

# The Data You Need to Build a Thriving FAST Channel

## Key Highlights

- Audiences are embracing FAST, with nearly half of US viewers already watching FAST channels and most watching the same *or more* FAST content in the past year.
- Programming is driving increases in FAST viewership, indicating the importance of matching the right content with the right audience.
- Unlocking territory-level preferences for specific genres, along with content that travels the strongest beyond borders, is key in launching a FAST service in strategic markets.

# Introduction

TV fans are getting used to life in the FAST lane – and that makes viewer data all the more important for FAST channel providers.

FAST, or free ad-supported streaming television, is one of the fastest-growing segments of the entertainment industry, both in the U.S. and abroad. And the data makes that clear.

Consider, nearly half (48%) of U.S. viewers watch FAST channels at least a few times per month, according to new Whip Media survey data. And of those viewers, seven out of 10 said that FAST channels were at least sometimes their first choice when it comes to how they watch their content. (Whip Media's 2023 survey data was fielded in mid-July to 2,011 TV viewers in the U.S.)

The key takeaway: In the past year, 78% of FAST viewers said they are watching the same amount of FAST content – *or more*.

FAST is gaining real traction, and there are a few reasons for it.

For starters, the “F” in FAST is very appealing, especially as subscription costs continue to rise. Most TV fans are juggling a handful of SVOD (subscription video-on-demand) services like Netflix and Disney+, but the ability to weave in a free service or two can help viewers reduce their monthly streaming budgets. Couple that with the medium's familiar viewing experience of turning on a TV and watching curated programming, and FAST operators have a strong foundation to build on with consumers.

But if you're looking to start a FAST channel of your own, it's important to remember the old adage that “content is king.”



The data certainly indicates as much, with 71% of respondents saying the reason they watched more FAST content this year was due to “programming.” In other words, the channels had TV shows and movies that intrigued viewers enough to keep them coming back for more – and, just as importantly, off their competitors’ services and channels.

However, it’s not just about having content – it’s about having the *right* content for the *right* audience.

We saw that in the U.S., there were two kinds of content driving FAST viewership above all else: movies and library TV titles, aka reruns. According to Whip Media’s survey data, 71% of respondents said they watch films on FAST channels, up from 54% a year ago, and 65% of respondents said they watched TV reruns, up from 45% in 2022. These figures make it clear to see why popular FAST platforms, like Pluto TV, offer channels dedicated to TV hits of yesteryear, from “Baywatch” to “Degrassi” to “Star Trek.”

This is a critical trend for FAST operators to keep in mind. By having that knowledge of what viewers are actually watching, current and prospective FAST operators can acquire the right content for their channels that will resonate the most with their viewers.

Fortunately, Whip Media’s proprietary CVM Insights & Data Suite offers authentic, first-party data on the content that resonates most with viewers - both local originating and foreign content. Again, if you’re getting your nascent FAST channel off the ground, leveraging those data points in real time is essential.

# The Importance of Genre

Let's look at the types of content that work best in certain markets today. There are often major differences in genre preference by country – even when those countries are close in proximity and/or cultural norms.

Globally, crime is one of the most popular genres of shows and movies, according to Whip Media's viewership data. But the genre's popularity can still vary a great deal from market-to-market.

In the United Kingdom, 83% of viewers have watched at least one crime show or movie in the first half of 2023 – slightly edging out the U.S. (81%) in terms of crime viewers during that same time. Germany and France have comparable crime viewership as well, with both countries hovering near 78%.

Spain and Portugal aren't as close when it comes to crime viewership, with 76% of Spanish viewers watching a crime title in the first half of the year, while Portugal is one of the lowest-ranked countries in terms of crime viewership (about 70%). And the genre's consumption is markedly lower in Turkey compared to all other markets, with less than 65% of Turkish viewers watching crime content between January and June.

This matters, because if you are launching a FAST platform in a specific territory, knowing what viewers have an appetite for *in* that market allows you to target and acquire the genres your prospective audience responds to the best.

And it cuts both ways. If you distribute content in a particular genre, it's also important to know where the genre is most popular. Let's take the example of anime. Saudi viewers (36%), as well as viewers in the United Arab Emirates (31%) and France (29%), are more than twice as likely to watch anime content than viewers in Norway and Sweden (each at 13%). Anime distributors, with that data in mind, would be best served looking to partner with FAST platforms in the Middle East or France before turning to the Nordic markets.




















































There can be major variances in viewership for other niche genres as well.

Documentaries are much more popular in the United Kingdom than in other Western European countries. In the U.K., 43% of viewers watched a documentary in the first half of 2023 – making British viewers twice as likely as French viewers (22%) to have watched a documentary so far this year; British viewers are also much more likely to watch documentaries than viewers in several other major European countries. In Portugal, Germany, and Italy, about one in four viewers have watched a documentary this year. The genre is even less popular in Saudi Arabia, where less than 15% of viewers have watched a documentary over the same period.

Needless to say, if you were starting a FAST channel in Saudi Arabia, you would be much better off spending your money on anime content than documentaries. Remember, programming was *the* driving force behind keeping FAST viewers engaged, so knowing the genres that appeal to your audience is vital.

## Genre Viewership by Country

The percentage of viewers who have watched a show or movie from this genre during the first half of 2023

| CRIME  |             | ANIME  |             | DOCUMENTARY  |             |
|--|-------------|--|-------------|--|-------------|
| Territory  | Viewershare | Territory  | Viewershare | Territory  | Viewershare |
|  United Kingdom       | 83%         |  Saudi Arabia         | 36%         |  United Kingdom       | 43%         |
|  United States        | 81%         |  United Arab Emirates | 31%         |  Norway               | 40%         |
|  Norway               | 80%         |  France               | 29%         |  United States        | 38%         |
|  Netherlands          | 79%         |  Italy                | 26%         |  Netherlands          | 36%         |
|  Germany              | 78%         |  Finland              | 23%         |  Canada               | 35%         |
|  Canada               | 78%         |  Spain                | 23%         |  Sweden               | 32%         |
|  France               | 78%         |  United States        | 23%         |  Finland              | 28%         |
|  Sweden               | 78%         |  Belgium              | 22%         |  Portugal             | 27%         |
|  Spain                | 76%         |  Germany              | 21%         |  Germany              | 26%         |
|  Belgium              | 76%         |  Canada               | 20%         |  Spain                | 26%         |
|  United Arab Emirates | 75%         |  Turkey               | 19%         |  Poland               | 26%         |
|  Poland               | 75%         |  United Kingdom       | 17%         |  Belgium              | 25%         |
|  Saudi Arabia         | 75%         |  Poland               | 16%         |  Italy                | 25%         |
|  Italy                | 75%         |  Portugal             | 16%         |  United Arab Emirates | 24%         |
|  Finland              | 71%         |  Netherlands          | 15%         |  France               | 22%         |
|  Portugal             | 70%         |  Norway               | 13%         |  Turkey               | 18%         |
|  Turkey               | 65%         |  Sweden               | 13%         |  Saudi Arabia         | 15%         |



# Content Beyond Borders

Beyond genre, an increasingly important factor in your content strategy is acquiring the right titles from countries that will appeal to your local market.

Generally speaking, American content travels the best. Viewers also typically gravitate toward shows and movies that were made in their home country. That makes sense in both cases – the U.S. has been the international tastemaker when it comes to entertainment for decades, and it's not hard to understand why viewers would enjoy movies and shows made in their first language and about topics they're familiar with.

Still, if you are starting a FAST channel, you don't want to assume that acquiring content from countries that speak the same language as your viewers will automatically translate into views.

Spain is a great example of this. In Spain, the most popular content (excluding the U.S. and Spain, of course) comes from the U.K., with 50% of Spanish viewers having watched a British title over the first half of the year. The second most popular content comes from Japan, at 31% according to Whip Media's data. Clearly, language isn't a key factor here in driving views.

In fact, content from Mexico, which comes in at ninth place overall, is the highest-ranked Spanish-speaking country of origin when it comes to consumption among Spanish viewers (7%). Shows and movies from Germany (16%), Korea (13%), and Australia (10%) are all more popular than those from Mexico among Spanish viewers. If the content is appealing, viewers will watch it – regardless of where it's from.



## Spain: The Top 10 Countries Spanish Viewers Consume Content From

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  |  United Kingdom |
| 2  |  Japan          |
| 3  |  France         |
| 4  |  Germany        |
| 5  |  Canada         |
| 6  |  South Korea    |
| 7  |  Italy          |
| 8  |  Australia      |
| 9  |  Mexico         |
| 10 |  Ireland        |

*\*Excluding U.S. content and Spanish content*

You can spot similar trends in other countries too. For example, in Canada, Japanese content is more popular than French content – a noteworthy stat when you consider one out of every four Canadians speaks French as their first language.

At the same time, if you have content to sell, you need data to inform your distribution strategy. That's where understanding the travelability of content is crucial – and Korea is a great example of this.

Korea ranks among the top five exporters of shows and movies to viewers in a number of countries, including Canada, France, the U.K., Turkey, and the U.A.E. A number of well-produced and popular shows have emerged from Korea in recent years. “Squid Game” is an obvious example to point to, after the drama series set – and still holds – Netflix’s record for most views in a single month (Netflix reported 1.7 billion hours viewed). Other Korean shows have found major audiences abroad, too, including “The Glory” and “Bloodhounds.”

The strong travelability of Korean content spurred Netflix to recently announce it will spend \$2.5 billion over the next four years on new Korean shows and movies. Those distributing Korean content would be wise to meet that demand and target key countries with their content.

# Conclusion

No matter where you are looking to start your new FAST service, making sure you offer an appealing content slate is imperative to success. To do that, you have to be mindful of both the content genres your audience tends to enjoy and the countries that produce shows and movies that travel best to your home market.



## ABOUT WHIP MEDIA

Whip Media's market-leading SaaS solutions include the Whip Media CVM Insights & Data Suite, global consumer insights that FAST operators can use to drive content strategy for maximum revenue potential, and Whip Media FASTrack™, the latest product designed to solve common problems associated with FAST reporting. For more information, visit [whipmedia.com](https://whipmedia.com).

## ABOUT MIP

MIPCOM Cannes stands at the forefront of the global entertainment industry as the ultimate Co-Production & Entertainment Content Market. Every year, industry professionals from across the world gather to explore a myriad of opportunities, forge partnerships, and discover the next big thing in entertainment.

## METHODOLOGY

*Whip Media operates the world's largest TV and movie tracking panel, totaling 26 million consumers globally. Data presented on genre and originating country consumption is based on balanced viewer share in the specified territories, from the time period of January through June 2023.*