

VENEZUELA: FOREIGN AND INDEPENDENT PRODUCTIONS AND ON-SCREEN BROADCASTS^{1 2}

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Authors:

Luisa Torrealba (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7739-0367>)

Zicri Colmenares-Díaz (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1384-737X>)

Morella Alvarado (<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4124-0575>)

Pedro De Mendonca (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5733-1159>)

Verónica Fuenmayor (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1139-5901>)

Erick García Aranguren (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5044-6981>)

Martin Hahn (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7546-1432>)

Introduction

In 2022, foreign productions were broadcast on free-to-air channels. As in previous years, national broadcasts formed an important part of the programming schedule, with productions from the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. The series *Carabobo*, *Caminos de Libertad*, second season, financed with state resources, premiered simultaneously on four national television channels. This year, even though political, social and economic problems persist in the country, alternative serialized fiction, which is generated with low resources and allows for the dissemination of content that, for example, promotes the values of democratic coexistence, became an option for audiences.

1. The Venezuelan audiovisual context in 2022

The Venezuelan audiovisual context has not changed much in recent years. Public channels prevail over private channels, as well as self-censorship and restrictions on the broadcasting of content, due to the legal regulatory framework. Access to streaming platforms continues to grow and position itself, along with subscription television. And the dissemination of content through free platforms such as YouTube or others such as Daily Motion, where archives of Venezuelan telenovelas such as *Por Estas Calles* (1992) with more than 400 episodes or *Mi Prima Ciela* (2007) can be found.

¹ Translation: Carmen Elena Contreras

² We thank Fundación En Plural for its financial support for the publication of the Obitel Venezuela Chapter

1.1. Free-to-air television in Venezuela

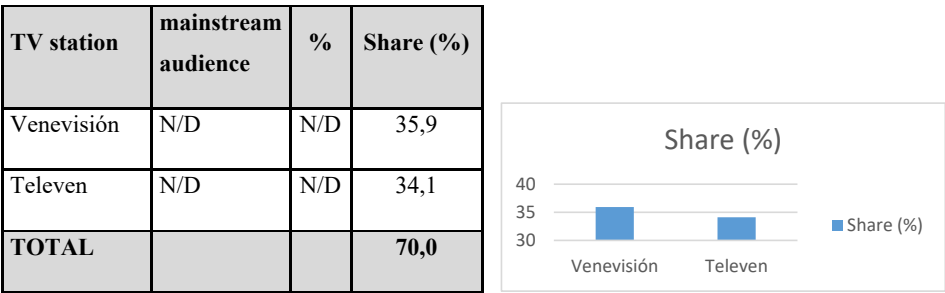
Table 1. National free-to-air television chains / channels in Venezuela

Private channels (9)	Free-to-air channels (13)
Canal I	123 TV
Globovisión	ALBA TV
La Tele Tuya (TLT)	ANTV - Fundación Audiovisual Nacional de Televisión
Meridiano Televisión	Ávila TV
Televen	ConCiencia TV
TV Familia	Corazón Llanero
Vale TV	Colombeia. La televisora educativa de Venezuela
Venevisión	PDVSA TV
Vepaco TV	Tele Sur -La Nueva Televisión del Sur C.A.
	TVES - Fundación Televisora Venezolana Social
	TV FANB
	Vive TV - Visión Venezuela
	VTV - Compañía Anónima Venezolana de Televisión
TOTAL Chains = 0	
TOTAL Channels = 22	

Source: Obitel Venezuela

There are a total of 22 free-to-air channels broadcasting nationwide, of which 13 belong to the public sector and nine to the private sector. Of the 13 public channels, four broadcast political and propagandistic content, alluding to the achievements of the current government, especially the government administration of Nicolás Maduro. On the other nine channels, educational, cultural and musical content prevails, which is broadcast alongside informative content.

Figure 1: Audience and TV share by broadcaster (rating per household)

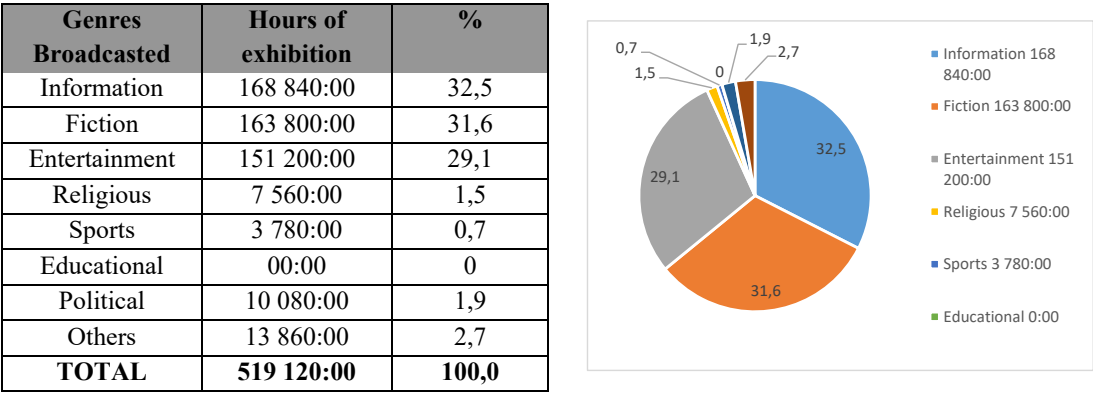


Source: Obitel Venezuela

At the beginning of 2022, BB Media, a global Data Science company, announced that it would start measuring audiences in Venezuela. It is worth remembering that the company Nielsen announced the cessation of its operations and withdrew from

the country in 2021. This situation has already been noted.³ Graph 1 was prepared based on the information published by Venevisión and Televen channels, and with the information published by BB Media during the months of July, August, September, October and November 2022. To date, there is no information on audiences during 2022, so this report does not reflect that data.

Figure 2: Genres and hours broadcast in TV programming



For Graph 2, the programming of five television channels⁴ (Venevisión⁵, Televen, Tves, VTV and Globovisión) was studied during the six-month period. It can be seen that, as in previous years, the news and fiction genres are the ones with the highest number of hours shown. The number of hours shown dedicated to fiction fell in 2022. In the case of the television stations Tves, Televen and Venevisión, we see that they gave up their slots for the broadcasting of sporting events (FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Venezuelan Professional Baseball League, Venezuelan Professional Football League, Professional Basketball League, among others), which altered the programming schedule. This situation generated complaints on social networks from users who wanted to watch telenovelas. There were also complaints from the audience about the constant failures in the signals, audio, and live broadcasts.

1.2. Pay TV and VoD platforms in Venezuela in 2022

According to the latest report published by the Venezuelan National Telecommunications Commission (Conatel), corresponding to the second quarter of 2022, the Venezuelan pay TV sector experienced a small increase. From 3,231,977 subscribers in 2021, it went to 3,259,761 subscribers in 2022. This represents a timid increase.

³ Nielsen Venezuela was the “only company that kept track of the rating and share of free-to-air television” (Torrealba et al., 2022, p. 431).
⁴ Due to the difficult access to the channels’ programming, we selected those channels whose programming is available through different media (social networks, official websites).
⁵ On 1 March, Venevisión celebrated its 61st anniversary as the oldest and most important private television station in Venezuela.

The number of subscribers of pay TV companies operating in the country was distributed as follows: in first place, SimpleTV with 43.11% of subscribers; Intercable with 17.16%; in third place, state-owned Cantv with 8.18%; Telefónica in fourth place with 5.16% of subscribers and, finally, NetUno with 2.88%. Movistar+ Telefónica stopped offering its pay TV services in the country in November 2022. It agreed with the company Inter, so that subscribers who so wished could migrate to this operator, without having to change their equipment (decoders and antennas) and without paying a different cost for accessing the service. On the other hand, the Open Satellite Television (FTA) project - launched in early 2021 by Conatel - continues to offer Venezuelans free satellite television through the Intelsat 35e satellite. This service has 50 national and international TV channels and 10 satellite radio channels, and to enjoy its content it is necessary to purchase a kit, which, according to its official website, costs approximately US\$40⁶. The offer includes channels from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, China, Cuba, Ecuador, the United States, Iran, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela.

The presence of small providers that, in exchange for a monthly fee, offer subscriptions to streaming platforms, such as Net Revolution, FlixTV Venezuela, Vitrina Venezuela, among others, was accentuated. This service facilitates access to services such as Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime, among others.

In 2022, three national channels were registered that broadcast only for pay TV: VePlus, the international signal of the Venezuelan channel Venevisión (owned by Organización Cisneros); IVC Networks (owned by Ole Communications), a channel dedicated to entertainment; and Sun Channel, a thematic channel on tourism (operated by Neva Network, Bitt Channel and Frida Media).

The different subscription TV services available in Venezuela offer a wide range of national and international channels. However, it is complex to establish which are the most watched channels, due to the fact that there is a lot of opacity in the information related to these issues. Despite this, the consultancy BB Media⁷, published some of the most watched pay TV channels during 2022 in Venezuela: DSports, Antena 3, RTVE and Universal.

⁶ FAT Venezuela. Open Satellite Television. Official website: ftavenezuela.com.ve

⁷ The Daily Television (2022). BB Media reveals Top Ten of free-to-air and pay TV in Venezuela. <https://bit.ly/3odlGxM>

Table 2. Pay-TV channels in Venezuela

Most watched pay-TV channels in Venezuela		
Channel	Genre	Origin
DSports	Sports	Latin America
Antena 3	Varied	Spain
RTVE	Varied	Spain
Universal	Fiction	United States

Source: Obitel Venezuela

There is no data available to account for subscribers to VoD platforms in the country. Some pay-TV companies offer users various options to enjoy the service of the most popular streaming platforms worldwide. Various sources claim that Netflix is the favorite among Venezuelans. According to González (2022), half of Venezuelans consume Netflix even for the telenovelas. 48.5% enjoy streaming on TV and 40% use shared passwords.

[...] when asking those who responded affirmatively about the device, they use to enjoy this streaming service, we have that, once again, almost half of the users (48.6%) consume their content through a television, which obviously has an internet connection. Meanwhile, 33.2% watch their series or films from the app installed on their smartphone and 18.2% do so on a computer (González, 2022, para.7).

1.3. Sources of funding in the audiovisual sector.

During 2022, Conatel continued its policy of collecting taxes for the telecommunications sector, including the parallel fiscal contribution (4% of gross revenues, earmarked for the Social Responsibility Fund). This is provided for in Article 24 of the Law on Social Responsibility in Radio, Television and Electronic Media. Through this Social Responsibility Fund, Conatel kept open the reception of independent audiovisual production and research projects. The details of the amounts collected as part of the parallel fiscal contribution are unknown, as are the details of all the products financed and produced with this fund.

On the other hand, the production and distribution of low-budget independent productions continued. Of particular note was the second season of the series *Vivir y Convivir en Venezuela*, which was financed by donations and featured two members of the Venezuela research team: Morella Alvarado and Martin Hahn. The rebroadcasts of national and international fiction, broadcast by the main free-to-air television stations, implied a significant saving of resources, as the media had no production costs.

1.4. Communication policies

The Ley de Responsabilidad Social en Radio, Televisión y Medios Electrónicos (Resorte-Me), which regulates, among other aspects, the broadcasting of content; the Organic Law on Telecommunications, which establishes the conditions for obtaining and exploiting the radio spectrum; and the Ley Constitucional Contra el Odio, por la Convivencia Pacífica y la Tolerancia, which establishes prison sentences and the possibility of license revocation for those who broadcast content deemed to promote hatred, remain in force. The national government, through Conatel, continued the policy of expansion of the telecommunications market through the licensing of at least 19 operators offering internet services in various regions. It also continued the expansion of the Televisión Satelital Abierta (FTA) project, through sales operations of decoders around the country.

1.5. Digital and mobile connectivity infrastructure

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the relationship between audiences and the media. Multi-screen mediated audiovisual consumption (TV, smartphones, tablets, smartTVs, PCs, laptops) has increased, enabling the satisfaction of information, education and entertainment needs. The relationship with digital media is more noticeable. The annual report by We Are Social and Hootsuite (2022), indicates that Venezuelan users who use the internet increased by 1.5%. That is, in 2022, 20.87 million people were actively using the internet, or 72% of the population, despite the fact that Venezuela still has one of the slowest connections in the world, and without taking into account migration figures. The average mobile internet connection speed is 5.76 Mbps, which translates into an increase of 0.32 Mbps (5.9%). The fixed internet connection is 6.51 Mbps, an increase of 3.46 Mbps (113%). These improvements are mainly due to the increase in services that offer internet via optical fibre, which have improved the service in some cities and towns in the country, such as Maracaibo, Porlamar, Valencia, Mérida, among others. The Digital Trends (2022) report indicates that the devices most used to access mobile connections are: mobile phone (43%), laptop (31%), desktop (25%) and tablet (2%).

According to figures from Conatel (2022nd), the distribution of the mobile telephony market by operator is divided as follows: 49.04% for Telefónica (Movistar); 34.57% for Digitel and 25.39% for Movilnet. According to We Are Social and Hootsuite (2022), the use of social networks increased by 15.45 million people in the country. This implies a growth of 10.4% compared to the previous year.

The report by Tendencias Digitales (2022) points out that the five most used social networks and direct messaging applications in Venezuela are: WhatsApp (62%), Facebook (58%), YouTube (55%), Instagram (39%) and Twitter (26%), with an increase in the number of users of TikTok (20%) and LinkedIn (18%). The same report points out the ten most common uses of the internet in the country: searching

for information (96%), sending and receiving emails (88%), banking (88%), visiting social networks (81%), reading news (81%), downloading files and/or applications (72%), watching videos (72%), chatting (67%), looking for a job (62%) and carrying out government procedures (53%). It is worth adding that despite these figures, a high percentage of the population remains disconnected, i.e. without permanent and quality access to internet services.

2. Analysis of the year: national and Ibero-American premiere fiction on free-to-air TV

To commemorate the Batalla de Carabobo, *Carabobo, Caminos de Libertad*, second season, the only publicly funded serialized fiction production of the year, premiered simultaneously on four channels on 19 April. This situation generates a distortion in the data, since it is the same product that premieres simultaneously on four channels. On the other hand, the situation of previous years is repeated in which, faced with the high costs of national production, television stations opted to premiere foreign productions, mostly from Mexico, Brazil and Colombia (see Table 1). This year Televen and Vive premiered two productions outside Obitel's scope: *No Olvides* (telenovela-Philippines) and *José el Profeta* (miniseries-Iran).

Table 1. Premiere fictions screened in 2022
(domestic, foreign Obitel and co-productions)

UNRELEASED NATIONAL TITLES-1	UNRELEASED FOREIGN TITLES - 18
Vive TV	Venevisión
1. <i>Carabobo, Caminos de Libertad.</i> (serie-Venezuela)	5. <i>Totalmente Diva</i> (telenovela-Brasil)
VTV	6. <i>Imperio</i> (serie-Brasil)
2. <i>Carabobo, Caminos de Libertad.</i> (serie-Venezuela)	7. <i>Pecados Capitales</i> (telenovela-Colombia)
TVES	8. <i>Nosotros los Guapos</i> (serie-México)
3.- <i>Carabobo, Caminos de Libertad.</i> (serie-Venezuela)	9. <i>Querer sin Límites</i> (telenovela-Brasil)
Televen	10. <i>Hermanitas Calle</i> (serie-Colombia)
4.- <i>Carabobo, Caminos de Libertad.</i> <i>2da temporada</i> (serie-Venezuela)	11. <i>Familia de Diez</i> (serie-México)
TOTAL UNPUBLISHED TITLES: 1	12. <i>40 y 20</i> (serie-México)
	13. <i>Papá a Toda Madre</i> (serie-México)
	Televen
	14. <i>Fuego Ardiente</i> (telenovela-México)
	15. <i>Soltero con Hijas</i> (telenovela-México)
	16. <i>Como Tú No Hay 2</i> (telenovela-México)
	17. <i>La Ley del Corazón</i> (telenovela-México)
	18. <i>Si nos Dejan</i> (telenovela-México)
	19. <i>La Desalmada</i> (telenovela-México)
	20. <i>La Herencia: un Legado de Amor</i> (telenovela-México)
	21. <i>Reina de Indias y el Conquistador</i> (telenovela-México)
	22. <i>Vencer el Desamor</i> (telenovela-México)
	TOTAL UNPUBLISHED TITLES: 19

Source: Obitel Venezuela

As can be seen in Table 1.b., national reruns led the way during 2022. The telenovelas *Las Amazonas* (1985) and the series *Muñeca* (1989) were rebroadcast decades after their premieres. Productions dating from the late 1990s and early 2000s returned to Venezuelan screens: *Entre tú y yo* (1997), *El País de las Mujeres* (1998), *Jugando a Ganar* (1998), *Amantes de Luna Llena* (2000), *El Amor las Vuelve Locas* (2005) and *Robando Corazones* (2008). Televen, repeated for the third consecutive year the telenovela *Guayoyo Express* (2005).

Table 1.b. Exhibition of repeated titles during 2022
(national, foreign Obitel titles and co-productions)

Repeated national titles - 19	Repeated foreign titles - 10
Venevisión	Venevisión
1. <i>Mi Niña Amada</i> (serie)	1. <i>Carita de Ángel</i> (telenovela–Brasil)
2. <i>Las Amazonas</i> (telenovela)	2. <i>La Reina del Flow 2</i> (telenovela-Colombia)
3. <i>Muñeca</i> (serie)	3. <i>Mi Querida Herencia</i> (serie–México)
4. <i>¡Qué Clase de Amor!</i> (serie)	4. <i>Vecinos</i> (telenovela-Colombia)
5. <i>El País de las Mujeres</i> (telenovela)	5. <i>Amor Mío</i> (telenovela-España)
6. <i>Cartas del Corazón</i> (unitarian)	6. <i>Nuevo Rico Nuevo Pobre</i> (serie-Colombia)
7. <i>Entre tú y yo</i> (telenovela)	Televen
8. <i>Las González</i> (telenovela)	7. <i>La Otra Cara del Alma</i> (telenovela-México)
9. <i>Jugando a Ganar</i> (miniserie)	8. <i>Carrusel</i> (telenovela-Brasil)
10. <i>Robando Corazones</i> (serie)	9. <i>Mujeres al Limite</i> (unitarian-Colombia)
11. <i>El Amor las Vuelve Locas</i> (telenovela)	10. <i>Tu Voz Estéreo</i> (telenovela–Colombia)
12. <i>Entre tu Amor y mi Amor</i> (telenovela)	TOTAL repeated titles: 29
13. <i>Amantes de Luna Llena</i> (telenovela)	
Televen	
14. <i>Carabobo, Caminos de Libertad</i> (serie)	
15. <i>Guayoyo Express</i> (telenovela)	
16. <i>Libres como el Viento</i> (telenovela)	
17. <i>Nadie me Dirá Como Quererte</i> (telenovela)	
Tves	
18. <i>Vivir para Amar</i> (telenovela)	
19. <i>Teresa en Tres Estaciones</i> (telenovela)	

Source: Obitel Venezuela

Table 2, called formats of national fiction premieres in 2022 and their evolution in the five-year period, should reflect the evolution of national productions in the country, but due to the economic crisis that the sector is going through, the table does not show an evolution but a stagnation. Titles have not been increasing, on the contrary, they have remained at one or two productions per year, of which: *La Dama y El Vigilante* (2019), *Carabobo, Caminos de Libertad* (2021) and *Carabobo, Caminos de Libertad*, second season (2022) correspond to productions financed with public funds. Other fictions such as *Libres Como el Viento* and *Angélica Pecado*, both from RCTV, which appear as premieres in 2021, were produced in 2009, only they had not been premiered by Televen, which may also distort the figures. In 2020, there were no productions, but *Carolay*, which premiered in 2019 and continued until

2020, is reflected. In this sense, although the table reflects eight productions in the five-year period, only five were produced.

Table 2. Formats of national fiction premieres in 2022 and their evolution over the five-year period

Format	Titles						Hours					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Telenovela	1	0	0	2	0	3	60:00	0:00	0:00	300:00	0:00	360:00
Series	0	2	1	0	1	4	0:00	35:00	3:00	0:00	240:00	278:00
Miniseries	0	0	0	1	0	1	0:00	0:00	3:00	0:00	0:00	3:00
Sitcom	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
Unitarian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
Docudrama	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00	0:00	0:55	0:00	0:00	0:55
Total	1	2	1	3	1	8	60:00	35:00	6:55	300:00	240:00	641:55

Source: Obitel Venezuela

Table 3 shows the situation of national productions, since only one title was released during the year: *Carabobo*, *Caminos de Libertad*, second season, the rest of the fiction released corresponds to Obitel countries. It is headed by Mexico, with 13 titles, followed by Brazil with five and finally Colombia with four productions.

Table 3. Premiere fiction screened in 2022: Venezuela

Country	Titles	%	Hours	%
NATIONAL (total)	1	5	240:00	14
OBITEL COUNTRIES (total)	18	95	1529:00	86
Argentina	0	0	0:00	0
Brazil	3	16	361:00	20
Chile	0	0	0:00	0
Colombia	2	11	283:00	16
Ecuador	0	0	0:00	0
Spain	0	0	0:00	0
EE.UU. Spanish speakers	0	0	0:00	0
México	13	68	885:00	50
Perú	0	0	0:00	0
Portugal	0	0	0:00	0
Uruguay	0	0	0:00	0
Venezuela	1	5	240:00	14
COPRODUCTIONS (total)	0	0	0:00	0
National Co-productions	0	0	0:00	0
Obitel Countries Co-productions	0	0	0:00	0
TOTAL	19	100	1769:00	100

Source: Obitel Venezuela

Table 4 shows that the prevailing formats on free-to-air channels are: telenovelas and series. It should be noted that some television channels broadcast other formats, but they are not among the year's premieres.

TABLE 4. National and Obitel fiction formats shown in 2022

Format	Titles				Hours			
	Nationals	%	Other Obitel	%	Nationals	%	Other Obitel	%
Telenovela	0	0.0	15	83.3	240:00	100.0	1409:00	83.3
Series	1	100.0	3	16.7	0:00	0.0	283:00	16.7
Miniseries	0	0.0	0	0.0	0:00	0.0	0:00	0.0
Telefilm	0	0.0	0	0.0	0:00	0.0	0:00	0.0
Unitarian	0	0.0	0	0.0	0:00	0.0	0:00	0.0
Docudrama	0	0.0	0	0.0	0:00	0.0	0:00	0.0
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0:00	0.0	0:00	0.0
Total	1	100	18	100	240:00	100	1692:00	100

TABLE 5: 9 Most-watched titles in 2022⁸

Title		Channel	Producer (Country)	Format/ Genre	No. of chap/ ep 2022 ⁹	Time Band ¹⁰	Rating	Share
1	<i>Cartas del Corazón</i>	Venevisión	Venevisión (VE)	Unitarian / Drama	260	Afternoon	N/D	38.31
2	<i>Tu Voz Estéreo</i>	Televen	Caracol (CO)	Series / Drama	175	Afternoon	N/D	36.35
3	<i>Totalmente Diva</i>	Venevisión	Rede Globo (BR)	Telenovela / Drama	161	Afternoon	N/D	36.11
4	<i>Si nos Dejan</i>	Televen	W Studios (ME)	Telenovela / Drama	121	Evening	N/D	34.31
5	<i>Imperio</i>	Venevisión	TV Globo (BR)	Telenovela / Drama, Mistery	180	Evening	N/D	32.76
6	<i>Pecados Capitales</i>	Venevisión	Caracol (CO)	Telenovela / Comedy	145	Evening	N/D	31.30
7	<i>Las Amazonas</i>	Venevisión	Venevisión (VE)	Telenovela / Drama	187	Evening	N/D	30.35
8	<i>La Ley del Corazón</i>	Televen	Rede Globo (BR)	Telenovela / Drama	163	Evening	N/D	25.67
9	<i>El País de las Mujeres</i>	Venevisión	Venevisión (VE)	Telenovela / Drama	225	Afternoon	N/D	18.89
10	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D	N/D
Total domestic productions: 3				Foreign original scripts: 7				
30%				70%				

Source: Obitel Venezuela with BB Media data.

Table 5 shows only nine titles and not ten, because the information presented was obtained from the Venezuela ranking from 18 to 31 June 2022 published by BB Media. The information is organized by share because there is no up-to-date open access data on ratings. The top 9 is led by the Venezuelan Unitarian *Cartas del Corazón*, a production dating from 2015, which is “a platform for viewers to raise their problems, [which are then] dramatized in the form of a short telenovela or capsules [and] the hosts will express [sic] their opinion” (Diario República, 2015, para. 3). Table 5 also shows that the Venevisión channel has a greater presence than its competitor Televen.

⁸ As in previous years, the most watched titles do not correspond to the 2022 releases.
⁹ Information obtained from television programming available on the Web.
¹⁰ Due to the limited measurement data in the country, the prime time schedule is not known, so the

3. VoD 2022 Monitoring

3.1. VoD platform market

Since 2020, there has been a growth in the consumption of content from streaming platforms worldwide. In the case of Venezuela, this dynamic is strengthened by the offer of subscription TV services such as Simple TV and NetUno Go, which include some streaming platforms in their plans. “The costs of pay-TV services are rising, while streaming services are gaining strength by providing faster and lower-cost internet services” (Puccini, 2022, para. 1).

In 2022, according to the pollster Datanálisis, there was an “increase in services, such as technology, mobile telephony, Internet, of more than 13% on average” (León, 2022 in Ramírez, 2022, para.7). This resulted in many users of analogue technologies migrating to digital services, such as the Netflix streaming platform, which is the most popular in the country.

It is important to note that in Venezuela, as in other countries, an important part of access to Netflix is through the use of shared passwords. The company detected that:

One of its problems as a business was that around 100 million connections correspond to users of accounts paid for by others. Netflix allows you, depending on the type of account, simultaneous use of one, two and up to four ‘screens’ or devices (TVs, phones, computers), which led to the widespread use of password sharing to provide the service for free to someone else. This led to a slowdown [sic] in the company’s subscriber growth. They are therefore testing a new methodology in which an additional fee has to be paid to be able to connect outside the subscriber’s main residence (González, 2022, para. 8).

Services such as Amazon, Disney+ and HBO Max have also entered the Venezuelan market with strength. It would seem that traditional television has taken second place, due to the strengthening of streaming services. However, we see that in the face of the poor conditions of access to technology in the country, traditional television and subscription TV services remain the main source of access to audiovisual production in the country.

3.2. Supply of local VoD platforms in 2022 (national, regional within the country)

In view of the strong incursion of international platforms in the country, as well as the decision of entrepreneurs not to invest heavily in order to avoid putting capital at risk, there is no supply of national streaming platforms, not even in the rankings of the most consumed services. International service providers have been characterized by making exclusive, high-quality productions, which can only be seen through

time slot was placed according to the broadcasting schedule: afternoon (12:00-18:00) and evening (19:00-23:00).

their own media. As a result, the audiovisual offerings of Venezuelan services cannot compete with the content offered by the most popular international services.

Given this reality, it is difficult to find attractive Venezuelan VoD services, since the few existing ones have become more repositories of old productions than spaces for the promotion of new products that encourage consumption. Such is the case of RCTV, owned by Empresa 1BC, which broadcasts a large part of its old productions on platforms such as PrendeTV, Tubi, Vix, CanelaTV and Amazon Prime Video. Meanwhile, the popular Venezuelan channels Venevisión and Televen only stream live on their official websites, and Venevisión, like RCTV, includes some old youth serials and telenovelas on the aforementioned providers.

One of the most recognized Venezuelan streaming applications is still Vivo Play, but this platform is still blocked in the country by Conatel. Although, through this service, the audience that manages to overcome the blockade can enjoy various channels (Antena 3, Telemundo Internacional, A&E, SYFY, WB TV, Sony Channel, RCN Novelas, among others), the serialized fiction productions offered by the platform are primarily international.

3.3. VoD analysis in 2022: national and Ibero-American premiere fiction

Venezuelan productions on these platforms are very scarce; those that can be found on some VoD services date from before 2022. Telenovelas and youth series produced by RCTV and Venevisión stand out. On the Amazon Prime Video platform, we find telenovelas such as *Natalia del Mar* (2011-2012), *Un Esposo para Estela* (2009-2010), *Válgame Dios* (2012) and *Las Amazonas* (1985), from the Venevisión network. While from the production company RCTV we have: *Para Verte Mejor* (2017), *Amor Secreto* (2016), *Los Secretos de Lucía* (2014), *Corazón Esmeralda* (2014), *KaIna* (1995), *Ellas Aman*, *Ellos Mienten* (2018) and the series *Almas en Pena* (2020).

Table 6. National fiction and co-productions shown in 2022 in VoD systems

NATIONAL PREMIERE TITLES	PREMIERE CO-PRODUCTIONS
No national productions premiering on VoD platforms	Netflix (3) 01. <i>Santo</i> (series – España/Brasil) 02. <i>Diario de un Gigoló</i> (series – México/Argentina) 03. <i>El Rey: Vicente Fernández</i> (series - México/Colombia) Amazon Prime (1) 04. <i>Sentença</i> (series - Uruguay/Brasil) Paramount+ (1) 05. <i>Bosé</i> (series - España/México)
Total: 0	Total: 5

Source: Obitel Venezuela

Although Venezuela has not introduced new fictional products on the most popular streaming platforms, national talent has stood out in various productions for these media. One of the factors influencing this is associated with the migration process. This is the case of Venezuelan playwright Leonardo Padrón, who was in charge of writing the Colombian series *Pálpito* (2022), a thriller created exclusively for Netflix, whose plot revolves around a man who seeks revenge on an organ trafficking network that murdered his wife. Venezuelan filmmaker Joel Novoa, meanwhile, was hired in 2022 to direct two episodes of the famous Netflix series *Cobra Kai* (2018). Novoa was in charge of episode five: *Match Point* and episode six: *Kicks Get Chicks*, both from the fourth season.

Venezuelan comedian and writer Joanna Hausmann is the writer of the Disney+ animated series *Hamster y Gretel* (2022). In its contents there are several references to Venezuela, for example, the mother of the main characters is Venezuelan, sometimes the characters eat arepas and in the house there is a beautiful picture of El Ávila, a mountain that borders the north of Caracas. Meanwhile, the writer of the Venezuelan series *Somos Tú y Yo* (2007), Naylis Sánchez, is part of the team of writers for the Disney+ series *Gina Yei* (2023), which will premiere in 2023. Other talents such as Carlos Villegas Rosales (Director of the projects *La Reina del Sur 3*, *Buscando a Frida*, *El Señor de los Cielos 3*, *El Señor de los Cielos 6*, *La Doña 1*, *La Doña 2*, *Señora Acero 2*, *José José, el Príncipe de la Canción*, among others), as well as Erasmo Colón (Art Director of *Operación Orion*, *Al Otro Lado del Muro*, *Jenni*

Rivera: *Mariposa de Barrio*, *Decisiones: Unos Ganan Otros Pierden*, among others), José Vicente Scheuren (Producer on *Decisiones: Unos Ganan Otros Pierden*, *Club 57*, *La Fuerza del Creer 2*, *Relatos de Un Sueño Americano*, among others) and Jhonny Semeco (Director of Photography on *Commissaire Magellan*, *Joséphine*, *Ange Gardien*, *Asesinato en Blois*, *Origines*, *La Trouvaille de Juliette*, among others).

Likewise, some Venezuelan actors have a presence in streaming. Humberly González has participated in several series such as *In the Dark*, *Ginny and Georgia* and *Jupiter's Legacy*. Actor Eduardo Navas played the character Rafael in a new episode of NBC's *New Amsterdam*. Renowned actress Gaby Espino participated in the Netflix series *El Rey*, *Vicente Fernández*, in which she played Verónica Landín, a character presented as the Charro de Huentitán's eternal rival. In the famous superhero series, *The Umbrella Academy* - also from Netflix - actress Génesis Rodríguez played Sloane, a member of the Sparrow Academy, who has the ability to manipulate the force of gravity at will.

4. Interactivity and audience participation

The constant interruptions of electricity services (in 2022 there were 233,298 black-outs nationwide, an increase of 22% over 2021, according to a follow-up by the Committee of People Affected by Blackouts, referred to by Bravo (2023) and internet (the non-governmental organization Espacio Público¹¹ counted 50 outages between January and October) and the prevailing censorship and self-censorship of television make audience participation limited in the country.

Television channels only encourage interaction with viewers to promote nationally produced content. Therefore, fiction is an almost absent genre in the spaces for interactivity and audience participation in Venezuela. This pattern has been maintained for at least a decade.

Thus, although Facebook is the social network with the largest number of users in Venezuela (according to the agency 2im Marketing¹² at the beginning of 2023 it had 11.90 million users in the country; followed by Instagram, with 6.10 million and, after Messenger and LinkedIn, Twitter, with 1.90 million), the platforms par excellence for audiences of national television channels to express their points of view on the content broadcast on screen are Instagram and Twitter. The dynamic consists of inviting people through the screens to interact with the content on the different social media accounts of the channels or TV programs and then reading some comments on air. This happened in 2022 in

¹¹ Runrun.es (Sep, 2022) Espacio Público: Internet service interruptions increased between January and August. <https://runrun.es/noticias/484727/espacio-publico-aumentaron-las-interrupciones-al-servicio-de-internet-entre-enero-y-agosto/>

¹² 2im Marketing (2023) Most used social networks in Venezuela 2023 [Blog]. <https://2immarketing.com.ve/redes-sociales-mas-usadas-en-venezuela/?cn-reloaded=1>

sports, opinion and variety programs, which are the ones currently produced by Venezuelan television. In the last quarter of the year, Televen's official Instagram account (@televentv) was dominated by posts about the Qatar 2022 World Cup, partially broadcast on that channel. And in the same period, on Venevisión's official Instagram account (@venevision), *Miss Venezuela 2022* was the most popular program. On both accounts, nationally produced entertainment morning shows also had a strong presence.

In the context outlined above, audiences were able to express very little opinion about fiction on @televentv and, to a lesser extent, on @venevision. Thus, of the 726 posts made on Televen's Instagram account, 20 (2.75%) were flyers about foreign premieres and reruns. Meanwhile, 884 posts were published on Venevisión's Instagram account in the same three months, of which three (0.33%) were about the television plant's imported fiction. It is worth noting that in most of the 20 posts about @televentv's fiction in the period analyzed, audiences complained about the suspension of the transmission of telenovelas due to the World Cup games. "Stay with your telenovelas and give the football to another channel that will show it live" and "Televen NO [sic] is not a sports channel and they prefer not to show the telenovelas to show a delayed game. It's a lack of respect for all viewers", were two of the comments on a video of actor Daniel Elbittar, in which he greeted the followers of @televentv and invited them to watch the premiere of *La Desalmada*, of which he was a member of the cast. In addition, another striking element in these interactions were viewers' complaints about the sudden departure from the air of the Brazilian revival *Xica da Silva*. "Can they be serious and tell the audience if they are going to continue showing Xica Da Silva," was one of the 63 comments on a 17 November post about the announcement of the premiere of *La Desalmada*.

A different scenario is found with the Instagram account of the series *Vivir y Convivir en Venezuela*, which has an organic growth of 57.6 followers. Among the comments that stand out are "@luzstella5 . Today by chance I saw a reel, and I loved it, I'm going to start watching it, what a joy and excitement to see great artists". "@griscolina05. I really like chapter 7 of the first season called El hallaquero. It portrays this era and our people. If you haven't seen it I invite you to watch it on the show's YouTube channel". @wilberrivero. When do they make more chapters? @yelyrebolledo. I love it I love it I love it congratulations to everyone who makes it possible to Live and Live Together in Venezuela VE. @keveryv. I didn't know this existed and I'm going to watch that telenovela.

5. The year's highlights

The decrease in the production of fiction serials for broadcast on air and cable during the year 2022 is proof, on the one hand, of the multifactorial crisis experienced in the

country, and on the other hand, of the decision of the major production houses and television channels to stop producing serialized fiction content. There are several reasons for this. The first is economic instability, although the country is undergoing a process of dollarization and there is evidence of large bubbles in which the exacerbation of luxury and waste are key to the intuition that some of the investments come from unclear funds, in which corruption plays an important role. The second reason is associated with the lack of interest and intention of the big production houses in generating serialized fiction content due to the high costs, which is why they resort to the use of canning and repetitions to retain audiences. And finally, the behavioral changes of some audiences who prefer to interrelate with serialized fiction through the services offered by cable operators, as well as Video On Demand, both those operating in the country and those accessed through different types of transactions (account loans, payment to intermediaries, among others).

However, despite the serious political, social and economic problems Venezuela is going through, some audiovisual creators have overcome difficulties in producing content to cover part of the Venezuelan consumer's entertainment needs. This is mainly due to the advantages offered by mobile devices, as well as social networks as spaces for the circulation of content.

Thus, for the year 2022, the highlights of the year are summarized in: a) Presence of fiction production financed by public funds. b) Maintenance of serialized fiction production generated from the margins. c) Presence of alternative serialized fiction contents, generated under the budgets of the *edutainment* for the promotion of the values of citizen coexistence, as well as for denouncing the violation of human rights.

In the first case, the only premiere production that was broadcast on Venezuelan cable and free-to-air screens was *Carabobo, Caminos de Libertad*, second season (2022). Conceived as a miniseries (12 episodes), it was directed by the historian Luis Alberto Lamata and produced by the Villa del Cine in 2020. The first season was broadcast on Venezolana de Televisión (VTV), Televisora Venezolana Social (Tves), Televen, Vive TV, TVFanb, Vepaco TV and Asamblea Nacional TV (ANTV). Both the first and second seasons were filmed during the pandemic as part of a government project to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Batalla de Carabobo.

In terms of alternative production to traditional systems, we have, for example, the youth webseries *Me la Tiro de... La serie*, created by a group of Venezuelan influencers (Marián Corrales, Rafa Estanga, Luis Herrera, Manuel Díaz and Macarena Colasante), whose first episode was published on YouTube on 24 July 2022. The plot revolves around issues related to bullying, social class differences, gender identity, male prostitution, the influence of social networks, neuro-divergent people, among others of interest to teenage audiences. Stylistically, the plot is a combination of drama, comedy and suspense. The web series is also the transmedia version of the stage show *Me la Tiro de...El Show*, classified as a "musical parody", which premiered in

April 2022. The screening of the last chapter of the first season took place simultaneously in two cities in the country (Caracas and Mérida) in alliance with the Cinex cinema distribution circuit and the show production company Evenpro. This highlights the creation of alliances for the promotion of content beyond social networks. To date, the first chapter has 36.8K on TikTok and 743,610 views on YouTube. The channel also includes Shorts, which complement the story.

Within the margins fiction group, we find *Ganar o Morir*, whose first chapter was published on 17 June 2022, and was produced in the state of Cojedes. *Sed de Venganza*, published on 13 July 2022 on the YouTube channel of the production company El Perro films. *El Ciprés*, whose first chapter was published on 17 July 2022, on the *LB Producciones* channel: “A series based on real life, which aims to leave a positive message in society, making it clear that all the props used are 100% props and special effects”. *Rutina de Barrio*, released on 30 August 2022, is produced in the area of Casalta in western Caracas and is part of the acting and urban film workshops of *Fundación Unidos Films*. Finally, *Resurrección 1. Serie Capos & Maleantes*, which is presented on YouTube under the slogan, “The only medicine against suffering, delinquency, and all the other evils of humanity, is wisdom”. The first episode was released on 19 November 2022. The three productions portray the criminal world, its transgressions, as well as the everyday life in the neighborhood.

In the third group, we find the independent news website El Pitazo, produced *Te la Cuento Yo*, a project developed by Yoyiana Ahumada which, through pieces of performative journalism, exposes themes related to the Venezuelan political-social reality. This project seeks to use art as a vehicle for peace and social transformation. In this same tone, regarding the creation of products that seek to strengthen citizen values, the Think Tank Imaginantes, the Visual and Digital Culture Laboratory of the Communication Research Institute (ININCO) of the Central University of Venezuela (UCV), together with the Global Observatory of Communication and Democracy (OGCD), premiered -in 2022- the second season of the web series *Vivir y Convivir*, a dramatic comedy, written and directed by playwright Martin Hahn, whose main purpose is to show a message that allows the reunion of citizens of the same nation, through the enhancement of the values that unite us as Venezuelans, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and, above all, the importance of the exercise of democratic citizenship.

These productions go unnoticed, as most independent producers do not have the necessary resources for adequate promotion, let alone global distribution to make their products successful. For this reason, a large part of the independent productions made in the country are exhibited -mainly- through YouTube or other social networks such as TikTok, Facebook and Instagram, as well as in community, academic and local government spaces.

6. Theme of the year: independent production companies and the internationalization of television fiction production in Ibero-America.

According to Venezuelan law, the National Independent Producer (PNI/NIP) is:

A natural or legal person duly registered in the Register of Independent National Producers and certified as such by the Ministry of People's Power for Communication and Information, in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Social Responsibility in Radio, Television and Electronic Media, the rules on the Register of Independent National Producers, and other regulations governing the matter (MippCI, 2022).

This figure was established on the basis of the Ley de Responsabilidad Social en Radio, Televisión y Medios Electrónicos (Resorte / Resorte-Me), approved in 2004 and amended in 2011, which in Article 13 establishes that the requirements for registration under this figure are: to reside in Venezuela, not to be a shareholder or director of any company providing radio and television services, not to be a public official linked to the areas covered by the law, to declare whether one has a subordinate relationship with any radio and television service provider, not to be a state-owned company. The idea of creating this figure was to provide programming grids with a percentage of media products - for a total of seven hours a day, four of which must be PNI productions - to diversify production sources, but, above all, to provide quality content made in the country. Thus, products that include capital, locations, scripts, performers, directors and production staff, as well as Venezuelan technical personnel, and, especially, highlight the values of Venezuelan culture, are considered national productions. Cendrós and Ramírez (2011) point out that the figure of the PNI generated:

A forceful opening and democratization of radio and television production, this has given the opportunity to more than 1500 producers, registered with the Ministry of Communications and Information (MippCI), without any relation to the government and the mass media, to publish three hours of programming daily on national and regional television and radio stations. [...] It should be noted that the mission of independent production companies is simple: it is to take charge of a project such as audiovisual programs for cultural, educational, informative and recreational purposes, in order to contribute to the integral development of users, especially children and adolescents, these must be delivered practically finished, to save time and money for the media. [...] With the implementation of the aforementioned law, independent business activity is rapidly increasing, but an aspect that has been affecting the development of this activity is the inexperience in the creation, management and administration of programs in companies of this type (para.15).

While it is true that this legislation allowed for an important diversification of content, it also served as a strategy to control what to produce, how to produce it, when to broadcast and where to broadcast it. Content was not always of the expected quality, and in some cases, private channels opted to register some programs under this figure, thus neglecting their responsibilities in terms of generating content that would influence public opinion. On the other hand, this figure served to amplify the views and voices on social problems, in which perspectives in line with the projects framed by the principles of the so-called “Bolivarian Revolution” were very often favored. A clear example of this can be seen in Vive TV (Visión Venezuela), an open public television channel with a cultural and educational profile. Founded in 2003, it maintained an informative profile with reports, documentaries, news programs and, to a lesser extent, opinion programs.

In 2005, Vive TV, together with Venezolana de Televisión and the Ministerio de Comunicación e Información, launched a call for applications to:

To inform about the *Ley Resorte*, the participation mechanisms under discussion, the possibilities and mechanisms for participation in state channels, and a diagnostic tool of existing realities. A total of 400 projects were received, of which 30 were selected for co-production (around 30% from the interior of the country). [...] The idea was to prioritize thematic strengthening aimed at building a fairer society, in which the values of solidarity, integration, social organization, the culture of our peoples, among others, form the basis for an audiovisual result that explores new aesthetic and discursive possibilities towards socialism (Eekhout and Deronne, 2016, p. 195).

The programming generated under the figure of PNI and broadcast by public, private and community media is rarely related to serialised fiction of interest to Obitel. In the Venezuelan case, NIPs can obtain public or private resources for content production. Public funds come mainly from the Fondo de Responsabilidad Social derived from the Resorte-Me Law, but also from other entities and dependencies such as the Villa del Cine Foundation, attached to the Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Cultura y el Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Comunicación y la Información (MippCI).

The Social Responsibility Fund was created in 2006 and, to date, has financed a total of 642 projects, of which 593 have been aimed at the development and promotion of national production, 22 have been aimed at training national producers, 19 have been dedicated to research and 8 have been developed for training in critical perception (Conatel, 2022b).

In 2016, the CONATEL Audiovisual Gala was held, with the participation of Vepaco TV, Tves, VTV and Venevisión, to grant broadcasting rights to these public

and private channels. Seventeen works were previewed at the event, including seven series, four documentaries, two musicals and four children’s programs.

In mid-2022, the 17 projects funded during the years 2020-2021 were presented, some of which are shown below:

Name	Type	Transmission
1. <i>La Canción que nos Une</i>	Musical interview	Vive TV
2. <i>Hola tú, Hola yo</i>	Information packs	
3. <i>Willkommen, Señor Humbolt</i> (2021)	Documentary	
4. <i>Kaporito el Guardián de la Montaña</i> (2021)	Feature Film Animation	Circuito Cines Unidos
5. <i>Venezuela Heroica</i> (2021)	Educational packs	
6. <i>Gabriel y los Comemaiz</i> (2021)	Music video web series	TV y RRSS
7. <i>Descapada Cultural</i>	Cultural TV Programme	
8. <i>Leyendas Venezolanas</i> (2021)	Fiction	
9. <i>Big Bang</i> (2021)	Animation capsules	
10. <i>El Pacto: 30 Años de Lucha y Rocanrol</i> (2022)	Documentary	
11. <i>Operación Orión</i> (2021)	Feature Film Fiction	Circuito Cines Unidos

Source: Obitel Venezuela.

On the other hand, Conatel published a list of productions financed through the Fondo de Responsabilidad Social, without specifying the years in which they were released or the media through which they were exhibited. Of 44 registered productions, 39 are linked to audiovisual production and five to radio production. In terms of audiovisual production, two belong to humorous fiction series, one children’s telenovela and two fiction series aimed at celebrating patriotic heroes.

While little information is available on independent national productions financed with public funds, less information is available on content produced with private funds. Hence, it is necessary to carry out archaeological work to reconstruct this facet of Venezuelan audiovisual history. In this regard, it is worth noting that in 2022, Conatel insisted on the need to comply with the provisions of Article 15 of the *Resorte-Me* Law, according to which all radio and television service providers are obliged to submit during the first five days of each month, details of nationally produced programs, independent national production, times and percentages of concurrent elements, through the registration system that will serve for consultation and support, but at

the time of writing this report it was not possible to access it. The exact number of NIPs registered up to mid-2023 was not found, nor is there any data available on the independent production companies that existed before the enactment of the *Resorte-Me* Law.

In Venezuela, during 2022, no independent production company produced serialised fiction contents for broadcast signal, therefore, there was no export either. Independent production companies, as well as natural persons who produce, have two alternatives to produce fiction content in the country. The first is with foreign capital and the second through public funds. In the first case, there is the guarantee that its partner and/or investor will circulate the product in the international market. In the second, it has state resources, but must comply with the commitment to generate content approved by the governmental content control body, the state-owned Comisión Nacional de Telecomunicaciones (Conatel).

The same reality happened with the private channels that did not produce fiction during that year. The answer obtained by the different producers interviewed was the same: “There is none”. We explored, then, what were the reasons that left this gap in fiction production and we found that there is no economic muscle to invest in fiction, besides the producers mentioned that the equipment is obsolete, that the infrastructures are not conditioned, that is, there are no lights, cameras, microphones, etc., and that the indispensable equipment for production was old. In addition to this, suitable equipment has to be rented, which increases costs. The few producers did not consider it profitable to invest in fiction production and justified their decisions by citing the condition of the country, the blackouts, the lack of petrol, the transport problem and other no less important problems such as filming permits or the safety of the equipment in outdoor locations. These problems are compounded by political instability and make international alliances difficult. The independent production industry of fiction content in Venezuela does not have the means and strategies to export its products. We know of the case of *Dealers*, a series premiered in 2021, which, not having found a buyer, they decided to broadcast it on YouTube with reasonable success. In 2022, the producers of *Dealers* went into post-production, but did not broadcast or export. A similar number of independent producers went into the manufacture of foreign commercials, as the production costs of commercials for other countries are highly profitable for both the client and the domestic producer. Other producers have recorded entertainment programs and have left fiction aside, according to them, for the time when the country changes.

The vice president of Venevisión, Manuel Fray Grijalba, pointed out that specialized workers such as cameramen, directors of photography, microphonists, make-up artists and costume designers have migrated and the new generations do not have adequate training to deal with the production of any television program.

The country's multifactorial crisis, which has been present for more than five decades, made it more difficult to produce television fiction material. The only possible way out was to rely on foreign investment, negotiations for which are approaching. In 2022, some projects were conceived that could materialize in 2023. People linked to national free-to-air television consider that the normalization of the industry will take three to four years.

A curious fact about the export of fiction, although not from independent producers, is that the free-to-air channel Venevisión has managed to sell its video library, which has titles dating back to 1990, at competitive prices on the international market. Buyers are to be found in Africa, Asia and South America.

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