CREATING, PRODUCING AND SELLING TV SHOWS

THE CASE OF THE MOST POPULAR DRAMEDIES IN SPAIN

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CHAPTER ONE
THE ECONOMICS OF SERIES AS AUDIOVISUAL ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTS
MÓNICA HERRERO

1. INTRODUCTION

From the perspective of media economy, this chapter lays down the basic concepts for the study of family fiction series, taken as TV entertainment products. The intention is to identify the characteristics that define the economic performance of these products, which are both television and entertainment products. It does not imply an analysis of Spanish series, but rather an advance on the definition of the theoretical framework that will allow for understanding of audiovisual fiction prime time products.

Initially, it seems appropriate to give a short conceptual summary in order to understand entertainment from a double standpoint: as an essential element that gives shape to the product, and also as an indispensable content in the communications relationship. The realities of leisure, free time and recreation facilitate the study from that double viewpoint that closes with the user.

Next, the study suggests a model for analysis of the television product, within the field of television economics, which will be of help in formulating an integrated definition of what a TV entertainment product is, and in attending to the fact that it focuses on commercial TV channel programmes.

Application of the economy model of TV entertainment products to family fiction series is carried out in the second part of the chapter. It studies the economic repercussions of the content, and the family viewers with the general audience.

Finally, we explore other types of audiovisual consumption that go beyond what is traditional, and are an extension of products present on the audiovisual entertainment market.
2. AUDIOVISUAL ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTS

2.1. ENTERTAINMENT AS A PRODUCT CONTENT AND IN RELATION TO COMMUNICATION

Making advances in the concept of entertainment implies the consideration of other complex realities which have been studied in other scientific areas. For our purposes, the consideration of those realities that can best contribute to a definition of the audiovisual entertainment product is of particular interest. On this point, understanding the meaning of the concepts of free time, attention, leisure and recreation, among others, is indispensable.

According to the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, entertainment means the action and effect of being entertained and occupied. The verb “entertain”, among other meanings, is to “amuse, raise someone’s spirit” and “maintain, conserve”. The etymology comes from the Latin root: *inter tenere*, which means, “to hold between”, that is, to hold someone’s attention. Over the years, the concept has come to mean a product that is constructed and designed to stimulate an audience pleasantly, in exchange for money (Sayre & King 2003: 1). Thus, entertainment is not an abstract reality, but an intangible item which may take the form of products or services.

There is no point in mentioning entertainment if we have no time to be entertained, time is the key to freedom to choose an entertainment product. In its widest sense, ‘free time’ is that time which is outside our working timetable (Vogel 2004: 464). In fact, the impact of entertainment on modern society began with the arrival of free time; thus Sayre and King define free time as the time left over once the basic needs of survival are covered, which implies that those who are well off economically will have more free time (Sayre & King 2003: 18-19). In any case, having free time is a given condition for entertainment, even if the meaning of free time changes depending on the situation.

Time is essential both for production and consumption, so economic science describes time as a business object, as a factor that shapes markets, in particular the communications market. Here the user “offers” time “to consume” an entertainment product, which does not exclude the complexity of the integration of the time ‘item’ into
the economic analysis of informative products and services (Nieto, 2000).

The growth of activity-offer leads to the idea of maximizing free time, which affects the offer of entertainment slots on television directly. However, it is becoming more and more common for the TV entertainment market to give greater importance to the doctrine of audience analysis and market competition than to multiple audiovisual product offers. As entertainment means attracting attention, entertainment economics is to a great extent attention economics. Indeed the process of attracting attention implies attraction, as in order to be entertained ‘something’ must have attracted attention a priori.

Although the offer of time is a condition that must come before entertainment, not all free time is offered with this aim. Free time and leisure are usually contrasted with work, but this is not always true because the leisure area offers richer realities and perspectives than a simple reference to free time. In one of the meanings, the *Diccionario de la Real Academia* defines leisure as free time, but in another it gives a broader view which is pertinent to this study: “fun or relaxed pastime, particularly time spent on brain puzzles, because these are frequently used in order to rest from other labour”. In fact, leisure is connected to a kind of activity that involves rest from our daily tasks and is more than simply free time in that it includes many different activities which incorporate amusement or fun. For example, when it refers to puzzles it emphasises participative and creative dimensions that are of particular interest for the entertainment market.

Like leisure, the concept of recreation precedes that of entertainment and follows that of free time; one of its meanings defines it as amusement for relief from work. According to Vogel, recreation may have elements of amusement, but entertainment goes further, and is defined as something that produces a pleasant, satisfactory experience, which is not simply amusing (Vogel 2004: 4).

Even in the Roman Empire, the association of entertainment and pleasure caused the apparent clash between entertainment and culture (Wistrand 1992: 14) that has lasted until the present day, and is to a certain extent expressed in the distinction between true culture and popular culture. Shustersman states:

Entertainment comes somewhere between vulgarity and “respectable culture” (Sprigge 2001: 175), which affects the contents of the *mass media*, where some media, such as
television, are not considered part of "respectable culture".

The term "entertainment" is usually linked with enjoyment and pleasure. While those products with mainly informative content are designed to make one think, entertainment products or programmes emphasise feeling. This difference makes the evaluation of contents difficult, as the viewers' tastes and degree of satisfaction are extremely varied when referring to the same item or service offered by the communications market.

A final thought on entertainment as product content: its root nature as an immaterial, intangible item, does not lead to its being classified as abstract. This intangible item called entertainment appears and comes to life through the supply/demand relationships on the communications market. The immaterial value is transferred to the product or service that gives it shape. Ignoring this distinction would mean invalidating the intelligence factor that devises the entertainment, independently of whoever materializes and commercializes the idea.

The second of the points for analysis is entertainment relative to communication. The etymology of the verb entertain suggests a discursive phenomenon rather than an impersonal narrative form, as in one way or the other it intends to hold attention. The term amuse, however, emphasises the creation of an impulse that attracts attention, which distracts from one's occupation (Sprigge 2001: 33).

Because entertainment is a personal, discursive phenomenon, it needs the presence of someone interested in entertaining and in maintaining the relationship with 'something' that is a consequence of the idea of entertainment and in keeping the 'other' who is the terminal subject of the relationship entertained. If it were simply a question of distracting attention, and not holding it (for a longer or shorter time) the discursive character would not be so important.

A communication relationship is established between the entertainer and the entertainee; other authors have called this an informative relationship, taken in its broadest meaning. Iraraim takes the informative relationship as "the action through which the viewer, in a socially contextualized way, intentionally possesses a message with the form (verbum) of a certain reference" (Iraraim 2000: 343). Here the viewer is a key element as she leads the action that defines the informative relationship. For the action to develop, the
viewer must necessarily offer her time. Thus, the relationship between the entertainer and
the audience begins with an offer of time by the viewer.

The subjects of the entertainment relationship are people who are connected with the
goal of entertainment. The object of the relationship is to relate, to be related, that is, the
relationship itself. This communication relationship is characterised as an entertainment
relationship whose effect is to be entertained. Without the communication relationship
there could be no entertainment, although usually they are concurrent because the
subjects are connected, on the one hand, to entertain by offering a product, and, on the
other, to be entertained or to entertain themselves with this product. In this sense, the
product is not finished, but must extend in the established communication relationship
(Tallón 1992: 150).

How can the main notes that contribute to outlining a concept for a TV entertainment
product be analysed? The answer is possible thanks to the triple view which considers the
content, form and logic of a TV product.

2.2. TRIPLE VIEW OF THE TV PRODUCT: CONTENT, FORM, LOGIC

Before beginning the analysis of the main features which are typical of a television
product, it seems appropriate to review some points that audiovisual products have in
common.

a) Market universality. Globalization and the new communication and information
technologies have given shape to the audiovisual product as 'public good' and the
possibility that its use should not be reduced by consumer growth. (Dunnet 1990: 1,
Picard 1979: 18). No one who has access to the product is excluded from using and
enjoying it. This is a consequence of the original intangible condition which underlines
the cultural dimension of these products, whose aim is to satisfy elusive desires and
needs, to promote individual knowledge, experience and imagination (Davies 1999:
203).

b) Qualified externalities. In economic terms, we can say that that communication
products have externalities, defined by the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* as “prejudice or benefit to an individual or company due to the actions of other people or bodies”. When the influence is negative it is called *negative externality*, if positive, *positive externality* (Mankiw 1998: 192). Audiovisual products can be described as goods which in themselves are desirable (*merit goods*), such as health, education or national defence, because of the positive externalities they may produce. A good in opposition to a *merit good*, with negative externalities, is considered injudicious by society in general. The cultural character of audiovisual products sometimes makes them injudicious, thus the profession appeals to state intervention and other self-censure measures (Doyle 2002).

c) Conceptual versatility. As Collins states, the concept of audiovisual product, because of its broad range, can be applied to different realities. For a programme producer, the product is an individual programme; for a TV chain, the programme schedule; and for the individual who subscribes to a pay channel, it may even be the complete channel (Collins 1988: 6). On the other hand, with the broadcasting of audiovisual content on the web, the concept of an audiovisual product has grown, which makes it even more difficult to establish limits (Ha and Ganahl 2007). In this sense, the activity flow that characterises TV broadcasting coexists with the publication of contents, which have been traditionally part of the press industries.

In this chapter we will focus on the audiovisual product from the perspective of the TV channel, and so we will refer to it as a TV product, with its many categories. As the main object of the study is family TV series, we must choose a theoretical framework which will allow a complete analysis of these products.

Distinguished authors see the *program grid* as the central TV product (Bustamante 1999: 93), taking it not merely as the juxtaposition of programmes, but as the action and effect of programming, a key activity in the television business (Giordano and Zeller 1999: 29). The end-result of the techniques of offer organization is the grid, in Italian *palinsesto*, or strictly speaking the TV product. Referring to the technique or system of organization, Aroldi proposes analysis from three perspectives: the *content*, *form* and *logic* of the TV
grid or palinsesto (Aroldi 2001: 238-243).

Content means the organization of the grid with reference to the genres. Thus we have
generalist channels, based on several genres; specialized channels, with one genre; and
segmented channels, which are organized round a few genres.

The form of the grid is due to the dependence of the programming activity on the time
factor, so the grid adopts the form that is the result of working the programmes in time
and on time, considering the schedule, the audience type, the social time, etc. On this
issue, it is of interest to point out, as do Dematté and Perreti, that TV activity is to a certain
extent determined by the composition of a sequence of audiovisual programmes following
the quantitative and qualitative force of public demand. (Dematté and Perreti 1997: 7).

Finally, by grid logic we mean the principle by which the programming is structured,
that is, what effect is intended by organizing the grid in a certain way. Clearly, the main
common aim for any TV company, no matter what financial system it uses, is to have
viewers. However, the logic behind this objective may be very different from one company
to another, as in some cases it means maximizing the audience figures, in others
succeeding in certain specific time slots, and for some fulfilling public service principles.

Aroldi's schema of content, form and logic when referring to the grid can also be
applied to other areas of the TV product, that is, to the individual programme and TV
channel. In this way we can build up a definition of a TV product that goes beyond mere
audiovisual content and will allow the analysis of the object of our study.

Deciding what the content of an individual programme is and placing it in a specific
genre is usually a simple task, following the Sofres classifications, for example. An
individual programme is always broadcast by the TV company in a specific form and in
answer to a certain logic, that is, fitting into the programme schedule. An individual
programme taken exclusively from the element of content does not make sense within the
activity of a TV company, whose role is to select, organize and broadcast programmes in
time. Therefore, prime time broadcasting is always conditioned by the maximization of the
desired heterogeneous audience (Medina 1997: 52). It could be said that the triple
dimension of content, form and logic is inherent in any TV product broadcast on a TV
channel.
Consequently, a TV product is more than its mere audiovisual content, and could be defined as follows: the units of audiovisual content, without taking into account its length, which by responding to a logic and adopting a particular form, is broadcast by a TV company.

In conclusion, and returning to our original thoughts on entertainment, we can define the TV entertainment product as that unit of audiovisual content that proceeds from idea, responds to the intention of creating an entertainment effect on the viewer, and so holds her attention in a pleasant activity of discursive character which distracts from work tasks; as a TV product it responds to a particular logic and fits into the grid in the social form or time slot which is appropriate to achieve its objective. This schema allows for the following analysis of family fiction series as a TV entertainment product.

3. THE ECONOMY OF FAMILY SERIES

3.1. FAMILY CONTENT AND THE FAMILY VIEWER

Following the categories established by Sofres, family fiction series, as an audiovisual unit, belong to national series. However, specialists on genres normally use a specific title for the products under examination which is composed of an exclusively Spanish genre that combines elements of drama and comedy, called dramedy. Dramedy not only includes family series, but also professional and other national fiction series, as will be seen in Chapter 2.

With reference to the economic study of these products from the perspective of content, it is of interest to define the elements of their economic reality. This means advancing in the understanding of their economic impact while taking into account the cultural nature of communications products, and the resulting externalities. As a starting point we must emphasise that this type of products is destined for family members, and moreover, the stories take place in a domestic, family context. There are other audiovisual products that share these characteristics to a certain extent, specifically soap operas and
TV serials: the former, because of their domestic content within family surroundings; the latter, due to their serial character and the resulting relationship with the viewers.

A significant aspect of family series that should be mentioned is that they are broadcast on prime time on open television. Therefore when, later, we make some comments on their similarity with soap operas, we are referring to prime time products, in contrast with the daytime soaps, with lower production costs and designed for an almost wholly female audience (Cantor 1979).

The prime time soap operas have specific economic features because of which they are very profitable. On this point, they are said to be perfect television, a real commodity in the TV industry (Hobson, 2003). The main reasons are their capacity to reach and hold high audience figures, to produce press coverage and loyal viewers, and the resulting appeal to advertising income (Wittebols, 2004). We will now see to what extent family series share these characteristics.

Firstly, with reference to the genre, the combination of comic and dramatic elements contributes both to enjoyment on the one hand, and to the cathartic element necessary to create a following among the viewers. The dramatic element places dramedy closer to soap operas, and gives it a serial characteristic, which is a particularly important factor in these products. They have been created as long-term products on the air and have partly-closed episodes, and so can be placed in an intermediate position between series, which finish a story in each episode, and serials, where the story does not finish in one episode but can be drawn out indefinitely (Creeber 2001: 442).

As regards the family content, soap operas have undergone an interesting evolution, which brings them closer to the object of our study. In the last twenty years this genre has developed in an attempt to become more attractive to a wider public and not only to women. As Geraghty has stated, in the 80's soap operas began to interest men, teenagers and children, and abandoned the idea of a product created solely for women. Male characters were included in the storyline in order to attract this sector of the public, and at the same time teenagers and children were given more important roles in the series (Geraghty 1991: 167).

Family fiction series include the two points mentioned earlier for soap operas: the
series target the whole family and include the whole family in their storylines. Accepting the term family series means a combination of family content and family viewing. However, throughout this section we will see the problems that emerge from the association of these two terms in TV fiction.

The action occurs within an everyday domestic context, and this is precisely why they are presented as products that are especially suitable for the whole family. As Kilborn states:

*What further reinforces the feeling that one is witnessing scenes of everyday life is the fact that the majority of issues or problems broached in the course of the narrative have to do with personal or domestic matters, especially those relating to family or group relationships* (Kilborn, 1992: 38).

Moreover, the above-mentioned serial format benefits from the family content, which provides a stable setting for the continuing changes in storylines and characters (Geragthty 1991: 60). Thanks to their everyday subject matter and episodic structure the series strengthen the relationship between the viewer and the audiovisual text, and the audience feels deeply involved. As Geragthty says when referring to soap operas:

*This close relationship between soaps and their audiences, the intimate knowledge regular viewers have of the programmes and their identification with particular characters is still a source of puzzle dismay to those who do not watch soap operas* (Geragthty, 1991: 9).

Audience commitment and involvement is strengthened by the presence of elements which give a high degree of localism. Besides, following the series is part of the routine of many people at the same time of day in the same geographical area. Following this reasoning, the series may be considered the ultimate TV ritual experience which defines a cultural community (Franco 2001: 453).

As we have already mentioned, it is interesting to analyse the supposed correlation between family content and family public, that is, whether the fact that the storylines take
place within a domestic and family context, where the whole family has a role to play, means that the content is suitable for children, young people and adults. Suitable is taken to mean the adaptation of the product to the audience, taking into account its positive and negative externalities. Thus we must analyse the family content of these products in depth. Some authors say that the family which is normally shown in TV fiction is not an authentic family. According to Barker, television often produces transgressive or alternative programmes, which are redescriptions of social order and cultural identities, and create new languages (Barker 2003: 155). Using this redecoration, the storylines have more universal features than local ones, and simplify their understanding and acceptance by other cultures, which make the export of the series more profitable. On this point, Valaskivi makes the following commentary on Japanese series:

A majority of Japanese television drama does not fit into the framework of family drama that contributes to preserving the traditional family values. Themes of love, love affairs, finding a partner and breaking up are more common and also popular among the younger viewer groups (Valaskivi 2000: 310).

However, other authors, such as Bonner, states that showing stormy family situations, full of problems, infidelity and suffering, bring about a desire in the viewer to belong to a romantic family ideal, where the man, woman and children form a close, happy unit (Bonner 2003: 113).

Then again, although family series reflect local subject matter, global aspects are also present, particularly in prime time fiction (Dunleavy 2005: 371). Here, we must underline the influence of the American industry on the shaping of local production. However, some recent examples, such as the Italian series Vivere, owe their success to their strengthening of the Italian view of the traditional family, rather than to global stereotypes.

The sense of community and the preservation of family integrity are shown to be powerful sources of the programme pleasure and primary elements of the viewers' cultural identity. This proves the efficacy of Vivere's formula which, while assimilating the community soap
model, further stresses the role of family as a structure providing nurture, support and cohesion to the whole group. If the soap’s moral condemnation of ‘atypical’ or extramarital relationships is appreciated, it is because it provides a relief from the emotional consequences of real life, where marriages are increasingly unstable (Giomi 2005: 479).

It seems clear that the perspective of the series on family relationships has an impact on the audience. On this point, Kilborn points out that although it is basically an entertainment genre, it gives the viewers considerable food for thought (Kilborn 1992: 82). We must not underestimate the educational effect of these products, which we will see in the following epigraph.

Consequently, there are differences between the terms family public and family target which allow us to draw some conclusions on family content. In fact, the term target is wholly commercial, and as such identifies the audience for which the programme is designed, which will then be sold to the advertisers. The family target gives the channel the opportunity to sell mass, heterogenous audiences to the advertisers (Andrés 2005:21). However, the family target takes the family public, which is the objective of the entertainment product for granted. This means that together with those commercial considerations that lead to a certain product being aimed at a certain audience, there is a public that wishes to satisfy its entertainment needs. So, the idea of public goes beyond the quantitative assessment of the target and propounds the appraisal of those externalities generated by a product aimed at such a heterogenous audience.

The creation of a content likely to attract a heterogenous audience implies an important creative challenge. On the one hand, it demands knowledge of the needs and desires of different audiences, in order to keep them happy. On this point, the possible negative externalities of one segment of the public may cause problems in pleasing another. The high audience figures among teenagers are no justification when evaluating the suitability of content for the audience. The absence of violence or explicit sex, and a comic feel are elements that may limit the perception of the possible negative externalities of these products. Without going into specific reviews of the object series, which will be studied in other chapters, from a theoretical perspective we must state the possible problems that
spring from the identification of family content with family public.

We can conclude that these series develop storylines within a domestic, family context, and include characters of all ages in their storylines, thus contributing to a family audience or target, as occurs in the three series which are the object of our study, although this does not necessarily imply correct adaptation to the needs of that heterogeneous public.

3.2. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AUDIENCE

The content of the family series is linked to the form they take on on the TV grid. Following Aroldi’s schema, it is not a question of whether the content paves the way for the form or vice versa as they are both dimensions of the same product. Clearly, many economic consequences spring from the form these contents take on prime time, and this point will be dealt with in another chapter. Here our intention is to study the relationship with the audience and carry out an in-depth study of the circumstances which permit long-term presence of these series on air, and allow them to reach other areas of broadcasting which contribute to greater profit.

The discursive character of entertainment, which attracts rather than distracts attention, is the direct reason for the stability of the relationship which is established with the audience. Keeping up this relationship successfully (which can almost always be seen in the audience indexes) has led these products to continue on air for longer than had originally been foreseen. Taking as an example a famous British soap opera, we could say that the success of Coronation Street stems from having held the viewers’ attention for over 40 years. The content favours keeping up the relationship, as the dramatic tension is based on domestic, intimate elements. And in the case of the Spanish series, the comic component leads to new chances for enjoyment. In a way, the humour loaded with localisms, which is typical of the dramedy, can be seen as an important attraction for male viewers. This is also true of the involvement of well-known actors in the series.

Articles on soaps operas audiences often describe them as passive or unambitious, which implies that an excessive link to TV fiction is a symptom of lack of intelligence. However, some authors disagree with this conclusion, and emphasise that many other
human activities also demand engagement and escapism:

Certainly, soap operas are not great art. Certainly, people sometimes are mindless when they watch soaps, and some people probably have an unhealthy absorption in the drama. But mindlessness and overengagement are potential drawbacks of most human activities, even those held in high cultural esteem. For many soap viewers immerse themselves in an emotional world without real consequences, interpreting a world of story possibilities. There often is an element of escapism, but soap viewing is not inherently mentally passive (Baym 2000: 66-67).

Whatever the case, these publications on the effects of the series on the viewers, and the relationships involved, focus mainly on the study of day soaps and housewives. Our product goes further, as we are dealing with family audiences, made up of men, women and children. On this point, we must remember that traditionally, men have had little interest in TV fiction, and do not admit to their interest in following series. An extensive study carried out by Morley on family consumption in the UK, showed that male viewers prefer news programmes and realistic fiction, while women had a greater penchant towards more imaginative or romantic fiction. Although this study was carried out in 1992, we believe that some elements are still correct (Morley: 1992: 152).

Every work of entertainment fiction has a sub-text that invites the participants to relate what they see to their own lives. It is not so much that the products influence the decision-making and the thinking of the viewers, but rather the constant references to the real world, which make the series more familiar (Luhman 2000: 61). The entertainment product is not finished, but grows in the relationship it establishes with the audience, and, in this sense, local and domestic fictions prolong the relationship through references to the everyday life of the viewer. As Ross and Nightingale state, the audience believes the stories are significant when they relate to their own lives or those of their friends or acquaintances (Ross & Nightingale 2003: 130).

Their family, domestic character strengthens the plausibility of what happens. By placing the fiction in a real world, the possibilities of what happens there are closer to what can happen in my world. Thus, this plausibility opens up the possibility of other like
worlds. We can say there are more possibilities of generating externalities with these products in the way they understand everyday reality. But again, we must not forget that they have been created for viewers of all ages. Children also follow the adult storylines, with possible negative externality in some cases.

Going back once more to the idea of the non-finished product, the series are prolonged not only in reference to the real world of the individual, but also in the relationships with other followers, and the possibility of getting more information on the series from TV magazines and, above all, from Internet. This is where we can begin to differentiate between viewers and fans, although talking about the series with other people, even members of the family, may be considered part of normal consumption:

"While all of us, simply by virtue of being members of audiences, work with the texts we read, watch and listen to, in order to produce meaning and pleasure, fans often take this engagement a step further" (Ross & Nightingale 2003: 136).

Loyal audience following of the TV schedule and technological developments have contributed to the distribution of traditional consumption to other windows, either individually or collectively. However, we should underline that this consumption spread implies a previous enjoyment of the traditional schedule, where the product has held the audience's attention, bringing it together every week at prime time. In a way, what we are about to study is based on the experience of sharing a successful programme broadcast on a generalist open channel:

"Certain events, like sports, happen in real time, not on a consumer's on-demand whim. Likewise, Internet video proponents who love the community aspect of the Web forget there is that same shared community experience for fans of O.C. or CSI: Crime Scene Investigation or Desperate Housewives the night those shows air. Viewers watch at the same time, react to the show in real time, and even send cell-phone text messages to each other (or to the show) in real time. They talk about what they saw the next day at work" (Stump 2006).
In conclusion, we could state that family fiction series, due to their intimate, family content, create a special relationship with reality in a tone of comedy that helps all the members of the family audience to follow it. This relationship frequently means great involvement of the viewer and extends consumption to other windows or media.

3.3. FROM CONSUMPTION ON THE TV GRID TO THE GROWTH OF INDIVIDUAL CONSUMPTION

Following Aroldi’s schema, the logic of maximizing audiences in the different time slots explains the fact that family series are programmed in *prime time*, as they are aimed at a heterogeneous public. *Content, form* and *logic* are inter-related realities in addition to being dimensions of the same product. When consumption exceeds the conventional *form* on the TV grid, the study schema for TV products is no longer enough. We will have to apply some economic characteristics to audiovisual products, and go beyond the limits of strictly television characteristics.

The intangible nature of audiovisual products strengthens their character of public goods, and thus the possibility of making maximum profit from a product which is not worn out by consumption. On this point, the transmission strategies on various windows, which have been applied successfully for cinema products, could be applied to family fiction series to a certain extent. These strategies allow profits to be maximized through differentiation of prices and time slots when the same product is offered and broadcast to wide-ranging audiences in general (Herrero 2007: 15). However, in the case of series we can spread or repeat consumption, and increase knowledge of the product in different media or windows for the same audiences.

The relationship between the degree of audience implication and the extension of consumption and the use of other media should also be taken into account. Although the type and degree of use differ, we can confirm that the mere fact of extending consumption beyond the programmed show allows us to speak of admirers of the series or *fans*.

*While some fans are content to use the internet simply as a tool for acquiring information, others thrive more on the potential for socialization and interpersonal communication. In the*
same way, where certain programs tend naturally to impel viewers to the internet for supplemental enjoyment of the program narrative, others are less successful in cultivating online fan activity (Costello 2007: 139).

Within TV consumption, technological development has increased the TV offer, and this has contributed to the creation of theme channels that show successful TV series both on pay-per-view channels and those which began with the digitalization of the terrestrial signal. In a way, we are still dealing with the traditional schema where certain content, apart from using the form of the grid, also adopts other new forms that contribute to the logic of maximizing profits. Whatever the case, watching an episode of a series for the second time is very different from the first, and is associated with the particular nature of the genre:

Lack of closure is an important structural component of the soap opera form and serial narratives in general. The narrative conflicts of the soap opera world never ‘end’ in any permanent way. All romances are subject to upheaval, families are continually broken and reunited, and even death is a conditional state of being (...) In this way, fans can watch soap reruns to be reminded of one of these particular conditional endings in which they invested so much time during the original run (Seiter & Wilson 2005: 145).

From the economic perspective, episode repetition does not affect the fans following of the series, moreover it allows them to see their favourite moments again. On the other hand, it allows the channel-owners of the series to maximize profits from one product, and fill up the grid. In the changeover to terrestrial digital television, the Spanish commercial channels are resorting to these products to form the programming of their new channels, as is the case of Telecinco Estrellas. Besides, with the development of a la carte TV, which the cable and satellite operators are already using, it allows enjoyment of these programmes at any time. Finally, programme repetition is an essential strategy for the television industry as a whole, as it maximizes profits from established products and gives strength to the idea that older television is part of our national heritage (Kompare 2006: 342).
Another step in this strategy is the direct distribution of series online, through mobile phones or portable media players, although the latter two are not yet used for the family series which interest us. Programmes distributed in this way have already been broadcast on TV, and so have become a new type of replay, but using different media, and usually sooner than before. It avoids the constraints of the traditional grid, not only by making the content form more flexible, depending on the wishes of the user, but also by making the viewing media more flexible.

Technology allows enthusiasts to develop activities that go beyond viewing again or following the series in TV magazines. If fan or enthusiast activity came before Internet, the web provides new means of participation:

*The Internet did not invent fan groups: they were thriving long before computers existed. On the one hand, the Internet has changed them, and for those with Internet access, it has changed what it means to be a fan (...) First, the Net has allowed audience communities to proliferate (...) Thus the Internet makes audience communities more common, more visible, and more accessible, enabling fans to find one another with ease, regardless of geography, and enhancing the importance of the interpersonal dimensions of fandom. The Internet also makes audiences communities more visible for mass media producers, who can log on anytime to get instantaneous feedback (Baym 2000: 215-216).*

On this point, we must not forget the fan’s sense of power when participating in the development of the series:

*Online fans believe they can prevent the cancellation of a program or even resurrect it after the decision has been made to end it. In the world before the internet, dedicated fans had organized mail campaigns and known some success, but online fans can move more quickly, organize more people, and generally be more effective. Usually, the effort to save a show was reported unsuccessful, but again, the fact that members of the audience see themselves as potentially powerful enough to influence executive decisions is a direct contradiction to the image of the passive audience, a victim of network whims and greed.*
Even when efforts fail, fans can be made more knowledgeable about the realities of the television industry (Costello 2007: 138).

Internet allows for a stable relationship between the creators of content and the consumers which was undreamt of not long ago. Apart from visiting the official series websites, the enthusiasts have created new sites, and visit those of other fans. The community feeling that comes from these relationships between people who had not met before, shows the importance of the universe of the characters and the stories they represent. In this sense, the product has spread not only to other media, but also to how other members of the audience understand it. In contrast, Siapera believes that the activity of TV channels on Internet through the official series websites gives even more power to the channels, who can in this way control the activity of their fans, know their preferences, promote creation of communities, and so strengthen audience loyalty for the following of off line broadcasts (Siapera 2004: 164).

The final step that we will study is a new business concept for the TV industry. The core of the commercial television business is the sales of the audience to advertisers (Owen & Wildman 1992: 3), whereas for many years other communications industries, such as the press, have focused on the direct sales of products to consumers. In the audiovisual industry, particularly the cinema, direct sales or rental of movies also became possible due to the development of domestic video, thereby extending the display strategy in different windows.

The serialized character of the product we are dealing with, and thus, the high number of videocassettes needed for a single season, and time and space constraints, make this strategy unfeasible. However, the development of the DVD permits the direct sale of successful series to the public after broadcasting, due to the drop in cost and a considerable reduction of the space needed. As Kompare says, this practice leads from the traditional flow of TV broadcasting to an activity which is closer to the publication of contents (Kompare 2006: 347) which means a certain “commodification” of the audiovisual product. The user accesses the product directly without reference to the TV schedule. However, due to copyright laws, this is only practicable for the corporations that
practice horizontal and vertical integration (Kompare 2006: 351).

Thus, the logic of maximizing profits on *prime time*, which is typical of commercial television, goes beyond what is strictly a TV product when dealing with family series. The content and the special relationship established with the audience maximize the opportunities offered by new technologies and earn the maximum profit from their quality of being public goods and discursive entertainment products. Nevertheless, these activities still represent a support for the core business, that is, broadcasting on *prime time*, and their principal goal is to increase audience loyalty, by improving the quality of their experience as followers of the series.
4. CONCLUSIONS

The study carried out on the economy of family series underlines the main effects of these programmes as a TV product.

Firstly, as an entertainment product, family series, because of their family content, have a broad relationship with their audience as they are based on domestic, everyday realities. This type of storyline and their serial character makes for a loyal audience following, which frequently results in repeated episode viewing, involvement in online chat sites, and even purchase of series from previous seasons.

On this point, if entertainment products are unfinished, and extend the relationship with their consumers, the life cycle of family series is quite long, and the profits they make also. Moreover, technology allows this cycle to extend, as it proposes new relationships to the viewers, who, in this way, can go beyond the constraints of traditional scheduling and consume much more than was expected some years ago.

However, the factors linked to the broadcasting of a product that aims to maximize its audience share on prime time are the basis for later business opportunities. Thus family series could be referred to as a product that had found the factors needed to become a successful programme on prime time. These factors are the family, domestic content and the special relationship with the audience.

Nevertheless, some aspects such as the identification of family content with a family public pose interesting challenges for the creators and those who are responsible for the production and broadcasting of these products. In order to obtain the maximum possible profit from these products, including the greatest positive externalities, an in-depth understanding of their complex nature is needed. Only understanding of the TV entertainment product from every possible perspective, including awareness of a heterogeneous audience and its needs, will allow family TV series to become quality products.
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