The Brilliant British Invasion: A Look at the Rise of British Television Shows in the United States

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I. Introduction

Within the past ten years, the advent of BBC America, a new channel focused on British-themed programming, has been widely noted. The channel’s popularity, however, is only one indication of a larger interest in British television shows. One of the most prevalent forms of culture that is leaking from across the pond is television shows. Many shows that are now household names, such as Doctor Who, are already internationally acclaimed. This project was designed to look at how these shows are received by a wider audience. As the project was initially inspired by my own interest in British programming, it also came from the curiosity of working with social media, in this case tweets, as a form of emerging media. The goal of the project was to see if there is a certain demographic to viewers of BBC shows and where in the United States those pockets of British television viewers are located. This data could lead to better awareness of cable and satellite service providers of their audience and allow them to analyze in what areas it would be beneficial for them to offer BBC programming.

II. Literature Review

This project required a fair amount of preparatory research in order to figure out exactly how to approach the issue. Through the process, I read several overviews of the BBC America network to see if the research would even be relevant and if there was data to be found. I learned from two different network overviews, one from Advertising Age and the other from the BBC itself, how popular BBC America has become since its creation. These articles seemed geared towards potential investors and thus were very relevant and if there was data to be found. I learned from two different network overviews, one from Advertising Age and the other from the BBC itself, how popular BBC America has become since its creation. These articles seemed geared towards potential investors and thus were very relevant and if there was data to be found. Through the process I read several articles, one by Clark Collis, which was published in “The Doctor Is In.” This article examines the history of Doctor Who, an extremely popular television show that has grown in recognition to Doctor Who and Top Gear as shows that had grown complimentary of the company. The fact that Doctor Who is in the top ten most watched shows on television shows that BBC America programming should be accessible to the general public. The media could be an avenue for the BBC to reach a wider audience.

The research was completed in a variety of steps. Firstly census data on educational attainment and income level by state was obtained using the 2008–2009 ACS 1-year survey, 2011. This data was used to collect data on the demographics of each state within the continental United States in order to determine patterns of viewing. It is possible to determine in what areas it would be beneficial for cable and satellite providers to offer BBC America. The Doctor Who seemed to cause the BBC America boom. In his article, “The Doctor is In,” self-appointed Whovian, Clark Collis examines the history of Doctor Who, spanning back 50 years after a 25-year hiatus, and its explosion in America. This article provided a good chronological examination of the program and was very informative about the constituents of the fandom over time. I also looked at a post released by BBC America in 2011 which claimed that BBC America has the highest rating among television channels due to the high quality and “strength” of the intelligent programming available. While this article lists statistics and infographics throughout the process, it is definitely meant for business-minded viewers, who BBC America hopes to pull in to invest their time and money in their programming.

Aside from my background research on BBC itself, I also looked at some how advertising and social media work. Twitter’s Alis A’s blog gives a basic of collecting data from Twitter. This article was very helpful because it gave me the idea of how I could manage to collect on my own, instead of paying to get it from Nielsen’s Media Research Corp. The project of trying something new and different throughout the process, even as it got bogged down in trying to learn coding and seemingly endless data entry.

III. Methodology

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IV. Results and Discussion

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B. Doctor Who

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C. Top Gear

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The calculations of this experiment are expected in general: the state with the large percentages of male high-educated persons with high income, tends to watch BBC America programming more than others. The state that ranks the highest of these are also the states with the states with the largest percentage of the population. This project uses the recent rapid growth in popularity of BBC America and the increasing fluidity of British and American cultural scenes as a basis. By accessing geoiled tweets (that have a specific latitude and longitude) with specific hashtags and comparing them against the demographics of each state within the continental United States in order to determine patterns of viewing, it is possible to determine in what areas it would be beneficial for cable and satellite providers to offer BBC America. The Doctor Who seemed to cause the BBC America boom. In his article, “The Doctor is In,” self-appointed Whovian, Clark Collis examines the history of Doctor Who, spanning back 50 years after a 25-year hiatus, and its explosion in America. This article provided a good chronological examination of the program and was very informative about the constituents of the fandom over time. I also looked at a post released by BBC America in 2011 which claimed that BBC America has the highest rating among television channels due to the high quality and “strength” of the intelligent programming available. While this article lists statistics and infographics throughout the process, it is definitely meant for business-minded viewers, who BBC America hopes to pull in to invest their time and money in their programming.

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I could not have brought this project to fruition without your help, so thank you so much.

Mike Vendris – for providing me with the background in the program I needed to complete this.

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And James McQuade – for taking my data and making it highly sharable.

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