

The Global War for Premium Dramas: Are SVODs a Threat

Mike Broster, Data Analyst

Parrot Analytics

www.parrotanalytics.com



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Introduction

The rise of premium dramas

With the digital age in television well and truly underway, the digital original series from the subscription-video-on-demand (SVOD) platforms are starting to become as mainstream as the shows from the linear broadcasters. This year, the trend was exemplified by the intense news coverage of the controversial Netflix drama *13 Reasons Why* — and *Stranger Things* the year prior. High-end scripted shows are starting to appear on streaming platforms and in 2017 we are seeing an acceleration of this trend.

Yet the linear networks are not simply rolling over and letting the SVODs take over. HBO's cultural juggernaut *Game Of Thrones*' seventh season is breaking audience records while AMC's *The Walking Dead* remains one of the most watched shows in the world, to name two examples.

Historically, few media companies have had the resources to produce a big-budget scripted show, but increasingly we are seeing high quality dramas from all markets. Although the most popular premium dramas are still overwhelmingly American, we expect the space to open up in the next few years as content producers worldwide find new audiences both locally, as well as internationally.

But just how well do the blockbuster digital original dramas perform against the linear dramas, both globally and in key markets? Using the industry standard popularity metric **Demand Expressions**, in this Parrot Analytics/MIPTrends whitepaper the true global popularity of these brand-defining shows is revealed.

A world map is visible in the background, rendered in a light blue color against a darker blue background. The map shows the outlines of continents and countries.

What is the global share of demand for premium drama between linear networks and SVOD platforms?

Global Overview

Note: What exactly is a “Premium Drama”? There’s no hard and fast definition. For this whitepaper, only dramas and comedy-dramas that lean heavier on the dramatic side have been included. Further, the analysis has been restricted to “brand defining” series: The 4 or 5 series per platform that have received more marketing support than standard shows on the same network. The exception is the SVOD platforms, where more titles have been included per platform. Please note, however, that this does not affect the demand share or ranking lists. Finally, the analysis has been restricted to shows with new episodes released in the last 12 months.

Global Drama Trends

The audience demand for premium dramas is growing

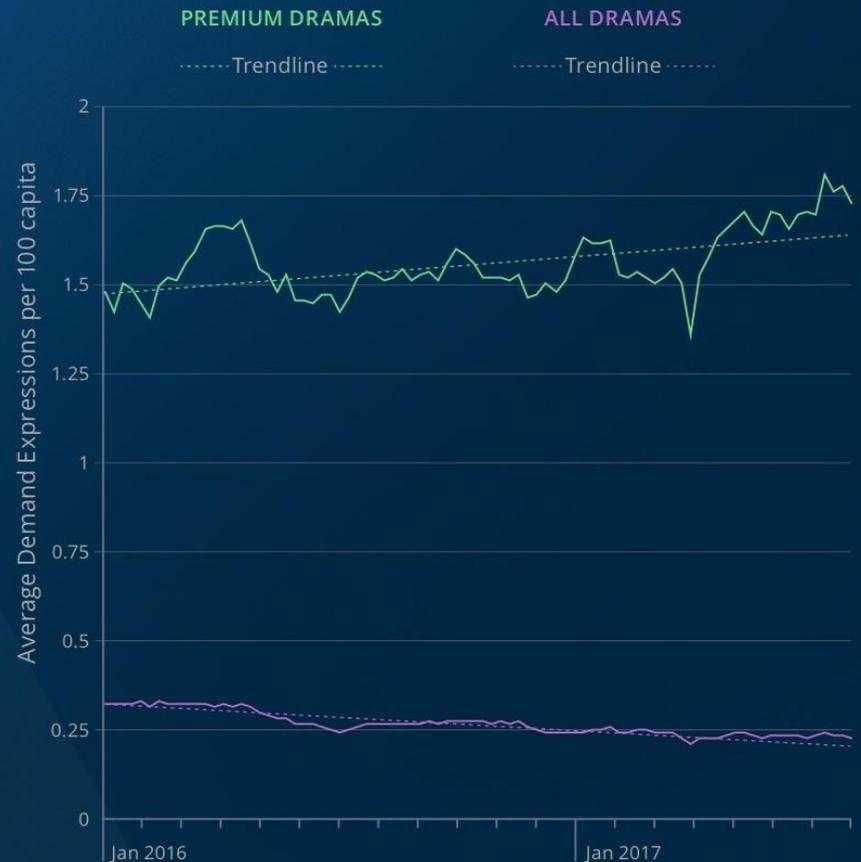
For each drama title, the average Demand Expressions per capita for that title from January 2016 to July 2017 was found globally. Because demand is therefore normalised by population, it can be averaged over all titles week by week.

The findings reveal that demand for a title in the drama genre as a whole is declining: The average drama title has lost 27.4% demand since January 2016. However, the opposite is true for premium dramas, where the average **premium drama has gained 16.7%** more demand since then.

High-end dramas also have approximately 5 times more average demand per title: **Premium dramas are on average 5 times more popular** than the standard drama.

It is no surprise then that the biggest media companies, both linear and SVOD, will continue to ramp-up the production of high-end drama in the pursuit of global audiences.

The Increasing Global Popularity of Premium Drama



Demand for Premium Drama on Linear Networks

Global share of demand by linear network for 2017 to date

In previous years the world of top quality dramas, often involving daring stories, has been solidly ruled by cable. HBO is one of the most prominent of the cable drama producers with such shows as *The Sopranos*. In recent years, however, broadcast networks have also consistently produced high quality drama, such as FOX's *Prison Break*.

By averaging Demand Expressions over the year to date for each premium drama title, and then aggregating these for each by channel, demand share on a per-channel basis can be calculated.

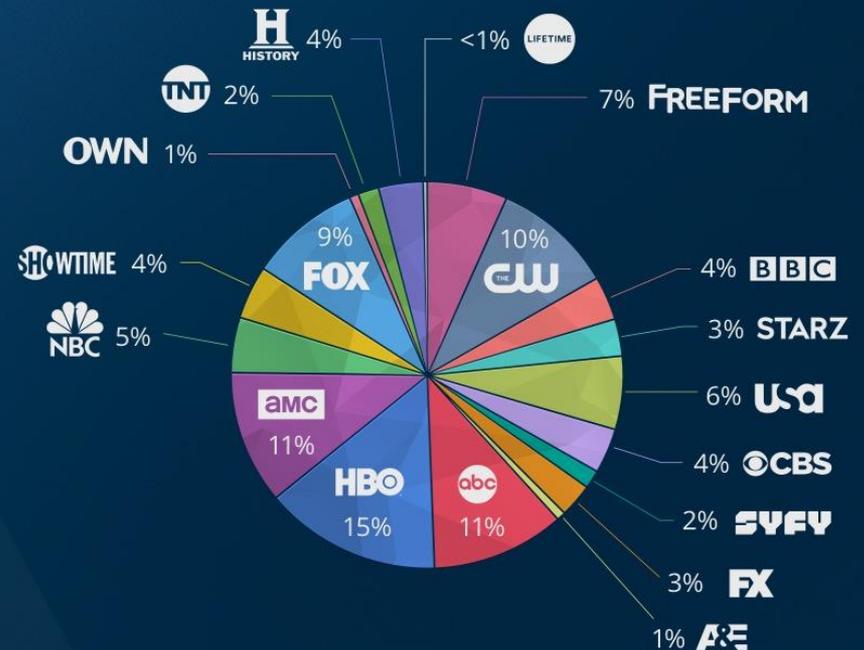
Analysis reveals that no single linear network or channel dominates. However, HBO has the highest market share with 14.6% of the global demand for premium drama. This is 31.2% more than AMC, which has captured 11.2% of the global share of demand.

The only other platforms to attract more than 5% demand share are ABC (11.0%), The CW (10.0%), FOX (9.3%), Freeform (6.6%) and USA Network (6.1%).

The sole non-US network to appear is the BBC from the UK. As the only public service broadcaster evident in this analysis, the network has managed to attract 3.7% of the global share of demand for premium dramas.

The premium cable network with the highest demand share in 2017 to date is HBO, for basic cable the highest share was achieved by AMC and for broadcast the highest share was attained by ABC.

Global Premium Drama Demand Share on Network/Cable



Percent Average Demand Expressions

The Global Top 25 Linear Premium Dramas

Game Of Thrones narrowly beats *The Walking Dead*

The title of the most popular premium drama from the linear platforms has been a 2-horse race between HBO's *Game Of Thrones* and AMC's *The Walking Dead* for a few years now. Both shows have aired new episodes during the January to July period covered in this analysis, and both had nearly the same amount of average demand over that time: There was only a 1.5% difference between the two.

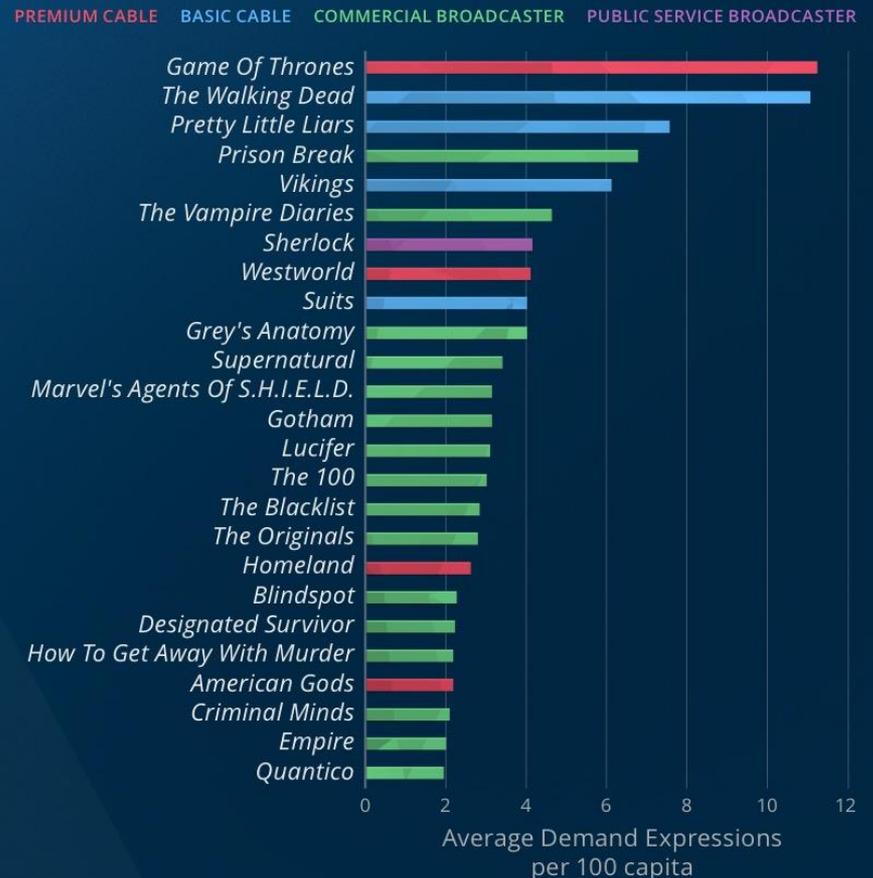
However, there can only be one winner and globally, *Game Of Thrones* was the more popular show. It was the most popular of the 4 premium cable shows in the top 25, with 172% more demand than the next most popular premium cable show, *Westworld* (also from HBO).

The third most popular premium drama is *Pretty Little Liars*, a basic cable show from Freeform. The highest placed basic cable show was *The Walking Dead*, which had 46% more demand than the teen drama. 4 of the top 25 were from the basic cable networks, the same number as premium cable.

Prison Break is fourth, and as a FOX title is the most in-demand broadcast show in this list. It has 46% more demand than the next broadcast show, The CW's *The Vampire Diaries*. Broadcast titles make up the majority of this list with 16 entries.

The only non-US show is *Sherlock*, which is in seventh place. This is the sole title from the UK's BBC, which is also the only public service broadcaster to appear.

Global Top 25 Linear Premium Dramas



Demand for Premium Dramas on SVOD Platforms

Global share of demand by SVOD platform for 2017 to date

Since the release of the digital original drama *House Of Cards* in 2013, Netflix and other SVOD platforms have been challenging the linear networks for the drama crown. The pie chart on the right shows how each streaming platforms' global demand for premium dramas compares in 2017 to date.

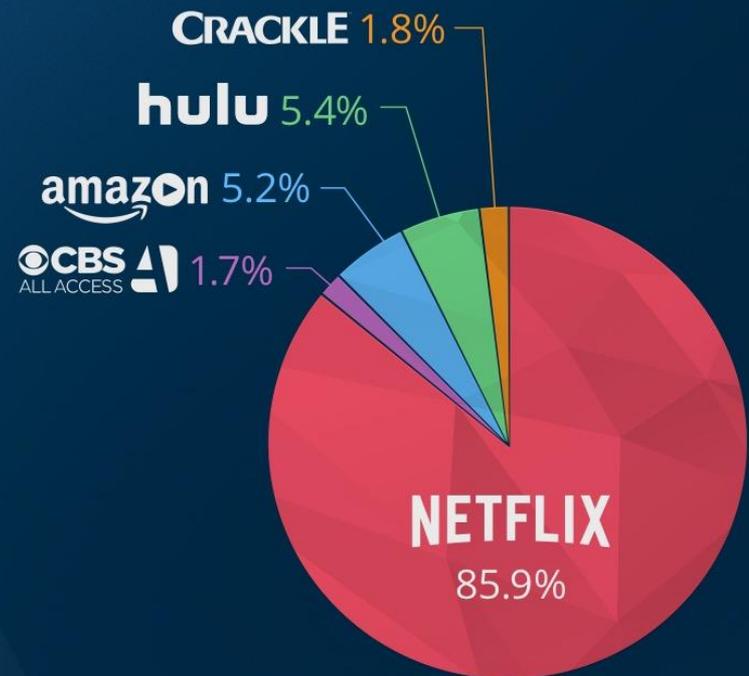
By averaging Demand Expressions over the year to date for each digital original premium drama title, and then aggregating by SVOD platform, the global demand share for each platform can be calculated.

As might be expected, Netflix's premium dramas dominate: The streaming giant has amassed an incredible 86.0% of the global demand share. However, shows like *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Man In The High Castle* helped rival services Hulu and Amazon Video gain 5.4% and 5.2% demand share respectively.

Smaller platforms also make an appearance: Crackle's *Snatch* helped it be the fourth biggest SVOD for Premium Dramas while the popularity of *The Good Fight* from CBS All Access helped this service secure fifth place.

As all of these platforms have committed to increasing their spending on original content, along with the fact that multiple new players to the streaming market have stated an intention to begin providing high-quality drama on demand, it remains to be seen whether Netflix will be successful in accelerating its significant lead.

Global Premium Drama SVOD Demand Share



Percent Average Demand Expressions

The Global Top 25 Digital Original Premium Dramas

New series *13 Reasons Why* more in demand than long-running titles

Unsurprisingly, the Netflix smash hit *13 Reasons Why* is the most popular SVOD premium drama globally. Despite experiencing a slower start than other shows that also release episodes all at once, word of mouth about Netflix's newest teen drama spread quickly. So far this year, it has 97.3% more demand than the second most in-demand digital original, Netflix's long-running political drama *House Of Cards*.

Both *House Of Cards* and *Orange Is The New Black* released new seasons this year, helping these veteran digital originals hold on to the second and third places respectively. Last year's breakout sci-fi hit *Stranger Things* is placed fifth.

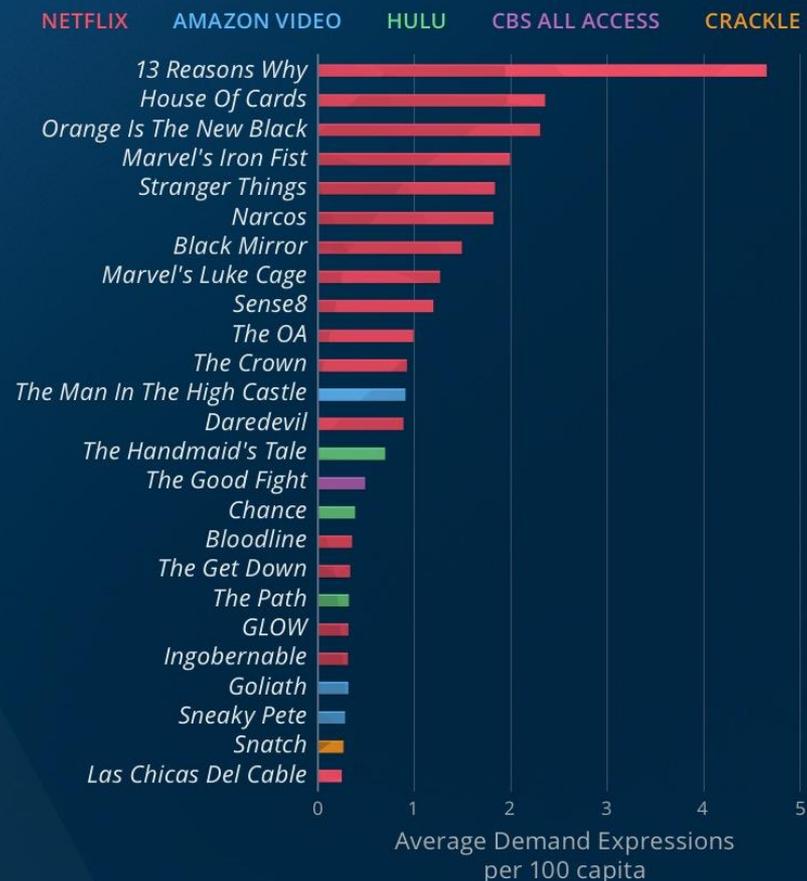
The highest placed non-Netflix show is Amazon's *The Man In The High Castle*, which at number 12 is Amazon Video's highest ranking title. It has 29.3% more demand than dystopian drama *The Handmaid's Tale*, which is not far behind in 14th place — Hulu's most popular title.

Legal drama *The Good Fight* is 15th from CBS All Access. The final streaming service to appear in this top 25 list is Crackle, with *Snatch*, ranked 24th.

Netflix's Spanish-language titles *Ingobernable* and *Las Chicas Del Cable* appear in 21st and 25th place. Netflix is the first SVOD platform to invest heavily in international productions and this result shows that this strategy is paying off.

For a more detailed analysis of the popularity of digital original titles across all genres, in 10 global markets, please refer to Parrot Analytics' latest quarterly digital originals report, available [here](#).

Global Top 25 SVOD Premium Dramas



The Global Premium Drama Rankings

Overall, premium dramas are still dominated by the linear networks

Parrot Analytics' analysis reveals that the five biggest premium dramas are still running on linear networks. However, SVODs are gaining ground: There are three digital originals in the top 25, one of which is also in the top 10.

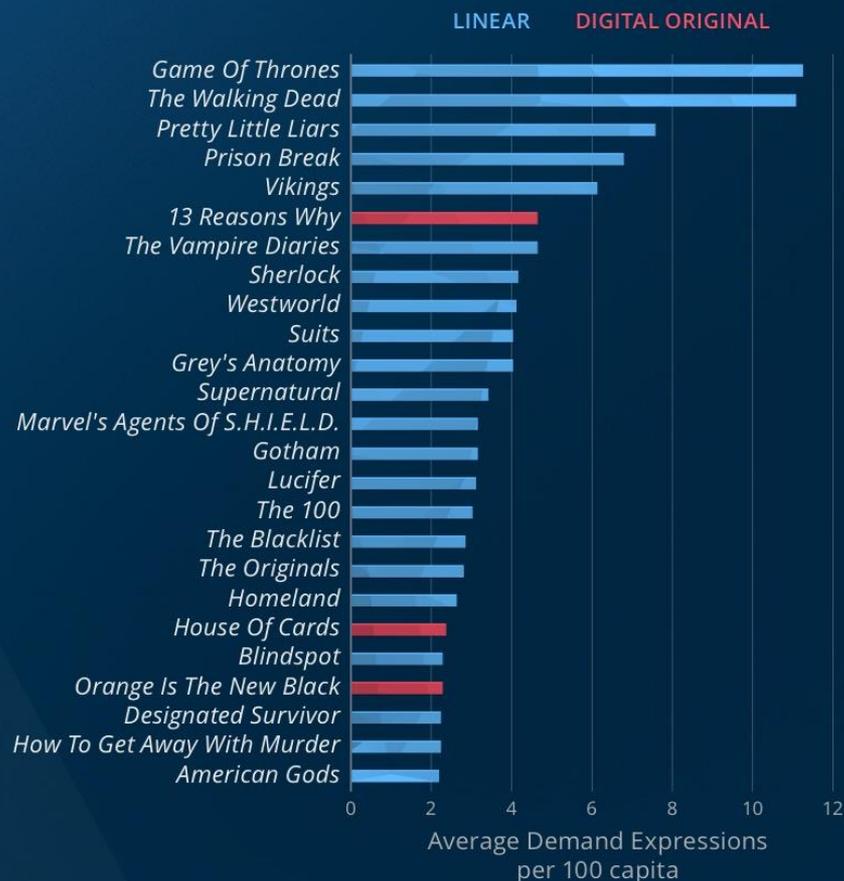
All the digital original entries in the top 25 are from the SVOD platform Netflix. The most popular non-Netflix digital original is Amazon Video's *The Man In The High Castle*, which ranks 58th (not shown). *The Handmaid's Tale*, Hulu's best performing drama, was 66th on this list (not shown).

The most popular linear show, *Game Of Thrones*, is still around two and a half times more popular than the most popular digital original *13 Reasons Why*. One interesting factor to consider with that number though is that *13 Reasons Why* is a new title, while *Game Of Thrones* is on its seventh season.

With that in mind, how long until a returning digital original drama will become the most popular premium drama of the year?

Last year's big SVOD hit is about to release a new season: How will *Stranger Things* season 2 fare in 2017 against the blockbuster that is *Game Of Thrones*, and to a lesser degree, *The Walking Dead*..?

Global Top 25 Premium Dramas



A world map is visible in the background, rendered in a light blue color against a dark blue background. The map shows the outlines of continents and countries. A large, dark blue triangular shape is positioned on the right side of the page, pointing towards the top right corner. A white triangular shape is positioned on the bottom right side of the page, pointing towards the bottom right corner.

What are the most popular premium dramas in North America, Europe, LATAM and Asia?

Premium Drama Regional Trends

Note: What exactly is a “Premium Drama”? There’s no hard and fast definition. For this whitepaper, only dramas and comedy-dramas that lean heavier on the dramatic side have been included. Further, the analysis has been restricted to “brand defining” series: The 4 or 5 series per platform that have received more marketing support than standard shows on the same network. The exception is the SVOD platforms, where more titles have been included per platform. Please note, however, that this does not affect the demand share or ranking lists. Finally, the analysis has been restricted to shows with new episodes released in the last 12 months.

Regional Trends: North America

Biggest audience for *The Walking Dead*

The top 20 premium dramas in North America are ranked by their average demand over the year to date ending July 31st and normalised by population.

The average demand for a title in the top 20 is 5.3 Demand Expressions per 100 capita, the second highest regional number. As the originating region for most of these titles, it is no surprise that premium dramas are performing well in this market.

The most popular premium drama in this region is *The Walking Dead*. North America also has the biggest difference between the first and second placed show; *The Walking Dead* has 56% more demand than *Game Of Thrones**. The appeal of *The Walking Dead* series to American and Canadian viewers does not stop at one show either, sister show *Fear The Walking Dead* also appears in the top 20.

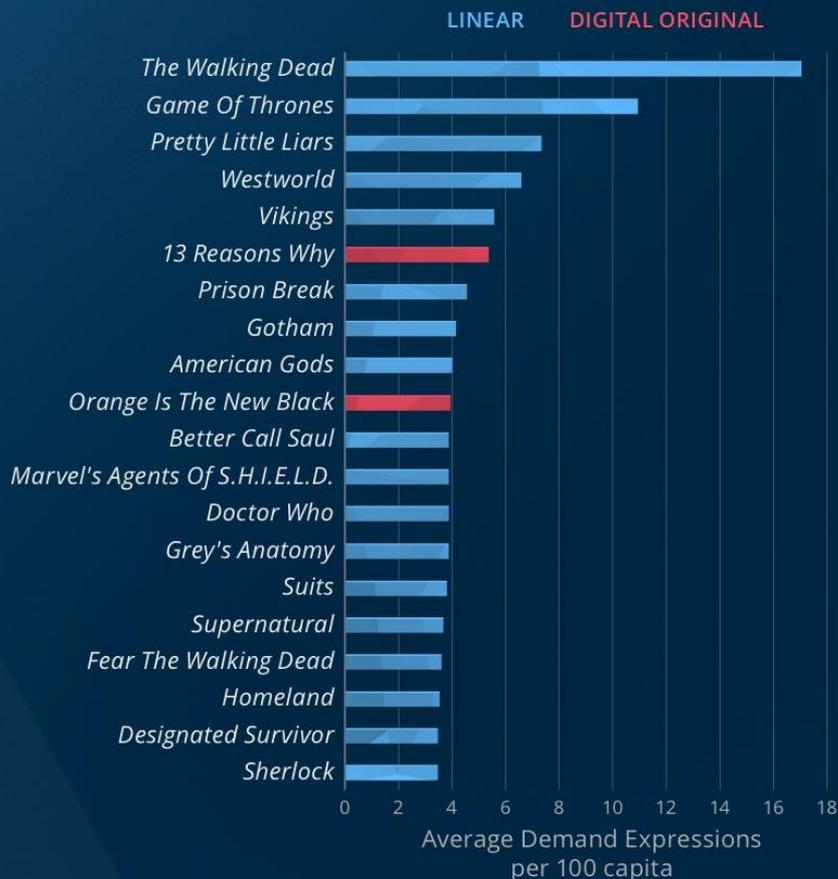
The highest placed digital original is Netflix's *13 Reasons Why*, which is 6th in this region. It is one place higher than the top broadcast network show, FOX's *Prison Break*.

Although North America prefers *The Walking Dead* to *Game Of Thrones*, HBO's other big drama *Westworld* is more popular in this region than any other.

AMC's *Better Call Saul*, the spinoff from the highly regarded *Breaking Bad*, makes it to the top 20 — the only region where this is the case.

* The analysis period only includes Game of Thrones' 7th season episodes 1, 2 and 3

Top Premium Dramas in North America



Regional Trends: Europe

Game Of Thrones tops the region

These are the top 20 premium dramas in Europe, ranked by their average demand over the year to date and normalised by population.

The average demand for a title in the top 20 is 4.9 Demand Expressions per 100 capita, the second lowest regional number.

Europe is the only region where *Game Of Thrones** beats *The Walking Dead*. *Game Of Thrones* has 12% more demand than the zombie drama and in this region *The Walking Dead*'s sister show *Fear The Walking Dead* does not make the top 20.

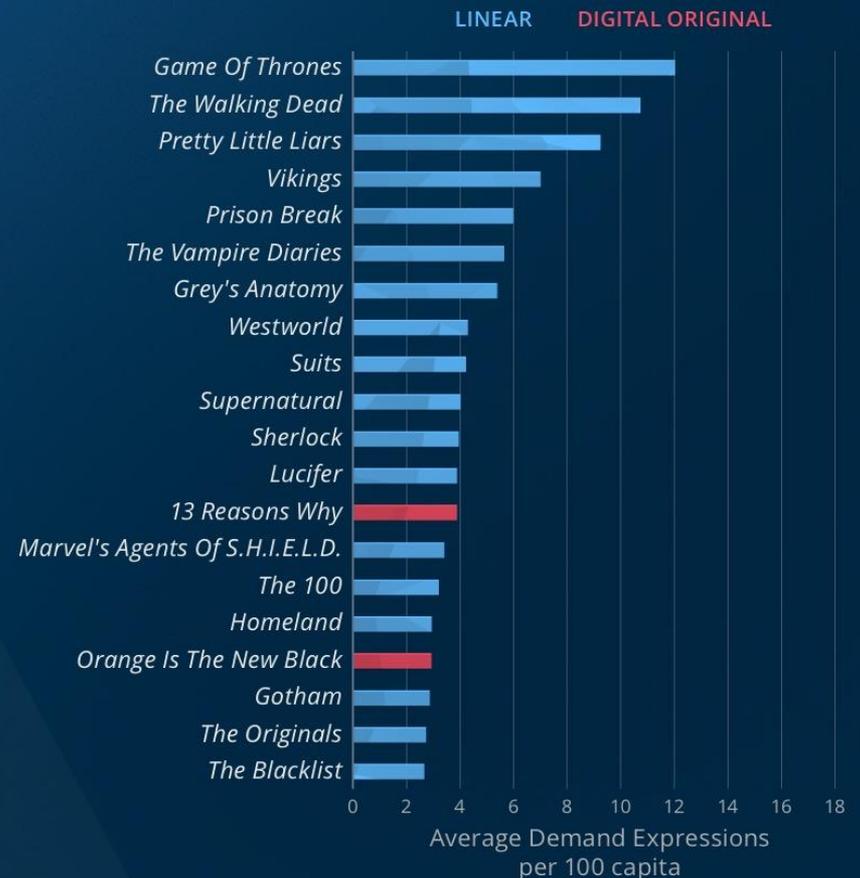
The 4th most in-demand show is *Vikings*, which is the same ranking as in Latin America. However, in that region it has 35.6% more demand per capita than in Europe.

Digital originals have performed worst overall in Europe. For example, *13 Reasons Why* had the lowest ranking here, only reaching 13th overall. However, Netflix's long running prison drama *Orange Is The New Black* placed highest here in 16th place; it only made the top 20 in one other market.

Europe appears to have a preference for supernatural drama elements: Both *The Vampire Diaries* and *Supernatural* ranked highest of all regions here. Europe is also the only region where the surrealistic *Twin Peaks* revival makes it into the top 20.

* The analysis period only includes Game of Thrones' 7th season episodes 1, 2 and 3

Top Premium Dramas in Europe



Regional Trends: LATAM

The highest demand for premium drama of any region

These are the top 20 premium dramas in Latin America, ranked by their average demand over the year to date and normalised by population.

Premium dramas really appeal to Latin American audiences as this is the region where they are most in demand. The average popularity of a title in the top 20 is 5.5 Demand Expressions per 100 capita.

Just like North America, Latin America enjoys the zombie stories of *The Walking Dead*: It is the top show in this region, with 23% more demand than *Game Of Thrones**, while *Fear The Walking Dead* at 14th is placed higher here than anywhere else.

The most in-demand digital original in the list is *13 Reasons Why*, which reached 5th place. Like Europe, Netflix's *Orange Is The New Black* also made the top 20 but in the lower position of 19th.

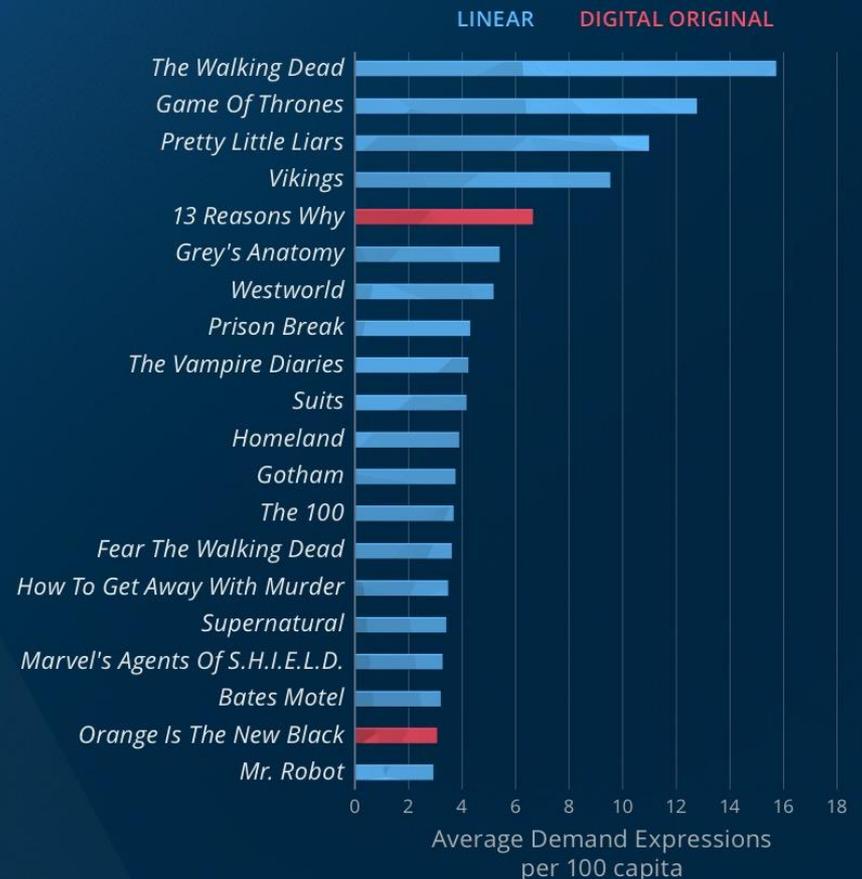
The 4th most popular show is *Vikings*, which is the same ranking as it has in Europe. However, in Latin America it has 35.6% more demand per capita than in Europe.

Audiences in Latin America enjoy medical dramas: The region has the highest demand per capita and ranking for ABC's *Grey's Anatomy*.

Despite the high placement of Spanish language titles in the SVOD top 25 for the region, Netflix's *Ingobernable* only makes it to 31st place overall (not shown).

* The analysis period only includes Game of Thrones' 7th season episodes 1, 2 and 3

Top Premium Dramas in LATAM



Regional Trends: Asia

The lowest demand for premium drama of any region

These are the top 20 premium dramas in Asia, ranked by their average demand over the year to date and normalised by population.

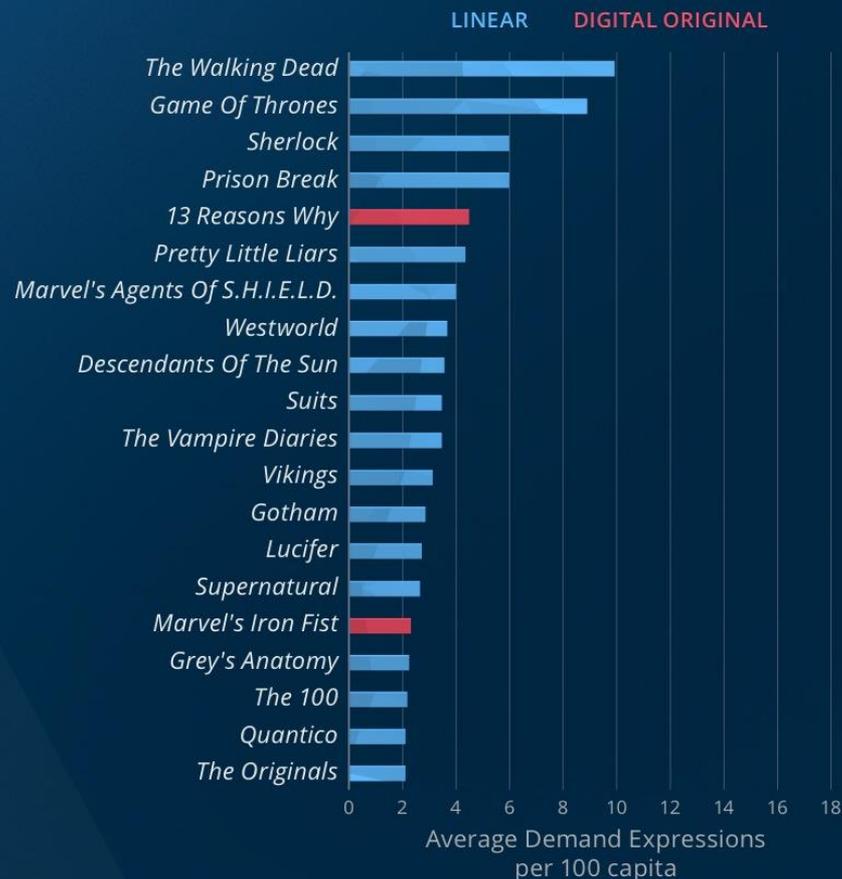
The average popularity for a top 20 title in Asia is 3.8. This is the lowest average, which makes Asia the region where the premium dramas included in this analysis have performed the worst. Demand for the top title is also the lowest here: *The Walking Dead* in Asia only has approximately half the demand it has in North America.

Asia is the only region where the top 3 shows are different. In this region, BBC's *Sherlock* is in third place. This is the highest result for the detective show in both rank and demand, representing 53% more demand than in Europe, the region where this show is next-most popular. Meanwhile, *Games of Thrones** is placed second in Asia and KBS' South Korean television series, *Descendants Of The Sun* ranked 9th.

As elsewhere, *13 Reasons Why* is the highest placed digital original in Asia. Just like in Latin America, it placed 5th. This means that Freeform's *Pretty Little Liars*, which is third in all other regions and also globally, was bumped out of the top 3. It only reaches 6th place in Asia, behind *Sherlock*, *Prison Break* and *13 Reasons Why*.

Despite the show reaching 21st on the global rankings, this is the only regional appearance in a top 20 of ABC's FBI drama *Quantico*.

Top Premium Dramas in Asia



* The analysis period only includes Game of Thrones' 7th season episodes 1, 2 and 3

Methodology

Global content demand measurement

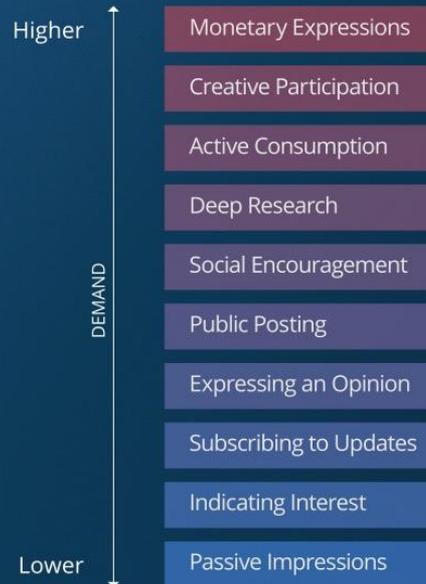


Consumers express their demand for content through various “demand expression platforms” including:

- ▶ Video Streaming Platforms
- ▶ Social Media Platforms
- ▶ Photo Sharing Platforms
- ▶ Blogging & Microblogging Platforms
- ▶ Fan & Critic Rating Platforms
- ▶ Wikis & Informational Sites
- ▶ Peer-to-Peer Protocols
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Industry-first: *DemandRank*™

Parrot Analytics captures cross-platform audience demand for content around the world. Audience demand reflects the desire, engagement and viewership, weighted by importance; so a stream/download is a higher expression of demand than a passive impression or a comment.



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Total audience demand being expressed for a title, within a market.

Characteristics of *Demand Expressions*®:

- ▶ They measure actual, expressed demand. *Parrot Analytics* does not use panel data.
- ▶ They encompass demand expressed by audiences from a multitude of sources, weighted by importance.
- ▶ There is no ceiling to how many *Demand Expressions*® a title can generate in a market.

About the Author

Parrot Analytics

Parrot Analytics is a data science company that empowers media companies, brands and agencies to understand global audience demand for television content. Wielding the world's largest audience behavior data sets, the company has developed the world's only global cross-platform, country-specific audience demand measurement system.

Parrot Analytics captures an unprecedented spectrum of actual audience behavior including video streaming consumption, social media, blogging platforms, file-sharing and peer-to-peer consumption spanning 249 countries. This enables media companies, for the very first time, to understand audience demand for content across all content distribution platforms in all markets around the world.

For more information visit www.parrotanalytics.com

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