

Designing Content Strategy for an Underserved, Multi-Cultural Region

HBO Latin America | Caribbean Launch 2006 | Content Design Case Study

CONTEXT

In 2006, HBO Latin America exercised its territorial rights and expanded into the Caribbean — a fragmented, culturally diverse region that had never been treated as a premium content market. The challenge wasn't distributional rights; it was audience understanding, trust, relevance, and acceptance across dozens of islands with different viewing habits, cultures, languages, and expectations.

PROBLEM

Historically, the HBO US feed had been pirated and passed along to subscribers at little to no cost. HBO Latin America, already positioned as secondary, entered the market behind a paywall. Content decisions, promotions, and subscriber interactions designed for Latin America were not designed with Caribbean audiences in mind. Internally, teams lacked a clear understanding of the region, resulting in underestimated market potential and inconsistent messaging.

DECISION

Rather than applying inherited US or LATAM strategies, I reframed programming as a content design problem rooted in audience anthropology. The focus shifted from *what* content was offered to *how* audiences encountered, valued, and committed to premium content. This required redesigning scheduling logic, launch timing, and content rotation — alongside reshaping internal narratives to build a shared understanding and marketing of the region.

SYSTEM

US and LATAM content rotation was studied and redesigned to ensure relevance and inclusion, while advocating for day-and-date releases aligned with the US to eliminate the perception of second-tier access. Unique, relevant LATAM distributional rights were capitalized, resulting in Caribbean subscribers benefiting from both territories. Internally, structured communications and newsletters functioned as alignment tools — combining cultural insight, data, fun facts, and storytelling to support consistent downstream decision-making.

OUTCOME

Within 5 years, the HBO Latin American feed designed for the Caribbean ranked #1 across all premium channels, including the pirated US feeds, despite the paywall. The region became HBO Latin America's fastest-growing market. As audience confidence stabilized, both qualitative and quantitative research practices matured, enabling the development of locally produced content, on-island recognition, and sustained engagement.

EVIDENCE

Attached media coverage report from St. Lucia (2015).