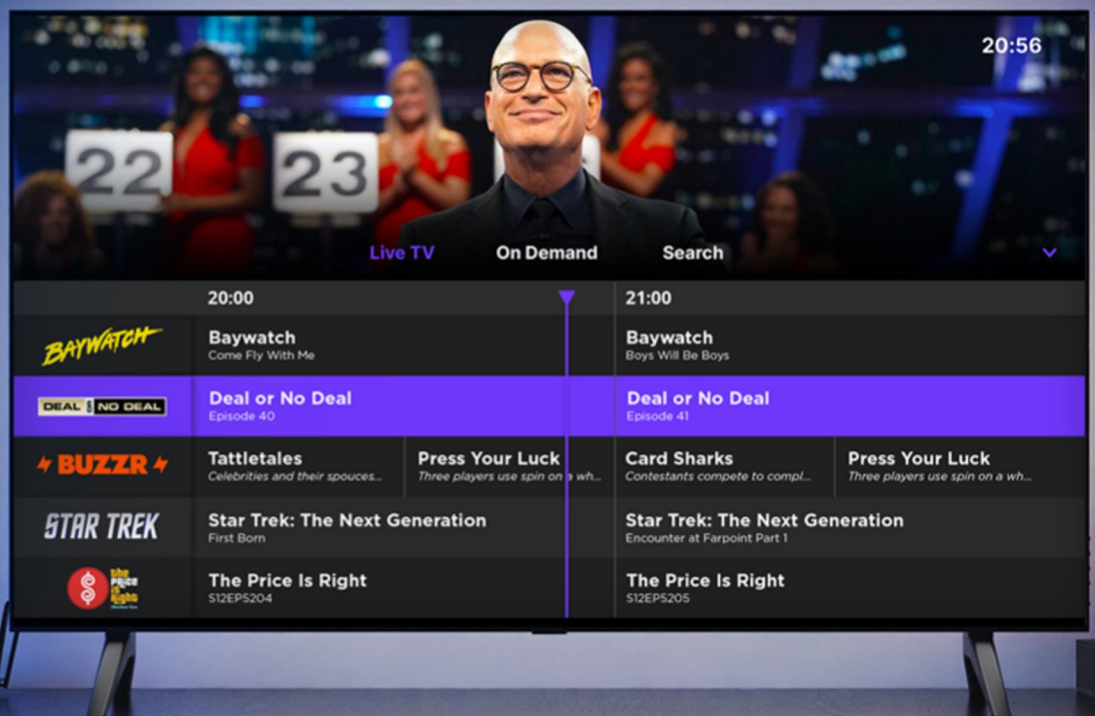




# Metadata matters: Powering future FAST channel success



# Welcome

In less than 20 years, the streaming industry has come full circle.

Traditional VOD services have embraced advertising, and linear-style, free ad-supported television (FAST) represents the streaming industry's biggest growth area. In addition to providing a familiar experience to viewers, FAST channels have gained prominence as a meaningful way to monetize content.

Despite the rapid rise of FAST, however, with revenue in the U.S. projected to hit \$17 billion by 2029, new entrants often overlook a key driver of audience engagement with scheduled programming: metadata. When metadata isn't foundational in content distribution and discoverability strategies, creators and publishers exclude a crucial ingredient that helps audiences find content they'll love, which directly hinders monetization opportunities.



Metadata is critical for search, discovery and monetization

As the leading provider of entertainment metadata solutions, Gracenote has extensive experience helping the global media industry attract and retain audiences, drive unique content search and discovery experiences and monetize programming.

FAST represents the next chapter of the streaming industry's evolution, and this guide will help new entrants understand the importance of metadata, especially as competition increases and the need to engage and maintain viewers intensifies. This guide will also help FAST channels succeed in the future, when search and discovery features within individual services mature.

# Why metadata matters

To understand the importance of metadata is to understand the state of the streaming industry.

Cord-cutting continues to accelerate, and audiences have more choice than they know what to do with. The abundance of content, however, doesn't translate to increased time with programming, and most viewers are experiencing subscription overload.

Amid the dispersal of viewership, platforms like Pluto TV, Amazon's Freevee and Tubi have put FAST on the map, and they continue to account for a growing slice of total TV usage. Major electronics manufacturers are engaged as well, as brands like LG and Samsung have their own FAST line-ups, which come pre-loaded and ready to watch. Individual channels, however, are in direct competition with every other option available, and many lack the necessary components they need to capture eyeballs and keep audiences tuned in.



**Many FAST services include as many as 500-800 individual channels**

As a result, they risk the ability to engage audiences today, and they won't have a solid foundation in place for search, discovery and recommendation experiences in next-generation user experiences, nor will they be able to capitalize on contextual use cases that help advertisers run ads within relevant programming.

It's a very crowded landscape, and content isn't born with an innate ability to deliver or merchandise itself to audiences. That's where metadata comes in, and its importance has never been greater.

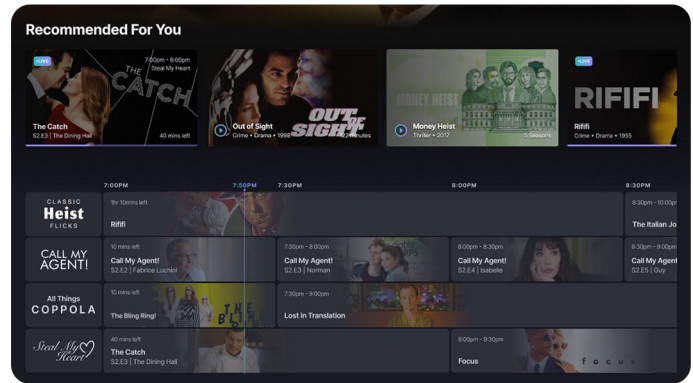
# Succeeding in the FAST ecosystem

At its onset, FAST was the great content equalizer. That's because anyone with a library of content and a technology partner could develop and distribute a channel. This is still the case, but market dynamics and congestion have amplified the importance of well-developed content and distribution strategies.

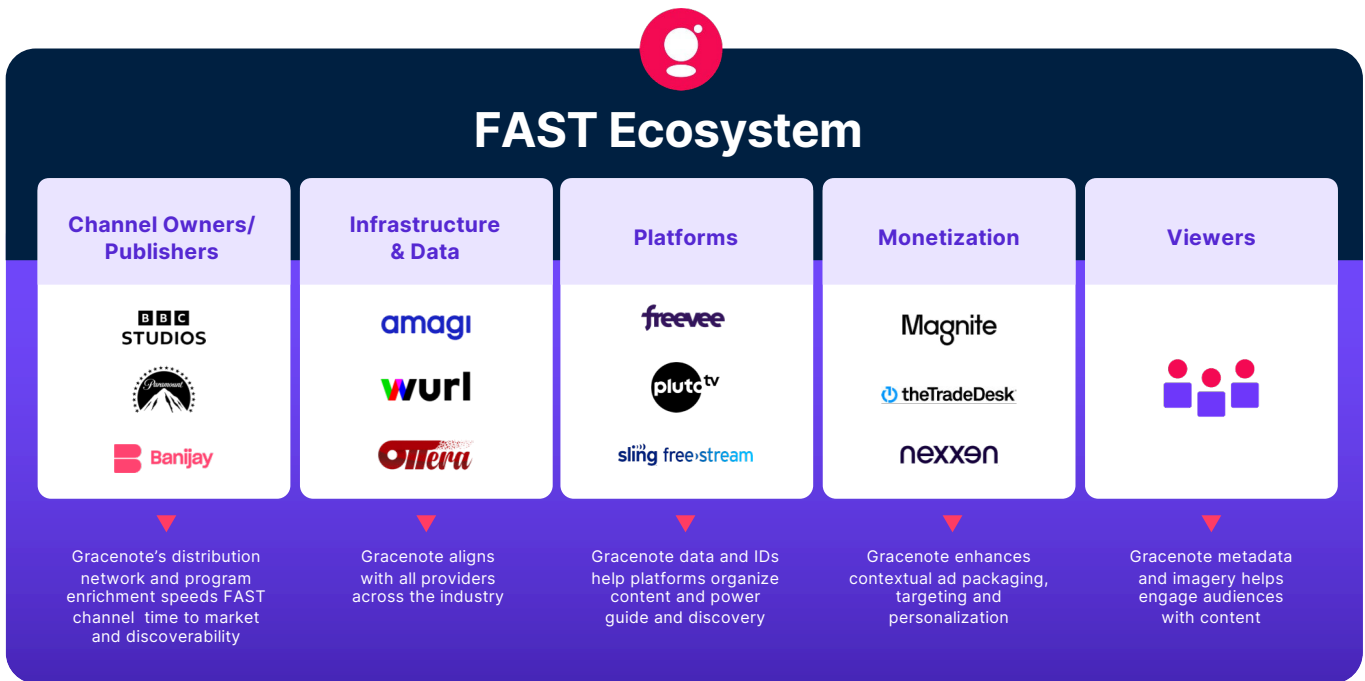
The open nature of the FAST ecosystem means there is little standardization. Content and channels come from a mix of independent creators, large studios, TV networks, streaming providers and more. Additionally, the growth of channels with branding from prominent media companies presents a level of competition for independents that wasn't there a few years ago.

## At its core, the FAST ecosystem involves:

- Channel owners/publishers
- Infrastructure and data
- Platforms
- Monetization



*The FAST ecosystem is playing catch up with respect to metadata. Metadata, however, will be critical in next-gen viewing experiences.*



*Gracenote IDs, imagery and metadata, along with downstream distribution partnerships, are the core of the FAST ecosystem\*.*

\*The logos shown here are used for illustrative purposes only and do not imply endorsement or affiliation with Gracenote products/services.



Today, and for the future, metadata needs to be at the front of any FAST initiative. And despite the in-depth, detailed intricacies associated with entertainment metadata, developing and distributing FAST channels **can be** easy and seamless.

The first step is the Gracenote ID. These unique identifiers are used throughout the global entertainment industry to identify content and link to a market-leading descriptive data sets that are universally relied on by top video services and platforms around the world.

Leading platforms in the entertainment ecosystem already leverage Gracenote data and our IDs to power their platforms. The Gracenote ID is an entryway into our customer ecosystem that enables easy and quick distribution of content and onboarding to individual platforms. The IDs also link content to critical content metadata, including description, genre, cast and imagery.

# THIS IS US

## Celebrity Info



**Mandy Moore**  
April 4, 1984  
Nashua, NH, USA

## Series, Season, Episode Descriptions



**SEASON 5 - EPISODE 1:**  
**Forty: Part one; Forty: Part two**  
The Pearsons gather to celebrate their 40th birthday while musing about the day they were born.

## Cast & Crew

 <b>Milo Ventimiglia</b> Actor	 <b>Sterling Brown</b> Actor	 <b>Chrissy Metz</b> Actress	 <b>Justin Hartley</b> Actor
 <b>Jack Pearson</b>	 <b>Randall Pearson</b>	 <b>Kate Pearson</b>	 <b>Kevin Pearson</b>

## Imagery



*FAST offerings that prioritize metadata, including imagery and descriptions, will stand out with viewers and maximize monetization opportunities.*

# Metadata makeovers

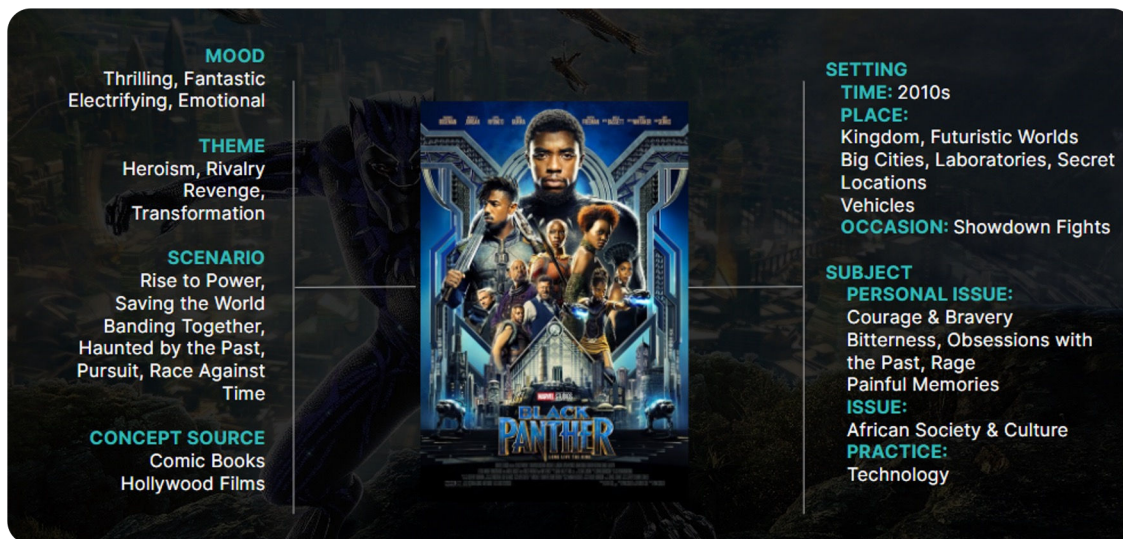
In their rush to go live and benefit from ad revenue, FAST channels often launch with very little and/or low quality metadata. Having only basic metadata, however, especially when metadata isn't standardized, inhibits content discovery. It will also limit a channel's ability to provide a cohesive viewing experience in the future. That's because FAST channels will evolve to deliver enhanced viewing experiences that will require enriched metadata.

As we saw during the growth of VOD, FAST channel providers will need to plug into future search and discovery experiences to retain viewership. Gracenote has been powering search and discovery experiences for the world's leading video platforms across more than 80 countries for decades—experience that translates seamlessly into the FAST ecosystem.

**67%** of U.S. streaming viewers say that recommendations are useful in helping them find something to watch

-Nielsen U.S. streaming content consumer survey, July 2023

Still in its early days, the FAST ecosystem is playing catch up with respect to metadata. The allure of being able to quickly curate content and distribute it often overshadows a focus on the future. In addition to understanding the need for basic, normalized metadata, content creators and owners should also be strategic in maximizing the appeal of their programming within the vast FAST ecosystem.



*Enriched metadata, like mood, theme and scenario, builds on the basics to provide a more complete and nuanced essence.*

Enriching the metadata associated with video content is vital in ensuring that it's as user-focused as possible, especially as platforms upgrade their search and discovery functions. Enriched metadata builds on the basics of imagery and descriptions by providing a more complete picture of your content.

Additions like mood, theme, scenario and setting provide a new layer of information that can elevate the appeal of programming among audiences looking for something to watch. Recommendation engines will be key here, as platforms that leverage viewing preferences with behaviors will be better positioned to make relevant suggestions to drive and maintain tune-in.

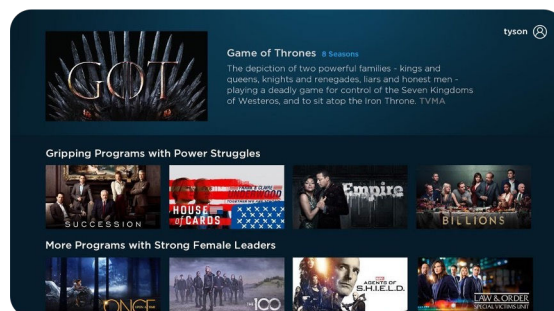
# Future-proofing FAST

The streaming landscape has become incredibly crowded in a very short span, and attracting audiences has never been more challenging. FAST channels are on the upswing with audiences, but success hinges on a channel's ability to stand out in the crowd.

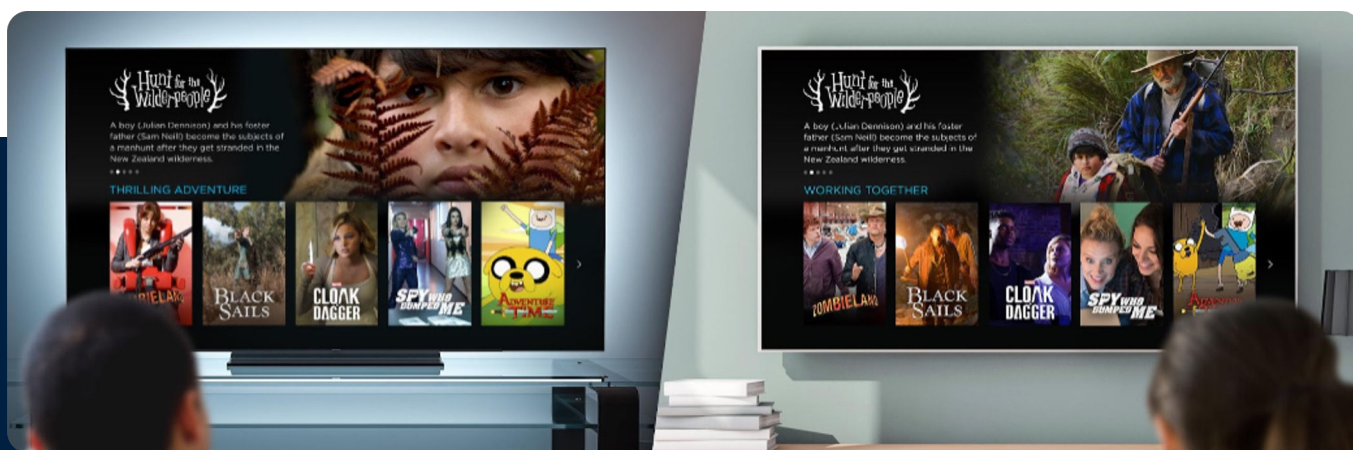
Next-generation viewing experiences in the FAST ecosystem will arrive in no time, and content creators and owners should be outfitting their programming today with the metadata that will put them ahead of the game as viewing experiences advance.

## Here are five benefits of enriched metadata for the next chapter of FAST:

- **Enhanced content search and discovery:** Content recommendation algorithms use enriched metadata to better connect audiences with content and drive tune-in.
- **Personalized user experiences:** Platforms use enriched metadata to curate personalized user-specific playlists and channels.
- **Optimized advertising:** Publishers and advertisers use metadata to better understand engagement with programming to contextually target ads for more relevant and brand-suitable ad placements.
- **Competitive content curation:** Platforms use enriched metadata to differentiate themselves by strategically curating content that ensures a diverse and appealing content library.
- **Intelligent imagery:** Platforms use captivating images that are tailored to individual viewers to supercharge visual content merchandising, drive engagement and increase viewership.



*Relevant recommendations help create personalized experiences that connect with audiences.*



*Differentiated program imagery for individual programs can help better connect content with different viewer preferences.*



# Launch planning: the metadata checklist

Having a comprehensive metadata strategy ensures successful FAST channel launches across three key areas: **distribution, discovery and monetization**.

## Distribution



FAST channels want to get their channels on streaming platforms to reach audiences. Creating and curating metadata for content varies by platform and can be laborious, and ensuring content identification compatibility with distribution partners is often overlooked at first. Reputable metadata partners make the process seamless, comprehensive and applicable throughout the FAST ecosystem.

Having the right metadata partner ensures that content will display properly and be presented in the most compelling way for audiences. It also helps ensure that programming metadata and content identification is compatible across TV and video platform and service interfaces and electronic program guides (EPGs). Top entertainment brands and platforms around the world rely on Gracenote video data and IDs to power their platforms, and working with Gracenote helps streamline and accelerate FAST channel distribution to them.

## Search and discoverability



Discoverability requires more than just developing and launching a channel. Ensuring that audiences can find it is key to long-term success, which means that metadata can't be overlooked, deprioritized or delayed.

With decades of experience in the entertainment industry, Gracenote has an industry-leading catalog of metadata that content owners can use to enrich their basic metadata, like titles, genres, descriptions and imagery, across standard size and aspect ratios to power guides and enable content discovery. Our datasets also include advanced attributes that downstream providers leverage, which ensures wide-ranging compatibility across platforms—including next-gen platform experiences.

## Monetization



Running a FAST channel is a business. Having the right metadata partner plays a key role here. Missing a genre, or being limited to only one, for example, is enough for an ad not to be served against a specific piece of content.

But monetization opportunities span well beyond the basics of including a genre. The Gracenote ID, for example, enhances advertising opportunities by enabling precise content targeting. And with granular metadata associated with content, advertisers can strategically place their ads based on an array of attributes about the content, including rating, genres and other classifications. This contextual targeting approach improves ad relevance and brand suitability.



# Accelerate your FAST strategy with the right metadata partner

Amid the drumbeat headlines about high-profile content and audience engagement across the streaming industry, it's easy to lose sight of what actually drives audience engagement: metadata. It's key today, and critical for tomorrow.

Given this importance, Gracenote's dedicated FAST Program helps streamline the distribution and launch of new FAST channels—complete with industry-standard metadata, the key ingredient that makes content discoverable and monetizable.

In addition to handling the nuances of relevant and comprehensive content metadata, the program allows content owners to tap into Gracenote's existing distribution network of leading streaming platforms to facilitate seamless onboarding and make content immediately available to audiences.

## Get started

Learn more about how the Gracenote FAST Program is helping content providers accelerate their FAST channel go-to-market strategies, drive viewership and unlock monetization opportunities.

Contact us today at [Gracenote.FASTProgram@nielsen.com](mailto:Gracenote.FASTProgram@nielsen.com) to begin your FAST metadata makeover.



**Free trial**

*Preview your content metadata today with a free trial of Gracenote View, our easy to use application providing instant access to Gracenote video data.*



**gracenote**  
a nielsen company