

# Connected screens: the crisis in TVE and its repercussions for the Spanish film industry (1990-1996)

## *Pantallas conectadas: la crisis de TVE y su influencia en el cine nacional (1990-1996)*



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### Abstract:

This article aims to analyse Spanish television's film policy and its relationship with the crisis in the Spanish film industry between 1990 and 1996. To do this, we examine TVE's participation in the financing of domestic productions and its cinematographic scheduling. Our research aims to corroborate two hypotheses. Firstly, that the need to secure the loyalty of an audience that, for the first time, could choose what it watched, forced public television to find new strategies. This affected all scheduling, especially domestic films broadcast on both

### Resumen:

*Este artículo tiene como objetivo estudiar la política cinematográfica de televisión española y su relación con la crisis de la industria filmica entre 1990 y 1996. Para ello se estudiará la programación cinematográfica y la participación del Ente público en la financiación de producciones nacionales. La investigación pretende corroborar dos hipótesis. Por un lado, cómo la televisión pública tuvo que buscar nuevas estrategias para fidelizar a unos espectadores que por primera vez podía elegir lo que veía. Esto condicionó al cine nacional emitido en ambas cadenas. Sus*

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channels. Low viewership figures made this product unprofitable, and, consequently, it was not properly scheduled on the small screen. Secondly, we attempt to show that the entity's financial difficulties had a profound effect on the Spanish film industry's crisis. A lack of capital affected cooperation in finance and production between the two media, further weakening the fragile domestic film industry. This lack of support for cinema not only had a negative effect on production, but also had consequences for its promotion and society's recognition and acceptance of it.

**Keywords:**

Spanish television; films; film industry; Spanish television crisis; film scheduling; Spanish film crisis.

*bajos índices de audiencia hicieron que este producto no resultara rentable y, por consiguiente, que no fuera convenientemente programado en la pequeña pantalla. Por otro, se intentará demostrar que los problemas económicos del Ente incidieron en la crisis de la industria cinematográfica española. La escasez de capital modificó las formas de producción y de colaboración económica entre ambos medios debilitando aún más la frágil industria cinematográfica nacional. La falta de apoyo al cine no solo tuvo un efecto negativo en la producción. También repercutió en su promoción y en su reconocimiento y aceptación por parte de la sociedad.*

**Palabras clave:**

*Televisión española; películas; industria cinematográfica; crisis televisión española; política cinematográfica; crisis cine español.*

## 1. Introduction

The first private TV channels appeared in Spain in 1990 thus breaking a near fifty-year monopoly. This Neo television, caused a radical change in the concept, function and consumption of the small screen. The new paradigm, characterised by the modification of reality, hypervisibility, increased choice or more showbiz-like content not only transformed the televisual medium (Eco, 1986), it also had an impact on the country's film industry.

The audio-visual sector is currently going through a revolution. Limitations on mobility and leisure spaces have accelerated the process initiated by the popularity of digital platforms. Although alternatives such as Filmin or Rakuten already existed, these were limited to being little more than containers of audio-visual material. The arrival of Netflix in 2015, of HBO one year later and of Amazon Prime, Disney and Apple in 2020 represented a radical transformation.

In just a few years, these new platforms have attracted millions of subscribers, while conventional television has lost viewers swiftly and inexorably. This scenario calls for a re-think of the idea of television, and of those formats typical of the medium, as well as the relationship established between the viewer and the channel and with other audio-visuals industries such as cinema.

Video streaming platforms allow the user to create their own televisual flow (Heredia, Quirós-Ramírez & Quinceno Castañeda, 2021). Thus, audience loyalty and therefore, finance, define the nature of the formats broadcast and permit investment with reasonable certainty in products suited to their tastes (Berejano, 2020).

The almost simultaneous opening of films such as *Roma* (Cuarón, 2018) or *The Irishman* (Scorsesse, 2019) in cinemas and via streaming offers a new business model which provokes a vital debate for this collective (Moreno, 2020, pp. 198-199). Moreover, the conversion of these platforms into producers has created films conditioned by the screens where they are going to be shown. They have been created in many cases in line with the circumstances of this new television. The internationalisation of films allows for greater projection, but also certain uniformity (Chalaby, 2016) which has a bearing on narrative, visual, sound and even creative approaches (León, 2021).

In this labyrinth, where the audio-visual industries face a paradigm shift, it is particularly interesting to observe the ways and means in which an analogous problem was approached thirty years ago. The study of the introduction of certain scheduling policies will allow us to understand the consequences that these may have for viewers' knowledge and recognition of a given product and the implications for other cultural sectors.

## 2. Objectives & methodology

This paper's object of study is the cinematographic policy of TVE between 1990 and 1996. The text strives to corroborate two hypotheses. Firstly, we will try to demonstrate that the loss of its television monopoly and the need to foster audience loyalty defined the way in which Spanish cinema was programmed on both of TVE's channels. Secondly, we will intend to discover how the entity's economic difficulties affected the crisis in the Spanish film industry.

The general objective of the research is, therefore, to study the changes occasioned in the public entity's film scheduling policy in the early-90s. The special circumstances that gave rise to these modifications and their consequences for the latticework of the industry structure a series of specific objectives:

- O1: Identify and understand the patterns of film scheduling, especially of Spanish films, during the period under consideration.
- O2: Establish the relationship between the changes in film scheduling and public television's economic and business crisis.
- O3: Analyse any possible relationship between the Spanish film industry's problems and the lack of support from TVE.
- O4: Outline some consequences, for both the industry and the public, of the scarcity of broadcasts of domestic films on public television.

This paper places itself chronologically between 1990, with the commencement of broadcasts by commercial television, and 1996, the year in which the electoral victory of the People's Party (PP) saw the socialist party (PSOE) leave office after fourteen years, with the corresponding changes in TVE's senior management. Apart from the changes in the organisation's management, 1996 was also the first year in which the sum of the private channels' audiences exceeded those of the public ones, thus beginning the slow but progressive deterioration of public television (Vaca Berdayes, 1997, p. 411). It was also the year that saw the beginning of a certain recuperation in the film sector due to increased production and the success of titles such as *Two Much* (Trueba, 1996), *The day of the beast* (De la Iglesia, 1996) or *Libertarias* (Aranda, 1996).

The study of one medium –cinema– broadcast in another –television– calls for a double analysis, as a broadcast product and, therefore, subject to the trends of TV scheduling, and as a format foreign to the medium and regulated by both national law and by those of its own industry. In order to learn how the format was scheduled, a data base has been created compiling the films broadcast on the two channels over four weeks of the year. 28 days per season over 6 years have been analysed, for a total of 168 days. For a broader understanding of the channels' film scheduling policy over the whole of a season, two months have been selected –March and September– when there were no events that could distort the broadcasting of these pieces, and another two with specific characteristics, such as the summer (July) and Christmas (December). The resulting data base is made up of 2064 items.

The quantitative analysis has been complemented by a qualitative study. As well as the time slot, data has been compiled on nationality, year of production, its inclusion or not in a specific themed series or the film's genre. These questions –a film's scheduling in line with the public's tastes or loyalty through a recognisable brand or time slot– allow us to pinpoint the importance granted by a channel to the film being broadcast and the medium's trends in the topic we are studying.

For the study of the relationship between television and cinema we have turned to both the academic literature on the matter and the publications of the two media during the period. On one hand, the annuals published by Televisión Española. These detail the channel's circumstances and its efforts to adapt to the new situation. On the other hand, the journal *Academia*, the periodical publication of the Spanish Film Academy. Here one finds both the consequences of television's film policies and the consternation these caused in the movie industry.

### 3. The relationship between television and cinema in Spain

In 1956, the year of the first television transmissions in Spain, cinema was one of the most popular media with a national *star system* that was both recognised and highly-regarded socially (García Fernández, 2009, p. 30). Despite this, television's arrival caused a degree of concern in the movie industry, principally due to how films were shown in cinemas. This was by using the lucrative formula of extending the life of films over several years by their projection in cinemas of different categories. Given this situation, television was seen as a competitor able to take on those older films destined for the minor local cinema screens in city neighbourhoods and / or villages.

The country's political and economic characteristics meant that both media were dominated and financed by the state. One, the cinematographic, through a complex system of subsidies intended to control film content and which hindered the development of private initiative. The other, the televisual, chiefly thanks to advertising, absolutely crucial for its launch and consolidation (Montero & Antona, 2019, p. 27).

The 70s brought major novelties to Spain. Social, political and economic changes brought new forms of entertainment. Cinema started to lose customers and the number of movie theatres also declined. While, in 1968, cinemas had a total of 773 million movie-goers, by 1987 the number had fallen to only 86 million (Gámir, 2001, pp. 223-253).

Television became the most popular mass media (Prado, 2001, pp. 161-170). This not only had repercussions for the economy of the sector, but also for its social standing. The consolidation of television as the place for making new viewers (Cerdán & Pena, 2007, p. 20), the progressive disappearance of film magazines (Llinas, 1987, p.153), the absence of effective and attractive advertising to win over the public (Academia, 1994a, p. 25) or the growth in domestic VCRs (Calvo, 2011, p.16) were some of the causes of the big screen's loss of influence.

At the beginning of the 90s, the cinema industry was in serious trouble. The poor box office results of the productions of those years did not encourage investment by film companies, which could not, nor wished to, assume the financial risk inherent in producing a Spanish film. Despite the search for new creative formulas to aid the development of film with a national Identity, the box office take showed a lack of synchrony with the public. As put by the Director General of Cinematography, Juan Miguel Lamet, it was quality cinema, but it left the public indifferent. (Academia, 1992, p.12).

The idea of a national film industry in crisis started to gain weight and entered the national consciousness. The 1992 Goya awards, the Spanish *Oscars*, demonstrated both the difficulties of and the unease in the sector. The continual allusions to the need for major investment or requests to movie-goers to go to see Spanish films made some talk of the ceremony as a “weep-fest” (Academia, 1992, p. 21). This image confirmed the weakness of Spanish cinema. As an industry and as a cultural good.

Televisión Española closed 1988-1989 having consolidated its position as the media group with the largest audience in Spanish history (TVE, 1989, p. 41). One year later, not only had the number of viewers fallen by a third, but it was immersed in one of the most complex and convulsive periods of its existence.

May 3, 1988, saw the passing of the private television law which conceded three licences, two for free-to-air channels –Telecinco and Antena 3– and one for a subscription channel (Canal Plus). The legislation ended public television’s monopoly and completely altered the nation’s audio-visual panorama.

The crisis in Televisión Española was due to several causes. Disastrous management of its resources united to the recession that affected all the audio-visual sector in the early 90s. Added to this, the arrival of the commercial channels, Telecinco and Antena 3, smashed a system that depended excessively on advertisers. Public television received mixed financing, part coming from the State and the rest from advertising and the sale of products. From 1984 on there was a progressive withdrawal of public subsidies to television (Palacios & Ciller, 2018, p. 579). 1988 was the first year in which RTVE did not receive money from the General Budget of the State, having to rely on its own resources to finance its operations (TVE, 1989, p. 22).

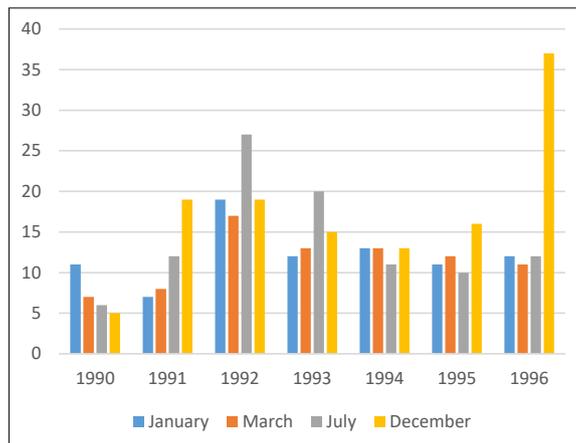
Advertising turnover for 1990 was 153,313 million pesetas. 178 times greater than the income for program sales, the second source of revenue (EFE, 1990). Six years later it had lost 42% of its advertising income (Tijeras, 2012). The fall in the number of advertisers represented, as can be seen, a terrible blow to the medium’s finances. Especially as it was so swift and so massive.

Without government money and at the mercy of a market it no longer controlled, the public organisation had to adopt a series of measures such as the creation of a marketing department that modified the image of the group’s channels, a drastic reduction in headcount and, more than anything, a radical control of spending.

#### **4. Films broadcast by TVE**

State television utilised film differently on its two channels. TVE1 tended towards modern, North American films. Their number increased at the weekend and over holiday periods, when, moreover, movies appropriate to the season were common, adventure films and films for teens in the summer, with Christmas-themed movies in December.

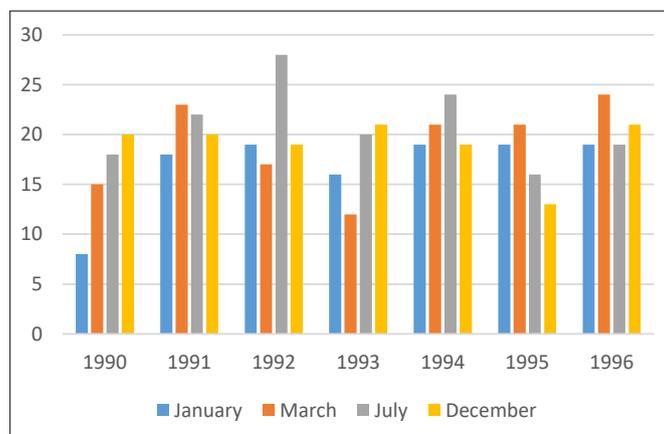
**Graph 1. Films broadcast by TVE1**



Source: created by the authors

The idiosyncrasy of TVE2 meant the broadcasting of older films from a wider range of nationalities. A large part of its schedules were films, even doubling the number shown on TVE1. Apart from abundance, there were differences in the genres and time slots. Compared to the other free-to-air channels, most of their movies were shown on weekdays. The channel also showed classic films under umbrellas such as *Cine club* or *The star is...*, films in black and white, mostly of renowned quality, and largely, though not exclusively, from Hollywood.

**Graph 2. Films broadcast by TVE2**



Source: created by the authors

The time slots were commercially driven. Firstly, successful films - mainly due to their topicality and popularity - were broadcast in prime-time though these became less frequent as other formats more suited to the medium became available, such as TV series. During the period under study, TVE broadcast, at least, three prime-time films per week, usually on Mondays, Tuesdays and/or Thursdays and, at the weekend, on Saturdays on TVE2 and Sundays on TVE1. Films were highly popular with the public which made them a great draw for viewers (TVE, 1989, p. 44).

Secondly, television films dominated the afternoons in the mid-90s on TVE1, substituting soap operas. Finally, films of lesser commercial value shown in the small hours or in the morning. Particularly on TVE2 which had two themed formats -*Films for Everyone* and *The Morning Movie*- showing a daily film. In both cases, the norm was family films, adventures, North American and Spanish, over thirty years old and B-films. In 1992, amidst the celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of the Discovery of the Americas, there were quite a number of Latin American films such as *Historia de una noche* (Saslavsky 1941) or *¡Viva el amor!* (De la Serna, 1958). The few morning films on TVE1 were mainly broadcast in 1991/1992 and 1994/1995.

These time slots indicated little care for or interest in the product. In fact, in 1993, the estimated viewing time in the slot was 18 minutes in the after-midnight slot and 22 minutes mid-morning. This is only half of the time in other slots and less than a third than in prime-time (Palacio, 2008, p. 168). As the director Antonio Mercero said, the important thing was not how much film was broadcast but when and what (SGAE, 2000, p. 335). Putting films on at a time when there is going to be little audience or with a very specific target, as well as choosing old films and ones of slight interest, shows, more than anything, a wish to cut costs using lower quality stock to occupy an unpopular time slot.

The public channels always maintained a consistent number of films. Excepting periods such as 1991/ 1992, the toughest in the organisation's crisis, when the number of films almost doubled. Most were part of the existing stock in the channel's library, old films, some of poor quality and little suited to the tastes of prime-time viewers. A special themed season was created, Cine 92, with one film per night.

The number of films can be seen to increase again in late 1996. The March elections had handed power to the People's Party. When the new director general, Mónica Ridruejo, took up her position, there was no budget left for acquisitions that year or the next (Munsó, 2001, p. 327). The policy of cost control she wanted to introduce and especially the limited room for manoeuvre called for an optimization of existing resources through the use of the library. This was particularly true at Christmas, a time for family and movies.

The early 90s saw greater repetition of films, in 1991 TVE tripled the number of repeats compared to previous years, a tendency "likely to become a fundamental resource to maximize the investment in external production" (TVE, 1991, p. 183). This approach, that sought not only to make the most of a film but also avoided scheduling others, was highly effective with popular titles such as *Pretty Woman* (Marshall, 1990). This film was broadcast three times by TVE during the period under study - twice in 1994 and once in 1996- achieving a large audience on each occasion (Palmero, 2015).

North American commercial cinema attracted viewers and, in consequence, advertisers, therefore TVE clearly turned to it. In October 1992, it signed a contract with Warner which committed the entity to purchasing broadcasting rights from the studio to a value of 100 million dollars over the 93, 94 and 95 seasons (Tijeras, 2012). This outlay set the nationality of the movies to be shown over the following years. The channels bought bundles of films from the majors. Licences were offered for a specified period

and bound together famous titles and others of less renown or made-for-TV. This meant that along with the acquisition of major feature films, the channel accepted a commitment to broadcast the other tapes it had been obliged to buy.

The most famous movies were shown under several umbrellas. One of the most popular was *Thursday Movie* which showed action and adventure films such as *Jumanji* (Johnston, 1995), *The Last Boy Scout* (Scott, 1991) or *The Film of the Week*. This space, which mixed Hollywood productions with made-for-TV pieces and Spanish films, struggled to consolidate itself as leader in its time slot until it switched to almost exclusively showing Hollywood films made in the 90s.

Until the 1991-1992 season, domestic titles used to figure in the top 25 most watched. The statistics for later seasons reflected a shift in viewers' preferences towards stories made in the Mecca of cinema. Nineteen of the top twenty films in terms of audience in the 1995/1996 season were American (GECA, 1997, p. 80). Spanish productions barely figured in this televisual scenario, maintaining a share, with little variation, of 12% over the years under consideration.

These productions used to be shown in the mid-morning or late-night slots, mainly on TVE2, the channel where, in the early years of the decade, some films were broadcast in the mid-afternoon slot on weekdays. There were hardly any Spanish feature films shown outside of these slots.

In general, the domestic films shown corresponded to two very specific periods. One, late-Francoism, stories from which were very popular. Indeed, between 1991 and 1993, the only Spanish films scheduled at popular times were comedies such as *Cateto a Babor* (Fernández, 1970) or *Objetivo bikini* (Ozores, 1968).

The other period was the 90s productions in which the public television entity had participated. Though few in number, from 1994 some of these feature films could be seen -for example, *Tender Summer of Lust on the Rooftops* (Chávarri, 1993) or *Anything for Bread* (Urbizu, 1991)- at weekday prime-time. The public's response was variable. While the Francoist movies gained high audience shares, the contemporary output had a varied following.

From 1995 on there was an increase in the number of Spanish films on TVE2 thanks to the creation of themed programs such as *Nuestro cine* and *Cine de Barrio* which swiftly, due to its popularity, switched over to TVE1. The structure of these programs implied a certain care for the product as it bundled together, in a common framework, films with similar characteristics. This allowed for their identification by the public, and thus created a certain affinity.

## 5. Causes of the lack of Spanish movies on the screens

The public channel's financial struggles and the need to gain the loyalty of the public so as to attract advertisers, created a cinematographic policy focused on the profitability of the products broadcast.

1992 was one of the seasons in which TVE broadcast most Spanish features. It was also the year in which the crisis engulfing Spanish cinema became most evident. During this time, the public channel relied on titles in its archive, and therefore did not renew or invest in films (TVE, 1992, p. 233). In the case of Spanish products, old films were shown for two reasons.

The first was financial. Domestic productions, like foreign ones, were purchased in bundles. This defined both the channel's library, which contained previous purchases, and the titles that had to be shown at some point. The figures were high. An example would be the nearly eight hundred movies acquired by TVE between 1995 and 1997 for three billion pesetas. Among these are

popular films such as *La tonta del bote* (Orduña, 1970) or *No desearás al vecino del quinto* (Fernández, 1970) and many others of little renown which, by contractual obligation, also had to be shown (TVE compra 700..., 1997).

Modern Spanish films could not, by law, be broadcast less than two years after their big-screen premiere, which meant a financial outlay which could not be recuperated for at least two years (Academia, 1995, p. 96-97).

Furthermore, there was the audience share. The domestic films with the highest TV audience – and therefore the most popular among the general public – were comedies from the 60s and/or 70s. Films from that period were very popular, even twenty years later. Their success, combined with that of domestic series, reflects the average viewer's interest in formats related to local and national culture as opposed to more universal and homogenous products (Waisbord, 2004, p. 359-383). The audience figures obtained by these films were also fruit of the nostalgia for lost idiosyncrasy, both general and particular (Armbruster, 2016, p. 23). A certain longing for a country that, though living under a dictatorial regime, had felt cheerful, carefree and undogmatic, with a clearly defined character. And, of course, for a time when the typical viewer of these pieces had been young and had their whole life before them.

Moreover, the need to maintain audience figures meant that certain broadcasting norms were systematically ignored, which had negative repercussions for the industry. These norms stated that 40% of commercial films broadcast should be productions from the European Community and, within that percentage, at least half had to be Spanish (Cuevas, 1994: 119). José Antonio Suárez, legal advisor to the Confederation of Spanish Audio-visual Producers (FAPAE), pointed to compliance with the legally established European-produced percentage as one of the key measures for the reactivation of Spanish production (Academia, 1993, p. 13). The solution, he thought, was evident, there should be investment in contemporary cinema and not in foreign material or films produced in the past (Academia 1993, p. 10). One should not forget that the broadcasting of old films, although they were domestic productions, not only failed to build the industry, but also failed to consolidate the new roster of stars.

Despite these considerations, Televisión Española's pressing financial needs led it to give priority to trends in the television market as opposed to public interest. Competition with the private channels had two fundamental consequences. Firstly, viewers began to see themselves as potential clients (Mateos-Pérez, 2014, p. 71). Secondly, there was a homogenisation of formats, degrading and putting cultural demands to one side (Gubern, 2006, p. 370).

## 6. TVE's participation in the financing of domestic cinema

TVE's financial crisis had a direct impact on its support of Spanish film-making. According to data from the Spanish Film Academy, a third of the finance provided to Spanish films in the 90s came from the sale of broadcast rights to TV channels (Academia, 1997b, p. 15). Agreements with these bodies could mean a difference of between 70 and 80 million pesetas, for films with a budget of little more than one hundred million (Academia, 1997a, p. 26).

The public entity started to participate actively in film financing in the 80s thanks to the signing of agreements with the Confederation of Spanish Audio-visual Producers which set a share of 20% and regulated broadcast rights and associated productions (Gómez-Escalonilla, 1998, p. 60). These were corroborated by the norms proposed by Pilar Miró – who during the 80s

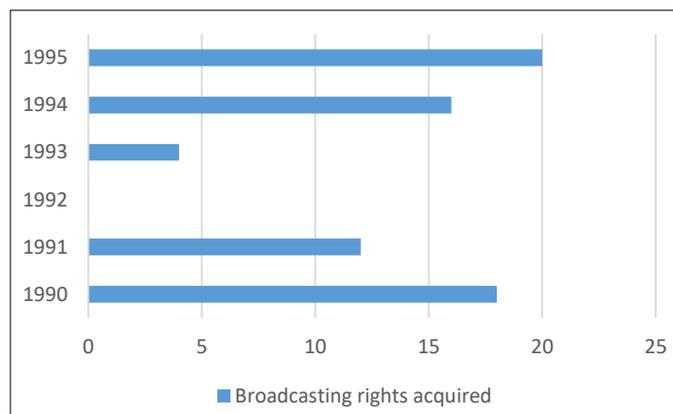
held the highest positions in the Directorate General of Cinematography and in RTVE – which permitted the direct production of films and series in exchange for exclusive broadcast rights (Mateos-Pérez & Cabeza, 2015, pp. 76-92).

Despite the producers' change of attitude and the channel's initial good-will, most of the agreements were not honoured. In 1990 the agreement signed a year earlier between The Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales (ICAA) was extended with a commitment to invest 2 billion pesetas in film and 10 billion in other types of audio-visual products. A year later, TVE declared its inability to fulfill the agreement, with the Ministry of Culture assuming the cost.

In 1992, TVE's tendency to participate in the financing of Spanish film through associated and financed production was modified (Academia, 1994b, p. IX), this being the first year in which no feature films were produced.

Although it did not acquire any broadcasting rights (Academia, 1994a, p. 9), from that moment on, the public channel was to bet on this format. The norm was to negotiate filming beforehand, and the agreements were for three years (Bello, 2012). Prices were low and were set following the channel's criteria. That is to say, the estimated audience, time slot or broadcast region were considered, instead of the movie's production costs.

**Graph 3. Broadcast rights acquired by TVE during the years under study**



Source: created by the authors from data compiled by the journal *Academia*

Thanks to the agreement signed by TVE and the Instituto de Crédito Oficial (ICO) in 1994, which established a 2 billion peseta annual line of credit for the purchase of broadcast rights over the following three years, the organization was able to keep up its investments. Although the terms had changed, the return of TVE to the world of financing Spanish cinema had positive repercussions for the industry. In fact, as pointed out by Agustín Almodóvar, Pedro Almodóvar's brother and producer of *El Deseo S.A.*, it was television that really brought profits for films (Academia, 1996a, p. 98). Nevertheless, and despite the change in tendency, domestic cinema's market share remained firmly below 11% (EGEDA, 2001, p. 11).

## 7. Consequences of TVE's cinematographic policy for the Spanish cinema industry.

During the 80s, a major cultural shift could be observed in Spain, fruit of the enormous changes taking place following the death of Franco. The consolidation of Spanish democracy, entrance into the EEC or the improved international standing of the country following numerous events in 1992 saw Spain open up to the world. The younger population found themselves torn between two trends, immersed in globalization but still tied to local tradition (Henseller, 2011, p. 16). This was not truly taken on by films, with themes and ideas differing greatly from those of their viewers. They were more tuned to imitating, with little success, stories from abroad, than addressing national problems, resulting in low audience levels both on the big screen and on the small.

The lack of support from public television did no more than worsen the situation. In fact, the small screen was one of the media that had most influence on mass audiences, which thanks to it, assumed tastes and fashions and learnt what books to read, which records to listen to and what movies to see. (Postman, 1991, p. 83). This had a negative effect on the media education of a society which lacked educational policies designed to study audio-visual culture (Medina, Briones & Hernández, 1997, p. 50). This contributed to a lack of awareness about domestic productions.

In this competitive system, public taste and the trends in the medium set both the nature and the format of the productions of the time. Products were no longer only created for darkened movie theatres but for brightly-lit living rooms. This meant that audio and visual elements such as the size of shots, depth, sound or photography (Academia, 1997b, p. 39) were affected by and adapted to new forms of consumption. This was manifest in the more technical tasks, where the professionals had to approach their work thinking of a substantially smaller screen. A good example of this is the modifications introduced in the field of lighting. As the Director of Photography Toe Trenas put it, in the 90s nobody dared to illuminate taking full advantage of the latitude and underexposure of cinematographic material, as they had just a decade before, as it was impossible to transfer the atmosphere and quality of an image to television (*Academia*, 1998, p. 27)

The development of televisual elements as opposed to the cinematographic also changed the narrative structure of stories. Language, rhythm, or staging were all altered when writing scripts (Rimbau & Torreiro, 1999, p. 38), in many cases adapting to the type of movie the organisation was backing, a quality product, mainly comedy, with sufficient budget to permit it to be well-made and which would gain certain prestige (*Academia*, 1996a, p. 100).

Television's subjugation in televisual, financial, aesthetic and even sociological terms produced a certain uniformity of format (Cerdán & Pena, 2007, pp. 18-19). It became a "generic" product that covered certain general and uncontroversial subjects from a conservative standpoint. In fact, as Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón said, "from the moment that I became aware that films were going to be on television (...) I have filmed more specifically, bringing the camera in closer without realising I'm doing it... At first, that doesn't matter, but at the end of the day, that's one of the reasons why films, unfortunately, look more and more like each other" (Monterde & Casas, 1986, p. 140).

## 8. Conclusions

In the early 90s, TVE struggled with serious structural and financial difficulties. After decades of control of both public and advertisers, the end of its monopoly obliged it to fight hard to keep its audience without greatly increasing spending. Films had an important role to play in this context. They were still a major draw for the public, and the broadcasting of library films allowed for the filling of broadcast hours, amortising material without the need to acquire new products.

Analysis of TVE's film scheduling over the period under study corroborates our initial hypothesis. It can be said that the lack of capital and, especially, the need to compete for the public's favour, defined the public channels' film policy. The priority given to broadcasting foreign, usually Hollywood, films, the emission of Spanish films in uncompetitive time slots or the systematic non-compliance with the broadcast quota were some of the actions that had a negative effect on the way domestic film was scheduled. Since TVE was, still, the leading channel, this trend became a constant over the decade, and defined, by imitation, the private channels' approach to broadcasting and investment.

This question confirms that Spanish television's financial problems were one of the factors that sharpened the national cinematographic sector's crisis. A sector that, alienated from its public, financially dependent on budgets that grew smaller and smaller every year, and almost totally lacking self-criticism, could not understand or connect with the new society of the 90s. This, at least, is what the poor results of contemporary Spanish films on the big screen seem to demonstrate. That is why, above and beyond questions such as a film being in the channel's archive, or its price, the most important criterion for the broadcasting of a Spanish movie was its box office results.

The paradigm shift when choosing to give financial backing to Spanish productions had a bearing on two questions. For one part, during the period of study, the number of pieces filmed fell considerably. Moreover, stories lost certain creative freedom in adapting to the thematic, visual and narrative tastes of the channels. Similarly, a lack of promotion and the scarcity of contemporary domestic products did little to drive the star system that could strengthen the recognition and following of certain actors and actresses. This is especially relevant given the social importance of the medium in Spain (Smith, 2006). At a time when television, as cinema had been before, became the school of the audio-visual, the absence of modern references supposes a lack of adhesion and habit in the consumption of Spanish films produced in the 90s.

The pass from Paleo-television to Neo-television had negative repercussions for the Spanish film industry. In 1996, a TVE advert in the journal *Academia*, indicated that the public tv body designed its programming for those films the viewers wanted to see (*Academia*, 1996b). The option to choose granted the public the power to decide the success or failure of a format. This turned them into an active subject able to influence the channel's future investment, by their choice of certain stories, with very specific themes and visual solutions.

The new televisual paradigm not only made manifest the clear inter-relation between audio-visual media in Spain, but it also revealed the industrial weaknesses of a sector, that of cinema, still highly dependent on external financing.

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## 10. Specific contributions from each author

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Methodology	Fátima Gil and Mar Chicharro
Compilation & analysis of the data	Fátima Gil and Mar Chicharro
Discussion & conclusions	Fátima Gil and Mar Chicharro
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