

# ECUADOR: RACE AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE REPRESENTATIONS OF ECUADORIAN TELEVISION FICTION

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## Authors:

Kruzka Ordóñez <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2360-8188>

Abel Suing <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4234-5926>

Angel Torres-Toukourmidis <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7727-3985>

Moises Pallo-Chiguano <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3007-410X>

Patricio Barrazueta Molina <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0987-1358>

## Team:

Carlos Ortiz

Lilia Carpio

## Introduction

The television industry in Ecuador holds a significant position within the country's economy. Television networks possess their own infrastructure and organize themselves according to their characteristics, needs, and interests. Programming strategies determine how each television channel approaches fiction by considering three fundamental aspects: dominant consumption trends, storytelling (observing social markers such as racial identity, social class, and gender), and narrative style—elements that set the tone for understanding what is happening with fictional narratives in Ecuador. It is worth noting that fiction, and particularly telenovelas, has been a key vehicle in the process of modernization and social integration established through television over the years.

This chapter is dedicated to observing Ecuadorian television fiction, which in the past two years has undergone an interesting strategic shift, especially in the telenovela genre. These productions reveal the incorporation of dual adaptations combining local and global identities—what is known as glocalization. This approach is evident in the creation of collaborative scripts that embed the essence of each culture. Since 2019, Ecuadorian production companies have been working hand-in-hand with production teams from the United States, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and Puerto Rico.

This shift in fiction can be traced back to the success of two original productions broadcast by Ecuavisa in 2019: *Sharon la Hechicera* and *Sharon 2: El Desencanto*. Experts agree that “being a national story has captured the viewer's attention; it is a homegrown product” (Latin Artis, 2019). These productions resonate with

Ecuadorians primarily because their scripts portray a real-life event that shocked the country, one that was brought to the screen and etched into the collective memory. The creativity, engaging storylines, and quality evident in these works meet the industry's most demanding standards.

Television in Ecuador coexists with the broadcasting system, streaming platforms, OTT systems, platforms like YouTube, and social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, as well as cable television providers offering subscription-based services.

In this multi-screen, transmedia environment, narrative expansion has opened up new spaces for emerging production in Ecuador. It also offers the opportunity to present local stories to the world, reflecting national identity while also rewriting narratives and sharing the stage through the development of local scripts with a global vision.

This chapter focuses on the study of race, intersectionality, and decoloniality—dimensions analyzed within Ecuadorian fictional narratives. These dimensions are rooted primarily in historical power structures and social identities, and they are represented in telenovelas conceived as “textual spaces with which audiences interact, while simultaneously incorporating a vision of the nation and of desirable citizen behavior, particularly in terms of racial identity, social class, and gender markers” (Lewkowicz, 2011). Fiction is a simulation of reality, enriched with elements of imagination to create a parallel world (Educando, 2016).

### **1. Audiovisual Context in Ecuador in 2024**

The audiovisual sector in Ecuador has undergone significant changes since the approval of the Organic Law for Digital and Audiovisual Transformation (LOTDA), enacted and published in Official Register No. 245 on February 7, 2023. This law prompted the Sectoral Committee of the Cinematographic and Audiovisual Industry (COSICA) to issue technical regulations for obtaining Audiovisual Investment Certificates (CIA), covering 37% of costs (Forbes, 2023) and expenses incurred in Ecuador for audiovisual and logistical services. These certificates serve as tax credits for taxes administered by the Ecuadorian Internal Revenue Service (MIPCEIP).

The approval of Technical Standard 002-COSICA-2023 for audiovisual projects positions Ecuador as an emerging player seeking to attract investments for the audiovisual sector, which includes film, video, free-to-air television, and subscription television (Bustán, 2023). The aim is to attract film projects that generate employment, facilitate the transfer of expertise from established production teams, and foster the sector's growth. This dynamic contributes to economic recovery and professional development.

Another noteworthy development is the coordination of public policies between LOTDA and the Law for the Strengthening of Tourism and Promotion of Employment, approved on March 22, 2024. This law promotes the creation of a Tourism Development Fund to finance activities, promotional programs, competitiveness, and the overall development of tourism in Ecuador (Primicias, 2024). This policy benefits the audiovisual production sector and reinforces the arguments made by experts Luzuriaga, Carpio, and Ulloa that Ecuador must support creation and production, strengthen ties with local companies, attract international audiences, and simultaneously develop strategies to promote and disseminate its culture, customs, traditions, and especially its cities and natural environments (Ordóñez et al., 2023).

While the audiovisual sector in Ecuador is growing, it is not yet considered competitive at the national or international level; more work is required to achieve such development. This assessment is supported by annual revenue data from the Internal Revenue Service (SRI), showing that the arts and entertainment sector accounts for only 2% of national revenue. One area experiencing growth in Ecuador is local production for social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Within the entertainment genre, the micro-genre of fiction has carved out space through reflective series, dramas, and comedies. This line of business has a local, national, and international impact. “Only between Loja and Zamora Chinchipe, there are more than 20 companies or networks that have formed a productive work network, generating hundreds of jobs and, through content monetization, are injecting resources into local economies” (Lara, 2023).

1.1 Free-to-Air Television in Ecuador

Chart 1. National Free-to-Air Television Channels in Ecuador

Private Networks/Channels (3)	Public Networks/Channels (2)
Ecuavisa (Channel 8)	Ecuador Tv (ECTV) (Channel 7)
Canal RTU (Channel 9)	Televisión del Pacífico GAMA TV* (Channel 11)
Red Telesistema RTS (Channel 9)	TC Televisión* (Channel 10)
Oromar (Channel 41)	
Teleamazonas (Channel 5)	
Telerama (Channel 4)	
Tevicentro (Channel 32)	
TOTAL, PRIVATE CHANNELS = 7	
TOTAL PUBLIC AND SEIZED CHANNELS = 3*	

Source: ARCOTEL (2024). In RTV Listing, December 2024.

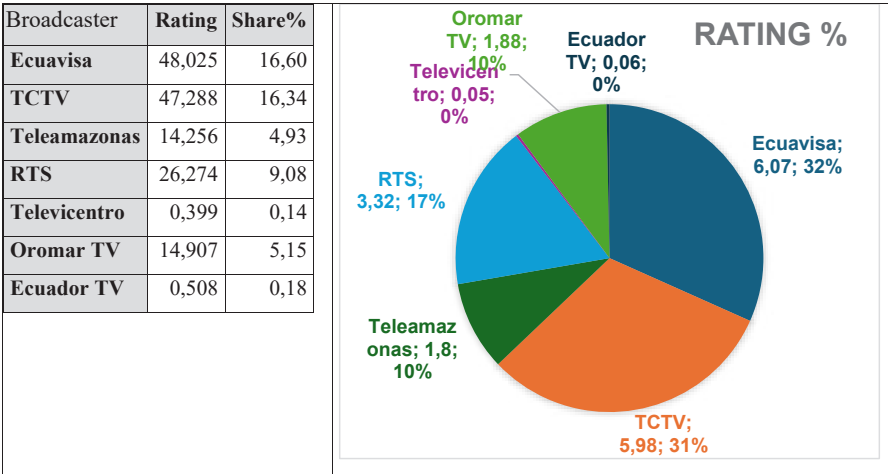
Free-to-air television in Ecuador is currently undergoing a transitional phase marked by multiple challenges, particularly due to competition from streaming platforms such as Netflix, HBO, YouTube, and Disney+, which have led to audience fragmentation and a decline in traditional television consumption, especially among younger generations. This situation has pushed free-to-air television to reinvent itself through original production, co-production, and distribution strategies, as well as presence on digital platforms, adopting a hybrid and flexible business model aligned with audience behavior.

Free-to-air television in Ecuador faces the same challenges posed by the “supremacy of streaming platforms and their digital environments [...], and open television networks [...] are aware of this and, for this reason, have placed their focus on streaming” (Calle, 2023) in order to remain competitive in the international market. Domestically, the Organic Law of Communication of Ecuador (LOC), reformed in 2022, continues to recognize public, private, and community ownership of free-to-air television channels according to spectrum allocation. Within this framework, private free-to-air television maintains its dominance (see Chart 1).

A distinguishing feature of these broadcasters is that they maintain simulcast transmissions in both SD and HD formats and also share their programming via their websites with live streaming available 24 hours a day. They use streaming to broadcast programs simultaneously on websites and mobile applications—an increasingly common digital strategy to maximize reach and accessibility to television content free of charge, with the exception of TC Televisión, which operates its own paid content platform, TC Digital. Another distribution method used by these broadcasters is through subscription TV providers. Ecuavisa, for instance, offers a free application called *Ecuavisa Play*.

Although subscription TV providers are one means of distributing free-to-air programming, broadcasters also take advantage of digital spaces to fragment their content across platforms such as YouTube and social media, enabling them to remain relevant in the digital sphere.

Graphic 1. Ratings and Share by Broadcaster



Source: Kantar Ibope. Rating–Share Ecuador – 2024 LMXJVSD 06:00–24:00.

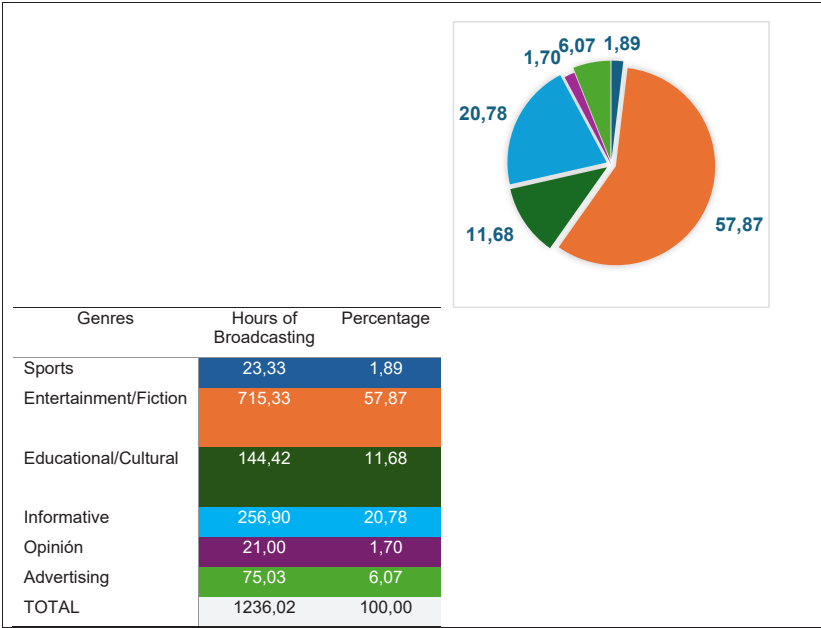
In this market, national broadcasters compete with each other, with Ecuavisa leading Ecuador’s television sector with 48 rating points (see Graphic 1), followed by TC Televisión, a financially autonomous public company, in second place with 47 points. Teleamazonas, a private channel that focuses on entertainment through franchises and original programming, scores 14 rating points.

RTS maintains an entertainment-based programming strategy that combines international series and telenovelas with locally produced shows, including gossip programs and reality shows.

Televiscentro, privately owned Oromar TV, and the public Ecuador TV channel retain a presence in a market increasingly fragmented by the diversity of video platforms operating digitally.

Another important aspect of television in Ecuador is its continued role as a reference for international, national, and local news—an added value it shares with native digital media outlets. Entertainment, particularly fiction, remains the dominant genre, followed by news and educational/cultural content (see Graphic 2).

Graphic 2. Genres and Hours Broadcast in TV Programming



Source: Kantar Ibope. Rating–Share Ecuador – 2024 LMXJVSD 06:00–24:00.

Ecuadorian television reaffirms its dominance by maintaining a connection and interaction between local and global content, allowing for an exchange of identities—what is known as cultural hybridization— “in which local identities are reinforced and reshaped by global influences” (Wheatley, 2024).

1.2 Pay Television and VoD Platforms in Ecuador

The subscription television sector (cable and satellite) is currently facing changes and a steady decline. This downward trend has been recorded since 2021, when penetration stood at 15.54%, dropping to 14.30% in 2023—significantly lower than the 31.55% penetration recorded in 2015. One of the main causes is the imposition of the Special Consumption Tax (ICE). The 15% ICE is applied to the cost of pay TV and is borne by the consumer, creating a competitive disadvantage compared to other OTT services (Méndez, 2023), which harms users and, consequently, results in lower tax revenues for the country.

Another factor to consider is that local pay-TV operators and national VoD platforms have a smaller market share in terms of subscribers compared to international giants. The main local offering is CNT/CNT Play, provided by the public operator *Corporación Nacional de Telecomunicaciones*. CNT integrated IPTV services with an OTT platform (*CNT Play*), along with telephony, reaching approximately 107,000 pay-TV subscribers by 2023 (Dataxis, 2024).

The subscription-based audio and video service (AVS)—a term used by the *Agencia de Regulación y Control de las Telecomunicaciones* (Arcotel) for traditional pay TV—experienced a sustained decline in subscribers during 2023. At the beginning of the year, Ecuador had 529,000 pay-TV subscribers (Arcotel, 2023). By the second quarter of 2023, this number dropped to 500,000 and continued falling to 492,000 by mid-year. At the end of 2023, the figure was 467,075 subscribers nationwide, meaning only 10 out of every 100 households pay for this service. This reflects a rapid migration away from the traditional free-to-air and subscription TV model.

Despite this scenario, television in Ecuador maintains a business model with multiple content distribution channels through pay-TV operators (see Chart 2), paid content access through websites, and free access via apps.

Chart 2. Pay TV Networks in Ecuador

Subscription television	Alfa TV
	Cable Premier
	Cableexpress
	Velocidad del cable
	CBVisión
	Cine Cable TV
	Claro Ecuador
	CNT
	CostacomTV
	DirecTV Ecuador /DirecTV Go Ecuador
	Televisión DV
	Ecuavisa
	Gama TV
	Movistar Ecuador
	Televisión Oromar
	Puerto Cable
	Tc Mi Canal
	Teleamazonas
	Telecuatro Guayaquil
	Televisión por cable
	TVC Ecuador
	TVNET Ecuador
	Setel

Source: Dataxis (2024)

Among the companies offering subscription television, DirecTV holds the largest market share at 44.5% (Graphic 2), followed by CNT TV, the state-owned company, with 16.1%, and Claro TV with 9.2%. These companies have the highest market share in both free-to-air and pay-TV services.

OTT platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon, along with national platforms like *Cholofix*, represent a clear path for the diversification of the free-to-air television business model, incorporating brand values that include high-quality production of local series. Social media also plays an important role in content distribution, particularly for sports coverage, local news, and entertainment programs. This strategy allows television providers to expand their audience base, offering services accessible from any device and any location, without depending on specific segments.

1.3 Sources of Financing in the Audiovisual Sector

Market trends in the audiovisual sector—particularly in free-to-air television—are increasingly oriented toward corporate services. In other words, business models are being established that integrate IPTV services with OTT platforms. In Ecuador, this dynamic is evident in public–private subscription television services combined with internet and mobile telephony packages. These diversified business and financing models enable the television sector to connect with the country’s audiovisual production dynamics.

In Ecuador, the main sources of television financing are advertising and the sale of content through direct payment on websites—*TC Play* is one example of a television business model that applies this approach.

Additionally, Ecuador’s audiovisual sector benefits from public funding sources promoted and managed by the State, as well as private financing originating from national or international companies and organizations dedicated to this purpose.

			Fondo de Fomento Audiovisual
			Certificado de Inversión Audiovisual (CIA)
			Instituto de Fomento a la Creatividad y la Innovación (IFCI)
<i>Direct</i>	<i>Public</i>	<i>Funding</i>	Fondos de Fomento Cultural del Ministerio de Cultura y Patrimonio.
<i>Sources</i>			
<i>Indirect</i>	<i>Public</i>	<i>Funding</i>	Banco de Desarrollo del Ecuador (BDE)
<i>Sources</i>			
<i>Direct</i>	<i>External</i>	<i>Funding</i>	Concejo Nacional de Cine (CNCine)
<i>Sources</i>			Crowdfunding y capital privado
<i>Indirect</i>	<i>External</i>	<i>Funding</i>	Ibermedia
<i>Sources</i>			



In addition to the funding sources listed above, the audiovisual field in Ecuador benefits from a variety of external financing organizations that encourage participation by Ecuadorian producers.

Another notable source of financing comes from social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok. This trend has motivated Ecuadorian producers to expand into these spaces, diversifying the production of entertainment fiction—particularly with series that focus on reflective themes and comedy.

#### **1.4 Communication policies**

In 2024, communication policies in Ecuador—particularly with regard to television, audiovisual fiction, and national production—are in a transitional stage due to technological changes and shifts in consumption across digital media. A debate has emerged over the advisability of regulating content created on the basis of artificial-intelligence tools, which in many cases misinform.

Despite this, the country has an Organic Law of Communication, reformed in 2022, which is the principal instrument framing the practice of communication; it guarantees fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and the promotion of national content. In addition, the Council of Communication, the body responsible for overseeing and promoting communication policies, has worked to foster national production and diversity in the media. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these policies depends on collaboration with other stakeholders and on the availability of resources.

A review of communication policies over the past year shows both positive outcomes and drawbacks. The General Regulations of the Organic Law of Communication set out aspects of post-production and exhibition, promote innovation in broadcasting and subscription television, and encourage the allocation of frequencies for the provision of radio broadcasting and free-to-air television services. Likewise, in 2024 the Audiovisual Investment Certificates (CIA) were implemented for national and international productions. Resolution No. 001-COSICA-2024 issued the Technical Standard regulating the requirements and conditions for applying for and issuing the CIAs. In the same vein, audiovisual fiction was supported through the approval of the National Telecommunications Plan 2024–2025, among whose objectives is the innovation of television services to drive the country's economic and social development.

Although the production of audiovisual fiction in Ecuador has not grown in recent years, it does stimulate local talent and interest in telling one's own stories. The industry faces limitations such as scarce financing, a lack of adequate infrastructure, and competition from higher-budget foreign productions.

Even though the Technical Committee for the Implementation of Digital Terrestrial Television (CITDT) has, since its creation, maintained the authority to coordinate and establish “a fund intended for calls for the generation of content, which must annually ensure the incorporation of digital and interactive content of national production” (Observacom, 2014).

It should also be noted that there are governmental and private initiatives aimed at supporting national production, such as competitive funds and training programs seeking to strengthen the local audiovisual industry; however, their reach is still limited and greater coordination is needed to achieve significant impact.

1.5 Digital and Mobile Connectivity Infrastructure

The digital and mobile connectivity infrastructure in Ecuador has experienced significant progress in recent years, driven by public policies aimed at reducing the digital divide and improving national coverage.

According to data from the Ministry of Telecommunications and the Information Society (MINTEL), population coverage with 4G or higher technology increased from 60,74% in 2021 to 78% in 2023, with a projected goal of 92% for the year 2025. Regarding Internet access, the percentage of households with fixed connection rose from 60,4% in July 2022 to 62,2% in July 2023. In addition, mobile Internet penetration reached 60,97% in October 2023.

International infrastructure was consolidated with the operation of four submarine cables that connect Ecuador with other countries, strengthening data transmission capacity. Chart 3. details the key connectivity indicators:

Chart 3. Key connectivity indicators

Indicator	Value 2023	Goal 2025
4G or higher coverage	78%	92%
Households with fixed Internet access	62,2%	78%
Mobile Internet penetration	60,97%	Not specified
Rural parishes with advanced mobile service	68,45%	79%
Average fixed connection speed	77,65 Mbps	Not specified
Average mobile connection speed	21,54 Mbps	Not specified

Source: Ministry of Telecommunications (2024).

2. Analysis of the Year: National and Ibero-American Premiered Fiction on Free-to-Air TV

Television fiction in Ecuador since the year 2024 has managed to adapt to the dynamics of the market, managing to place Ecuadorian production on television and foreign platforms. This is the case of Ecuavisa Studios, which in the third quarter of 2024 launches its new production *Los García*, managing to resonate with the Ecuadorian

audience. This series, inspired by the Argentine success *Los Roldán*, adapts the story to the Ecuadorian reality, incorporating cultural and social elements that resonate with the local public. However, the telenovela also has a universal touch that connects with audiences from different countries (Ecuavisa, 2024).

Figure 1. Los García



Source: De TV a Youtube return (2024)

With this same adaptation structure, TC Televisión premieres in 2024 the series *Los de al Lado*, a comedy that presents the routine of a neighborhood full of rivalries, comic situations, and touches of love. The series itself humorously reflects the daily dynamics of families and their neighborhood relationships. This series was broadcast by TV Globo Brazil; the original version has 155 episodes, while for export it was cut to 105 episodes.

Figure 2. Los de al Lado



Source: Dailymotion TC televisión (2024).

Table 1. Premiered fiction exhibited in 2024 (national, foreign)

UNPUBLISHED NATIONAL TITLES-3	FOREIGN TITLES UNPUBLISHED-28
<b>Ecuavisa</b>	<b>Ecuavisa</b>
1.Los García (telenovela)	1.Hilos del Destino (soap opera- Turquía)
2.De Locos (serie web 2024)	2.Traicionada (soap opera Sadakatsiz-Turquía)
<b>TCTV (Tc Televisión)</b>	3.Goldenboy (soap opera Yalı Çapkını- Turquía)
3. Los de al lado (telenovela)	4.Segunda Oportunidad (soap opera- Brasil)
	5. La Gata (soap opera- México)
	6. Destino en Llamas (soap opera Alev Alev- Turquía)
	<b>TCTV (Tc Televisión)</b>
	7. Leandro Diaz (soap opera- Colombia)
	8. Tres Razones para amar (soap opera-Turquía)
	9.Luz de Esperanza (soap opera-Turquía)
	10.El Secreto de mi Esposo (soap opera-Turquía)
	11.Giros del Destino (soap opera-Turquía)
	12.Tu Nombre y el Mío (soap opera-Turquía)
	13.Mi Madre la Culpable (soap opera-Turquía)
	14.Vida Robada (soap opera-Turquía)
	15.Falsa Promesa (soap opera-Turquía)
	<b>Teleamazonas</b>
	16.Ana de Nadie (soap opera-Colombia)
	17. Escorpión (soap opera-Colombia)
	18.Secretos de un Ángel (soap opera- Turquía)
	19.Entre Sombras (soap opera-Colombia)
	20.Hasta que la Plata nos Separe (soap opera-Colombia)
	21.El Rey Vicente Fernández (soap opera- México)
	<b>RTS</b>
	22.Tierra amarga (soap opera- Turquía)
	23.Amor Prohibido (soap opera- Turquía)
	24.Legado de Amor (soap opera- Turquía)
	25.Cuestión de Honor (soap opera- Turquía)
	<b>Televiscentro</b>
	26.Amor y Oído (soap opera-Venezuela)
	<b>Oromar TV</b>
	27.Acorralada (soap opera-Venezuela)
	<b>Ecuador TV</b>
	28.Por Amarte Así (soap opera- Argentina)

Source: Obitel Ecuador with data provided by Kantar Ibope (2024).

On the other hand, in Table 1b, foreign titles that were rerun by television networks such as Ecuavisa, TCTV are listed, and these were those that were among the most-watched products by Ecuadorians.

Among the emblematic productions is the telenovela *Compañía 593*, whose second season premiered in 2023, following the success achieved with its first season. This product is one of the titles rerun during 2024.

*Compañía 593* is an original telenovela by Ecuavisa premiered in September 2022; the first season ended in December of the same year. Since then, viewers remained attentive to the premiere of the second installment. The telenovela, which was broadcast until 2024, managed to obtain a rating of 33.2 points, positioning Ecuavisa as the leader in national prime time programming (Vistazo, 2023). The same happens with the national telenovela *Si se Puede*, premiered in 2020.

Table 1b. Exhibition of rerun titles during the year 2024

UNPUBLISHED NATIONAL TITLES-3	FOREIGN TITLES UNPUBLISHED-16
<b>Ecuavisa</b>	<b>Ecuavisa</b>
1. <i>Compañía 593 2T</i> (2023)	1. <i>Dos Esposas</i> (soap opera-Filipinas)
2. <i>Si se Puede</i> (2020)	2. <i>El Precio de la Traición</i> (soap opera-Turquía)
<b>TCTV</b>	3. <i>Hilos del Destino</i> (soap opera-Turquía)
3. <i>Los de al lado</i> (2024)	4. <i>Doble Kara</i> (soap opera-Filipinas)
	5. <i>Sueños Robados</i> (soap opera-Turquía)
	6. <i>La ley de la Venganza</i> (soap opera-Turquía)
	7. <i>Pasión de Gavilanes 3</i> (soap opera-Colombia)
	8. <i>Pasión de Gavilanes</i> (soap opera-Colombia)
	9. <i>Vidas Separadas</i> (soap opera-Turquía)
	<b>TCTV</b>
	10. <i>Leandro Diaz</i> (soap opera-Colombia)
	11. <i>Giros del Destino</i> (soap opera-Turquía)
	12. <i>Luz de Luna 3</i> (soap opera-Perú)
	13. <i>Tu Nombre y el Mío</i> (soap opera-Turquía)
	14. <i>Alas rotas</i> (soap opera-Turquía)
	15. <i>Canto Para no Llorar</i> (soap opera-México)
	16. <i>Nehir</i> (soap opera-Turquía)

Source: Centro Internacional TV. Rating Ecuador (2023). Kantar Ibope data

The premieres registered in 2023 and in 2024 provide a general overview of how television fiction is consolidating with a transmedia perspective, production for various formats, and exhibition platforms. The production dynamic in Ecuador is recurrent for platforms, and this trend sets the tone for strengthening an emerging industry.

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

	2019		2020	2020	2021		2022		2023		2024	
Format	Rat%	Duration	Rat%	Duration	Rat%	Duration	Rat%	Duration	Rat%	Duration	Rat%	Duration
SERIES	0,82	10408	0,88	10243	0,72	8848	0,72	7889	0,72	7156	0,67	6433
SOAP OPERA	1,83	11441	1,82	13040	1,73	13455	1,47	14136	1,31	114565	1,24	13344
FEATURE FILM	1,34	2742	1,61	2424	1,88	2343	1,73	2447	1,55	25992599	1,44	3120
DOCUMENTARY	0,49	641	0,56	492	0,62	597	0,24	1241	0,23	752	0,16	877
Total	1,32	25334	1,41	26300	1,36	25254	1,21	25724	1,13	25074	1,07	23775

Source: Kantar IBOPE Media Ecuador

Thus, the evolution of fiction in Ecuador indicates that the telenovela genre is maintained over time, both due to the tuning rating data, which competes mainly with feature films shown on Ecuadorian television screens.

Regarding foreign titles, Ecuadorian television strengthens its link with the foreign industry, which allows it to invigorate its programming offer with this genre. Below, in Table 3, the titles with the highest tuning rating during 2024 are presented.

Table 3. The 10 most-watched titles in 2024

	Novel title	Chanel	Country Producer	Format /Gender	Number of Chapters	Time zone	Rat%	Share
1	Hilos del destino	Ecuavisa	Endemol	Series	97	A, B 18H00 A 22H00	5,86	15
2	Traicionada	Ecuavisa	Medyapim y MedNova	Series	120	A, B y C 22H00 a 6H00	5,59	57
3	Leandro Díaz	TCTV	RCN Televisión	Soap opera	80	A, B 18H00 A 22H00	5,11	51
4	Goldenboy	Ecuavisa	OGM Pictures	Series	101	A, B 18H00 A 22H00	4,84	146
5	Propuesta Indecente	Ecuavisa	MBC Studios, 03 Turkey Medya.	Series/ Soap opera	50	A, B 18H00 A 22H00	4,69	79
6	Segunda Oportunidad	Ecuavisa	Süreç Film	Series/ Soap opera	170	A, B y C 22H00 a 6H00	4,67	40
7	Tres razones para amar	TCTV	Latin Media	Soap opera	130	A, B 18H00 A 22H00	4,02	69
8	Luz de Esperanza	TCTV	Del Barrio Producciones	Soap opera	65	A, B 18H00 A 22H00	3,96	62
9	La Gata	Ecuavisa	Televisa	Soap opera	121	A, B y C 22H00 a 6H00	3,80	137
10	Destino en Llamas	Ecuavisa	Tv Azteca	Soap opera	139	A, B y C 22H00 a 6H00	3,62	61

Source: por Kantar Ibope (2024). \* Broadcasts

The Ecuadorian audience maintains its loyalty to Colombian and Mexican narratives, which occupy the top positions according to the tuning rating. It should be noted, as an interesting fact, that Turkish narratives have positioned themselves in the last year and have resonated with the Ecuadorian audience. The acceptance of national production, which has remained in the top positions with two telenovelas—*Los García* and *Los de al Lado*—also stands out.

Tabla 4. Most-watched national titles in 2024

	Novel title	Chanel	Country Producer	Format /Gender	Number of Chapters	Time zone	Rat%	Share
1	Los García	Ecuavisa	Ecuavisa	Soap opera	144	A, B 18H00 A 22H00	3,29	52
2	Los de al Lado	TCTV	Tc Televisión	Soap opera	155	A, B 18H00 A 22H00	1,54	43

Fuente: por Kantar Ibope (2024). \*Emisiones

3. VoD Monitoring 2024

In Ecuador, the body that monitors investment in Telecommunications is the Ministry of Telecommunications (MINTEL). This entity set out in 2024 to strengthen the deployment of 5G technology for faster Internet use and thereby promote connectivity and the development of emerging technologies. However, while these actions are being considered, other markets such as VoD platforms and local operators compete with international markets and within the domestic market itself.

Among the platforms entering Ecuador and forming part of the digital market according to the register of the Internal Revenue Service (2024) are: Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Danz, Mubi, Paramount, HBO, StarPlus, Sling, Stwitcher, Gaia, Peacocktv, Servisky, Viki, ABSCBN, among others.

These platforms, according to the Organic Law of Simplification and Progressive Taxation, published in Supplement to Official Registry No. 111 in 2019 within the provisions referred to by the Internal Tax Regime Law, are subject to the regulation of the Value Added Tax (VAT) on the provision of digital services (SRI, 2020). That is, the 15% VAT is collected, a tax that is charged to Ecuadorians who use these services.

Likewise, other national platforms are registered, such as Retina Latina and Choloflix, which are free audiovisual streaming platforms open to the national and international public. Their catalogs mainly offer Ecuadorian productions and can be accessed upon user subscription. There are certain audiovisual products that have an additional cost for “rental,” a price that depends on national producers.

The Zine platform, also of Ecuadorian origin, on the contrary, maintains a paid subscription business model; the added value is offering more selective national products, unlike Choloflix, which accepts various types of productions and short films for online distribution.

4. Highlights of the Year

Ecuadorian television fiction production resurged in 2024, with ambitious premieres both on free-to-air TV and in digital formats. The most outstanding case of



the year was *Los García*, a dramedy telenovela produced by Ecuavisa, which marked the return and revival of large-scale national production after several years of imported content dominance (Ecuavisa, 2024). Premiering in October 2024 in prime time, *Los García* reached extraordinary audience figures: its first episode averaged 10.5 rating points in Guayaquil (7.3 in Quito), leading its time slot (Ecuavisa, 2024). According to press reports, its debut achieved a 30% audience share, accumulating more than 54 million views combining TV and digital platforms (Vistazo, 2024).

This telenovela, an Ecuadorian adaptation of the Argentine *Los Roldán*, managed to connect especially with young audiences (18–25 years old) through a transmedia strategy: it was actively discussed on social networks and featured the support of local influencers in the cast (Ecuavisa, 2024). In fact, *Los García* incorporated popular digital content creators in their TV debut roles, leveraging their follower bases to attract new young viewers.

Another local milestone in 2024 was the exploration of new digital fiction formats. Ecuastudios, the production arm of Ecuavisa, launched *De Locos*, a web series of 10 short episodes aimed at young audiences, designed for consumption habits on social networks and streaming (Ecuavisa, 2024). This 100% Ecuadorian production bet on emerging talent and fresh narratives, seeking to keep the local industry at the forefront for new generations.

## **5. Theme of the year: race and intersectionality in representations of Ecuadorian television fiction**

The analysis topic in question proposed for this study is of notable relevance insofar as local stories become added values for the television industry in Ecuador, considered an emerging country for the development of audiovisual production according to the report of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which examines the state of the audiovisual sector in Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of the boom in demand driven by streaming and the growing national industries.

In this sense, and with the aim of delving into the national audiovisual sector and specifically into the telenovela genre, it is determined to work with two outstanding productions according to audience preference. For this, a comparative analysis is established of two recent Ecuadorian telenovelas: *Los de al Lado* produced by TC Televisión and *Los García* produced by Ecuavisa. The study sample focuses on the episodes of the first season.



Chart 4. Study sample

Los García		
Chapter	Release date	Link
Episode 1 Season 1 Ecuavisa	9 oct. 2024	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbE9Gk1MZOU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbE9Gk1MZOU</a>
Episode 3 Season 1 Ecuavisa	11 oct. 2024	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHVZx95qO7k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHVZx95qO7k</a>
Episode 5 Season 1 Ecuavisa	15 oct. 2024	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdgVIMd1vsg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdgVIMd1vsg</a>
Episode 7 Season 1 Ecuavisa	17 oct. 2024	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DF_uAfX8mDo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DF_uAfX8mDo</a>
Los de al Lado		
Episode 1: #TheMeatWar TC Television	18 de oct. de 2024	<a href="https://tctelevision.com/los-de-al-lado/episodio-1-la-guerra-de-las-carnes/">https://tctelevision.com/los-de-al-lado/episodio-1-la-guerra-de-las-carnes/</a>
Episode 3: #AmoresPerros TC Television	19 de oct. de 2024	<a href="https://tctelevision.com/los-de-al-lado/episodio-3-lasdeudas/">https://tctelevision.com/los-de-al-lado/episodio-3-lasdeudas/</a>
Episode 5: #Entrepreneurship TC Television	23 de oct. de 2024	<a href="https://tctelevision.com/los-de-al-lado/episodio-5-emprendimiento/">https://tctelevision.com/los-de-al-lado/episodio-5-emprendimiento/</a>
Episode 7: #EllasVsEllosParte2 TC Television	24 de oct. de 2024	<a href="https://tctelevision.com/los-de-al-lado/episodio-7-ellasvsellosparte2/">https://tctelevision.com/los-de-al-lado/episodio-7-ellasvsellosparte2/</a>

Source: Obitel Ecuador (2024).

Three levels are examined: casting strategies, character development, and intersectional positioning of the characters, to evaluate how these series reflect or challenge postcolonial logics and the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion of social groups. It also seeks to identify who is represented on screen and under what stereotypes or archetypes, as well as which absences are significant in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, or other social categories.

5.1. Casting strategies: talent selection and ethnic-racial background

In both fictions, the composition of the cast shows a clear predominance of mestizo actors in the leading roles, with scarce presence of ethnic minorities. The first step of the analysis was to identify the racial/ethnic groups present, as well as those absent.

In the cast of *Los de al Lado*, the rival neighboring families (Rivadeneira and Chávez) are played by actors of mestizo phenotype, without openly Afro-Ecuadorian or Indigenous characters among the central ones. The difference between them is marked more by social class and regional origin than by race: the Rivadeneira embody an affluent, urban family, while the Chávez represent recent arrivals from a popular stratum (the wife La Pochis is Manabita, emphasizing her coastal identity). There is no indication of Indigenous characters, and the only possible Afro-descendant presence could be Bartola, the domestic worker, whose characterization (a gossip and extroverted girl from the neighborhood) fits with a

frequent pattern in regional TV where members of racialized groups appear in servile or picturesque roles.

According to the methodology designed by Obitel, when Indigenous or Afro populations are incorporated into fiction, it is usually as background or tertiary characters, whose stories are not developed, often in a subordinate position, mostly as service providers or domestic workers (maid, driver, gardener). Bartola fulfills precisely that tertiary function of service and comic relief, confirming the trend. The protagonists, on the other hand, belong to the dominant social group (urbanized mestizos), which is referred to as postcolonial logics of television representation: a disproportionate visibility of white/mestizo characters in central roles, even in a country with an ethnically diverse population.

Likewise, in *Los García*, a similar pattern is observed. The story revolves around the García family, of humble origin, whose patriarch José Pepe Pancho García (played by Diego Spotorno) is a mestizo man who suddenly rises to a position of business power. The central characters Pepe and his family, as well as the wealthy antagonist Rossi family, do not include any Indigenous or Afro-descendant person. The Rossis, with Italian surnames (Vito and Cuty Rossi), allude to a whitened elite of European descent.

The narrative incorporates an actor of Asian descent (Diego Chiang as Fernando Amador), an unusual case of Asian-Ecuadorian representation; however, he is a secondary character who plays the role of close friend or best friend of Pepe Pancho, who in the first episodes has little prominence. Likewise, one of the co-protagonists, Carolina Parker, could suggest foreign nationality (Anglo-Saxon surname); in the plot, she is Pepe Pancho's advisor, contributing national diversity, although within the same racial framework (light-skinned Latina actress). Overall, the absence of Indigenous or Afro characters in main roles is striking, reproducing the phenomenon described by Hall and Said of the construction of the other through invisibilization. Ecuadorian television fiction, like Latin American fiction in general, carries a historical debt regarding the inclusion of Indigenous peoples. This debt is evident in the ethnic homogeneity, with a predominantly mestizo casting in which heroes and villains are mostly light-skinned mestizos, while racialized groups remain in the background or off-screen. In the words of Stuart Hall (1997, n/p), "representation [functions] as a signifying practice" that tends to reinforce existing social hierarchies. In these casts, such practice translates into the image of the universal Ecuadorian falling almost exclusively on mestizo characters, relegating ethnic otherness to a peripheral place.

## 5.2. Strategies: Archetypes, Types, Signs, and Stereotypes

Analyzing the way characters are constructed in each series makes it possible to see how much they delve into their subjectivity or whether they remain in the broad strokes of the stereotype. Therefore, this analysis proposes to distinguish between complex characters (characters or archetypes in this context), linear type characters, mere functional signs, or stereotypes that reduce a character to the representation of an entire group. Applying these criteria to the episodes examined, clear differences emerge in the level of narrative development granted to one or another character, which also correlate with their social belonging.

### 5.2.1. Development in *Los de al Lado*

As a situational comedy, this series presents rather schematic characters, conceived to generate humor from contrast. The protagonists embody recognizable social archetypes: the nouveau riche but vulgar neighbor vs. the well-off and conceited neighbor. Darío Chávez (El Gordis) is the good-natured, immature, and soccer-loving man, while Toñeco Rivadeneira is the somewhat conceited successful professional; their wives are also defined by one or two strong traits (Lourdes Luli as a vain and fitness-oriented woman, Jessica La Pochis as a tough woman with provincial roots). Although they are likeable characters, their subjectivity does not explore many facets beyond the class or regional stereotype they represent. They tend more toward linear types that show only one side of their personality than toward three-dimensional characters in evolution. For example, Luli remains superficial and classist in every episode (a trait that defines her in a fixed way), and Pochis is always sustained as the hard-working mother who is proud of her humble origin. This comic linearity fulfills the expectation of the genre but implies a denial of deep development for these characters. On the other hand, the secondary characters fulfill very clear functional roles: Bartola, the gossipy maid, is practically a sign character; she exists to trigger entanglements and serve as the voice of gossip in the gated community, and her own motivations or past remain out of focus. Likewise, Juanetito (the retired concierge) contributes comedy and a secondary romance with Dayita, but he is a static character anchored in his role as an old-fashioned veteran ladies' man. Both could also be classified as stereotypes: Bartola embodies the cliché of the extroverted and nosy maid (a recurring figure on regional TV), stigmatizing the working woman of domestic service as naturally gossipy and funny. This coincides with the definition of stereotype proposed by Hall (1997): a representation that reduces people to a few essential characteristics and usually appears where there are inequalities of power. In contrast, the four protagonists (all mestizos from the middle/upper class) dominate the plot and, although they are archetypal, they have greater influence in the

stories; for example, the wives influence neighborhood conflicts and the husbands learn comic lessons, which gives them a slightly greater degree of development than the tertiary characters. Nevertheless, even they persist with the same traits throughout the episodes analyzed, which suggests that the series relies more on comic typifications than on a deep evolution of characters.

### **5.2.2. Development in *Los García***

Being a dramedy (adaptation of *Los Roldán*), *Los García* provides a somewhat more nuanced treatment to its main characters. Pepe Pancho García, the protagonist, does qualify as a developed character: throughout the first episodes he is seen in different facets, as a widowed and affectionate father, a humble man from the neighborhood, and suddenly as an improvised executive, which reveals an inherently complex humanity in the character. His decisions and internal conflicts (for example, the tension between his modest origin and his new role as president of the corporation) are explored with a certain depth within the light tone of the telenovela. Alongside him, his sister-in-law Adelita and the advisor Carolina Parker also show nuances: Adelita combines the archetype of the self-sacrificing surrogate mother with the dilemma of a secret love for Pepe, giving her her own inner life; Carolina, for her part, although she begins as a stranger in the house, soon takes shape with professional and emotional motivations (including a possible romantic interest in Pepe), which distances her from being simply a cold executive woman and adds personal dimensions to her. That is to say, several of the central characters evolve or at least reveal different sides of themselves as the plot progresses, avoiding being totally one-dimensional.

However, not all members of the cast enjoy this development: the main antagonists, the Rossi family, are drawn in much flatter colors. Vito Rossi and his wife Cuty embody the type of the arrogant and classist rich; they are caricatured villains whose obsession with status and contempt toward the Garcías makes them predictable. Their son Enzo represents the petulant privileged youth. These antagonist characters function more as social stereotypes (the superficial white elite) than as complex individuals, serving as a comic and moral counterpoint to the popular heroes. Likewise, other supporting characters fall into conventional roles: the matriarch Isabel Luque (owner of the company) is the benevolent telenovela lady who acts almost like a fairy godmother, and although her gesture of handing over command is central to the plot, she disappears early without greater personal development; Pepe's teenage children (Toño, Mónik, María) are delineated with simple conflicts typical of their age (studies, courtships, rebellion) without delving too deeply; and figures such as the friend Rogelio or the employee Lorenzo contribute to the plot but lack their own arcs, being rather utilitarian sign characters.

It is important to note the pattern: those who receive greater complexity and screen time are Pepe Pancho and his close circle, who belong to the same dominant racial-cultural group (mestizos); in contrast, any character who could contribute another identity perspective (for example, an Afro-descendant character, which does not even exist, or the Asian character Fernando) is not developed beyond his anecdotal function. This answers critical questions: to which groups is it permitted to be complex archetypes and to which is the development of their subjectivity denied? In *Los García*, the answer is clear: the mestizo male protagonist does have full development, while the characters who fall outside the dominant norm (whether because of upper class, being an ethnic minority, or being domestic service) remain boxed into types and stereotypes. This disparity in character development reflects a structural bias: as Hall points out, stereotyping is a practice at the service of power, which fixes subordinate groups in certain simplistic images (1997). Both *Los de al Lado* and *Los García* exhibit this phenomenon, by reserving psychological complexity mainly for characters belonging to the hegemonic group (mestizo, urban) and presenting the Others—whether the domestic worker, the driver, or the foreignized rich family—in a more rigid or caricatured way.

### **5.3. Intersectionality and positioning of the characters: race, class, gender, and narrative power**

Intersectionality is framed within the study of race, class, gender, and narrative power. In television fiction, this approach helps to analyze which combinations of attributes the characters hold in positions of authority or, on the contrary, in subordinate positions within the narrative world. Following the intersectional roulette proposed by Carrera (2021), it is examined how *Los de al Lado* and *Los García* construct their fictional social hierarchies through the intersection of race/ethnicity, social class, gender, and other markers.

#### **5.3.1. Distribution of power by class and race**

In both series, the upper social classes are mostly represented by light-skinned mestizos, while the characters from lower or service classes belong to mestizo groups with darker skin tones. This fictional stratification reflects the real hierarchies of postcolonial Ecuadorian society, where the elite tends to be associated with whiteness and European descent, and the subordinate with the popular or cholo mestizo. For example, in *Los García*, the pinnacle of economic power is first symbolized by Doña Isabel Luque (a white elite woman) and then by Pepe Pancho, who, although mestizo and from the neighborhood, exceptionally manages to access a leading role according to the script. However, his rise is presented as an almost fairy-tale-like

individual anomaly, which implicitly confirms that such an executive space is not usually open to people of his origin. Around Pepe, other characters in executive or wealthy positions—the Rossi family, Carolina Parker herself as a high-level advisor—share his white mestizo phenotype and a high cultural capital (education, refined manners), unlike common employees. In *Los de al Lado*, the well-off neighbor Luli Rivadeneira and her husband Toñeco (commercial manager) represent the local apex of status in the gated community; they are mestizos and are coded as more “modern” and civilized. In contrast, the Chávez family, middle-lower class, although now living in the same gated community, retains mannerisms from the popular neighborhood; their *montuvio*/Manabita background marks them as culturally subordinate in relation to the Rivadeneiras. It is revealing that the only characters who perform service work on screen, Bartola cleaning houses, Juanetito guarding the condominium, also come from the lowest stratum.

In both *Los de al Lado* and *Los García*, the lower classes (domestic workers, guards, “neighborhood” people) are composed of racialized or minority mestizo individuals, while the positions of owner, manager, or wealthy neighbor are occupied by mestizos with a more European phenotype. In *Los García* we even see that, when the humble family from the south of Guayaquil moves into the mansion in the wealthy north, their immediate neighbors (the Rossis) are portrayed almost as aristocratic *criollos* of another lineage. The class gap is accompanied by a gap in racial and cultural capital.

### 5.3.2. Gender and power roles

A crucial intersectional aspect is how gender combines with race and class in these stories. It is worth noting that, despite the strength of several female characters, formal power within the diegesis predominantly falls to men. In *Los García*, the highest position (president of the corporation) is assumed by Pepe, a man, replacing Doña Isabel, a woman whose authority came from family inheritance. Although Isabel is the one who initially holds economic power (a positive rarity, portraying her as a business leader), her early exit and the transfer of command to Pepe ultimately reinforce a traditional patriarchal order—the large company ends up in the hands of a man again. The women in this series exert more influence from informal or affective roles.

In *Los de al Lado*, the gender dynamic is somewhat more complex in appearance: Luli and Pochis, the wives, are the true catalysts of conflict and reconciliation between families—that is, they have agency in the plot and strong characterization. However, that agency is exercised mainly in the domestic/community sphere, rather than in their own professional careers. Both remain within the traditional female sphere, although with voice and character. The men (Toñeco and Darío) compete



for the masculine status of success, vying for material or sports achievements, in a classic display of masculinity.

In summary, gender acts as a factor that modulates the power granted: mestizo men occupy the executive apex or visible authority (bosses, presidents, “head of the family”), while women—even white/mestizas from the upper class—tend to influence indirectly or be restricted to the domestic sphere.

### **5.3.3. Other intersections (sexual orientation, age, disability)**

Both *Los de al Lado* and *Los García* operate under a heteronormative discourse without evident exceptions in their first episodes. No openly LGBTQ+ character is identified, nor are there plotlines that challenge the sexual norm. Regarding age and generation: both series give narrative preeminence to young or middle-aged adults. Older people appear (Juanetito at 68 years old, Doña Isabel elderly), but their roles of power are transitory or secondary. In contrast, youth (the children/teenagers in *Los García*, Pochis and Darío’s children who are barely mentioned) lack agency: the youngest are there to complete the family picture or contribute minor plotlines, without their own voice in important decisions. Disabilities are not addressed in any of the main characters; all are physically able, which excludes another dimension of human diversity.

The intersection of markers such as regionality also deserves mention: *Los de al Lado* exploits the contrast between urban coastal vs. provincial coastal (Guayaquil vs. Manabí), which is a variant of cultural intersectionality. Pochis, being a Manabita woman from a small town, suffers class and regional microaggressions at the hands of Luli (who considers her “rustic”); here we see race and class intertwined with regional prejudices, a particular phenomenon of Ecuadorian reality where internal geography marks otherness. *Los García*, set entirely in Guayaquil, on the other hand, contrasts the marginal south and the opulent north of the city—a spatial difference that symbolizes class and race without leaving the coastal mestizo sphere. In both cases, geolocation accentuates hierarchies: the origin of a character (popular neighborhood vs. private gated community).

## **5.4. Analysis of narrative strategies**

### **5.4.1. Social groups linked to behaviors considered positive or aspirational**

One of the fundamental axes of positive representation in *Los de al Lado* is the role of women as agents of transformation and empowerment within the home and the community. Characters such as Dayita, Pochis, or Luli, despite being portrayed in a humorous and caricatured tone, embody a narrative that places them as persistent, disciplined, and creative, particularly in the field of entrepreneurship, appealing to

economic independence in the face of the precariousness of their husbands or partners. Children, such as Vicky and her brother, are also represented with innocence and creativity, showing an idealized version of youth that contrasts with the frustrations of adults. Their relationship with pets, as well as their participation in activities such as collecting clothes for the “Muchachitos Descalzos Foundation,” reflects a discourse of compassion, solidarity, and empathy.

In *Los García*, the characters associated with positive or aspirational behaviors are linked to the business world and upward social mobility. For example, Carolina Parker and Mrs. Isabel represent rationality, success, and discipline. Carolina, with her elegance and professionalism, embodies the ideals of a successful woman in the corporate sphere, while Isabel, as a figure of authority, symbolizes power and legality in the business world.

The García family embodies a type of “popular resilience” that the narrative transforms into virtue. Despite being initially presented as a migrant group from the neighborhood to an elite gated community, its members maintain values such as solidarity, collective effort, a sense of humor in the face of adversity, and fidelity to cultural roots (expressed in traditional cooking, sayings, speech patterns, and daily practices). Pepe García embodies a popular version of the “self-made man”; although his rise is accidental and mediated by the intervention of a wealthy figure (Mrs. Isabel), he is constructed as a subject with leadership capacity, emotional integrity, and a certain strategic naivety that reinforces his symbolic legitimacy.

As important findings, we want to highlight how virtue is linked to the ability to sustain ethical bonds, care, persist, and act with coherence in contexts of conflict, displacing the meritocratic ideal with a situated ethic. Social ascent is not presented as a direct consequence of individual merit, but as the product of chance, circumstance, or external decisions, whereby the meritocratic ideal is displaced or questioned from the narrative structure. The aspirational is then constructed not as cumulative success, but as relational capacity and everyday ethics. In turn, there is a shift in the centrality of the characters: women, children, and unconventional figures emerge as bearers of agency, instead of adult men linked to power.

#### **5.4.2 Social groups linked to behaviors of a “deficient citizenship” or “social problem”**

The humorous strategy of the soap opera intensifies the representation of men, especially those from the lower middle class, as failed citizens. Darío, Juanetito, and Toñico in *Los de al Lado* frequently embody the figure of the incapable, immature, dependent, or emotionally unstable male. In multiple episodes, they are shown as useless in domestic tasks, clumsy in conflict resolution, impulsive or lazy, and lacking vision or family commitment.



In *Los García*, the Rossi family and the business environment around them, despite being placed in a register of upper middle or elite class, are frequently associated with negative behaviors from a popular ethical perspective: envy, hypocrisy, selfishness, repressed emotionality, class-based racism, and the instrumentalization of personal relationships. The irony in the narrative strategy is that the dominant classes, traditionally associated with order, rationality, and success, are here shifted toward the pole of affective abnormality and emotional illegality. The narrative thus subverts the common place that associates marginality with criminality or irrationality. Here, the most emotionally unstable behaviors—such as cultural racism disguised as good manners, covert classism, or hatred toward the popular *nouveaux riches*—come from those who should represent rationality and institutional order.

In this case, the most important finding is how deficient citizenship is not linked exclusively to material poverty, but rather cuts across all social strata through violence, corruption, contempt for others, and the instrumentalization of relationships. However, when popular sectors engage in these behaviors, they are more likely to be corrected or redeemed, while the elites are portrayed as more resistant to change or learning. In both cases, the behaviors associated with a deficient citizenship are performative and not essential; that is, they are shown as the result of contexts, tensions, or learning, rather than as immutable essences of a social group. This allows the soap operas to articulate a social critique from a more dynamic and less moralizing perspective.

#### **5.4.3. Social groups linked to the presentation of historical facts and/or social events**

Although *Los de al Lado* is not a historical soap opera, there are elements that allow certain scenes to be read as a satirical documentation of contemporary social practices and events. The most evident case appears when the closure of the *Tierra Cítrica* business for unsanitary conditions is portrayed, accompanied by television-report-style coverage denouncing the lack of hygiene. Here, the aesthetics and narrative of consumer or public health oversight programs are emulated, turning a fictional anecdote into an allegory of real processes, such as informality, the precariousness of domestic-commercial work, and symbolic state control. Likewise, the *Muchachitos Descalzos Foundation*, which appears in several episodes as a recipient of donations and a symbol of social charity, functions as a reference to structural realities: childhood in a situation of vulnerability, social inequality, and the need for civil and community intervention.

The narrative of *Los García* subtly inserts references to broader social dynamics, especially internal migration, social mobility, and the precariousness of labor contracts. The arrival of the García family to the mansion, through an ambiguous contract with Mrs. Isabel, stages a type of conditional social mobility, dependent on the whim of the power groups. This reflects a structural situation in which popular sectors manage to access certain benefits only as part of a symbolic economy of emotional servitude or personal loyalty. There are also symbolic representations of the transition from a neighborhood-based society to a gated community, which can be read as an allusion to the urban and social transformations of contemporary Ecuador: class displacement, gentrification, and tension between the popular and the exclusive. In this transition, a new form of segregation is documented, one that is not only spatial, but also cultural and emotional.

It is here that our findings point to how the representations of historical and social facts are constructed from everyday scenes that allude to structural problems such as financial violence, social exclusion, and gentrification. Popular narrative becomes a living archive of real social processes, dramatizing their effects on the lives of concrete subjects through labor informality, popular appropriation of the language of rights, and forced displacements toward foreign class norms. Precarious entrepreneurship, the feminization of emancipatory discourse, and aesthetic surveillance in business environments are not presented as exceptions, but as part of the habitual social landscape

**a. Is there a type of narrative/theme that is most used when representing a specific racial-ethnic/social minority group?**

The representation of racialized groups in *Los de al Lado* is scarce, fragmentary, and essentially symbolic, where isolated and parodic references appear, such as Juanetito's shout "¡por Karanki y Atahualpa!" which constitute stereotyped or folklorized forms of ethnic evocation that serve an ornamental function, without developing cultural or political complexity. The most present social minority is the group of domestic workers, especially Bartola. Her figure not only personifies class marginality, but also the intersection of gender, race, and servitude. Although she is treated with affection and even deference at times, the narrative built around her is based on sacrifice, selflessness, and domesticity as a natural destiny. Her role as disciplinarian, caretaker, and silent worker positions her within a subordinate class archetype that rarely achieves full agency.

In *Los García*, the racial or ethnic dimension does not appear explicitly in the categorizations that the narrative uses to construct its characters. However, there is a symbolic framework that assigns certain cultural and bodily characteristics to popular

characters, which allows for a glimpse of a racialized representation, although not openly declared as such. The García family is constructed as the cultural “other” within the white, silent, and elitist gated community. Their speech, rich in coastal idioms, sayings, diminutives, and linguistic play, their flashy clothing, and their festive corporeality markedly differentiate them from the original residents of the neighborhood, who represent a white/mestizo middle-upper-class ideal, associated with order, sober aesthetics, emotional control, and regulated consumption. This opposition is not articulated in biological or phenotypic terms, but rather through cultural coding that serves the same function of symbolic exclusion as racial markers.

Thus, we find that, taken together, the works construct symbolic equivalents of the ethnic and racial through the language, accent, corporeality, humor, and cultural codes of the characters. The most visibly represented symbolic minority is that of the popular coastal sectors, especially through marked linguistic expressions, eating habits, exuberant corporealities, and modes of affective socialization. These marks function as narrative substitutes for the ethnic-popular within the urban framework, establishing cultural distinctions that operate as axes of narrative conflict or symbolic difference.

#### **5.4.4. Is there any type of situation/environment within the narrative in which a type of racial group consistently becomes visible, and in what modality?**

The soap opera *Los de al Lado* takes place almost exclusively in domestic spaces such as kitchens, patios, dining rooms, family living rooms, and occasionally neighborhood streets. In these contexts, the represented subjects—mainly extended families, mothers, fathers, children, and even pets—share a saturated spatiality, where the intimate mixes with the public, and where conflicts are heightened by the material and symbolic proximity of bodies and needs. Interestingly, the only spaces that simulate a certain aspirational status, such as the set of the reality show *Cuarentonas whit Talentó* or the candy-selling ventures, end up also being scenarios of frustration, sabotage, or failure, which reinforces the idea that social ascent is illusory or ridiculous within the framework of the work.

In *Los García*, the plot focuses on the opposition between the neighborhood, as a space of origin, and the elite gated community, as the setting of social ascent. This opposition extends beyond physical geography, encompassing spaces such as the company, the house, and social gatherings, which become cultural battlegrounds. The mansion where the García family lives symbolizes both a conquest and a trap, since, although it represents material ascent, it also implies adapting to a regime of cultural and aesthetic norms foreign to their origin. In the company, Pepe Pancho, a man with no professional experience, becomes president, showing how his human

and ethical leadership contrasts with the coldness and superficiality of traditional executives. Public spaces, such as the street and the neighborhood, represent places of genuine community, overflowing affections, and social creativity, in contrast with the controlled intimacy of the home and the imposture of the company.

In conclusion, and as important findings, it is indicated that spatial organization in the narratives reproduces social hierarchies through implicit codes that regulate symbolic belonging. Elite spaces are constructed as scenarios of silent exclusion, where material access does not guarantee cultural integration or social legitimacy. In them, expressive differences are perceived as threats to order. On the other hand, popular spaces allow for a greater continuity between identity, language, and behavior, functioning as territories where social practices do not need to be concealed. The distribution of bodies and their ways of inhabiting these environments reveals how space acts as a filter of citizenship, structuring which ways of life are visible, acceptable, or worthy of recognition.

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