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**MEXICO: BETWEEN THE PANDEMIC, THE MELODRAMA AND  
THE INCREASE OF THE VoD SYSTEMS.**

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**Introduction**

At the Latin American level, México was one of the most affected countries by the pandemic that caused the coronavirus and its illness, COVID-19, by registering more than 2 million positive cases and more than 206 thousand deaths<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore, millions of Mexicans found themselves from a day to another, homebound, 24 hours a day. Many had to leave their houses

1 Cut to April 8th, 2021. Source: Secretariat of Health (Secretaría de Salud), Mexico.

to work, but others had to remain at home. This implied such a challenge for the families, their coexisting dynamic changed, their routines and the interaction between each other.

One of the dynamics that many families had was watching broadcast television and streaming content. The closure of activities and the obligation for all to remain at home, somehow forced people to consume more content, not only of broadcast television, but also from VoD platforms. Some data indicate that more than six million people watched the Canal de las Estrellas (Televisa) in prime time, same how, the SVoD services have been in greater demand during the pandemic, having a doubled annual growth rate in subscriptions, from 9,0% to 18,2%.

The audiovisual content production industry faced major challenges in order to be able to transmit and produce products; the drop in the advertising revenue affected the productions budget. The TV networks, as well as the OTT companies, faced the challenge of retaining audiences and gain subscribers, and be able to have a wide catalog.

On the other hand, by being confined to their homes, millions of people were able to consume contents through SVoD on multiple devices and at different times, when and where they wanted. Without a doubt, the Covid-19 pandemic is marked by the use and consumption of more technology and digital content, but also, by a major growth of television.

Part of this broadcast television viewing increase was due to the fact that face-to-face classes not only changed to be online, but also televised, as the Mexican Government signed on August 3rd, 2020, an agreement with Televisa, TV Azteca, Grupo Imagen and Grupo Multimedios in order to support the Back to School Plan 2020-2021 (Plan

de Regreso a Clases del Ciclo Escolar 2020-2021), by facilitating the transmission of the television program “Learn at Home (I-II)” (Aprende en Casa I y II), which was aimed at 30 million students of 16 scholar grades of the basic education system (preschool, elementary and junior high), who took classes through television lessons. This agreement, which initially assured being of goodwill, implied an expense of 450 million pesos only for the period from August 24 to December 18, 2020, and this was only for the transmission of the 1.550 contents that were generated.

In August of 2020, Canal Once launched the bidding for the production of educational content for the Secretariat of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP), which was considered the largest bidding process ever launched by that channel. The bidding was released in 17 days. The winning company should be able to operate services for 900 to 2.300 people, transfer 2.240 people, two production forums of their own and 150 technicians, to change shifts every eight hours. Finally, Canal 11 hired, for 51.5 million pesos, nine companies for the “Learn at Home II” (Aprende en Casa II) program.

On a commercial level and due to the pandemic, Televisa launched the #TelevisaAccompaniesYou (#TelevisaTeAcompaña) strategy in its different businesses with special programming about Covid-19, in order to be transmitted through broadcast and cable TV (Izzy and Sky). The campaign “Beware of the Coronavirus” (*Mucho Ojo con el Coronavirus*) was added to this strategy, broadcasting information on health, hygiene and preventive measures.

Information that, likewise, was taken in some national fictions such as *La Rosa de Guadalupe* (The Rose of Guadalupe), which was one of the only productions along with *Como dice el Dicho* (As the

saying goes) (both of Televisa) that in an open way, took the pandemic as part of their narrative plot.

**1. The audiovisual context of Mexico in 2020**

**1.1. The broadcast television in Mexico**

**Chart 1. National broadcast television networks/channels in Mexico.**

<b>Private broadcast / channel (9)</b>	<b>Public broadcast / channel (4)</b>
Televisa (Channels 2, 5, 9 and Foro TV)	Once TV (Channel 11 and 11.1)
TV Azteca (Channels 1, 7, ADN40 and A+)	Conaculta (Channel 22)
Imagen Televisión (Channel 3)	Canal 14 (Channel 14)
<b>NETWORKS TOTAL = 6</b>	
<b>CHANNELS TOTAL = 13</b>	

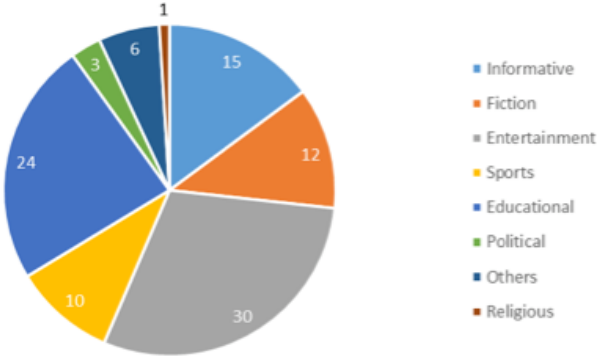
*Source: Obitel Mexico.*

Even though it had been announced that the alternation in the federal government would imply a democratization in the national broadcast television, the biddings for a fourth national channel that had been deserted in 2015 have not been launched nor replaced; what has been established in a better way, is the use of the mirror channels of the existing television networks; it was through the mirror signals of Televisa, TV Azteca and Grupo Imagen that the classes of the “Learn at Home” (*Aprende en Casa*) program, were transmitted; the only

public national TV network that did broadcast school classes were Canal Once, Canal 14 and Canal 22.

**Graph 2: Genres and hours broadcast in TV programming<sup>2</sup>**

Broadcast genres	hours	%
Informative	21657	15
Fiction	18310	12
Entertainment	44040	30
Sports	15524	10
Educational	35460	24
Political	3980	3
Others	8768	6
Religious	550	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>148289</b>	<b>100</b>



Source: Obitel Mexico.

2 Graph 1 was not carried out due to lack of information.

One element to highlight is that this year the number of hours of educational content increased due to the agreement that the Mexican Government made with the national commercial networks (Televisa, TV Azteca and Imagen) in order to use their mirror channels for broadcasting the classes that had to be given in the Mexican basic education system through television, due to the COVID-19 pandemic that had suspended face-to-face classes.

### 1.2. Pay TV and VoD platforms in Mexico

**Chart 2. Pay TV Networks in Mexico**

<b>Most viewed Pay TV Networks in 2020</b>
1) SKY, 2) Totalplay, 3) Megacable, 4) Izzi, 5) Cablecom, 6) Axtel, 7) Dish, 8) Gigacable
<b>TOTAL: 8 subscription television networks</b>

*Source: Obitel Mexico.*

The impregnation of Broadband internet, together with the multiple offer of OTT's services worldwide, led to a significant drop in the subscribers to pay television services. This, coupled with the pandemic, caused furthermore the subscribers' loss. Nevertheless, in Mexico, subscribers to these pay television services increased 6,7% during 2020.

To companies that offer pay TV content, it's been useful to sell packages that offer satellite or cable TV content, plus broadband internet and telephony. Being the companies of Grupo Televisa (Sky, Izzi)

the ones with the highest insertion (64,7%); followed by Megacable (15,9%), Dish-MVS (12,3%) and Total Play 5,3%<sup>3</sup>.

**Chart 3. VoD in Mexico**

<b>Top active VoD platforms in 2020</b>	<b>Total</b>
Netflix (Netflix), Disney+ (Disney) Dish Móvil (Dish), Amazon Prime (Amazon), Movistar+ (Telefónica) Blim (Televisa), Apple TV (Apple) Cinépolis Klic (Cinépolis), Claro- Video (Claro Video), HBO Go (HBO) Pluto TV (Viacom CBS), Paramount+ (Paramount Picture), Acorn-TV Crunchyroll, Curiosity stream Fox Premium, Fox play, Tubi	<b>18</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>

Source: *Obitel Mexico*.

### 1.3. Independent television fiction production companies

In Mexico, independent production companies are very important pieces for VoD platforms and television networks. In recent years their productions have been successes on SVoD platforms and, without a doubt, their participation is on the rise. We found that in 2020 the most active production companies were: Noc Noc Cinema, which produced *La Casa de las Flores (third season)* for Netflix; Lemon Studios, which in 2020 made the *Control Z* series. BTF media has produced for Disney, TV Azteca, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Net Geo, among

3 December 2019 data provided by Statista: <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/984810/distribucion-por-proveedor-del-mercado-de-television-por-cable-mexico/>

others. Within their most recent productions is *Maradona “Sueño Bendito”*, which is to air in late 2021.

On the other hand, the production company Argos Comunicación (led by Epigmenio Ibarra) has collaborated with TV Azteca, Telemundo, Netflix, Imagen Televisión, Disney Channel among other networks (its productions include *Ingobernable*, *El Señor de los Cielos*, etc.). According to their CEO, Epigmenio Ibarra, the company has taken off, gaining a more global vision, as well as a better use of a universal language in their productions. In this production company, they increasingly use *big data* in order to build stories, known as *data-oriented content*<sup>4</sup>. The production made this year was *Oscuro Deseo*, for Netflix. For its part, Estudios Teleméxico (from Fox TeleColombia) made *Promesas de Campaña* for Claro-Video. While Caponeto produced *Desenfrenadas* for Netflix.

#### 1.4. Financing sources for the audiovisual sector

2020 was not a good year for TV networks, as the pandemic also affected their advertising revenue. In other years reports, we have repeatedly said that advertising revenues have been declining each year. In the first nine months of 2020, Televisa and TV Azteca lost 8,122.7 million pesos (about 400 million dollars). Without a doubt, the most important private companies in Mexico are losing publicity against digital platforms. Another reason for this decline is the cut in the government budget, due to official advertising, and the fall of advertisers as a result of the global pandemic.

With an enormous growth, streaming platforms are in different circumstances. According to Forbes, Netflix added 15.8 million users in 2020, when in 2019 we reported 6 million 783 thousand active

4 Tele Mexico Studios.



accounts. Meaning that, during the pandemic, their subscriptions have increased more than one hundred percent.

### **1.5. Communication policies**

As a government strategy, teaching through television channels returned during the pandemic, as pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, due to Covid-19. On August 3, 2020, given the increase in cases and the risk involved in face-to-face classes, President López Obrador announced that the educational system would be remote, through four private television networks in order to reach more than 30 million of students at the basic levels. For achieving this, an agreement was signed by the Secretary of Public Education and the television networks. The broadcasts were seven days a week. For this transmission, the government paid 450 million pesos (22 million dollars) to the networks.

The pandemic escalation on 2021's first semester forced the government to create "Learn at Home III" (*Aprende en Casa III*), which is now being carried out by *Altán Redes* -a Mexican company responsible for designing, deploying, operating and marketing the Red Compartida (the Shared Network), the Red para Todos (the Network for Everyone) (State network that provides telecommunications services)-, and that still has the support of Canal Once for content formulation, as well as the support of the television networks for transmission and retransmission.

### **1.6. Digital and mobile connectivity infrastructure**

According to data from the 2020 Population and Housing Census (*Censo de Población y Vivienda*, INEGI, 2020), Mexico has a population over 126 million people, the average age being 29 years.

In other words, Mexico continues to be a country with a young population. Between 2010 (when the previous Census was applied in the country) and 2020, in Mexico, cellphones availability *at homes* grew from 65,1% to 87,5%. Internet in households grew from 21,3 to 51,3%, telephone landlines decreased from 43,2% to 37,5%. As we can observe in these data, the internet has been growing in homes, as well as cell phones, while landline telephony is declining. Television continues to be a very important medium at home. Between 2010 and 2020, the availability of TV dropped only 2 points (from 92,6% to 91,1%), and 43% of homes have Pay TV. According to data released in this Census, there is a large digital divide between Mexico City (such as owning a computer) and other states (at the southeast region of the nation). This, as a result of the vivid inequalities that have prevailed in the country for decades. The internet insertion in the country by 2020 is of 80.6% million people, with rural populations having the least access to internet, and even more than 40 million Mexicans without access to it.

## 2. Analysis of 2020: National and Ibero-American Premiere Fiction on Broadcast TV

**Table 1. Fictions exhibited in 2020 (national and imported; premiere, reruns and co-productions)**

### **NATIONAL UNPUBLISHED TITLES – 13**

#### **Televisa - 11 national titles**

1. *Vencer el miedo* (Series)
2. *Rubí* (Series)
3. *Te doy la Vida* (Telenovela)
4. *La Mexicana y el Güero* (Telenovela)
5. *Imperio de mentiras* (Telenovela)
6. *Quererlo todo* (Telenovela)
7. *Como dice el Dicho 7* (Unitary Drama)
8. *La Rosa de Guadalupe 13* (Unitary Drama)

9. *El Dragón: el regreso del guerrero* (Series)
10. *Esta Historia me Suena 2* (Series)
11. *Vencer el Desamor* (Telenovela)

**TV Azteca – 2 national titles**

12. *La Bandida 2* (Series)
13. *Lo que Callamos las Mujeres* (Dramatization)

**Imagen TV– 0 national titles**

**Canal Once– 0 national titles**

**Canal 22– 0 national titles**

**COPRODUCTIONS– 0**

**OBITEL FOREIGN UNPUBLISHED TITLES – 8**

**Televisa – 6 titles**

14. *Preso No. 1* (Series- USA)
15. *El final del paraíso* (Telenovela – Colombia/USA).
16. *La Esclava Blanca* (Series- Brazil)
17. *Jesús* (Telenovela -Brazil)
18. *Betty en NY* (Series - Colombia/USA).
19. *Sin senos sí hay paraíso* (Telenovela- Colombia/USA).

**Imagen TV– 1 title**

20. *Dulce ambición* (Telenovela -Brazil)

**Canal 22 – 1 title**

21. *El tiempo entre costuras* (Series – Spain)

**NON OBITEL FOREIGN UNPUBLISHED TITLES - 4**

**Imagen TV– 4 Non OBITEL foreign unpublished titles**

22. *Pecado original* (Telenovela - Turkey).
23. *Omer sueños robados* (Series – Turkey).
24. *Mar negro* (Telenovela - Turkey)
25. *Tierra Amarga* (Telenovela - Turkey)

**RERUNS TITLES- 9****Televisa - 9 national titles**

26. *Mañana es para Siempre* (Telenovela -Mexico)
27. *Soy tu Dueña* (Telenovela -Mexico)
28. *Corazón Indomable* (Telenovela -Mexico)
29. *Destilando Amor* (Telenovela -Mexico)
30. *La que no Podía Amar* (Telenovela -Mexico)
31. *Hoy voy a Cambiar* (Telenovela -Mexico)
32. *Silvia Pinal, Frente a Ti* (Series -Mexico)
33. *Que Pobres tan Ricos* (Telenovela -Mexico)
34. *Corona de Lágrimas* (Telenovela -Mexico)
35. *La Rosa de Guadalupe* (Unitary Drama- Televisa)

**UNPUBLISHED NATIONAL TITLES TOTAL: 13**

**OBITEL UNPUBLISHED TITLES TOTAL: 8**

**UNPUBLISHED TITLES (NATIONAL AND**

Unlike 2019, in 2020, ten fewer titles were released; the reason is the temporary and/or definitive suspension of the production of diverse fictions that chose to resume the recordings until there were more favorable conditions in order to avoid COVID-19 contagion between the cast and the production.

This caused that, more than in other years, there were several reruns of titles that had already been released; this strategy of placing fictions on the screen was profitable in terms of rating, since titles such as: *La que no Podía Amar* (2011), *Soy tu Dueña* (2010) and *Destilando Amor* (2007) -these last-mentioned were starred by the former Mexican first lady, the actress Angélica Rivera- were placed among the five most viewed fictions in 2020, displacing the premiere titles, despite being broadcast on a non-prime time.

**Table 2. The Premiere Fiction in 2020: countries of origin**

Country	Titles	%	Chapters/ Episodes	%	Hours	%
<b>NATIONAL (total)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>62,0</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>51,0</b>	<b>906:20:00</b>	<b>51,0</b>
<b>OBITEL COUNTRIES (total)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>38,0</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>49,9</b>	<b>884:00:00</b>	<b>49,0</b>
Argentina	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
Brazil	3	14,0	463	52,0	459:30:00	52,0
Chile	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
Colombia	3	14,0	374	42,0	371:00:00	42,0
Spain	1	5,0	11	1,0	10:20:00	1,0
U.S.A (Hispanic production)	1	5,0	44	5,0	43:50:00	5,0
<b>Mexico*</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>62,0</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>5,0</b>	<b>906:20:00</b>	<b>51,0</b>
Peru	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
Portugal	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
Uruguay	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
Venezuela	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
<b>COPRODUCTIONS (total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0,0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0,0</b>	<b>0:00:00</b>	<b>0,0</b>
Mexican coproduction **	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
<b>OBITEL Countries coproduction</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0,0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0,0</b>	<b>0:00:00</b>	<b>0,0</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>1,813</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>1,790:20:00</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Source: *Obitel Mexico*.

Due to the drop in titles due to the pandemic, this year the number of episodes and hours of national premiere fiction was reduced, but this was not the case for Ibero-American premiere fiction that this year increased its hours on screen, almost to double compared to 2019.

In 2020, there were no co-productions registered between Mexico and some other Obitel countries.

**Table 3. National and Ibero-American fiction formats**

Format	Nationals						Ibero-American					
	Titles	%	C/E	%	H	%	Titles	%	C/E	%	H	%
<b>Telenovela</b>	5	38,4	430	47,0	426:00:00	47,0	4	50,0	652	73,1	646:10:00	73,0
<b>Series</b>	5	38,4	255	28,0	249:20:00	27,4	4	50,0	240	26,9	238:00:00	27,0
<b>Mini-series</b>	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
<b>Telefilm</b>	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
<b>Unitary</b>	3	23,0	236	25,0	231:00:00	25,6	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
<b>Docudrama</b>	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
<b>Others</b>	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00:00	0,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>906:20:00</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>884:10:00</b>	<b>100,0</b>

*Obitel Elaboration with national data provided by Nielsen Ibope México, S.A. de C.V. Software MSS TV, Base “Regular Rating 5 domains + Dish. Total television programming during 2020.*

Regarding the format, in 2020, the series production remained on the rise in both national and Ibero-American titles; although, in the case of nationals, there is still a wide consumption of the unitary dramatization *La Rosa de Guadalupe* and *Como Dice el Dicho*; both were among the five most viewed fictions in the year.

It is also noteworthy, the drastic decrease in the hours produced of telenovelas for 2020, since in 2019 there were 750 hours, while for 2020 were 249 hours, that is, 66% less. The reason for this is that several of the productions had to stop their recordings as a result of the pandemic, which in the long run it also implied a reduction in their episodes, which also reduced the number of broadcast hours.

**Table 4. The ten most watched titles on broadcast television<sup>5</sup>**

	Title	Channel	Production company	Format/ Genre	Chap./ eps.No. (2020)	Time slot	Rating	Share
1	<i>Te doy la Vida</i>	Canal 2	Televisa	Telenovela	81	Afternoon	18,94	29,62
2	<i>Rubí</i>	Canal 2	Televisa	Series	27	Prime	17,71	25,73
3	<i>La Rosa de Guadalupe 13 Vencer el Miedo</i>	Canal 2	Televisa	Unitary	88	Afternoon	17,60	26,86
4	<i>Como Dice el Dicho</i>	Canal 2	Televisa	Series	46	Afternoon	16,51	27,63
5	<i>El Dragón: el Regreso de un Guerrero</i>	Canal 2	Televisa	Unitary	155	Afternoon	16,22	27,88
6	<i>Vencer el Desamor</i>	Canal 2	Televisa	Series	82	Prime	15,42	23,26
7	<i>Quererlo todo</i>	Canal 2	Televisa	Telenovela	93	Afternoon	14,10	20,99
8	<i>Esta Historia me Suena 2</i>	Canal 2	Televisa	Telenovela	39	Afternoon	13,98	28,13
9	<i>La Mexicana y el Güero</i>	Canal 2	Televisa	Unitary	38	Afternoon	13,14	22,21
10		Canal 2	Televisa	Telenovela	126	Prime	12,36	18,89

*Obitel Elaboration with national data provided by Nielsen Ibope México, S.A. de C.V. Software MSS TV, Base "Regular Rating 5 domains + Dish. Total television programming during 2020.*

It is to highlight that in 2020 the ratings increased on regard to 2019, the year in which the most viewed fiction reached 18,94 points; this implies an increase near to one point in relation to 2019, which stands out, since the trend was, on average, a decrease from one to two rating points per year.

This year, unlike the previous three, *La Rosa de Guadalupe* was not the most watched fiction, although it did come in third place;

<sup>5</sup> The ten most viewed titles refer only to those fictions that were released in 2020, so this top ten cannot coincide with the ten most viewed fictions during 2020 on national broadcast television.

however, regarding to the preference for unitary dramatization, a new production is added: *Esta historia me suena*, focusing on youth problems and developing them through a song. This format is similar to the fiction *La vida es una canción*, a unitary produced by TV Azteca in 2004. Also, it should be recognized the unitary program *Como dice el Dicho*, which is gaining audience; this program is produced by Televisa.

The most watched fiction in 2020 was *Te doy la vida*, whose main plot revolves around the leukemia diagnosis in a child, for whom the only alternative is the bone marrow donation of his biological father, who does not know him, and the love story between his biological father and his adoptive mother; this was an adaptation of a Chilean title with the same name. In Mexico it was the telenovela with the highest rating this year, broadcast in the afternoon hours, not in *prime time*, as it was the trend.

**Table 5. Audience profile of the ten most viewed titles: gender, age, and socioeconomic status**

	Titles	Channel	Gender Rating %		Socioeconomic level %		
			Women	Men	AB	C	DE
1	<i>Te doy la Vida</i>	Canal 2	10,8	7,4	10,3	19,5	26,7
2	<i>Rubí</i>	Canal 2	10,7	6,0	10,5	18,7	25,0
3	<i>La Rosa de Guadalupe 13</i>	Canal 2	10,2	5,4	9,3	17,6	29,0
4	<i>Vencer el Miedo</i>	Canal 2	9,5	5,1	8,9	16,5	24,7
5	<i>Como dice el Dicho</i>	Canal 2	9,47	5,1	9,8	15,9	25,1
6	<i>El Dragón: el Regreso de un guerrero</i>	Canal 2	8,4	5,6	8,5	16,0	22,3
7	<i>Vencer el Desamor</i>	Canal 2	9,1	4,9	7,8	15,9	23,5
8	<i>Quererlo Todo</i>	Canal 2	8,2	4,0	7,7	15,6	20,6
9	<i>Esta Historia me Suena 2</i>	Canal 2	7,5	4,0	7,4	10,7	20,9
10	<i>La Mexicana y el Güero</i>	Canal 2	7,8	4,4	7,0	11,8	23,1



Titles		Channel	Age ranges %				
			4 to 12	13 to 18	19 to 29	30 to 44	45 +
1	<i>Te doy la Vida</i>	Canal 2	9,0	8,9	5,5	9,6	11,5
2	<i>Rubí</i>	Canal 2	8,5	8,0	6,7	8,6	9,9
3	<i>La Rosa de Guadalupe 13</i>	Canal 2	9,1	8,6	5,8	7,8	10,2
4	<i>Vencer el Miedo</i>	Canal 2	8,1	6,7	5,3	6,8	8,6
5	<i>Como dice el Dicho</i>	Canal 2	8,5	7,4	5,7	6,6	9,4
6	<i>El dragón: el Regreso de un Guerrero</i>	Canal 2	7,1	6,1	5,0	6,8	8,9
7	<i>Vencer el Desamor</i>	Canal 2	7,2	6,8	4,9	7,0	8,9
8	<i>Quererlo Todo</i>	Canal 2	6,5	5,4	4,5	6,1	8,3
9	<i>Esta Historia me Suena 2</i>	Canal 2	5,8	5,4	4,8	5,8	7,0
10	<i>La Mexicana y el Güero</i>	Canal 2	6,5	6,8	4,3	5,9	8,0

*Obitel Elaboration with national data provided by Nielsen Ibope México, S.A. de C.V. Software MSS TV, Base "Regular Rating 5 domains + Dish. Total television programming during 2020*

As a constant during the last five years, in Mexico, the fiction consumer profile is a woman over 45 years of age who belongs to the middle and lower socioeconomic status.

However, the pandemic condition that forced the population to stay at home had an impact on the fiction viewing, since all socioeconomic groups increased their audience. The highest being the DE group (with the lowest socioeconomic income), since in 2019 the program with the highest rating had 20,14; meaning, that group increased five rating points its viewing on broadcast television.

### 3. VoD 2020 monitoring

The pandemic had positive repercussions for the SVoD industry. As we previously reported in this document, Netflix subscriptions in Mexico grew more than one hundred percent (grew from 6 million 783 thousand accounts to 15,8 million in 2020), which has also had an improvement point with the arrival of new services, Disney Plus being the most anticipated.

#### 3.1. VoD platform market

The much-announced Disney Plus arrival in Mexico occurred on November 17, and on its first launching day, it collapsed in some areas of the country, due to the saturation of the platform. It is considered to be a true competitor for Netflix and it can be demonstrated with the following: Mexico is the third country with the highest number of the Disney Plus APP downloads, after the United States and Brazil (2,2 million downloads during its launching month), which places it in the second SVoD platform with the highest number of subscriptions in Mexico.

The revenue generated in November 2020 by the Disney + App in Mexico were up to \$350,200 dollars<sup>6</sup>. In 2021, Disney is expected to make 21 productions in Mexico. On the other hand, according to The CIU data, Prime Video has 918 thousand accounts, followed by Claro-Video with 418 thousand, as well as HBO-Go, and finally is BLIM, with 234,600 accounts<sup>7</sup>. The launch of Star +, the Walt Disney Studios' new overture, is forecast for June 2021, and in the same

6 <https://elceo.com/tecnologia/mexico-el-tercer-pais-con-mas-descargas-de-la-app-de-disney-plus/>

7 <https://www.xataka.com.mx/streaming/disney-plus-llegara-a-mexico-prime-video-tiene-que-preocuparse-marvel-star-wars-subio-al-segundo-lugar-streaming>

month, the arrival of HBO Max. In regard to the production investments in Mexico, Netflix invested 200 million dollars in productions in Mexico and for 2021 is expected a 300 million expense.

### **3.2. VoD analysis in 2020: National and Ibero-American premiere fiction**

In 2020, Claro-Video increased its national productions (six) in contrast to a single production that was broadcast in 2019 (the series *Claramente*). We found, in its contents, series starring by Eugenio Derbéz, who due to the pandemic had to stay at home, -as the vast majority-, and knew how to take advantage of this situation in order to produce a series from there, sharing what he and his family lived.

Claro-Video has bet on producing historical series, such as *Orgullo México*, as well as the comedy genre such *Manual para Galanes* and *Herederos por Accidente*. On its part, Netflix still prefers to produce content that addresses issues based on real events, as it did with the series *Historia de un Crimen: la búsqueda*, which story shocked a large part of the Mexican society in 2010; as well as topics that address terror content (*Diablero*), crime (*Oscuro Deseo*), and content with young protagonists: *La Casa de las Flores* (3rd. and last season) and *Desenfrenadas*. While Prime-Video seems to prefer to produce content with themes aimed at young people: *De Brutus Nada* and *Cómo sobrevivir soltero*. While Blim, this year only had one production, *40 y 20* in its fifth season.

It is estimated that in 2020 the main Video on Demand platforms (without counting in this report the arrival of Disney Plus), Netflix, Claro-Video, Blim and Prime-Video obtained profits of more than 200 million dollars.

According to a report from the Federal Institute of Telecommunications (IFT), which applied a survey to users who had OTT services, indicated that 84 percent of these are subscribed to Netflix<sup>8</sup>.

Action and adventure series are an important part of the overview of original digital series. Many of the biggest streaming compete in this field, with some of the most important series of this genre that boost subscriptions.

In the last months, the concurrence of Amazon Prime video series has increase from 9,5% in August to 20,8% in September 2020. Between July and September, the most demanded Amazon original series in Mexico was *The Boys* (Parrot Analytics Report).

**Table 6. National and Ibero-American fictions exhibited in 2020 in VoD systems**

NATIONAL RELEASED PRODUCTIONS	IBERO-AMERICAN RELEASED PRODUCTIONS	CO-PRODUCTIONS
<p><b>Netflix – 6 national titles</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>La Casa de las Flores (3a temporada)</i> (series).</li> <li>2. <i>Control Z</i> (series).</li> <li>3. <i>Diablero 2</i> (series).</li> <li>4. <i>Oscuro Deseo</i> (series).</li> <li>5. <i>Historia de un crimen. La búsqueda</i> (series).</li> <li>6. <i>Desenfrenadas</i> (series).</li> </ol>	<p><b>Netflix – 14 Ibero-american titles</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Elite 2</i> (series-Spain)</li> <li>2. <i>Selena: La Serie</i> (series - USA).</li> <li>3. <i>Las Chicas del Cable 5</i> (series -Spain).</li> <li>4. <i>Alguien tiene que morir</i> (miniseries -USA).</li> <li>5. <i>Altar Mar 3</i> (series -Spain).</li> <li>6. <i>Valeria</i> (series -Spain).</li> </ol>	<p><b>Netflix – 0 titles</b></p> <p><b>Prime-Video- 0 titles</b></p> <p><b>Claro TV- 0 titles</b></p>

8 <https://www.milenio.com/negocios/ingresos-otts-netflix-1-400-mdd-mexico-2024>

NATIONAL RELEASED PRODUCTIONS	IBERO-AMERICAN RELEASED PRODUCTIONS	CO-PRODUCTIONS
<p><b>Claro-Video – 6 national titles</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>DesHecho en casa</i> (series)</li> <li>2. <i>Orgullo México</i> (series).</li> <li>3. <i>Herederos por Accidente</i> (series).</li> <li>4. <i>Promesas de Campaña</i> (series).</li> <li>5. <i>Manual para Galanes</i> (series).</li> <li>6. <i>Reto Tokio 2020</i> (series).</li> </ol> <p><b>Prime-Video- 4 national titles</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>De Brutas Nada</i> (series).</li> <li>2. <i>Cómo sobrevivir soltero</i> (series).</li> <li>4. <i>El Candidato</i> (series).</li> <li>5. <i>Ana</i> (series)</li> </ol> <p><b>Blim- 1 national title</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>40 y 20</i> (season 5) (series).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. <i>Los favoritos de Midas</i> (series -Spain).</li> <li>8. <i>El desorden que dejas</i> (series -Spain).</li> <li>9. <i>100 días para Enamorarnos</i> (series - USA).</li> <li>10. <i>3% 4</i> (series -Brazil).</li> <li>11. <i>Reality Z</i> (series -Brazil).</li> <li>12. <i>Siempre bruja</i> (series - Colombia).</li> <li>13. <i>Espectros</i> (series -Brazil).</li> <li>14. <i>Omnisciente</i> (series - Brazil).</li> <li>15. <i>Narcos 2</i> (series-USA).</li> </ol> <p><b>Prime-Video- 3 Ibero-american titles</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Patria</i> (series-Spain).</li> <li>2. <i>Caronte</i> (series-Spain).</li> <li>3. <i>El Cid</i> (series-Spain).</li> </ol> <p><b>Claro TV – 1 Ibero-american titles</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Monte Olivos</i> (series-Spain).</li> </ol>	
<b>Total: 17</b>	<b>Total: 19</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL: 36</b>		

Source: *Obitel Mexico*.

At the national level, there were 16 premiere titles, series being the most widely used format; even though this year more Mexican productions had been announced by Netflix, many were postponed to 2021 and 2022; the U.S. company plans to make Mexico the epicenter of its fictional productions, and in January, by that reason, it moved its creative and production headquarters to our country.

It is worth mentioning that with the data extracted from reports by Parrot Analytics (The Global Television Demand Report, 2020) they display that in the 20 fictions with the highest audience in Mexico in the SVoD, there are two national and Ibero-American premiere productions: *Narcos 2* (Netflix) in second place and *La Casa de las Flores* (3rd season) at 12th. place.

**Table 7. The 2020 premiere fiction in VoD: countries of origin**

Country	Productions	%
<b>NATIONAL (total)</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>47,0</b>
<b>OBITEL COUNTRIES (total)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>53,0</b>
Argentina	0	0,0
Brazil	4	21,0
Chile	0	0,0
Colombia	1	3,0
Spain	10	52,0
U.S.A (Hispanic production)	4	21,0
Mexico*	17	100,0
Peru	0	0,0
Portugal	0	0,0
Uruguay	0	0,0
Venezuela	0	0,0
<b>COPRODUCTIONS (total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0,0</b>
Mexican coproductions **	0	0,0
OBITEL Countries Coproductions	0	0,0
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Source: *Obitel Mexico*.

It is to point out that in the SVoD, Spanish productions dominate the scene with 10 of the 18 premiere titles in 2020, followed by

Brazilian productions with four titles, this in relation with the Ibero-American titles.

## 4. Fiction and Audience Participation in Digital Settings

### 4.1 Proposals for digital expansion

SVoD platforms promote, from digital social media, the content they produce. Although in some series they manage their own social media accounts, there is a “global” management in order to promote the platforms catalog contents of the Latin American region. In the case of productions made in Mexico, they are also promoted on Twitter through @Netflix Latin America. The account has 5,7 million followers and has posted more than 72 thousand tweets. This was created on October 31, 2020, apparently it is managed by a male, and it informs about new releases, new seasons, and they even throw some questions to the followers; also, they offer audience data of the series, as it can be observed in the following image, which refers to the series *The Queen’s Gambit* (*Gambito de Dama*), one of Netflix’s original productions with the highest audience also in Mexico:



Source: <https://twitter.com/NetfixLAT>

Netflix also has a Facebook account @Netflixmx with more than 73 million followers. On the other hand, Amazon Prime Video also promotes content through social media. On Twitter, in November 2019, it opened the account and has just over 199 thousand followers. On Facebook, @PrimevideoLAT has more than 15 million followers. Disney + Latin America (@Disneyplusla) has 524.000 followers and opened the account in June 2018. On Facebook, the @DisneyPlusLatino account has just over a million followers.



Source: @Disneyplusla

Through digital social media, the Video on Demand industry constantly promotes its contents and measures the thermometer of what the audience likes. In Latin America there are more than 60 million users of digital social media. Without a doubt, it is a market strategy for content promotion to use these networks by SVoD platforms.



## 4.2 Social interactivity

Without necessarily being a fiction, *La Más Draga* positioned itself as the most viewed paid content on YouTube in Mexico for the second consecutive year<sup>9</sup>, although in 2020 it broke all records by being the most viewed Mexican production of the year on this platform and it also stood out for being the exclusive content for which more Mexican users paid.

*La Más Draga* is a drag competition web series produced by *La Gran Diabla*, where diverse members of the LGBTTTQI+ community compete to find out who achieved the best characterization (wardrobe, makeup and hairstyle) within a series of dynamics imposed on them and that must be performed in the live broadcast, presented every Tuesday at 9:00 p.m. on its platform.

During 2020, this production carried out its third season, which has been the most successful one, since the money raised was used to support members of the LGBTTTQI+ community who lost their jobs or faced severe economic problems due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Source: *La Más Draga*

9 See: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrkgxVsNPCm113PQmJpK6wLbOh6kb4aV>

The innovativeness about this format is that in order to watch the “live ” streams or the exclusive content, you had to pay 99 pesos per broadcast (5 USD); days later, these same contents were uploaded to its YouTube channel with an edited version. Unofficially, the end of the third season that took place on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, managed to capture the attention of more than 500 thousand users who paid in order to see the broadcast on that platform.

### 4.3 Emerging fiction productions

The “exclusive content” format also had its peak with other YouTube content creators, mainly with singers and/or comedians, who also commercialized “*lives*” (live streams) and special content on their channels, as a way to seize resources after the theaters, nightclubs and auditoriums were closed.

Likewise, independent fiction producers took advantage of the *web series* format in order to place on YouTube some productions whose themes revolve around the LGBTTTQI+ community, which demonstrates -as happened with *La Más Draga*- the lack of opportunity and visibility of other identities and gender orientations, not only in Mexican fiction, but also in national open television.

Some of the web series on these themes, which have been very successful are *La Bastarda* and *Ana, la Chica Bolera*, both made not only with thematic of gender diversity, but also acted by actresses and actors from the LGBTTTQI+ community.

An example of independent production that found shelter on YouTube were: *Bravas*<sup>10</sup>, a new dramatic webseries inspired by Latin urban music that follows three friends, Mila, Roja and Ashley, who

10 See: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrkgxVsNPCm1l3PQmJpK6wLbOh6kqb4aV>

seek to find their place in the world; and *Gris*<sup>11</sup>, which tells the story of Angie and Lara, who were brought together by the quarantine and must spend the confinement together in an apartment.

## 5. Highlights of the year

Although the year has been marked, without a doubt, by the pandemic, another of the great issues that the country suffers from is violence, mainly of gender, because according to data from feminist groups such as “*Nosotras tenemos otros datos*” (We have other data), 2020 was recognized as “one of the most violent years for women and girls” in Mexico.

Compared to the previous year, 2019, a 39% increase in requests for care and support to the National Shelter Network (Red Nacional de Refugios) (which provides security for women who suffer from domestic violence), which is translated into 46.000 women, girls and teenagers who were victims of violence. Meanwhile, during the last four months of 2020, they offered 11.132 accompaniments through social media, telephone and protection spaces.

With these actions, they identified that, in the majority, 75% of their aggressors were their partners and former partners. The most worrying thing for the Network is that during November and December of the same year, every hour, a woman asked for support from the Red Nacional de Refugios. Finally, four out of every hundred women reported a femicide attempt.

In addition, they agreed that the re-victimization by the authorities is constant and worrying. On one hand, the authorities continually outrage women who were looking for support or to make an

11 See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFvO7rzNikA>

accusation, -who already came from a complex violence context-. On the other hand, they inhibit the access to justice, the proper process and, finally, the imprisonment of their aggressors, which means a circle of impunity.

This terrible reality was not an outsider toward Mexican telenovela, so characterized by obviating this environment or minimizing it in their narratives, since one of the telenovela that stood out the most for addressing it was *Vencer el Desamor*, which presents this problem through the investigation that a journalist does about a serial femicide. At the end of each chapter, each of the characters offered some advice to the audience so that they denounced violence situations, in case of experiencing them, and there were published telephone data so that the audience could seek support. This as a social service.

It is worth highlighting, there are two productions of the project called "*Vencer*", which seeks to address relevant social issues in order to help battle gender violence, as well as empower female audiences.

*Vencer el Miedo* dealt with the gender violence that women of different ages face in Mexico, and *Vencer el Desamor*, which sought to denormalize the violence that tend to be justified because of the love of a couple, and it also addressed gender violence, which makes evident that Mexican audiences are eager for content that approach this reality. Between 2015 and 2020, the number of victims of femicide grew by about 130%, according to data from the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System (Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública)<sup>12</sup>.

Both fictions were positioned as two of the top ten most viewed of the year, being adult and young women who most watch them.

12 <https://www.economista.com.mx/politica/Violencia-contra-las-mujeres-al-alza-en-2020-20201229-0001.html>

## **The comeback to fiction production**

TV Azteca had announced in 2019 through Alberto Ciurana, who was the general director of content and distribution of TV Azteca: “may the telenovela rest in peace”. However, in May 2020 he retracted announcing the retransmission, through his channel 7 (canal 7), of the successful telenovela *Betty, la fea (Ugly Betty)*, and Ciurana himself, through a tweet, declare: “and they were not dead ... they were partying”. Apparently, TV Azteca plans to produce and broadcast telenovelas and series again in 2021.

Unfortunately, this comeback does not seem to be present in other networks such as Imagen Televisión or Canal Once, which for the second consecutive year haven’t produce any type of series or telenovelas.

## **6. The Theme of the Year: *The fiction in times of the pandemic in México***

In Mexico, the case of the first contagion by Covid was presented in February 2020. Since then, to date, more than 2.300.000 people have been infected and 212.000 have died in a country of just over 126 million. The federal government implemented measures to restrict and close non-essential activities and businesses from March 26, 2020. Through the Secretary of Health, Dr. Hugo López-Gatell, the measures in order to avoid contagions were announced, in view of the new pandemic, known as SARS-CoV-2 (Covid).

Evidently, the closure of activities also affected the television content production companies, which were forced to suspend their productions for some months. Such situation had never been experienced before, worldwide, so this took us all by surprise, and we had to adapt to the new reality. It was expected, that the effects of this pandemic

would affect all the areas on which television networks depend on, mainly advertising revenue and content production.

### *Economic costs and losses during the confinement periods*

In the case of Televisa, in its investment report for 2020, published on its portal, (2021)<sup>13</sup> it announced:

...given that they are considered essential economic activities, we have continued to operate our uninterrupted telecommunications businesses and media in order to continue benefiting the country with connectivity, entertainment and information, and during the fourth quarter ended December 31, 2020, we continued with production content again following the health requirements and guidelines imposed by the Mexican government. During the trimester ended on December 31, 2020, our content business recovered from previous trimesters during the pandemic as a result of the flexibility of the lockdown restrictions in some jurisdictions where customers are located. Nevertheless, we are partially dependent on the advertising demand of business consumers, and the COVID-19 pandemic has caused and could cause advertisers to reduce or postpone their advertising spending on our platforms”.

For its part, TV Azteca stated in its 2020 report that “The deterioration in economic activity indicators derived from the health contingency continues to affect the dynamism in the broadcast television

13 <https://www.televisair.com/~media/Files/T/Televisa-IR/PPTS/210303-4q-2020-gtv-presentation.pdf>

advertising market in Mexico, so despite the solid audience levels, TV Azteca reported a decrease in net sales in the trimester”<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore, these television companies had decreases in their sales revenues: Televisa had a 7% drop in profits, mainly as a cause of the pandemic effects. Because some projects were suspended, and productions were withheld entirely for a few months, they had savings in their original 2020 plan, in total of 2.2 billion pesos. While TV Azteca, in 2020, had a 4% drop in its net sales (its sale in 2020: 3.912 million pesos; while in 2019: 2.863 million pesos).

The role of public television stations on the global pandemic was to organize informative programs related to the coronavirus, having specialists to guide the audience. On Channel 11.2 (Canal 11.2) of the National Polytechnic Institute (Instituto Politécnico Nacional), online classes “Learn at Home on TV” (Aprende en Casa por TV), are still broadcast for the basic levels of public education (pre-school and elementary school).

### **Televisa productions “stopped”**

Televisa had to stop the fiction production, “never in my life we had stopped a telenovela, never” declared Lucero Suárez, the producer of the highest rating telenovela in 2020, *Te doy la Vida*. The cancellations of productions occurred in the months of March and April, returning to sets in the month of May. When the first coronavirus outbreak began, the producer Suárez decided to speed up the production,

14 <http://www.irtvazteca.com/>

adding one more day to the recordings (Saturdays). For the last episodes of the telenovela, the scenes were filmed with measures of social distancing, without kisses or any other physical contact.

Another production that was interrupted by the coronavirus was the melodrama *Imperio de Mentiras*, starring Angelique Boyer, which had only 20% of filming before it stopped. This production was scheduled to premiere at the end of April, but it began on September 14, 2020. Several leading actors of this production were infected, so in a press release of October of that year, it was announced the labor stoppage regarding to that telenovela.



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/televisaprensamx/>

The production *La Mexicana y el Güero*, starring the actress Itatí Cantoral was also affected. Its recording was postponed in March, resuming on June. Recording in the streets was not allowed, all had to be in studios.

While the successful dramatized unitary program *La Rosa de Guadalupe* stopped the productions since the Federal measure "Healthy Distance" (Sana Distancia) was implemented, as well as the



order to stop non-essential work activities, for which it stopped the recordings in March.

### **Re-runs in order to “fill” spaces**

Due to the stoppage in the production of telenovelas, it was decided to broadcast the bioseries *Silvia Pinal, frente a ti* in prime time in April 2020, and *Hoy voy a cambiar*, a biopic about the life of the interpreter Lupita D’Alessio, in May. That place corresponded to the telenovela *Imperio de Mentiras*, as we mentioned, its production stopped and was able to be released until September.

On the other hand, the unitary program *La Rosa de Guadalupe* changed its timetable for some weeks, and was broadcast an hour ahead of the usual, beginning at 8:30 p.m., before the broadcasts of *Vencer el Desamor* began. *La Rosa de Guadalupe* has constantly changed timetables since it first appeared. It seems that since it is appreciated by the public and due to the big amount of material it has produced, it is a “wild card” program in order to move it as convenient. This program transmitted a compilation of its best episodes, since it could not release new episodes either, because it had paused the production since the end of March.

### **Protocols and strategies for the return of fiction production on broadcast television**

In the case of Televisa, protocols were implemented to protect the staff (production, actors, etc.). One of the strategies to protect and avoid contagion was to avoid love scenes, but a telenovela with-

out kissing scenes is not the same. According to the producer Rosy Ocampo, color codes (from green to red) were implemented in Televisa. As for the red code, these scenes are those that required some kind of closeness, with acts of passion and kisses, and in order to perform them, the actors were required to apply the Covid test. In addition, the set was cleaned as if it was an operating room in a hospital, and fewer staff were allowed on the set.

In the telenovela *La Mexicana y el Güero*, when they arrived on the set, the actors' temperature was taken, and they all had to wear facemasks. Disinfectant mats, portable sinks and antibacterial gel were installed in the forum. In the makeup area, the staff had to follow different protection protocols, and they made up the actors by turns.

While in *La Rosa de Guadalupe* they had to modify the logistics in order to mobilize the staff to locations, reducing spaces in transportation, which was also delaying the entire production process; the recording hours are more restricted (7 a.m. to 10 p.m.)<sup>9</sup>. Each chapter of this fiction is recorded in two and a half days, with two independent units and equipment assigned to them, so they can record four chapters a week. Given the pandemic, the processes to prepare the scenes and disinfect the equipment, as well as its transfer, forced them to have more pressure, once they resumed the recordings, after a stoppage of months.

### **Contents with the topic of Covid**

As for the pandemic being addressed in the stories of the melodramas, we find that in 2020, only *La Rosa de Guadalupe* and *Como Dice el Dicho* addressed the problem, despite the fact that at the beginning of the pandemic their producers had announced that they would not address the coronavirus issue (in the case of *La Rosa*

*de Guadalupe*). However, in this unitary, they did it from two angles: 1) As a problem within the story; some of the characters were infected with the Coronavirus, and this unitary portrayed the situations that many families have suffered and still suffer from having a sick person at home; 2) As a context within the story: meaning, the epicenter was another social problem, but Covid was part of the daily lives of the characters, of their social environment. All the characters wore face masks, or masks. Chapters titled as: *Beatriz is attacked with chlorine, just for being a nurse (Beatriz es atacada con cloro, solo por ser enfermera)*; *Zoila's daughter catches Covid-19 (La hija de Zoila se contagia de Covid-19)*; *Deadly virus (Coronavirus)*; *Toñito goes to work during the pandemic (Toñito se pone a trabajar durante la pandemia)*; *Aníbal and Sol become parents amid Covid-19 (Aníbal y Sol se convierten en papás en medio de Covid-19)*; *Davina suffers from her online classes! (¡Davina sufre por sus clases en línea!)*.

Some episodes of the official page of *La Rosa de Guadalupe* have more than 6 million views and the topic addressed in these episodes demonstrates some of the situations experienced in Mexico during the pandemic; such as the attack on the medical personnel by the citizens; or the difficult conditions of a vast majority of the population in Mexico, such as those experienced by students who take their classes online. As a characteristic insignia of this unitary, the solution focuses on the miracle and the faith, and the intercession of the Virgin of Guadalupe for the problem solving. For its stage director, Eduardo Said, the success of this unitary is due to the fact that there is an empathy with the audience “so that for the people who watch it, recognize ourselves in what happens as well as the people shown there, and then we remain in the screen and people say “of course this has happened to me or it has happened to someone I know, and I can learn from it”<sup>15</sup>.

We cannot fail to mention Martín-Barbero, who in the book *De los medios a las mediaciones* (1987) precisely, reflected on this point of recognition.

Another of the Televisa productions where the issue of the pandemic was addressed, was the unitary *Como dice el Dicho*. In this series, is narrated a story in which a “saying” is selected and in program stars one of the most recognized comic actors in Mexico: Sergio Corona. Some of the titles of its episodes are: *Almendrita is infected by the recklessness of her sisters (Almendrita se contagia ante la imprudencia de sus hermanas)*; *Daniela makes a quarantine panic shopping (Daniela hace compras de pánico por la cuarentena)*; *Medicine heals and love heals (La medicina cura y el amor sana)*; *Dany Has a Panic Attack Over Covid News (Dany sufre un ataque de pánico por las noticias de Covid)*.

In the production of *Vivir el Desamor*, Covid-19 was nor the subject of the narrative, neither the characters wear face masks, however, in the musical closing of the telenovela when the credits appear, it appeared scenes with the members of the production in in the set, wearing face masks. In one of the episodes, the main character, played by actress Daniela Romo, addresses the audience explaining the departure of an actor (Leonardo Daniel) from the production, because he had been infected with Covid. The actress reported the name of the actor who would replace him.



Image: Scene from *Vivir el Desamor* (2020).

Source: <https://www.milenio.com/espectaculos/television/rosy-ocampo-tele-novela-concientiza-cambia-habitos>

In the rest of the 2020 telenovelas, the Covid issue did not appear in the content. However, at the beginning of 2021, the new production of Juan Osorio was launched, precisely at the timetable left by *Vivir el Desamor*. The telenovela produced by him, *¿Qué le pasa a mi Familia?*, addressed the issue of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it was known that he had a warning that he would be punished, from the upper spheres of Televisa, for having discussed the issue in that telenovela.

The warning was due to not having notified the company that it would address this issue: The producer stated that: “Sometimes it is hard for us to accept reality, but nevertheless, it is not only a problem in

my country, it is a global issue and that we have to approach it, whether we like it or not”<sup>16</sup>.

### **Some reflections**

From what we can observe, the only television company in Mexico that produces telenovelas in the country is Televisa, in 2020. But the pandemic affected all television networks, and all had losses due to advertising. TV Azteca just announced its return to fiction and it did so with the rerun of *Lo que Callamos las Mujeres*, which will be reported in the 2021 yearbook, and Imagen TV continues to buy telenovelas produced in other countries (Turkish telenovelas) and broadcast bioseries, such as *Paquita la del Barrio*. In face of the enormous challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, Televisa had to stop its productions, to protect its staff but also to comply with the federal measures. Such an event had never occurred in its history. Taking stock, we can say that it gained an audience on broadcast television; The rating reports for this year indicate at least that the first place (within the top ten fiction) with the highest audience on broadcast television, in 2020 it obtained one point more than the one reported on the same site in 2019. The dramatized unitaries continue to rise in Televisa. In the case of *La Rosa de Guadalupe*, it remains as one of the most successful fictions of all time, with an average of 17 rating points, while *Como dice el Dicho* obtained 16,22 points, almost one point more than in 2019. These two productions were the only ones in 2020 to address the issue of Covid-19. Televisa left the pandemic out of the contents of the traditional melodrama (telenovelas). What does this say about it? Why did Televisa decide not to address this topic in their stories?

16 <https://www.milenio.com/espectaculos/famosos/juan-osorio-televisa-castigo-hablar-covid19-novela-video>

We believe that they have remained very consistent with their philosophy of “entertaining” the audience. Although, in several productions, as we have reported, they address cases in telenovelas that have to do with social issues, in the case of the pandemic it is a revealing fact that it has not been included in the stories. We consider that the public experiences great uncertainty in the face of a unique and unexpected event, totally new, and they receive a lot of information from the media (including the social media) which saturates the public. Much of this information is negative, or false. Perhaps the executives of Televisa decided not to saturate the telenovelas with more content about the pandemic, in order to give the audience a “break” from what they are living.

Only the unitaries *La Rosa de Guadalupe* and *Como Dice el Dicho* approached the issue of Covid-19, and as we mentioned, only in 2021 one of the most successful producers, Juan Osorio, dared to address the problem in a telenovela. Unlike other countries in which the television networks opted to produce fictional content that addressed the pandemic, Televisa did not, neither the other private nor public television networks.

All private television stations have suffered enormous economic losses, while SVoD platforms doubled subscribers and began to include more telenovela in their catalogs. As in the case of Netflix, which in 2020 included the successful telenovela *100 días para Enamorarnos*, produced by Telemundo (United States) and which was halfway through the recordings when the pandemic appeared and resumed the production months later. This indicates that platforms such as Netflix are aware that this genre is liked by the audiences. Releasing all the episodes, without the audience having to wait as it does in linear television in order to consume the content with the flexibility that the platforms allow.

## **As a closure**

Undoubtedly, the pandemic and more than a year of home confinement brought with it new media practices that will hardly change and that, without a doubt, have profoundly modified both, the IT and the entertainment industries; for example, the series of activities that we can solve through technological mediation; we learned that we can meet with others in order to figure out or agree things without having to meet in person, but mainly, we learned that all entertainment can stay at home and this is validate by the increase of VoD platforms and systems during the pandemic.

This predominance, driven by the pandemic, has created a re-adjustment in the entertainment industries, since those who do not join this new market will be destined to perish; for this reason, we want to close this chapter with the merger in streaming services between Televisa (Mexico) and Univisión (United States), announced on April 13, 2021, in order to create what they called the most important Spanish-language media system in the world.

This, we consider, will mark the agenda of television production in Ibero-America for the consecutive years, as it is a bet to compete for -from the Ibero-American sphere- with the *streaming* owners: Netflix, Amazon and now Disney +, among others.



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