



# RIDING THE GLOBAL PRODUCTION WAVE:

## FIVE TIPS FOR CREATING CONTENT

### WITH INTERNATIONAL APPEAL

- **Market changes: It's complicated out there**
- **The executives**
- **Tip#1: Don't think 'international'!**
- **Tip#2: Make shows and storylines that are universally relatable**
- **Tip#3: Embrace co-production**
- **Tip#4: Embrace the female audience and diversity**
- **Tip#5: Consider adaptation and real-life**

## About the author

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Guy Bisson is executive director of Ampere Analysis, a new breed of analyst firm founded January 2015 by an experienced team of sector-leading entertainment industry analysts. Ampere specialises in research and insight on the global TV and content markets, delivering data and analysis through five online services:

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# Market changes: It's complicated out there

Content boom. Globalisation. International opportunity. Originals. Binge viewing. Pan-territorial rights agreements. The list of terms and phrases that characterise the way the TV business has changed in the past five years seems endless. But one thing is certain: change it has. Fundamentally, the industry has entered a self-perpetuating cycle, characterised by an apparently insatiable demand for content, compe-

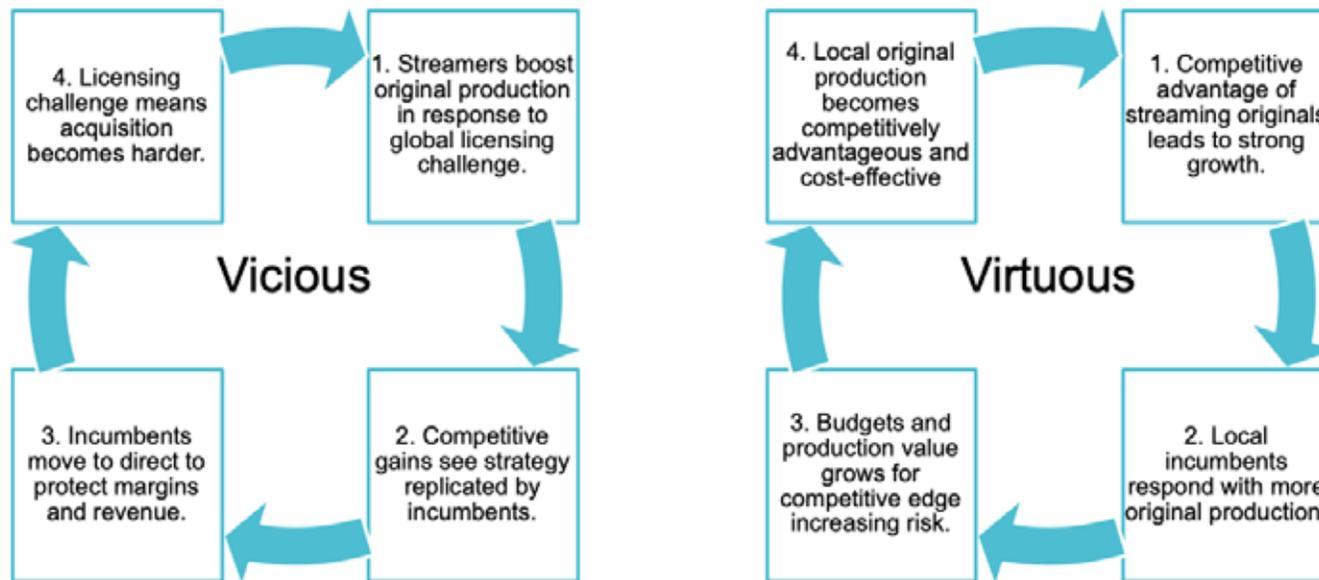
tion for creative talent, ever-growing budgetary demands and the knock-on effects that these cycles have on co-production, financing and traditional models for content distribution. But all cycles have a starting point, and when we think about the one thing that kicked off the current wave of change, thoughts return to the need for global rights, seeded by the streaming revolution. The demand for global rights set off

two related cycles (and numerous eddies of flux around them) from which almost every market change today can be traced. One consequence of these cycles has been the expansion of demand for international content.

And while we are often guilty of focusing on high-end drama when we think and talk about content today, the changes we're seeing are genre-blind, with a trickle-down effect that benefits all. Some of the old rule books have been ripped up and good stories can be told in all sorts of ways. As Danna Stern, Managing Director of Israel's yes Studios says, "People are consuming much more content than ever before. I think it's vast and across all genres. The whole world has changed and really opened up and people are seeing documentaries and documentary series as another form of storytelling as good as, if not better than, some of the scripted fare."

It was the demand for global rights that kick-started the current original production boom. As the competitive edge that created for content providers became apparent, local players jumped on the original production bandwagon, pushing budgets and talent shortages even higher. Global expansion, competition and fragmentation also led to the need to produce locally, both to retain a competitive edge, and because production costs are more competitive than in the USA. In another cycle, local production success created

Graphic 1: **VICIOUS AND VIRTUOUS CYCLES**



Source: Ampere Analysis

# Market changes: It's complicated out there

a demand and audience acceptance of non-US content (even when that was created in languages other than English) creating in turn yet more demand for international content.

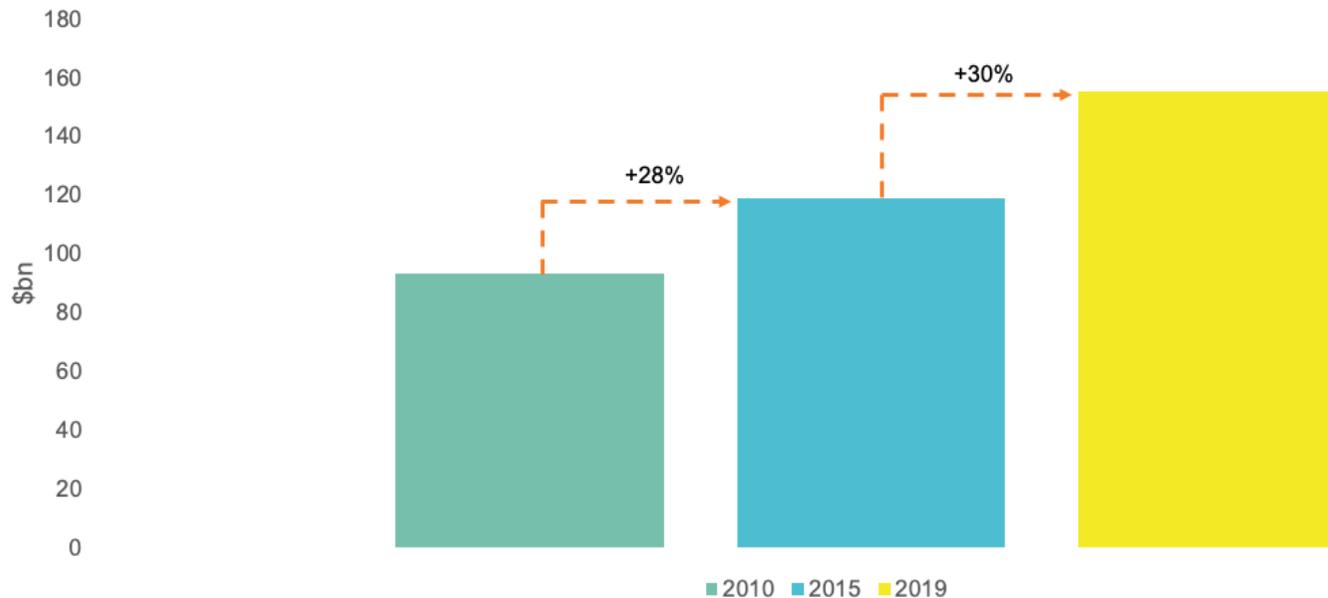
And if all that isn't enough, we're about to enter another phase of streaming change with the direct studio strategies of the majors such as Disney+ and NBCU's Peacock. This will lead to more original production, more budget demands, more talent shortages and the potential

to fan the flames of the content boom cycle by encouraging more rights holdback from international distribution, leading to an ever greater need for original production. That will kick the two cycles into hyperdrive. Ampere Analysis data suggest global spend on acquiring and producing content increased 30% over the past five years (even excluding sport), with a similar rate of increase forecast in the coming five years. So if international is now hot property, how do you

create successful international content? This report looks at the five key considerations producers, creatives, financiers, distributors and sales agents need to think about when making and selling content with wide international appeal.

We've spoken to a range of executives involved in the international market and distilled their considerable wisdom into five top tips, supplemented with data and insight on global production trends from Ampere Analysis.

Graphic 2: **GLOBAL CONTENT SPEND INFLATION**



Source: Ampere Content Markets

# The executives



**Danna Stern**  
**yes Studios**

Danna Stern is Managing Director of yes Studios, a boutique content sales, distribution, development and production company based in Israel, specializing in high-end IP. Part of the Bezeq-owned yes pay TV group, yes Studios has backed and distributes shows such as Fauda, Your Honor, On the Spectrum and Asylum City.



**Mercedes Gamero**  
**Atresmedia**

Mercedes Gamero is Acquisitions and Sales Director & General Manager of Atresmedia Cine. Atresmedia is Spain's leading commercial TV group and owner of Atres Studios, the production group behind break-out Spanish hit La Casa de Papel (Money Heist).



**Filippa Wallestam**  
**Nordic Entertainment Group**

Filippa Wallestam is EVP and Chief Content Officer for Nordic Entertainment Group, the Scandinavian powerhouse behind the Viaplay streaming service and the Viasat pay TV platform as well as NENT Studios which has produced an extensive portfolio of original content, including Midnight Sun, Nobel, and Hassel.



**Oliver Bachert**  
**Beta Film**

Oliver Bachert, is EVP International Sales and Acquisitions for German distribution and production major Beta Film. Among Beta Film's international successes is period drama Babylon Berlin. Currently in production are new dramas The Turncoat, German Moon and Atlantic Crossing.

# Tip #1: Don't think 'international'!

It may seem odd that the first of five tips for finding international success is to avoid thinking 'international', but this was a consistent theme in our executive interviews. In production, trying to make a show 'international' risks overshadowing the story, a death knell for audience success. It's a variation on the classic writer's tip of 'write what you know'.

"There's always the risk that you lose authenticity by trying to be appealing to the international market," says Oliver Bachert, EVP International Sales and Acquisitions, International Marketing for Germany's Beta Film. "There is no silver bullet, so you have to try to define what you're aiming for, and don't try to please everyone because then there is the risk that it goes nowhere," he adds. But that doesn't stop producers, writers and other creative talent asking anyway. "It's the elephant

in every room right now - you know, 'where's this going to air internationally?' Even before there's a show," says yes Studios' Danna Stern. That's a fundamental mistake in thinking and risks the whole success of the project, agrees Bachert: "The audience doesn't care if a character is flag-waving from the country in the background, but they care about the underlying storyline," he argues.

**"It's the elephant in every room right now — you know, 'where's this going to air internationally?' Even before there's a show."**

**— Danna Stern, yes Studios**

One of the reasons that creating a show for 'international' is so difficult is simply defining audiences. Stern says that while conversations with creatives may start with questions about making shows for an international audience, "I don't know what that means... honestly, I don't know what that audience looks like—what that [international] person is like... there is no such person."

While defining an international audience may be challenging conceptually, that's not stopping the world's largest commissioners from spreading their creative portfolio around the world. A dive in to Ampere's commissioning database shows that Netflix, Amazon and Facebook are all major commissioners of shows outside the USA and up to a quarter of production from the studio majors is now made outside the USA.



Babylon Berlin — Beta Film



# Tip #1: Don't think 'international'!

**“Be true to yourself, because that always works better...”**

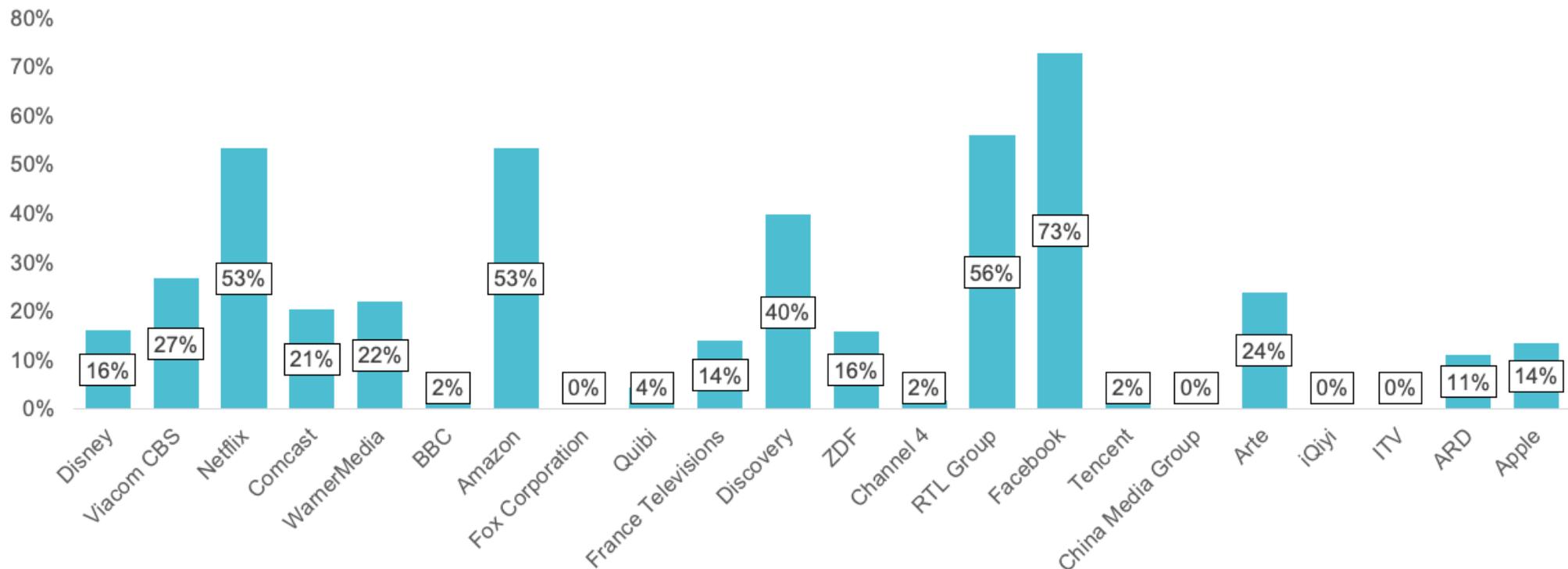
**— Mercedes Gamero,  
Atresmedia**

Being true to the story, and yourself, is more important than pushing international elements that

may or may not connect with your audience. Mercedes Gamero, Acquisitions and Sales Director and General Manager for Spain's Atresmedia Cine, thinks aping international elements just doesn't work. She has a list of don'ts when it comes to international production. “Don't betray yourself by trying to set up, quote unquote, international elements. To make an internation-

al success, don't do a Euro pudding and don't copy international formula, be true to yourself, because that always works better,” she advises. Ironically, one of the strategies for international success is to create really good local shows. As Domingo Corral, Head of Original Content for Movistar+ told Ampere during MIPCOM, “We have done very, very Spanish shows, but the pro-

Graphic 3: **TOP INTERNATIONAL COMMISSIONERS**



International means being produced outside the home country of the company named. Includes all commissions (scripted and unscripted) – Source: Ampere Commissioning

# Tip #1: Don't think 'international'!

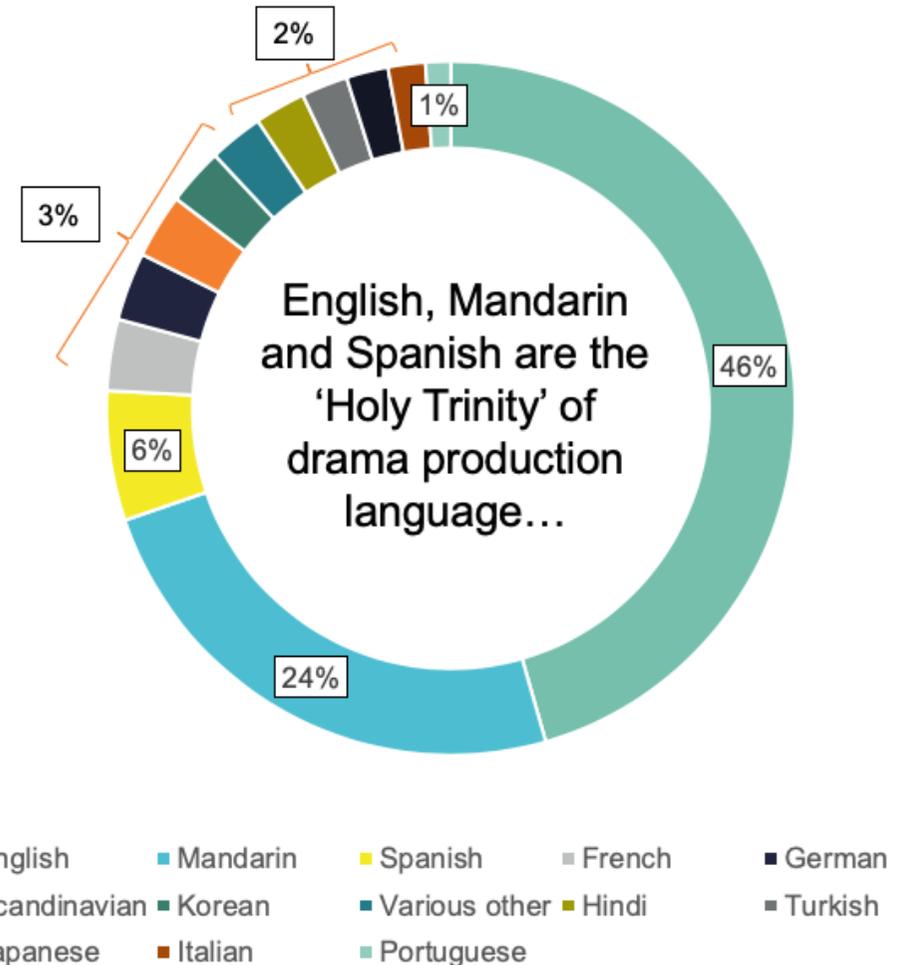
duction values and the storytelling are universal [even though] they're rooted in the Spanish culture, which gives them a unique personality.” Of course, one unavoidable aspect of international production is the question of language. It's true that English still reigns supreme for international, regardless of the country of origin. But things are beginning to change, with the Oscar success of Korean drama *Parasite* suggesting a new openness among audiences to high-quality content that overcomes what director Bong Joon Ho de-

scribes as “the one-inch-tall barrier of subtitles.” Production strategies that include both local and English language can be successful. Break-out hits like Beta Film-backed *Babylon Berlin* or Atresmedia's *La Casa de Papel* (known as *Money Heist* in English speaking countries) can change things very quickly. “There's certainly many more opportunities to see stories told in any language from any corner of the earth now with global streamers and even local players,” says *yes Studios'* Stern. *Yes Studios* is owned by Is-



Skam Norway — Beta Film

Graphic 4: **UPCOMING SCRIPTED LANGUAGE MIX**



Scripted projects currently in production or development (excluding animation). Based on analysis of 2,799 drama projects. — Source: Ampere Commissioning.

# Tip #1: Don't think 'international'!

raeli pay-TV group Yes, itself a big buyer of international shows. “Yes also acquires a lot of foreign language content, not just English. So a lot of foreign language series, Spanish series, Turkish do exceedingly well, even Korean dramas do well for us,” Stern notes.

Filippa Wallestam, EVP & Chief Content Officer for Scandinavia's Nordic Entertainment Group (NENT), argues that in some cases, remaking shows in English just doesn't work. NENT's upcoming crime show Party Song is a case in point: “It's a very local Swedish crime story located in Sweden in the countryside. It's this beautiful setting and beautiful scenery with a really creepy scary crime story underneath. I hope it can travel just the way it is. I think it would be weird to do a remake of it.”

One way to hedge risk on languages is to develop a show that does combine legitimate cross-language storylines. Beta Film's Bachert points out that new show Atlantic Crossing (set in Norway in World War II) has “a strong English language component due to the fact that you have the Franklin D. Roosevelt story in there, which is obviously portrayed in English.” But he warns not to force language elements: “It also goes back to the authenticity that you do not try to put together a couple of European actors and let them speak English and shake it well and hope it turns out to be something meaningful,” he says.

**“Do not try to put together a couple of European actors and let them speak English and shake it well and hope it turns out to be something meaningful.”**

**— Oliver Bachert, Beta Film**

Analysis of Ampere's commissioning database shows that the three big language groupings for scripted content are English, Mandarin and Spanish. Spanish content, in particular has increasingly found global success, but it's been a long road. As Atresmedia's Gamero notes: “I think there were three waves of Spanish content working very well abroad, which was Un, Dos,

Tres 12 or 15 years ago, then the second wave with Grand Hotel and Velvet, which was four or five years ago, and then the big splash was La Casa de Papel”.

And while English, Mandarin and Spanish are likely to remain the top languages for scripted content for the foreseeable future, other markets are opening up all the time. Beta Film's Bachert is looking increasingly eastward: “I feel that Eastern Europe is one of the other [areas that] could become a very interesting source of new productions—from Russia to other parts of Eastern Europe—because there's a certain development of elevating the productions and that's probably where we see our role; to maybe partner and see if there is something quite local that could be elevated to international appeal,” he says. ■



**Gomorrah — Beta Film**



**Murder by the lake — Beta Film**

# Tip#2: Make shows and storylines that are universally relatable

So, if you've just read tip one, you may now think that the key to international success is simply to make really good local shows? Not quite. If not forcing the concept of 'international' into the creative process is important, then equally key is to make content that an audience can relate to. One way to do that is to think topical (or just get lucky that world events align). Atresmedia's Gamero says this was one of the elements that helped La Casa de Papel in key international markets: "I think it has resonated very well in countries like Brazil or France, where at the time of the show, there also was a tumultuous period, so it resonated with what was really happening within their society," she notes.

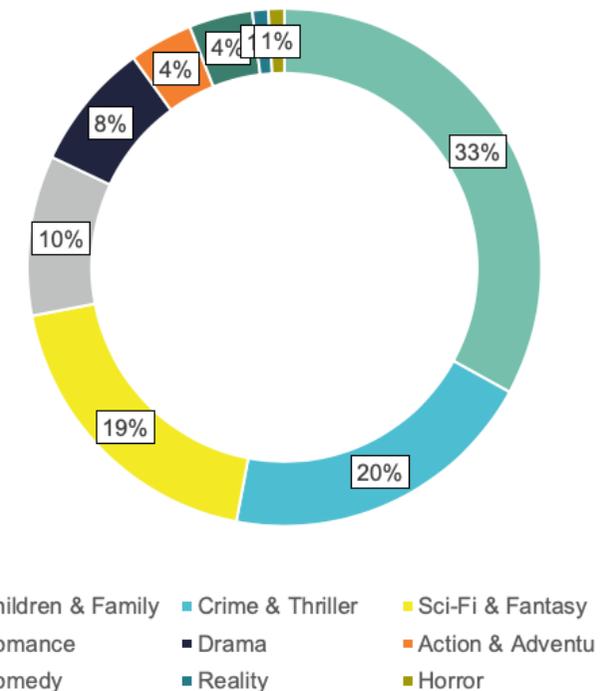
Beta Film's Bachert hopes new show Atlantic Crossing will have similar resonance, even though it's a period piece set in World War II: "Something like Atlantic Crossing has a lot of references to today due to the Franklin D. Roo-

sevelt element and the 'America first' situation he was facing, so it seems kind of relevant," Bachert says.

One aspect of relatability is getting the genre and content type right for the market. Ampere data of the top 100 most widely distributed shows on streaming platforms across the globe shows that the genres that travel best are Children's content, Crime and Sci-fi with a second -tier grouping of Romance and miscellaneous Drama. Children's content is easy to explain. It's highly adaptable and universal in its themes, meaning children around the world can relate to characters wherever they may have been created. Indeed, the most distributed show of all on streaming platforms is Nickelodeon-distributed Paw Patrol from Canada's Spin Master Entertainment.

But generating an emotional response in the viewer is also important says NENT's Filippa Wallestam. "What do we want from our interna-

Graphic 5:  
**GENRE MIX OF TOP 100 MOST WIDELY DISTRIBUTED SHOWS ON STREAMING PLATFORMS**



Top 10 based on number of countries and streaming platforms show has or has had a distribution deal with.  
Source: Ampere Analytics—SVoD



Alex — NENT



Hassel — NENT

## Tip #2: Make shows and storylines that are universally relatable

tional projects?”, she asks, “I think it really comes down to the story. You have to have a strong story that is possible for people to relate to. It has to feel real.”

Sky-HBO co-production Chernobyl was a great example she says. The show’s global appeal came not so much from the epic story (which, after all, was set in a Soviet past that many are too young to remember), but in the way it triggered human emotions. The infamous ‘Bridge of Death’ scene (so called because everyone present on the bridge on the night of the disaster later reportedly died) was one such example. “I can relate to the people standing out watching this and holding their little baby. Then the whole mother part of me is like—*aagh!* It still creates a lot of feelings and things that make you think, even though it’s not your environment,” says Wallestam.

Beta Film’s Bechert agrees that Chernobyl worked despite its epic storyline rather than because of it: “Chernobyl obviously is something narrated not necessarily from a Russian point of view, but more from an Anglo-Saxon British-American view, but it was done in such a sophisticated way that it was successful,” he says.

**“It [Sky-HBO drama Chernobyl] still creates a lot of feelings and things that make you think even though it’s not your environment.”**

**— Filippa Wallestam, NENT**

One obvious way to nail relatability is to focus on stories that are universal across cultures. Themes involving love and family relations are a good place to start. NENT’s Wallestam cites one of her shows that’s been a surprise international success:

Graphic 6: **TOP 20 MOST WIDELY DISTRIBUTED SHOWS ON STREAMING PLATFORMS**

Title	Producer	Primary Genre
Paw Patrol	Nickelodeon	Children & Family
Once Upon a Time	ABC Studios	Sci-Fi & Fantasy
My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic	Hasbro Studios	Children & Family
Spongebob Squarepants	Nickelodeon	Children & Family
The Good Wife	CBS	Crime & Thriller
Adventure Time	Cartoon Network	Children & Family
The 100	Warner Bros.	Sci-Fi & Fantasy
Ben 10	Cartoon Network	Children & Family
Lego Ninjago: Masters of Spinjitzu	LEGO	Children & Family
Peppa Pig	eOne	Children & Family
Grimm	Universal Studios	Sci-Fi & Fantasy
The Vampire Diaries	Warner Bros.	Sci-Fi & Fantasy
America’s Funniest Home Videos	Vin Di Bona Productions	Reality
Steven Universe	Cartoon Network	Children & Family
The Big Bang Theory	Warner Bros.	Comedy
Transformers: Rescue Bots	Hasbro Studios	Children & Family
Oggy and the Cockroaches	Xilam	Children & Family
The Walking Dead	AMC	Crime & Thriller
Sherlock	BBC	Crime & Thriller
Fireman Sam	HIT Entertainment	Children & Family

Based on number of countries and streaming platforms show has or has had a distribution deal with. – Source: Ampere Analytics—SVoD

## Tip#2: Make shows and storylines that are universally relatable

“We’ve just done a show in Sweden that is called Love Me, that’s been a super, super success. It’s very Swedish in the way it’s told, but it is about love for three generations. Of course, everyone can relate to that, you will find moments that you recognize so I think it’s very possible to relate to, even if you’re in Russia, or in LA, or wherever you are.”

But don’t think that international success always needs high budgets and top-notch production values. Beta Film’s Bachert argues that, while we all tend to focus on high-end drama when think-

ing about the current content boom, “There’s also [a] relatively large target, that is, let’s say, more escapist-minded and wants easy, digestible content.”

Channels like Hallmark have built very successful businesses catering for a very specific audience, that may want lighter entertainment and drama or enjoy crime procedurals. “It might be from an intellectual perspective not the core that certain creative people are aiming for, but you have lots of examples,” Bachert notes.

**“There’s also [a] relatively large target, that is, let’s say, more escapist-minded and wants easy, digestible content”**

**— Oliver Bachert, Beta Film**

One final consideration when ensuring shows can travel well is to think about, and keep on top of, behavioural trends among viewers. Binge viewing may be a relatively new concept, but as a behaviour it’s become ubiquitous. The drama



Svartsjon — NENT



Rig 45 Viaplay — NENT

## Tip#2: Make shows and storylines that are universally relatable

boom that is feeding the binge-viewing culture is having a knock-on effect on series length, meaning that the once-common miniseries is making a comeback. Limited series have an important role to play in the drama mix going forward.

“Storytelling is much more condensed now, people aren’t asking you about what the next season is anymore. That used to be the first question you’d get asked. [Now] it’s okay for shows to come in and be really tight with eight episodes

or 10 episodes max and not necessarily have a second season built in — or at all,” notes yes Studios’ Danna Stern.

Atresmedia’s Mercedes Gamero agrees: “We are coming back to miniseries again, I think [driven by] the organic success of shows like Big Little Lies or Chernobyl. Right now, the audience is so overwhelmed by the quantity of stuff available every week that [they] don’t want to commit their free time to only one show”. ■

**“People aren’t asking you about what the next season is anymore. That used to be the first question you’d get asked”**

**— Danna Stern, yes Studios**



Conspiracy of silence — NENT



Stella Blomqvist — NENT

# Tip #3: Embrace co-production

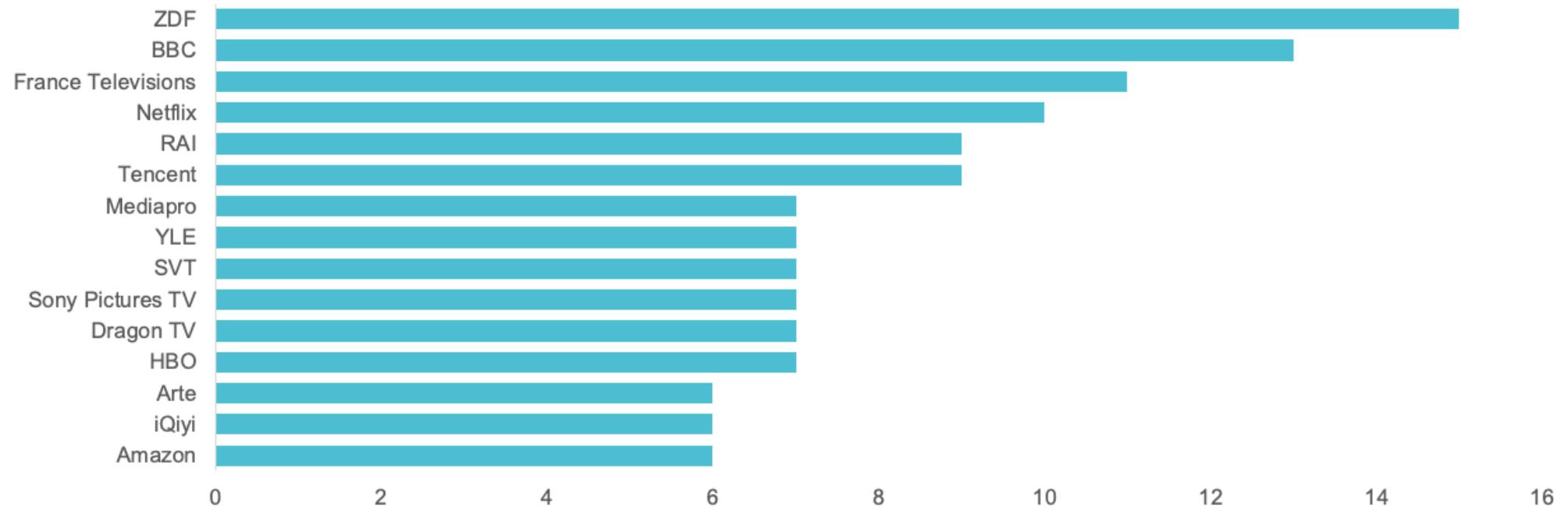
One of the many side-effects of the content boom and the drive for internationally-successful content is an uplift in co-production activity. The economics of show-making have changed as budget and production demands grow and the risk profile of new shows gets ever higher. The days of getting a good chunk of budget from a single broadcaster leaving a manageable deficit to make up in international distribution are gone. As budgets have grown, money from new com-

missions has stayed the same or dropped, meaning the deficit is now a major potential obstacle. As NENT's Filipa Wallestam warns: "These big international productions are complicated, they are expensive, and in many cases, they get more expensive as you go along." Co-production is one way to spread risk and to get a high-production-value show in exchange for out-of-territory rights if you partner with a global platform or player.



**Straight forward – NENT**

Graphic 7: **LARGEST DRAMA CO-PRODUCERS**



# scripted co-production projects currently in production or development (excluding animation) – Source: Ampere Commissioning

■ # co-productions in development

# Tip #3: Embrace co-production

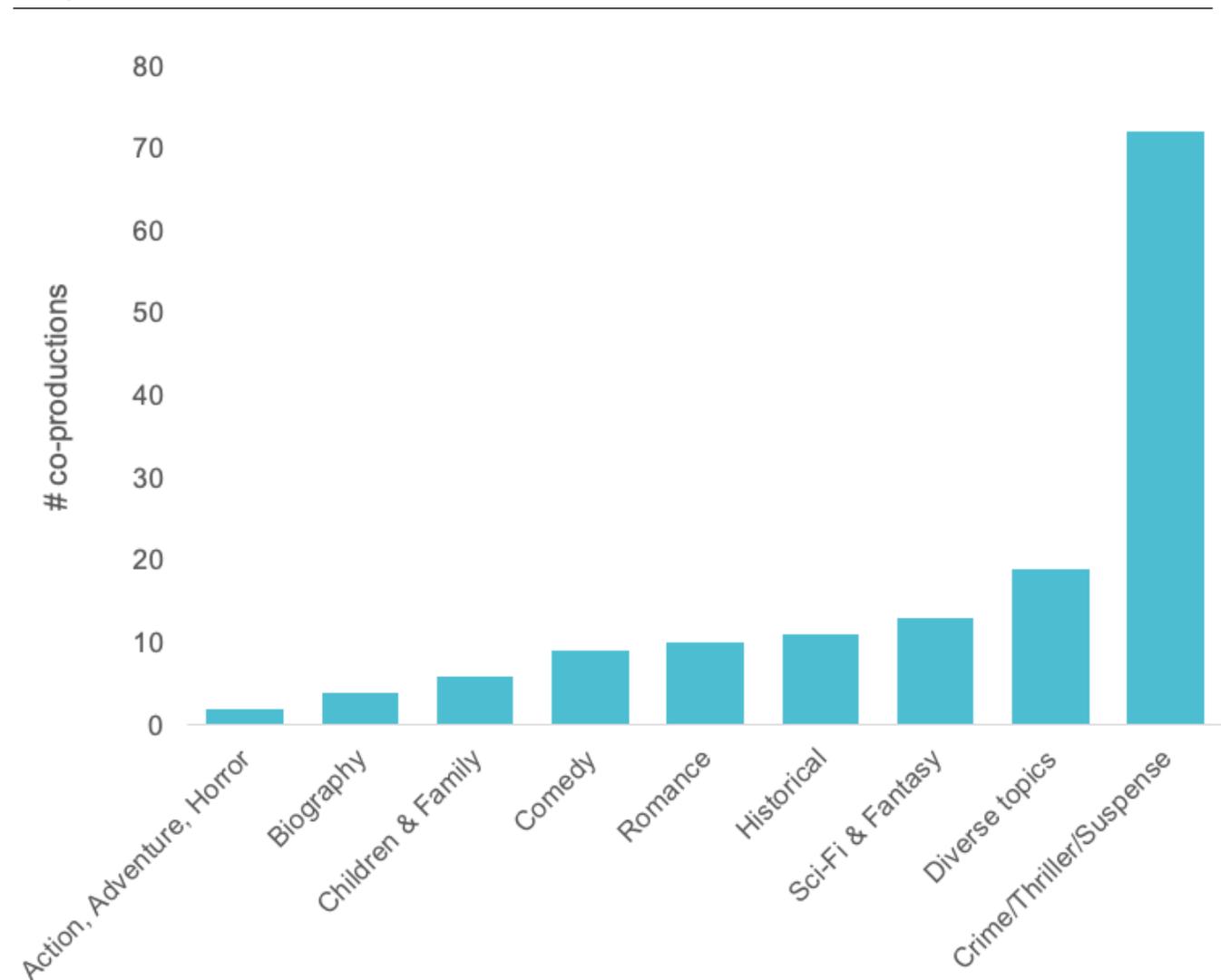
On the face of it, involving international partners and talent should be a recipe for success in creating a show with broader international appeal, right? Well, not quite. Co-productions are, by their nature, complex and while international partners can help with local market knowledge and talent, they can also bring problems all of their own. As Beta Film's Bachert notes: "If you look at co-pros, language barriers between producers are sometimes a little bit of a challenge to work with. Sometimes a wonderful structure on paper that seemed like it was so great because we had ten partners doesn't deliver the best creative results."

Ampere data shows that the largest co-producers today fall into two distinct groups: single-market public broadcasters and global streaming platforms. Those groups illustrate where the dynamics of high-budget co-production can make most sense: large single market broadcasters need big bang shows for their local markets, while streamers are chasing global or large pan-regional rights deals and will often fund deficits in exchange for such.

**[Co-productions] are complicated, they are expensive and in many cases, they get more expensive as you go along..."**

**— Filippa Wallestam, NENT**

Graphic 8: **GENRE OF CO-PRODUCTIONS**



# scripted co-production projects currently in production or development (excluding animation) – Source: Ampere Commissioning

## Tip #3: Embrace co-production

So if co-productions are an increasingly a necessary evil, what are the keys to make co-production relationships a success?

“You need to have partners that you are aligned with. If you don’t have aligned goals for the way forwards then it’s not going to work. We work extremely hard on creating the right alliances and the right partnerships and helping each other,” says NENT’s Wallestam.

A strong partnership that proves fruitful can lead to a much longer-term working relationship as well. “We can do this [co-production] together and then we can do multiple projects together so that you get to know each other and there is this mutual sort of trust and willingness to make it work,” Wallestam adds.

Regional and local cultural knowledge is another factor in making a co-production relationship work. As yes Studios’ Danna Stern says: “Places are very different from one another between not only countries, but even cities and even buildings, so you need someone local who knows their market,” she says. Cultural knowledge and mutual respect can also smooth the relationship between partners from different countries, Stern adds: “I learned a lot in the past couple of years about India, we do a fair amount of business there, and I know all the holidays now and put them in our calendars....that was something I never had to take into consideration [before]”. Of course, co-productions have to make financial sense and be structured in such a way that

all partners feel they have a voice and are getting a fair cut from the deal. The old adage ‘he who pays the piper calls the tune’ certainly applies when it comes to managing expectations. Says Wallestam: “[At] 25% of the production budget [the show] needs to be quite Nordic in terms of the storylines and have some connection to the Nordics,” she says of NENT’s approach to partnerships.

“Our investments level will vary depending on how much say we have and how Nordic it is, and how many of our markets we think it is going to work in. But generally, it’s probably somewhere around 15-25% of the production. And then we have a third [way of working] where it’s more we just go in and take the pre-buy,” she adds.



Asylum city – yes Studios



Fauda Boxing – yes Studios

# Tip #3: Embrace co-production

**“Places are very different from one another between not only countries, but even cities and even buildings, so you need someone local...”**

**— Danna Stern, yes Studios**

International can seem like a key goal for producers too, Wallestam notes: “We have produced so much Nordic drama in the last few years across the markets, so [international] is a little bit of a next step for the production companies as well. They’ve done it in the Nordics, that next step is that they want to go international. So we see

a little bit more of those ideas coming that are more ambitious than we had before.”

Ampere commissioning data shows that the scripted content most likely to be co-produced is a mix of content that is universal and travels well (Crime) and genres that are particularly expensive to produce (Sci-Fi and Period Drama). ■

Graphic 9: **EXPORTING COUNTRIES BY GENRE**



All charts exclude USA which is largest producer across all genres. Charts show top five countries producing stated genre of content.

## Tip #4: Embrace the female audience and diversity

Diversity in production is an important topic. Analysis of upcoming scripted content tracked in the Ampere Commissioning database shows that topics such as female empowerment, #MeToo, race, and gender identity are increasingly important in newly commissioned shows.

Diversity of talent is also recognised as crucial to a show's success. Considering the representation of diverse groups within production and the demands of different segments of the viewing public can also help international success. "I think there's much more an openness to hear

about worlds and stories and characters that maybe five or 10 years ago would not have been given the spotlight," says yes Studio's Danna Stern.

**"Turkish dramas are very classical: they have all the key elements of the telenovela, but with a higher budget."**

**— Mercedes Gamero, Atresmedia**

Turkish drama, for example, has found huge international appeal in recent years, partly because it's filling a gap in the market for soap-style melodramas in regions like Latin America and connecting with a female audience left behind by some of the local players. Says Atresmedia's Gamero: "I think [the female audience] is a little bit unserved in that sense, because there are very few countries that produce melodramas for primetime. In the past Telemundo and Televisa were doing that. But five years ago or so they shifted their telenovelas to Narco novelas."



**Just for today – yes Studios**



**Magpie – yes Studios**

## Tip #4: Embrace the female audience and diversity

What did Turkish drama do right? “Turkish dramas are very classical: they have all the key elements of the telenovela, but with a higher budget. So the look is very beautiful and the production values are high,” says Gamero.

And success begets success. With Turkish drama now flying internationally, partnerships look like the next step: “Maybe that is going to be the new trend at MIP, because they are trying to set up co-productions as the next step after just licensing their shows to Europe and to LatAm,” thinks Gamero.

**“We’re actively looking for female directors and female script writers and looking for female storytelling.”**

**— Danna Stern, yes Studios**

Giving Latin American women a little of what they want was one strategy that has worked well internationally for Turkish producers and distributors. But telling stories with female protagonists and using female writing talent is another strong card in creating shows with a unique voice that can connect to new and diverse audiences. As Stern explains: “We’re actively looking for female directors and female script writers and looking for female storytelling. We are very mindful of more diverse storytelling.”

Ampere Analysis commissioning data shows that female-first is a notable strategy for upcoming scripted content. Globally, a milestone has been reached in that there is now an even split

between single male and single female protagonists in lead drama roles. In the USA, nearly two thirds of dramas with a gender-identifiable single protagonist are now female-led compared



**On the spectrum – yes Studios**

## Tip #4: Embrace the female audience and diversity

to around a third with a primary male lead. But gender isn't the only defining factor of diversity. There are many groups and sectors of society that have been under-represented in drama and on-screen representation. Yes

Studios' new show *On the Spectrum* is one attempt to change things: "Having an entire show about three adults on the autistic spectrum — I don't know that that would have been possible five or 10 years ago. Certainly there have been

shows like *Parenthood*, that are families coping with a son with autism or different characters along the way, but not an entire show from the point of view of characters like that," says *yes's* Stern.

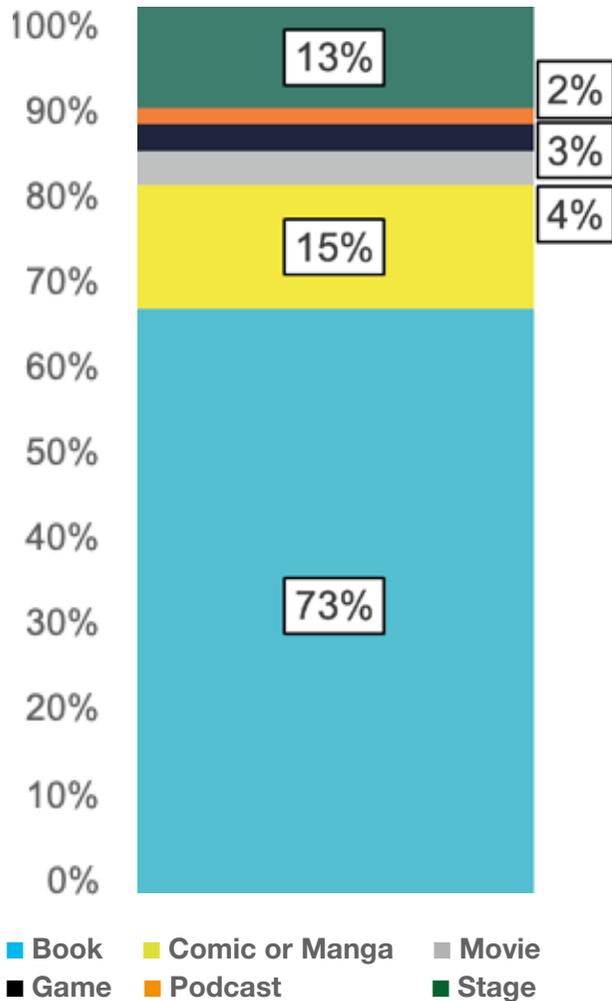
Graphic 10: **DIVERSITY IN SCRIPTED COMMISSIONING — US NOW MAJORITY FEMALE-LED IN DRAMA**



Shows proportion of scripted shows currently in production or development with an identifiable gendered lead. Shows with group or other protagonists excluded – Source: Ampere Commissioning

# Tip #5: Consider adaptation and real-life

Graphic 11: **SOURCE MATERIAL FOR SCRIPTED ADAPTATIONS**



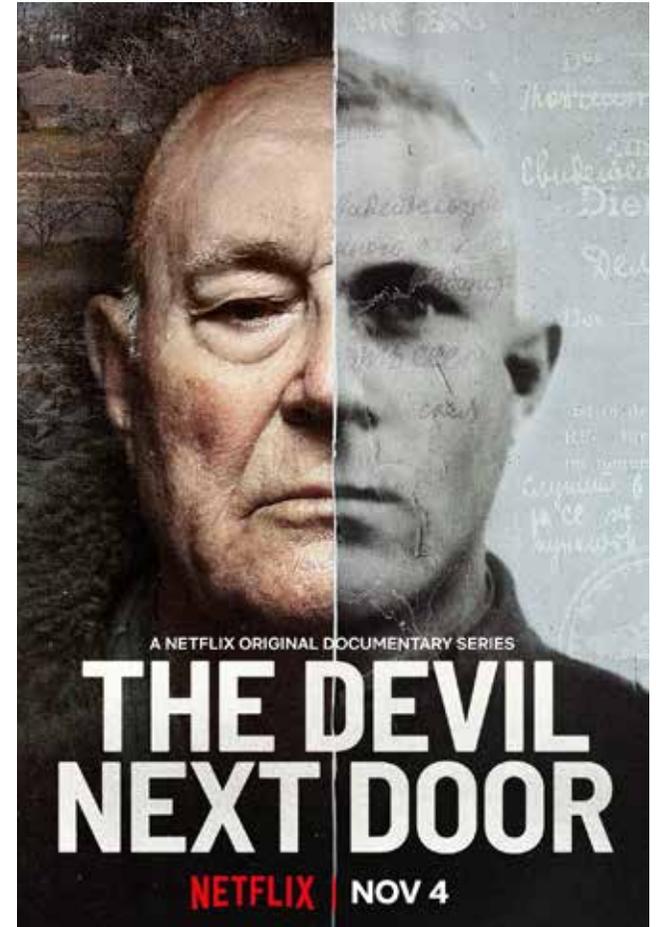
Based on scripted shows currently in production or development. Global and all distribution platforms. – Source: Ampere Commissioning

Given today’s obsession with original production, considering non-original source material is another tip that may seem counter-intuitive. But grounding a drama in something the audience knows can actually give a big boost to international appeal and the ‘relatability’ of the story and narrative. And don’t forget the old saying, ‘truth is stranger than fiction’. “Sometimes when I see pitches I’m [thinking] this is not realistic, we cannot do this, it would never happen,” says NENT’s Filippa Wallestam. “And then they’re like, yeah, but this is based on a true story. It kind of [lets you] get away with more because some really strange things happen [in real life].”

**“[Adaptation of true stories] kind of lets you get away with more, because some really strange things happen.”**

— **Filippa Wallestam, NENT**

Analysis of scripted projects currently in production or development and tracked in the Ampere Commissioning database shows that one in five scripted projects is adapted from existing material. Adding remakes and reboots of old TV shows boosts this even higher. The commonest source material is books (representing more than 70% of the source material for drama adaptations), but comics, games, podcasts and movies are also used regularly for inspiration.



The Devil Next Door – yes Studios

## Tip #5: Consider adaptation and real-life

Danna Stern from yes Studios thinks adapting material, particularly material based on real life, can definitely boost the international appeal of shows, not just for the audience, but for financiers and distributors as well. “You have to have something that’s recognizable, whether it’s a director, or screenwriter or piece of IP, and that’s becoming the kind of norm in international as well. Before, it wasn’t like that, but now it’s really important to make sure that you get as many elements that are recognizable as possible when putting a show together internationally.”

NENT’s Wallestam also thinks adaptation can mean a very local show gaining global appeal. “To create something local that can travel it’s good to base it on something that has actually happened, something that people have heard about or know about and then if you don’t know the story completely you can always read up on it. It makes it a little bit more interesting,” she says.

Adaptation can also help reduce risk: “You can always look at the risk-minimizing thing. And that would be based on a strong story or a best-selling novel, of course - that helps,” Wallestam notes. Stern echoes that: “You do want to make sure that there’s something that people and buyers and channels and platforms feel certain about. It’s not just a great idea, but it’s a great idea with great people behind it, or a great idea that we kind of know where it goes because it’s based on something in existence,” she says.

So there we have it. Five top tips to consider when creating content that could go global. It boils down to remaining true to the story, staying faithful to the characters and narratives, and looking for themes that are universally relatable or based on events or true stories or IP that

are widely known. Mix in successfully navigating production and co-production relationships and the unique voice that can be derived from diverse talent and diverse protagonists and you have everything you need for global domination. Easy, right...?



**Your Honor – yes Studios**