

Genre trends in five European countries, 2006 to 2010

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Abstract

This paper analyses box office trends of the genres for the top 50 grossing films in each year from 2006 to 2010, inclusive, in five European countries – France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. We find that, generally, the frequency of genres is homogeneous and that the same types of films dominate the highest reaches of the box office charts; while the number of films unique to a country and the variation among production sources within a country is strongly associated with the distinction between international ‘technology-friendly’ films (action/adventure, fantasy/science fiction, and animated family films) and domestically produced ‘technology-unamenable’ genres (comedy, drama, crime/thriller, romance, and non-animated family films). The results suggest the concepts of national cinema and genre are closely interrelated, and that for audiences in these five European countries the decision about which films to see presents itself as a choice between genres that is often also a choice between Hollywood films and domestic films.

Keywords: French cinema, German cinema, Italian cinema, Spanish cinema, British cinema, genre

Introduction

Product categories are cultural schemas that underpin markets by providing a shared frame of reference for producers and consumers that emerge as ‘consensual conceptual schemes that define goods being exchanged as experientially similar’ (Lounsbury & Rao 2004: 970). Product categories circumscribe product characteristics and producer behaviour, providing an abstract set of product features, institutional logics, and practical guidelines that determine the production process (Jensen 2010); while making it possible for consumers to navigate a market by evaluating specific products based on their category prototypes (Sujan 1985).

The dominant product categories in the cinema are *genres*, which function as ‘formulas that precede and model cultural industry production, the formal framework on which individual products are founded’ (Perretti & Negro 2007: 564). This framework enables producers to make decisions about what films to make based on information about the past performance of genres and current box office trends, and provides a privileged mode of communication among aesthetic personnel based upon pre-existing artistic and narrative conventions. A film is assigned to a product category (i.e. genre) based on whether the combination of genre elements makes the film more prototypical of one genre than another, and its market identity is determined by extracting core genre elements and combining them in the promotional material for a film (Jensen 2010: 43-45). Those genre elements comprise recurring configurations of formal traits, themes, narrative structures, and aesthetic personnel associated with a particular group of films. A film genre can therefore be described as composed of ‘elements that enable and constrain the construction of individual film identities, whereas a film market is composed of different genres that collectively define the horizontal dimensions of the market space’ (Jensen 2010: 43). These identities provide audiences with a first reference point by which they are able to assess product traits without having seen a particular film (Hennig-Thurau, Walsh, & Wruck 2001); and empirical research has shown that genre is an important factor – if not the most important – in audiences’ decision making about which film to see (Litman 1983, Da Silva 1998). The relative stability of genres enables producers and distributors to overcome the contradictory requirements that

‘consumers need familiarity to understand what they are offered, but they need novelty to enjoy it’ (Lampel, Lant, & Shamsie 2000: 292).

Film studies has long recognised the importance of genre to the film industry; while theoretical definitions of genre in terms of themes, formal, and the historical evolution of individual genres have been extensively discussed (see Altman 1999, Moine 2008, and Neale 2000). Beyond film studies we find research on how genre can impact on the box office success of a film (Ainslie, Drèze, & Zufyden 2005; Desai & Basuroy 2005; Foutz & Kidiyali 2003), the role genre plays in structuring film markets (Jensen 2010), and how genre shapes decision making for audiences (Da Silva 1998; Hennig-Thurau, Walsh, & Wruck 2001). However, there is a general lack of empirical research describing genre trends over time or across different markets. Two studies of contemporary Hollywood filmmaking by Lu, Waterman, and Yan (2005) and Ji and Waterman (2010) analysed the frequency of different genres among the top 20 grossing films at the US box office from 1967 to 2008, finding an increase in the dominance of ‘technology friendly’ films that rely heavily on special-effects technology in general, and computer generated imagery in particular, at the US box office (i.e. action, adventure, fantasy, science fiction); and a decline in the share of box office achieved by character- and narrative-driven films (i.e. dramas, comedies, thrillers). Wang (2011) extended this research to compare genre trends among the top 20 grossing films in seven countries – including France, Germany, and the UK – from the 1940s to 2007 to assess the impact of advances in special effects technology on international film production. Redfern (2012) analysed trends in the frequency and box office performance of genre films among the top 50 grossing films in each year from 1991 to 2010 in the United States, again identifying the increasing dominance of action/adventure, family, and fantasy/science fiction films and the decline in comedies, crime/thrillers, and dramas. There are no corresponding studies of genre trends at the European box office, though Neelamegham and Chintagunta (1999), Moretti (2001), Craig, Greene, and Douglas (2003), and Hennig-Thurau, Walsh, and Bode (2004) have examined the performance of Hollywood films in overseas markets and identified genre as an important variable influencing on a film’s performance in different countries. Although some national and pan-European film bodies collect and publish data on genre and box office grosses, the extent to which different genres characterize the production and consumption of films in different European industries, or how the box office performance of genre films varies in different European countries remain unknown.

This article presents an analysis of the genres of the top 50 grossing films in each year from 2006 to 2010, inclusive, in five European countries – France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. In presenting a comparative analysis of real-world data, we aim to move beyond purely theoretical discussions of genre to fill the empirical gap in our knowledge by systematically studying genre trends and box office performance in real-world contexts. In the next section we describe the sample used in the study and the genre labels employed. Section three seeks to answer four questions: is the frequency with which films of a particular genre occur homogenous across different countries?; are individual genres characterised by films that reach the top 50 in one country only or films that reach the top 50 in several countries?; is there a relationship between genre and source of production?; and, which genres are dominant at the box office and which are less successful, and are these patterns consistent across different countries? Answering these questions allows us to determine if audiences in different countries are watching the same types films and the variation of films within those genres. Finally, we discuss the relationship between genre and national cinemas in film studies focussing on the international specialization of genre production and the competition between films from different production sources within genres.

Sample and methods

The sample analysed here includes the top 50 grossing films in each year from 2006 to 2010 from each of five different European countries – France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The revenue distribution of motion pictures is heavily skewed with a small number of films earning the bulk of box office revenue (Walls 2009), and by including only the top 50 in each year we focus our attention on those films that received a wide release and which audiences paid to see in large numbers. The data were obtained from Box Office Mojo (<http://boxofficemojo.com/>) and the Internet Movie Database (<http://www.imdb.com/>), and the data set contains the name, and country for each film and total gross for each film. Where Box Office Mojo lists a film more than once, only the first, highest grossing record was taken. This gives a total of 250 data points for each country, and a total 1250 data points in the sample overall. As many of the films achieved top 50 rankings in more than one country, this represents a sample of 594 different films.

We assigned each film to one – and one only – of eight genres: action/adventure, comedy, crime/thriller, drama, family, fantasy/science fiction, romance, and other. The category ‘other’ includes films from genres that occur infrequently across the time period and the countries in the sample, and comprises documentaries, horror films, musicals, war films, and westerns. Genre labels were applied once all the data had been collected in order to ensure consistency over the whole time period covered, and are based on narrative and formal criteria (e.g. musical numbers, action sequences), the presence of stars, iconography, intended emotional effect (e.g. horror, comedy), source material, and subject matter. Sequels and films in the same series were always classified as belonging to the same genre. Both Box Office Mojo and the Internet Movie Database provide information regarding a film’s genre taken from a variety of sources, but these were used as guidelines only since the methodology of genre labelling may vary from country to country and over time. While producers, audiences, and critics use genre labels with ease as, they are elusive as objects of inquiry since there are no established defining criteria or fixed system of genre categories (Pye 1975; Bordwell 1989) and ‘one can only note the vitality of generic activity at an empirical level, and the impossibility of organizing cinema dogmatically into a definitive and universal typology of genres at a theoretical level’ (Moine 2008: 24). Consequently, the genre categories used are inevitably subjective but they are not arbitrary and are based on defensible reasoning.

We use three production categories based on the countries listed for each title on The Internet Movie Database. A film was classified as either *domestic*, in which the home country is the only listed production source; a *co-production*, in which the home country is listed as a producer along with any other countries and includes both minority and majority co-productions; or an *international* film, in which the host market is not listed under country. These definitions are relative to the market being considered, and a film is categorised differently in different markets. For example, the only country listed by IMDB for *Das Leben der Anderen/The Lives of Others* is Germany; and so in Germany this film is listed as a domestic production, whereas it is an international film on release for France, Spain, and Italy.

Genre trends in five European countries

To determine if audiences in different countries are watching different types of films we first tested homogeneity for each genre across the five selected markets using a chi-square test with a two-tailed Sidak-corrected $\alpha = 0.0131$, based on an experiment-wise $\alpha = 0.10$ and eight tests. Effect size was measured by Cramer’s *V*. Post-hoc analysis was performed based on the adjusted standardized residuals of the cells, with a Sidak-corrected critical Z-value of ± 2.56 , based on an

experiment-wise $\alpha = 0.10$ and a contingency table with 10 cells. Table 1 presents these results, and shows no significant differences in the proportion of films in each genre across these countries with the exception of comedy films. From the adjusted standardized residuals we see it is Spain ($Z = -3.59$) that has fewer comedy films than expected, although the effect size for the chi-square omnibus test is small. We conclude that, overall, film genres are homogenous across these markets and that film audiences in different countries are watching the same types of films.

Table 1 Frequency of genre films and chi-square test of homogeneity test across five European countries, 2006 to 2010

Genre	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	UK	χ^2 (df = 4)	p	V
Action/Adventure	39	39	36	48	42	2.43	0.66	-
Comedy	44	49	56	26	53	15.05	<0.01	0.11
Crime/Thriller	28	16	24	33	16	10.52	0.03	-
Drama	42	31	32	36	23	6.84	0.14	-
Family	45	51	38	45	46	2.33	0.68	-
Fantasy/Science Fiction	23	23	22	29	30	2.51	0.64	-
Romance	17	23	28	17	18	4.93	0.29	-
Other	12	18	14	16	22	3.86	0.42	-
Total	250	250	250	250	250			

Table 2 presents the number of ‘unique’ films in each genre in each country (i.e. films to make the top 50 in that country only), the number of films in each genre to reach the top 50 in all five countries, and the total number of different films in each genre. These results show that while audiences in these five countries are watching the same types of films they are not necessarily watching the same films, though this varies from genre to genre. This variation is associated with the distinction between ‘technology-friendly’ and ‘non-technology friendly’ genres.

Those genres with a high proportion of unique films tend to be associated with non-technology friendly films. Comedies, crime/thriller films, dramas, and romance films tend to appear among the top 50 films of just a single country. Over three-quarters of comedy films feature in the top 50 of one country, and only 2 per cent make it into the top 50 of all five (*Burn After Reading*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Mr. Bean’s Holiday*, and *The Hangover*). There are very few unique comedy films in Spain reflecting the lower number of films in this genre in general. Crime/thriller films also tend to rank in just one country (63 per cent), though there is also a substantial proportion to make it into the top 50 in all five. All of the 10 crime/thriller films to feature in every market are Hollywood films, and several are franchise movies (films in the Jason Bourne and Sherlock Holmes series, or adaptations of Dan Brown novels). Only a few drama films appear in the top 50s of all countries (*Australia*, *Blood Diamond*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *Shutter Island*, and *The Pursuit of Happyness*), while 73 per cent feature in one list only. Romance films show the same pattern, with only seven films featuring five times (including three from the *Twilight* franchise and the two *Sex and the City* films), and 65 per cent of films featuring once only. The drama and romance films that appear once tend to feature only in the country from which they originate, but when drama films do cross borders they move between the continental countries and not to the UK. For example, *Das Leben der Anderen/The Lives of Others* features in

every country except the UK. There does not appear to be the same level of cross-over for the romance films, and when a film from this category appears more than once it tends to be a Hollywood franchise film.

Table 2 Number of unique films in each genre in each country ('Unique'), number of films to make the top 50 in every country ('All'), and the number of different films in each genre ('Total') for five European countries, 2006 to 2010

Genre	Unique					All	Total
	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	UK		
Action/Adventure	0	1	0	8	4	26	59
Comedy	33	22	42	4	24	4	159
Crime/Thriller	13	0	7	14	1	10	56
Drama	26	11	13	14	9	5	102
Family	8	12	2	5	8	29	79
Fantasy/Science Fiction	1	3	2	4	6	14	44
Romance	9	6	14	4	1	7	53
Other	5	2	1	7	8	3	42
Total	95	57	81	60	61	98	594

'Technology friendly' genres exhibit greater commonality across markets than non-TF genres, but the variation in the number of unique films tends to be highly localised. Action/adventure films in particular tend to feature in multiple markets, with 44 per cent of films achieving top 50 rankings in all five countries (with a further 15 per cent to make the top 50 in four countries). This category is dominated by Hollywood franchise movies, including films from the James Bond, *Mission Impossible*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Fast and Furious*, *Indiana Jones*, *Die Hard*, and *Transformers* series, as well as comic book adaptations (*X-Men*, *Iron Man*, *Fantastic Four*, *300*, *Batman*, etc). Just over one-fifth of the films in this category are unique to anyone country and Spain accounts the majority of such films. Family and fantasy/science fiction films are split more evenly between achieving a top 50 ranking in just a single country and in all five markets. For the fantasy/science fiction genre 36 per cent of films feature in the sample once only, though Spain and the UK account for the majority of these; and 32 per cent reach the top 50 in all five countries and are mostly Hollywood franchise films (*Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Chronicles of Narnia*). For the family genre, 44 per cent of films feature once only and 37 per cent of films feature five times. Again, this genre is dominated by Hollywood animated films that feature in the top 50 rankings, many of which are franchise films (e.g. *Shrek*, *Toy Story*, *Ice Age*, etc); whereas family films featuring in the top 50 rankings of a single country are mostly in Germany and France, which tend to be domestic productions and part of local franchises (*Die Wilden Hühner* and *Die Wilden Kerle* in the former, and *Asterix* and *Arthur* in the latter); and the UK, where they tend to be Hollywood films. To better understand these patterns we look at the relationship between genre, uniqueness and commonality, and source of production in the next section because it appears that the extent to which these genres are characterised by 'unique' films depends on the presence or absence of domestically produced films.

As 'other' is a category comprising films from several genres it makes little sense to speak of trends across markets, but films in this category tend to feature in a single country only: 55 per

cent of films classed as 'other' achieve a top 50 ranking in just a single country. It is interesting to note that the three films to feature in all five lists are *High School Musical 3: Senior Year*, *Inglorious Basterds*, and *Mamma Mia!* These films appeal to different audiences, but like other films to successful across the range of countries they are all Hollywood films.

Table 3 shows the number of films in each genre sorted by the three production categories for each country. Overall, the results show there is a strong association between those films unique to France, Italy, and Germany and films involving producers from these markets. These patterns are not observable in Spain, where there few films involving a Spanish producer in the sample, and in the UK, where co-productions account for the variation in production source.

International productions account for 60 per cent of the total in France, the lowest value of any of the five countries; while domestic productions account for 26 per cent, the highest of any country. There is a clear distinction between those genres dominated by Hollywood franchise movies that are associated with international productions – action/adventure, family films, fantasy/science fiction, and (to a lesser extent) crime/thriller films; and comedies that are strongly associated with domestic productions. Three quarters of high grossing comedy films in France are unique to this country; and of these films thirty-one are domestic productions. The only French comedy film to reach the top 50 in another country was *Bienvenue chez les Ch'its/Welcome to the Sticks*, which was also successful in Germany. Drama films are distributed more evenly across the three production categories, but again show a clear distinction between films that involved a French producer and were successful only in France and international productions. Seventeen of the eighteen domestic drama films to reach the top 50 in France did not make it onto the list of any of the four other countries, the exception being *Ensemble, c'est tout/Hunting and Gathering* which also achieved a high ranking in Germany. Similarly, nine of the ten co-productions to reach the top 50 did so in France alone, while *La Môme* also made the top 50 in Germany. All the international films in this genre achieved a top 50 ranking in France and at least two other countries, except for *Into the Wild* which appears in the rankings for France and Italy only. Romance films also appear to be more evenly divided between production sources; but closer inspection again shows that all of the nine domestic films and co-productions in this genre achieved top 50 rankings in France only, while the eight international films feature in the rankings of at least one other country.

In Germany domestic films and co-productions account for approximately 15 per cent of the highest grossing films each, with international productions accounting for the majority of films in each genre except drama. All fourteen of the international drama films made the top 50 in at least one other country in addition to Germany, whereas only *Das Leben der Anderen/The Lives of Others* among the domestic films in this genre did so. Co-productions are more variable with German-language drama co-productions unique to this country (e.g. *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*, *Auf der anderen Seite/The Edge of Heaven*), whereas English-language drama co-productions such as *Perfume – Story of a Murder* or *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* are internationally successful. Germany has a greater number of domestic family films compared to the other countries, though this still only accounts for seven films, and is due to the success of domestic franchises (such as *Die Wilden Hühner* or *Die Wilden Kerle*) that do not have international appeal and did not make the top 50 in any other country. All fifteen of the German domestic comedy films are unique to this country, as are the three co-productions in which the primary language is German. The remaining three comedy co-productions (*Mr. Bean's Holiday*, *Rush Hour 3*, *The Hangover*) either involved a German producer or were in part shot in Germany but their primary language is English and all three reached the top 50 in at least three countries.

Genre trends in five European countries, 2006 to 2010

Table 3 Genre and production source of the top 50 films in five European countries, 2006 to 2010

		Action/ Adventure	Comedy	Crime/ Thriller	Drama	Family	Fantasy/ Science Fiction	Romance	Other	Total
France	Domestic	0	31	5	18	4	1	6	1	66
	Co-production	4	3	5	10	4	1	3	3	33
	International	35	10	18	14	37	21	8	8	151
	Total	39	44	28	42	45	23	17	12	250
Germany	Domestic	0	15	0	9	8	2	3	1	37
	Co-production	7	6	4	8	4	3	0	4	37
	International	32	28	12	14	39	18	20	13	176
	Total	39	49	16	31	51	23	23	18	250
Italy	Domestic	0	36	2	0	0	1	8	0	46
	Co-production	0	2	2	8	1	1	3	0	19
	International	36	18	20	24	37	20	17	14	185
	Total	36	56	24	32	38	22	28	14	250
Spain	Domestic	1	3	0	8	1	0	1	3	17
	Co-production	0	1	3	4	3	1	1	0	13
	International	47	22	30	24	41	28	15	13	220
	Total	48	26	33	36	45	29	17	16	250
UK	Domestic	0	3	0	2	0	0	1	1	7
	Co-production	12	7	2	7	4	11	1	4	48
	International	30	43	14	14	42	19	16	17	195
	Total	42	53	16	23	46	30	18	22	250

Domestic productions account for nearly one-fifth of films in Italy and these are overwhelmingly comedy films. This confirms Moretti's (2001) findings for the period from 1986 to 1995 that every single national hit of this decade was a comedy film, indicating the long-term stability of the Italian comedy film in its home market. The only other genre with a substantial number of domestic productions is the romance films, and, along with the five co-productions, these films are all unique to the Italian market while the international films in this genre are successful in Italy and at least one other country (with the exception of *A Good Year* that reached the top 50 in Italy only). The Italian market thus exhibits the same distinction noted in France between films with an Italian producer and those without for the comedy and romance genres. There are only three domestic films that are not comedy or romance films, including two in the crime/thriller genre (*Gomorra*, *Milan-Palermo: il ritorno*), and a single fantasy/science fiction film (*Winx club - Il segreto del regno perduto*). For the drama film, all eight co-productions reached the top 50 in Italy alone, although unlike France there are no domestic productions in this genre. There are five international drama films that are unique to the Italian rankings, but the majority of such films are internationally successful. International films account for three quarters of the highest grossing films in Italy, and dominate the genres of action/adventure, crime/thriller, family, fantasy/science fiction, and 'other' to the exclusion of films involving an Italian producer.

Spain is the most one-dimensional market, with international films accounting for 88 per cent of the total and very few domestic films or co-productions at all. Drama films account for what little variation there is with half of the domestic films allocated to this genre, while one third of drama films involved a Spanish producer. These films are all unique to the Spanish market with the exception of Pedro Almodovar's *Volver* which made the top 50 in every country except the UK. The crime/thriller film also accounts for a large number of unique films in Spain but these tend to be international films though all three co-productions involving a Spanish producer (*El Orfanato/The Orphanage*, *El secreto de sus ojos*, *The Oxford Murders*) are unique to this country.

The UK is different from France and Italy in that the variation of genres by production categories lies in the relationship between co-productions and international films only. Domestic productions accounted for just 3 per cent of the films to rank in the top 50 in the UK from 2006 to 2010, and included three comedy films (*St. Trinians'*, *St. Trinians' 2*, *Run Fat Boy Run*), two dramas (*Notes on a Scandal*, *The Last King of Scotland*), one romance film (*Slumdog Millionaire*), and one other (*StreetDance 3D*). In contrast, co-productions account for nearly a fifth of the films in the UK sample reflecting the UK's position as an international production hub and its close relationship to the US film industry. The high number of co-productions in the action/adventure and fantasy/science fiction genres the UK's in particular is the result of the UK's leading position as a destination for productions requiring visual effects, with the British film industry servicing films such as *Avatar*, *The Dark Knight*, and *X-Men: The Last Stand*, and the *Harry Potter* franchise. However, this does not change the fact that 78 per cent of the films in the UK sample are international productions that did not feature a UK producer; and that those genres the British have traditionally been regarded as characteristic of a national cinema in the UK (i.e. comedy and drama) are overwhelmingly dominated by Hollywood films at the highest reaches of the box office charts. This explains why 'unique' films in the UK exhibit different patterns to those in France and Germany noted above: there simply are not any domestic UK productions in the upper reaches of the box office charts. Thus, of the fifty-three comedy films to reach the top in the UK, 24 do not feature in the sample for any other country; but unlike France, Italy, or Germany where the comedy films unique to those countries are domestically produced in the UK these films tend to be Hollywood films.

Table 4 presents the total accumulated grosses and median box office grosses, along with the proportion of a country's total gross and the proportion of the films in the sample accounted for

by each genre. Figure 1 shows the frequency with which genre films reached the top 10 in each country. Overall these five countries show a high degree of similarity in the box office performance of genres with the same types of films occupying the highest reaches of the box office charts and accounting for similar proportions of the total gross of the films in the sample, though Italy is different from the other countries in some key aspects.

The highest grossing genres across all five countries are those dominated by technology-driven Hollywood franchise films. Taken together, the action/adventure, family, and fantasy/science fiction genres account for between 43 to 60 per cent of the total box office gross in the countries. These genres also tend to have the highest median grosses and tend to dominate the top 10 rankings. The highest grossing film over this time-period in every country was *Avatar* except for France where this fantasy/science fiction film was the second highest grossing. The proportion of the total gross accounted for by the family and fantasy/science fiction exceeds the proportion of films in the sample in every country. The action/adventure film also achieves a higher proportion of gross in Spain and the UK but not in France, Italy, or Germany, indicating for action/adventure films perform relatively better in the two countries which also accounted for most of the unique films in this genre. In four of the five countries action/adventure films account for one in five films to make it into the top but this is not the case in Italy where the comedy film is particularly successful.

In contrast those genres that are not 'technology friendly' tend to be much less successful, though there are some key exceptions. The crime/thriller and drama genres are consistently low grossing, with drama films achieving a much smaller proportion of the total gross than the proportion of films in the samples for each country. Few films in these genres make it into the top 10 and the median grosses tend to be among the lowest for all genres. Hollywood films also dominate the most successful crime/thriller films and *The Da Vinci Code* is the highest grossing film in this genre in four of the five countries. Surprisingly it is Spain, with so few domestic productions in any genre, which is the only country where the highest grossing crime/thriller film (*El Orfanato/The Orphanage*) is not a Hollywood film (though *The Da Vinci Code* was a close second). The romance genre accounts for a small proportion of the total gross in each country but has high median grosses in France, Germany, and the UK indicating strong box office performances. In fact, this genre has the highest median gross in Germany. However, in all these three countries few romance make it into the top 10 indicating the grosses of romance films tend to be restricted to the low to mid-range with few of the very highest grossing films belonging to this genre. Approximately 1 in 10 of the top 10 grossing films in each country are romance films compared to between 1 in 3 and 1 in 4 accounted for by family films and approximately 1 in 5 that are fantasy/science fiction films. No more than two romance films made the top 10 in the same year in any country, and only in Germany did a film (*Keinohrhasen*) achieved a number one ranking in its year of release.

Like the other non-technology friendly genres, the proportion of the total gross accumulated by comedy films in Germany, Spain, and the UK is smaller than the proportion of comedy films in the sample; and they have among the lowest median grosses with few films reaching the top 10 and none whatsoever in Spain. This is not the case in France or Italy, where films in this genre are largely comprised of domestic productions unique to these countries and achieve a much greater proportion of the total gross. In fact, comedy accounts for a quarter of the total gross in Italy, far out-grossing the other genres; and this is the only country in which comedy accounts for more than a handful of films to reach the top 10. Of the sixteen comedy films to achieve a top 10 ranking in Italy, fourteen are domestic productions. A particularly popular series is Neri Parenti's 'Film di Natale' (also known more derogatorily as *cinapanettone*, see O'Leary [2011]), with a top 10 film in every year in the survey. This series also accounts for the single top 10 co-production

(*Natale a Beverly Hills/Christmas in Beverly Hills*). The only non-Italian comedy film to make the top 10 was *The Devil Wears Prada*. Although the highest grossing film in France was the domestic comedy film *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis/Welcome to the Sticks*, there is no similar pattern of comedy films at the very highest reaches of the box office charts. The proportion of the total gross is equal to the proportion of comedy films in the sample, but the median gross is relatively low and there are only five films to make it into the top 10. Thus in both France and Italy the comedy film accounts for a significant number of domestically produced films unique to these markets, but it is only in the latter that films from this genre are able to displace action/adventure and fantasy/science fiction films in the box office rankings.

Generally, films in the genres that make up the category 'other' perform less well than the major genres described above. In the UK the top five grossing films in the category 'other' are all musicals, with *Mamma Mia!* (at \$134.06 million) the second highest grossing film in the UK in the time period covered and this accounts for the relatively large total gross of this category in the UK. There are no similar patterns or such high grossing films in this category in the other countries.

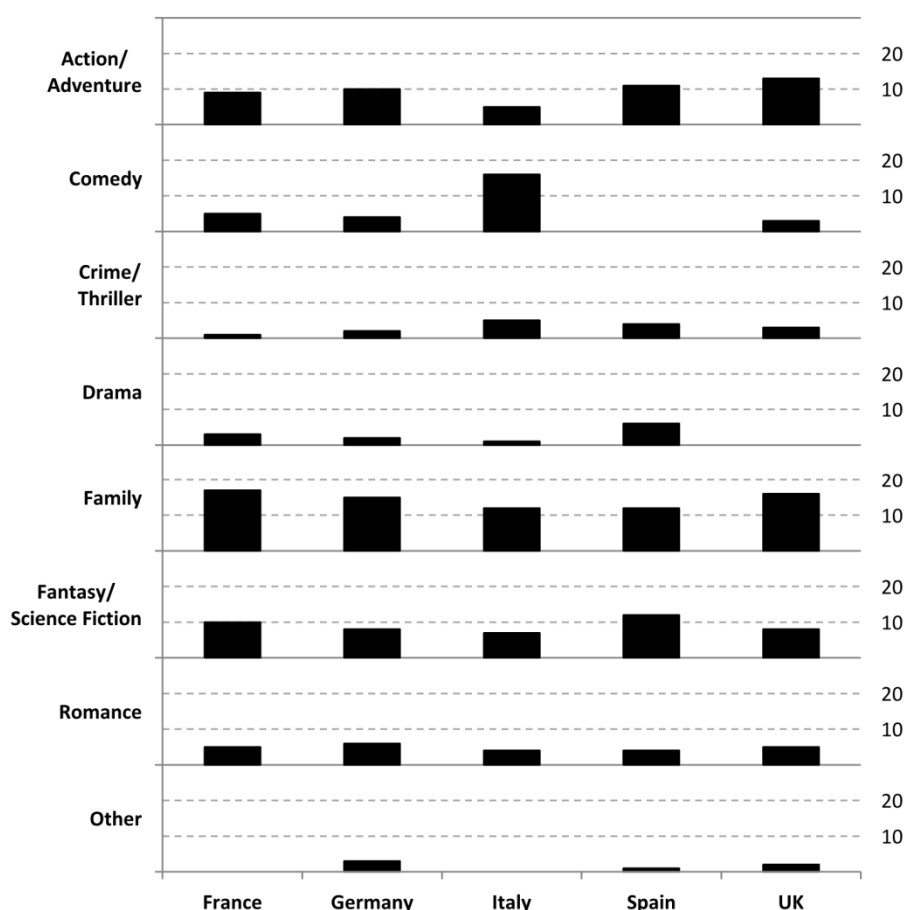


Figure 1 Frequency of genre films in the top 10 box office rankings in five European countries, 2006 to 2010.

Genre trends in five European countries, 2006 to 2010

Table 4 Cumulative and median box office grosses (2010 US dollars) and top 10 films in each genre in five European countries, 2006 to 2010

		Action/ Adventure	Comedy	Crime/ Thriller	Drama	Family	Fantasy/ Science Fiction	Romance	Other	Total
France	Total (\$m)	789.14	926.28	367.67	592.94	1185.62	689.05	331.98	182.92	5065.59
	N	39	44	28	42	45	23	17	12	250
	Median (\$m)	16.65	12.98	11.82	10.16	21.76	21.17	16.68	14.00	13.61
Germany	Total (\$m)	758.88	603.30	252.62	414.72	977.37	663.04	450.12	261.44	4381.49
	N	39	49	16	31	51	23	23	18	250
	Median (\$m)	14.62	11.73	10.95	10.26	13.37	14.94	15.64	11.22	12.65
Italy	Total (\$m)	404.08	796.97	275.30	278.40	553.75	382.84	304.50	117.34	3113.17
	N	36	56	24	32	38	22	28	14	250
	Median (\$m)	10.13	10.31	7.68	8.27	10.43	12.77	9.07	7.30	9.28
Spain	Total (\$m)	620.19	216.01	362.41	371.97	634.45	465.00	184.03	145.39	2999.44
	N	48	26	33	36	45	29	17	16	250
	Median (\$m)	11.26	8.29	8.12	9.31	11.28	10.06	6.90	7.86	9.36
UK	Total (\$m)	1441.32	906.20	368.12	308.65	1445.33	1027.47	457.49	488.32	6442.91
	N	42	53	16	23	46	30	18	22	250
	Median (\$m)	24.56	12.88	15.40	12.16	25.96	18.08	20.12	16.52	16.73

Genre and national cinemas

Empirical analysis of genre trends in five European countries shows the frequency of genres is homogeneous across all five countries, with one notable exception; the number of unique films in a country varies from genre to genre and is associated with the distinction between 'technology-friendly' and 'non-technology friendly' genres; and, variation among production sources differs from genre to genre and from country to country with domestic film production in the continental countries associated with 'non-technology friendly' genres, while co-productions in the UK are associated with technology-intensive genres. Finally, with the exception of the comedy film in Italy, 'technology-friendly' genres dominate the box office in each country with the same types of films reaching the top of the box office charts.

A key finding of this study is that Hollywood-produced and European-produced films are associated with different genres. Wang (2011) distinguished between 'technology-friendly' (TF) genres with a heavy-reliance on special effects (corresponding to action/adventure, fantasy/science fiction, and animated family films in this study) and 'non-technology friendly' (comedy, drama, crime/thriller, romance, and non-animated family films), and analysing the long-term production trends across a range of countries concluded those countries with the largest home markets (i.e. the US and Japan) have risen to leading positions in 'technology-friendly' genre production while smaller countries have fallen behind and that this reflected a trend to international specialization in genre production. Although based on box-office rather than production data the results of this study generally confirm this division between Hollywood-produced films that dominate TF genres and which are internationally successful, and the European-produced films associated with non-TF genres and that tend to be restricted to their home market. This is clearly evident in the strong association between films involving producers from France, Italy, and Germany and the comedy, drama, and romance genres. What little Spanish film production there is among the top 50 grossing films is also associated with non-TF genres. However, the UK does not fit neatly into this pattern since film production among the highest grossing films in this country is strongly associated with co-productions in TF genres. Unlike the US or Japan the UK does not have a thriving special effects industry because it has a large home-market but because it services films originating in other markets (i.e. Hollywood) and this has not resulted in a significant number of domestic productions in technology-friendly genres. The status of the UK in the global film industry is therefore quite different to that of other European countries.

An intriguing question raised by this research is why the proportion of films in each genre is homogeneous across different countries when the source of production of films in those genres varies from country to country. Domestic comedy films in France and Italy achieve high ranks whereas internationally produced comedy films do not, while in the UK the situation is reversed with international productions dominating this genre to the almost total exclusion of domestic films. Domestic films simply do not co-exist side by side with international films in this genre even when the proportion of films in this genre is homogeneous. Similarly, in the romance genre we see that films with a home producer in France and Italy make the top 50 alongside the core of international films that feature in all five countries, whereas these eight films feature alongside other international films in Germany, Spain, and the UK. We do not see any evidence that when international films from one genre are absent from a market they are replaced by similar films from another genre: for example, the absence of international comedy films in France does not lead to an increase in international films in the action/adventure genre. One possibility is that a film is primarily in competition with films from the same genre irrespective of its source of production so that more domestic films in a particular genre do not translate into more films from the same genre but into fewer non-domestic films within that genre: that is, Italian comedy

films are in competition with non-Italian comedy films and not with films from other genres wherever they may originate from. There is no research in this area to guide us: although Ainslie, Drèze, and Zufyden (2005) showed that releasing a film contemporaneously with other movies of the same genre adversely affects box office in the short- and the long-term, they did not take into account a film's source of production relative to the market in question.

The results presented here suggest national cinema and genre are closely interrelated, and that for audiences in these five European countries the decision about which films to see presents itself as a choice between genres that is often also a choice between Hollywood films and domestic films. There is an extensive body of literature on the theory of film genres and on the theory of national cinemas but the relationship between genre and nationality remains under-theorised. Genre is used in the study of national cinemas to organise production trends within a territory (see, for example, Street 2008) or is represented as an intruding cultural 'other' to be countered by a 'genuine' national cinema rejecting the generic conventions of Hollywood cinema; while nationality is understood as a means by which genres are 'indigenized' in culturally specific contexts (O'Regan 1996) or is presented as simply another way of categorising films, that is, as a genre. Genre studies do not generally address issues of nationality in depth (if they refer to it at all) and national labels are often used only to distinguish between production trends at the level of sub-genres. Although their complexity is widely recognised in their individual fields, the concepts of genre/nationality are often used uncritically as modifiers when talking about nationality/genre (e.g. French *comedy* film or *German* romance film). In light of our analysis it is necessary to recognise that when we talk about national cinemas we are often talking about particular genres and that when we talk about genre we are often talking about films that originate from particular film industries. Taking this as our starting point we can begin to understand genre and national cinema not as separate concepts but as integrated at the most fundamental level and this should determine our future research in this area.

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