Design and Procedure of a Method for Audience Research in the Digital Context:
From Linear Audience to Social Audience

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social networks host numerous comments on television programs. Two-screen viewing, where the viewer follows their favorite programs from the television screen, the screen of their computer, tablet, or mobile phone, allows the use of social networks to know the responses of viewers in real time, creating a communication channel (backchannel). Regarding the methodology, the analysis carried out in this work is based on the use of indicators. The main objective of this work is to show the methodology of evaluation by indicators in social networks of Spanish fiction series broadcast by general channels. In addition, a case study is included: series, programmed in prime time, on generalist television. In conclusion, the authors see that it is becoming more common for viewers to change their habits when consuming television programs. Once again it has been revealed in the analyzed series where the exclusive profiles of the series generate a greater linear audience.

INTRODUCTION

The Conect@r research group has for years been analyzing television audiences in social networks, the so-called social audience, and has been continuously developing a research method that is supported by its publications. This is the reason why this research study was proposed in order to verify the impact

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and follow-up of this method. For this, the methodological approach taken employs indicators to make evaluations, which allows values to be established that are comparable over time, and thus draw valid conclusions regarding the relationship between television audiences and social networks, as well as correlations between the different series studied.

So-called social television is a phenomenon associated with social interaction, with the social media audiences that interact with television shows – the social audience. This phenomenon has now long been analyzed by the research groups Sapiencia and Conect@r, as well as their UEx collaborators. Indeed, it can be included among the studies designated as Social TV analytics – social television metrics (Gallego, 2013). It is characterized by being a field of study in expansion, in which there stands out the analysis of the relationship between the audiences of television series and social networks (Ruano, 2016; Trabadela et al., 2017; Thaipisutikul & Tuarob, 2017). One of the objectives of the present study was therefore to develop a systematized method that would allow valid comparisons to be made between current and future research about the analysis of television series on social networks, or Social TV series analytics.

BACKGROUND

Television is experiencing a paradoxical situation in the face of the crisis of traditional audience measurement systems; On the one hand, the new video-on-demand services, platforms such as Netflix, HBO or Amazon prime, have made a strong commitment to series, there is an increase in the popularity of series. In addition, the number of hours that users spend watching a series on the platforms makes them very profitable, to the detriment of their consumption on linear television, which is causing a serious crisis in this form of television consumption; and on the other, consumption, especially of fiction, is personalized and distances itself from the linear programming of the channels.

In this context, social networks have emerged strongly in television channels around the world and are becoming a key tool for sharing knowledge and publicizing content of programs in general and series. Any television program has been affected by this new phenomenon that is social networks. This phenomenon has been growing so much that it has created a new context and, due to this, the networks create their own websites for these programs, where followers can enter and make comments on the social networks created for this purpose, so that they immediately satisfy and efficiency the new needs.

With social networks viewers are in direct contact, users can leave their comments and opinions through the website itself, the Facebook page itself or their Twitter or Instagram accounts. In addition, social networks allow viewers to be more informed about the exclusive content they can find from their favorite series and programs and to participate in contests and games and even comment on the broadcast of some of the programs live. This creates a fun way to watch television while interacting with other Internet users.

This phenomenon has meant that the share is no longer the most important thing: now it matters more what is said about the program, its social impact. Leading social share has become a reliable indicator of why television content succeeds or fails. According to Séntisis Analytics (Séntisis Analytics, 2019) this great change from a passive and isolated audience to a fully active social audience that generates its own content has already caused a reaction in television productions, which are beginning to offer more interactive experiences taking into account the potential of this double screen, such as, for example, the fact that in many productions exclusive extra content is offered for social networks.