

Spellbound

Spellbound is an action-adventure 10 episode TV series set in a medieval fantasy world. Every episode is set to be around 22 minutes long with a single, short, 3 minute pilot episode to be released for free on digital streaming platforms.

"After years of solitude after being burnt at the stake by villagers for practicing witchcraft, Joanna must learn to re-integrate into a society that she rejects."

The story follows two characters, Joanna Kilner, a witch with temper issues scarred by her burning and Inky, a curious but cowardly Inkat which feeds on ink. Together they go on various adventures with questionable results in a magical world abandoned by magic.

Market

Target Demographic, Taste Communities and Subscription Services

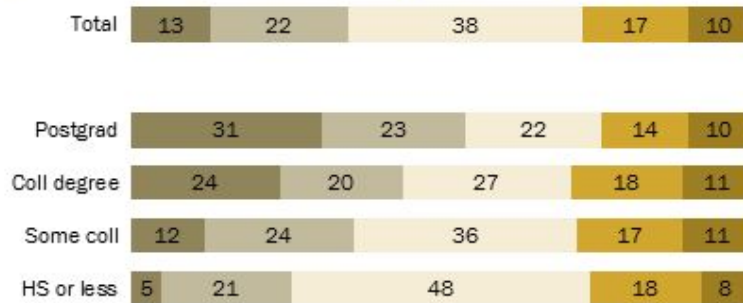
First of all, let's define our target audience. Primarily, we are looking at both males and females aged 16-26, most of which consists mostly of so-called *millennials*, with secondary audience of 18-40 and (if) their kids aged 9+. *Spellbound* is essentially a coming-of-age story and about finding your place in the world, which seems to be something a lot of young people like Joanna struggle with. Transition into adulthood in millennial generation is being recontextualized, as contemporaries identify different traits as core to being an adult, while previous generation's *rites of passage* such as moving out are being pushed back (Shaputis, 2003). Millennials value independence when making decisions and taking responsibility for oneself as more important marks of adulthood. (Arnett, 1998)

Furthermore, Millennials detach themselves from institutions more, networking with friends instead and overall are more willing to vote than previous generations and fight for social change. Even though they tend to detach themselves from the institutions, millennial generation is already more educated than any of the previous ones, with 4 in 10 employed millennials having a college degree, which in turn causes the educated populace to grow more liberal, as the below graph shows.

Adults with postgraduate experience most likely to have consistently liberal political values

% with political values that are...

■ Consistently Lib ■ Mostly Lib ■ Mixed ■ Mostly Cons ■ Consistently Cons



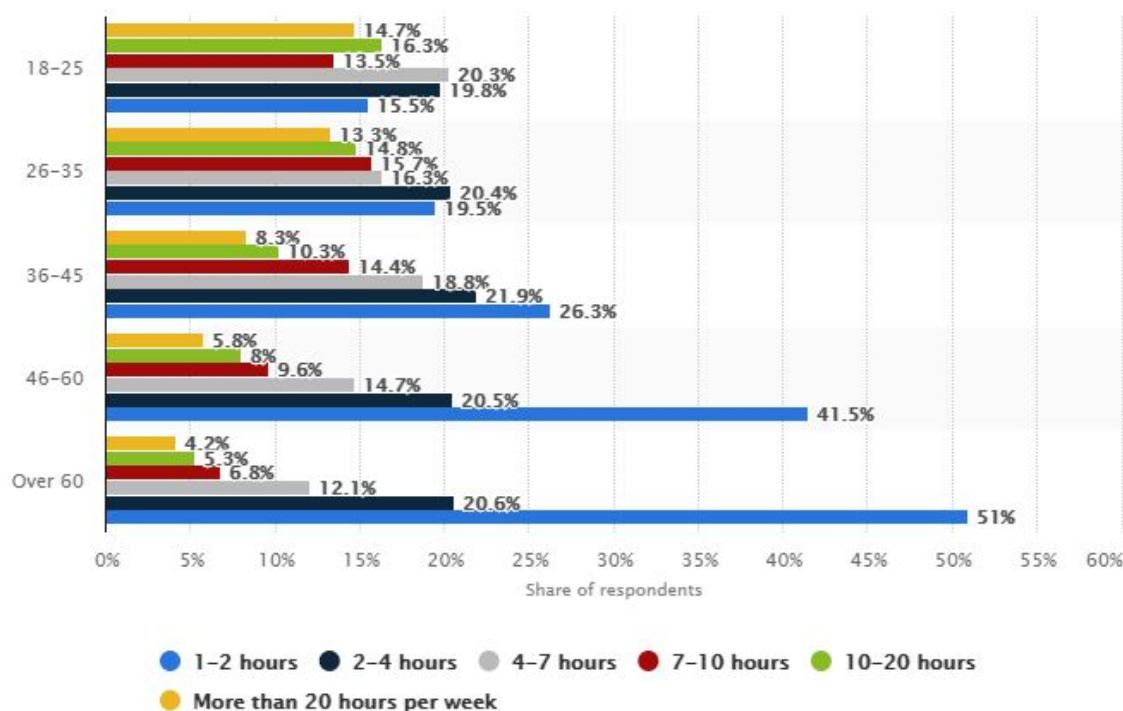
Source: Survey conducted Aug. 27-Oct. 4, 2015 (N=6,004). Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions.

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Therefore, a show presenting more liberal and progressive elements would be favourable when catering towards millennial audience.

Millennial viewing habits

Weekly time spent with online video according to internet users worldwide August 2018, by age group



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According to Statista, people in the age group of 18-25 spend between 1-2 hours(15.5%) a week to more than 20 hours a week (14.7%). More detailed breakdown can be found in the graph above. From the time spent watching online video, on average, 34% of that time is spent watching youtube, and 27% Netflix, with hulu and amazon at 4% and 3% retrospectively.

Furthermore, E-Poll's "Streaming Media Landscape" is an ongoing tracking study that explores behaviour of media consumers in US aged 13-54. Below table strongly shows the preference of teens and both young and older millennials towards Netflix and Youtube for watching TV Shows.

Notable is the shift with more Gen X-ers towards Netflix and other subscription based video-on-demand streaming services, but Live TV coming very close second.

VIEWING SOURCE	Total	Teens 13-17	Young Millennials 18- 24	Older Millennials 25- 34	Gen X 35- 54	Baby Boomers 50- 54
Netflix streaming subscription	33%	39%	51%	34%	25%	24%
A TV channel during its original air time	16%	11%	7%	13%	22%	21%
DVR or TiVo Service	15%	6%	6%	15%	20%	21%
Hulu(paid) subscription	7%	5%	7%	9%	7%	6%
YouTube	7%	17%	10%	6%	4%	4%
Online, on a free site	4%	9%	5%	3%	3%	3%
Amazon Prime subscription	3%	1%	2%	2%	4%	4%
VOD (Video on Demand)	2%	1%	1%	3%	3%	2%
All other sources(14 choices)	13%	12%	11%	16%	13%	15%

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survey commissioned by LendEDU shows that only 8% of US College students did not use a netflix account, although 54% said they use a friend or family member's account, which seems in line with netflix's numbers, which say that even though they have 137 million active subscribers, the actual number of viewers is around 300 million. Nonetheless, 92% market penetration is very impressive.

Coming back to previously mentioned statistic of 34% people watching youtube

Netflix, being a subscription based content distribution platform specialized in on demand video streaming services, has two major goals regarding its subscribers. Acquisition and retention. First, let us take a look at how does Netflix acquire subscribers.

Mentioned above, E-poll's tracking study also surveyed reasons why people aged between 13-54 subscribed to netflix and other SVOD(Streaming Video On Demand).

REASONS FOR SUBSCRIBING	Netflix	Amazon Prime	Hulu (Paid)
To get free shipping	n/a	72%	n/a
There are NO commercials/ There are limited commercials (Hulu only)	69%	37%	23%
The ability to watch at a time that is convenient for me	66%	34%	54%
The price I pay for total access is a reasonable value	58%	30%	45%
The ability to binge watch multiple episodes in a row	51%	22%	39%

People tend to choose a way of the least resistance, for example when getting their content, and netflix knows this. It's convenient. A single place where you go to get almost all your tv shows and movies is very much ideal on paper. Another big draw towards Netflix and Amazon Prime is the original content. Netflix is spending more and more on original context each year, from 2.4b\$ in 2013, to 6b\$ in 2017 and now 13b\$ in 2018. As the competition among the streaming services increases, the amount of exclusive content may be the final decider for majority of people and producing original content is a sure fire way to secure that. Reaching almost 700 series underneath the umbrella of the Netflix Originals label, with plans to release 80 original movies during this year (2018).

Although, producing and buying original content is seems to be the king, and looks like netflix's key to subscription acquisition and retention, producing content headlessly would be bad business practice and they know it. Therefore Netflix utilizes big data and tracks almost everything the users do within the application, from watch time, searches and and what content do they preview. In synergy with their constantly refined processing algorithms which tailor shown content to each user. Now, traditional content labeling based on genre, actors, directors et cetera would make such the algorithm inaccurate. Usually, content targeting is driven by demographics and psychographics, and netflix is no different, but it also refines the results by dividing the audience into what they call "taste communities". Supposedly they identified around 2000 of them, using them as a major decider what original programming to show to users and which type of productions to look for. These "taste communities" are not separate from each other, but are very much interconnected, identifying like-minded fan communities. Therefore, when Netflix decides about which original programming to produce or support, one of the major drivers behind the decision is figuring out how many of these "taste communities" can they hit and suggest how to better tailor the content to the audience. Since the success of netflix, we can assume that other SVOD services have similar systems in place, or in development. Knowing this, we could draw changes into *Spellbound* which would help us successfully pitch by hitting a wide range of the taste communities, although we need to be extremely careful as the common issue which arises from this exact train of thought is *pandering*. Therefore, I propose that each change to the world of *Spellbound* needs to positively impact the world and the narrative, or not sacrifice any element important to either. Furthermore, adding an element that targets certain "taste communities" and under developing it, or in any way neglecting it will negatively impact the value that community might get from its existence, or even from the show as a whole.

On the topic of pitching to, for example netflix, how does one actually go about it ? From Netflix's website, they do not accept unsolicited submissions. Therefore, as suggested on the website, the only way to get your materials or ideas to netflix is "through a licensed literary agent, or from a producer, attorney, manager, or entertainment executive with whom we have

a preexisting relationship.” So, how does one find , for example, a literary agent netflix works with ? Well, we tried googling “Literary agent netflix” and at least one popped up so that might not be a herculean task after all. Then again, I suppose getting the idea to a production company should not be hard, rather the process of getting evaluated and approved is the hardest task at hand, and one to not be underestimated.

Another step would be to figure out what are SVODs interested in. E-poll’s study predicts that parents of young kids will represent the largest growth among the subscribers in the next 6 to 12 months. According to data, 55% of surveyed households with kids under the age of 13 subscribed to netflix and 44% of those subscribed to Hulu report that Kids programming was very important to their decision. Furthermore, the data below shows that this group is the most likely to say they plan to subscribe to a new streaming service in the next 6 months.

Plans to Subscribe in Next 6 Months:	Have Kids <13 in HH	No Kids in HH
Netflix, Hulu or Amazon Prime	36%	28%
Streaming Service Other Than Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime	16%	9%

Amazon has also experienced increases in both subscription and viewing among this demographic this year to 44% vs. 38% they reported last year.

One last statistic to look at would be the awareness of other streaming services. Albeit on a slow rise, fewer than 15% of surveyed people have watched programming on other than the top 4 services.

Awareness of Streaming Services

Aware of Streaming Service	Total SVOD Subscribers		
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
Netflix	97%	93%	89%
YouTube	82%	87%	84%
Amazon Prime	76%	74%	76%
Hulu (paid)	69%	72%	71%
CBS All Access	16%	23%	30%
Crunchyroll	14%	14%	20%
PlayStation Vue	n/a	16%	21%

Ever watched TV program on each service

Streaming Service- ever watched a full length TV show	Total	SVOD Subs
Netflix	73%	82%
YouTube	44%	41%
Amazon Prime	34%	42%
Hulu (paid)	26%	28%
Hulu (free)	23%	26%
Additional 25 Free and Paid Services	<15%	<15%

One service we should look at is Crunchyroll. Crunchyroll is another on demand video streaming service, but one with the focus on licensing japanese animation. We can see that they have shown a 6% growth in awareness between the second and third wave of surveying. Slowly but surely growing, Crunchyroll has plans to expand more into production of the original content, currently testing the waters with their first venture, High Guardian Spice, albeit receiving massive backlash, mostly due to supposedly pandering. Although Crunchyroll is growing, it is questionable until how long, since Netflix is slowly pouring into the Animation market as well. Producing live-action adaptation from several highly popular japanese animation shows to lukewarm reception might not have paid off, it did raise awareness of netflix's venture into japanese animation. A more successful move was production of the Castlevania and Devilman Crybaby series, the latter of which has garnered noticeable online awareness. Another, a 3D animated series, The Dragon Prince has garnered some attention. Even though panned by critics for it's creative decision to use framerate of 12 frames a second, it retains a 8.4 out of 10 score on IMDB, and has been renewed for second season, implying at least a partial success. On the topic of framerate, the decision might have been further motivated by the budget constraints due to rendering costs.

To make a slight detour, I think the topic of rendering can be addressed. In the past, rendering of animation and VFX was done solely by offline renderers, but in the recent years, real-time renderers such as Unreal Engine have come forward in prominence. A notable example of its use is during the production and delivering the final product in Rogue One on the characters of K-2SO, which was fully rendered using Unreal Engine before being composited into the movie. Being a real time renderer, the time and money costs of rendering are minimized, while speeding up the processes of look development.

Another thing to consider is the content delivery. In the past, TV shows and movies premiered on live TV during set programming blocks which were clearly determined to garner as much viewership as possible, heightening the ratings and audience for advertisements. With on-demand video streaming services, the option to premiere the episodes one at a time during set times is overshadowed by the option to release the whole show at once. Even though premiering episodes one at a time can entice hype and encourage water cooler discussion, several studies have shown that SVOD subscribers enjoy the convenience of being able to watch the show whenever and wherever they want, pausing as necessarily. With previously shown graph informing us that one of the major reasons, at 66%(for netflix) of the people surveyed for SVOD Subscription is the ability to watch at a convenient time. Another element to consider when deciding to release the show all at once is the growing culture of binge watching. Binge-watching enables friends and colleagues to catch up with the shows they are interested in during their free time and promotes discussion among communities. Furthermore, 62% of millennials surveyed report that they prefer to binge watch shows, which is also motivated by millennial desire for better work/life balance.

Verdict

Finally comes the question, what is the plan ?

I propose the following: Further refine the show concept and world, try to include elements which target multiple "taste communities" in a way that benefits the narrative and enriches the world. Afterwards, produce an animated short to be publicly released on youtube for free, drawing the attention and further testing the waters, and if met with good reception, take the concept, find an interested person working with netflix, then *successfully* pitch.

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