

Chapter 15

No More Drama: Genres and Subgenres of TV Series

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ABSTRACT

The undeniable development of the television series sector in recent years has resulted in viewers having access to a large amount of television content, thanks largely to the development of technologies such as the internet and the emergence of video on demand. Given the scarcity of academic works that categorise these television contents, this chapter comes to conceptually delimit the television drama genre, as well as its different sub-genres. With this, the authors seek to centralise in a single academic work the main characteristics of each dramatic sub-genre that causes a series to be ascribed to a certain category, serving as a guide for potential academic works related to this growing sector.

INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of humanity, people have felt the need to listen and transmit stories to others. The capacity to give meaning to our surroundings through stories serves as a mechanism to transmit life experiences to others in order to make sense of common experiences (Robledo Dioses, Atarama Rojas & Palomino Moreno, 2017). Nowadays, television and TV series play an important role in the transmission of these narratives.

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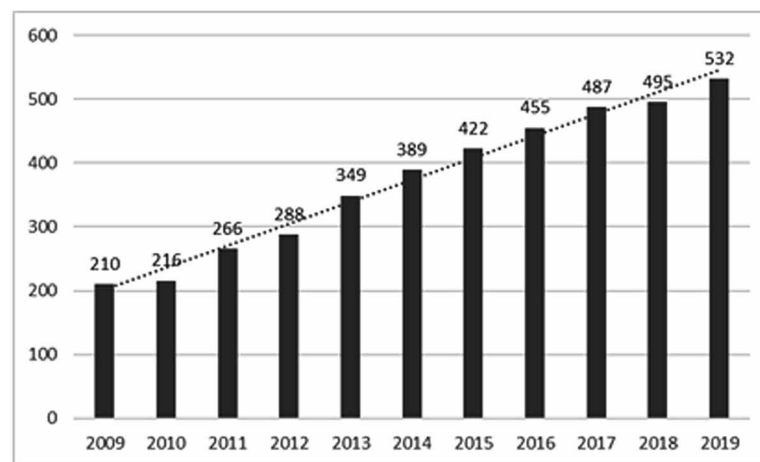
No More Drama

In the 1980s, scriptwriters began to explore new narrative forms, with long-format stories that were not self-contained, i.e., they were not resolved at the end of each weekly episode (Nandakumar & Murray, 2014). Therefore, there is a tendency to create continuing stories, covering several seasons, with each season's series broadcast over a short period of time (Bost, Labatut, Gueye & Linares, 2018).

In the current era of abundance of TV programmes, with television series growing consistently year after year (see Figure 1), a wide variety of themes, stories, production and distribution techniques have been introduced (Lewis, Calvert, Casey, Casey & French, 2007). The drive for innovation has brought television series closer to the film industry, with bolder story lines and greater attention to both aesthetics and production (Cascajosa, 2005; Gordillo, 2009). As a consequence, since the 1990s, television series budgets have increased considerably (Dunleavy, 2005). In fact, according to the National Association of Broadcasting, the significance of the television and radio broadcasting sector contributes 1.18 billion dollars, representing 6% of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

Figure 1. Evolution of the number of television series 2009-2019

Source: The authors' elaboration from Statista (2019) and The Hollywood Reporter (2020)



The entertainment industry and their audiences use genre to categorise the various audiovisual products (Kim & Long, 2012). Moreover, they classify the different programmes according to similar characteristics, reducing complexity and uncertainty because they are, thus, associated with previous expectations (Schlütz, 2016). Various authors maintain that this is a repertory of common elements or established conventions, such as: narratives, aesthetics, formats, style and type of characters, etc. (Gough-Yates, Osgerby & Yates, 2013; Neale, 2015). The assignment of a given audiovisual content to a certain television genre implies a production oriented to the essential characteristics, determining the visual appearance of the series or the volume of dialogue (Valaskivi, 2000).

After having analysed the specialised literature, the present chapter has come to the conclusion that there is no standard categorisation of television series. Therefore, the objective of this chapter is the conceptual delimitation of the television genres, with a focus on drama. Different sub-genres are associated with drama: crime fiction, mystery, detective fiction, action, young adult fiction, medical fiction, historical fiction, science fiction and fantasy. After an in-depth review of literature, the authors seek

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