MDSA DataDash 2026

Case Study: Project Greenlight

Problem Statement

Your studio is preparing to greenlight a major film project. You have been provided with a dataset of historical Disney movies to guide your strategy.

However, the industry has fundamentally shifted. The rise of streaming platforms (Netflix, Disney+, etc.) has altered audience behavior. A film that succeeds in theaters today may not follow the exact same patterns as the historical data suggests.

Your Challenge: You must analyze historical trends, account for modern streaming realities, and propose **what** movie to make, **how much** to spend, and **when** to release it.

1. Choose Your Strategic Objective

Your team must align its proposal with **one** of the following objectives. This choice dictates your budget cap and risk tolerance.

- **Option A: The Critical Masterpiece**
  - **Goal:** Critical acclaim, awards, and long-term brand prestige.
  - **Risk Profile:** High. Willing to sacrifice opening weekend box office for cultural impact.
  - **Budget Cap:** $120M – $160M (Focus on production quality and talent).
- **Option B: The Counter-Strike**
  - **Goal:** Capitalize on market weaknesses. Find a release window or genre where competitors (like Disney) historically underperform.
  - **Risk Profile:** Moderate. Strategic differentiation rather than direct competition.
  - **Budget Cap:** $80M – $120M (Focus on targeted marketing).
- **Option C: The Safe Bet**
  - **Goal:** Predictable returns and downside protection. Avoid volatility at all costs.
  - **Risk Profile:** Low. Stick to proven formulas.
  - **Budget Cap:** $40M – $70M (Focus on cost control and efficiency).

2. Required Tasks (The Core Analysis)

Using the provided Disney dataset as a starting point, your team must:

1. **Analyze & Augment (The Data Step):**
   - Analyze the provided historical data to identify trends in genre, revenue, and seasonality.
   - **Requirement:** You must locate and incorporate **at least one external dataset** and external articles from sources such as The Hollywood Reporter, Deadline or

Variety (e.g., modern box office stats, streaming viewership data, competitor performance, movie audience behavior) to validate your findings.
    - You may use any data visualization tool (ex. Power BI, Tableau) but extra points will be awarded for using the SAS Viya platform
    - *Note:* Be prepared to discuss how theatrical data differs from streaming data.
2. **Determine the Release Window (best time to release your movie):**
    - Unlike previous years, release windows are not assigned. You must recommend the optimal release month/season for your film.
    - Justify this decision using your data analysis (ex. data that proves the best time to release a horror movie is a certain month).
3. **Develop the Package:**
    - Select a **Genre** and general **Theme**.
    - Select a **Cast** (using the *Actor Cost & Availability Appendix*) that fits your budget and release window.
    - Allocate your budget (Production vs. Cast vs. Marketing).

3. The Movie Pitch (Creative Bonus)

- Develop a specific creative concept (Title + 500-word plot synopsis) that brings your data strategy to life. This will be scored as **Bonus Points**.

Deliverables

Submit a slide deck covering:

- **REQUIRED:** Executive Strategy (Objective selection & rationale).
- **REQUIRED:** Data Analysis & Visualizations (Insights from Disney data + External sources).
- **REQUIRED:** The Strategic Proposal (Release window, budget breakdown, cast selection).
- **REQUIRED:** Risk Assessment (Data limitations & theatrical vs. streaming risks).
- (OPTIONAL): Creative Pitch (Plot summary and character overview).

Tips

- There is no universally “best” release window, only choices that are more or less aligned with your objective
- Strong teams will show how the risk profiles and budget caps influenced their decisions
- Through your analysis it’s possible you won’t end up with the “full picture” and there may be limitations to your findings, but this is both normal and expected

Appendix

Budget Table by Executive Objective

Make the Best Movie Ever

- Focus on critical acclaim, long-term brand value, and cultural impact
- Willing to accept higher risk and uneven box office performance
- Larger but constrained budget

Capitalize on Disney's Weaknesses

- Counter Disney by exploiting historically weaker periods, genres, or strategies
- Moderate risk tolerance
- Budget allocated strategically to differentiate rather than dominate

Stable Box Office Performer (Nothing Out of the Ordinary)

- Prioritize predictable returns and downside protection
- Avoid highly volatile release windows(low risk)
- More conservative budget

Budgets are **hard constraints**. Teams must design a film concept and release strategy that fits within their assigned range.

Budget Allocation

Executive Objective	Total Budget Range	Risk Tolerance	Budget Emphasis
Make the Best Movie Ever	$160M	High	Production quality, talent, world-building
Capitalize on Disney's Weaknesses	$120M	Medium	Strategic casting, targeted marketing

Stable Box Office Performer	$70M	Low	Cost control, efficient production

The budget needs to be broken up for Production, Actor Cast, and Marketing. Budget allocation must reflect the budget emphasis of the above table.

Appendix: Actor Cost & Availability Table

Actor Tier	Actor Name	Estimated Cost (USD)	Star Power	Availability Constraints	Compatible Genres
A-List	Scarlett Johansson	$25,000,000	Very High	Not available for **Summer**	Action, Adventure, Thriller
A-List	Leonardo DiCaprio	$30,000,000	Very High	Not available for **Spring**	Drama, Thriller, Adventure
A-List	Dwayne Johnson	$22,000,000	Very High	Not available for **Fall**	Action, Adventure, Family
A-List	Margot Robbie	$18,000,000	High	Available for **all** release windows	Family, Adventure, Fantasy, Drama
A-List	Timothée Chalamet	$15,000,000	High	Not available for **Holiday**	Drama, Fantasy, Romance
B-List	Florence Pugh	$8,000,000	Medium–High	Available for **all** release windows	Drama, Fantasy, Thriller
B-List	John Boyega	$7,000,000	Medium	Available for **all** release windows	Action, Adventure, Family
B-List	Ana de Armas	$9,000,000	Medium–High	Not available for **Spring**	Thriller, Drama, Adventure
B-List	Michael B. Jordan	$10,000,000	High	Not available for **Fall**	Action, Drama, Adventure
B-List	Zendaya	$11,000,000	High	Not available for **Summer**	Family, Fantasy, Adventure
C-List	Paul Mescal	$3,000,000	Medium	Available for **all** release windows	Drama, Romance, Thriller

C-List	Daisy Edgar-Jones	$2,500,000	Medium	Available for **all** release windows	Drama, Family, Fantasy
C-List	Lakeith Stanfield	$4,000,000	Medium	Not available for **Holiday**	Drama, Thriller, Fantasy
C-List	Jenna Ortega	$3,500,000	Medium	Available for **all** release windows	Family, Fantasy, Adventure
C-List	Dev Patel	$4,500,000	Medium	Available for **all** release windows	Drama, Adventure, Fantasy