

TAC

TAC Submission to the Welsh Affairs Select Committee inquiry on International Representation and Promotion of Wales by UK Bodies

Introduction

1. TAC represents around 40 independent TV production companies in Wales. These companies provide a range of TV and related content to Welsh and UK broadcasters, but also are increasingly looking to work with overseas broadcasters, selling programmes, ideas and formats.
2. TAC therefore welcomes the committee's inquiry and will in particular focus on our members' experiences and perspectives pertaining to two of the committee's key areas of interest:
 - Whether Wales has an identifiable 'brand' overseas
 - How successful UK bodies, including the UK Government, the Welsh Government and UK Trade and Investment, have been in promoting Wales as a place to do business and invest, and promoting Welsh products overseas
 - How effectively is Welsh culture promoted overseas by UK Government bodies, such as the British Council and the FCO
3. In summary TAC's members have expressed the concern that whilst generic support is available for TV producers to promote themselves overseas, no real advantage is taken of the potential boost from a Welsh 'brand' or help given to the Welsh creative as a specific sector.
4. At the moment Wales is all but invisible. It is left to Welsh companies to promote Wales, and whilst the financial aid from the Welsh Assembly Government is welcome there is much more that Welsh and UK Governments could do.
5. Whilst Welsh TV production is a specific sector and would benefit per se from any strengthening of the Welsh 'brand' and / or help with specific stands at trade fairs, it must be remembered that TV is a very powerful medium for promoting a region or country. Tourism can therefore be boosted if greater efforts can be made to promote Welsh productions.

Welsh Production Companies

6. TAC members have sought to maximise opportunities for international deals. They have managed to do this to a significant extent, but it has been done through individual company efforts rather than as part of an overall strategy and it means that only the biggest companies are able to invest on the kind of market presence that international sales normally require.
7. For example, Caernarfon-based **Cwmni Da** has been pro-active in the international television market place for several years, successfully negotiating co-production and distribution deals with multiple partners in many territories including Europe, North America and China.
8. Recent successes include selling (via distributor Nordic World) factual entertainment format *Farm Factor* (S4C) to China and Denmark, and securing distribution deal with Content West for *Helicopter Rescue* (BBC).
9. Another example company is **Rondo**, which produces successful programmes such as the award-winning *Indian Doctor* and Welsh soap *Rownd-a-Rownd*.
10. Rondo's *My Tattoo Addiction* was originally commissioned by Channel 4 as a one off documentary in 2012, with a follow up three-part series in 2013. The commission was facilitated by a small investment from C4's Alpha Fund, supported by the Welsh Assembly Government. All four documentaries were critical and commercial successes, achieving above slot-average audience figures and selling well internationally (via BBC Worldwide). This is one of the first examples of a fully funded factual series for Channel 4 produced by an indigenous Welsh production company, and part of that broadcaster's current emphasis on increasing commissions from the Nations.
11. Similarly Welsh indie **Avanti** has also benefitted from Channel 4's Alpha fund and WAG investment to make programmes for UK network television, allowing it to break through to a UK-wide audience, which in itself is a major stepping-stone to promote its programmes internationally.
12. Avanti is also currently producing a Factual Entertainment Pilot for Sony's 'format farm' in partnership with S4C. This timely initiative will open the door on high volume returnable sales in a global market. In the global market place also Avanti will be launching in this October's Mipcom a breaking science series for 7-9 year-olds, *Wonderworld*, in partnership with Zodiac (a specialist in international children's programme distribution). Avanti's Development unit is this year considering three 'first-look' deals from one major UK Independent distributor and two global Distribution companies that would see real returnable value and global sales.

13. **Boom Pictures'** stable of companies has managed to have some success abroad, again mainly due to building on support from S4C, the Welsh Government and the C4 Alpha Fund: **Boomerang** has produced the successful "Posh Pawn" format for C4 which is selling well internationally; **Indus Films'** critically acclaimed factual programmes sell across the World, examples including *Bruce Parry's Arctic* and *Amazon*, *Kate Humble: Shepherdess* and *World's Greatest Markets*; **Cloth Cat Animation** reinforces Wales's strong reputation for creating world class animation, with series such as *Toot the Tiny Tugboat* and *Boj* (both supported by S4C and the Welsh Government), selling around the world.
14. S4C's commitment to children's programming makes it one of the biggest commissioners of Kids TV. This has helped Boom Pictures become one of the largest providers of children's content in the UK, and now *Ludus*, a spin-off of an S4C format has recently been produced for CBBC and is now being sold on the international market.
15. All this shows that Welsh TV production companies are creating compelling content that when the correct resources are applied, can generate further income and promote Wales as a country, both as a provider of expertly produced TV and animation and often also as a tourist destination. But more needs to be done in terms of promoting Wales as a brand and providing wider support to the whole sector on obtaining routes to market.

Does Wales has an identifiable 'brand', and how successful have UK bodies been in promoting Wales as a place to do business and invest, and promoting Welsh products overseas?

16. There appears to be no one clear brand that embraces all agencies in the context of promotion. This means that Wales has to be 'explained' each time in any new venture. However, the recent Visit Wales promotion (produced by a Welsh team) successfully created a tourism brand and this may be something which could be expanded upon to help market industries such as TV.
17. It is felt that in general, in the field of its creative industries at least, the Welsh 'brand' receives little marketing. Whilst Welsh culture has made impacts across the UK in terms of music and TV amongst other things, this has not translated into the international sphere.
18. To this extent TAC feels that those responsible for marketing UK content are missing a trick in terms of demonstrating that the UK is not all about London or even England but has member nations with their own cultures, perspectives and talents. The more Welsh culture, locations and language are visible internationally, this would without doubt have a significant positive knock-on effect for Welsh tourism.
19. Outside of limited content promotion by S4C, there is no visible Welsh presence in the international TV marketplace. There is no branding or culturally identifiable marketing that specifically promotes Wales, Welsh content, Welsh culture or Wales as a potential place to do business. Welsh producers are instead represented on the British UK Indies

stand or, as in the case of Welsh indie Cwmni Da, are represented independently by company directors and development staff.

20. As a case study: Cwmni Da has regularly attended the main European markets for television content, Mip TV (held in April) and Mip Com (held in October) for over a decade. In that time the company has been represented independently and also been part of the UK Indies Stand, part funded by PACT and UK Trade and Investment. The company has also received financial assistance by the WAG to help pay for travel, accommodation and delegate fees. But Cwmni Da content is represented by three main international distributors, Nordic World, Content West and Zodiak Rights. There is no Welsh distributor and other companies' content is represented by a wide variety of international distributors.
21. Both Mip TV and Mipcom attract in excess of 10,000 delegates, and are by far the biggest and most important European marketplaces for content. But despite the huge opportunity presented by these markets, the only identifiable Welsh branding that has been visible has been Welsh content on the S4C International stand. This was at its strongest in the 1980s but has since disappeared completely.
22. A contrast can be made here in terms of the Republic of Ireland. Ireland has a strong presence in the form of a joint stand between the Irish Film Board and Irish Producers representation. They host a drinks reception for buyers, sellers and potential business partners.
23. The importance and visibility afforded to buyers and sellers in these two markets cannot be underestimated. Distributors, broadcasters, production companies are all at these markets and it is a golden opportunity to promote both business, culture and opportunities that mark out Wales as a special place to do business.
24. Many companies cannot afford to go to market and do not know how the system works. Having some sort of representation with year round backing would grow companies understanding and confidence of the marketplace and boost business opportunities. TAC would like to see UKTI establish a partnership with Welsh producers – with TAC / S4C to represent Welsh content and production talent.

How effectively is Welsh culture promoted overseas?

25. TAC's current impression is that activity promoting Welsh culture overseas is piecemeal. There is a strong relationship between the FCO and ACW and other cultural organisations, but the agenda is British and the lack of a strong Wales core brand is a problem.
26. Wales is still identified by the old industrial ethos and the values and images that are associated with this. This runs counter to the modernity of Welsh cultural efforts and the individuals who are known on the world stage.

27. TAC would argue that Wales needs to have a national conversation about its 'brand'. Out of that conversation we may be able to drill down to the core elements of 21st century Wales. This process would inspire the creative industries to work together with clarity in promoting Wales.