



CUSTOM REPORT

Streaming Content Performance: Executive Insights 2024 State of the Market

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Introduction

The media and entertainment market is at a pivotal moment.

Streaming video is now the dominant way that viewers consume content, and media companies large and small are experimenting with a mix of subscription-based and advertising-supported services across multiple distribution paths to generate revenue.

To complicate these efforts, the streaming landscape is deeply fragmented. Providers must work to grow audiences through exposure on as many platforms as possible.

This fragmentation makes for a challenging business environment and creates barriers to understanding audience engagement and content preferences.

Companies that own or aggregate television and video assets report distributing their content, on average, across 18 platforms.

This white paper shares findings from an extensive study of more than 45 senior executives, representing a comprehensive sample of the industry (see Appendix for respondent details). Insights were collected via in-depth surveys and interviews. Backed by custom primary research, this white paper:

- Sheds light on the complexities of acquiring and using streaming data that can help sustain business operations in this ever-changing market.
- Explores the challenges that media organizations face when attempting to collect, analyze, and apply data for optimal content and revenue performance within the fragmented landscape.
- Identifies the metrics that content sellers and streaming services rely on to make critical business decisions – and the data they wish they had.
- Reveals how businesses are currently tracking data across platforms today, including limitations and pain points.
- Examines efforts to improve data collection and standardization, along with best practices for media organizations to access the data they need to be successful.

The consensus from streaming executives is clear: greater access to data on content performance, revenue, and audience engagement is critical for businesses to compete effectively for audiences' limited time and attention, and for the streaming market to reach its full potential.

Evolution of Streaming: Hybrid Models and Profitable Viewing

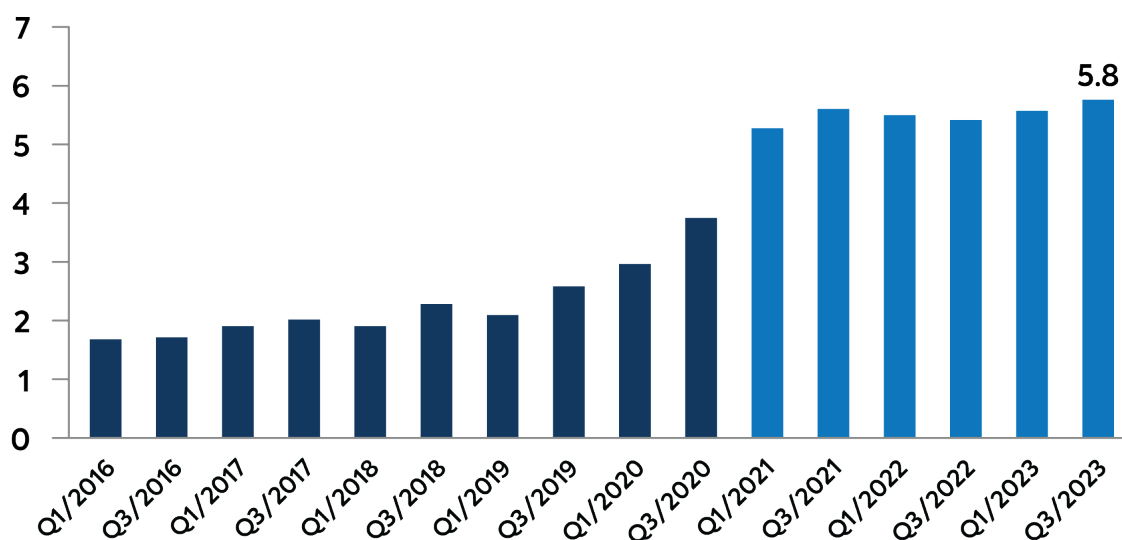
Many of the earliest streaming video services, like Netflix, Amazon Prime Instant Video, HBO Now, and PlayStation Vue, were subscription-based, with customers paying a monthly or annual fee for the rights to stream content. Viewers were largely spared the commercials characteristic of broadcast, cable, and satellite TV services. As competition increased, services invested in exclusive and original content to differentiate and expand subscriber bases.

Today, services are reconsidering the costs to acquire and produce original content and subscription stacks are leveling out.

Streaming viewers subscribe to 5.8 streaming services on average, though that number has not grown substantially since 2021.

Average Number of OTT Service Subscriptions

Among Streaming Households



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In 2024, profitability is the focus of the streaming market. Platforms and content sellers are expanding the use of advertising to generate new revenue streams, raising prices on subscription tiers, and making tough decisions related to content acquisition and production to reach profitability.

Optimizing Decision-Making with Data

Media operations rely on data to optimize their business strategy in this quickly evolving space. Executives seek reliable data to reveal effective ways to attract and retain viewers, create new value for audiences, optimize content strategy, detect and predict churn, and better understand the viewer journey.

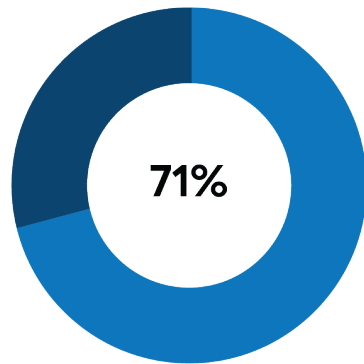
Companies seek to better understand viewer preferences and behavioral patterns to inform content and distribution strategies for increased reach, engagement, and revenue.

However, nearly half of industry executives report that they do not have the data they need, in the way they need it, to make the best business decisions possible. The fragmentation of distribution channels and drastically varying policies on what data is shared with content sellers results in businesses making strategic decisions based on diverse – and often lacking – sources of unstandardized data. Plus, keeping up with licensing agreements and other contracts adds another layer of difficulty. Even metadata can be formatted differently across platforms, complicating proper cross-platform analysis.

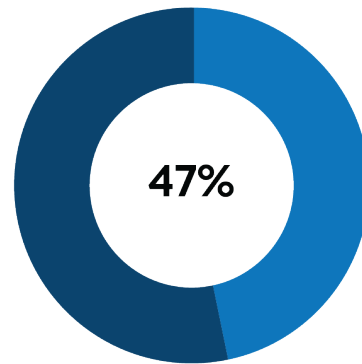
This fragmentation poses challenges to understanding the viewer journey, audience engagement, and content preferences.

71% of industry executives say it is difficult to see all of their streaming-related data in one place, and 47% said they do not have all the data they need to make good business decisions.

Difficult to See Streaming Data in One Place



Don't Have all the Data Needed to Make Good Business Decisions



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Executives pinpointed specific challenges when assessing content performance, optimizing operations for ad-supported content, and gauging viewer engagement.



"I have no understanding of how I am performing against anyone else...I don't know if we could do better or if there are things we should improve on, or ask about, other than what our own context is."

– C-Suite Executive, Streaming Content Owner

Challenges with Measuring Content Performance

Executives rely on the limited metrics to which they have access as a proxy for the metrics they want when making important business decisions. This makes an already challenging environment more challenging.

Many streaming platforms offer content sellers topline metrics such as the total number of streams or episodes watched, but executives are unable to dive into the specifics of certain viewer segments or titles. For example, 78% of streaming executives said content performance by title is or would be “very useful” but just 46% said that data is fully accessible to them. Identifying what titles perform best with the core audience and with new audiences can help enhance content, advertising, and distribution strategies; however, many companies are unable to obtain all the metrics they need to reach their maximum potential.

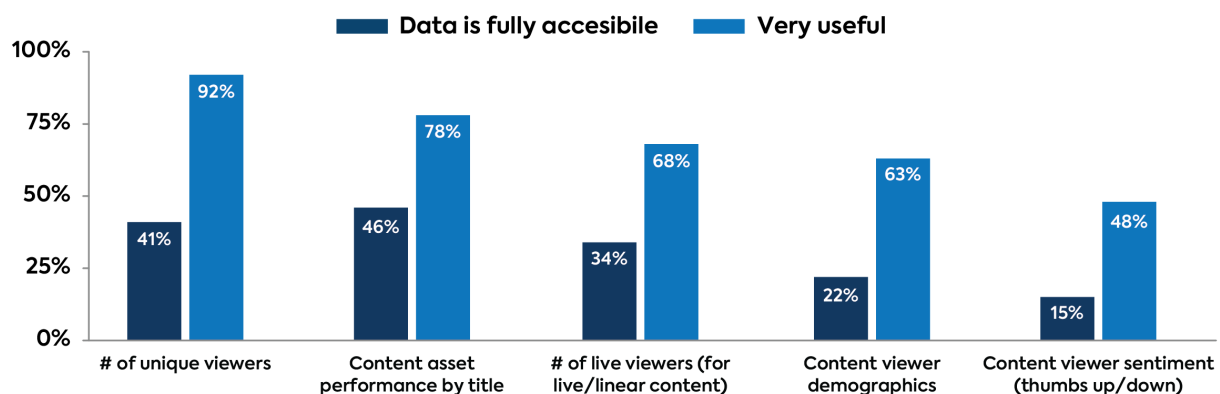


“Consumers have become used to a personalized approach, and it simply doesn’t exist in this world — partially because of fragmentation, but also partially because our partners are unwilling to share [data].”

– General Manager, Streaming Owner/Aggregator

Executives rated 12 metrics associated with content performance according to usefulness and level of data access. Five key metrics stood out as particularly useful but inaccessible to a majority of executives, revealing a critical data gap: number of unique and live viewers, viewer demographics, viewer sentiment, and content performance by title.

Top 5 Content Performance Metric Gaps



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■ The Value of Identifying Viewership

Content is at the core of a media business, and properly planning an effective monetization strategy while balancing resource constraints is paramount. The ability to recognize which content most resonates with various viewers, regions, and platforms is highly valuable throughout the industry.



Streaming services can learn which titles and genres are the least and most popular by region to capture (and keep) viewers and advertisers.



Advertisers may find that certain populations are more accepting of particular product categories or ad types and use that knowledge to target customers more resourcefully.



Content sellers can identify how genres and titles perform with specific audiences and tailor future production and distribution strategies accordingly.



“We don’t know in a given month what is affecting watch time. Instead, we have to look at it from an aggregate level. We have top level data [at the channel level], but that data doesn’t always come through from the content level.”

– C-Suite Executive, Streaming Owner/Aggregator

The gap in content performance metrics is a particular challenge for content distributed via FAST platforms, according to executives interviewed. Content sellers may get limited channel-level performance data from FAST services, but very little title-level or audience-level insight within each channel.

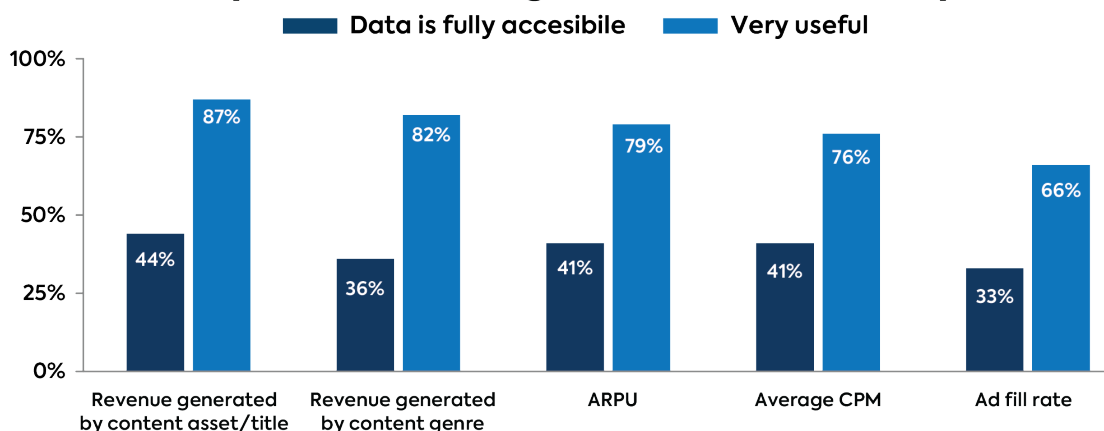


Challenges with Revenue and Advertising Data

Streaming services require reliable viewer data to support rates charged to advertisers, while content sellers rely on the same data to measure distribution revenue. Metrics such as how much revenue content generates, average revenue per user (ARPU), average CPM, and ad fill rate can all help optimize distribution and profitability. Unfortunately, few of these metrics are available to content sellers.

87% of executives said that knowledge of revenue generated per title would be “Very useful,” but just 44% reported having access to that data. Two-thirds said that ad fill rate metrics would be “very useful,” yet just one-third have full access to that data.

Top 5 Advertising Revenue Data Gaps



The ability to identify high revenue-generating titles could help streaming businesses understand what type of content resonates most with viewers.

Viewership metrics are also important for proving value to advertisers. In some cases, brands are hesitant for their ads to appear alongside certain content categories. With more detailed data, such as title-level audience metrics, content sellers could better advocate for placement alongside their titles.



“If there was a way to communicate to advertisers that the numbers are there, then I think that would help everybody because the eyeballs are there.”

– VP, Streaming Content Owner



Challenges with Measuring Streaming Service Engagement

Streaming platforms often keep viewer engagement and demographic data confidential to safeguard their competitive edge and adhere to privacy laws. By retaining control over this information, platforms gain the upper hand when negotiating with content sellers and advertisers. Meanwhile, content sellers distributing through streaming platforms must extrapolate from limited data to develop actionable insights.

Executives rated watch time and viewer counts (active users on ad-based services and monthly subscribers) as the most valuable audience metrics, which is essential for optimizing content performance. Demographic and customer satisfaction at the platform level were likewise considered valuable. Together, these metrics provide a comprehensive view of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of a streaming service's success.

Remarkably, 80% of streaming executives said viewer demographics would be “very useful” to their business, but just one-fourth have full access to that data. Understanding and optimizing these factors are vital to attracting, retaining, and growing viewership.

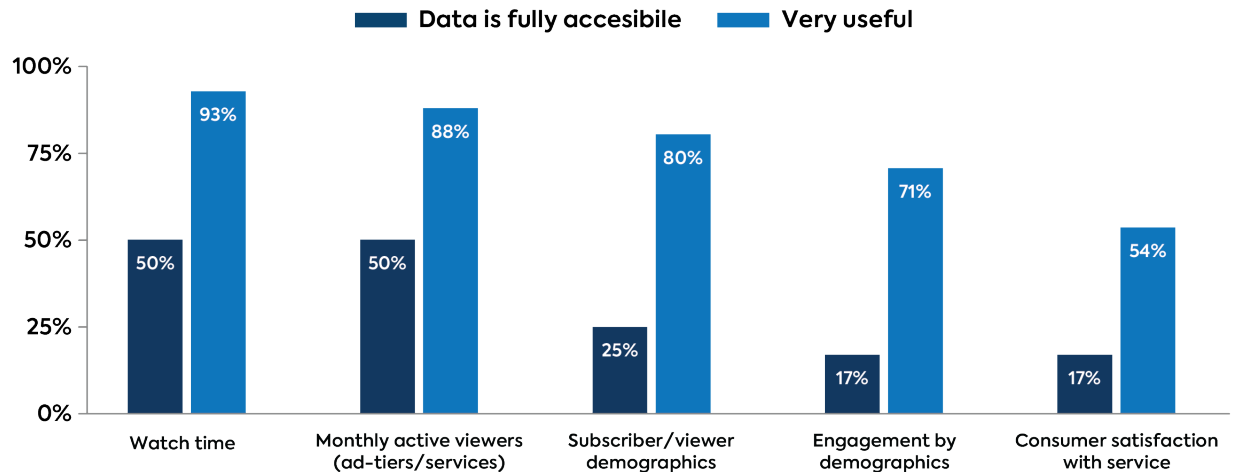


“We have a publisher portal where we can track viewership. For our publishers who have programs only viewed via the subscription service, they have a record of every single view, and where it’s from and what platform they watched it on. So, we are giving back to the content owners. You pay them based on the number of viewers they get each month, so they are motivated to improve the viewership.”

**– Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer,
Streaming Platform and Content Aggregator**

Remarkably, 80% of streaming executives said viewer demographics would be “very useful” to their business, but just one-fourth have full access to that data.

Top 5 Viewer Engagement Gaps



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Balancing Act: D2C or Third-Party

Streaming executives navigate the strategic trade-off between the data available through their direct-to-consumer (D2C) apps and channels and the broader reach possible on third-party platforms. Businesses must determine the approach that brings in the most revenue while also thinking about what will generate the most subscribers or viewers long-term. This is no easy task and requires a thoughtful strategy that may change as the business evolves.



“It is especially challenging for niche services because we need that broad reach and we don’t have the budgets to pump advertising into our D2C app, so a lot of the monetization is from the third-party platforms. But then you’re having to split that revenue, and all of those deals are different.”

– C-Level Executive, Streaming Content Owner

Pros and cons of operating on a D2C app vs. third-party platform:

D2C	3rd Party
More Data	Less Data
Less Reach	More Reach
Less Revenue Sharing	More Revenue Sharing
Direct Relationship with Subscribers	No Relationship with Subscribers

Identifying Subscribers and Viewers

Content acquisition and distribution strategies greatly depend on how engaged viewers are with the content itself. More eyes on content means more revenue but maintaining (or building up) a solid viewer base requires insight into who is watching and their overall customer journey. Without a D2C app, this isn't always feasible.



"The hard part is, you don't know from your own channel if the platform itself has a large viewership and you're just not getting anything, or if it's a small platform in terms of scale and what you're seeing is what you expect."

– VP, Business Development, FAST Channel Service Provider

User Experience

To stay competitive, executives must stay attuned to the wants, needs, and preferences of their viewers. A deeper understanding of the audience can drive more effective promotions, dynamic pricing, targeted product and service offers, and more. Audience goodwill is often lost through the customer experience, which is a conglomeration of multiple facets of the customer journey.

The growing number of FAST channels poses an additional discoverability problem: Brands can launch a channel relatively easily, but securing viewership is difficult. For instance, electronic programming grids (EPGs) that hold over 500 channels offer a multitude of options, but can interfere with discoverability and be difficult to manage.



"There's a lot of extrapolation involved. If we are seeing this behavior and this content popping on D2C, then is this something that we want to promote on other platforms? [Third-party data] is not as defined as what I can see on my direct platform... It's just a matter of how much [data] we get, and a lot of the time it's just minutes streamed or the number of streams in particular."

– C-Suite Executive, Streaming Content Owner





Towards a Smarter Streaming Future

Streaming service providers and content sellers face numerous challenges today – competition for viewers, evolving technology and consumer preferences, content discovery and subscription fatigue, consumer data privacy concerns, and pressure to turn a profit are only a few.

Data is invaluable to succeed in this rapidly evolving marketplace, and the challenges are only magnified when data is held by a few key players. This results in a complicated business environment fraught with inefficiencies and conjecture. Industry executives overwhelmingly shared their hopes that the marketplace can evolve to better serve all players.

Industry Movement Towards Collaboration, Consolidation

Streaming is the predominant consumer choice for video entertainment, with 89% of US internet households using at least one service, and 29% using more than eight. Competition is fierce. As the streaming market matures, executives aspire to a more collaborate future. In the FAST environment in particular, executives feel that the high number of channels, wide range of content quality, and data gatekeeping limit the growth of the whole ecosystem, including potential advertising revenue.



"Producing higher quality content for FAST won't happen until more dollars are coming in and there's equitable distribution of that [revenue]. Because if we worked as an ecosystem, we would have significantly more growth."

– C-Suite Executive, Streaming Owner/Aggregator

Several dynamics are pushing the market to evolve towards a more cooperative – or at least less fragmented – reality:

- **Data Sharing and Standardization:** Some industry leaders are starting to share more data publicly and with partners. One outcome of the 2023 writers' and actors' strikes is a requirement that streaming platforms share more metrics with creatives (though not publicly). In December 2023, Netflix released 6 full months of viewership data by content title – a first for the industry leader. Additionally, multiple streaming platform executives shared with Parks Associates that they see their relative data transparency as a differentiator in the industry. Others shared confidentially that while they would like to provide more to their partners, reaching an internal consensus about what and how much to share is a slow organizational effort.

- **Industry Alliances:** New organizations are forming to serve the interests of streaming stakeholders, including the Independent Streaming Alliance (ISA) and Streaming Innovation Alliance (SIA). The ISA advocates for establishing collective measurement for platforms and brand marketers, best practices and fair business practices for distribution, and seamless advertising transactions through partnerships with SSPs, DSPs, brands, and agencies. The SIA seeks to promote “federal and state policies that build on the strong, competitive, and pro-consumer market for streaming video” through advocacy and lobbying efforts. The stated aim of such organizations is to solve industry challenges to the benefit of everyone involved, though competing interests are sure to persist on the path to a more open, collaborative industry.
- **Mergers and Consolidation:** Content providers continue to consolidate products, content, and resources to differentiate themselves from the competition and accelerate profitability. In 2023, HBO Max and Discovery+ merged to create Max and Paramount+ added Showtime to its highest tier. Now that Disney has acquired Comcast’s share of Hulu, analysts expect the two to eventually converge. In a crowded market, movement towards consolidation does help ease fragmentation, but streaming executives stressed the goal of preserving fairness through a diverse marketplace rather than one monopolized by a few key players.



“We are not getting the data that we need. We get more data from some than others and we’re grateful for the data that we do get, but the industry as a whole is very used to performance data, like from Nielsen. Because there’s so much fragmentation it’s very difficult to measure. We’ve had to work with various third parties and try to understand different ways into that data.”

– General Manager, Streaming Owner/Aggregator



Supplementing Data with Technology

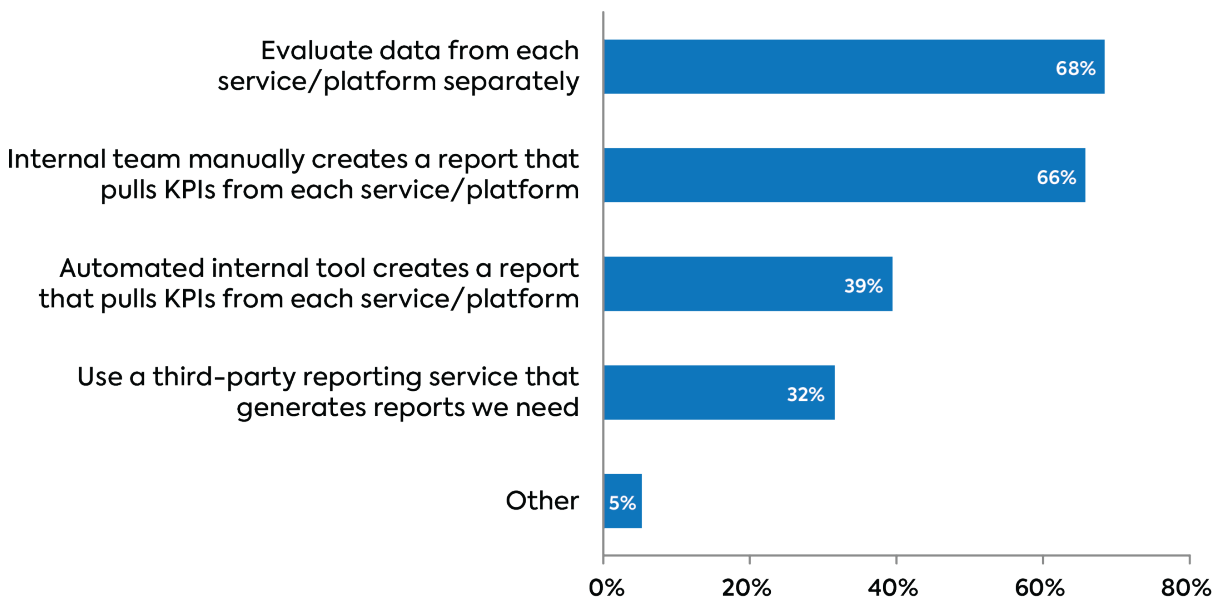
Businesses face a lack of data, but also a lack of resources to handle that data if they had it. Most executives surveyed are utilizing internal resources to manage and analyze their data manually. This is due partially to fragmentation and partially to a lack of resources. Each distribution platform reports different metrics through different processes, forcing an inefficient approach that could easily be streamlined if there was standardization.

Structured data for content performance, revenue, advertising, non-transactional audience engagement (e.g., brand loyalty), and other metrics is crucial for proper benchmarking and intelligent business strategy.

Standardization and automation will enable businesses to gain insights faster and stay competitive in this rapidly evolving landscape.

About a third of streaming executives said that capturing and analyzing data is extremely challenging, and 42% said a consolidated data service would be valuable. The most popular uses for such a service would be to gauge performance across platforms, conduct financial forecasting, and automate reporting.

Method of Tracking Data Across Distribution Partners



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Leveraging AI for Smarter Business Decisions

Streaming operations use AI today primarily for content recommendations by leveraging machine learning algorithms to analyze user data, such as viewing history, search queries, and ratings. This analysis helps to predict and suggest content that aligns with user preferences, thereby enhancing user engagement and satisfaction. Netflix, Spotify, Amazon Prime Video, YouTube, and TikTok currently leverage AI to analyze user behavior and preferences to deliver personalized content recommendations and enhance user engagement.



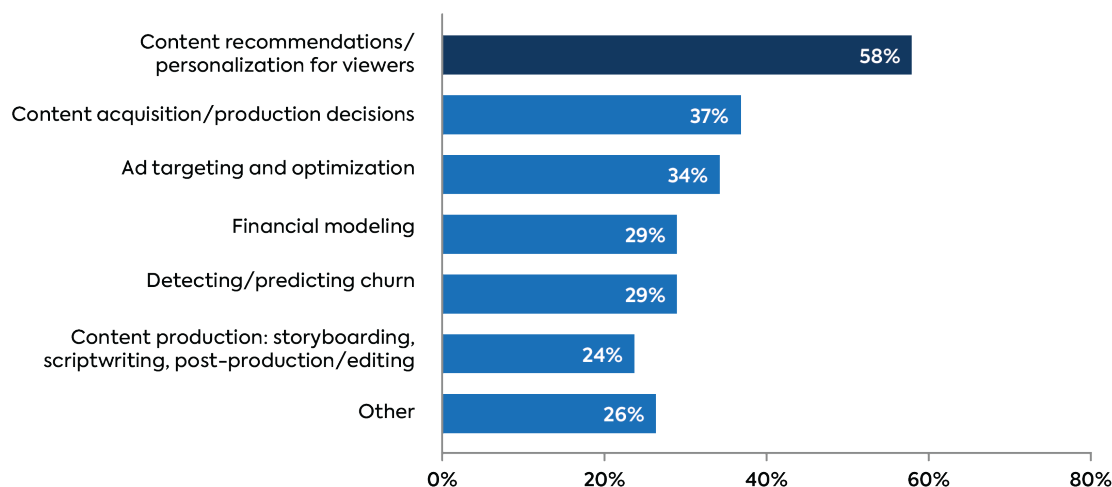
"If we don't start using it [AI], we're probably going to be left behind. It can be useful for setting ad breaks and AdWords, building out EPGs, etc. There are so many opportunities just with curation. It would be helpful, especially when we are trying to push certain content sometimes."

– Director, Streaming Content Owner

Generative AI is typically used to create and optimize content, from creating new content to subtitling existing assets for international markets.

In our survey, we found that companies plan to use AI for content recommendations, but anticipate other future uses related to content acquisition decisions, ad targeting, and financial modeling.

Future Plans for Making Use of AI Tools in 2024/2025



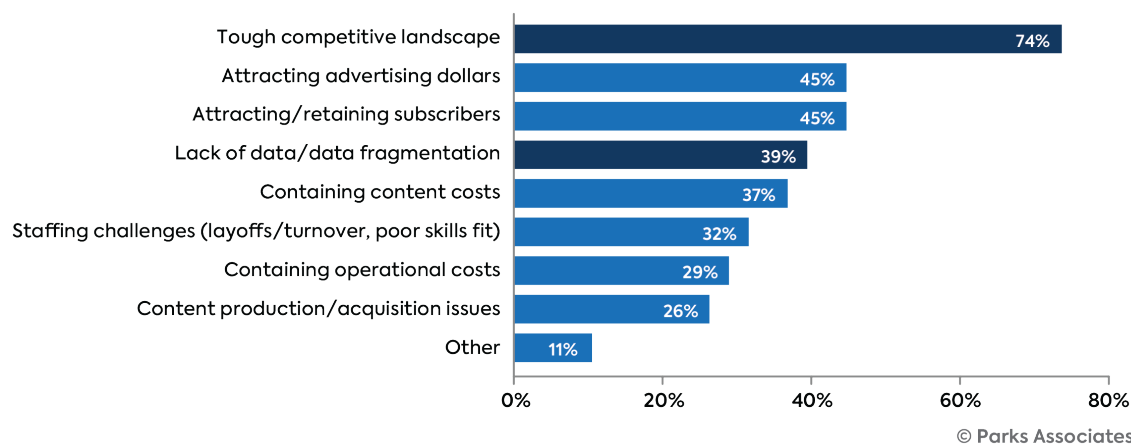
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Future Challenges

Most streaming executives surveyed ranked dealing with data scarcity and fragmentation in the top five challenges facing them in 2024/2025.

A tough competitive landscape is the top challenge.

Future Challenges Expected in 2024/2025



The absence of standardized metrics across the streaming industry combined with the absence of data and tools required to make use of those metrics pose significant challenges. Nominal sharing of data by major players creates obstacles for the other players in the market and limits their ability to properly understand and navigate this ever-evolving landscape. Everyone, from the main providers to the FAST platforms and content holders, share a common goal of achieving profitability – the most recent industry shift focuses on moving more dollars in through advertising and social platforms.



"I worry we're limiting ourselves as an industry. If we worked as an ecosystem, we would have significantly more growth."

– VP, Streaming Owner/Aggregator

Streaming executives see the current marketplace as fragmented, gated, and ultimately inefficient, yet they also envision opportunities for ecosystem-wide growth through cooperation, data-sharing, standardization, and intelligence that better communicate the value of streaming audiences.

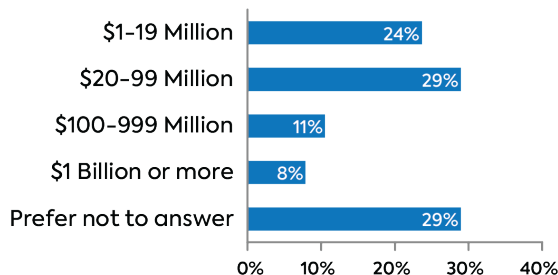
Appendix

Methodology

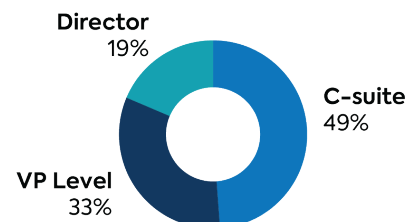
Parks Associates conducted a 15-minute B2B survey of streaming service providers, networks, and content sellers, as well as nine interviews with executives between September 2023 and November 2023.

All interviewees and survey respondents are in a decision-making role for content or business strategy, with a director-level position or higher title. Respondent companies have a streaming presence in both North America and Western Europe, among other geographies. Respondents represent companies with a range of business models, revenues, and content strategy.

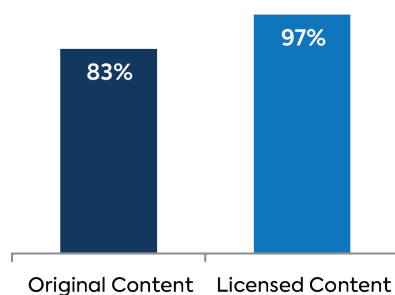
Annual Company Revenue



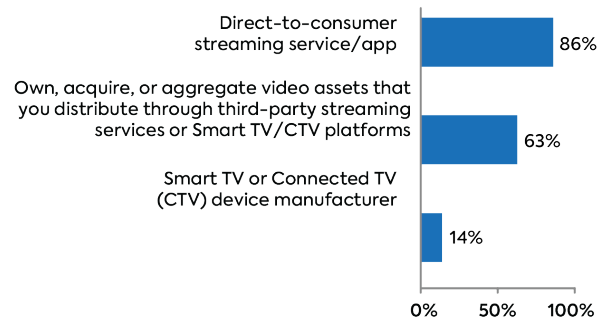
Job Title



Content Offerings



Organization Role in Streaming Ecosystem



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About Parks Associates



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Parks Associates, a woman-founded and certified business, is an internationally recognized market research and consulting company specializing in emerging consumer technology products and services. Founded in 1986, Parks Associates creates research capital for companies ranging from Fortune 500 to small start-ups through market reports, primary studies, consumer research, custom research, workshops, executive conferences, and annual service subscriptions.

The company's expertise includes new media, digital entertainment and gaming, home networks, internet and television services, digital health, mobile applications and services, consumer apps, advanced advertising, consumer electronics, energy management, and home control systems and security.

About SymphonyAI Media



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SymphonyAI Media is the leading provider of solutions that deliver actionable insights to global media and entertainment organizations. Its Revedia platform provides a single source of truth to manage, optimize, and predict revenue across all distribution models. Automated data ingest and normalization, real-time analysis, and AI-based insights empower smarter, faster content investment and distribution strategy decisions to maximize revenue.

SymphonyAI Media has successfully enabled financial integrity and strategic revenue management across linear and digital distribution channels for over 35 years and has established itself as a trusted partner to more than 90% of the industry.

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Jennifer manages the research department and Parks Associates' process for producing high-quality, relevant, and meaningful research. Jennifer also leads and advises on syndicated and custom research projects across all connected consumer verticals and guides questionnaire development for Parks Associates' extensive consumer analytics survey program. Jennifer is a certified focus group moderator, with training from the Burke Institute.

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ATTRIBUTION

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RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

for Emerging Consumer Technologies

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Smart Home Devices and Platforms



Digital Media and Platforms



Home Networks



Digital Health



Support Services



Entertainment & Video Services



Consumer Electronics



Energy Management



Home Control Systems



Home Security