VoD platform strategies for entertainment formats: Between innovation and the assimilation of linear television in the Spanish market

Estrategias de las plataformas de VoD ante los formatos de entretenimiento: entre la innovación y la asimilación de la televisión lineal en el mercado televisivo español

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Abstract:

The introduction of streaming platforms has reshaped the processes of content production, distribution, and consumption in today's television market. Beyond the fiction offered by these operators, other formats have emerged that emulate broadcasting strategies characteristic of linear television. This research aims to map Spanish entertainment programming produced by VoD operators and identify synergies with linear television. To this end, Netflix, HBO/Max, and Amazon Prime Video formats are quantified and examined, and two specific cases are qualitatively analysed: Operación Triunfo (Amazon Prime Video, 2023-) and Sálvese quien pueda (Netflix, 2023-2024). The study concludes that there is a growing, yet vaguely defined, production of entertainment programmes. These programmes adopt traditional television strategies to varying degrees of success, emphasising the types of programming as well as mainstream, recognised content.

Keywords:

Television; VoD platforms; streaming; entertainment programs; reality show.

Resumen:

En el mercado televisivo actual, la implantación de plataformas de streaming ha reformulado los procesos de producción, distribución y consumo de contenido. A la oferta de ficción de estos operadores se le suman otros formatos que han tratado de emular con particular claridad estrategias de emisión características de la televisión lineal. El objetivo de esta investigación es cartografiar la producción española de programas de entretenimiento por parte de los operadores de VoD y determinar sus sinergias con la televisión lineal. Con esta finalidad se cuantifican y examinan los formatos de Netflix, HBO/Max y Amazon Prime Video, y desde un alcance cualitativo se analizan dos casos específicos: Operación Triunfo (Amazon Prime Video, 2023-) y Sálvese quien pueda (Netflix, 2023-2024). Se concluye una producción creciente, pero ambiguamente conceptualizada, de programas de entretenimiento, que adoptan estrategias de la televisión tradicional con mayor o menor éxito, destacando las formas de programación y los contenidos reconocidos por la audiencia generalista.

Palabras clave:

Televisión; plataformas VoD; *streaming*; programas de entretenimiento; *reality show.*

1. Introduction: entertainment formats and VoD in Spain

Since the arrival of international video-on-demand (VoD) platforms in Spain (Netflix in 2015, HBO in 2016, Amazon Prime Video in 2018, among others), these services have committed to producing original content to rival traditional linear television. Their strategy aims to attract audiences to pay TV through exclusive, differentiated projects. Over the past decade, the primary line of differentiation has been fiction series, and to a lesser extent, documentary series, delivering appealing content unavailable elsewhere.

However, in recent years, a growing number of non-fiction programs have emerged that align with the entertainment macro-genre (Gordillo, 2009; Guerrero, 2010b, 2011). Supporting this observation, José Manuel Eleta, Deputy Director at the consultancy Barlovento, noted in an Infolibre interview that "streaming platforms have reached their subscription ceiling with series and must now explore other television genres" (González, 2023; cited in Caffarel-Rodríguez & Olivia-Gordillo, 2024: 279). Consequently, OTT (over-the-top) operators are increasingly integrating content types that were previously unique to linear television, in response to a saturated, fragmented, and diverse audiovisual landscape (Arjona Martín, 2021).

This research focuses on three VoD platforms –Netflix, HBO Max, and Amazon Prime Video– which are internationally renowned brands with a presence in multiple countries and have developed original production lines in many of them, including Spain. This study aims to determine how these platforms are positioning themselves within the emerging landscape of non-fiction entertainment content creation. To this end, the following research questions were posed: What original entertainment formats (excluding fiction films, series, and documentaries) have the three VoD platforms in Spain produced? What are the characteristics of these formats? What creative and industrial strategies do they deploy? Furthermore, given the emerging nature of this type of production, two additional questions are posed: How do the platforms themselves conceptualize these formats? And what descriptive categories are used to label them?

The selection of these three streaming services is justified by their lack of linear television extensions, thereby fostering a perception of exclusivity and enabling direct comparability, unlike other audiovisual services. For instance, some platforms are extensions of traditional television networks or media groups. Atresmedia (parent company of Antena 3 and La Sexta) operates Atresplayer, and Mediaset (owner of Telecinco and Cuatro) runs Mitele Plus, and the public broadcaster RTVE manages RTVE Play (Higueras-Ruiz *et al.*, 2024). In contrast, groups like Movistar Plus+ offer both VoD and linear pay-TV channels, such as #0 or Series por M+ (Cascajosa-Virino, 2018).

On the other hand, within these operators' new entertainment programming, several shows explicitly emulate linear television's broadcast strategies, particularly through live transmission or, at the very least, synchronous content. In this regard, two cases that began in 2023 stand out: *Operación Triunfo* (*OT*) on Amazon Prime Video, which features live broadcasts, and *Sálvese quien pueda* on Netflix, which employs a synchronous premiere at a specific time, aiming to generate the anticipation typical of a linear television debut. Consequently, an additional research question is posed: how do these entertainment formats interact with the creative and industrial strategies and conventions characteristic of linear television?

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2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Entertainment formats on Spanish television

The emergence of private television in Spain in the early 1990s revitalized entertainment formats within this television market, both creatively and industrially. During the RTVE monopoly, which lasted from 1956 to 1990, iconic programs were produced that became milestones in Spanish television history, such as *Un, dos, tres... responda otra vez* (TVE1), which aired intermittently from 1972 to 2004; or *El precio justo (*TVE1), which premiered in 1988 on public television and was later acquired by Antena 3 and Telecinco for several seasons, remaining on air until 2021. However, the introduction of competition for audience share- following the launch of Antena 3 and Telecinco in the 1990s, along with the rise of regional channels, created the need for new strategies to achieve the highest possible viewership (Saló, 2003). This shift led to the adoption of production values associated with perceived high-quality entertainment programmes, including content, presenter, set design, and creative quality (Guerrero and Etayo, 2015).

Thus, numerous local formats emerged, such as *Luna de miel* (Regional Networks, 1992-1994) or *El semáforo* (TVE1, 1995-1997), while acquisitions of international formats accelerated, such as *El juego de la oca* (Antena 3, 1993-1995; Telecinco, 1998), *Lluvia de estrellas* (Antena 3, 1995-2001; TVE1, 2007), *Sorpresa ¡Sorpresa!* (Antena 3, 1996-1999) o *¿Qué apostamos?* (TVE1, 1993-2000). Acquiring foreign entertainment formats became an appealing and cost-effective strategy for the receiving market for two main reasons: "On the one hand, it reduces the need for research and development; and on the other hand, it lowers the high economic risk in the audiovisual entertainment industry, which is based on prototype production and has a high failure rate" (Guerrero, 2010a: 241). At the same time, the success of national programmes has encouraged their export to international markets. One prominent example is *Operación Triunfo* (TVE1, 2001-2003; Telecinco, 2005-2011; TVE1, 2017-2020; Amazon Prime Video, 2023-) and more recently *Tu cara me suena* (Antena 3, 2011-), which has become the most exported Spanish format, airing in over 40 countries (Marcos, 2021).

The concept of format, defined as "the specific development of a series of audiovisual elements and content, which comprise a specific programme and distinguish it from others" (Saló, 2003: 11), is not without debate and variation depending on the television context. In this research, entertainment is understood as a macro-genre- an overarching concept that encompasses several television genres beyond fiction and news content. Over the past two decades, scholars have identified what some describe as hyper-television (Gordillo, 2009) or post-television (Imbert, 2010)- an era characterised by hybridisation and recycling. The boundaries between traditional macro-genres and audiovisual genres have become increasingly blurred. For this reason, authors like Gordillo argue that since the 1990s, a new macro-genre has emerged: reality television, a hybrid format integrating informational, fictional, and entertainment elements. Moreover, with the debut of *Gran Hermano* (Telecinco, 2000), Telecinco pioneered in Spain what Saló (2003) would call "flow-programming", that is, interconnected scheduling where multiple shows feed off the central format's content (in the case of *Gran Hermano,* this includes spin-off shows such as daily recaps or debate galas). This strategy was later replicated by other reality shows such as *Operación Triunfo* or *Supervivientes* (Telecinco, 2000-2001, 2006-; Antena 3, 2003-2005; Cuatro, 2019-2021).

Precisely due to the hybrid nature of many formats that have emerged over the past few decades, this study includes reality shows within the broader concept of entertainment, as it has become increasingly complex to draw clear boundaries between the two. Within this macro-genre, it is therefore possible to identify distinct subgenres, each with representative examples from the history of Spanish television: game shows (*Trato hecho*, Antena 3, 1998-2002), reality-shows (*Gran Hermano*, Telecinco, 2000-), talk-shows (*Ratones Coloraos*, Regional Networks, 2002-2010), sketch comedy (*Cruz y Raya*, TVE1, 1997-2007), magazine-style shows (*El informal*, Telecinco, 1998-2002), talent-shows (*Masterchef*, TVE1, 2013-), late-night shows (*Crónicas marcianas*, Telecinco, 1997-2005), docu-realities (*Alaska y Mario*, MTV España, 2011) or dating-shows (*First Dates*, Cuatro, 2016-).

The establishment of streaming platforms in Spain and their production of entertainment programmes has sparked academic interest in these on-demand formats. Researchers aim to identify prevailing trends and strategies, as well as the synergies and convergences between these projects and free-to-air, linear television. In this regard, Izquierdo-Castillo and Latorre-Lázaro (2022) analyse content offerings on platforms to conceptualise their programming, Fernández-Herruzo and Pedrero-Esteban (2023) examine how VoD platforms produce entertainment programmes to compete with traditional channels, and Caffarel-Rodríguez and Oliva-Gordillo (2024) study the adaptation of the *Operación Triunfo* format from linear to digital television.

A changing context: convergence and VoD platforms

The evolution of streaming platforms in recent years has not only significantly altered audience audiovisual consumption habits but also transformed the way content is created and distributed. However, it has also altered content production strategies and reshaped the dynamics of both the VoD and generalist television markets. This shift has redefined the geographic boundaries of viewers and contributed to the internationalisation of locally produced content (Lotz, 2021). According to authors such as Marín Pérez (2021), today's audiences value the new functionalities afforded by this evolving context, particularly the flexibility that allows content to be accessed at any time and from any location. Similarly, Evens *et al.* (2024) emphasise features such as distinctiveness, interactivity, and community building as technological advantages that encourage users to favour streaming platforms over traditional television. This transformation in consumption patterns has prompted linear broadcasters to rethink the mass-reach model that has sustained them for decades and to explore new dynamics to remain relevant and competitive (Martín-Barbero, 2008; Piñón, 2021). Consequently, traditional television has gradually adapted to the on-demand model popularised by streaming services, leading to an increasingly blurred distinction between OTT operators and conventional broadcast television (Mulla, 2022).

The evolution of traditional television strategies and VoD platforms in response to the changing market and shifting audience needs and preferences (Clares-Gavilán and Medina Cambrón, 2018), has led to a convergence space, giving rise to a hybrid model that seeks to combine the strengths of both systems to attract increasingly diverse audiences (González *et al.*, 2022; Llanos, 2022; Vázquez *et al.*, 2020). In this context, generalist television –characterised by fixed programming schedules and its capacity to attract large audiences at specific times (Prado *et al.*, 2020)– has begun adopting various customisation techniques inspired by streaming platforms. These include the use of algorithms and data analytics to understand audience preferences (Bazzara, 2021). As González and Torres (2023) note, many broadcasters have recently launched their own streaming applications or partnered with digital platforms to offer complementary services to their linear programming. These

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initiatives aim to provide audiences with access to content anytime and anywhere, while also appealing to viewers who favour on-demand consumption (Castro Higueras *et al.*, 2022).

VoD platforms have transformed contemporary audience expectations (Agustín Lacruz and Gómez Díaz, 2021; Dandan *et al.*, 2023; Esteinou, 2022; Hidalgo-Marí *et al.*, 2022; Pérez-Rufí *et al.*, 2024; Wang and Li, 2020). According to the literature, various factors drive audience preference for OTT platforms. Mulla (2022) identifies price, content, flexibility, ease of use, enjoyment, desire for autonomy, entertainment value, socialisation, cultural inclusion, and binge-watching as key motivators. In response, VoD services have begun to explore new formulas beyond fiction series, experimenting with new formats that are more closely aligned with generalist television, such as reality shows, true crime documentaries, competitions, and sports and lifestyle content (Marcos, 2023). Other examples of how these platforms adopt features of linear television include simultaneous premieres and live events, such as concerts or sports broadcasts, aiming to replicate the "event" experience typical of linear TV (Marinelli & Marcos, 2022). Moreover, these services are increasingly testing advertising-supported subscription models –a hallmark of generalist television– to offer lower-cost options and expand their user base (Cortés *et al.*, 2024). In this context, Fernández-Herruzo and Pedrero-Esteban (2023) identify an increase in Spanish-produced entertainment content on streaming platforms between 2020 and 2022. Although this category ranks third after fiction and reality programming, its share has grown significantly, from 4.5% in 2020 to 12.5% in 2021, highlighting a particular emphasis on reality show and talk show production.

In specific cases, a hybrid model is apparent, which integrates the advantages of both audiovisual consumption forms (García, 2021). For example, the *Operación Triunfo* format on Amazon Prime Video (2023), which is one of the case studies examined in this article, is the first live broadcast programme on the platform. It has also generated various satellite programmes around it, replicating the flow-programming developed for previous reality TV shows, like *OT* or *Gran Hermano*, on linear television. Meanwhile, the docu-reality show *Sálvese quien pueda* (Netflix, 2023), the second case study in this analysis, reflects this new hybridisation of entertainment content (Terán, 2023a) by adapting the universe of the tabloid talk show *Sálvame* (Telecinco: 2009-2023) into a new OTT format. It strategically premieres episodes at specific times to attract audiences, combining simultaneous releases with batch releases to encourage the binge-watching behaviour characteristic of Netflix (Neira *et al.*, 2024).

Finally, it is worth noting the growing number of alliances between streaming platforms and linear broadcasters. Platforms often end up licensing and integrating formats released on generalist television into their catalogues. Collaborations between the two services are also taking place, notably the agreement between Amazon Prime and Mediaset to co-produce content and premiere series on streaming platforms (Tones, 2023).

3. Methodology

To address the research questions, the first objective is to compile a catalogue of Spanish entertainment formats on VoD platforms, selected explicitly as case studies (Netflix, HBO Max, Amazon Prime Video), from 2016 to 2024. This selection is supported by data from the Household Panel report issued by the *National Commission of Markets and Competition* (CNMC, 2024) whose latest update (second half of 2024) identifies these platforms as the most widely used for online content

consumption in Spanish households Netflix (39.8%), Prime Video (21.6%), Movistar+ (17.6%) and HBO/Max (7.3%). Moreover, as previously mentioned, with the exception of Movistar+, these three international brands have established original content production lines in Spain over the past decade, based on the principle of exclusivity, which limits their original content to online distribution.

An analysis table has been compiled based on the previously reviewed bibliography, which enables the identification of key aspects regarding the characteristics, genre, subject matter, and content of the programmes produced, covering the period from the origin of each platform's production in Spain until September 2024. The complete catalogue obtained can be consulted in open access via the link: https://osf.io/d4msn?view_only=90c1b5730b0146f88b843afbbc1d7395

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Table 1. Analysis sheet of entertainment programmes on VoD platforms

Title	**Title of the project**
Platform	VoD distribution platform
Release date	Release date or broadcasting period
Premiere	Block or seralised premiere
Season	Number of seasons
Episodes	Number of episodes
Duration	Average duration of episodes
Origin	Original or adapted format
Genre	Game shows, reality shows, talk shows, comedy sketches, magazine-style shows (Saló, 2003), talent shows, late-night shows, docu-realities, and dating shows.
Subgenre (subject matter)	Musical, culinary, historical, personal relationships, cohabitation, comedy, celebrities, magic, travel, stand-up comedy, improvisation, lifestyles, idyllic setting, physical tests, intellectual tests, survival, interviews

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Principales vínculos con la TV lineal	Characteristics of the project that make it similar to the entertainment programmes broadcast on linear television: presenters, formats, programming, etc. (Fernández-Herruzo & Pedrero-Esteban, 2023)
Descriptive labels	Categories and tags are used in the platform interface to describe and classify the project.

Source: created by the authors based on the indicated sources

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To develop the catalogue, no fiction or documentary formats were included; only productions that hybridise documentary and reality television through the docu-reality format were incorporated. Formats that previously premiered on linear television channels and were later added to these platforms' catalogues were excluded, as they do not meet the exclusivity criterion for original productions available solely via paid access (such as various HBO/Max programmes that premiered on Discovery Max, or formats stemming from production agreements between Mediaset España and Amazon Prime Video that were not exclusively premiered on the platform). Furthermore, platform-defined classifications were respected when calculating the results, with some programmes treated as separate cases. This approach is applied, for instance, to *Amor con fianza* (2021) and *Amor con fianza: Destino Cerdeña* (2022) on Netflix, as well as to the various spin-offs derived from *Operación Triunfo* on Amazon Prime Video.

The catalogue aims to be as comprehensive as possible; however, several challenges were encountered during its construction. First, there is no repository with complete and reliable information. Second, the data provided in the platforms' own catalogues is sometimes incomplete, inaccurately stored, or inconsistently presented online. Furthermore, as will be observed, the descriptive labels used by each platform vary significantly for these entertainment formats, suggesting some improvisation over time, adaptation to a changing scenario, and a lack of uniformity in categorization.

Using the data obtained, the corresponding quantifications were carried out according to the characteristic features of the gathered formats. Descriptive statistics were employed to identify core trends with enhanced precision across three dimensions: configuration, operational models, and creative and industrial strategies followed by these programmes.

Finally, based on the findings, two formats are selected as case studies. Using a qualitative methodology, key parameters characterising them are described in depth: origin and acquisition of the format. Segment breakdown, production company, and technical and creative staff, critical and audience reception, promotional strategy, and alternative content, among others. The section aims to provide an in-depth answer to the research question: "How do they interact with the creative and industrial strategies and conventions characteristic of linear television?"

To this end, two programmes have been selected that explicitly emulate linear television broadcasting strategies: *Operación Triunfo* (Amazon Prime Video, 2023-) was broadcast live, and *Sálvese quien pueda* (Netflix, 2023-2024) premiered at scheduled times. Both formats reformulate long-standing, popular, and successful shows from Spanish generalist television for the VoD content over the past decades, and thus enjoy wide recognition from both audiences and the television market in Spain. These case studies were selected primarily for their singularity, rather than their representativeness (given the variety of genres within the sample), as they clearly illustrate recycling, experimentation, and dynamics of uncertainty characterising Spain's emerging entertainment format productions on streaming platforms.

4. Results

4.1. Highlighted characteristics of the sample

A total of 32 programmes were identified, 15 produced by Netflix (46.88%, nearly half), 10 by Amazon Prime Video (31.25%), and 7 by HBO/Max (21.88%). The table below details the number of entertainment formats produced per platform and year (2024 data includes only January to September).

Table 2. Production of entertainment formats by platform and year

Platform/year	Amazon Prime Video	HBO/Max	Netflix	Total
2016	-	-	-	0
2017	-	-	1	1
2018	-	-	-	0
2019	1	-	1	2
2020	1	-	1	2
2021	2	2	4	8
2022	1	1	6	8
2023	4	3	2	9
2024*	1	1	0	2
Total	10	7	15	32

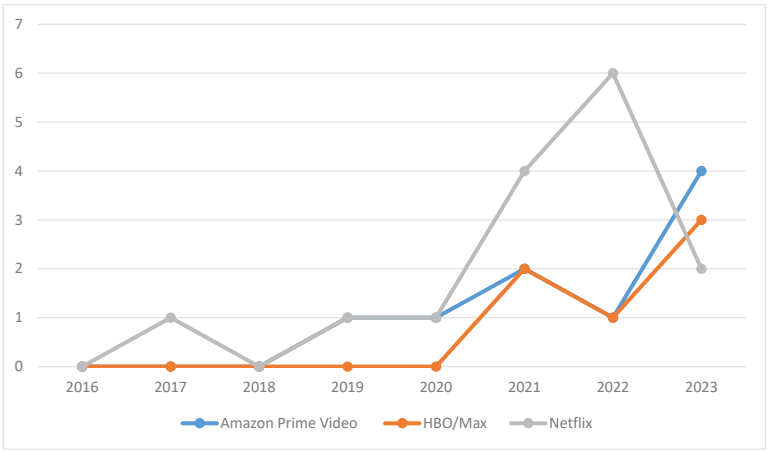
Source: created by the authors

The results are also presented through graphs (Graphs 1 and 2) to visually illustrate each platform's production trajectory, as well as the combined annual output across all four platforms (data from 2024 was omitted to avoid skewing the plotting of each line, given its incompleteness).

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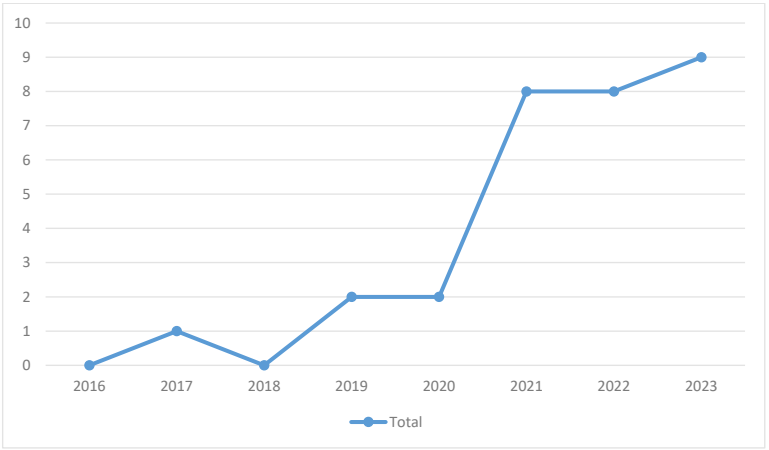
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Graph 1. Entertainment format production by platform and year (2016-2023)



Source: created by the authors

Graph 2. Joint production of entertainment formats by year (2016-2023)



Source: created by the authors

As observed, after a modest start, entertainment programme production surged notably in 2021, with at least 8 formats produced that year and the following two years. By platform, Netflix leads in output volume, accounting for almost half of the

sample and significantly outpacing competitors during 2021 and 2022. However, Table 2 highlights a sharp decline in original format production for 2024 (even considering data only up to September) which cannot be explained by multiple seasons or previous formats (only two such cases were identified: Season 3 of *Soy Georgiana* (2022-2024) and the second batch of *Sálvese quien pueda* episodes, both on Netflix). While it is too early to draw conclusions about this decline, it may reflect a lacklustre audience reception.

Among these programmes, very few have been renewed for more than one season. On Netflix, only 2 stand out: Insiders (2021-2022), with two seasons, and *Soy Georgina*, three seasons (perhaps the most successful format due to its potential international appeal thanks to its star, model Georgina Rodríguez); o which we could add *Amor con fianza* and *Amor con fianza: Destino Cerdeña*. Netflix categorises *Amor con fianza: Destino Cerdeña* as a separate programme, though the latter is derived from the former. On HBO/Max, only two programmes have had multiple seasons: *Chef sin desperdicio* (2021-2022), with two seasons, and *Acoustic Home* (2021-2024), with three. Amazon produced no multi-season programmes. Excluding *Amor con fianza*, only 4 out of 32 formats (12.5%) have seen a second season; the number rises slightly to 5 out of 31 when it is included (16.13%). In both cases, figures are remarkably low, indicating fewer than 1 in 5 programmes get renewed. This raises important issues: perhaps the audience ratings underperformed expectations, or the platforms prioritise a varied catalogue with constant new releases to drive marketing campaigns, attracting audiences to the brand, rather than fostering loyalty through specific programmes, except in cases of undeniable success.

The average number of episodes per program is 11, although this figure is skewed by *OT al día*, a daily show that aired for 65 consecutive days. Seasons tend to be short, with 6 episodes (28.13%) and 8 episodes (15.63%) being the most common lengths[1].

Table 3. Number of episodes of each programme

Number of episodes	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency (%)
1	3	9.38
2	2	6.25
3	-	-
4	-	-
5	-	-
6	9	28.13
7	3	9.38

1 Almost a third of programmes exceed 10 episodes (because the total number of episodes of renewed programmes has been counted, and this number does not always remain the same per season).

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8	5	15.63
9	-	-
10 or more	10	31.25

Source: created by the authors

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Regarding average episode length, Netflix generally offers shorter programmes, typically under 50 minutes in length. In contrast, Amazon Prime Video and HBO/Max have the most common durations of 50 minutes and 55 minutes, respectively. Another notable trend across platforms is the release of episodes in batches, rather than following a weekly rollout schedule.

When examining the number of original or adapted formats, there is a relatively even split: 18 are original formats (56.25%) and 14 are adapted (43.75%). Among the adapted formats, most are based on international versions, sometimes even within the same platform. For instance, on Netflix, *Niquelao!* (2019) is adapted from *Nailed It* (2018) or *¡A cantar!* (2020) from *Sing On* (2020), whose international versions are also available in Spain. As for the original formats, their originality is relative, as many rework previously successful industry formulas, as will be discussed below.

In terms of genre, there is an abundance of reality shows, spanning various subgenres, including talent and dating shows. Among talent shows, there are musical ones such as *A cantar!* and *Operación Triunfo,* along with their spin-offs or culinary shows like *Niquelao!* and *Celebrity Bake Off* (Amazon Prime Video, 2021), which differ from linear TV formats like *Masterchef* (TVE1, 2013- present) by focusing specifically on baking. Comedy features prominently in 6 cases, half of which are on Netflix. Some examples include stand-up-based specials and hybrid formats that blend comedy with game show elements, such as *LOL: Si te ríes, pierdes* (Amazon Prime Video, 2021). Occasionally, programmes resemble magazine-style formats, incorporating interviews and/or performances, though these are rare, with *Acoustic Home* being an example.

The differences between these formats and linear TV precedents are relatively minor. Four programmes exemplify the trend pioneered by *La isla de las tentaciones* (Telecinco, 2020-), which tests couples' fidelity by having them live separately in idyllic settings surrounded by temptation. There are some variations in their approach. On Netflix, *Amor con fianza*, *Amor con fianza: Destino Cerdeña,* and *Falso amor* (2023), and on HBO/Max, *Fboy Island España* (2023), are examples of this trend. Notably, *Amor con fianza* and its sequel are hosted by Mónica Naranjo, who also hosted the first season of *La isla de las tentaciones*.

A clear example of reformulation is *¿A quién le gusta mi follower?* (Netflix, 2022), which continues the dating show strategy, particularly popular on the linear channel Cuatro, where *First Dates* (2016-) remains a staple of its programming. Specifically, it emulates several formats previously presented by Luján Argüelles, who also hosts this programme. Even the title echoes her most successful Cuatro programme: *¿Quién quiere casarse con mi hijo?* (Cuatro, 2012-). Other shows previously hosted by Argüelles on Cuatro include: *Granjero busca esposa* (2008-2011), *¿Quién quiere casarse con mi madre?* (2013) and *Un príncipe para…* (2013-2016).

Continuing the trend of featuring well-known presenters such as Naranjo and Argüelles, another notable example is Raquel Sánchez Silva, who hosts *Falso amor*. Her involvement follows a well-established career in reality television on linear channel formats such as *Supervivientes* or *Maestros de la costura* (TVE1, 2018-).

Among dating shows, *Naked Attraction* (HBO/Max, 2024) stands out for its distinctive feature: participants appear fully nude, a strategy previously employed by Cuatro with *Adán y Eva* (2014-2015). Similarly, docu-realities centred on the lives of the wealthy, such as *Soy Georgiana, La Marquesa* (2022), and *First Class* (2022), all on Netflix, draw inspiration from earlier formats like *Mujeres Ricas* (La Sexta, 2010).

Following the model of *First Dates*, reality television shows about couples and dating have made some progress toward the inclusion of LGBT individuals, in contrast to the criticised heteronormativity of programmes such as *Mujeres y hombres y viceversa* (Telecinco, 2008-2018; Cuatro, 2018-2021) or the aforementioned *La isla de las tentaciones*. However, as Sánchez González and González-de-Garay (2020) highlight, in *First Dates,* diversity is relative as gay male couples predominate, and this is the case in formats like *Amor con fianza*, *¿A quién le gusta mi follower?*, *Falso amor,* or *Naked Attraction*, where most LGBT participants are gay men.

Finally, it is worth noting that original non-fiction and non-documentary programming often lacks clear identification, and there is no consensus on how to address this issue, either across platforms or within each one. This suggests that improvisation is a key factor in the production of entertainment shows, whose numbers have grown despite not being initially conceived as part of a deliberate creative strategy. For example, on Netflix, all entertainment formats are labelled "*españolas*" (Spanish), using the feminine form, as if they were fiction series, films, or documentaries, where such grammatical agreement would automatically apply. In the case of reality TV, the label "realities" is employed, and a search for "Reality TV *española*" yields 11 original productions. It is also noteworthy that the docu-reality series *First Class, Soy Georgina, La Marquesa,* and *Sálvese quien pueda* are labelled as *"docunovela",* suggesting their serialised structure and a certain degree of fictionalisation. On HBO/Max, the term "reality" is used heterogeneously to describe reality TV formats. However, the most ambiguous and surprising label is "*improvisación*" (improvisation), a term frequently used by Amazon Prime Video formats. This category distinguishes these programmes by emphasising their supposed spontaneity, in contrast to fiction or documentary series, which are implicitly seen as more structured productions.

4.2. Case studies: negotiations with linear television

Following this sample overview, two case studies are analysed, notable for their distinctive negotiations with linear television. Both represent efforts to reformulate previously successful formats within the emerging context of VoD platforms.

4.2.1. Operación Triunfo (Amazon Prime Video, 2023-)

The *Operación Triunfo* (*OT*) format was created by Josep María Mainat and produced by Getmusic Endemol. The show draws on earlier music talent competitions, such as *Popstars* in New Zealand, *Pop Idol* in the United Kingdom, *Starmaker* in the Netherlands, and *Star Academy* in France (the latter two also produced by Endemol), where a group of contestants train and compete to become professional singers (Saló, 2003). This format is the result of the hybridisation between the musical genre and reality show, which Guerrero and Diego term "contemporary musical talent show" (2020: 603).

The Spanish public broadcaster RTVE acquired *OT* in 2001. In contrast to the cohabitation-based reality TV contest model established by *Gran Hermano* (Telecinco, 2000), RTVE launched an achievement-based reality TV contest model (Saló, 2003),

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promoting artistic talent and offering prizes such as representing Spain at the Eurovision Song Contest. Broadcast on La 1 every Monday during prime-time, the programme became a hit for the network, reaching an 80% audience share when the winner was announced at the final gala. It also increased the viewing figures for La 2, where a daily *OT* summary was aired (Saló, 2003). Additionally, the programme was broadcast on TVE's international channel and even had its own pay-TV channel, *OT 24horas* (Guerrero & Diego, 2020).

After three seasons on TVE, *Operación Triunfo* was acquired by Telecinco in 2025, where it aired for six additional seasons. However, the final season was cancelled due to low ratings. In 2017, the format returned to TVE with a strong online presence, utilising transmedia storytelling to create a fandom phenomenon across social media, apps, online channels, and more (Alonso López, 2018).

The success of *OT* fostered synergies between the television and record industry through album releases, public signings, and concert tours. It also encouraged audience interaction, with viewers participating in the contest by voting and effectively transforming the programme into a social phenomenon (Guerrero & Diego, 2020).

In 2023, Amazon Prime Video announced the acquisition of the format, adapting a classic programme, typical of linear television, for the new viewing habits of younger audiences (Caffarel-Rodríguez & Olivia-Gordillo, 2024). Although the show was not made available free-to-air on the platform, it preserved its live broadcast, which is considered "one of the key elements that has attracted the largest audience to *OT*" (Alonso López, 2024).

The VoD operator's *OT* format retains the core dynamics of its linear television programme: alongside educational communal living at a music academy, it features a live weekly prime time gala, though shorter in duration (1 hour and 40 minutes), where contestants perform a musical theme. After being evaluated by a jury, four candidates are nominated for elimination. Academy instructors save one, and another is saved by fellow contestants, leaving two final nominees to face a public vote to decide whether they will be eliminated or continue to the next gala.

As in previous TVE and Telecinco editions, talent shows have expanded into other spaces: *OT al Día,* a daily live show hosted by YouTuber Xuso Jones alongside various collaborators, reviews the latest developments in the academy; *OT Post-galas,* a post-elimination special hosted by influencer Masi Rodríguez dedicated to bidding farewell to the eliminated contestant. Meanwhile, *OT Casting* introduces viewers to future contestants through audition footage and reactions. All programmes are available on-demand via the platform's catalogue through global distribution.

The contest also features a YouTube channel broadcasting 24/7 live feeds of the contestants' daily lives and training sessions, as well as recap videos and a chat function where the audience can comment. All of this is "key to generating identification and connection with viewers" (Terán, 2023b).

Social media accounts have been created for the programme and each contestant. Viewers have used these platforms to express criticism and suggestions, which Tinet Rubira, the programme's executive producer, has responded to and implemented (Molina, 2023). Among other social media platforms, TikTok is a notable new feature of this edition, with the hashtag #OT2023 exceeding 5 billion views. Additionally, the voting app for the competition has quickly become popular for selecting the favourite nominee of the week and for saving nominees. It registered 350,000 users during the first 2023 gala (Terán, 2023b).

Moreover, Amazon Prime Video's acquisition strategically leverages Amazon's ecosystem to promote related product lines, hosting songs on Amazon Music, and selling merchandise via the official *OT* Amazon store. Fans can also interact with the show's dedicated Alexa features (About Amazon, 2024).

Finally, *OT* taps into nostalgia to re-engage longtime fans by appointing Chenoa —a contestant from the original season —as the show's host, while former contestants make guest appearances. Noemí Galera participates as casting and academy director, as she did in previous editions. For these reasons, Caffarel-Rodríguez and Olivia-Gordillo agree that, "with this new edition we have seen how *Operación Triunfo* has once again become a reason for social gatherings and generational connection" (2024, 282). With an estimated 3.5 million unique viewers, Rubira confirmed the programme's renewal following *OT's* 2023 finale (About Amazon, 2024). This pioneering experiment, featuring a live format with interconnected programming on a VoD platform in Spain, is set to continue.

4.2.2. Sálvese quien pueda (Netflix, 2023-2024)

The convergence between linear television and on-demand television is further exemplified by *Sálvese quien pueda* (2023). At the same time, Netflix had historically engaged with free-to-air television broadcasters by acquiring licenses to add previously aired shows to its catalogue or producing new seasons of previously cancelled projects on linear television, like *Money Heist* (2017-2021) or *El Ministerio del Tiempo* (2015-2020). However, *Sálvese quien pueda's* unique format makes it particularly noteworthy.

The platform revives the universe of collaborators from the magazine-style show *Sálvame,* which aired daily from 2009 to 2023, as well as its spin-offs, including *Sálvame Deluxe, Sábado Deluxe,* and *La última cena*, all of which were broadcast over the 14-year period. Combining celebrity gossip and talk shows, the format exploited the personal and professional relationships of its contributors through a reality TV lens. Following Mediaset's 2023 cancellation, which aimed to rebrand the network's editorial line, Netflix welcomed the main stars of the popular format. The resulting docu-reality, produced by La Fábrica de la Tele, the creators of the aforementioned programmes, premiered on Netflix in two three-episode blocks (40-45 minutes each), in November 2023 and February 2024, respectively (Netflix, 2023).

The format follows eight stars from the *Sálvame* universe, including Belén Esteban, María Patiño, and Kiko Matamoros as they search for entertainment industry opportunities in Latin America, initially in Miami and later in Mexico City (Sánchez Sequera, 2023). The show aims to portray the resurgence of these personalities on a Latin American tabloid talk show, with cultural clashes providing comedic relief. To achieve this, the stars must overcome various challenges, including interviews and auditions, visits to television studios, and attendance at parties. These challenges advance the docu-reality storyline while preserving the spontaneity that defines its stars. The aim is also to give these characters, who are deeply rooted in Spanish culture, a certain transnational appeal, making them more attractive to viewers in other Spanish-speaking countries.

This spin-off represents "a new migration of traditional television audiences to on-demand television" (Terán, 2023a). However, while the original linear TV format (*Sálvame*) blended tabloid journalism, talk show, and reality elements, its Netflix adaptation transitions into a full docu-reality, combining interpersonal conflicts, travelogues, and Spanish cultural tropes. Therefore, despite abandoning the studio setting, *Sálvese quien pueda's* narrative remains familiar to its core audience. The

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main difference was the programming format on Netflix, where it premiered on Fridays at 9:00 p.m. with three episodes back-to-back (Tones, 2023). This emulated the live broadcasting that was so important in the original *Sálvame*, generating synchronicity in audience consumption, as viewers were accustomed to watching formats like *Sálvame Deluxe* or *Sábado Deluxe* on Fridays or Saturdays at 10:00 p.m. Now, *Sálvame*'s audience, mostly adults and older adults, can access *Sálvese quien pueda* content in the Netflix catalogue and must actively seek it out. This represents a significant shift in the habits and dynamics of these viewers in relation to the television medium.

The success of the first block of the docu-reality series was reflected in Netflix's Top 10: *Sálvese quien pueda* (in English, *Fame After Fame*) remained in the ranking of the top 10 most watched programmes on Netflix in Spain for three consecutive weeks (the programme was ranked number one for the first two weeks) (Netflix Top 10, 2023). Additionally, during the first 50 minutes after the show's premiere, it became a nationwide trending topic, garnering 5,000 tweets (Tones, 2023).

However, the results were likely not what Netflix had hoped for. The second part of the reality show premiered on 1 February 2024, with little promotion or fanfare. The second instalment was ranked sixth among the most-watched series in Spain after its premiere, which prevented the show from being renewed, and the platform cancelled *Sálvese quien pueda* (Meeks, 2024). The format remains an experiment by Netflix to integrate stars and creative formulas deeply rooted in linear television, combining them with its own strategies (docu-realities, transnationality, and block premieres to encourage binge-watching). However, the speed with which Netflix abandoned it suggests it did not achieve the desired results.

Subsequently, contributors from the *Sálvame* universe revived the dynamic of the original programme in another space, based on live broadcasts, combining celebrity gossip, talk shows, and reality TV. In May 2024, they aired on Canal Quickie, created by La Fábrica de la Tele, which has since been renamed Fabricantes Studio (El Economista, 2024). This streaming channel broadcasts live via social networks YouTube and Twitch, as well as the linear DTT Channel Ten, clearly demonstrating the convergence between both environments. On this platform, the show *Ni que fueramos Shhh* (2024) was hosted, which was reminiscent of Telecinco's format, in terms of timing, style, and content. This allowed this group of tabloid journalists to continue working in television with daily audiences ranging from 2% to 3% of the national share, without being limited by the creative conventions previously imposed by Netflix. Subsequently, the public broadcaster TVE reformulated the programme's format as *La familia de la tele* (2025), which premiered in May 2025. However, it was cancelled a month and a half later due to poor ratings. This programme brought together the contributors mentioned above, among others, for a live broadcast in the afternoon, lasting approximately three hours, consisting of two slots on TVE1 and two exclusive slots on the RTVE Play streaming platform.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Reviewing and analysing entertainment programmes production on VoD platforms enables us to conclude the strategies and trends of these formats in relation to free-to-air and linear television.

Firstly, the establishment of streaming services has brought about changes in the production, distribution, and consumption of audiovisual content, resulting in a changing television landscape. This new landscape is characterised by audience fragmentation, content saturation, and project diversification. Television networks and VoD platforms alike are responding

to this scenario to incorporate the necessary innovations and synergies that will enable them to remain competitive in the audiovisual industry. The result is television convergence: linear television incorporates streaming services, such as "television on-demand" or configures its own platforms, while operators apply traditional television strategies, such as scheduled or live broadcasting.

In this context, the production of entertainment programmes by the three most popular VoD services in Spain. Netflix, HBO Max, and Amazon Prime Video are examined, providing answers to the initial research questions: "What original entertainment formats have the three VoD platforms in Spain generated ?" "What are these formats like?" and "What creative and industrial strategies are used?"

Noteworthy results include the fact that almost half of the 32 programmes found are produced by Netflix (46.88%); a notable trend that began in 2021, when the largest number of programmes were released, and continued through 2023. There is a tendency to produce a limited number of episodes and release them in batches. This leads to the conclusion that the focus is on offering varied products to attract new audiences, rather than providing continuity or making greater investments to build subscriber loyalty.

Regarding the content, there are many reality TV programmes and their variants, such as talent or dating shows. Programmes revolving around humour or music, as well as magazine shows, also stand out. Moreover, in recent years, numerous docu-reality shows about various figures from the Spanish public sphere have emerged. These results highlight the tendency to continue with the types of programmes that have historically had the most significant presence and acceptance on linear television in Spain.

However, in response to the questions: "How are such formats conceptualised by the platforms themselves?" and "What descriptive categories are they labelled with?" it is worth noting that there is no clear strategy for labelling and/or conceptualising this type of programme in platform catalogues. The platforms use a range of vague and inconsistent terms, from "reality" to "improvisation". This finding reflects the lack of consensus and the difficulty in conceptualising formats, genres, and macro-genres as discussed in academic literature. This, in turn, complicates research in the field of television studies and perpetuates such ambiguity.

Selecting two different formats as case studies allows us to illustrate two approaches to producing entertainment programs on streaming platforms. The analysis of *Operación Triunfo* (2023-) on Amazon Prime Video highlights a commitment to maintaining the essence and continuity of the original format, while also embracing technological advancements and business opportunities to attract audiences. At its core, the programme retains the same structure, associated spaces, dynamics, and even the same method of broadcasting live. However, its appeal to young audiences has increased through a strong commitment to social media, both participation dynamics and the inclusion of social media personalities. Moreover, its duration has been reduced, as it no longer needs to fill the full primetime and late-night slots on linear television, as it did in previous editions — thus favouring a more flexible viewing experience. The result has been a resurgence in popularity for the programme, leading to its renewal on Amazon Prime Video.

Conversely, regarding *Sálvese quien pueda* (2023-2024), Netflix has acquired the imagery and legacy of the popular show *Sálvame*, but transformed the format to adapt it for streaming as a docu-reality show. As a result, the audience –mostly adults

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and older adults accustomed to linear, live television– must make an additional effort to adapt to on-demand consumption of a substantially different program. The first season of the show was received well due to its novelty, which, however, did not carry over to the second instalment and ultimately led to the cancellation of the format –in this case, transferring and adapting the programme from linear television to streaming failed, likely due to the original format's particularities, which had been well-established over 14 years of continuous broadcasting, as well as the specific characteristics and habits of its target audience.

In light of the results of both case studies, the final research question –"How do entertainment programmes on these platforms interact with the creative and industrial strategies and conventions characteristic of linear television?"– is answered. Firstly, the very format and content of programmes on these platforms are inspired by, or replicate, their linear television counterparts, including related spin-offs and transmedia extensions on social media. Additionally, these programmes tend to follow a programming strategy more akin to traditional television than to full-season block releases, seeking to recreate the anticipation and immediacy of live television. The comparison of the two case studies highlights the central importance of audience awareness and adaptation to new streaming consumption habits, particularly among younger audiences, which could explain the success or failure of the two analysed programmes.

The study's limitations stem from the specificity of the sample, which analyses only three platforms within a particular geographic and temporal context, as well as from the selection of only two programmes for qualitative analysis, due to spatial constraints of the text. Therefore, a future line of research is proposed to expand and strengthen the findings presented here by analysing other entertainment formats on other OTT services, as well as continuing to pay academic attention to this constantly evolving phenomenon in the contemporary television landscape.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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