

CREATING, PRODUCING AND SELLING TV SHOWS
THE CASE OF THE MOST POPULAR DRAMEDIES IN SPAIN

Mercedes Medina (Editor)



Collection

mediaXXI



TITLE: CREATING, PRODUCING AND SELLING TV SHOWS

THE CASE OF THE MOST POPULAR DRAMEDIES IN SPAIN

AUTHOR: Mercedes Medina (Editor)

TRANSLATOR: Ann Hannigan-Breen

PROOFREADING: Mercedes Medina and Guilherme Pires

LAYOUT DESIGN AND COVER ART: Telma Leonor Ferreira

PUBLISHED BY Media XXI | Formalpress, Publicações e Marketing, Lda.

COLLECTION: Media XXI

PRINT: Xecomplex

Original Title: "Series de televisión. El caso de Médico de Familia, Cuéntame cómo pasó y Los Serranos" (2008), Yomelia Textos, Ediciones Institucionales Universitarias, Madrid

This book is copyright. All rights reserved. Material in this book may not be published, broadcasted, rewritten or redistributed in any form without the written permission of the Author and the Publisher.

Formalpress – Publicações e Marketing, Lda

Rua Dr. Egas Moniz, nº 11 – Loja A, 2675-341 Odivelas | Lisboa

Telefone: 217 573 459 | Fax: 217 576 316

formalpress@gmail.com

Praça Marquês de Pombal, n.º 70; 4000-390 Porto

Telefone | Fax: 225 029 137

1ª Edition - February 2009

ISBN: 978-989-8143-10-5

LEGAL DEPOSIT: 287810/09



NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

José A. Cortés is Professor of Programming Strategies at San Pablo-CEU University (Madrid). He is the author of *La estrategia de la seducción* (2001) and *El espectador frente a la nueva televisión* (2003). His professional background was in TVE, Tele 5 and Antena 3 TV as Programme Director. He has been Assistant Dean of the School of Communication (2003-2004) and the Director of the Audiovisual and New Technologies Department at San Pablo-CEU University (2002-2004).

Patricia Diego is Professor of TV Drama Production and TV Programming at the School of Communication, University of Navarra (Spain), as well as Vice-director of the Master in Media Management (MGEC) at the same School. She got a Ph.D. in 2004 with a thesis entitled *Production of TV fiction in Spain* (1990-2002). History, industry and market, which received the Outstanding Doctoral Thesis Award. She has been Visiting Researcher at University of Westminster and has published several articles about TV production in Spain in books and journals. Her coming publications are a history of TV Fiction in Spain and a handbook for TV Drama Production.

Christine Geraghty is Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK. She has written extensively on television and fiction, her first work being an early study of narrative in the British soap opera *Coronation Street* (BFI, 1981). She is the author of the classic *Women and Soap Opera* (Polity, 1991) and co-edited (with David Lusted) *The Television Studies Book* (Arnold, 1998). Her work on cinema includes *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the 'New Look'* (Routledge, 2000), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (IB Taurus, 2005) and her most recent book, *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptation in Film and Drama* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), includes a study of television classic adaptations.

Mar Grandío is Lecturer at the School of Communication of the Catholic University of telenovelas (Geraghty 2005). She won the Award for Excellence within the Doctorate in



INTRODUCTION

MERCEDES MEDINA

Why are family series like *Médico de familia*, *Cuéntame* and *Los Serrano* so successful? How do they get from the script to screen? How are they programmed? What audience figures have they got and why? What parallels and differences do they show in portraying the family in Spain? How profitable have they been? Here you will find full answers to these and other questions on the three series that, thanks to their popularity and commercial success, are landmarks in the history of Spanish television. This is a complete comparative study that covers creative and production issues (script and development, negotiations, production standards), in addition to programming and commercial exploitation strategies, audience analysis and narrative structure. Because of its multidisciplinary approach, this study is a first in our country, and will doubtlessly contribute to academic research on TV series.

There is a reason for these series to be considered paradigmatic. *Médico de familia*, broadcast from 1995 to 1999 on the private channel Tele 5 and produced by Globomedia, showed the way for the channel's change of image at the time. *Cuéntame cómo pasó* has been on air since 2001, and is produced by the Ganga and Cartel production companies. It was the beginning of a revival of the channel as a broadcaster of quality series with audience appeal. And finally, *Los Serrano*, on screen on Tele 5 since 2002, produced by Globomedia, has become the most popular series in the last few years. What the three series have in common is that they have reached a 35% audience quota for many of their broadcasting seasons, and have been exported abroad. They have also had great social repercussion and have contributed to the definition and position of the broadcasting channels. They also have a common family component. Not only do they address a family target, but also a family as the basis for the action and relationships. Their main storylines are family-based and generally take place in the home. *Médico de familia* is about a father of two children who has to take care of them; *Los Serrano* is the family name of a family composed by a widow with three boys who get married to Lucía, who was his girlfriend



when he was young and now is divorced and has two girls, and *Cuéntame* narrates the adventures of Alcantara family who lives at the end of the seventies from the view of the youngest boy of the family. This is composed by the parents, three children and the grandmother.

The term “family” is not limited to the fact of living in a common home; it also means links that guarantee unity, affection and security for the individuals who live under the same roof. The adjective “family” implies a series of universal, permanent values, understandable in any country.

Therefore, apart from a cast of well-known actors, with well-developed characters and simple, humorous storylines, the narration must correspond to the reality of the family environment, which has links with the values of protection, security, education and learning. When these elements are dealt with judiciously, the possibility for exploitation and audience loyalty increases.

In some chapters, the study is limited to the first and second seasons due to data management; in others, all seasons broadcast up to September 2007 have been analyzed. For some points, *Médico de Familia* series provides more data, because, as the oldest of the three series, there are more publications and studies available than for the other two. Table 1 shows technical data for the series.

TABLE 1.1: SERIES DATA

Title	Length Nº episodes	Seasons	Channel company	Production	Setting dates
<i>Médico de Familia</i>	1995-1999	4/119	Tele 5	Globomedia	Currently to time broadcast
<i>Cuéntame cómo pasó</i>	2001-2007+	8+/133+	TVE 1	Cartel Ganga	70s
<i>Los Serrano</i>	2003-2007+	6+/100+	Tele 5	Globomedia	Currently to time broadcast

Source: author's own.

Médico de familia, *Los Serrano* and *Cuéntame cómo pasó* are landmark series which are set in daily life, in the home, with everyday heroes and family conflicts. From creation to production, from channel programming to product sales, these series, undeniably, appeal to the present-day public, and this study considers the management proposals and the values contained in these series.

After a preliminary inspection of the series, firstly, the features which belong to entertainment products of all genres are described, an analysis of the development and possibilities for commercial exploitation of these series both in Spain and abroad. Then we deal with the characteristics that influence their programming and the dramedy production standards as a specifically Spanish genre. In the fifth chapter, we study the audience as the recipient of these series that definitely have great public backing. In sixth place, the portrayal of the family in these series is studied. Finally, in the epilogue, the influence of the drama genre on other TV genres is explained.

This research offers several novel aspects. The development of independent production in Spain is relatively new, and as yet there have not been any thorough studies in this area. There are three references that study some of the drama series we do but from different perspectives. Estrada (2004) and Smith (2006) compare the story of *Cuéntame cómo pasó* with the recent history of Spain. According to Smith (2006: 21), “this is a TV drama that invites its audience to be responsible and to understand recent history”. Paul Julian Smith is the only author that has written in English about the Spanish television. In *Spanish Visual Culture: Cinema, Television, Internet* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), Smith analyzes the content of some popular television Spanish series and combines audiovisual analysis with use of audience ratings and profiles of television channels, independent producers, scriptwriters and actors. Farré and Salvador (2007) look at how the scripts of *Los Serrano* and *Cuéntame* were written.

Therefore, the multiple approach of this project gives it added value. Moreover, the convergence of different areas of research into fiction series is innovative. As Havens (2006: 1) pointed out “we need to understand both the political-economic structures of global television and the culture worlds of the business people who operate within its constraints”. On the one hand, from the perspective of media economics it studies issues



from the industrial sector of production and the commercial exploitation of audiovisual products; from the area of value representation it analyses issues involved in the genesis of ideas, narrative and social portrayal; and from the field of social communication it deals with questions of programming. All of these aspects are approached from an evaluative standpoint in order to make proposals which will be useful and constructive for producers, programmers, scriptwriters and researchers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a great deal of writing on successful programmes; for example, *Big Brother* has been analysed as a global phenomenon by Mathijs and Jones (2004). Within the studies on content, the dramatic genre has been widely studied in academic literature. Bignell (2000), for example, made a study of the British soaps *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders*. Silverstone and Hirsch (1992), and Hartley and Fiske (2003) deal with the narrative aspect of television. A classic reference is the monograph written by Ang (1985) on *Dallas*. There is also an abundance of writing on the Latin-American "telenovelas" (Bylereist & Meers, 2000; Mayer, 2003; Slade & Beckenham, 2005). Other authors have focused their research on the family and television (Lull, 1998; Morley, 1989; Taylor, 1989; Liebes & Livingstone, 1998). Most of these studies fit into the framework for cultural studies, and pay special attention to the effect on audiences (Allen, 1995; Miller, 2001; Thornham & Purvis, 2005) or the portrayal of certain social groups (Geraghty, 1991; Gledhill, 1997; Valaskivi, 2000; Creeber, 2001; Mazdon, 2001; Ardèvol & Muntanola, 2004).

The European Audiovisual Observatory has made a considerable effort to study fiction production in Europe in the last few years (Jezequel; Lange, 2000 and Buonanno, 2000 & 2002). The market in Spain has been studied in depth by Vilches, Berciano and Lacalle of the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (1999 & 2001).

Other authors use different approaches to analyse the fiction phenomenon. For example, Fuller (1992), when speculating on the success of *The Cosby Show*, not only mentions its audience impact, the effectiveness of its commercial exploitation, or its appeal

to advertisers, but also emphasises aspects such as the characters' warmth, humour, the familiarity of the stories and the actors' performance. Hobson (2003) offers a multi-disciplinary approach to soap operas; she considers their production and programming, their narrative structure, how they present values, economic aspects and audience satisfaction. Wittebols (2004) studies how economics affect TV series.

The quality of TV programmes has been studied extensively (Pragnell, 1985; Hoggar, 1989; Mulgan, 1990; Leggatt, 1993; Lasagni and Richeri, 1996; Ishikawa, 1996; Hilve, Majanen & Rosengren, 1997; Gutierrez, 2000; Jaramillo 2002; Medina, 2006; Mc Cabe & Akass, 2007), but very few studies consider the values they reflect and the economic and commercial factors that affect their production, distribution, exploitation and consumption. Examples are the monograph by Bignell and Lacey (2005), where they develop a global view of the above-mentioned factors with reference to fiction quality, or the handbooks by Sánchez-Tabernero (2000) and Nieto & Iglesias (2000), which give guidelines for the evaluation of media content quality in the management area.

Numerous studies on Spanish television have been published, but the area of domestic series has been studied for academic purposes just recently. There are several works that deserve mention, such as the pioneering piece on television in Spain by Alvarez Monzoncillo and Luc Iwens (1992). López Villanueva and Monzoncillo (1999) published an article entitled: *La producción de ficción en España: un cambio de ciclo* [Production of drama in Spain: a new era]. In 1997, Sánchez-Tabernero and other authors published *Estrategias de marketing de las empresas de televisión en España*, which gave an in-depth study of production and programming. Bustamante (1999) made a detailed analysis of the production methods as applied to the production of Spanish series. More recently, several academics and professionals such as Pardo (2001), García de Castro (2002) and Bardají and Gómez (2004) have focused their work on the field of series production in Spain. Finally, we must highlight some other bibliographical references on series-production in Britain or the US, such as Broughton (1986), Millerson (1998), Schihl (1997), Koseluk (2000), Longworth (2000) and Cury (2002).



REFERENCES

- ALLEN, R. (Ed.) (1995), *To be continued... soap operas around the world*, Routledge, London-New York.
- ALVAREZ MONZONCILLO, J.M. & LÓPEZ VILLANUEVA, J. (1999), "La producción de ficción en España", *ZER*, nº 7, pp. 65-88.
- ÁLVAREZ MONZONCILLO, J. M. & IWENS, J. L. (1992), *El futuro del audiovisual en España: las transformaciones ante el nuevo marco europeo*, Fundesco, Madrid.
- ANG, I. (1985), *Watching Dallas. Soap operas and the melodramatic imagination*, Routledge, London.
- ARDÈVOL, E. & MUNTAÑOLA, N. (Eds.) (2004), *Representación y cultura audiovisual en la sociedad contemporánea*, UOC, Barcelona.
- BARDAJÍ, J. & GÓMEZ, S. (2004), *La Gestión de la creatividad en televisión. El Caso de Globo Media*, Eunsa, Pamplona.
- BIGNELL, J. & LACEY, S. (Eds.) (2005), *Popular television drama: critical perspectives*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- BIGNELL, J. & LACEY, S.; MACMURRAUGH-KAVANAGH, M. (Ed.) (2000), *British television drama: past, present, and future*, Palgrave, Hampshire, New York.
- BROUGHTON, I. (Ed.) (1986), *Producers on producing: the making of film and television*, Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland.
- BUSTAMANTE, E. (1999), *La Televisión Económica. Financiación, Estrategia y Mercados*, Akal, Madrid.
- BYLTEREIST, D.; MEERS, P. (2000), "The international telenovela debate and the contra-flow argument: a reappraisal", *Media, Culture and Society*, nº 22, pp. 393-413.
- BUONANNO, M. (ed.) (2000), *Television Fiction in Europe. Eurofiction Report*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
- BUONANNO, M. (Ed.) (2002), *Television Fiction in Europe. Eurofiction Report*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
- CREEBER, G. (2001), "'Taking our personal lives seriously': intimacy, continuity and memory in the television drama serial", *Media, Culture and Society*, nº 23, pp. 439-55.
- CURY, I. (2002), *Directing and producing for television*, Focal Press, Boston.
- ESTRADA, I. (2004), "Cuéntame cómo pasó o la revisión de la historia española reciente", *Hispanic Review*, 72, pp. 547 - 564.
- FARRÉ, M. (2007), "Cuéntame", in HUERTA, M. Á.; SANGRO, P. (Ed.), *De Los Serrano a Cuéntame. Cómo se crean las series de televisión en España*, Arkadín ediciones, pp. 115 - 127.
- FISKE, J. & HARTLEY, J. (2003-2), *Reading television*, Routledge, London-New York.
- FULLER, L. (1992), *The Cosby Show. Audiences, Impact and Implications*, Greenwood Press, Westport.
- GARCÍA DE CASTRO, M. (2002), *La ficción televisiva popular: una evolución de las series de televisión en España*, Gedisa, Barcelona.
- GERAGHTY, C. (1991), *Women and Soap Opera*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- GLEDHILL, C. (1997), "Genre and Gender: The case of soap opera", in HALL, S. (Ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Sage, London, pp. 337-386.
- GUTIERREZ, C. (2000), "Televisión y calidad: Perspectivas de investigación y criterios de evaluación", *ZER*, pp. 151-184.
- HAVENS, T. (2006), *Global Television Marketplace*, BFI Publishing, London.
- HILLVE, P., MAJANEN, P. & ROSENGREN, K. E. (1997), "Aspects of Quality in TV Programming. Structural Diversity Compared over Time and Space", *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 12, nº3, pp. 291-318.
- HOBSON, D. (2003), *Soap opera*, Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA.
- HOGGART, R. (Ed.) (1989), *Quality in TV: Programmes, programme-makers, systems*, John Libbey, London.
- ISHIKAWA, S. (Ed.) (1996), *Quality Assessment of Television*, University of Luton Press, Luton.
- JARAMILLO, D. L. (2002), "The Family Racquet: AOL Time Warner, HBO, The Sopranos, and the Construction of a Quality Brand", *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 26.2, January, pp. 59 - 75.
- JEZEQUEL, J. & LANGE, A. (2000), *Economy of European TV Fiction. Market Value and Producers-Broadcasters Relations*, European Audiovisual Observatory and Centre National de la Cinématographie, Strasbourg.
- KOSELUK, G. (2000), *Great Brit-Coms: British television situation comedy*, Jefferson, N.C., McFarland.
- LASAGNI, M. C. & RICHERI, G. (1996), *Televisione e qualità*, RAI, ERI, Roma.
- LEGGATT, T. (1993), "Quality in TV: The Views of Professionals", *Studies of Broadcasting*, NHK, nº 28, March, pp. 37-71.
- LIEBES, T. & LIVINGSTONE, S. (1998), "European Soap Operas. The Diversification of a Genre", *European Journal of Communication*, 13, nº 2, pp. 147-180.
- LONGWORTH, J. L. (2000), *TV creators: conversations with America's top producers of television drama*, Syracuse University Press Syracuse, New York.
- LULL, J. (1988), *World families watch television*, Sage, Newbury Park, California.
- MATHIJS, E. & JONES, J. (Ed.) (2004), *Big Brother international: formats, critics and publics*, Wallflower Press, London, New York.
- MAYER, V. (2003), "Living Telenovelas/Telenovelizing Life: Mexican American Girls' Identities and Transnational Telenovelas", *Journal of Communication*, September, pp. 479-495.
- MAZDON, L. (2001), "Contemporary French Television, the Nation, and the Family", *Television & New Media*, 2, nº 4, pp. 335-349.
- Mc CABE, J. & AKASS, K. (Ed.) (2007), *Quality TV. Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, I.B. Tauris, London.
- MEDINA, M. (2006), *Calidad y contenidos audiovisuales*, Eunsa, Pamplona.
- MILLER, T. et al. (Eds.) (2001), *Global Hollywood*, British Film Institute, London.
- MILLERSON, G. (1998), *Effective TV production*, Focal Press, Oxford.
- MORLEY, D. (1988), *Family television: cultural power and domestic leisure*, Routledge, London.
- MULGAN, G. (Ed.) (1990) *The Question of Quality*, BFI, London.
- NIETO, A. & IGLESIAS, F. (2000) *Empresa Informativa*, Ariel, Barcelona.



PARDO, A. (2001), "La producción televisiva: un sector en alza", *La Nueva Era de la Televisión*, ATV, Carat, España, pp. 44-50.

PRAGNELL, A. (1985), *Television in Europe, Quality and Values in a Time of Change*, EIM, Manchester.

SALVADOR, O. (2007), "Los Serrano", in HUERTA, M. A.; SANGRO, P. (Ed.), *De Los Serrano a Cuéntame. Cómo se crean las series de televisión en España*, Arkadin ediciones, pp. 169 – 186.

SÁNCHEZ-TABERNERO, A. et al. (1997), *Las estrategias de marketing de las empresas de televisión en España*, Eunsa, Pamplona.

SÁNCHEZ-TABERNERO, A. (2000), *Dirección Estratégica de Empresas de Comunicación*, Cátedra, Madrid.

SCHIH, R. J. (1997), *Dramáticos en televisión*, [traducción: Ma Luisa de Diego] Madrid: Instituto Oficial de Radiotelevisión Española.

SILVERSTONE, R.; HIRSCH, E. (1992), *Consuming technologies: media and information in domestic spaces*, Routledge, London-New York.

SLADE, C. & BECKENHAM, A. (2005), "Telenovelas and soap operas: Negotiating Reality", *Television and New Media*, vol. 6, nº 4, pp. 337-341.

SMITH, P. J. (2006), "The Approach to Spanish Television Drama of the New golden Age. Remembering, Repeating, Working Through (Cuéntame cómo pasó)", *Television in Spain. From Franco to Almodovar*, Tamesis, UK, pp. 11 – 27.

SMITH, P. J. (2006), *Spanish Visual Culture: Cinema, Television, Internet*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.

TAYLOR, E. (1989), *Prime-time families: television culture in postwar America*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

THORNHAM, S. & PURVIS, T. (2005), *Television Drama, Theories and Identities*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.

VALASKIVI, K. (2000), "Being a part of the family? Gender, genre and production in a Japanese TV drama", *Media, Culture and Society*, nº 22, pp. 309-325.

VILCHES, L., BERCIANO, R. & LACALLE, C. (1999), "La ficción televisiva europea: la ficción nacional en Europa planta cara a EE.UU." *Signo y pensamiento*, XVIII, pp. 11-14.

VILCHES, L., BERCIANO, R. & LACALLE, C. (2001), "Eurofiction certifica el fin de la euforia en el género de ficción", *Carta de Ajuste*, 36, pp. 37-45.

WITTEBOLS, J. (2004), *The Soap Opera Paradigm: Television Programming and Corporate Priorities*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham.

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.