It's Showtime!

Innovation explodes across every workflow as technology emerges from the pandemic.

Where are you in this accelerated evolution?

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
In the office, behind the camera, and on the screen, diversity is crucial

SECURITY
Remote productions create new security concerns, with assets under siege

SMART CONTENT
Artificial intelligence and machine learning are being applied in new, exciting ways

NEW WORKFLOWS
The cloud is delivering on its promise, powering the future of productions

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DIVERSITY DRIVES ENGAGEMENT IN PERIOD CONTENT AND BEYOND

Gracenote's launch of Inclusion Analytics tackled M&E data in ways never seen before

ABSTRACT: In order for TV content to meet its full potential to entertain, educate and engage, it must equitably reflect the makeup of audiences and the broader population. Here we cover the current state of diversity in programming and what's possible based on data and insights designed to foster more inclusive content.

By Maryl Widdows, VP, Product, Gracenote, and Charlene Polite Corley, VP, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Nielsen

The hardship, stress and pain the global population collectively endured during 2020 is almost unimaginable. The confluence of a global pandemic and a reckoning with deeply ingrained racial, gender and wealth inequality will have long-term impacts that we can only begin to assess now.

Looking back, one thing is clear: audiences stuck at home under COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders sought escape from the events unfolding in the outside world by turning to TV. According to Nielsen's Total Audience Report, U.S. adults 18-plus spent five hours and 21 minutes per day consuming video content. That amounts to nearly a quarter of their day, and a sizable portion of their waking hours … depending on how much sleep they were actually able to get during this tumultuous time.

When audiences had their fill of the break-neck news cycle, they turned to TV for entertainment, especially streaming. In the U.S., the most-viewed content on subscription VOD (SVOD) services included journeys to the past like "The Crown" and "Hamilton" which were viewed throughout the year. Audiences ostensibly gravitated to these period pieces set in bygone eras to

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transport themselves away from present realities.

One of the most popular programs in 2020 was Netflix's "*Bridgerton*" which made Nielsen's list of top SVOD programs despite being released just one week before the end of the year. Buzz - and some controversy - resulted from the show's racially diverse reimagination of British Regency era high society. With a 40 percent Black lead cast, *Bridgerton* reinforced the fact that period pieces could center on diverse narratives, feature racially diverse talent and draw a broad viewing audience.

So how did other period programs featuring diverse on-screen talent fare in terms of viewership? Looking at Gracenote's rich trove of descriptive metadata capturing the moods, themes, settings and other micro-genre details about popular TV programs, we identified period programs set at least 100 years in the past and honed in on those drawing the highest audience ratings.

Of the 23 programs that fit this criteria, four of the top five programs based on Nielsen audience ratings (persons ages 2-plus) had strong representation of lead Black talent in their casts. Strong representation is defined as being on par with the representation of Black people in the U.S. population.

Not only were these the most popular programs among the top period pieces, they were the only period programs in the dataset with lead Black talent at or above parity with population estimates. Ratings for these top programs significantly outperformed the other programs on the list by a factor ranging from two to ten times higher.

The answer to our question indicates *Bridgerton* executive producer Shonda Rhimes clearly knows something content creators, distributors and advertisers are just now figuring out: Diversity drives engagement.

These popular programs were embraced by both White and Black viewers, demonstrating the ability of period programs with strong Black representation to attract large and broad audiences. Their resonance debunks the narrative that period programs with strong Black representation isolate audiences instead of expanding them.

When we look at the data we see that audiences are actively seeking diversity on-screen. Content creators and distributors would be well served to respond by developing new stories that shine a light on underrepresented experiences or by bringing underrepresented talent into old stories in new, creative ways.

To help the entertainment industry leverage diversity and inclusion data in order to deliver more resonant video programming, Gracenote launched Inclusion Analytics. The new solution measures the diversity of casts appearing in the most popular programs on

Charlene Polite Corley is VP of diverse insights and partnerships on Nielsen Media's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion team. In this role, she is responsible for developing thought leadership that uses Nielsen data to reveal insights around underrepresented identity groups enabling their needs and value to be more fully understood. charlene.polite@nielsen.com @CharSpeaks1

Maryl Widdows is VP of product for Nielsen Gracenote. She oversees a team which develops advanced content analytics offerings which leverage trusted Nielsen audience measurement data and Gracenote content metadata to answer vexing business questions. She leads the Gracenote Inclusion Analytics product team responsible for delivering new metrics on the diversity of content and audiences to studios, distributors, advertisers and agencies. maryl.widdows@nielsen.com @Gracenotetweets

cable, broadcast and streaming platforms as well as the audiences watching those programs. Share of Screen and audience metrics are compared to the diversity of broader society to illuminate how well the entirety of the U.S. audience is represented in content and how audiences respond to on-screen talent.

Fueling Inclusion Analytics is Gracenote metadata which enables creators and distributors to better understand the aspects of a program's story, cast or characters that are driving audience engagement and therefore ratings. This data also holds the power to help combat bias in content development, acquisition, distribution and merchandising as well as create new opportunities to institutionalize equity and inclusivity into company workflows, operations and decision-making.

Now and going forward into the future, the need for representation of different identity groups in entertainment content is more critical than ever. Not just to diverse audiences which are actively seeking programming that reflects their experiences and exposes them to the realities of others. But also to the entertainment industry which is continuously challenged to create and deliver resonant content. By bringing to market programming which hits home with an increasingly diverse population of viewers in authentic ways, the industry opens new opportunities to drive connection and engagement.

Featuring a racially diverse cast in a fresh new way, Bridgerton broke through barriers in terms of representation in period content. Because the show's themes, settings and importantly, it's cast resonated broadly with viewers, the creators were rewarded with a large and diverse audience.

In the big picture, what's possible for period content based on inclusivity is also possible for all other TV genres and entertainment formats. When we reach the point where creators understand what Shonda Rhimes clearly does, we'll take a step towards more representative content. At that point, our industry will be one step closer to meeting the wants and needs of its consumers. And a more equitable future for society at large will be in sight. ⊞
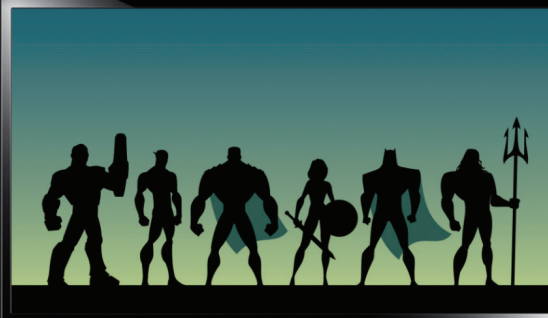
GRACENOTE INCLUSION ANALYTICS

Diversity Insights Across Entertainment Talent & Viewers

Access Inclusion
Data Across Content

Grow Diverse Content
Portfolios & Viewership

Accelerate Diversity
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