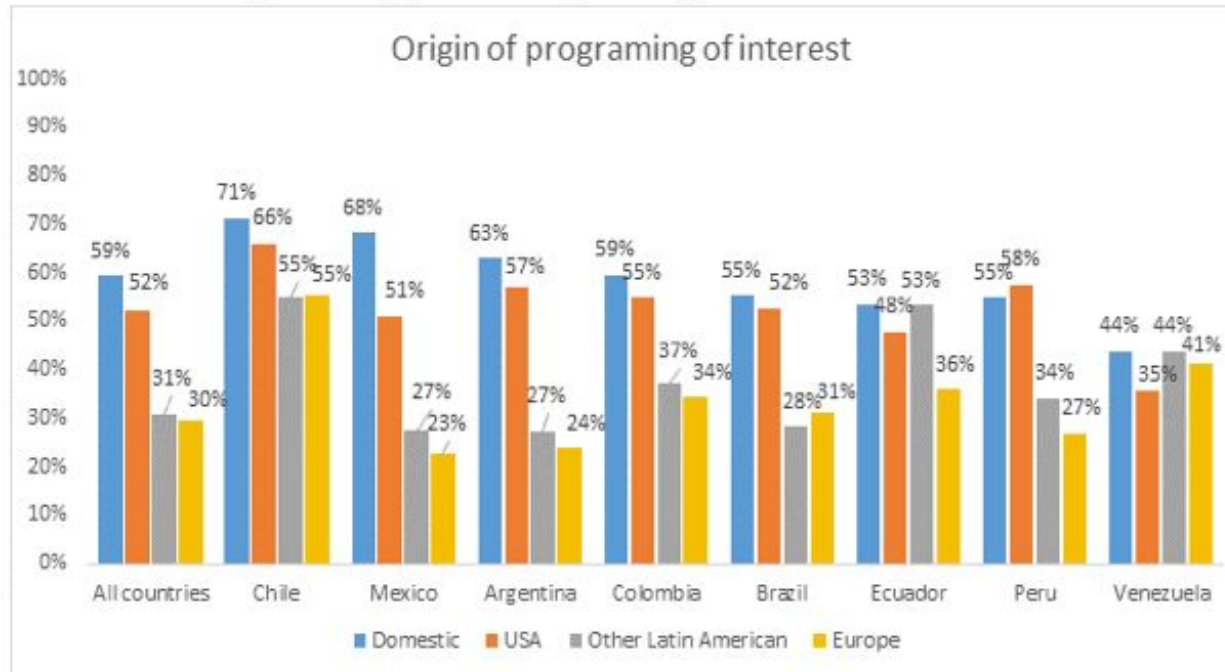# Netflix and the Global Flow of Quality Programming

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This paper will examine how audiences in Latin American are approaching Netflix as a source of quality programming, relative to their national and regional options.

The paper will argue that Latin American audiences are being socially and economically stratified in ways that produce a larger audience for Netflix among the middle and upper middle-class than would have been the case 10 years ago. It is interesting that Netflix is to first major international target countries both for basic operations and for local coproduction. Brazil produced one of Netflix's initial international hits, *Narcos*, and in Mexico, is collaborating with several well-known Mexican actors and actresses and local producers to produce both national and regional hits, such as *Ingobernable* (Ungovernable). Netflix seems to be calculating that Brazil and Mexico, and elsewhere in Latin America as well, will be important markets for them in their global expansion.

Working with audience data from Kantar Media, we have the opportunity to examine several possible ideas about Netflix's strategy toward audiences with actual audience preference data from eight countries in the region including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico as well as several smaller countries. This reveals how audiences are reacting to programming from several world regions including the US Europe and Latin America, see figure 1, which closely resembles Netflix's overall strategy, which gives us a chance to consider how Netflix is approaching programming in the region. It also gives us a chance to see the likely audience response to Netflix's strategy of increased transnational flow from not only the United States, but also Europe and other parts of Latin America. The figure below shows that the average audience across Latin America, shown on the left-hand side of the graph, still prefers national programming but even the general audience reflected here, has come to have American programming as their second preference followed somewhat distantly by European and regional programming. Space this shows an opening for the kind of programming from the Golden age of US programming at this moment much of it considered relatively quality programming, appeals or potentially appeals to audiences in the metropolitan regions of Latin America which is the group that was surveyed for this study.

Latin America TV viewing interest by origin of program - 2014

Origin of programing of interest

| Country	Domestic	USA	Other Latin American	Europe
All countries	59%	52%	31%	30%
Chile	71%	66%	55%	55%
Mexico	68%	51%	27%	23%
Argentina	63%	57%	27%	24%
Colombia	59%	55%	37%	34%
Brazil	55%	52%	28%	31%
Ecuador	53%	48%	53%	36%
Peru	55%	58%	34%	27%
Venezuela	44%	35%	44%	41%

One of the limits to this strategy for this paper is that neither local producers nor Netflix openly announce a strategy focused on quality as opposed to higher middlebrow or other strategies for programming. However, in-depthinterviewing I conducted with student age Netflix viewers in the state of São Paulo in Brazil shows some interesting patterns. The younger Brazilian audiences with whom I spoke tended to see watching programs on Netflix such as Orange is the New Black, House of Cards, Narcos, and other Netflix programs as a source of quality and prestige. I watched as people would drop those names to their friends and colleagues in the university classes I was teaching in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, as a way to achieve what we might call symbolic capital (Bourdieu), as an indication of their status and their refinement or distinction, use Bourdieu's terms. So taking ethnographic data to indicate what audiences perceive as quality programming, it was clear to me that younger viewers with higher levels of education, clearly saw several kinds of Netflix programs that might or might not be seen as quality by different reviewers and evaluators as in fact quality programming that indicated their own personal refinement.

It's important to note that these younger audiences are better educated, with many of them in either undergraduate or graduate school. That is similar to the pattern of audiences in the Kantar study of Latin America which also showed that preferences for American and European programming tended to be most tended to be higher in middle, upper middle and upper classes. The survey permits us to break that down a bit to find

out that both higher income people better educated people and those with what other languages, particularly English are more likely to be interested in American and European prop programming which is a pretty good indication of how they will respond to Netflix. A breakdown of audience preferences by their social class, which includes education income and ability with languages, along with their material patterns of consumption, is shown in figure 2. That indicates that those of higher status, the top 10% are more interested in US programs than are those of the lowest status the lower the lowest 40%. That also reflects on the Netflix strategy of implicitly naming their programming at those of middle upper middle and upper-class status, who are likely to have the education or cultural capital, the income to have broadband, and linguistic and other capitals or skills that make them more likely to enjoy programming from either the United States or Europe.

Latin America TV viewing interest by origin of program - 2014
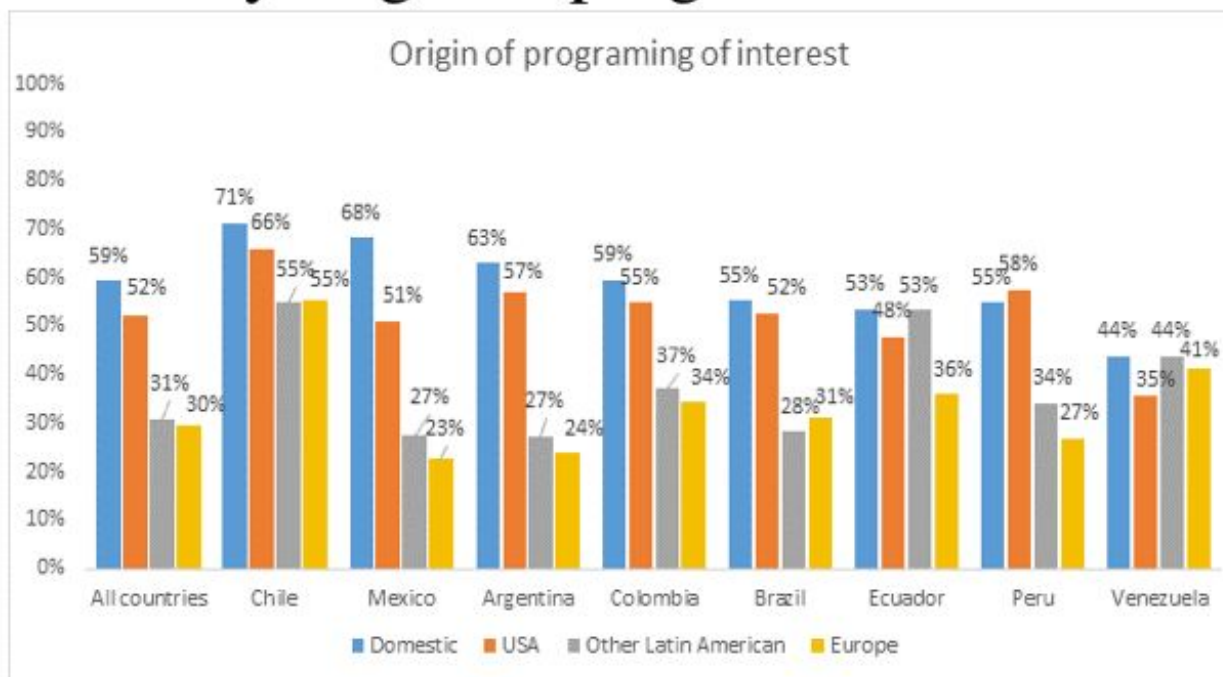
Overall, both the audience preferences shown in the two survey questions, as well as the in-depth interviews with students in São Paulo show an audience ready for the kinds of programming, particularly from the United States, Europe, and the rest of Latin America, as well as a limited amount of national production and coproduction, that Netflix is currently trying to offer. The interviews with students also reflect that this programming is seen to them as quality programming, and watching that perceived quality program helps reinforce their status as well as giving them enjoyment from programming they have come to understand and prefer.