

CONTENT TRENDS

How they develop **content business** in mainland China and surrounding Asian countries and vice versa

Discover 7 examples,  
tips and 1 case study



# Summary

## 07 examples

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2. UnREAL : India
3. The Bridge : Malaysia / Singapore / Indonesia
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7. I love my country : Vietnam

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Toned down to work better

A strong emphasis on collaboration

An Asian version of a show can be a great sell-on asset

Be flexible with show structures

Look out for changing regulations

## 01 case study

MOTHER

# Content trends – 7 formats doing the business in Asia

DIFFERENCES in audience taste, combined with competition from strong local producers, has meant that tape sales into Asia have long been difficult to do. Western animation was a partial exception, though even this genre often found it difficult to break out of pay TV and find berths on free-to-air channels.

# Key developments making Western IPs successful in Asia

In recent times, however, **a couple of major developments have boosted the fortunes of Western IP in Asia.**


The first is the **emergence of streaming platforms**, which have been more open to acquiring non-traditional content. In China in particular, there has been a boom in business thanks to the likes of iQiyi, Tencent, Youku and Bilibili.

The second is the **inexorable rise of the scripted and unscripted format business**. With this model, Western ideas can be adapted to fit local sensibilities. Introducing characters that local audiences can relate to is the key here, but so is the cultural tone of the show.

**A show that is regarded as too risqué or progressive in Asia can be softened without adversely affected the core mechanic that drives viewing.**

Also important is that format adaptation is usually an exercise in collaboration. Rather than a Western firm simply parachuting in completed shows, **it is required to work with local producers, broadcasters and talent agencies** to make a show happen. In other words, local stakeholders feel engaged, respected and remunerated. There is a growing roster of great adaptations.

**Below, we profile 8 examples of shows that have seized the Asian opportunity.**



01

# Got Talent : China

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# FREMANTLE/Syco Entertainment's feelgood format Got Talent seems to work everywhere – and China is no exception.

The current season is produced by Star Canxing and simulcast on both Tik Tok in China and local broadcaster JiangsuTV.

Previously, the show aired on Dragon TV.

Known locally as Dian Zan Da Ren Xiu, the new season of China's Got Talent airs weekly on Sundays at 21.00 and comprises 11 episodes. Commenting on the decision to work with two platforms, Ganesh Rajaram, general manager and executive vice-president of sales for Asia at Fremantle, said it would *“help us to maximise the series potential to reach a wider audience”*.



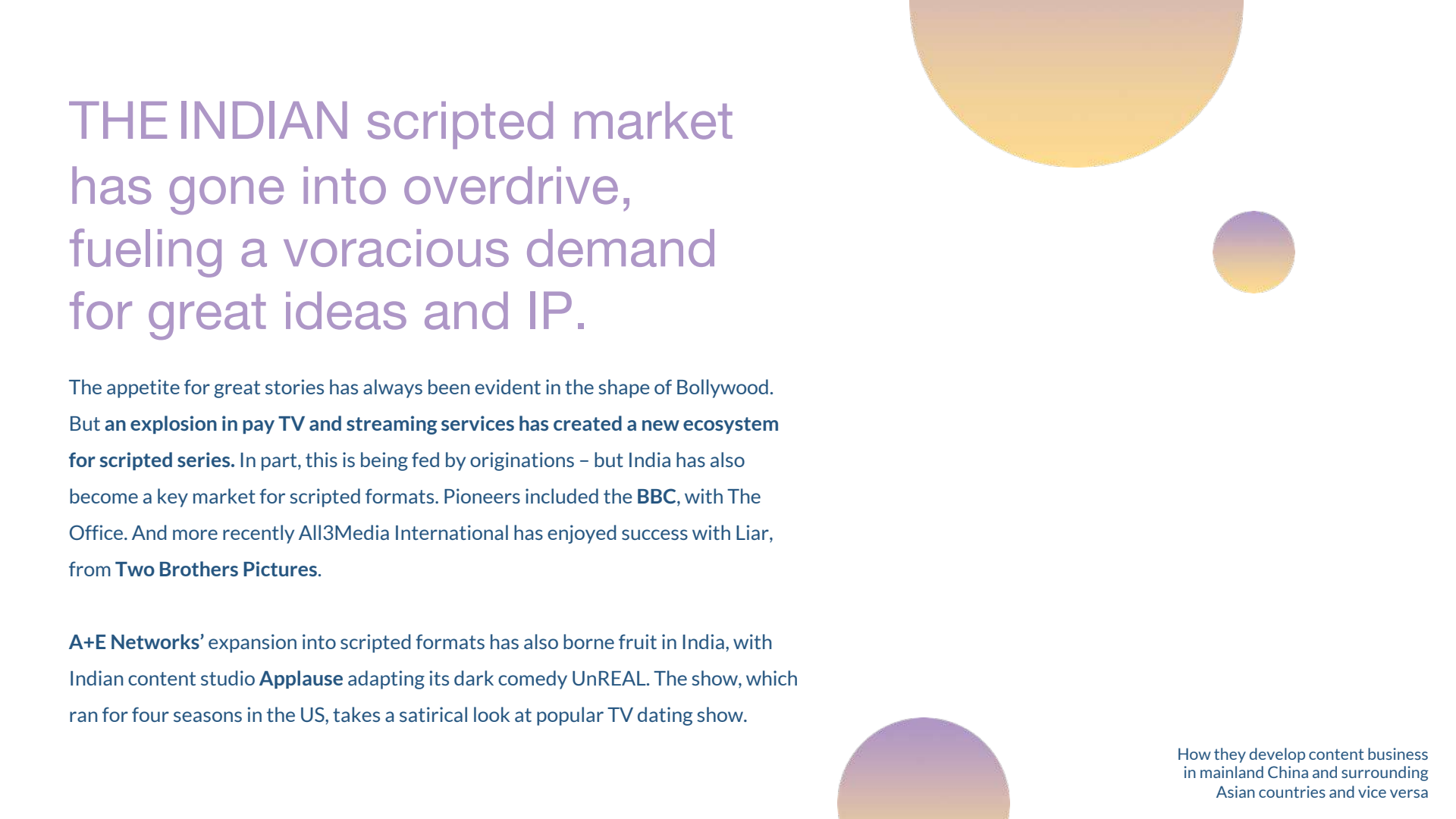
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02

## UnREAL : India

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# THE INDIAN scripted market has gone into overdrive, fueling a voracious demand for great ideas and IP.

The appetite for great stories has always been evident in the shape of Bollywood. But an **explosion in pay TV and streaming services has created a new ecosystem for scripted series**. In part, this is being fed by originations – but India has also become a key market for scripted formats. Pioneers included the **BBC**, with *The Office*. And more recently All3Media International has enjoyed success with *Liar*, from **Two Brothers Pictures**.

**A+E Networks'** expansion into scripted formats has also borne fruit in India, with Indian content studio **Applause** adapting its dark comedy *UnREAL*. The show, which ran for four seasons in the US, takes a satirical look at popular TV dating show.



**Applause** committed to one 10-episode season, with an option for a second season. At the time of the deal, Sameer Nair, CEO of **Applause**, said: *“Indian audiences have always loved reality shows, and UnREAL – a brilliant show on the behind-the-scenes conniving of a dating show – is bound to be a unique reality check in India’s exploding digital content space.”*



03

## The Bridge : Malaysia/Singapore/ Indonesia

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WHO WOULD have thought that a thriller based around an incident on the Sweden / Denmark border could be so adaptable worldwide?

But alongside remakes involving the UK/France, USA/Mexico, Estonia/Russia and Germany/Russia, **SVT/DR** co-production **Bron** (The Bridge) has been relocated to the Singapore/Malaysia border.



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Season one aired on pay-TV channel **HBO Asia**, streaming platform **Viu** and was simulcast in Malaysia by **NTV7**. A 10-part second season aired in 2020, with **HBO** and **Viu** the primary partners again. Adding to the thrill factor, “the second season introduces an Indonesian dimension, which escalates the stakes and production value of the series,” said Jessica Kam, head of **HBO Asia Original Production, WarnerMedia Entertainment Networks & Sales, SE Asia, Pacific and China**.

Sahana Kamath, head of original production for **Viu** Indonesia and Malaysia, said series two is : *“a true regional production with more twists and turns, moving the action seamlessly across three countries”*.



04

# Lego Masters : South Korea

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# BANIJAY Rights-distributed Lego Masters is one of the surprise format successes in recent years,

racking up territories such as the US, Australia and Scandinavia.  
But even the creators of the show (**Tuesday's Child**) must marvel  
at the fact that the show has conquered both the Chinese and Korean  
television markets in the last year.



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Leading Korean channel **MBC** has agreed to broadcast a local version of the show, which it will co-produce with production company B&C Content. Commenting on the breakthrough partnership, Daryl Kho, senior vice-president, Asia – formats, **Banijay Rights**, said: *“Lego Masters is already a global phenomenon, providing upbeat and inclusive viewing to audiences worldwide. This is a landmark deal – the only unscripted format originating from outside South Korea to air on its free-to-air channels.”*



05

## Doctor Foster : The Philippines

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# THE PHILIPPINES doesn't feature often in the international TV trade publications,

but it is home to a vibrant TV market with some powerful broadcasting entities. One of these is **ABS-CBN**, which recently signed up to create a local version of BBC Studios scripted format Doctor Foster.

Written by Mike Bartlett, the series focuses on a doctor whose life spirals out of control when she suspects her husband of having an affair. The format has proved popular on the international market, having been adapted in Korea, France, Russia, Turkey, and India.



The Filipino version will be a 50 x 60-minute series produced by **ABS-CBN Entertainment**. Cory Vidanes, **ABS-CBN** COO of broadcast, said the company is looking forward to producing *“this highly engaging and relatable story for the Filipino audience. True to our commitment to serve the Filipino, we are excited to create our own retelling of this story, and to see the characters come alive with Filipino elements.”*



06

## Ru Paul's Drag Race : Thailand

# DRAG Race is a global phenomenon, spawning several spin-off shows and local versions.

A little-known fact, however, is that **Thailand was one of the first countries outside the US to produce its own version.** The show is hosted by local drag stars Art Arya and Pangina Heals, and is already prepping its third season.

The original show is produced by World of Wonder, which is looking to build a dedicated streaming proposition based around the franchise. The Thai version, meanwhile, is handled by **Kantana** and airs on **Line TV**. There was a second season in 2019 and **Kantana** has said the show will return in 2022.





07

I love my country :  
Vietnam

# ECHOING a point made in the introduction about intermediaries, a lot of hit formats in Vietnam go via Dong Tay Promotions.

Formed in 2000, **Dong Tay** produces 1200 hours of content a year for leading broadcasters. Titles it has brokered into Vietnam include Idol, So You Think You Can Dance and Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader ?

In 2020, it also picked up the rights to **ITV Studios'** I Love My Country, with plans to produce the show for **HTV**. Despite belonging to **ITV**, the format is actually Dutch in origin and was created by **John De Mol**. It has sold to around 25 countries including China and Thailand.

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# 5 Useful Takeaways to seize the Asian opportunity

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# 5 Useful Takeaways to seize the Asian opportunity

## 01

Asian cultures are generally more conservative than those in the West – so risqué or provocative formats like Love Island and Married At First Sight may need to be toned down to work across the region.

## 02

Asian territories place a strong emphasis on collaboration – so expect to share responsibility for the local version with a trusted producer or the in-house division of one of the leading broadcasters.

## 03

An Asian version of a show can be a great sell-on asset. Korean and Japanese shows in particular are widely viewed across the region – so there may be additional revenues from completed sales.



# 5 Useful Takeaways to seize the Asian opportunity

## 04

Prepare to be flexible with show structures: there's no guarantee that local broadcasters will share Western-style scheduling templates. This has historically been true in Japan, for example.

## 05

Look out for changing regulations, with governments sometimes restricting the volume of Western content that can be commissioned. Monetisation models may also be different, with advertiser barter arrangements sometimes the preferred way of doing business.

# “Mother”: one of the most exported scripted format out of Asia

Licensed in more than 10 countries,  
discover how Nippon TV's Mother  
Transformed Japanese Scripted Exports.



# “Mother” : one of the most exported scripted format out of Asia

It's fair to say that Korea has been the most successful Asian territory when it comes to exporting content & scripted format around the world. But Japan has also had some notable successes in the international market...


The majority of Japan's recent successes on the international market have been **entertainment formats, high-end documentaries and anime**. But **Nippon TV's** ongoing success with the format of scripted series **Mother** has showcased a new dimension to Japan's creativity and commercial acumen.



“Mother” : one of the most exported scripted format out of Asia

First adapted for the Turkish market, the format for Mother has now been sold into several major markets. It has also opened the way for other **Nippon TV** shows to secure remake deals. Here we talk to Yuki Akehi, director and head of marketing and PR, international business development, **Nippon TV**, about the company's experience with exporting Mother.

"Mother" : one of the most exported scripted format out of Asia

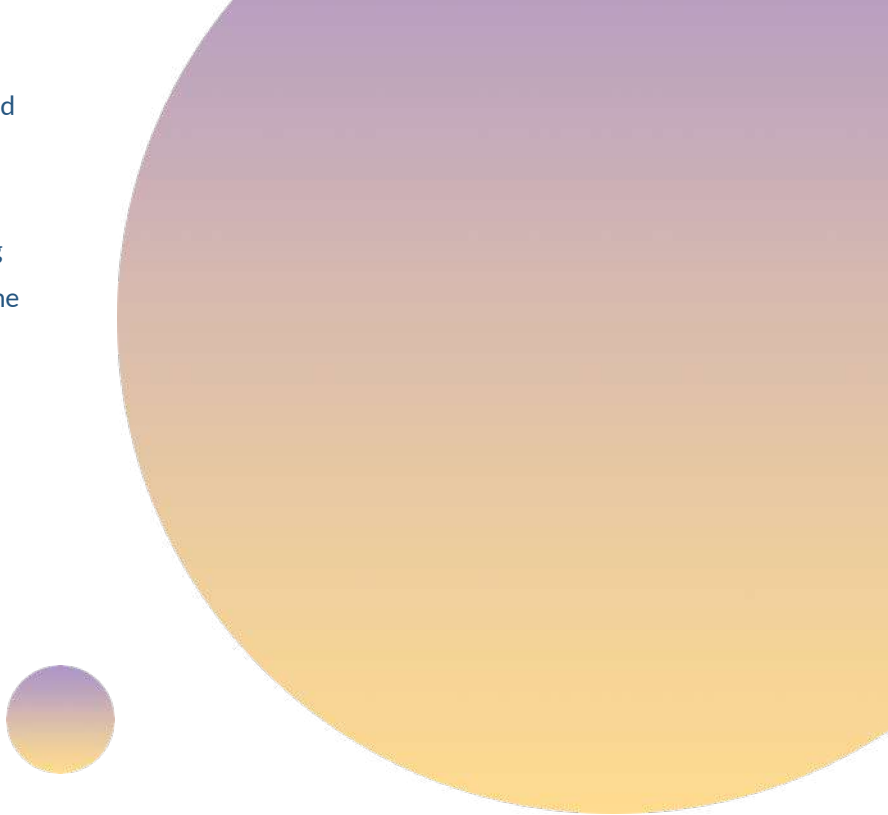


01

Can you tell us  
the plot line of  
the format Mother?

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The heroine of this drama is a woman in her mid-thirties who has apathetically lived her life without interest in romance, society or even her own life. Working as an elementary school teacher, she learns that one of her students is being abused at home. Although unable to comprehend her sudden impulse, she kidnaps the young abused girl to bring up as her own. This is where the story begins. Later, while on the run, she re-examines her past lifestyle and searches for her path in life. Pivotal to this drama is the word “maternal”. The heroine, who had never awakened to her own maternal side, discovers this instinct deep within herself.



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02

When did Mother  
launch in Japan?  
Did it do well  
in terms of ratings?

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Mother was created by the team of **Nippon TV's** producer and director Hisashi Tsugiyama and Nobuo Mizuta and award-winning scriptwriter Yuji Sakamoto. It started filming in early 2010 and finished in June 2010. It aired in primetime on **Nippon TV** – and its network stations – to rave reviews and high ratings. It subsequently won awards at home and around the world.

"Mother": one of the most exported scripted format out of Asia





03

Was it renewed  
in the domestic  
market?

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The term “renewal” does not often apply in the Japanese industry. **Mother was not written with multiple seasons in mind.** It had 11 episodes and the plan was for them all to be 60 minutes. But the season premiere and finale were both programmed longer due to high anticipation before the premiere, as well as heightened interest in the ending.

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04

Would you say  
it was typical of  
Japanese content  
at that time?

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Japanese viewers were intrigued from the first episode because it was not typical at all. Tsugiya and Mizuta were seasoned creators, but it was the first time they had worked with Sakamoto. Between them, they set out to create a story that they believed was necessary for the times. **They had multiple meetings where they discussed what made them angriest in society, and child abuse was the unanimous topic.** Once the theme was set, director Mizuta brought his expertise in telling the story, utilising cutting-edge camera and editing techniques to show the story in the most dramatic way. Once the series aired, viewers were quick to notice the high production values as well as the poignant message of the story. The story of an abused child and the woman who had never awakened to her own maternal side, along with the harsh reality faced by the biological mother of the child, stirred viewers' feelings.

"Mother": one of the most exported scripted format out of Asia



05


How did  
the international  
rollout work?

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It sold immediately to Asian countries where we have clients and viewers that are keen to acquire and watch Japanese series shortly after they air in Japan. South Korea is a prominent example, where **CJENM** was our client for acquiring the scripted format rights. South Korea's scripted market is known for making meticulous preparations in creating captive series for their audience, and while they were working on the local script with their writers, **MF Yapim/Medyapim** from Turkey actually became the first to actually to produce a local version in 2016.




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06

How did the Turkish deal come about?

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**MF Yapim/Medyapim** are two major Turkish production companies lead by Faruk Bayhan and Fatih Aksoy. They are not the same company, but they work very closely – and they had been looking for new types of series for their competitive market. **Mother was an impactful genre that they had never seen before, and they had a very strong desire to adapt our story in their way.**

It is always a bit worrying to work with a foreign country for the first time, but it was timely that Turkey was the country of honour at MIPCOM 2015. **Their ability to create stories with high production values was impressive**, and the distribution record of completed Turkish shows to international countries was eye opening. That all supported us during the initial business negotiations between two completely different content industries working together for the first time. It took quite some time and a lot of discussions. But in the end, their passion persuaded us to pursue Nippon TV's first ever deal with a Turkish production company. As a result, Mother became the first Japanese scripted format to be adapted in Turkey.

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07


Can you provide  
more insight into  
the creative  
collaboration?

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**MF Yapim/Medyapim** proposed some new ideas to intrigue their viewers and produce more episodes, and Sakamoto and the team were quick to understand the necessity of those local adaptation ideas. They approved, but only after trust between the creators was established. **Looking back, a factor that helped both companies to overcome their cultural differences was that the theme of the script was motherhood.** It is a theme every culture has interest in and can relate to. There was also another similarity between the two countries: the style of both series productions is not so direct; they make viewers read between the lines, and take in the message of the story without it being overtly said or acted out.



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08

How did the Turkish  
version work out?

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Anne – the title of the local version of the show – was produced to a high standard and the result was phenomenal. **The story became an instant hit on Turkish broadcaster Star TV.** Each episode was double our length, spanning over 30 episodes. Anne brought a dramatic new approach to the Dizi industry with its heart-wrenching story and realistic portrayal. It was a new genre in the fiercely competitive weekday night drama scene and ratings grew week after week.

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09

How does  
the distribution  
of Anne work?

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Turkish content has excellent global reach, from the Middle East to East Europe and Central and South America. Anne is distributed by **Global Agency** on the behalf of MF Yapim/Medyapim and us and has sold to over 40 countries worldwide. It is an innovative partnership, where the original IP holder also gets a share of the revenue of the tape sales.

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10

Did you secure more format deals in Turkey as a result of Mother's success?

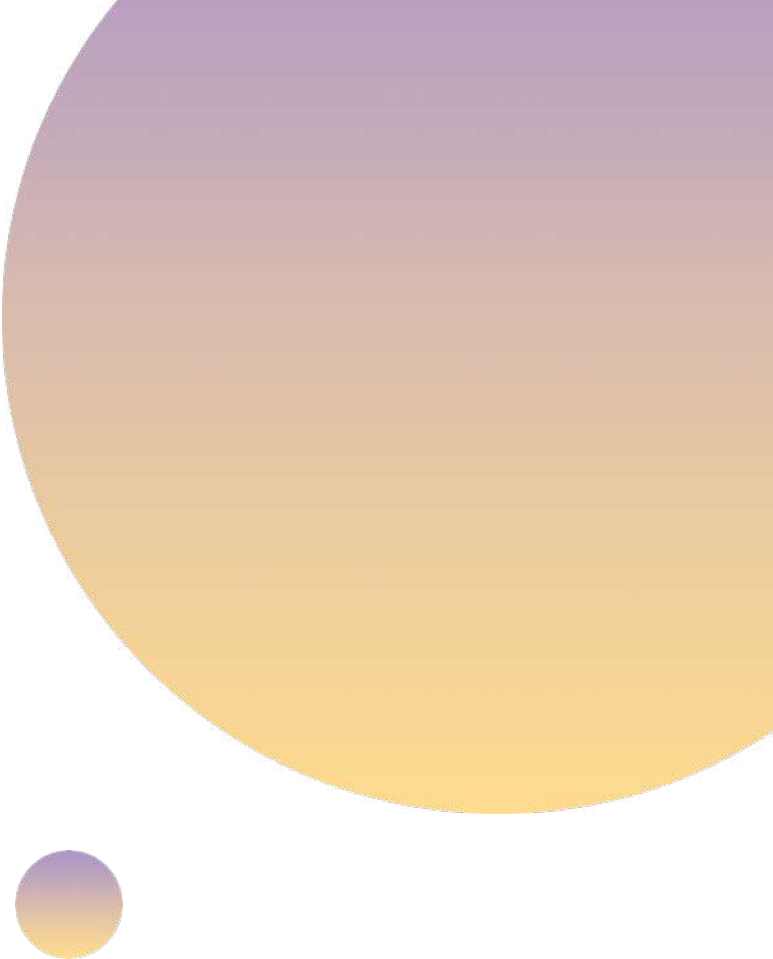
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After Anne, **MF Yapim/Medyapim** proceeded to adapt another scripted format of ours, Woman – My Life for My Children. This was another series that had been created for **Nippon TV** by Tsugiya, Mizuta and Sakamoto, in 2013. The team reunited to tell the story of a single mother living in harsh reality and her relationship with her estranged mother. **MF Yapim/Medyapim** and **Fox Turkey** set out to produce and air Kadin – the title of the adaptation of Woman – in 2017. Again, the magnificent portrayal captivated the audience and it went on for an astonishing three hugely successful seasons spanning over three years in total. Echoing the previous success of Mother, it has been distributed in almost 50 countries.

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So far, other format deals in Turkey are all with **MF Yapim/Medyapim**. Although we do not have an exclusive partnership, their interest in Nippon TV series continues, and led to Mr. Hiiragi's Homeroom being adapted as *Öğretmen* in March 2020 and *Abandoned as Cocukluk* in October 2020. The latest adaptation is our *Oasis* – a love story adapted as *Misafir*, currently airing on **FOX Turkey**. We have also announced the adaptation deal of our *My Son* and *I'm MITA*, *Your Housekeeper*, which again should be well received by the Turkish audiences.



"Mother": one of the most exported scripted format out of Asia



1 1

Have you done  
other format deals  
for Mother?

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scripted format out of Asia

Yes, word travelled quickly and we started to receive many offers for more international adaptations. **Mother has now been licensed to South Korea, Turkey, Ukraine, France, Thailand, China, Indonesia and Spain, making it one of the most exported formats out of Asia according to K7 Media (Nov, 2021).** Indonesia has not yet started production due to the pandemic but Spain is in preparation. Our first adaptation in Western Europe is the French version *Sauver Lisa* (Saving Lisa), produced by Édouard de Vésinne's production company **Incognita**. It first streamed in July on **SALTO** to rave reviews and is currently airing on M6.



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1 2

What is the usual  
distribution model  
on these format  
adaptations?

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**We retain the original rights to the scripted format, while our partners produce and distribute their version and the revenue is shared.** South Korea aired their version in 10 countries in Asia at the same time and we expect the Spanish version to travel as well.

[Editor's note: the Korean version of Mother actually sold back into Japan, where it aired on **Nittele Plus**, a channel operated by **Nippon TV**. **Nittele Plus** aired the original Japanese version in its entirety as well as all episodes of the South Korean remake. Binge watching to compare the original with the remake is popular on Japanese pay-TV platforms].

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1 3

What key lessons  
have you learned  
from which others  
might benefit?

Flexibility is essential for a successful adaptation.  
But before you reach this point, **you need to understand and build trust with your client and have passion for your content to travel.** The original party needs to have confidence that the adapting party understands the important underlying spirit of the original story before greenlighting their adaptation. **The depth of communications that you make until you gain that confidence is what makes the difference.** Our creators and those of us in the international business division witnessed the passion, strong understanding and dedication of **MF Yapim/Medyapim.** That made it possible for us to support their decisions, leading to the enormous global success of Mother.



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14

Any other positive  
developments  
on the format front?



We recently did a deal with streamer **Netflix** in Asia for several completed series and entertainment shows. Netflix has a keen eye for content and we are happy with this non-exclusive deal, which has opened more doors for us. Since that deal we have received interest from clients who were not aware that our shows might resonate with their local audience.

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# Conclusion

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