improvements. The reality is that as the companies earn less and less from traditional pay-TV plans, they'll increasingly rely on internet service as the primary money spinner keeping shareholders happy. Stir all this together and you get an industry that resisted change for as long as it could, and when it had no choice, it adapted quickly to the new digital landscape. And then it started running the same old playbook to lock in viewers and charge them as much as it can get away with.

There's little we can do about subscription fees, other than to be more selective about which streaming services we sign up for and hope a competitive market works its magic. Broadband internet costs — that's a whole other matter. I'm with those who say high-speed internet should be treated like any other utility, particularly in light of the fact that a single company is often the sole provider for thousands of households. Broadband should be regulated to ensure high-quality service at reasonable prices, with all rate hikes requiring justification and documentation by providers. We didn't bat an eye when that sort of thinking applied to phone service. Are things so different now? – ***Los Angeles Times***

If you rely on an antenna for your TV viewing, changes between now and July 2020 may affect reception of some of your channels.

As part of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) work to make more airwaves available for high-speed mobile broadband services, some TV stations in cities across the United States are changing their over-the-air broadcast frequencies. While the channel numbers you see on the TV are not changing, viewers will need to rescan their televisions to update to the new frequencies so they can continue receiving those channels. Viewers will not need to buy a new TV or purchase a converter box. Only those who use an antenna to watch local channels need to rescan their TVs; cable and satellite subscribers are not affected by these changes.

Not all channels are changing and the changes are happening on a rolling basis, so not all channels will change at the same time. Some viewers may need to rescan their televisions and converter boxes multiple times over the transition period. Viewers should look for additional announcements on local channels and rescan when those

changes take place. Consider these common transition questions to ensure you're prepared:

– How will I know it's time to scan? Some local TV channels will change frequencies at various times through mid-2020. Viewers should be on the lookout for public service announcements, "crawls" running across the bottom of TV screens and other notifications from local stations announcing "rescan days" on which viewers will need to rescan. Broadcasters will give viewers at least 30 days of notice that their frequency change is approaching. A good rule of thumb is to rescan your TV anytime you notice a channel missing. If you haven't rescanned in a while, you may be surprised by how many channels are now available.
– How many people will be affected by the transition? Millions of Americans nationwide who watch television for free with an antenna will be affected.
– What is the advantage of making the frequency changes? The benefit is that more airwaves will be available to meet consumer demand for increased mobile broadband capacity, the new 5G and other advanced high-speed mobile broadband services being developed.
– How can I find out which channels are changing? The FCC website has an interactive map that allows viewers to insert their address to see which local channels are making a transition in their market. To access the map, visit **fcc.gov/media/engineering/dtvmaps**.

Once you enter your location information, such as city and state or zip code, you will be able to view a list of stations in your area. Stations that are changing frequencies will have an "R" in the last column marked "IA." Click on the station to seethe time period during which each affected station will make the change. To find the specific "rescan day" for a particular station, watch for its on-air announcements and notices or check its website for information. For more information and tips on how to rescan, visit **fcc.gov/TVrescan** or call 1-888-CALLFCC (1-888-225-5322). – ***FCC***

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