Discovering International Audiences for Content

With the global increase in broadband and fibre penetration, content on the Internet now reaches its biggest audience ever. Television shows are no exception: Through social media and peer-to-peer networks, fans’ engagement and viewership of their favorite titles are no longer geographically restricted. This globalization means that shows quickly find new audiences beyond their home market.

THE CHALLENGE

While a show may have strong international audiences, identifying these is often difficult. Traditional measures of popularity, such as linear ratings, can be unreliable or unavailable in certain markets. Even if available, linear ratings do not capture viewing on online platforms such as Netflix. In addition, the show in question may not have aired in the market yet, which means ratings are entirely unavailable, yet this show may be very popular on torrent or streaming sites. With this lack of information, distribution decisions are often based on limited surveys or gut feelings.

THE SOLUTION

Unlike linear ratings and simple social media listening tools, which are restricted to one market or platform, Parrot Analytics’ demand measurement system captures data from a wide variety of sources to accurately measure the demand for content, in every country. These sources range from Wikipedia, where fans read about the show, to social media, where they discuss it, to file sharing and streaming networks and devices, where audiences watch content. Expressions of demand from these sources are captured on a country-by-country basis, giving the most complete picture of the international popularity of content. For this reason, Demand Expressions are the industry’s most accurate measure of “earned media”.

By comparing the demand per capita for a title in a variety of markets, new opportunities for distribution and monetization are easy to uncover. In many cases, a show’s home market is not the one with the most demand for it.

THE RESULT

Three different cases illustrate how powerful these insights into global content popularity can be:

- The BBC sold out a Doctor Who cast tour after Parrot Analytics data revealed strong audience demand in the country.
- Parrot Analytics predicted that Netflix’s content will have difficulty finding an audience in Japan, prior to the streaming company announcing its new content strategy for the market.
- Parrot Analytics determined that a Norwegian teen drama, Skam, was among the top teen shows in the US, even before an American adaptation was announced.
Doctor Who in South Korea

The BBC had believed that South Korea was a small market for its sci-fi series due to low revenue from the region. However, Parrot Analytics’ demand data revealed that there was a significant fan base in South Korea. Based on this insight, the BBC took the Doctor Who cast to South Korea as part of a global publicity tour. The hall the BBC booked had 4,000 seats but tens of thousands of people applied for tickets, confirming Parrot’s information and leading to coverage by The Economist.

Netflix Originals in Japan

Before Netflix’s launch in Japan, Parrot Analytics found that demand for their digital original series in this market was significantly less than in other markets as reported in this article for Variety.

Shortly after Netflix’s launch in Japan, the SVOD platform announced that it would invest in a larger percentage of domestic content than in other markets, including several Japanese-produced original series. This outcome suggests that Parrot’s predictions were correct in that Japanese audiences were not satisfied with existing content, requiring Netflix to alter its content strategy in this market.

Skam in the United States

Most recently, Parrot has observed that Skam, a Norwegian teen drama from NRK, ranks within the top ten teen titles in the United States. While this show has never aired outside of Scandinavia and does not have official English subtitles, it has attracted worldwide interest. Fans are engaging with the series on social media and have even created their own translations of the show. In the US, its demand over June and July 2017 ranked above that of American productions such as KC Undercover and Switched at Birth. While none of this popularity could be seen through traditional ratings and simple social media monitoring, the show’s popularity was nevertheless significant enough that a US version will be produced later in 2017.