

URUGUAY: PERIPHERAL FICTION

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Introduction

Programming strategies of broadcast television channels and their production decisions have led to a change in the flow of images on the screen: Ibero-American fiction scenes are less and less frequent and instead, when the TV is turned on, appears the image of some game show with spectacular display, or that of television news. Ibero-American fiction has been displaced to the margins, to the periphery of those other star programmes. Prime time is no longer intended for this genre.

This transformation will be analyzed in this chapter, as a long-term phenomenon and in a context of more consumption on platforms, setting up some hypotheses. The characteristics of seriality in the two Uruguayan fictions released in 2021 will also be studied.

1.The Audiovisual Context of Uruguay in 2021

1.1. Broadcast television in Uruguay

Chart 1. Networks/ national broadcast television channels in Uruguay

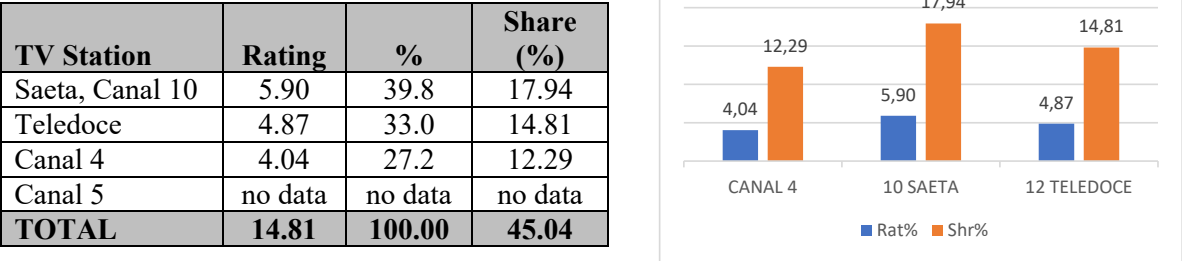
| Networks/private channels (3) | Networks / public channels (2) |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Canal 4 (Channel 4)           | Canal 5                        |
| Saeta (Channel 10)            | TV Ciudad                      |
| Teledoce (Channel 12)         |                                |
| TOTAL CHANNELS= 5             |                                |

Source: Obitel Uruguay

The national broadcast television system remains unchanged in terms of its structure: it has three private and two public television stations, one of them of national coverage, Canal 5. In 2021 this public channel would no longer be called Televisión Nacional del Uruguay (TNU) and returned to Canal 5, its traditional

name. TV Ciudad is the other public channel, but it depends on the government of Montevideo, the country’s capital, and emerged as a cable channel (1996) that later became a free digital channel (2015). The study presented in this chapter focuses on the three private channels and the national public channel, Canal 5. However, TV Ciudad will be taken into account in the cases that are relevant to national fiction.

Graph 1. TV audience and share by station<sup>1</sup>



Source: Kantar Ibope Uruguay <sup>2</sup>

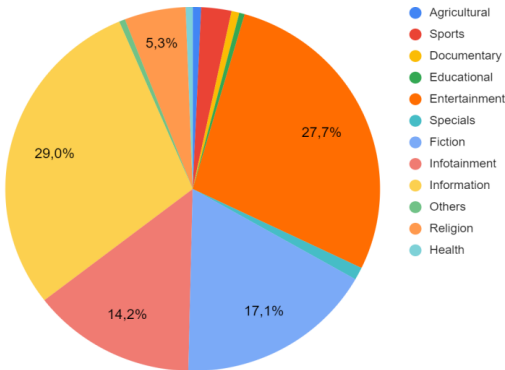
Broadcast television total audience remained in ranges similar to those of 2020, with an annual average of 14.81 rating points and 45.04 share. The order in the ranking also remained unchanged with Saeta Canal 10 in first place. When considering the programming for the year, nine out of ten most watched programs of all genres, excluding special broadcasts such as the Copa América, were run on that channel. The largest audiences were drawn by the news and entertainment programs, particularly game shows. Thus, the highest shares were obtained by formats such as *Got Talent*, which was the most viewed with 28.52 points, or *Master Chef Celebrity* (22.63) and *Subrayado* (24.47). Teledoce managed to place one of its programs among the ten most watched: *Fuego Sagrado*, which is also a reality show. The share data shows that more and more the TV set has different uses that are not watching television, but mainly streaming, watching recorded content and playing video games. It is not that people do not use the TV set, but that they are using it for activities that are not only watching broadcast television, a phenomenon that is occurring globally (Marcos, 2022).

<sup>1</sup> Data for the tables was provided by Kantar Ibope Uruguay, to whom we thank for the generosity, without which our work would not be possible. We especially thank Carolina Arigón and Valentina Cal for their constant collaboration.

<sup>2</sup> According to Kantar Ibope Uruguay data sheet, the audience measurement in 2021 was carried out on a universe of 477,697 private households in urban Montevideo, which corresponds to 1,223,163 individuals (4 years of age and older) living in those households.

Graph 2 a. Exhibited Genres

| Genre         | Broadcast Hours | %      |
|---------------|-----------------|--------|
| Agriculture   | 128:55:30       | 0.72   |
| Sports        | 464:38:15       | 2.60   |
| Documentary   | 120:56:15       | 0.68   |
| Education     | 82:48:00        | 0.46   |
| Entertainment | 4927:39:45      | 27.62  |
| Specials      | 199:17:15       | 1.12   |
| Fiction       | 3047:51:30      | 17.11  |
| Infotainment  | 2522:47:15      | 14.14  |
| Information   | 5174:12:45      | 29.00  |
| Others        | 92:15:00        | 0.52   |
| Religion      | 942:30:45       | 5.28   |
| Health        | 107:55:30       | 0.60   |
| TOTAL         | 17811:47:45     | 100.00 |

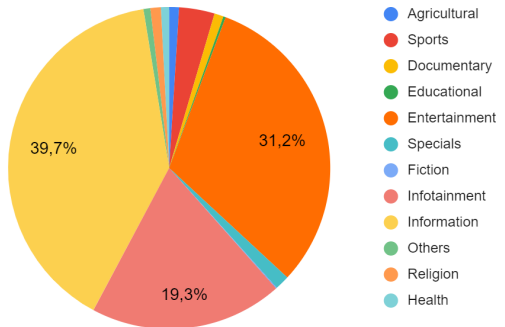


Source: Obitel Uruguay on Kantar Ibope data Uruguay

The genres that occupied the most screen time were Information, Entertainment and Fiction, in that order, confirming the progressive decrease in the offer of this last category. 56% of broadcast time is covered by the first two categories compared to just over 17% for Fiction, three percentage points less than the previous year.

Graph 2b. Exhibited genres of national production

| Genre         | Broadcast Hours | %      |
|---------------|-----------------|--------|
| Agricultural  | 128:55:30       | 0.99   |
| Sports        | 464:38:15       | 3.56   |
| Documentary   | 120:56:15       | 0.93   |
| Education     | 29:27:45        | 0.23   |
| Entertainment | 4070:21:00      | 31.20  |
| Specials      | 189:43:30       | 1.45   |
| Fiction       | 12:50:00        | 0.10   |
| Infotainment  | 2522:47:15      | 19.34  |
| Information   | 5174:12:45      | 39.67  |
| Others        | 88:51:45        | 0.68   |
| Religion      | 137:09:00       | 1.05   |
| Health        | 107:55:30       | 0.83   |
| TOTAL         | 13047:48:30     | 100.00 |



Source: Obitel Uruguay on Kantar Ibope data Uruguay

National production programming was 73% of the total broadcast<sup>3</sup> hours in 2021. The distribution shows the predominance of Information, Entertainment and Infotainment, genres in which the television channels invested their resources.

The programming strategy of broadcast television was directed towards the enlargement of programs of the Information and Entertainment categories, in addition to a certain growth in Infotainment. The newscasts in their central edition had an extension between 2 hours and 3 hours. The most remarkable case is that of *Subrayado*, which before its main edition at 7:00 p.m., placed another edition -*Subrayado Especial*- at 6:30 p.m., which enlarged the time of the newscast to three hours in a row. However, this extension does not imply more information, but rather the news tends to be repeated or redundant<sup>4</sup>. In 2021, the emerging trends in the last seven years and that had been sharpened in 2020, were confirmed: information and large entertainment formats such as game shows/*reality*-contests, either in *quiz* or game logic occupied *prime time* slots and most of the screen time.

1.2. Pay TV and VoD platforms in Uruguay in 2021

Chart 2. Main pay television networks

| Company     | Origin    |
|-------------|-----------|
| TCC         | Uruguay   |
| Nuevo Siglo | Uruguay   |
| Cablevisión | Argentina |
| Multiseñal  | Uruguay   |
| Montecable  | Uruguay   |
| Direct TV   | USA       |

Source: Obitel Uruguay

Pay television experienced a drop in its subscribers in the first half of 2021 with a total of 606,909 subscribers<sup>5</sup>. This drop meant about 2% over the previous year. However, income in this category had a slight growth reaching \$6,024,710,735 (Ursec, 2021b, p.113).

<sup>3</sup> The information of the graphs corresponds only to the programming and time of the three private channels. Kantar Ibope Uruguay, which measured the audience of Canal 5, stopped doing so in 2017, so since then we do not have accurate and homogeneous information regarding private channels to unify and process the data. However, we did a manual survey to have the data corresponding to the premiere fiction, necessary for the tables of section 2 corresponding to the analysis of the premiere fiction of the year.

<sup>4</sup> We refer to the practice by which the news is reported from the set or by a journalist who is outdoors and illustrative images are immediately shown with a voice that repeats the same thing that has already been said, while the images do not add new information either.

<sup>5</sup> Data presented here comes from the reports of the Regulatory Unit of Communications Services of Uruguay (Ursec). Its reports contain semi-annual information as of December 2021.

Direct TV continues to have the largest number of subscribers (30%) and was the only company that grew (2.5%) in the year, while the rest suffered a drop in their number of subscribers (Ursec, 2021b, p.114).

Chart 3. VoD in Uruguay

| Main active VoD platforms in 2021                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Foreigns:</b><br>Netflix, Amazon Prime, HBO Go/HBO Max, Flow (Cablevisión), Movistar+ (Telefónica), Claro Video (Telefónica), Disney +, Star +. Paramount+<br>Mubi (Cinema - feature films) |
| <b>Nationals:</b><br>Vera TV (State telecommunications)<br>+Cinemateca (Cinema - feature films)                                                                                                |
| <b>TOTAL: 11</b>                                                                                                                                                                               |

Source: Obitel Uruguay

Chart 3 includes the main platforms that were available in Uruguay in 2021. Although it would seem that Netflix continues to be the most used platform, the opacity of the system made it impossible to access specific data on the number of users on each of them. The most important novelty of 2021 was the arrival of new platforms: towards the middle of the year HBO Max replaced HBO Go; also Disney + and Star + with adult content and sports. Finally, Paramount + was incorporated.

1.3 Independent production companies of television fiction

Independent production companies in Uruguay are usually committed to the production of advertising, entertainment and cinema. However, in 2021 two production companies dealt with fiction: Cholo Films, which produced *Metro de Montevideo*, and La Vorágine Films, which co-produced *Temporario* with theatre El Galpón. In addition to these production companies, it is important to highlight the development of international fiction projects, of national execution and that involve several production companies, mainly Salado and Cimarrón.

1.4. Sources of funding for the audiovisual sector

The funding of the audiovisual sector in terms of television fiction has remained unchanged compared to the last two years, mainly with two types of support with public resources: the SeriesUy fund and the Uruguay Audiovisual Program (PUA).

SeriesUy is a fund created at the end of 2016 that had four calls: in 2017 the winner was *Todos detrás de Momo* (Nadador Cine, debuted in 2018); in 2018, *Gris* (Magenta) which was not carried out; in 2019 *Metro de Montevideo* (Cholo Films, aired in 2021) and in 2021 the winning project was *¿Es el amor?* (Coral Cine).

The PUA program consists of a reimbursement of a percentage of the expenditure made in the country (*cash rebate*), which varies according to the size of the production and applies to both international film projects and series, in addition to maintaining a line for national projects. The program had a pilot version in 2019 and was later established as a stable policy<sup>6</sup>.

Another approach to the funding of television fiction refers to advertising investment. Of the set of media monitored by Kantar Ibope Uruguay (newspapers, magazines, television and public roads advertising), 93% of advertising was concentrated on television. According to the data provided by this company, the investment in fiction advertising on broadcast television was 1,701,811 seconds in 2021, about 300,000 seconds more than the previous year. The main advertisers were Genomma laboratory, Tele Shopping, L'Oreal Uruguay, Unilever and SC Johnson, in that order. The predominance of cosmetic and health-related products, in addition to home exercise equipment, continues to be the constant trend.

### 1.5. Communication policies

From a regulatory point of view, it is necessary to point out that Law No. 19307, passed at the end of 2014, is still in force. However, after the new government took office in 2020, another Media Law project was presented that has been under discussion in parliamentary committees for the last two years. The new project makes changes to the current regulations, but it is not clear what its final text will be nor if it would be voted on by Parliament.

### 1.6. Digital and mobile connectivity infrastructure

Digital connectivity continues to depend on the infrastructure provided by the state-owned company Antel (Sánchez, Gadea, 2019, p. 379-389). Regarding fixed broadband services, of a total of 1,088,513 services, 1,078,472 correspond to Antel. 88% of these services are to homes where the fiber optic Internet connection predominates (Ursec, 2021a).

Total mobile services were 5,871,466, 54% provided by Antel, 28% by Movistar and 18% by Claro. One of the aspects under discussion in 2021 referred to the right to number portability, which enables the users to change their mobile phone provider while keeping their phone number. This issue was included in the Urgent Consideration Law promoted by the national government. The critics pointed out that the state telephone company Antel would be affected by the private companies. The data available for 2021 show that the largest mobile phone provider continued to be Antel and increased its market share (Ursec, 2021, p.66).

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<sup>6</sup> For more details of the funds to stimulate production, see “La ficción en fuga y la industria en alza”, Sánchez, Gadea (2021).

According to data from *El Perfil del Internauta Uruguayo 2021*, prepared by Grupo Radar<sup>7</sup>, the number of people with mobile phones with Internet connection exceeds 2,300,000 and this type of device is present in 92% of households. On the other hand, its use reaches 90% in low socioeconomic levels and 97% in the highest levels. 93% of the population declares to be an Internet user and at the extremes of the age ranges, an expansion of use is perceived. Three out of four children under 5 years of age use the Internet and among people over 65 years of age, 80% claim to use the network, according to this survey. The average use of the Internet in the population as a whole is about 5.8 hours a day (Búsqueda, 02/22).

According to the same survey, the most used devices are Smart TV, Smartphone and notebooks. The percentage of Smart TVs reached 61% while it was 6% in 2014. However, 51% use cell phones to watch movies and 47% do so on a Smart TV. Regarding the preferences to chat, WhatsApp predominates (98% use it frequently) and Instagram (52%) is in second place. However, the most used social network is still Facebook (80%), in second place Instagram (70%) and for the first time TikTok ranked third (30%) while Twitter is in fourth place with 27%.

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<sup>7</sup>The survey is not freely available, so the data has been taken from press articles.

2. Analysis of the Year: National and Ibero-American  
Premiere Fiction on Broadcast TV

Table 1. Fictions aired in 2021

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>PREMIERE NATIONAL TITLES – 2</b></p> <p><b>Saeta Canal 10 – 1 title</b></p> <p>1. <i>Temporario</i> (unitary)</p> <p><b>Canal 5 – 1 title</b></p> <p>2. <i>Metro de Montevideo</i> (series)</p> <p><b>CO-PRODUCTIONS – 0</b></p> | <p><b>PREMIERE IMPORTED TITLES – 12</b></p> <p><b>Canal 4 – 1 title</b></p> <p>3. <i>La Rosa de los Milagros</i> (series, Mexico)</p> <p><b>Saeta Canal 10 – 1 title</b></p> <p>4. <i>Jesús</i> (soap opera-Brazil)</p> <p><b>Teledoce– 9 titles</b></p> <p>5. <i>Acoso</i> (series – Brazil)</p> <p>6. <i>Corazón de madre</i> (soap opera– Brazil)</p> <p>7. <i>Dulce Ambición</i> (soap opera – Brazil)</p> <p>8. <i>El Cazador</i> (miniseries – Brazil)</p> <p>9. <i>Final Feliz</i> (series – Brazil)</p> <p>10. <i>Isla de Hierro</i> (series – Brazil)</p> <p>11. <i>Suerte de Vivir</i> (soap opera – Brazil)</p> <p>12. <i>La Usurpadora</i> (soap opera – Mexico)</p> <p>13. <i>Rubí</i> (soap opera – Mexico)</p> <p><b>Canal 5 – 1 title</b></p> <p>14. <i>Inés del Alma Mía</i> (miniseries – Spain)</p> <p><b>TOTAL OF PREMIERED AIRED</b></p> <p><b>TITLES: 14</b></p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Source: Obitel Uruguay



Table 1 shows that the main programming channel for Ibero-American fiction premieres was Teledoce; Saeta Canal 10 included only two titles in its programming and Canal 4 only one. There is once again a decrease in the total number of premieres of that origin, however, this year two premieres of national origin are incorporated.

Table 2. Premiere national fiction

| Year | Titles         | Episodes | Hours    |
|------|----------------|----------|----------|
| 2017 | 4              | 28       | 10:82:79 |
| 2018 | 2              | 22       | 15:52:41 |
| 2019 | 1 <sup>8</sup> | 9        | 3:22:30  |
| 2020 | 1              | 125      | 46:52:30 |
| 2021 | 2              | 24       | 12:50:00 |

Source: Obitel Uruguay

Table 3. Formats of premiere national fiction

| Format     | Titles |      |      |      |      | Hours   |         |         |          |         |
|------------|--------|------|------|------|------|---------|---------|---------|----------|---------|
|            | 2017   | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2017    | 2018    | 2019    | 2020     | 2021    |
| Soap opera | 0      | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0:00    | 0:00    | 0:00    | 0:00     | 0:00    |
| Series     | 3      | 0    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 8:48:49 | 0:00    | 3:22:30 | 46:52:30 | 8:00:00 |
| Miniseries | 1      | 1    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 2:34:29 | 7:33:11 | 0:00    | 0:00     | 0:00    |
| Sitcom     | 0      | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0:00    | 0:00    | 0:00    | 0:00     | 0:00    |
| Unitary    | 0      | 0    | 0    | 0    | 1    | 0:00    | 0:00    | 0:00    | 0:00     | 4:50:00 |
| Docudrama  | 0      | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0:00    | 0:00    | 0:00    | 0:00     | 0:00    |
| TV movies  | 0      | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0:00    | 0:00    | 0:00    | 0:00     | 0:00    |
| Others     | 0      | 1    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0:00    | 8:19:30 | 0:00    | 0:00     | 0:00    |

Source: Obitel Uruguay

Tables 2 and 3 offer a diachronic look at the last five years. This allows us to observe the national production capacity in those years, particularly in terms of the number of hours of fiction and also its distribution by format. In this sense, the year that showed the largest number of titles was 2017 with four premieres, but the highest number of hours and episodes was in 2020, which is explained by the presence of an educational fiction, due to the pandemic situation, and it was broadcast daily. The series and the miniseries have been the formats with more hours in the period.

<sup>8</sup> It was a co-production with Brazil: Ernesto el Exterminador de Monstruos y otras Porquerías.

Table 4. Premiere fiction aired in 2021: countries of origin

| Country                           | Titles | %   | Hours     | %   |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-----|-----------|-----|
| NATIONAL (total)                  | 2      | 14  | 12:50:00  | 3   |
| OBITEL COUNTRIES (total)          | 12     | 86  | 423:18:45 | 97  |
| Argentina                         | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| Brazil                            | 8      | 57  | 383:27:45 | 88  |
| Chile                             | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| Colombia                          | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| Ecuador                           | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| Spain                             | 1      | 7   | 08:00:00  | 2   |
| USA Hispanic                      | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| Mexico                            | 3      | 21  | 31:51:00  | 7   |
| Peru                              | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| Portugal                          | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| Uruguay                           | 2      | 14  | 12:50:00  | 3   |
| Venezuela                         | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| COPRODUCTIONS (totals)            | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| National Coproductions            | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| Coproductions of Obitel Countries | 0      | 0   | 00:00:00  | 0   |
| TOTAL                             | 14     | 100 | 436:08:45 | 100 |

Source: Obitel Uruguay on Kantar Ibope Uruguay data.

The information systematized in Tables 1 and 4 highlights the low volume of fiction of Ibero-American origin. Although the sharp drop occurred in 2020 -with 16 titles and a 50% decrease in the amount of screen time compared to 2019- the 14 premiere titles in 2021 seem to confirm the trend. In addition, the number of hours of imported Ibero-American fiction fell again by more than 40 hours.

Regarding the origin of the released fiction, the predominance of titles of Brazilian origin is repeated as a trend. Only three titles are Mexican and one Spanish, the latter offered by Canal 5, which is the channel that in recent years has kept a constant presence of fiction from that origin. In this composition of the offer, it is important to highlight a relevant phenomenon in the tradition of the Uruguayan screen: it is the first year that no title produced by Argentina is shown, a country that has historically been a provider of television fiction available to Uruguayan audiences.

The drop in the supply of Ibero-American fiction is correlated to two phenomena that we have already pointed out in previous editions: the expansion of international entertainment formats -either in an imported version or in national productions with the purchase of the format- and the persistent inclusion of Turkish fiction in the programming grid. In 2021, nine titles of Turkish origin were released (two less than in 2020) by Saeta and Canal 4.

A novelty is the premiere of two national titles: *Temporario* in Saeta -a channel that has not broadcast Uruguayan fiction since 2013- and *Metro de Montevideo*, run by the public channels, Canal 5 and TV Ciudad.

Table 5. Formats of national and Obitel fiction exhibited in 2021

| Format     | Titles    |     |        |      | Hours     |       |           |       |
|------------|-----------|-----|--------|------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
|            | Nationals | %   | Obitel | %    | Nationals | %     | Obitel    | %     |
| Soap opera | 0         | 0   | 6      | 50   | 0:00      | 0     | 376:29:15 | 85.99 |
| Series     | 1         | 50  | 4      | 33.3 | 08:00:00  | 62.35 | 46:49:30  | 10.7  |
| Miniseries | 0         | 0   | 2      | 16.7 | 0:00      | 0     | 14:30:00  | 3.31  |
| Sitcom     | 0         | 0   | 0      | 0    | 0:00      | 0     | 0:00      | 0     |
| Unitary    | 1         | 50  | 0      | 0    | 04:50:00  | 37.65 | 0:00      | 0     |
| Docudrama  | 0         | 0   | 0      | 0    | 0:00      | 0     | 0:00      | 0     |
| Others     | 0         | 0   | 0      | 0    | 0:00      | 0     | 0:00      | 0     |
| Total      | 2         | 100 | 12     | 100  | 12:50:00  | 100   | 437:48:45 | 100   |

Source: Obitel Uruguay

The structure of the offer in terms of formats reveals some relevant transformations. In the first place, although the largest number of Ibero-American titles in the Obitel area are categorized as soap operas in Table 5, the volume of hours devoted to this genre has dropped in relation to previous years. Thus, taking the year 2020 as a reference, a decrease in hours of more than 19% can be seen in this format. On the other hand, some of the titles are new versions of old soap operas, but now made with a different length standard. Such are the cases of the remakes of *Rubí* that had 26 chapters or *La Usurpadora* with 25 chapters. To this presence of shorter soap operas, altering the most classic features of the format, is added that of series and miniseries, also with fewer chapters. This is one of the transformations of seriality that is the theme of this yearbook and that is present in this structure of the offer.

As for national fiction, the reappearance of a format that had not been used for a long time can be observed. The format known as Unitary or Anthology has been used sporadically by Uruguayan filmmakers, the last time in 2011 with *Adicciones* (13 episodes).

Table 6: The Ten Most Viewed Titles

| Title                            |                         | Channel  | Producer<br>(Country)                  | Format/genre             | Nr. of<br>chap/ep<br>in 2021         | Time slot | Rating | Share |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1                                | <i>Dulce Ambición</i>   | Teledoce | Globo (BR)                             | Soap opera/Drama         | 146                                  | Afternoon | 9.13   | 18.6  |
| 2                                | <i>Isla de Hierro</i>   | Teledoce | Globo (BR)                             | Series/Drama             | 22                                   | Night     | 8      | 14.98 |
| 3                                | <i>Corazón de Madre</i> | Teledoce | Globo (BR)                             | Soap opera/<br>Melodrama | 75                                   | Afternoon | 7.89   | 18.59 |
| 4                                | <i>Suerte de Vivir</i>  | Teledoce | Globo (BR)                             | Soap opera/Drama         | 56                                   | Afternoon | 7.57   | 16.57 |
| 5                                | <i>Rubí</i>             | Teledoce | W<br>Studios/Televi<br>sa (MX)         | Soap opera/<br>Melodrama | 26                                   | Night     | 6.84   | 15.73 |
| 6                                | <i>Temporario</i>       | Canal 10 | El Galpón/La<br>Vorágine<br>Films (UY) | Unitary/Drama            | 8                                    | Night     | 6.38   | 12.12 |
| 7                                | <i>Acoso</i>            | Teledoce | Globo (BR)                             | Series/Drama             | 10                                   | Night     | 5.72   | 12.48 |
| 8                                | <i>El Cazador</i>       | Teledoce | Globo (BR)                             | Series/Drama             | 10                                   | Night     | 4.76   | 11.7  |
| 9                                | <i>Jesús</i>            | Canal 10 | Record TV<br>(BR)                      | Soap opera/<br>Biblical  | 342                                  | Night     | 4.14   | 15.86 |
| 10                               | <i>La Usurpadora</i>    | Teledoce | Televisa<br>(MX)                       | Soap opera/<br>Melodrama | 12                                   | Night     | 4.08   | 10.68 |
| Total of national productions: 1 |                         |          |                                        |                          | Total of foreign original scripts: 9 |           |        |       |

Source: Obitel Uruguay and Kantar Ibope Uruguay

The ten most watched premiere titles are basically Brazilian fiction, almost all produced by Globo, except for the case of *Jesús*. The predominance of Teledoce as broadcaster of the ten most watched fictions is repeated and it is consistent with the fact that the channel programmed the largest number of titles of Ibero-American origin. Mostly the titles are soap operas, but the ranking also includes the series and the unitary, which shows a willingness of part of the audience to also consume this type of shorter formats.

The most relevant novelty shown by this table is the appearance of a national title among the ten most watched: *Temporario* in sixth place with a rating of 6.38 points and a share of 12 points. The last year that Uruguayan fiction made the top ten was in 2011. That year *Adicciones* ranked fourth, with 14.9 rating points and just over a 20 share. These quantitative data are quite revealing if we compare them with the values shown in Table 6 for all cases. The title that reached first place had only 9.13. Audience values are on a downward trend in regard to Ibero-American fiction, but not only in those of that origin. If we look at audience measurements for Turkish fiction, most of the nine titles achieved lower measurements than they used to get since 2015. Even so, two titles reached values higher than those of the top ten: *Y Tú Quién Eres* with a rating of 12.72% and a share of 24.77%, and *Tierra Amarga* with 10.18% and 21.55%.

Table 6a: Most viewed national titles

| Title |                            | Channel  | Producer (Country)                | Format/genre | Nr. of chap/ep in 2021 | Time slot | Rating  | Share   |
|-------|----------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| 1     | <i>Temporario</i>          | Canal 10 | El Galpón/ La Vorágine Films (UY) | Unitary      | 8                      | Night     | 6.38    | 12.12   |
| 2     | <i>Metro de Montevideo</i> | Canal 5  | Cholo Films (UY)                  | Series       | 16                     | Night     | No data | No data |

Source: Obitel Uruguay and Kantar Ibope Uruguay

Table 7: Audience profile of the 10 most watched titles: gender, age, socioeconomic status

| Title |                         | Channel  | Gender % |       | Socio-economic status (%) |       |       |       |       |
|-------|-------------------------|----------|----------|-------|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|       |                         |          | Women    | Men   | U+U                       | M+    | M     | M-    | L+L   |
| 1     | <i>Dulce Ambición</i>   | Teledoce | 74.26    | 25.74 | 12.15                     | 17.50 | 23.78 | 19.59 | 26.98 |
| 2     | <i>Isla de Hierro</i>   | Teledoce | 63.40    | 36.60 | 11.92                     | 15.03 | 20.09 | 24.11 | 28.85 |
| 3     | <i>Corazón de Madre</i> | Teledoce | 73.14    | 26.86 | 10.82                     | 17.31 | 25.13 | 21.91 | 24.83 |
| 4     | <i>Suerte de Vivir</i>  | Teledoce | 71.18    | 28.82 | 11.74                     | 18.30 | 27.17 | 17.01 | 25.79 |
| 5     | <i>Rubi</i>             | Teledoce | 69.90    | 30.10 | 14.37                     | 15.43 | 31.07 | 9.87  | 29.26 |
| 6     | <i>Temporario</i>       | Canal 10 | 63.99    | 36.01 | 22.20                     | 5.92  | 30.38 | 13.54 | 27.96 |
| 7     | <i>Acoso</i>            | Teledoce | 70.86    | 29.14 | 16.33                     | 12.98 | 21.93 | 12.42 | 36.33 |
| 8     | <i>El Cazador</i>       | Teledoce | 73.58    | 26.42 | 14.96                     | 9.46  | 21.68 | 8.97  | 44.93 |
| 9     | <i>Jesús</i>            | Canal 10 | 75.62    | 24.38 | 12.21                     | 8.94  | 30.39 | 11.96 | 36.51 |
| 10    | <i>La Usurpadora</i>    | Teledoce | 71.43    | 28.57 | 8.29                      | 7.49  | 33.09 | 29.27 | 31.86 |

| Title |                         | Channel  | 4 to 11 | 12 to 17 | 18 to 24 | 25 to 34 | 35 to 49 | 50 to 59 | 60+   |
|-------|-------------------------|----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| 1     | <i>Dulce Ambición</i>   | Teledoce | 6.58    | 5.64     | 4.65     | 16.95    | 13.92    | 11.91    | 40.36 |
| 2     | <i>Isla de Hierro</i>   | Teledoce | 6.16    | 6.09     | 6.28     | 13.90    | 22.70    | 10.30    | 34.57 |
| 3     | <i>Corazón de Madre</i> | Teledoce | 4.21    | 2.75     | 6.73     | 15.81    | 12.31    | 16.25    | 41.94 |
| 4     | <i>Suerte de Vivir</i>  | Teledoce | 5.68    | 7.27     | 4.91     | 14.47    | 14.32    | 8.52     | 44.83 |
| 5     | <i>Rubi</i>             | Teledoce | 7.40    | 6.40     | 4.73     | 18.22    | 26.88    | 11.74    | 24.62 |
| 6     | <i>Temporario</i>       | Canal 10 | 1.69    | 2.23     | 0.81     | 2.18     | 11.84    | 18.98    | 62.26 |
| 7     | <i>Acoso</i>            | Teledoce | 9.49    | 7.79     | 1.59     | 16.93    | 20.36    | 17.00    | 26.84 |
| 8     | <i>El Cazador</i>       | Teledoce | 13.13   | 5.84     | 4.01     | 16.92    | 17.19    | 16.92    | 26.00 |
| 9     | <i>Jesús</i>            | Canal 10 | 3.69    | 3.83     | 4.49     | 6.80     | 17.50    | 17.96    | 45.73 |
| 10    | <i>La Usurpadora</i>    | Teledoce | 1.68    | 3.62     | 8.48     | 13.94    | 15.65    | 22.41    | 34.22 |

Source: Kantar Ibope Uruguay

The audience profile is mainly female, with percentages that exceed 70% in most titles, while the male audience ranges between 24% and 36% for these titles. These percentages show a certain growth in the female audience compared to the previous year.

Regarding the audience socio-economic status, the tendency to concentrate in levels Lower+ and Lower- is repeated, with a higher percentage recorded in a mini-series, *El Cazador*. From its audience, 44.93% corresponded to that level. Middle level is the next in audience percentages. Regarding the structure by age, the predominance of an audience over 60 years of age persists.

The structure of the audience of *Temporario*, the national fiction title, shows that 22.20% of its audience corresponds to the upper levels and 30.38% to the middle level, exceeding 50%; 27% corresponds to low levels. On the other hand, most of its audience was over 60 years old (62.26%) and it maintains the predominance of the female public.

### 3. VoD Monitoring 2021

#### 3.1 VoD Platform Market in 2021

The VoD offer in the country is supported by the platforms that were mentioned in Chart 3. As noted above, in 2021 the number of players increased and this could show a change in the distribution of consumers. However, in Uruguay, the opacity of the information regarding the platforms makes it impossible to have accurate data on subscriptions, users, consumption trends, etc. The data presented here were taken from the Radar Group surveys for *El Perfil del Internauta Uruguayo 2021*, published in the national press (Búsqueda, February 10-16, 2022). In 2021, the platforms continued to increase subscribers and reached around two hundred thousand more users (Grupo Radar, 2021). Netflix got the highest percentage 83%; Amazon and HBO grew from 8% to 11% between 2020 and 2021, while Disney + went from 2% of users to 17%<sup>9</sup>.

#### 3.2. Offer of local VoD platforms in 2021 (nationals, regionals within the country)

The only local VoD platforms are: Vera TV, a public platform linked to the state-owned telephone company Antel, and Cinemateca, a platform that offers movies. In the case of Vera TV, some contents have free access. It allows access to national and local broadcast television channels, as well as other international channels such as Deutsche Welle, free of charge. Other contents are offered as a Premium subscription at an additional cost.

Vera TV offers contents from the Argentinian platform QubitTv, in addition to maintaining access to the Uruguayan platform KlikVeo, that has broadcast Uruguayan programs, and Veoflix, which above all offers old Argentine film titles.

<sup>9</sup> Data from Grupo Radar published by Semanario Búsqueda, N° 2161, February 10, 2022.

Broadcast television channels continue their practice of offering fiction content on their website for a short time after it is run, and pay television companies also offer some contents from cable channels on demand, as well as access to contents from a platform such as HBO Max.

### 3.3. VoD analysis in 2021: national premiere fiction and co-productions

None of the platforms listed in Chart 3 included premieres of Uruguayan fiction. Only *Metro de Montevideo* was available *on demand* on TV Ciudad's YouTube channel until January 2022 and some episodes of *Temporario* can still be found on the Saeta Canal 10 website.

The two *on-demand* fiction premieres were produced by YouTube: *Encierro de Mente*, a seven-episode webseries created by Guillermo Trochón and *ALGOdRITMO*, also a four-episode webseries created by Daniel Landau.

On the other hand, *Feriados*, a nine-episode series that had been run in Uruguay in 2016 on broadcast television channels, Canal 5 and TV Ciudad, premiered on UN3, the channel of the Tres de Febrero University in Argentina. *Feriados* had never been available on the Internet.

This panorama would not be complete if we did not include that independent Uruguayan production companies work for fictions of the VoD offer on international platforms available in Uruguay. Of course, these are not Uruguayan fictions, but they are part of the increasingly intense and complex process of transnationalization experienced by audiovisual production.

The information provided by the Film and Audiovisual Institute (Incau) shows that in 2021, production services worth US\$84,383,832 were exported, including audiovisual content (US\$61,921,991) and advertising (US\$22,461,841), which meant almost tripling the amount of 2020<sup>10</sup>. The relevance of these projects lies in the fact that they have given a boost to the development of the local audiovisual industry in the last three years, with national professional resources in varied and numerous roles and a progressive advance of original ideas arising from Uruguayan production companies. As an overview: between 2019 and 2021, 68 productions were completed, mainly with Argentina, but also with Brazil and Spain, among others.

### 3.4. Narrative features of VoD in 2021

*Encierro de Mente* is a pandemic fiction. Not only because it arises from the Quarantine Art call promoted by the Municipality of Montevideo in 2020, but also because its creator, Guillermo Trochón, forced to be in quarantine upon his return to the

<sup>10</sup> The information comes from the zero VAT certificates issued by Incau in compliance with incentive policies, mainly from the Uruguay Audiovisual Program (PUA). The total increase in exports of goods from Uruguay in 2021 was 43%, 11.5 billion dollars. As for services, the decrease was generalized, especially due to the global drop in tourism; non-traditional services showed a moderate increase. See: [https://medios.presidencia.gub.uy/tav\\_portal/2022/noticias/AI\\_856/informe\\_uruguay\\_xxi\\_exportaciones\\_2021.pdf](https://medios.presidencia.gub.uy/tav_portal/2022/noticias/AI_856/informe_uruguay_xxi_exportaciones_2021.pdf)



country, explores six characters who are actually the six Guillemos that are in him, with very different features. One of them is murdered and this will trigger a police investigation. Absurdity and humour are the tone of this narrative.

*ALGOdRITMO* can also be considered linked to the pandemic. Shot in a single place, a living room, due to budget and protocol restrictions, with rehearsals by Zoom and six characters. The story refers to a group that intends to go against the harmful use of social networks. In the words of one of the characters and the director himself, Landau, it is a kind of “poor *Black Mirror*”.

Both fictions were shot in 2020 and debuted in 2021 on their respective YouTube channels.

4. Interactivity and audience participation

The selected case for the study of this topic is the *Metro de Montevideo* series. According to the definitions adopted in the Obitel methodological protocol, interactivity is a dimension established from the design of those who produce fiction with the purpose of capturing attention and stimulating engagement with the product. Participation, on the other hand, although closely linked to interactivity, depends on the action and initiative of the viewer. In national fictions, this second dimension has had historically very low presence and this has not changed for *Metro de Montevideo*. Our analysis, then, will focus on studying interactivity and we will refer to some specific participation that is shown from the design of interactivity.

Having *Metro de Montevideo* in the offer has the peculiarity of presenting quite distant antecedents. In fact, its creator, Marco Caltieri, began to work on the central idea of the fiction -a Metro in the city of Montevideo- creating graphic pieces such as postcards: in 2005 a map of the metro lines was published and in 2010 some postcards of the Metro passing through emblematic places of the city, on the occasion of the celebration of its fictitious inauguration.



As a closing to these actions, the book *Metro de Montevideo* was published in 2011. In December 2012, the Twitter account was created with regular posts that looked like notices from the Montevideo Metro company. Finally, the idea turned out as a script that won funds from the third call (2019) of SeriesUy. The series debuted in



October 2021 and concluded by the end of November of that year. In other words, at the time of the broadcast, a series of actions had been carried out that could affect the engagement of the potential public of the series. However, none of these previous actions seemed to have the purpose of ending in a television fiction. In fact, Caltieri has said that at some point he thought of making a film<sup>11</sup>.

Once the series was completed, the work on audience expectations was spread through several press, radio and television releases, but mainly through the official Twitter account created in 2012<sup>12</sup>, in which -now redirected towards television fiction- a photo of the series was added and those scattered actions since 2005 were brought together under a subtitle: “A fiction project that includes a poster, two books and a television series”. The account has 2,159 followers and remained active in April 2022, with announcements of the series’ nomination for Platinum Awards and the promise to return, revealing the intention to maintain contact with its followers and leave the door open to a new season.

In general terms, *Metro de Montevideo* created a strategy based on the spreading of “closed” statements, that is, that neither appeal to the recipient’s action as a constituent part of the statement, nor require his participation or cooperation to be completed.

However, at the end of the television cycle, an engagement activity was implemented through the official Twitter account, called “reviews”. There, the followers of the account were invited to participate in a review contest of the series. This type of transmedia television content can be characterized as ludic length experiential content typical of an expansion strategy of the narrative universe (Fechine, 2013). In its ludic function, these strategies promote the involvement of the audiences by inviting them to enter a “make believe” game, through content that takes some element from the narrative, such as the characters or situations of the plot.



Official Twitter account. Interactivity strategy.

<sup>11</sup> Interview in “De Taquito”, Radio Universal.

<sup>12</sup> <https://twitter.com/metromontevideo>

What characterizes the *ludic length contents*, particularly those that are called experience *ludic length*, is that they serve to stimulate the public to enter the fictional universe, but they necessarily depend on the direct and active action of the recipient to be completed<sup>13</sup>. In the case of *Metro de Montevideo*, participation in the writing of reviews is what promotes some kind of familiarity or experience with the fictional universe. The following images illustrate this type of participation, which in any case had a small number that reached about twelve reviews.



Ludic length. Image of the official account.

The same type of interactivity and content was displayed on the Instagram account that had 230 posts and 1,209 followers.

Another of the initiatives created from the production was the publication of a new book *How to conduct the Metro de Montevideo. 33 management lessons by engineer Estero Bellaco*. The book simulates the authorship of the leading character, who flaunts his management skills and corporate strategies. The post generated comments and photos of participants showing the book.



<sup>13</sup> Examples of this type of content are diverse: games and contests that involve knowledge of the plot, as in the case of reviews of *Metro de Montevideo*, surveys on character preferences based on a certain outcome or entanglement, and hobbies or entertainment from the narrative universe. (Fechine, 2013).

In the case of this fiction, although there was a display of varied actions over time and a certain expansion of the narrative universe fundamentally through the books, they do not seem to respond to a planning final objective that was centered on the series, but that its achievement is a derivation of an idea that could have had other goals.

On the other hand, one of the problems in studying this production is that the chapters are no longer available (they were removed from Tevé Ciudad's YouTube channel on January 31, 2022) and the audience measurements are not known either. The only data published is in a Twitter post that shows that the series had 180,000 views on TV Ciudad's YouTube channel.

## 5. Highlights of the Year

Two facts stand out in the year 2021: on the one hand, after seven years of absence, a national television fiction, *Temporario*, is broadcast on a commercial channel; on the other, it is the first time that Argentine fiction disappears from the offer.

Stated in this way, these facts could lead to misinterpretations: it is not a regression of imported fiction due to the resurgence of national production. The first of these events is an isolated and circumstantial phenomenon. This fiction arises from the need of the theatrical institution El Galpón<sup>14</sup> looking for a way out to the closed theaters. Channel 10, which had been the main producer of television fiction between 2009 and 2013, had not broadcast national fiction since then. *Temporario*'s access to this screen is achieved by the link that the channel established with El Galpón as a result of using that theater for the reality show *Got Talent*, as stated by Iván Ibarra, the channel's programming manager (Lauber, 2022). In this circumstance does not seem to have established a continuous line of action. However, the fact that *Temporario* has occupied a mid-table position in the *top ten*, is undoubtedly a relevant fact in the year.

The second fact, the absence of Argentine fiction, shows the consolidation of a deep change in Uruguayan broadcast television. The relationship between Uruguayan television and Argentine fiction is historical: since the 1960s, the images of the Nené Cascallar's or Alberto Migré's soap operas accompanied the lives of successive generations. From the 1990s onwards, Telefé's fictions, fundamentally those produced by Cris Morena, and Pol-Ka's fictions, were a central part of the fiction offer (Sánchez Vilela, 2016). Fictions from other origins could increase or decrease, but Argentine fiction was always there. Its absence marks a milestone in the history of Uruguayan television programming.

It is possible to venture some explanations. In the last two years there has been fewer production of television fiction in Argentina<sup>15</sup>. The offer was less abundant

<sup>14</sup> El Galpón is a theatrical institution founded in 1949 and which was part of the long-standing independent theater movement in Uruguay

<sup>15</sup> See the chapters on Argentina in the latest yearbooks, especially in the Obitel 2021 Yearbook (Kircheimer & Rivero, 2021, p. 65-99).

and probably less attractive for Uruguayan channels, which decided to purchase television fiction of Turkish origin. Channel 4, that traditionally broadcast in Uruguay the Argentine fictions run by Telefé, did not offer any fiction of that origin, and instead broadcast Turkish fiction. Another explanation refers to the dissolution of the agreement that linked Teledoce with Grupo Clarín and Canal 13 in particular. With this, the usual practice by which the main Pol-ka fictions were almost always broadcast by Teledoce was interrupted, especially after Adrián Suar, creator of Pol-ka, became the programming manager of Canal 13 in 2001. The last Argentine title ran by Teledoce was *Las Estrellas* in 2018.

This absence of Argentine television fiction represents a radical change. The screens of the three private channels resemble each other, mimicking the aesthetics, sound and color of the large international formats, this time made in Uruguay, with local participants: *Got Talent*, *Master Chef Celebrity*, *8 escalones*, *Pasapalabra*, among others. An exacerbation of this trend is announced for 2022 with the addition of *El juego de la Oca*, *Quién es la Máscara*, *La Voz*, *Ahora Caigo* and *Bake Off*. The reality show, the game show, occupies the prime time slots, after the news. Fiction is pushed to the margins of the night or to a brief period of the afternoon. Television fiction is peripheral, it is on the edge, surrounding the central programs, filling in what is not occupied by entertainment. But it is also in relation to audience data. No top ten television fiction titles in 2021 equaled or exceeded the ratings and shares achieved by programmes such as *Got Talent* (17.08% and 28.52%) or *Master Chef Celebrity* (13.29% and 22.63%) and the rest of these entertainment programmes.

As a hypothesis, we could anticipate that the commitment to produce these large international formats and living room entertainment programs seems to respond to the intention of offering a type of product that connects with family consumption, that brings together the whole family as in traditional television. At the same time, it exploits programs adjusted to the logic of direct or false direct, as in game shows (the public participates either directly or vicariously, playing at home). In other words: the way commercial channels react to the challenge of *streaming* and platforms is to bet on what is not on the platforms. The audience data seems to accompany these decisions, but the share percentages also reveal that the televisions are turned on to see other things rather than broadcast television.

## **6. Transformations in television seriality and its impact on Ibero-American television fiction formats in *streaming* times**

Seriality in Ibero-American television fiction has maintained a certain stability throughout its history, especially due to the importance that the soap opera format has had in it. However, in the context of the redefinition of the media ecosystem there have been fractures and transformations, some of them formal, others of content. One of these transformations is that of the extension of these serial narratives. The

purpose of this section will be to analyze the two Uruguayan productions released in 2021, *Temporario* and *Metro de Montevideo*, to study their seriality, in particular the dimension of their length, and identify possible continuities and transformations.

The trends of contemporary fiction towards shorter narratives, made up of less chapters or episodes, although almost always with several seasons, can be explained by the *short attention span*, that is, by the tendency of the audience to maintain attention for short periods (Lacalle, Mateos-Pérez & Piñón, 2021). According to this line of argument, the expansion of streaming and platforms would have configured a context of overabundance of supply and stimuli that would accelerate the times and rhythms of consumption. The viewer -thus required- would seem to prefer shorter narratives. However, in the case of Uruguayan productions, briefness has been a historical constant, which does not seem to be explained by these reasons.

The two cases that we will study, *Temporario* and *Metro de Montevideo*, adopt different forms of seriality, although in both cases they are short narratives. Before analyzing this, it is worth remembering the distinction between series and serial as two different forms of seriality, a distinction that Umberto Eco underlined in “Tipologia della ripetizione” (Eco, 1984). Series and *serial* are versions of the expanded serialized narrative in the 19th century that would later have its version on radio and television. Although the first term has been generalized to label all types of audiovisual product where narrative is delivered in a fragmented way, technically the series refers to a specific narrative *modus operandi*: its narrative structure is self-conclusive, so that each episode has a narrative arc that begins and ends in a single episode. The narrative structure in serials, on the other hand, supposes the development of narrative arcs throughout several episodes. However, in the mid-1980s there was a phenomenon of “serialization of the series” (Innocenti & Pescatore, 2011) and self-contained series experienced a strong hybridization, approaching the narrative structure of the serial. This turn towards serialization produces a type of narrative in which there is a story that concludes in each episode (*anthology plot*) and narrative lines that extend through several episodes (*running plot*).

From this conceptual framework, the analysis of the two national premieres in 2021 confirms that while *Temporario* fits the narrative logic of the *Metro de Montevideo* series, it corresponds to the *serial* structure.

### 6.1. *Temporario*

*Temporario* has eight episodes of around 30 minutes each. Episodes have different writers<sup>16</sup>, although all are under the direction of Guillermo Casanova. It was run weekly, on a private broadcast TV channel (Saeta Canal 10), on Fridays at 11 p.m.

<sup>16</sup> Screenwriters: Gabriel Calderón, Pablo Stoll, Laura Santullo, Rodolfo Santullo, Carlos Morelli, Federico Borgia and Marcos Acuña.



The seriality in this fiction takes the form of the *anthology plot*. That is, each episode contains a narrative arc that begins and ends in a single episode, hence the usual use of the term Unitary to refer to this type of format, although the most classic denomination is Anthology.

However, the anthological modality requires the presence of some element of connection between the episodes. In the history of television, the anthology is a format that has a long tradition that some link with the first golden age of television (Cascajosa, 2016). The classic anthologies used to be built sometimes around the same theme and, in other cases, the unity was sustained in the genre (suspense, horror)<sup>17</sup>. In *Temporario*, the only element of cohesion is the space: a temporary accommodation, Airbnb style, where different characters -protagonists of stories, of very different themes and tones- appear. Each episode presents a completely different story that never intersects with each other, although it takes place on the set of the same apartment. The title thus indicates the anthology nature of this fiction.

The eight episodes go through very different fictional types: from representations directed towards a certain dramatic realism to deal with euthanasia (script by Gabriel Calderón) to narratives that include the fantastic in “Happy New Year” (script by Pablo Stoll). The handling of temporality in these narrations is almost always linear with the exception of some small ellipses in “Gerente general” (script Carlos Morelli) and more intense alterations in “Happy New Year”. In the latter, the story works on the oscillation of the fantastic by which the viewer is suspended in doubt as to whether what is happening belongs to the ordinary world, guided by the rules of his own everyday world, or whether it is an unreal phenomena. The hallucinatory delirium of the characters is integrated into the narration of the story and in some sections they function as flashbacks that allow the reconstruction of the past.

Although the series is presented as a television fiction, at the end of each episode, the shot opens up to show the space of the theater, the stage, the seats, revealing the nature of the production and breaking the illusion of the fourth wall.



<sup>17</sup> *Alfred Hitchcock presents* (1955-1962) was one of the landmark anthologies.

This television fiction production arises from the alliance of the theater institution El Galpón with the production company La Vorágine Films in the context of the pandemic. Given the situation of closed theaters, the Teatro El Galpón institution sought survival strategies and recovery of contact with the public. After trying with online streaming programmes and recorded theater productions, El Galpón set out to work on an audiovisual product that would use the resources of the theater (actors, space, expertise) added to the *know-how* of audiovisual production. Thus, they turned to the Argentine scriptwriter Esther Feldman, who had the original idea for the series and was directed by the filmmaker Guillermo Casanova, from La Vorágine Films<sup>18</sup>. Added to this was the contribution of screenwriters from the theater, as in the case of Gabriel Calderón, and from the cinema, as in the case of Pablo Stoll.

Completely carried out during the pandemic, the proposal is thought based on the need that it should be a production with a limited budget, using the theatre's existing capacity of material and human resources. The decision to use a single location set on the theater stage responds to this. Telling different stories from a single place, implies the support of fiction on the strength of the story and the script, without the need for a large deployment of locations or number of actors. The final result of the episodes, although it presents some script weaknesses, reveals that this is a format that would be worth exploring further. Only with the continuity of these productions will it be possible to develop the skills and fine-tune the quality and possibilities of circulation on international platforms.

## 6.2. *Metro de Montevideo*

This is also a short series. With 16 chapters of about 30 minutes each, it debuted in October 2021 on two public channels, TV Ciudad and Canal 5. On the first it was run twice a week (Tuesday and Thursday at 8:30 p.m.) and on the second once a week (Monday at 11 p.m.).

In this fiction, the narrative logic is that of the serial: the chapters are interconnected by a central narrative arc, so that an accumulative modality prevails. The production of a documentary celebrating the 25th anniversary of the *Metro de Montevideo* is the thread that unites the story. Although the leading role tends to be choral, one character stands out, the engineer Estero Bellaco, at the center of the story. However, an intense fragmentation interferes with the logic of the serial: scenes and situations that are not always interconnected follow one another, so that the accumulative dynamics of the serial narrative are not specified. At the same time, the systematic entry of artists or figures from the Uruguayan media, who generally pretend to be themselves and then disappear, contribute to a logic of fragmentation

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<sup>18</sup> The alliance is also manifested in the integration of the production: Héctor Guido, director of El Galpón, and Natacha López of La Vorágine.

rather than continuity. A stable group of characters sustains the unity of the fiction, although they are flat characters (Ducrot & Todorov, 1985, p. 262) and do not experience changes throughout the plot.



From the point of view of the genre, this fiction is a mockumentary, both for its expressive features and content. The production of the institutional piece justifies the presentation of the Metro employees and other characters speaking to the camera, in a succession of interview fragments. In addition to these elements typical of the genre, fragments of archive images of not real television news programs and audiovisual announcements of the Metro company to its users or images of some passenger traveling in a car, are introduced. All this is a documentary rhetoric that functions on a fictional universe. The city of Montevideo with the Metro is the central artifice: Montevideo does not have and never had a Metro, neither tunnels, nor stations.

Humour and absurdity are the tone in which this fiction is developed, especially parodying the language of business leadership and organizational rhetoric. To this are added some nods to local political circumstances (references to the plebiscite against a law of the Uruguayan government that would take place in 2022, for example).

Humour in a local key is the dominant tone in such a way that a large part of the humorous twists would be difficult to understand for a non-Montevidean viewer. The reference to a Metro in Montevideo and its 25 years works only if the absence of the Metro is known, the cyclical conversations about the possibility or not of building a Metro in this city, the legendary argument that the land of Montevideo would not allow its construction, or the discussions about a skytrain from the center of the city to the East. For the humour to work, it is also necessary to recognize in the images the places in the city where the fictitious stations were located (for example, in the Plaza Independencia where the remains of Artigas, the national hero, are located).



### 6.3. Final considerations

In the production of national television fiction, seriality has not undergone relevant transformations due to the effect of *streaming*. A quick retrospective look shows that long narratives have not been the norm in Uruguayan productions. In the last two decades, two moments of greater productivity can be identified: one between 1999 and 2004 and another between 2009 and 2013. In the first one, the longer fiction was the soap opera *Constructores* (2003) with 35 episodes, followed by *Mañana será otro día* (2002) with 24 episodes on Canal 4. The second one corresponds to the three longest-running fictions of the last 23 years: *Dance* (2011) with 80 episodes, the second season of *Porque te quiero así* (2011) with 40 and the sitcom *Bienes Gananciales* (2012) that came to have 66 episodes, from Saeta Canal 10. Of a total of 37 titles, only these five had a relatively extended seriality. Instead, the usual serial model has been between 13 and five chapters or episodes. The explanation for this trend of making short narratives is basically due to production costs and limited financing resources. Private investments have been sporadic, trying different business models, without finding a formula that would make them sustainable. On the other hand, the television fictions of the last seven years have been produced with a small amount of public funds, affecting both the number of chapters and the duration of each one. The exhibition screens have been public television stations, without subsequent commercialization, which closed the way to a certain recovery for reinvestment in new projects.

The forms of seriality adopted by the two fictions released in 2021, *Temporario* and *Metro de Montevideo*, have had similar manifestations before the installation of the phenomenon of *streaming* and video on demand. Thus, the anthology modality had precedents such as *8x8* (2004, Detaquito, Canal 4) with eight chapters, *Diez Mandamientos* (2004 Canal 10), *Adicciones* (2011, Canal 12).

As for *Metro de Montevideo*, the short mockumentary has had a constant presence in fictions produced with public funds in the last ten years and also in some webseries (Sánchez Vilela, 2019). The clearest precedents have been *REC*, *Una serie casera* (2012) with nine chapters and *El Mundo de los Videos* (2017) with five chapters, both fictions using public funds, as well as the two cases that we analyze here. In short, the duration of the chapters and their low number seem to respond to limited budgets, rather than to the trends present on the platforms.

The year 2021 was a critical one, the worst, of the covid pandemic in Uruguay. There is no study of cultural consumption and entertainment that provide information that contextualizes the place of broadcast television in that year.

However -and as a synthesis- we were able to verify that the displacement of television fiction to marginal areas in broadcast television for the benefit of other types of television consumption is confirmed. Fiction on broadcast television is not only marginal, but has also lost relevance in terms of audiences to the benefit of other genres.

A contradiction becomes evident: while the production and co-production of content for the world increases (films, series, advertising) and global audiovisual management and trade networks are put into operation, national fiction on television remains stagnant.

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