

Are Spanish Series diverse? An Analysis of Platform Inclusion

¿Son las series españolas diversas? Un análisis sobre la inclusión en las plataformas

As séries espanholas são diversificadas? Uma análise da inclusão nas plataformas

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ABSTRACT | This study analyzes the main characteristics of characters in Spanish television series broadcast on streaming platforms from a diversity perspective, focusing on gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and functional diversity. In recent years, the proliferation of these platforms has changed the levels of representation and inclusivity in their audiovisual content, which is even advertised as diverse. The aim of this study is to verify if the representation offered by these products corresponds to reality or if, on the contrary, diversity is just a marketing strategy to attract subscribers. To determine the main features of character representation, a content analysis of 38 series broadcast on Spanish platforms and 749 characters was conducted. The results show that we cannot speak of a diverse representation of characters on the streaming platforms; there is still a male dominance in leading roles in a context of heteronormativity, there are underrepresented age groups, such as the elder. At the same time, although the presence of characters of different geographical and ethnical origins has increased, people with Caucasian features are the majority. On the other hand, there is little functional diversity in this type of serial fiction.

KEYWORDS: media diversity; streaming; series; characters; minorities; representation.

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RESUMEN | Este estudio analiza las principales características de los personajes de las series españolas que se emiten en las plataformas de streaming desde la óptica de la diversidad, poniendo el foco en cuestiones de género, edad, nacionalidad, etnia, orientación sexual y diversidad funcional. En los últimos años, la expansión de este tipo de plataformas ha transformado los niveles de representación e inclusión en sus contenidos audiovisuales que, incluso, son publicitados como diversos. En este artículo se busca comprobar si la representación que ofrecen estos productos es similar a la real o, por el contrario, la diversidad es solo una estrategia de marketing para atraer a los servicios de suscripción o para realizar lo que se denomina *diversity washing*, esto es, utilizar la diversidad para cubrir cuotas, pero sin considerarla verdaderamente. Para poder determinar los principales rasgos de representación de los personajes, se ha realizado un análisis de contenido de 38 series emitidas en plataformas españolas en 2021, con un total de 749 personajes. Los resultados indican que aún no puede hablarse de una representación diversa en las plataformas de streaming; sigue existiendo un predominio masculino en los papeles protagónicos en un contexto de heteronormatividad, y hay franjas de edad infrarrepresentadas, como la vejez. Asimismo, aunque se haya aumentado la presencia de personajes de diferentes orígenes geográficos y etnias, la gran mayoría de los personajes son caucásicos. Cabe destacar que apenas hay personajes con diversidad funcional en este tipo de ficción seriada.

PALABRAS CLAVE: diversidad mediática; streaming; series; personajes; minorías, representación.

RESUMO | O estudo analisa as principais características das personagens das séries espanholas transmitidas em plataformas de streaming a partir da perspectiva da diversidade, centrando-se em questões de género, idade, nacionalidade, etnia, orientação sexual e diversidade funcional. Nos últimos anos, a expansão destas plataformas transformou os níveis de representação e inclusão nos seus conteúdos audiovisuais, que inclusive são publicitados como diversos. Este artigo visa verificar se a representação oferecida por estes produtos é semelhante à real ou se, pelo contrário, a diversidade é apenas uma estratégia de marketing para atrair serviços de subscrição ou para realizar o que se designa por *diversity washing*, ou seja, utilizar a diversidade para cobrir cotas, mas sem considerá-la realmente. Para determinar as principais características da representação das personagens, foi realizada uma análise de conteúdo em 38 séries transmitidas em plataformas espanholas em 2021, com um total de 749 personagens. Os resultados indicam que ainda não é possível falar de uma representação diversificada de personagens em plataformas de streaming; ainda há uma predominância masculina em papéis principais num contexto de heteronormatividade, e há grupos etários sub-representados, como a velhice. Ao mesmo tempo, embora tenha aumentado a presença de personagens de diferentes origens geográficas e etnias, a maioria das personagens são caucasianas. É importante ressaltar que quase não existe a diversidade funcional neste tipo de ficção seriada.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: diversidade midiática; streaming; séries; personagens; minorias, representação.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of streaming platforms is unstoppable with an ever-increasing number of options for consuming audiovisual content. As recent studies on content consumption show, there were already more than 642 million subscribers on streaming platforms in 2019, and it is expected to exceed 1,100 million by 2025 (García Leiva & Hernández Prieto, 2021). This new scenario has posed numerous questions in several areas: there have been changes in consumption patterns and in the production parameters of series and movies (Chalaby, 2016), binge-watching has become popular (series binge; Pilipets, 2019), and the way of distributing content or identity in the construction of characters has changed. The academic research that has been conducted on television content indicates that this field of study is relevant today, as the circulation of content is a fact of life in a globalized industry. In this context of change, analyzing the inclusion of diversity in contents is still a pending subject.

As Gordillo (2019) points out, audiovisual content serves several functions beyond entertainment and has a cultural value (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008). Already in 1999 Buonanno defined the different functions that television can have, one of them being that of community upkeep, related to sociocultural representation.

Regarding diversity, its representation is not usually a credible recreation of society, since the elements used to portray realism are influenced by television conventions and audience expectations. In this regard, the representation of cultural diversity does not reflect the actual coexistence of the different cultures in the society represented. Traditional media, such as television, have been extensively studied, especially in the field of their uses and effects. An early precedent on the over- and under-representation of certain demographic groups to the detriment of others on television is the classic work of Gerbner and colleagues (1980), in which it was found that the social reality offered by television was highly biased, which was defined as a perverse demography (Roda, 1989). As the television sector has grown, there has been a proliferation of studies focused on social representations on television from different perspectives, such as gender identity, gender differences, immigration, racial or age aspects, among others (Galán, 2006a; Galán, 2006b; Camacho Platero, 2010; Masanet et al., 2012; Montero, 2005; Montero, 2006; Ramírez et al., 2013; Lacalle & Gómez, 2016).

Beyond these theoretical underpinnings on how diversity is represented in traditional media, to date, academic studies in the Spanish context on diversity in SVOD are still very scarce and often focus on reflecting on what type of content is offered by the platforms (Andrade Mendoza, 2022; Aranzubia & Gallego, 2021; Agustín & Gómez, 2021; García Leiva, 2020, 2021), or on differences and similarities

compared to its predecessor, generalist television (Aranzubia & Gallego, 2021; Agustín & Gómez, 2021; García Leiva, 2021). Despite this, in recent years there have been some notable works (Martín et al., 2022; Narbarte Álvarez, 2021) on character representation in the context of SVOD that have been used as a starting point in this study.

If we examine recent studies on platform inclusion, we find diverse debates. For example, the latest report by Nielsen, *Being Seen on Screen: Diverse Representation and Inclusion on TV* (2021) suggests that, in the 2020-2021 television season, among the top 1,500 programs in the United States, 78% of them had some presence of non-normative characters.

Besides the reports, some platforms, such as Netflix, measure and promote inclusion and diversity both in their productions and in the human team. The platform has offered public data since 2013 and in 2021 produced the first report on inclusion in its content; in that year, 19 series showed improvements in inclusion indicators (Smith et al., 2021).

Streaming platforms have increased not only the number of audiovisual products, but also have influenced the supply of unconventional content in terms of aesthetics and thematic variety (Lacalle et al., 2019). It is important to remark some contradictions observed in the business logic currently experienced by the main SVODs, in which some problems in the balance between diversity and freedom of expression are beginning to be glimpsed, as some are forced to restructure at a time of crisis after the good audience figures obtained during the pandemic (Neira, 2022). Indeed, in some cases, these changes translate into layoffs that directly affect diversity content. This is the case of Netflix, which fired more than a hundred employees (“150 despidos...”, 2022) or that of HBO, which, according to an investigation, is seeking to eliminate all inclusion and diversity content from the platform. This research also denounced that a large part of the recent layoffs had mainly affected people belonging to minorities (Manno, 2022). In contrast, Disney’s conservative tradition (Digón, 2006) seems to be taking some turns towards more diverse positions, showing the company’s commitment to promote diversity, since at least 50% of its characters belong to sexual and racial minorities (León, 2022).

Diversity has long been a pending subject in television in Spain, but in recent years some improvements have been observed, as shown by the data offered by the latest ODA Report (ODA, 2022) on character representation in series and films. Other works, such as those by Garrido and Zaptsi (2021), Pedro (2022), or Villena Alarcón (2022) also offer a more optimistic view on the representation of diversity

and the social benefits that can favor inclusion and equality from the contents offered in this type of platforms.

THE RESEARCH

This research's first goal is to study whether diversity is represented in Spanish SVOD series. The second, to know if it is present in the same way in all platforms. Therefore, the object of analysis is to make a radiography on the representation of diversity in Spanish production series broadcast on digital platforms in Spain and to check to what extent this fiction is inclusive and diverse in a context of readjustment of the streaming world. This raises several research questions:

RQ1. What are the characteristics of the protagonists of Spanish series broadcast on streaming platforms (age, nationality, socioeconomic level, ethnicity, education, marital status, gender, sexual orientation...)?

RQ1.1. What is the representation of the characters according to the platforms? Are there any groups that are more represented?

RQ1.2. Are there differences by platform?

RQ3. What are the main topics of conversation of the characters of Spanish series on streaming platforms?

RQ2.1. Are there differences depending on the type of platform?

RQ2. To what extent is functional diversity represented on the platforms?

RQ3.1. Is there any type of streaming platform where it is more represented?

RQ2. What is the diversity index of Spanish series broadcast on streaming platforms?

RQ4.1. Are there differences in diversity representation depending on the type of platform and its corporate culture or ideology?

RQ4.2. Which platform offers content with the highest diversity representation?

METHOD

This work is part of a broader research that seeks to analyze LGBTIQ+ representation in serialized fiction on SVOD platforms in Spain, funded by the

Ministry of Science and Innovation (PID2019-110351RB-I00). Details of the coded sample previously used in this study to respond to other hypotheses and objectives, the reliability analyses performed and further details of the research conducted can be found in González-De-Garay and colleagues (2022).

Sample

We coded series produced by the platform itself, of Spanish production -not co-productions- that had been premiered between 2020 and the first half of 2021 (up to April 2). Characters were determined to be the basic unit of analysis; to be analyzed, they had to meet two requirements: they had to appear visually and have at least one sentence of dialogue with another character in the scene (Koeman et al., 2007). To ensure representativeness, from each of the 38 series, we randomly selected one episode for coding.

Number	Platform	Series	Analyzed episode
1	Movistar	<i>Antidisturbios</i>	S01E05
2	Movistar	<i>La unidad</i>	S01E03
3	Movistar	<i>La línea invisible</i>	S01E04
4	Movistar	<i>Nasdrovia</i>	S01E03
5	Movistar	<i>Dime quién soy</i>	S01E01
6	Movistar	<i>Vergüenza</i>	S01E02
7	Movistar	<i>Hierro</i>	S01E03
8	Movistar	<i>Los espabilados</i>	S01E02
9	Movistar	<i>Libertad</i>	S01E03
10	Movistar	<i>Merlí sespare aude</i>	S02E01
11	HBO	<i>Patria</i>	S01E08
12	HBO	<i>30 monedas</i>	S01E05
13	HBO	<i>En casa</i>	S01E04
14	HBO	<i>Por h o por b</i>	S01E04
15	Amazon Prime	<i>Relatos con-fi-na-dos</i>	S01E03

Table 1 continues ▶

Number	Platform	Series	Analyzed episode
16	Amazon Prime	<i>Madres</i>	S01E12
17	Amazon Prime	<i>3 caminos</i>	S01E08
18	Amazon Prime	<i>El internado: las cumbres</i>	S01E05
19	Amazon Prime	<i>La templanza</i>	S01E04
20	Amazon Prime	<i>El cid</i>	S01E04
21	AtresPlayer Premium	<i>Mentiras</i>	S01E01
22	AtresPlayer Premium	<i>Veneno</i>	S01E05
23	AtresPlayer Premium	<i>La valla</i>	S01E09
24	AtresPlayer Premium	<i>Física y química</i>	S01E01
25	AtresPlayer Premium	<i>By ana milán</i>	S01E07
26	AtresPlayer Premium	<i>Deudas</i>	S01E02
27	AtresPlayer Premium	<i>Alba</i>	S01E01
28	AtresPlayer Premium	<i>#Luimelia</i>	S02E02
29	AtresPlayer Premium	<i>El nudo</i>	S01E11
30	AtresPlayer Premium	<i>Caronte</i>	S01E10
31	Netflix	<i>Valeria</i>	S01E06
32	Netflix	<i>White lines</i>	S01E02
33	Netflix	<i>Alguien tiene que morir</i>	S01E01
34	Netflix	<i>El desorden que dejas</i>	S01E01
35	Netflix	<i>Los favoritos de midas</i>	S01E05
36	Netflix	<i>Sky rojo</i>	S01E06
37	Netflix	<i>Hache</i>	S01E02
38	Disney+	<i>Besos al aire</i>	S01E01

Note. S = Season, E = Episode.

Table 1. Sample description

Source: Own elaboration.

Instrument

This research was conducted using a codebook already employed previously (González-De-Garay et al., 2023, among others), which allows information to be obtained on the characters in the more than 80 variables that compose it. This book is divided into ten large blocks that group different variables: (1) basic identification data, (2) general character data (gender, sexual orientation, nationality, geographic origin, etc.), (3) character's narrative level (main, secondary, or background; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000), (4) character's social sphere, (5) character's violent behavior, (6) victim of violent behavior, (7) health behaviors manifested by the character, (8) conversation topics, (9) personality traits (Igartua & Páez, 1998), and (10) functional diversity traits. To collect the data, we used a code sheet composed of variables in which, by means of a different response system (dichotomous, defined, open...), the coders identified what could be clearly observed in the episode analyzed. For the sake of the veracity of the data, the answer could not be inferred in any case.

Procedure

A total of nine coders were trained in the application of the instrument. Likewise, to study the reliability of the variables, an external coder acted as a judge in 32.57% ($n = 244$) of the study sample, following the recommendations of Igartua (2006) to include between 10% and 20% of the units of analysis. For the study of inter-judge reliability, given that the prevalence was very high, we used the percentage of agreement and the bias-adjusted and prevalence-adjusted kappa coefficient (PABAK; Byrt et al., 1993). All the variables studied, except age, obtained adequate reliability. The percentage of agreement was higher than 75% for all variables, except for those related to personality (PABAK between .19 and .81, mean = .51).

Data analysis

A diversity index (Marcos-Ramos et al. 2020), which assesses the inclusion or not of characters with different characteristics to estimate the representation of reality in fiction, was applied to analyze the results. Based on the review of studies on gender, diversity, orientation, immigration, age, etc., we established representation values based on the reference values of the real distribution of these characteristics in the Spanish population. For this research, the data for the creation of the index were updated according to the most recent population data available (table 2). A 5-point scale was generated for each variable (0 = lowest diversity, 4 = highest diversity).

Indicator	Reference value	Indicator definition	Percentage	Index
Gender	50.99% women (https://www.ine.es)	Percentage of female characters	<35	0
			35–45	1
			46–55	2
			56–65	3
			>66	4
Sexual orientation	12.00% LGBT people (Ipsos, 2021)	Percentage of LGBT characters	<2	0
			2–5	1
			6–8	2
			9–11	3
			>11	4
Age group	19.6% of people over 65 years old (https://www.ine.es)	Percentage of people over 65 years old	<10	0
			11–15	1
			16–20	2
			21–25	3
			>26	4
Nationality	11.6% of foreigners in Spain (https://www.ine.es)	Percentage of foreign/immigrant characters	<5	0
			6–8	1
			9–11	2
			12–14	3
			>15	4
Functional diversity	9.07% of people with functional diversity in Spain (https://www.ine.es)	Percentage of people with functional diversity	<5	0
			6–8	1
			9–11	2
			12–14	3
			>15	4

Note: Updated values of the Marcos-Ramos and colleagues diversity index (2020).

Table 2. Values for the creation of the diversity index

Source: Own elaboration.

RESULTS

The first research question aims to measure the representation of the characters appearing in fiction broadcast on platforms according to their gender, age, sexual orientation and geographical origin so as to determine whether the media representation is representative of the general Spanish population. Table 3 shows the frequencies of the main characteristics of the characters according to type of character (main, secondary or background), as well as the diversity index, and table 4 gathers the data necessary to answer the second research question.

Variable	General			Main			Secondary			Background		
	N	%	In	N	%	In	N	%	In	N	%	In
Age			0			0			0			0
Infants	15	2.00		2	1.48		5	2.46		8	1.95	
Adolescents	44	5.87		7	5.19		19	9.36		18	4.38	
Young adults	173	23.10		42	31.11		51	25.12		80	19.46	
Adults	476	63.55		81	60.00		117	57.64		278	67.64	
Elderly	38	5.07		3	2.22		10	4.93		25	6.08	
Unknown	3	0.40		0	0.00		1	0.49		2	0.49	
Gender			1			2			1			1
Cis-female	291	38.85		67	49.63		69	33.99		155	37.71	
Cis-male	448	59.81		67	49.63		134	66.01		247	60.10	
Trans-female	10	1.34		1	0.74		0,00	0.00		9	2.19	
Sexual orientation			3			2			3			2
Heterosexuality	309	41.26		102	75.56		112	55.17		95	23.11	
Homosexuality	28	3.74		8	5.93		12	5.91		8	1.95	
Plurisexuality	1	0.13		0,00	0.00		1	0.49		0,00	0.00	
Other	1	0.13		0,00	0.00		0,00	0.00		1	0.24	
Unknown	410	54.74		25	18.52		78	38.42		307	74.70	
Studies												
No education	33	4.41		8	5.93		7	3.45		18	4.38	
Primary	116	15.49		31	22.96		35	17.24		50	12.17	
University	215	28.70		58	42.96		41	20.20		116	28.22	
Unknown	385	51.40		38	28.15		120	59.11		227	55.23	

Variable	General			Main			Secondary			Background		
	N	%	In	N	%	In	N	%	In	N	%	In
Ethnicity												
African American/ African	12	1.60		1	0.74		5	2.46		6	1.46	
Arab/Middle Eastern	23	3.07		1	0.74		7	3.45		15	3.65	
Asian/East Asian	4	0.53		2	1.48		1	0.49		1	0.24	
Caucasian	673	89.85		124	91.85		183	90.15		366	89.05	
Gypsy	2	0.27		0,00	0.00		0,00	0.00		2	0.49	
Latina	21	2.80		7	5.19		6	2.96		8	1.95	
Other	1	0.13		0,00	0.00		1	0.49		0,00	0.00	
Unknown	13	1.74		0,00	0.00		0,00	0.00		13	3.16	
Socioeconomic Status												
Low	54	7.21		8	5.93		15	7.39		31	7.54	
Medium	410	54.74		86	63.70		109	53.69		215	52.31	
High	128	17.09		32	23.70		50	24.63		46	11.19	
Unknown	157	20.96		9	6.67		29	14.29		119	28.95	
Nationality			1		1			1				0
Foreign	83	11.08		20	14.81		26	12.81		37	9.00	
National	635	84.78		111	82.22		170	83.74		354	86.13	
Unknown	31	4.14		4	2.96		7	3.45		20	4.87	
Functional diversity			0		0			0				0
No	742	99.07		133	98.52		201	99.01		408	99.01	
Yes	7	0.93		2	1.48		2	0.99		3	0.99	

Note: In = Diversity index.

Table 3. Characteristics of the characters according to their type

Source: Own elaboration.

	General			Amazon			Atresplayer			Disney			HBO			Movistar			Netflix		
	N	%	In	n	%	In	n	%	In	N	%	In	n	%	In	N	%	In	n	%	In
Age			0			0			0			1			0			0			0
Infants	15	2.00		1	0.74		7	3.59		1	3.33		0	0.00		3	1.47		3	2.34	
Adolescents	44	5.87		12	8.89		17	8.72		0	0.00		1	1.75		4	1.96		10	7.81	
Young adults	173	23.10		23	17.04		53	27.18		1	3.33		15	26.32		42	20.59		39	30.47	
Adults	476	63.55		94	69.63		107	54.87		22	73.33		37	64.91		142	69.61		74	57.81	
Elderly	38	5.07		5	3.70		11	5.64		4	13.33		3	5.26		13	6.37		2	1.56	
Unknown	3	0.40		0	0.00		0	0.00		2	6.67		1	1.75		0	0.00		0	0.00	
Gender			1			1			1			3			0			0			1
Cis-female	291	38.85		54	40.00		80	41.03		18	60.00		17	29.82		65	31.86		57	44.53	
Cis-male	448	59.81		81	60.00		107	54.87		12	40.00		40	70.18		139	68.14		69	53.91	
Trans-female	10	1.34		0	0.00		8	4.10		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00		2	1.56	
Sexual orientation			3			3			4			0			0			3			3
Heterosexuality	309	41.26		68	50.37		76	38.97		15	50.00		21	36.84		69	33.82		60	46.88	
Homosexuality	28	3.74		4	2.96		12	6.15		0	0.00		0	0.00		6	2.94		6	4.69	
Plurisexuality	1	0.13		1	0.74		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00	
Other	1	0.13		1	0.74		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00	
Unknown	410	54.74		61	45.19		107	54.87		15	50.00		36	63.16		129	63.24		62	48.44	
Studies																					
No education	33	4.41		1	0.74		11	5.64		0	0.00		0	0.00		14	6.86		7	5.47	
Primary	116	15.49		27	20.00		31	15.90		1	3.33		12	21.05		20	9.80		25	19.53	
University	215	28.70		27	20.00		51	26.15		12	40.00		5	8.77		78	38.24		42	32.81	
Unknown	385	51.40		80	59.26		102	52.31		17	56.67		40	70.18		92	45.10		54	42.19	

Table 4 continues ▶

	General			Amazon			Atresplayer			Disney			HBO			Movistar			Netflix		
	N	%	In	n	%	In	n	%	In	N	%	In	n	%	In	N	%	In	n	%	In
Ethnicity																					
African American/African	12	1.60		3	2.22		2	1.03		0	0.00		0	0.00		3	1.47		4	3.12	
Arab/Middle Eastern	23	3.07		4	2.96		1	0.51		0	0.00		0	0.00		18	8.82		0	0.00	
Asian/East Asian	4	0.53		2	1.48		1	0.51		0	0.00		0	0.00		1	0.49		0	0.00	
Caucasian	673	89.85		118	87.41		183	93.85		30	100.00		56	98.25		175	85.78		111	86.72	
Gypsy	2	0.27		0	0.00		1	0.51		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00		1	0.78	
Latina	21	2.80		3	2.22		3	1.54		0	0.00		1	1.75		5	2.45		9	7.03	
Other	1	0.13		1	0.74		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00		0	0.00	
Unknown	13	1.74		4	2.96		4	2.05		0	0.00		0	0.00		2	0.98		3	2.34	
Socioeconomic Status																					
Low	54	7.21		14	10.37		12	6.15		0	0.00		1	1.75		23	11.27		4	3.12	
Medium	410	54.74		65	48.15		113	57.95		18	60.00		41	71.93		103	50.49		70	54.69	
High	128	17.09		35	25.93		21	10.77		0	0.00		6	10.53		34	16.67		32	25.00	
Unknown	157	20.96		21	15.56		49	25.13		12	40.00		9	15.79		44	21.57		22	17.19	
Nationality			3			4			0		0				1				4		4
Foreign	83	11.08		18	13.33		9	4.62		0	0.00		3	5.26		36	17.65		17	13.28	
National	635	84.78		102	75.56		176	90.26		30	100.00		53	92.98		167	81.86		107	83.59	
Unknown	31	4.14		15	11.11		10	5.13		0	0.00		1	1.75		1	0.49		4	3.12	
Functional diversity			0			0			0		0				0				0		0
No	742	99.07		134	99.26		195	100.00		30	100.00		55	96.49		200	98.04		128	100.00	
Yes	7	0.93		1	0.74		0	0.00		0	0.00		2	3.51		4	1.96		0	0.00	

Note. In = Diversity index.

Table 4. Character features according to platform

Age

It was found that 91.1% of the main characters analyzed were coded as adults (31.1% as young adults and 60% as adults), compared to 5.2% (n=7) of adolescents, 1.5% of infants and 3% of older people (table 3). Similar results are found in the case of secondary and background characters. As reflected in the diversity index, which has a value of 0, there is no age diversity, which does not seem to be representative of the Spanish population. In all platforms there is a predominance of characters located in the young adult and adult age range (table 4). The platform with the most adults is HBO (92.1%), followed by Movistar (90.2%). It should be noted that in Disney+ a total of four characters were found to be categorized as seniors. In this case, despite the fact that there are not many characters coded in Disney+, it represents 13.3% of the cases studied. As for the diversity index, low values are found in all platforms and only a value of 1 can be highlighted in Disney.

Sex-generic identity and sexual orientation

In the sample analyzed, there are only 38.8% of cis-women and 1.3% of trans-women. In the protagonist roles, there are 49.6% of cis-female characters, 49.6% of cis-male characters and 1.3% of trans-female characters. Looking at the diversity index, the value is 2. As for representation by streaming channel, there are only trans-female characters on three platforms (Amazon, Atresplayer, and Netflix). On the other hand, Disney+ has 60% of cis-female characters, Netflix 44.5%, Atresplayer 41%, Amazon 40% and, in last place, Movistar, 31.9%, and HBO, 29.8%. The diversity index is 3 points for Disney+, 1 point for Amazon, Atresplayer and Netflix, and 0 points for HBO and Movistar, so all platforms, except Disney+, present a very low inclusion of non-normative characters.

Regarding sexual orientation, 41.3% of the characters have been classified as heterosexual, 3.7% as homosexual, one person as plurisexual and another as another category. It is important to note that, in this case, there are many characters who are listed as unknown since no behaviors have been observed that would allow them to be clearly identified.

Considering the percentages, without considering the missing values -on which the diversity index was obtained- it can be seen that there is greater diversity in main characters (In=2) than in secondary or background ones (In=1). By platform, the one with the greatest diversity is Atresplayer (In=4), followed by Movistar and Netflix, with a value of 3, and finally Disney+ and HBO, where no diversity has been detected.

Nationality and ethnicity

As to whether the characters were national or foreign, depending on where the series is set (tables 3 and 4), 84.8% of the characters were national and the

diversity index obtained in this category is 1 point, with similar values detected in the type of character (main, secondary, or background).

Regarding the platform, we can highlight that all Disney+ and Atresplayer characters were national (In=0). HBO and Netflix have an index of 4 points, with a great diversity in terms of nationality.

By geographic origin and ethnicity, the main characters have mostly Caucasian features (91.8%), followed by characters of Latin origin (5.2%) and with a minimal representation of 1% of other origins (East Asia, Africa, and the Middle East; table 3 and table 4). A clear majority of Caucasian characters was found on all platforms, followed by Middle Eastern Arab ethnicity with representation in characters from series broadcast on Movistar (8.8%) and Amazon Prime (3%). Representation of characters of Latin American origin has also been found, mainly in Netflix (7%). In this case, Disney+ and HBO are the least diverse platforms, featuring only Caucasian characters.

Conversation and platform type

Table 5 shows the frequencies of conversational topics by type of platform. According to the data obtained, work is the most repeated topic in the characters' conversations on all platforms and family is the second, especially in the case of Amazon (48.1%) and Movistar (44.1%). Meanwhile, the third topic of conversation of the characters is love, more relevant in Disney and less so in HBO.

	Amazon		Atresplayer		HBO		Disney		Movistar		Netflix			
	N	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Environment	4	0.5	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	1.0	2	1.6
Friendship	172	23.0	38	28.1	48	24.6	10	17.5	0	0.00	49	24.0	27	21.1
Love	228	30.4	53	39.3	67	34.4	7	12.3	13	43.3	50	24.5	38	29.7
Sports	14	1.9	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	5.3	0	0.00	11	5.4	0	0.00
Money	147	19.6	30	22.2	34	17.4	9	15.8	2	6.7	41	20.1	31	24.2
Education	94	12.6	6	4.4	41	21.0	1	1.8	2	6.7	36	17.6	8	6.2
Empowerment	47	6.3	9	6.7	8	4.1	7	12.3	0	0.00	13	6.4	10	7.8
Family	309	41.3	65	48.1	73	37.4	17	29.8	12	40.0	90	44.1	52	40.6
Immigration	60	8.0	6	4.4	7	3.6	3	5.3	0	0.00	38	18.6	6	4.7
Sexism	37	4.9	7	5.2	7	3.6	3	5.3	1	3.3	17	8.3	2	1.6
Politics	61	8.1	6	4.4	11	5.6	4	7.0	0	0.00	33	16.2	7	5.5
Racism	13	1.7	0	0.00	1	0.5	3	5.3	0	0.00	6	2.9	3	2.3
Health	149	19.9	40	29.6	31	15.9	9	15.8	22	73.3	28	13.7	19	14.8
Sex	123	16.4	15	11.1	45	23.1	6	10.5	3	10.0	27	13.2	27	21.1
Labor	432	57.7	80	59.3	104	53.3	20	35.1	17	56.7	135	66.2	76	59.4
Violence	213	28.4	37	27.4	45	23.1	13	22.8	2	6.7	87	42.6	29	22.7

Table 5. Conversation topics of the characters by platform

Source: Own elaboration.

Functional diversity and platforms

It should be noted that only those characters with a functional diversity have been coded, which may lead to underrepresentation. The results only show the presence of characters with functional diversity in the case of Movistar (four characters), HBO (two characters), and Amazon Prime (one character) and in the rest of the platforms –AtresPlayer, Disney+, and Netflix– no character with functional diversity traits was identified (In=0). Therefore, the results indicate that there is a clear underrepresentation of characters with functional disabilities.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In a global context such as the current one, it is essential to analyze Spanish fiction, since it is demonstrating an enormous maturity, both at a narrative and technical level, which has connected with the audience, as evidenced by the success of series such as *La Casa de Papel* (Netflix, 2017- 2020), *one of the most watched series on the platform*. As Lacalle and colleagues (2019) state, “the boom of Spanish fiction on VOD is evident in the 24 titles premiered in 2018, which include 16 Spanish productions, three Mexican, one Brazilian, one Colombian, and one American” (pp. 201-202). Therefore, analyzing what this fiction is like is essential to ascertain what image of Spain is given outside our borders: whether a diverse one close to today’s world or one rooted in past times.

This study has shown that in recent years there have been increased efforts to represent diversity in SVOD and overcome the perverse demographics alluded to by Gerbner (1980). However, despite these advances, there is still work to be done, since when comparing audiovisual demographics with population data there are still important differences. Thus, in relation to the age of the characters, series such as *La Unidad*, *La línea invisible*, *30 Monedas*, or *Deudas* are just a few examples that show that the representation of adult characters still prevails over adolescents, infants, and older people, which differs from the real Spanish population data (www.ine.es) and shows a bias of the social reality of Spain.

This research also reflects a heterosexual and cisgender tendency in Spanish series broadcast on streaming platforms. Although in the sample analyzed there are examples of characters with diverse sex-gender identities, especially in cases such as *El Internado*, *Merlí* *sespare aude*, *Veneno*, *Madres*, or *Libertad*, it was found that there is still a significant underrepresentation of LGTBIQ+ people in fiction. Therefore, there is a need to delve into the evolution of these characters to introduce different gender and LGTBIQ+ perspectives that go beyond the cisheteropatriarchal gaze (Godoy & García, 2021).

According to geographic origin and ethnicities, although there is a presence of racialized characters, there is a clear predominance of characters with Caucasian features. However, the number of immigrant characters in series such as *Antidisturbios*, *La Unidad*, *Nasdrovia*, or *Caminos* does adjust to the Spanish social reality. In this regard, it is important to point out that in many cases they are secondary and background characters and, therefore, they are not sufficiently developed to be able to construct images far from the stereotype. These data remind us that it is necessary to reinforce the creation of characters from an inclusive perspective that reflects the new social realities and that can contribute to avoid aspects such as hate speech or discrimination of certain groups (García & Garcés, 2021).

Finally, we sought to study the extent to which functional diversity was represented in the different platforms. The results show that it is hardly present, since only 1% of the characters have some diversity but, in addition, these are concentrated in few series, broadcast in three of the analyzed platforms –*Hierro*, *Patria*, and *Merlí sespare aude*–; the presence of characters with functional diversity was found in the case of Movistar (four), HBO (two), and Amazon Prime (one). Likewise, in the case of Movistar, the characters appear in three series (*Hierro*, *Patria* [HBO, 2020], and *Merlí sespare aude* [Movistar, 2021]), so there is a certain concentration in certain fictions and a total absence in others. In this regard, there is a clear underrepresentation, since there are hardly any characters with any clearly identifiable diversity. Thus, there is a lack of representation of functional diversity or its relegation to the background in the form of secondary characters. This situation of the reality of Spanish fiction should be considered for the development of new models of creation and representation of social minorities, which highlight their autonomy as individuals, as previous studies have already pointed out (Palenzuela et al., 2019; Monleón, 2020).

This research not only aimed to measure the representation of the diversity of the characters and compare it with the Spanish sociodemographic reality, but also to analyze the commitment to diversity of the different platforms, at least in the case of Spanish series. After analyzing the main features of the characters, the cases of Disney and HBO in Spain are very striking, as they have turned out to be the least diverse platforms in general terms, since they maintain the tendency to make certain groups invisible in their creations (Monleón, 2021).

Admittedly, the results obtained in this research show that, in some aspects, it is possible to speak of a greater representation regarding age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or functional diversity, but the figures are very far from being close to reality. This situation is very similar in almost all platforms, and the data seem to be in line with prominent media studies such as those developed

in 1994 by Qualter, which considered that there was a symbiotic relationship of dependence between the media and advertising. This could be one of the reasons for the overrepresentation of certain age groups, such as the young adult population, which is considered a target population for advertising.

Beyond advertising and, by extension, economic issues, the power of fiction to create mental images that take root in our memory should not be overlooked. In fact, some international research papers have recently been published that show that media content can also contribute enormously to social inclusion. For example, in the case of immigration and racism, a study conducted by the organization Define American (2021) concludes that fiction series with immigrant characters can favor a change in audience attitudes and inclusion. For this reason, among others, it is necessary for audiovisual fiction to have an equitable representation of diversity and for this image not to be stereotyped. Therefore, the media must present a truthful and impartial image of minorities, naturalizing it and abandoning stereotypes, prejudices and perceptions that create or feed existing conflicts since, according to the data obtained, it seems that audiovisual platforms are rather taking advantage of diversity washing, i.e., using diversity to cover quotas, but without really taking it into account, ignoring that people belonging to minorities are fully entitled members. Despite this, as has been observed, the people responsible for deciding content, not only programming but also its creation, are usually non-minorities and, since they cannot access positions of responsibility, they do not manage to convey their vision to public opinion (Hartley, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to take care of diversity from the origin, i.e., from the people responsible for creating an audiovisual fiction so as to be able to offer an audiovisual story in which all people feel included. It should not be overlooked that fiction not only has to entertain, but also has a responsibility to the world by creating judgments of opinion.

Some limitations of this research should be pointed out in order to improve it. Thus, it should be noted that, given that only one episode per series was analyzed, the representativeness is limited. The fact of selecting an episode at random can also distort the results, since it may not be one in which there is a great deal of diversity and another in which there is. Similarly, this selection approach allows us to work with randomness, although the unpredictability of events may be detrimental. In future research, it would be advisable to work with larger samples, which would allow the analysis of the series in a complete manner, since the number of episodes would increase, but especially the number of characters. To be able to do this, it is necessary to have a large team of coders and analysts. This modest research allows future studies to analyze the perception of the representation of diversity in Spanish fiction broadcast on audiovisual platforms.

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