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Exploring Uncontested Markets: A Critical Reassessment of Blue Ocean Strategy in ABS-CBN's Post-Franchise Digital Transformation

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Abstract

The loss of ABS-CBN Corporation's legislative broadcasting franchise in 2020 disrupted its traditional business model and intensified the need for alternative distribution and revenue arrangements. This study critically reassessed a Blue Ocean Strategy proposal completed in November 2024 to determine whether the company's post-franchise initiatives constitute market-creating value innovation or primarily strategic adaptation undertaken to maintain organizational viability. A qualitative retrospective documentary case analysis compared the original proposal with selected corporate announcements, financial disclosures, and peer-reviewed literature available through October 27, 2026. Analysis employed the Eliminate–Reduce–Raise–Create Framework and five related dimensions: value innovation, audience engagement, cultural localization, subscription design, and digital inclusion. The evidence indicates that several features proposed in 2024, including a unified streaming service and tiered viewing arrangements, existed by 2020. Distribution partnerships also preceded the proposal, while the iWant relaunch and a sponsored-data arrangement emerged subsequently. Although ABS-CBN reported extensive online audience reach and growing digital-business indicators, substantial consolidated losses persisted. The documented initiatives are therefore more securely classified as strategic adaptation with selected possibilities for value innovation than as demonstrated creation of an uncontested market. The study offers a framework for distinguishing survival-oriented restructuring from commercially sustainable differentiation, while recognizing limitations in consumer and platform-level financial evidence.

Keywords: *Blue Ocean Strategy; strategic adaptation; value innovation; ABS-CBN Corporation; digital transformation; coopetition*

1. Introduction

The global media industry has been transformed by streaming services, platform-based distribution, and changing audience expectations. Traditional broadcasters increasingly compete with international video-on-demand providers as well as social video platforms that offer flexible viewing, personalized discovery, and multiple pricing arrangements. Tang and Wei (2023), in their comparative examination of Netflix and Tencent Video, describe distinct approaches to content, technology, business strategy, and audience-centered practices. Yet the movement from broadcasting to digital distribution should not be equated automatically with successful strategic innovation. It may instead reflect an incumbent organization's response to diminished access to existing channels and revenue sources.

Blue Ocean Strategy offers a framework for differentiating value innovation from head-to-head competition. Its Eliminate–Reduce–Raise–Create Framework invites organizations to reconsider activities and buyer-value elements assumed to be necessary within their industries. A systematic review by Hajar et al. (2021) connects value innovation with competitive advantage and organizational performance, although such associations do not establish that every initiative produces an uncontested market. Digital transformation may also erode traditional differentiation and compel incumbent firms to reconstruct their offerings (Miller & Wang, 2024). It is consequently necessary to distinguish the adoption of digital channels from evidence of newly created demand and sustainable economic value.

ABS-CBN Corporation provides a particularly instructive case. The company's legislative broadcasting franchise expired in May 2020, and a House committee rejected the application for a new franchise on July 10, 2020 (Cervantes, 2020). The resulting loss of its former free-to-air broadcasting operations did not dissolve ABS-CBN Corporation, which continued as a content producer, distributor, and media enterprise. It did, however, significantly

constrain its traditional route to mass-market audiences. The company's response included licensing, third-party distribution, cooperative broadcasting relationships, and greater reliance on online services. Questions of strategic adaptation under regulatory and digital pressure have also been examined in other established Philippine firms, including Mercury Drug Corporation and National Book Store (A. G. Atento & R. G. Atento, 2025, 2026b).

In June 2023, ABS-CBN and GMA announced that *It's Showtime* would air on GTV; in March 2024, they announced that the program would move additionally to GMA's main free-to-air channel beginning April 6 (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2023, 2024). The relationship is strategically striking because the two organizations previously competed for television audiences and advertising. The distribution agreement is best understood initially as coopetition—simultaneous cooperation and competition—rather than prima facie creation of an uncontested market. For a company constrained by the loss of its former broadcasting frequencies, access provided by another broadcaster may represent a critical survival resource.

The distinction becomes equally important for digital distribution. ABS-CBN launched iWantTFC in November 2020 by combining iWant and TFC.tv. The service already featured free, standard, and premium subscription options, selected advertising-free access, and offline viewing for eligible titles (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2020). Its subsequent relaunch as iWant in July 2025 provided updated viewing functionality and renewed emphasis on Filipino content (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2025). In June 2026, a partnership with DITO Telecommunity offered eligible prepaid subscribers up to 1 GB of sponsored iWant streaming per day within the designated application (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2026b). These actions show continuing business-model adjustment, but much of the general streaming model was already established in the industry and within ABS-CBN itself.

The company's digital audience also illustrates the limits of equating reach with success. ABS-CBN reported that its Entertainment YouTube channel had 55 million subscribers and 76 billion lifetime views as of July 3, 2026 (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2026c). However, subscribers do not necessarily represent unique viewers, active users, paying customers, or profitability. The corporation reported consolidated revenue of ₱15.85 billion and a net loss of ₱4.72 billion for 2025; for the first half of 2026, it reported ₱6.88 billion in consolidated revenue and a ₱1.83 billion net loss (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2026a, 2026d). These consolidated results cover several business activities and cannot be attributed entirely to digital services, but they do demonstrate the importance of financial sustainability in assessing the post-franchise strategy.

Consumer engagement, culturally localized programming, affordability, and accessible distribution may provide alternative sources of value. Periaiya and Nandukrishna (2024) identified relationships involving streaming gratifications, satisfaction, and platform stickiness, while Ildır and Celik-Rappas (2022) showed that localization can elicit complex audience responses. Redondo and Serrano (2025) found that tiered subscription incentives can influence intention in ways conditioned by content evaluation, whereas Triviño et al. (2024) identified both accessibility benefits and competition concerns in zero-rating arrangements. These studies suggest possible mechanisms of value creation without demonstrating that the same mechanisms have generated new or profitable demand for ABS-CBN.

In November 2024, Maya, Malolos, Oruga, Quian, and Salcedo completed a student strategic proposal advocating an integrated *ABS-CBN World* application. It proposed entertainment, news, artist interaction, community functions, inexpensive subscriptions, reduced advertisements, and mobile-network partnerships. It also recommended eliminating partnerships with other broadcasting channels (Maya et al., 2024). Several elements were already offered by iWantTFC or depended on partnerships that had already become strategically significant; later initiatives also resembled some recommendations. The chronology makes it inappropriate to claim that the students originated, predicted, or caused those corporate actions.

The central analytical gap is therefore not the absence of ideas for streaming functionality. It is the need to establish when such initiatives are properly classified as market-creating value innovation rather than adaptation to major operational constraints. The case permits a critical reassessment of a historical strategic proposal against dated public developments and scholarship published through 2026. Such a reassessment can also test whether the Four Actions Framework adequately accounts for distribution interdependence, competition, and the economic viability of a disrupted media company.

Objectives of the Study. This study aimed to critically reassess the applicability of Blue Ocean Strategy to ABS-CBN Corporation's post-franchise digital transformation, especially the distinction between market creation and survival-oriented adaptation. Specifically, it sought to: (1) examine major post-franchise disruptions and constraints; (2) analyze subsequent partnerships, digital initiatives, and financial indicators; (3) evaluate the original 2024 proposal using the Eliminate–Reduce–Raise–Create Framework; (4) assess potential consumer-value mechanisms involving engagement, localization, pricing, and digital access; and (5) formulate evidence-informed recommendations consistent with the available documentary record.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Blue Ocean Strategy and Value Innovation in Digital Media

Blue Ocean Strategy concerns the reconstruction of market boundaries through a distinctive combination of buyer value and cost considerations. Hajar et al. (2021) synthesized research connecting value innovation to competitiveness, organizational performance, and growth; their review supports the relevance of the approach but does not imply that technology adoption automatically produces strategic success. Išoraitė and Alperytė (2022) likewise considered Blue Ocean principles in relation to innovation and inclusion, indicating that efforts to reach previously excluded groups may be relevant to value creation. In the Philippines, the Eliminate–Reduce–Raise–Create grid, strategy canvas, and buyer utility map have been applied to a family-owned paint retailer's proposed shift toward a digitally supported service model and to a proposed app-enabled hotel personalization service (R. G. Atento et al., 2025; Benosa et al., 2026). These applications are design-oriented, specifying proposed strategic shifts and feasibility assumptions rather than reporting observed market outcomes.

In digital media, however, the availability of technology can reduce entry barriers while increasing imitation. Tang and Wei (2023) compared Netflix and Tencent Video, describing differentiated content and platform strategies within an already competitive streaming market. Miller and Wang (2024), examining book publishing, found that digitization can reshape the bases of product differentiation. Their results cannot be applied mechanically to broadcasting, but they clarify why moving content online may constitute a competitive necessity rather than a novel market space. A thematic review of Chinese enterprises similarly concluded that digital capabilities generate competitive value only through organizational mediators, in settings shaped by platform-ecosystem dominance (Chen & Atento, 2026).

Accordingly, three questions should be separated: whether a company introduced a new technology or commercial arrangement; whether consumers obtained value they could not readily obtain elsewhere; and whether this value led to new demand or economically durable advantage. Customer value is itself multidimensional; in a Philippine café setting, for example, Mendoza and Magnaye (2026) assessed functional, hedonic, relational, and communication value alongside product differentiation. An initiative may meet the first condition without establishing the latter two. For ABS-CBN, simply developing or improving an application is insufficient evidence of a Blue Ocean outcome when integrated video streaming was already part of its business and of the broader market.

2.2 Consumer Engagement and Interactive Streaming Platforms

Digital media users assess experiences as well as content. In a mixed-method study of OTT video platforms, Periaiya and Nandukrishna (2024) linked consumer gratifications with satisfaction and platform stickiness, suggesting that navigation, entertainment value, and personalization can contribute differently to continued platform use. Lombardo (2024) reported positive associations of YouTube-channel characteristics with follower satisfaction; nevertheless, information and entertainment quality were more influential than interactivity in the studied model.

More recent OTT research provides an important qualification. You et al. (2026) found that interactivity was associated with usage intention but not directly with functional value or satisfaction in their tested structural relationships. Gamification research by Li and Aumeboonsuke (2025) supports potential relationships among engagement, consumer experience, and loyalty, although it examined a different digital-brand context. Philippine research on AI-assisted gamified learning likewise found that acceptance was associated with perceived value, engagement, and responsible-use safeguards, indicating that game-like features are accepted conditionally (Malolos & Atento, 2026). These differences in setting and outcome caution against extrapolating from fan interactions directly to subscription retention.

For ABS-CBN, proposed artist–fan communities, responsive program features, and personalized recommendations can be evaluated as potential complementary experiences. Evidence from Filipino university students suggests that the commercial relevance of audience relationships depends on how they are specified: A. G. Atento and R. G. Atento (2026a) found that perceived influencer credibility did not significantly predict purchase intention, whereas parasocial trust did when credibility was controlled. Dancel et al. (2026) also observed that Generation Z college students primarily consumed social media passively, by watching or scrolling, rather than by posting or commenting. Their commercial relevance would depend on whether they address unmet needs, generate repeated participation, and improve retention rather than merely reproducing functions available on YouTube or competing platforms. Documentary evidence of planned or launched features should therefore remain distinct from independent evidence of users' responses to those features.

2.3 Cultural Localization and Consumer Preferences

Local content may offer differentiated value in streaming markets where international catalogs coexist with domestic productions. Ildır and Celik-Rappas (2022) found that localized Netflix content in Turkey interacts with

audience expectations, sociocultural practices, and institutional conditions; local production does not guarantee acceptance. In the Philippine context, Parilla and Abadilla (2025) examined perceived trustworthiness and content quality in relation to Netflix satisfaction. Cultural affinity was considered within a broader content-quality construct rather than demonstrated as an isolated causal influence.

Sukmono et al. (2025) documented differences in motivations among young streaming audiences in Indonesia and China, illustrating the importance of context in entertainment, social interaction, and learning gratifications. Damásio et al. (2025) also highlighted content diversity, catalog interaction, and choice challenges for streaming services in smaller European markets. These findings suggest that domestic catalog ownership may have value without automatically translating into market dominance or even reliable discovery by users.

ABS-CBN's Filipino dramas, films, news, regional content, and entertainment archives constitute possible inputs for cultural differentiation. The relevant strategic question is whether their presentation, licensing, recommendation, and accessibility satisfy needs that competing services neglect. Conceptual work on Filipino participation in global social media spaces identifies relational identity and transnational connectedness among the forces shaping Filipino online behavior (R. G. Atento et al., 2026), considerations that may bear on the appeal of diaspora-oriented content. Regional-language programming, archival discovery, and diaspora-oriented curation can be considered candidate innovations, but their commercial effects must be validated independently.

2.4 Subscription Pricing, Advertising, and Consumer Adoption

Price and advertising decisions involve trade-offs among access, consumer experience, and revenue. Redondo and Serrano (2025) observed that advertising-related and loyalty-related subscription discounts can influence stated video-on-demand subscription intention, but content evaluations remained highly important. Jeong and Lee (2025) linked subscription fatigue and mental coupling with discontinuation among consumers holding multiple OTT subscriptions, illustrating how overall financial and search burdens may matter beyond the nominal fee for one service.

Advertising intrusiveness is likewise not equivalent to consumer rejection of all ad-funded services. Riedel et al. (2025) examined the role of perceived intrusion and limited control in consumer evaluations of freemium advertising. Kim et al. (2025) found differentiated attitudes toward ad-supported OTT plans in South Korea, while McKenzie et al. (2025) identified substantial interest in advertising-funded on-demand options across their sampled countries. Each study measures a particular context and should not be treated as a direct estimate of ABS-CBN subscriber behavior.

Thus, a proposal to eliminate advertising cannot be considered self-evidently beneficial. Free, discounted, and premium tiers may serve different groups and support different revenue mechanisms. Blue Ocean value creation would require a more distinctive and viable balance of price, content, ease of use, and advertising exposure—not simply the lowest subscription price or absence of commercials.

2.5 Digital Inclusion and Telecommunications Partnerships

Mobile-data costs, device ownership, network coverage, and digital skills can constrain participation in online entertainment. R. Chen (2021) examined demand-side determinants of mobile internet adoption across the Global South, showing why infrastructure and affordability interact with socioeconomic conditions. The implication for streaming is that availability of online content alone does not ensure effective access for all consumers. Regional evidence points in the same direction: a thematic review of Global Findex 2025 data argued that intra-Asian differences in financial participation cannot be explained by connectivity differentials alone (A. G. Atento et al., 2026), while ASEAN-5 panel evidence found that internet access did not significantly predict household consumption growth (Lantin-Magana & Atento, 2026).

Agualimpia-Arriaga et al. (2024) used an economic model to explore subsidization and social-welfare outcomes in telecommunications. Such modeled results offer conditional insights, not observed effects on Philippine subscribers. Wang et al. (2023) investigated sponsored mobile-data plans using a competitive carrier model, indicating that their attractiveness depends on cross-side network effects and market circumstances. Klaser and Pinar García (2023) analyzed zero-rating through considerations of fairness and network neutrality, while Triviño et al. (2024) described differing accessibility and competitive implications across four South American countries. Partnership terms are also shaped by carriers' financial positions in a capital-intensive industry; recent analyses of two major Philippine telecommunications firms reported declining profitability, weak liquidity, and high leverage amid intensified competition (Dela Costa & Atento, 2025; R. G. Atento & Manzana, 2026).

The literature consequently supports a cautious interpretation of sponsored streaming. A telecom agreement can reduce eligible consumers' marginal data charges while also introducing limits tied to network quality, technical eligibility, participating services, and competition policy. A zero-rated data allowance does not mean internet access

is available without network connectivity. For ABS-CBN, this distinction matters in assessing the strategic significance of its DITO arrangement: it may ease one affordability barrier without independently proving new market demand or financial sustainability.

2.6 Synthesis and Research Gaps

Across the literature, value innovation, audience engagement, cultural relevance, price design, and digital accessibility appear as interconnected opportunities for media companies (Hajar et al., 2021; Tang & Wei, 2023; Periaiya & Nandukrishna, 2024). Yet the studies also identify limits to simple strategic prescriptions: digitization can weaken established differentiation (Miller & Wang, 2024); interactivity need not directly increase satisfaction (You et al., 2026); localization may disappoint audiences (Ildır & Celik-Rappas, 2022); affordable access can entail commercial trade-offs (Redondo & Serrano, 2025); and sponsored connectivity can raise competition and equity concerns (Triviño et al., 2024).

A gap arises when these strategic dimensions are applied to a company whose transition is driven not just by competitive opportunity but by severe structural disruption. The reviewed studies do not demonstrate that ABS-CBN's combination of partnerships, streaming products, and digital audiences created an uncontested market. The present case therefore examines what can be established from documented developments and what remains only a value-innovation proposition. It reframes the Four Actions Framework as a critical instrument for judging a previously developed strategy, rather than a device for assuming the superiority of its recommendations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study used a qualitative, retrospective, single-case documentary design to reassess a historical Blue Ocean Strategy proposal in light of subsequent publicly documented developments. ABS-CBN Corporation was the organizational case; its post-franchise distribution, platform, and consumer-access initiatives constituted the analytic focus. The study did not involve primary surveys, interviews, experimental interventions, or statistical causal estimation. It examined materials dated from the franchise disruption in 2020 through October 27, 2026, distinguishing conditions existing by the original November 2024 proposal from developments documented afterward. Comparable document-based single-case designs have been used in Philippine strategy research (A. G. Atento & R. G. Atento, 2025, 2026b; R. G. Atento et al., 2025).

3.2 Documents and Sources

The historical baseline was the unpublished student analysis completed by Maya et al. (2024). The present authors prepared that original 2024 proposal; this study reassesses their earlier work against subsequent evidence. The publicly documented case materials used in this reassessment comprised the Philippine News Agency report of the franchise committee decision (Cervantes, 2020); ABS-CBN's 2020 iWantTFC announcement; its 2023 and 2024 *It's Showtime*–GMA partnership announcements; the 2025 iWant relaunch; and four 2026 disclosures concerning annual performance, the DITO access agreement, YouTube reach, and interim financial results (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2020, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c, 2026d). Scholarly literature was used as an interpretive complement, not as a substitute for ABS-CBN-specific empirical evidence.

3.3 Selection and Scope

Documents were purposively selected for direct relevance to the objectives, clear publication dates, and identifiable provenance. Corporate reports were preferred for the company's stated initiatives and disclosed financial indicators, with a contemporaneous news record used for the congressional decision. The document set is a bounded selection, not an exhaustive census of every corporate filing or digital initiative. Public statements may emphasize company objectives; they were therefore treated as evidence that a development was announced or reported, not automatic proof of its success.

3.4 Analytical Framework

The original student recommendations were mapped onto the Eliminate, Reduce, Raise, and Create categories. Each recommendation was then compared with the publicly documented chronology and evaluated against three criteria: (a) strategic necessity or adaptation to operational constraints; (b) potential consumer-value differentiation relative to available alternatives; and (c) evidence of new demand or sustainable market-creation outcomes. An initiative could represent both adaptation and potential value innovation. Unlike design-oriented applications that use these categories to specify a proposed strategic shift (R. G. Atento et al., 2025; Benosa et al., 2026), the present

framework applies them retrospectively to test a proposal against later evidence. No numerical index of Blue Ocean performance was constructed.

3.5 Review Procedure

The original 2024 paper was examined to identify proposed consumer segments, platform functions, partnerships, and assumptions. Dated company records were then arranged chronologically to establish which initiatives predated the proposal, which followed it, and which lacked evidence of implementation in the reviewed materials. Disclosed audience and financial indicators were recorded separately. The five literature themes provided interpretive criteria for consumer value and strategic constraints. This review did not establish that the student proposal influenced any later corporate initiative.

3.6 Data Analysis

Analysis proceeded through chronological comparison, framework-based classification, and interpretive synthesis. Reported events were distinguished from strategic inferences and recommendations. Consolidated financial results were not attributed solely to streaming operations, and YouTube subscribers were not treated as unique paying customers. Where documents lacked consumer research, platform-specific margin data, or evidence of genuinely uncontested demand, assessments were designated as prospective or indeterminate rather than conclusive.

3.7 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The reassessment used a student manuscript and public documents; no participant-level data were collected. Because the present authors also prepared the original 2024 proposal, the reassessment involves a self-critical review of their earlier work; the original recommendations are therefore reported as written and kept distinct from the evidence-informed revisions. Limitations include the single-case focus, a selective document corpus, the company's own reporting of some performance indicators, and absent platform-level profitability and independent consumer-response data. The study can evaluate the plausibility and chronology of strategic claims but cannot establish causal effects or definitive Blue Ocean success.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Chronology of Post-Franchise Strategic Transformation

The documents establish that ABS-CBN's transition to new distribution methods began well before the 2024 student paper. The loss of former free-to-air broadcasting access created a strong need for substitute delivery arrangements. Streaming consolidation was documented by November 2020, and the *It's Showtime* distribution agreements with GMA were announced in 2023 and 2024. Later changes involved further streaming-platform enhancement and subsidized access rather than the first emergence of online distribution.

Table 1. Selected Strategic Developments in ABS-CBN's Post-Franchise Transformation

Date / period	Documented development	Interpretation
May–July 2020	Franchise expiration and subsequent denial of renewal	Disruption of former free-to-air operations
November 2020	iWant and TFC.tv combined as iWantTFC	Unified streaming access with multiple subscription options
July 2023	*It's Showtime* began airing on GTV	Alternative free-to-air access through a competitor's platform
April 2024	*It's Showtime* began airing on GMA's main channel	Expanded cooperative distribution
November 2024	Original student Blue Ocean proposal completed	Historical proposal assessed in this study
July 2025	iWant service relaunched	Enhancement of an existing digital platform
June 2026	DITO–iWant sponsored-data arrangement announced	Targeted improvement in access affordability

Note. Dates are based on the student paper and cited company/government records; the table does not establish that the 2024 proposal caused subsequent corporate decisions (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2020, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026b; Cervantes, 2020; Maya et al., 2024).

As Table 1 shows, both the streaming platform and the GMA partnership preceded the original proposal. Treating those capabilities as entirely unimplemented innovations in 2024 would therefore be historically inaccurate. The later iWant relaunch and DITO agreement demonstrate continuing strategic activity, but they do not by themselves establish a new market with negligible competitive pressure.

4.2 Reassessment of the Original 2024 Proposal

The student paper proposed *ABS-CBN World*, an application combining news, entertainment, community interaction, artist updates, low-cost subscriptions, and telecom-enabled access. Its Four Actions recommendations included eliminating other broadcasting partnerships, reducing ads, raising availability, and creating integrated functionality (Maya et al., 2024). Comparison with the dated records identifies both overlap with existing activities and unresolved proposals.

Table 2. Retrospective Assessment of the Original Blue Ocean Proposal

Original proposal	Documentary comparison	Assessment
Create an integrated streaming application	iWantTFC existed in 2020 and iWant was relaunched in 2025	Application creation alone was not novel by 2024
Eliminate external channel partnerships	GTV/GMA distribution arrangements were in operation before the proposal	Recommendation conflicts with an existing route to audience access
Reduce advertising interruptions	Free, ad-supported, and premium options already existed	Potential consumer benefit requires a revenue trade-off assessment
Raise access across devices	Cross-device capability existed and was enhanced in 2025	Service improvement, not proven creation of new demand
Partner with telecommunications firms	DITO sponsored-data access was announced in 2026	Partially similar later development, without evidence of causal influence
Create integrated artist–fan communities	The reviewed announcements do not establish the full proposed functionality	Potential innovation; market and technical feasibility remain unverified

Note. Lack of evidence in the reviewed announcements is not proof that a feature does not exist. Comparisons are based on ABS-CBN Corporation (2020, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026b) and Maya et al. (2024).

Two implications are particularly important. First, original novelty claims must be assessed against the company's pre-existing capabilities. Second, elimination of broadcasting relationships is not necessarily consistent with the firm's actual distribution needs. The subsequent DITO arrangement resembles a proposal for affordability, but historical similarity should not be characterized as prediction, adoption of the student work, or evidence of profitability.

4.3 Audience Reach, Financial Indicators, and Sustainability

The company reported extensive digital reach, with 55 million subscribers and 76 billion lifetime views on its Entertainment YouTube channel as of July 3, 2026 (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2026c). Its 2025 announcement also reported ₱1.03 billion in direct-to-consumer revenue, ₱842 million in direct advertising sales, and a 19% increase in local iWant subscribers after relaunch (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2026a). These are relevant indicators of digital-commercial activity; they are not, however, equivalent to audited profitability of the streaming platform.

Table 3. Selected Consolidated Financial Indicators, 2024–2026

Reporting period	Consolidated revenue (₱ billions)	Consolidated net loss (₱ billions)
Full year 2024	17.33	6.09
Full year 2025	15.85	4.72
First half 2025	8.27	0.85
First half 2026	6.88	1.83

Note. Rounded from the company's disclosures. Full-year and half-year figures are not equivalent reporting windows; first-half results should be compared with the corresponding first half only. These are consolidated figures across businesses rather than separate iWant results (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2026a, 2026d).

Table 3 shows that consolidated annual losses narrowed between 2024 and 2025 despite a revenue decline, while first-half 2026 performance worsened relative to the first half of 2025. The reported 2025 revenue improvement in Content Production and Distribution to ₱12.59 billion coexisted with a decline in Cable TV and Broadband revenue (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2026a). Consequently, the consolidated net loss is not proof that the digital business failed; conversely, digital-audience growth does not establish that organizational recovery has occurred. An assessment of sustainable advantage would require platform-level costs, margins, conversion, and retention that were unavailable in this documentary review. Market-level context also counsels caution, because Philippine equity valuations during the review period reflected broad multiple compression (Reyes et al., 2026) and earlier evidence of persistent discounting relative to firms' earning capacity (R. G. Atento, 2025); market valuation alone is therefore a limited signal of any single firm's strategic success.

4.4 Assessment Through the Four Actions Framework

The Four Actions Framework remains useful when deployed as a critical test of value propositions rather than a preset prescription for particular activities.

Table 4. Revised Eliminate–Reduce–Raise–Create Assessment

Dimension	Original recommendation	Evidence-informed revision
Eliminate	Stop partnerships with other broadcasters	Retain useful distribution partnerships; eliminate only demonstrably redundant activities
Reduce	Minimize advertisements and viewing costs	Reduce intrusive advertising selectively while evaluating revenue sustainability
Raise	Expand availability and accessible programming	Improve discoverability, service quality, cultural relevance, and cost-sensitive access
Create	Build a multifunctional streaming application	Test differentiated community and cultural features beyond existing platform capabilities

Note. Revised actions are proposals arising from the documentary evaluation, not observed management decisions or validated operational effects.

Eliminate. The reviewed evidence does not support unconditional termination of GMA-related distribution arrangements. These collaborations gave ABS-CBN access to free-to-air audiences after its former frequency-based broadcasting operations ceased. A more defensible elimination criterion is whether a specific activity adds unnecessary cost without meaningful consumer or strategic benefit.

Reduce. Advertising may disrupt experiences, but digital advertising is also a documented revenue source. A blanket move to ad-free access could therefore undermine financial goals. The literature suggests examining different consumer segments and offering trade-offs between price and advertising rather than assuming a single optimal format (Kim et al., 2025; Redondo & Serrano, 2025; Riedel et al., 2025).

Raise. ABS-CBN may strengthen culturally localized access, content discoverability, device compatibility, and reliable distribution. Improvements should be defined and evaluated in relation to actual consumer needs. The DITO arrangement illustrates a targeted affordability mechanism; it does not eliminate the need for an available internet connection or establish ubiquitous access (ABS-CBN Corporation, 2026b).

Create. Creating another general streaming application is insufficiently distinctive, given iWantTFC's earlier capabilities. More promising possibilities involve tested combinations of archival access, local-language curation, creator participation, and integrated community experiences. These propositions require consumer evidence and cost analysis before they can be described as market-creating outcomes.

4.5 Strategic Adaptation Versus Potential Value Innovation

The combination of evidence favors a classification of **strategic adaptation as the principal documented response**, with possible value innovation in selected offerings. GMA distribution constitutes a response to constrained broadcast access; YouTube distribution preserves a connection with an online audience but uses an intensely competitive external platform; iWant's relaunch updates an existing streaming operation; and the DITO partnership offers a specific affordability benefit under defined eligibility conditions. None of the reviewed records independently establishes a previously uncontested market or the sustained profitability attributable to a particular initiative.

This classification does not deny the strategic relevance of the activities. It applies a higher evidentiary standard to Blue Ocean claims. Adaptation can be valuable, innovative features may emerge within it, and targeted initiatives could later prove market-creating. Analyses of other Philippine incumbents under digital disruption have similarly framed future competitiveness as a matter of balancing legacy strengths with new digital capabilities (A. G. Atento & R. G. Atento, 2025), including partnership ecosystems with content providers and other stakeholders to preserve differentiation (A. G. Atento & R. G. Atento, 2026b). The present record supports the existence of those possibilities, not their definitive commercial success.

4.6 Discussion

The case illustrates a tension between the aspirational orientation of Blue Ocean Strategy and the constraints confronting a legacy broadcaster following an externally imposed operational disruption. The historical proposal assumed that consolidation, interactivity, and more affordable access would distinguish ABS-CBN. The chronology demonstrates, however, that integrated streaming and tiered plans predated the proposal, while external broadcasting partnerships were already helping sustain access. These findings reinforce the need to compare a purported innovation with the organization's existing capabilities and its actual substitutes.

Several literature-based qualifications strengthen this conclusion. Hajar et al. (2021) connect value innovation with competitive outcomes, but Miller and Wang (2024) demonstrate that digitalization can also reconstruct or weaken established bases of differentiation. In the streaming context, Tang and Wei (2023) describe competing platform strategies rather than a single uncontested market template. Hence, investment in digital distribution is not itself a sufficient operational definition of Blue Ocean success.

The consumer-value literature also resists universal prescriptions. Interactivity may be associated with continued usage without consistently predicting satisfaction (You et al., 2026). Cultural localization is contingent on expectations and platform discoverability (Ildır & Celik-Rappas, 2022; Damásio et al., 2025). Affordable ad-supported tiers can attract some consumers, while other audiences may prefer uninterrupted premium access (Kim et al., 2025; McKenzie et al., 2025). Telecom subsidies can ease consumer expense yet have competitive and regulatory consequences (Klaser & Pinar García, 2023; Triviño et al., 2024). Thus, the Four Actions Framework should produce testable, segment-specific hypotheses instead of assuming that every reduction in price or increase in access produces superior performance.

The coexistence of large online reach and substantial consolidated losses further demonstrates why success indicators must be differentiated. Public view counts reflect exposure, not directly net margin or unique active buyers. Company-wide losses reflect the performance and nonrecurring effects of multiple businesses, not necessarily the failure of online distribution. This prevents both an overly optimistic interpretation of audience statistics and an overly pessimistic attribution of all losses to digital transformation. A similar distinction has been drawn for skills-based online learning platforms, where the credibility of a value proposition was argued to rest on verification infrastructure rather than message reach (Espelita & Atento, 2026).

The contribution of the reassessment is conceptual and diagnostic: it distinguishes observable organizational adaptation from potential differentiated value and from market-creation outcomes requiring much stronger evidence. For ABS-CBN, preserving audience access through coopetition, deepening digital distribution, and testing particular content innovations may all be strategically coherent. Whether they create a Blue Ocean depends ultimately on demonstrated unmet demand, differentiation from alternatives, and commercially sustainable returns, none of which can be conclusively established from the bounded document set.

5. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

5.1 Conclusions

The first objective concerned the effects of post-franchise disruption. The findings establish that the loss of ABS-CBN's former frequency-based operations substantially changed its distribution environment and intensified its reliance on alternative channels. This is a strong basis for identifying organizational adaptation but is not, on its own, evidence of Blue Ocean market creation.

For the second objective, digital and cooperative distribution initiatives sustained substantial audience reach and generated observable digital commercial activity. At the same time, the company continued to disclose significant consolidated losses. Neither online reach nor consolidated profitability can be used alone to determine the economic performance of any specific digital service.

For the third objective, several assumptions in the 2024 student proposal require correction. A unified streaming service and multiple subscription arrangements already existed by November 2020; GMA-related distribution partnerships were operative before the paper was completed. The proposal to eliminate such partnerships was

therefore inconsistent with an important existing channel of audience access. Later similarities between the DITO arrangement and the students' suggested telecommunications cooperation do not demonstrate causation.

For the fourth objective, the literature supports the plausibility of engagement, cultural localization, price design, and subsidized connectivity as components of consumer value. Their contribution to unmet demand and financial sustainability for ABS-CBN remains insufficiently established in the reviewed documents. Their strategic relevance is conditional rather than automatically market-creating.

Taken together, the findings answer the fifth objective by supporting a cautious application of Blue Ocean Strategy. The documented transformation is most defensibly described as strategic adaptation with some potential sources of value innovation. The evidence is insufficient to declare the creation of a sustainable uncontested market.

5.2 Recommendations

Maintain evidence-based distribution partnerships. Evaluate relationships with other broadcasters and online distributors by their reach, cost, commercial returns, and strategic flexibility. Avoid eliminating partnerships merely because they involve former competitors. For a company without its former free-to-air distribution rights, coopetition may be an essential part of the operating model.

Develop differentiated features within existing services. Instead of commissioning another general-purpose application, prioritize small-scale evaluation of archival discovery, regional-language content, authorized artist interaction, and carefully moderated audience communities. Compare pilots with current features and competitors' offerings using engagement, satisfaction, adoption, and retention measures.

Balance advertising and affordability. Consider free, advertising-supported, and premium tiers as complementary offers for different consumers. Assess viewing quality alongside advertising yield, subscription conversion, and incremental contribution margins. Removing advertising indiscriminately could reduce an important revenue stream without establishing greater consumer value.

Test cultural differentiation rather than presume it. Evaluate the discoverability, licensing feasibility, appeal, and costs of Filipino classics, regional productions, and diaspora-oriented collections. Cultural familiarity can support positioning, but willingness to pay and continued viewing should be measured.

Assess data-sponsored access transparently. Review uptake, usage, marginal costs, service reliability, eligibility, and competition concerns in telecom-assisted viewing programs. Explain clearly that sponsored mobile data does not constitute universal connectivity or unlimited offline access.

Use financially meaningful performance indicators. Where available, examine platform-level revenues and costs, paid conversion, active use, retention, content spending, customer acquisition cost, advertising yield, and contribution margins. Separate these from company-wide losses and aggregate social-media audience counts.

Undertake subsequent empirical research. Survey and mixed-method studies should test perceived differentiation, willingness to pay, advertiser tolerance, regional-content demand, and uptake of subsidized data. Comparative work with other disrupted broadcasters would help determine which conclusions are case-specific.

5.3 Implications of the Study

Theoretical. The case clarifies that digital transformation, organizational resilience, and Blue Ocean value innovation are related but nonidentical concepts. Coopetition may preserve consumer access and contribute to innovation, while still operating within a competitive market. The Four Actions Framework is more informative when subjected to historical and commercial constraints than when used as a predetermined endorsement of new features.

Managerial. Strategic proposals should distinguish between existing functionality, necessary adaptations, and genuinely differentiated value propositions. Audience scale and visibility should be treated as potential assets, not proxies for sustainable profit. Managers should assess an innovation's added consumer value and economic implications before declaring it an uncontested-market strategy.

Methodological. Retrospective document-based reassessment can reveal inaccuracies in earlier proposals and clarify how later events affect their plausibility. Yet it cannot substitute for interviews, independent consumer behavior data, or platform-level financial records when stronger causal or profitability claims are sought. The chronology of original research and subsequent revision must remain explicit.

Industry and policy. The experience illustrates how broadcasting restrictions, telecom access, digital distribution, and cross-network partnerships shape the options available to a media organization. Policy and industry

debates regarding digital inclusion should consider consumer affordability together with network neutrality, market concentration, and the financial conditions faced by content producers.

In sum, ABS-CBN's post-franchise operations demonstrate that survival-oriented cooperation and platform development can preserve meaningful audience relationships without conclusively establishing uncontested market creation. Blue Ocean Strategy remains relevant as a disciplined search for differentiated value, but its successful application requires evidence of unmet demand and sustainable economic returns.

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