Teenage consumption of television series. The case of "La que se avecina"

Consumo adolescente de series de televisión. El caso de "La que se avecina"

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Abstract:

Television series exert a significant influence on adolescents' beliefs and opinions, especially in regards to gender, racial and social stereotypes. In this context, this work aims to discern youth involvement with fiction series by finding out what types of series they consume and what motivations they have for doing so. The bonds that are established by teenagers with the characters were also determined. For this purpose and by means of a mixed methodology; surveys and group dynamics were conducted with 236 adolescents from four education centers in Zaragoza. The results have shown that these teenagers consume Spanish sitcoms, such as "La que se avecina" as they are drawn to its absurd humour and also establish bonds with adult characters who are defined by their comicalness.

Keywords:

Adolescence; fiction series; humour; motivation; characters.

Resumen:

Las series televisivas ejercen una influencia significativa en las creencias y opiniones de los adolescentes, especialmente en lo que atañe a estereotipos sexuales, raciales y sociales. En este contexto, este trabajo pretende conocer la implicación de los jóvenes con la ficción seriada averiguando qué tipo de series consumen y cuáles son sus motivaciones, así como los vínculos que establecen con los personajes. Para ello, a partir de una metodología mixta, se han realizado encuestas y dinámicas de grupo con 236 adolescentes procedentes de cuatro centros educativos de Zaragoza. Los resultados exponen que estos jóvenes consumen comedias de situación españolas, como La que se avecina, atraídos por el humor absurdo, y establecen vínculos con personajes de edad adulta caracterizados por su comicidad.

Palabras clave:

Adolescencia; series de ficción; humor; motivación; personajes.

1. Introduction

The media has considerable power of cultural pervasiveness for the creation and strengthening of stereotypes (Masanet, Medina and Ferrés, 2012; Ambrós and Breu, 2011), in particular for young people who are undergoing a process of constructing their identity (França, 2001). Television can significantly influence the opinion of the very young in terms of gender, racial, professional and social stereotypes (Ferrés, 1994; Greenfield, 1985).

Furthermore, several investigations have confirmed that the exposure to fiction contents, such as television series have significant effects on television audiences' attitudes and beliefs (Slater and Rouner, 2002; Green and Brock, 2000). Therefore, research on youth media consumption is necessary, especially that which is centered on entertainment products that are most consumed by this age group; which is the case with fiction series (Iglesias and González, 2012; Pindado, 2006; Figueras et al., 2014).

It is necessary to know the type of consumption and adolescents' favourite fiction series genres as well as the most watched series by this age group before delving into the study of immigration values noted by adolescents in their most consumed media products, fiction television. Moreover, it is essential to find out what these teenagers' motivations behind choosing their favourite character are; an issue of great significance in order to understand the potential reach of media effects on its audience (Medrano, Martínez de Morentín and Pindado, 2014). Numerous studies have demonstrated that there is a direct relationship between television viewers' identification with characters in television fiction and that series influence audiences on an emotional, cognitive or behavioural level, especially amongst younger viewers (Slater and Rouner, 2002; Igartua, 2010).

1.1. Youth audiences and fiction series

By cultural conventions, adolescence is considered to be the part in our life cycle when puberty begins and concludes once the person reaches maturity. This phase of physical and psychological changes was described by Freud as causing emotional upheaval that gives rise to heightened vulnerability of the personality (Freud, 1937).

In this context, the media industry is a very important factor for socialization (Rivadeneyra, 2006: 394). The subject of study in this paper is fiction series, which is displayed/presented as emotional fodder for broadening and organizing adolescents' psychological and affective experience. Watching series can contribute to creating new ways of interacting in society and new methods for relating to others and themselves. Therefore, it could be said that they fulfill an "initiation" role for youth. Series, as well as youth magazines inform about ethical codes and esthetics without leaving home (França, 2001).

Fedele and García-Muñoz (2010) divided the research on youth and series into five variables: culture effect; the ownership of the meaning given to the series by the youth audience; identity; use and consumption; and motivations.

The first group corresponds to the projects that were carried out on this subject of study in the United States in the eighties. The aim of these investigations was to measure the effects of watching soap operas on young students. Based on Gerbner's cultivation theory it is confirmed that the more television that children and youth watch the more likely it is that their conceptions about the world and its people (their attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviour) are reflected in what they watch on television (Gerbner et al., 1994).

A second theme of analysis arised going into the nineties, specifically in the qualitative area: the significance that adolescents gave to fiction series products. In other words, how young people acquire the meanings, views, opinions and values constructed by the series (Fedele and García-Muñoz, 2010).

This idea subsequently led researchers to focus on the issue of adolescents' identity, taking into account the formation process and personality development in this age group (França, 2001).

Fourthly, studies about uses and consumption comprise the highest number of projects on the subject of study: the viewer's situation, the uses that adolescents apply to the contents, youth assessments about the series and finally how they incorporate the consumption of these products in their day to day lives (Fedele y García-Muñoz, 2010). These types of investigations on a national level have focused in particular on what García-Muñoz y Fedele (2011) call the binomial teen-series and teenagers, that is they have covered fiction products specifically directed towards young people. They highlight the analysis of reception in this field in the series *Al salir de clase* (Montero, 2005) and *Compañeros* (França, 2001), among others.

Finally, the research on motivations has centered on the analysis of the reasons that drive young people to watch fiction series. As previously mentioned, this is one of the aims of this work; as well as to find out what type of fiction series adolescents consume.

1.2. Teen consumption of fiction series in Spain

Five formats of different fiction series can be identified: soap opera, melodrama, drama series, sitcom and dramedy. The first three belong to the category of drama due to the nature of their contents. Soap opera is formally distinguished from the rest due to the open nature of its plots and episodes. In most cases melodrama has a main plot, which the storyline revolves around and whose ending is always pre-determined. Conversely, dramas or dramatic series tend to place importance on two or three plots, which are developed in each episode in approximately 50 minutes in a self conclusive way. They belong to the last category of professional, action, mystery o thriller series (López et al., 2011).

Moreover, the contents in the category of comedy are chosen and mainly orientated towards entertaining its audience through humour, although not exclusively. The first type is the sitcom, which originated in the United States, and whose

duration does not go over 30 minutes (Álvarez, 1999). This genre in Spain has been created from the hybridization of the American sitcom, *el sainete*, and "Spanish style comedies". Each episode has been extended from 45-75 minutes, depending on the production, among other changes (Diego and Grandío, 2011). The second type is the dramedy, which combines plots that pertain to television drama with specific comedy elements. In other words, it has dramatic content, but its main purpose is to be funny and to entertain.

In this context, Spanish youth prefer drama to sitcom, although by a small margin; and unquestionably choose comedy over drama (López and Gómez, 2012; López et al., 2013). The consumption of national production versus foreign production is highlighted in relation to origin, even though some products such as *The Simpsons* are also very famous among youth (Almansa, 2005; Marta and Gabelas, 2013).

Furthermore, teen series also prevail over dramedies, i.e. produced specifically for a youth target audience and corresponding to plots and contexts appropriate to the teenage population (García-Muñoz and Fedele, 2011). Thus, adolescents tend to look for television series that reflect their problems and concerns, likewise adults can choose other themes more closely related to their necessities (Montero, 2005).

1.3. *Youth, series and favourite characters*

Within the theoretical framework for the motivations that young people and adolescents have for consuming some media over others, or some genres over others, we have found a premise that matches most research on the theme: entertainment and amusement that viewers experience watching their favourite programs (González, Dávalos and Gutiérrez, 2012; Medrano, Palacios and Aierbe, 2007; Flores-Ruiz and Humanes, 2014). Furthermore, research has also highlighted the need to know the outside world, forget about daily life and to switch off from the routine (Austin, 1984; Planells and Maz, 2012).

In the case of fiction series, González, Dávalos and Gutiérrez (2012) demonstrate that young students watch this type of format because it is amusing, funny, and entertains at the same time as allowing one to escape from the routine, as well as the fact that it is fashionable and you are able to comment on it with your friends so that you are not excluded from social conversations. In their study Sánchez and Fabbro (2014) discovered that being able to relate to characters is a variable that accounts for the satisfaction obtained from audiovisual fiction; an idea that Cazeneuve (1974) and Ang (1985) reflected in their time.

Numerous authors have analyzed the existing link between fiction series characters and adolescents. The identity of the latter (Pindado, 2006), perceived values (Medrano, Martínez de Morentín and Pindado, 2014), social learning for acquiring values, the characters' persuasiveness as a tool for entertaining and young peoples' health (Igartua, 2007) are some of the themes that have been studied. In this case, the objective is to find out the reasons for choosing favourite characters, which

involves addressing the construct of identification as well as other possible relationships between media figures and adolescents.

Igartua (2008) outlines three possible relationships connected to the construct of "identification", which he refers to as empathy. Therefore, the relationship between the fiction characters and youth could be based on: emotional empathy (to feel like the character) cognitive empathy (understanding the character and adopting their points of view), behavioural empathy (of which it is important to differentiate between wishing to seem like the character and imitating some of their behaviour). In addition to identification, Cohen (2001) sets out another type of relationship, such as feeling attracted to characters (affinity) or the desire to interact with them (parasocial interaction).

With respect to the attributes that allow the creation of a bond between characters and youth, in other words reasons for choosing favourite characters, similar gender and age as well as personality have been mentioned (Hoffner, 1996), social origins and that they are accepted by peers and family members (Pasquier, 1996), among other ideas. In other words, those that construct their individual and collective identity are chosen as favourites (França, 2001).

Ruiz, Conde and Torres (2005) have recently demonstrated that one of the most noted reasons by adolescents for choosing their favourite characters is physical attractiveness, which brings into question other investigations that emphasize friendliness, humor and personality as well as other issues such as work, a non-conformist and rebellious attitude and intelligence (Aierbe and Medrano, 2013; Medrano et al., 2010). Abad (2015) demonstrates that besides humor and rebelliousness, adolescents are interested in the role that the actor plays, that is, their performance as well as the language used by the characters. Lacalle (2012) states that adolescents relate to characters more because of their personality than their age, whereby rebels and more ambivalent characters arouse more interest. Accordingly, Figueras et al. (2014: 49) demonstrates that, youth feel attracted to the "bad guy" in regards to the male characters in series because in their imagination, "they seem to have taken on the idea that what makes a man's personality attractive and seductive (…) is a contrast between a kind or loving side and a powerful one in which he exerts (or threatens to exert) violence."

Finally, in the current era of television digitalization it is imperative to mention adolescent consumption via computers, although it is not the subject of study in this work. Web fiction series viewers develop a context, "where multitasking and multi-screens are usual practice for the purpose of maintaining contact with friends" (Pavón-Arrizabalaga et al., 2016: 45); thus emerging as a social function for fiction contents. In addition to offering series on demand, the Internet allows us to redefine the type of consumption due to the capacity to share information at the same time via social networks and digital mediums. All of this has allowed the audience to adopt an active role (Bolin, 2010).

1.4. Objectives

The theoretical framework shown sets out some concepts as a starting point. Firstly, that fiction series consumption and identifying with characters influences adolescents on an emotional, cognitive and behavioural level in the way that they interact with society. Secondly, youth consume teen series and comedy, but in particular the subgenre dramedy followed by sitcom; and in terms of origin, viewers watch nationally produced series over foreign ones. Thirdly, the main reason adolescents give for watching series is to be entertained, escape from the routine, commenting on it with their friends and the relationship that they establish with characters. Finally, adolescents choose their favourite characters for being the same gender or age, their intelligence, personality, as well as a rebellious or non-conformist character. Humor and physical attractiveness are two other categories that are dealt with in this last theme.

Based on these ideas, a general objective was constructed in order to find out the involvement that adolescents have with their favourite series. For that purpose, the following specific objectives are proposed: (1) investigate gender and origin of the series consumed by adolescents as well as the type of consumption; (2) ascertain the motivation for watching their favourite series; and (3) analyze the existing bonds between youth and their favourite characters.

2. Methodology

As indicated in the objectives, the main source for this study is adolescents' discourse about their television consumption. 236 young people between the ages of 14 and 16, who were in the 10th grade in four educational centers in Zaragoza, have participated in this project. The following schools participated: The secondary school *Miguel Servet* and semi- private secondary schools *Cantín y Gamboa, El Pilar Maristas* and *Hijas de San José.*

The choice for the sample subject of study is founded on two key reasons: first of all, the age group corresponds with what Horrocks (1984) called middle adolescence, the stage in which adolescents undergo intense deliberation about themselves and the society: secondly, we have chosen to carry out the research in high schools because it is practical for obtaining a sample of adolescents. Moreover, educational centers are influential when affecting a social construction of reality (Marta, 2007), and are a place of socialization (Gómez-Quintero and Fernández, 2012). The choice for each one of the centers meets the requirement for a bigger sized project in which it is necessary to choose diverse cultural environments[1]. In short,

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[1] Different multicultural contexts which we intend to reach allow us to find out whether a multicultural environment influences the image that is conveyed in the series and the the influence that this image has on the perception of the phenomenon in reality. Thus we have chosen a center with 71.6% foreigners (*Cantín y Gamboa*), a center with 2% of immigrants (*El Pilar Maristas*) and another two with a similar percentage of immigrant students (*IES Miguel Servet* with 35.6% and *Hijas de San José* with 29.1%. This data is from the Provicional Education Service in Zaragoza, dated May 13, 2013.

it is not a probability sample (Vinuesa, 2005) whose objective is not to guarantee representation in the teenage population, but to examine the understanding of the phenomenon.

As basic characteristics of the adolescents in the sample; it is necessary to describe that the percentage of boys and girls is similar among those surveyed (50.6% women-49.4% men); most of them were 15 years old and were in the 10th grade; 74.7% are natives and 25.3% are foreigners from 21 different countries.

Moreover, a mixed methodology has been used in this work (Jensen, 2005). Thus, the first objective was completed after carrying out a socialmedia and demographic survey with 236 adolescents in October, 2013. This survey was developed based on the Television Habits Survey (CH-tv) in both versions (Medrano, Palacios and Aierbe, 2007; Medrano, Martínez de Morentín and Apodaca, 2015) and the survey employed by França (2001) in his PhD about adolescent consumption of the series, "*Compañeros*". The results of several points in the survey are intended to be shown in this work, namely those relating to the fiction series; with the objective to find out what series teenagers watch (open question); and where, when and how it is consumed[2]. Another open question has also been analyzed in relation to adolescents' favourite characters.

By using the program SPSS (Statistical package for the social sciences) the analysis of the survey analysis was carried out whereby the consumption data was cross-referenced with the variables "gender", "nationality" and "educational center". The open questions about the series and favourite characters have been analyzed by inductive classification of the variable "production origin" and deductive of "fiction series genre". With respect to the series and the characters, they have been classified by "age" and "gender"; key questions in numerous investigations regarding the bond between characters and the adolescents (Lacalle, 2012; Hoffner, 1996; Pasquier, 1996).

In order to respond to the second and third objectives, four group dynamics were conducted in January 2014 (that correspond with what Jensen, 2005 called naturalistic group interviews). There was one for each educational center and only one class from each center. These classes were chosen because as a whole students watched their favourite series the most throughout the year from the sample. In the second phase a total of 85 students participated. The dynamic as a whole aimed to address the adolescents' reception of the series *La que se avecina*. The responses to the adolescents' motivations for watching their favourite series and choosing their favourite character were studied in relation to the objectives of this work. The adolescents' nationality and gender as well as the educational center were taken into account.

A categorical analysis has been carried out in this case, which makes reference to breaking down operations of the text and from there classifying units into categories (Bardin, 1977). The units correspond to the objectives of this work: to find

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[2] These questions are closed and are comprised of the following values: "Where" makes reference to both the medium (television, on PC, on cell phone, on console, on the Tablet, others); and the place (at home, at friends' and relatives' homes, at the educational center, on the street. others). "When" refers to the time of day (in the morning, at noon, after lunch, in the evening, at night, others). Finally "how much" is the number of hours a day (none, 1, 2, 3, 4, over 4).

out the motivations behind young people choosing the series and their favourite characters. In this case the categories are theoretical (Ruiz, 2012); i.e they emerged as the text is analyzed on the basis of a set of guidelines, which will be explained later. In addition to this, McMillan's and Schumacher's (2005) proposal has been taken into account, not only by categorizing from the bibliography, but also by classifying information into concepts and emerging ideas.

3. Results

3.1. Series consumed by teenagers: results from a quantitative analysis

The analysis of the survey questions is addressed in this first synopsis: the type of series that are consumed, in what media context and what the adolescents' favourite characters are.

The 236 adolescents that participated in the study coincided regardless of gender, nationality or educational center where a fiction series was consumed from 1 to 3 hours a day (91.5%), on a TV screen (80%) and at home (99%). 51.5% watch the series at night during prime time.

Up to 70 different names of series are mentioned in response to the open question about the series that are consumed. With a view to find out the origin of the production, the data has been inductively classified according to production teams' country of origin, in this case they were: Spanish, North American, English and Korean. In relation to type or series subgenre a deductive categorization was carried out based on some values: soap opera, melodrama, drama, sitcom and dramedy (Carrasco, 2010).

The results of the analysis show that young people mentioned more North American series (54.8%) than Spanish (44.3%). Both countries make up practically 100% of fiction series consumption. In relation to subgenre or type of series, an elevated consumption of comedies or sitcoms (61%) was noted, well above dramas (35%) and in particular dramedies (4%).

In contrast to data from other investigations, dramedy loses importance giving way to sitcoms, even so comedy is reaffirmed as the content (López and Gómez, 2012; López et al., 2013). Titles of series mentioned in numerous studies reappear, with respect to the origin of the series the consumption of North American and Spanish fiction as seen later is still even (Almansa, 2005; Marta and Gabelas, 2013).

Therefore, one Spanish comedy stands out among the rest: *La que se avecina*, 67.1% of the sample of adolescents are consumers. Followed by *Aída* (49.1%), also Spanish, and the American series *The Simpsons* (25.7%); *Big Bang Theory* (24.8%), *Castle* (20.3%) and *How I met your mother* (19.4%). Even though, more American series are mentioned, ultimately the favourites are Spanish. The par excellence genre is indisputably the sitcom.

In terms of nationality and educational center there are no differences in gender in terms of the series mentioned; however, it is essential to highlight that 20.9% of girls consume a drama teen series that none of the boys mentioned: *Pretty Little Liars*. The rest of the teen series barely reach 10% of the teen sample, which signifies an important difference with respect to the results of other studies (García-Muñoz and Fedele, 2011).

In relation to favourite characters, adolescents named a total of 99 characters. Only two variables were taken into account in order to analyze their profile: age[3] and gender, as shown earlier. Both concepts have been considered key in numerous investigations with respect to the bond between young people and fiction characters (Lacalle, 2012; Hoffner, 1996; Pasquier, 1996); although their conclusion that adolescents usually choose those characters who are the same age and gender was not found in this study.

The teenagers in this study name adults as their favourite characters (young and middle aged) with 88.1% and adolescent characters only obtain 7.2% with no differences in educational center, nationality and gender. In this regard, the top three characters named as favourites were adult men aged between 40 and 49, this is true for both boys and girls, immigrants from all nationalities and natives. Furthermore, by an important difference in percentage in relation to the other characters. Therefore, Antonio Recio from *La que se avecina* (actor Jordi Sánchez) takes the top spot at/with 41.8%; followed by Amador from the same series (Pablo Chiapella) at/with 33.7%; and finally, Luisma from *Aída* (Paco León) at/with 32.1%. Adolescents' next favourite character only obtained 17.3%.

In conclusion, the connection with Spanish sitcoms *La que se avecina* and *Aída* in particular with the former is obvious. Firstly, sitcom as a genre is quintessentially young peoples' favourite. Secondly, their favourite characters are three adult main characters from the series. Notwithstanding, a direct relationship between teenagers and these characters can not be established because these series are not intended for adolescents (their targets are broader); and, therefore, everything in relation to these characters must be interpreted in this context.

3.2. Sitcom and absurd humor: the case of La que se avecina

The results from the categorical qualitative analysis of the questions in the group dynamics will be shown in this second section. As explained in the methodology section,

oral dynamics were conducted with the groups of students with the highest percentages that watched their favourite series; in this case *La que se avecina*. This synopsis aims to respond to the second and third objectives of the study: what motivations youth had for watching this sitcom and what bonds were established with the characters.

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[3] The values in relation to the age have been agreed upon based on the study of Juan-Francisco Martín (2005): infancy from 0 to 5 años, intermediate childhood from 6 to 12, adolescence from 13 to 19, young adults from 20 to 39, middle-aged adults from 40-49, and mature aged adults from 50 onwards.

La que se avecina has been broadcasted on several Mediaset channels between 2007 and 2016 (nine seasons) with an audience share at 15% (data from Fórmula TV). The eighth season achieved an audience share of 48.5 (2015) amongst youth between 13 and 24, far higher than other favourite adolescents' series whose percentages are below 28% (data from Kantar Media). This series emerged when Telecinco acquired part of the producer that had funded and made the series *Aquí no hay quien viva* (Antena 3), among other reasons. *La que se avecina* came to light after wishing to go on with the success of this format. As a matter of interest, the fictitious context is moved from the center to the outskirts as *7 vidas* and *Aída* did (Sangro, 2005). On this occasion, the series is set in the residential estate *Mirador de Montepinar*, which is located in the outskirts of a big city and is characterized by being remote and badly connected to the rest of the city. The plot revolves around the problems that arise in the building among the owners, tenants and some workers; the story is always told from an almost absurd comic perspective and is characterized for being hyperrealistic and for the characters' incorrectness (Folgueras, 2011). Accordingly, different types of humour must be clarified: absurd humour is characterized by showing a reality that is incongruous with what is to be expected. Black humour purposefully presents issues that would otherwise generate pity or commiseration (Fuentes-Luque, 2000).

3.2.1. Motivations for watching their favourite series

The analysis of the motivations for watching *La que se avecina* was conducted by categorizing the students' responses into ideas already proposed in the bibliography as previously shown, although some new concepts emerged. Some different expressions made by the adolescents are grouped into categories by difference in gender, which appear in table 1. Ideas that have been previously mentioned in other studies are humor, entertainment, not to get bored, escapism, links to reality, characters, the intention to socialize, trends, a good schedule, habit, and finally, taste. The emerging ideas (underlined) have been classified into: television genre, free time and language.

Table 1: Reasons given by the study subject sample of adolescents for watching the series *La que se avecina.* Differences by gender.

CATEGORIES	Boys	Girls
Humour	"I laugh a lot"[4] (CyG) "It's funny" (CyG) "It's a laugh" (IMS)	"It makes me laugh" (IMS) "It's funny" (EPM) "They turn serious things into a joke" (HSJ)
Entertainment	"I have fun" (HSJ) "I have a good time" (IMS) "It's really entertaining" (IMS)	"It's funny" (CyG) "It entertains me" (IMS)
Not getting bored	"I get bored" (IMS)	"So as not to get bored" (CyG)
Escapism	"It makes you switch off" (HSJ) "I forget about studying" (IMS)	
Links to reality		"It's quite similar to real life" (EPM) "You see life from another point of view" (HSJ)
Characters	"I like the characters" (CyG)	
Socializing and Trends		"Because it's what the whole family likes, this way we don't argue about the channel." (IMS)
Taste	"I like it" (All)	
Television genre	"It's the only good thing on television" (CyG) "There's nothing better on" (IMS)	
Free time	"I have free time and sometimes I don't know what to do" (CyG)	"I don't have anything to do" (IMS)
Language	"Because of what they say and that" (EPM)	

Source: Own preparation

As can be seen, adolescents from both genders coincide in highlighting humour, entertainment and not getting bored, previously indicated as issues closely related to the theory of Uses and Gratifications (Medrano, Palacios and Aierbe, 2007). A new category called Free Time is highlighted because adolescents attribute "not having anything to do" to this cause. This

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[4]   References to students will be made indicating the educational center (IMS – *Instituto Miguel Servet,* CyG – *Cantín y Gamboa,* EPM – *El Pilar Maristas,* HSJ – *Hijas de San José*). The Word "All" corresponds to the students from the four educational centers.

idea could also be a form of escapism or the gratification very similar to not getting bored, but it does not have the positive connotation of these. Therefore, the idea that adolescents choose to watch a series without it bringing benefits is considered.

Furthermore, some differences were found between genders. Boys emphasize that they "like the characters" this is a motivation closely related to what Cazenueve (1974) and Sánchez and Fabbro (2014) called identification with the characters. In this particular case they choose the series because of the characters, without mentioning anyone in particular; they are really funny and their performance is good (the actor's performance comes into play here more so than the characters themselves). A new idea appears for that matter: the characters' language which is found in the phrase, "because of what they say and that".

Males also mention that *La que se avecina* "is the only good thing there is on TV", which confirms that adolescents' favourite format is fiction series (Pindado, 2006); in this case it is a Spanish sitcom. Another fundamental idea that boys note is escapism: forgetting about studying and the daily routine (Planells y Maz, 2012; González, Dávalos y Gutiérrez, 2012).

On the other hand, girls comment on issues that relate the fiction to reality. Firstly, the series for them, "is similar to real life" and allows them "to see things from a different point of view". The fact that these are motives for consumption means that they could be interested in obtaining information about reality, which is an argument that has already been shown by other authors, or that they want to understand the world and look for role models that they can relate to (Bryant and Vorderer, 2006); as well as explore moral values and ethics in relationships (Pasquier, 1996). Moreover, the motivation to socialize with other people and to be trendy can be found in the phrase, "because the whole family likes it and this way we don't argue over the channel", in this case not with their peers and friends as highlighted in other studies (González, Dávalos and Gutiérrez, 2012), but with the family.

In view of the above we have observed that boys are ultimately motivated by escapism and entertainment, and place importance on the characters' role and language in the series. In addition to entertainment, girls make their choice based on reasons connected to the need to be informed about reality and to socialize with other people.

3.2.2. Favourite characters and reasons for their choice

The characters in *La que se avecina* are defined, as previously mentioned, by a humoristic attitude which at some points is exaggerated and close to parody and absurd humour. The adolescents that participated in the group dynamics were asked, "who their favourite character was and why" in order to find out their reasons for choosing their favourite character in the series.

Two characters from the series have been named the most as favourites, as shown in the information from the survey: in first place Antonio Recio (Jordi Sánchez) with 41.8% and Amador (Pablo Chiapella) in second place with 33.7%. The same order appeared in group dynamics with 49.8% for Antonio Recio and 42.3% for Amador. The increase in the percentages indicates that the youth that watch *La que se avecina* the most (the participants in the group dynamics) mainly choose the characters from this series.

However, the last piece of information which came from young peoples' responses given in writing anonymously must be taken into consideration.

Favourite characters that young people mentioned in group dynamics are shown in the following table.

Table 2: Characters from *La que se avecina* mentioned as favourites by adolescents from this sample in oral dynamics.

Boys	Girls
	Antonio Recio (Jordi Sánchez)
Amador (Pablo Chiapella)	Amador (Pablo Chiapella)
Coque (Nacho Guerreros)	Coque (Nacho Guerreros)
Izaskun (Mariví Bilbao)	Izaskun (Mariví Bilbao)
Enrique (José Luis Gil)	Nines (Cristina Medina)
Maxi (Eduardo Gómez Manzano)	Estela (Antonia San Juan)
Vicente (Ricardo Arroyo)	Lola (Macarena Gómez)
	Maite (Eva Isanta)

Source: own preparation

Antonio Recio is only mentioned by one student upon communicating their preferences aloud. This raises the question of how anonymity influences the choice for a favourite character. Accordingly, it was decided that we would ask students during the group dynamics why they chose Antonio Recio in writing while they did not name him in front of their classmates. Their responses were the following: "Look, I like this character, but I would never be friends with someone like that. I know that it is a fictitious character and that's it, that's why I like him" (Female student IMS); "Because he is funny, he does silly and crazy things, but I wouldn't associate with a person like that" (Female student IMS); "I like him because of the role he plays and so on, but I don't like him because he makes Spain look bad" (Female student IMS); "Because you laugh with him, you are entertained" (Female student EPM).

These reflections seem to indicate that adolescents are not going to choose those characters which they would not like to interact with or consider to be a bad example for society when choosing in front of their classmates and friends. The series' script writers even say that he is, "a xenophobic, homophobic, paranoid, counterphobic, sexist character (…) a despicable

person" (Caballero and Caballero, 2014). It can be confirmed that anonymity ultimately influences youth when establishing a relationship with characters from the fiction.

Amador, who is in second place in the surveys, is named more in public in contrast to Antonio. Furthermore, a shared characteristic is that they are favourites regardless of the adolescents' sociodemographic characteristics. Other characters in the series have this aspect too, but in other cases there are differences in gender.

With this in mind, there are three characters in common: Coque, who has already been mentioned, Amador and the old woman Izaskun. The rest of the characters, with the exception of the girls mentioning Antonio Recio, follow in the wake of other studies which confirm that characters are chosen because they belong to the same sex (Hoffner, 1996). The idea that age is influential by other authors, is contradicted (Lacalle, 2012; Pasquier, 1996). There is only one character that is the same age as the sample of adolescents in this series, Fran (Eduardo García Martinez) and he is not mentioned at any point in time.

Concerning the reasons for choosing these characters, it is important to emphasize that adolescents reveal some bonds that have been classified into the concepts proposed by Igartu (2008) and Cohen (2001): emotional empathy, cognitive empathy, behavioural empathy (in relation to the identification construct), affinity and parasocial interaction. The only bonds presented by teenagers in this work are behavioural identity and affinity, both constructs are identified respectively by the expressions, "I can relate" and "I like them". The following sections show these two ideas and the attributes and reasons for one or another bond with a character.

Regarding the classification of the attributes from which these links are established, we used some ideas already mentioned as a starting point: gender, age, personality, physical attractiveness, social attractiveness- prosocial values, acceptance by friends and/or family members, humor, a rebellious or non-conformist attitude, work, acting performance and language (Hoffner, 1996; Aierbe and Medrano, 2013; Lacalle, 2012; Figueras et al., 2014).

Moreover, some new attributes have emerged in this study: physical appearance "not attractive", attitudes towards laziness and an affinity felt towards an actor that has passed away in real life.

a) "I can relate" (empathy)

Firstly, it is confirmed that female students relate to women and that males relate to men. The Identification process that the girls have for Amador is an exception. This hot favourite elicits behavioural empathy from both girls and boys, although they differ in the reasons for this: girls repeat entertainment and boys because "he teases everybody" (Male students HSJ).

The main bonds that boys establish with their characters are behavioural in nature, in this case Amador and Vicente: Amador's rebellious attitude as previously mentioned, and the empathy by imitation that some young people feel towards Vicente because, "he sits on the sofa watching football all day and doesn't do anything" (Male students EPM).

In addition to imitating Amador's behaviour, girls also relate to Lola because of her personality, "one minute she's calm and the next she's stressed out" (Female student HSJ), "because she is really over the top" (Female students HSJ); and with Nines because "she is lazy" (Female students HSJ). They also feel emotional empathy for the latter because of the fact that they physically feel like the character, "she is not the typical blonde or red-head, she is ordinary and not as good looking as the others (Female student HSJ); and cognitive because it is perceived that "she likes to gain things easily, without doing anything" (Female student HSJ). Finally, one of the students says verbatim, "I would like to be like Estela" because of "her craziness" (Female student EPM), which is a kind of behavioural identification, but without imitating the character only wishing to be like her.

Girls ultimately have more ways to relate to their favourite characters than boys, even though they coincide in that most of the time it is behavioural empathy. There are substantial differences in attributes. On the one hand, females choose personality, humour (Aierbe y Medrano, 2013), and appearance (not attractive); and on the other hand the males highlight a rebellious attitude (Lacalle, 2012).

It is noteworthy that appearance is considered by adolescents, but without the connotation that other studies have granted (Ruiz, Conde and Torres, 2005). Appearance is important not because they are attractive but because the girls feel that it is more similar to theirs. From the phrase "not as good looking as other women" (Female student HSJ) it can be concluded that they welcome characters who are not necessarily very attractive, but more ordinary.

Finally, boys and girls both appreciate laziness, which is a new quality that is to be added to research on this theme. In the last case Vicente's and Nines' attitude doing nothing because they are lazy could be considered as the antithesis to prosocial values that have been mentioned in other investigations (Hoffner, 1996); thus, verifying this as a teenage rebellion by choosing negativey stereotyped characters who are deemed incorrect by society (Abad, 2015)

b) "I like them" (affinity)

In addition to identification, affinity is another fundamental tie between the sample of adolescents and the characters from *La que se avecina*, which is clear in the responses "I like them". Nines and Estela reappear among the girls; and Amador amongst both genders.

In terms of affinity for Amador there are three common attributes that girls and boys observe ("He is very funny", "He's the funniest in the series", "He is always joking around with his friends- All); the social value of the phrase, "despite the fact that he doesn't have any money, he never gives up" (All) and that Pablo Chiapella, "plays the part well, his performance is natural" (All). On the other hand, girls also emphasize him for being socially appealing "his personality" (Female Students HSJ) and that he is a "good person" (Female students EPM, IMS). Boys are again inclined towards the character's rebelliousness, "he spends the whole day thinking about *echando un pinchito*" (Male students HSJ), an expression from

the series which refers to sexual intercourse (Caballero and Caballero, 2014). In general, his marital status, work and family life is considered to be very funny and "laughable" (All) for these adolescents regardless of their gender.

It is essential to highlight that for the rest of the characters girls feel affinity firstly towards the comicalness of female characters like Estela ("she is really dramatic and this makes me laugh"- Female students EPM, HSJ), Nines ("She is always talking nonsense and you laugh with her- Female students HSJ, CyG) and Izaskun ("she doesn't take life seriously- Female student EPM). Secondly, they like Estela's social attractiveness, "she never gives up" (Female student EPM). Furthermore, they also like one of Coque's and Antonio Recio's non pro-social value such as, "living without a care in the world" (Female student EPM). Finally, like their male counterparts, they feel a special affinity towards Izaskun because the actress (Mariví Bilbao) passed away in real life in April 2013, "since she died you like her more" (Male and female students HSJ). This new post mortem affinity towards a character is a new subject of study.

In addition to Amador and Izaskun, boys also highlight Coque's sense of humor ("he is really funny"- Male students IMS) and Enrique ("you laugh at him because he is a know-it-all" Male student HSJ). Izaskun's intelligence is perceived with negative connotations, as to how much they can laugh at her is valued, not as a positive attribute. Finally, funny language appears as an attribute, which is characterized by the character Maxi ("because of the things that he says"- Male students HSJ, EPM; "he makes comparisons to animals"- Male student IMS).

In conclusion, and unlike the identification processes the attraction to favourite characters does not comply with the presupposed idea that adolescents choose persons of the same gender: Amador, Izaskun, Enrique, Coque and Antonio Recio are an example of this.

With respect to attributes, girls and boys coincide in highlighting humor (Aierbe y Medrano, 2013); their behaviour pattern (Abad, 2015); social attractiveness (Pasquier, 1996), the latter in particular by girls. However, there are also differences. Boys value language (Abad, 2015) and rebelliousness (Lacalle, 2012) at the same time they vilify intelligence in contrast to what has been shown in other studies (Medrano et al., 2010).

Females insist that many of their favourite characters have pro-social values, although they also hold a conflicting value connected to humor in high regard. The fact that they do things without thinking about the consequences taken to exaggeration and therefore the absurd, as in this case, supposes that the seriousness of non pro-social values could not emotionally involve the adolescents and therefore not affect their beliefs, attitudes and values (Fuentes, 2000). Finally, the affinity that could be generated from the death of one of the actors in real life is a new concept to be assessed and studied in the future.

4. Conclusions

The adolescents from the sample subject of study watch up to 70 different series, of which there are more North American produced series (54.8%) than Spanish (44.3%). The remaining percentage are English and Korean series. There is an elevated consumption of sitcoms in regards to the subgenre or type of series, which is well above dramas and in particular dramedies.

Spanish sitcom *La que se avecina* (67% of the sample of teenagers are consumers) and *Aída* (49%) are by far teenagers' favourite series. Followed by the American series *The Simpsons* at 26% and *Big Bang Theory, Castle* and *How I met your mother* at close to 20%. The notion that adolescents particularly consume teen series and dramedies is contrasted. Sitcom is the hot favourite, and the Spanish series *La que se avecina* is undeniably the favourite amongst these teenagers.

Furthermore, it is important to note that there are differences in gender when giving reasons for choosing their favourite series: boys are motivated by entertainment and switching off from their everyday life, as well as this they place importance on the role and language of the characters in the series. In addition to entertainment, girls highlight reasons connected to the need to be informed about reality and socializing with other people.

Humor and entertainment are also a common reason given by all the teenagers. The comment, "They make fun of serious things" defines the type of humor in this sitcom: absurd humor supposes a surrealist view, incongruous with reality when concerned with serious issues (that could generate pity, compassion etc.) making it become black humor. This type of humor exaggerates stereotypes even more so and several researchers believe that viewers become insensitive to values that are transmitted, while drama does not exert the same influence.

In relation to the third objective- analyzing the bonds between teenagers and fiction characters-it is confirmed that adolescents relate to same sex characters, although contrary to other studies they do not feel affinity towards one sex or another. Another fundamental aspect is that all these characters are adults, most of whom are over 40. There is one teenage character in the series who is not mentioned at any point. Of the 99 characters that are mentioned as favourites, Antonio Recio (Jordi Sánchez) takes first place followed by Amador (Pablo Chiapella) from *La que se avecina*; and Luisma respectively (Paco León) from *Aída*.

In this context, it is important to note the big difference between characters that were noted in the surveys as to the ones in group dynamics. Antonio Recio who is the favourite on paper is barely mentioned in the group dyamics, which leads to the consideration that anonymity can influence decisions when choosing one favourite character or another. In drawing attention to this matter, teenagers say that they choose him because of his lunacy and because he is very funny, but they insist that they wouldn't be friends with him. Antonio Recio portrays a xenophobic, homophobic and male chauvinistic attitude which is comical because of the exaggerated language that he uses. Black humor is highly regarded, but not socially accepted by youth.

The rest of the characters have also been chosen as favourites mainly due to their comicalness, albeit there are other attributes that appeal to adolescents such as pro-social values, a rebellious attitude, their personality etc.; notions that have already been mentioned in other works. In addition to this, new ideas have emerged in this project such as laziness and indolence, the affinity towards a character who has died in real life, and a different perception of physical attractiveness as opposed to other studies; in this case an appearance similar to theirs is valued and not "attractive" in terms of today's society's beauty standards.

Lastly, in relation to the main aim of this study, it can be stressed that teenagers are involved with their favourite series in terms of identification with the characters and to a greater empathetic degree: their behaviour. Emotional reasons are sometimes even given for the affinity that teenagers feel towards the characters, though a direct relationship between age and gender amongst the adolescents and their favourite characters cannot be established. These bonds, combined with an elevated consumption of *La que se avecina* by teenagers at almost 70%, means that adolescents have a greater incapacity to be critical about the messages that are being transmitted. However, *La que se avecina* corresponds to the sitcom genre, in particular absurd humor (on occasions black) that can lead to the spectators´ insensitiveness towards values, beliefs and attitudes.

This dilemma of the reception of values that youth receive in the series is raised for future analytical study. The data provided in this work allows us to draw from a context of teenage consumption of fiction series that differs to other papers in many ways; and invites us to continue researching the binomial teen series due to the fundamental role that they play. Despite the fact that they are not primarily aimed at teenagers, they are in the construction of adolescents' collective imagination.

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