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RTVE's transmedia strategy aimed at young audiences: the case of Playz (2017-2020)

Abstract

Generally speaking, audio-visual consumption is changing. More specifically, in recent years young people have increased their viewing of content through the Internet, which is often supplied through online platforms. This article focuses on one the Playz platform, which is one of the key strategies being used by Spanish public television (RTVE), as it aims to reconnect with the new generations through transmedia narratives. Based on studies undertaken by Costa Sánchez (2013) and Cascajosa-Virino (2018), a content analysis of the series broadcast on Playz between 2017 and 2020 has been carried out, taking into account the duration, year of release, and number of episodes or seasons for each of them. This study confirms a clear interest by this platform in generating products that are innovative from their very conception. In fact, a large number of transmedia strategies have been identified, such as episodes turned into films, a high degree of interactivity with the audience, original music videos, promotional events and more, which is in line with Playz's public service obligation to reach out to all types of audiences through all the platforms available to them.

Keywords

Transmedia, television, public service, youth, Playz, RTVE.

1. Introduction

The expansion of offerings through online sites in recent years has led to a major shift in audio-visual consumption habits away from traditional television channels toward new platforms, a phenomenon especially noticeable among young people. The flexibility, ubiquity and personalised

consumption allowed by such platforms has led users to shun traditional offerings to a large extent, though never completely, so they can watch what they want, when they want, and how they want (Guerrero Pérez, 2018).

This is a major challenge for traditional television operators, both public and private. For the former, part of their mission is to reach all strata of society and generate attractive content for the population (European Broadcasting Union, EBU, 2014). As argued by Sundet (2020), they must serve a diverse audience and use any platform at their disposal to create popular culture. From a more pragmatic point of view, this audience shift does not bode well for public media, which are also under pressure from budget cuts (García De Castro & Caffarel Serra, 2016), and have been subject to particular scrutiny for some time (Casado del Río, 2012; Fernández, 2018).

Private channels are equally threatened in this new scenario. Generally, they are the flagship of large media groups whose turnover depends essentially on advertising revenues based on audience behaviour that no longer takes place, or at least not in the same way. According to the latest *Infoadex* report (2022), the television medium lost 17.2% of its advertising revenue between 2017 and 2021, declining from 2.14 to 1.78 billion euros. Within the sector, the revenues of national free-to-air TV channels have gone from 1.93 to 1.59 billion euros, which is a drop of 17.9%. On the other hand, in the same period revenues in the digital realm increased from 1.86 to 2.48 billion, an increase of 33.3%. It is worth noting that since 2020, digital revenue has surpassed that of television for the first time in *Infoadex*'s calculations.

In this context, both of these media must adapt (Guerrero, 2014), and they have already begun to develop strategies to approach the elusive young audience. Ramsey (2018) offers the example of the British BBC3, which uses platforms and devices specifically used by young people. Moreover, it offers them content developed by young people who speak to them as peers. In some cases, they adapt part of their offering; in other cases, they use social networks more intensively. In Spain, the three major media groups, which are RTVE, Atresmedia and Mediaset, have made a commitment to online offerings aimed at young audiences through Playz, Flooxer and MTMAD.

This article focuses on the former, which is a key element in RTVE's strategy to reconnect with new audiences, especially young people, taking into account the important role of transmedia narratives in this objective. Like other public media, the delicate situation that RTVE is going through makes this case study a useful contribution to the knowledge of the multiplatform strategies of European public media.

1.1. *Changes in television consumption in Spain*

Since 2012, there has been a decline in the amount of time viewers spend watching television. According to Guerrero Pérez, González Oñate and Kimber Camussetti (2018), online platforms have played a role in this decline. In fact, 71.2% of people aged 18-35 have watched less television as a result of their online consumption. Between 2010 and 2018, La 1, Telecinco and Antena3 saw a reduction in the share of the 4-12, 13-24 and 25-44 age groups. In 2018, more than 74% of the audience of the three channels was over 45 years old. The situation of La 1 was especially striking, at more than 80%.

A comparison of audiences between 2010 and 2020 clearly shows that if we look at people between 16 and 34 years of age, the three main Spanish channels lost viewers; in 2010, TVE, Telecinco and Antena3 had a young audience of 13.6%, 19.3% and 20.3%, which dropped to 7.8%, 10.1% and 9.8%, respectively, in 2020 (*SGAE*, 2011 and 2021). This has led to a profound transformation of television that places it at a historical crossroads (Álvarez Monzoncillo, 2011; Uribe-Jongbloed, 2016; Mazaira, 2017; Guerrero Pérez, 2018). Technological paradigms, consumption modes and business models have been questioned, which has made linear television "one" of the options, as the door has been opened to new actors that are attractive to audiences. Along these lines, Askwith (2007) proposes that in order to guarantee its future, television must convert itself into a participative medium that generates emotion in the audience.

This transition has been developed gradually: live TV programmes were incorporated into the channels' websites; interactivity with the viewer was encouraged, helping to enhance the promotion of content (Rodríguez-Fernández, Sánchez-Amboage & Toural-Bran, 2018); and paid models were developed on platforms such as *A3player* and *Mitele Plus* (Guerrero, Diego & Pardo, 2013). At the same time, on-demand services were launched on *DTT*, *HbbTV* and the *LovesTV* portal, which is the combined commitment of RTVE, Mediaset and Atresmedia to confront the new platforms. There is even RTVE's *Botón Rojo* [Red button], a pioneering service that offers access to news and audio-visual content, with the additional

option of commenting on programmes (RTVE, 2013). Likewise, telecommunications operators such as Orange, Vodafone, and especially Movistar+ should also be mentioned, as they have recently doubled their commitment in this area.

Given this context of moving to the online environment, traditional operators are developing specific strategies to approach young audiences, in a process of “youtubisation” (Guerrero Pérez, 2018, p. 1242). Thus, in 2015 Atresmedia launched the Floopster portal; in 2016 Mediaset presented MTMAD; and in 2017 RTVE did the same with Playz.

This situation is not only occurring in the Spanish market but is a widespread phenomenon in Europe. In Scandinavia, for example, native online products aimed at young audiences have been developed (Bengtsson, Källquist & Sveningsson, 2018; Krüger & Rustad, 2019; Lindtner & Dahl, 2018; Rustad, 2018). One that stands out is the series *Skam*, produced by Norwegian public television (NRK). Envisioned as an innovative transmedia project, it has been adapted in more than seven countries and distributed in the United States by Facebook Watch (Sundet, 2020).

1.2. Transmedia

In this search for young audiences, innovation has played a key role. Thus, the transmedia features of audio-visual narratives have held an important position. According to Scolari (2009, p. 189), the new narratives arising from media convergence have been given multiple names, including “cross media, multiple platforms, hybrid media, intertextual commodity, transmedial worlds, transmedial interactions, multimodality, and overflow.” These narratives can be described as fiction that bypasses the linearity of the story and encourages active consumption by the audience, so that multiple extensions emerge (Albadalejo Ortega & Sánchez Martínez, 2019).

Within this diversity, it bears highlighting multiplatform, cross-media and transmedia narratives, whose common link is the need for multiple media at the service of one narrative, although it is necessary to differentiate them (Piñeiro Otero & Costa Sánchez, 2013). Thus, multiplatform refers to the distribution of content across a variety of devices (Guerrero Pérez, 2011). It is not a new phenomenon, but it has spread thanks to technological developments and convergence among platforms.

Similarly, according to Antikainen, Kangas and Vainikainen (2004, p. 19), crossmedia could be summarised in the following way: “Create it once, publish it anywhere.” It is a narrative developed in sections through various channels, carried out by several authors, and with different styles. This forces the viewer to go through this itinerary of episodes in order to understand the discourse in its entirety (Davidson, 2010). It differs from the previous concept due to the need to change the channel (Dena, 2004), and due to the fact that each part of the story provides information that can only be understood by viewing the all the content. According to Alonso González (2015), crossmedia is mainly used to shift programmes from television to online platforms and to provide the audience with new ways of participating.

Finally, transmedia involves narratives that are interrelated and developed on multiple platforms (Jenkins, 2008). They are all part of one story, yet they maintain narrative independence and are complete in their own right. In other words, they can be experienced individually, yet they are part of an overall narrative. According to this author, each story should enable the viewer to consume it independently, thereby becoming a point of entry into the franchise. In Spain, some of the most notable works in this field in are Movistar+'s “*La zona*” [The Zone] (Torres Martín, 2019), RTVE's “*Isabel*” and “*El ministerio del tiempo*” [The ministry of time] (Establés Heras, 2016), and Atresmedia's “*El tiempo entre costuras*” [Time between needlework] (Formoso Barro, 2015).

A key factor in understanding these narratives are the so-called transmedia worlds, which are successions of abstract content whose repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be consumed through various media channels in which both the representation of the

space and the meaning of the story become important (Klastrup & Tosca, 2004). Costa Sánchez (2013) has established a classification of the different components that might form part of a transmedia narrative, as follows: diegetic elements, which are those that help extend the storyline (books, films, activity of the characters in social networks, etc.); extradiegetic components, which are those that expand the transmedia world more than the narrative storyline –they generate content about the product, yet without creating additional material for the narrative story line, such as blogs, social networks, marketing, events, etc.; and mixed elements, or those that expand both the transmedia world and the storyline itself, such as websites. Thus, the presence of these diegetic elements suggests previous planning that allows identifying these products as “native” (Costa, 2013), or “strategic” (Scolari, Jiménez & Guerrero, 2012).

Good planning of a transmedia product involves studying the content, platforms, distribution model, and involvement of users. If this is done from the very conception of the product, it is strategic, and if it develops spontaneously once the transmedia narrative has been set in motion, it is tactical planning (Scolari, Jiménez & Guerrero, 2012). The first option, which Costa Sánchez (2013) calls *native*, involves greater risk, as it requires a larger investment, and also because the creators must try to involve the audience from the start.

According to Mikos (2016), current television series are always broadcast with their corresponding mobile application, as this enables the participation of viewers and access to extra information. This supplementary content expands the fictional story, promotes the series, and obtains an emotional link or engagement with the audience (Torres Martín, 2019). If this connection is attained, the audience takes an active role in the dissemination, and even in the creation of the product content, which is a fundamental characteristic of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2008; Scolari, 2013; Formoso Barro, Videla Rodríguez & García Torre, 2015; Establés Heras, 2016).

In short, transmedia narratives increase the sensation of being immersed, which is demanded by new audiences, and generates a feeling of belonging in them that is enhanced in social networks (Maroto González & Rodríguez Martelo, 2018). The aim is to maintain expectations before and during the broadcast, and to create an environment that fosters interactivity with those who watch the content (Gray, 2010, p. 115). According to Albadalejo Ortega and Sánchez Martínez (2019), the audio-visual market has ceased to be media-based and has now become transmedial.

For their part, television operators use transmedia stories for the purpose of adapting to the new consumption habits. According to Formoso Barro (2015), broadcasters see this new mode of storytelling as an opportunity to approach the young audience, who consume audio-visual products on different devices. For Mikos (2016, p. 49), this is a 360-degree experience where television programmes, web series, graphic novels, computer games, and social networks are intertwined.

In this sense, transmedia products reach young people because they reflect their way of communicating and connect with their desire to participate (Azurmendi, 2018; Maroto González & Rodríguez Martelo, 2018). As young people are leading the change in consumption habits (Woods, 2016), they demand personalised and interactive experiences (Guerrero Pérez, González Oñate & Kimber Camussetti, 2018). They are also interested in transmedia narratives because such stories are close to them and gather together aspects of their daily lives such as social networks, the Internet, and gamification (Vázquez-Herrero, González-Neira & Quintas-Froufe, 2019).

Thus, interaction with the audience becomes a necessary feature in defining the transmedia narrative, which has been enabled by technological developments in recent years (Tur-Viñes & Rodríguez Ferrándiz, 2014). Transmedia fiction invites television viewers to get involved, which allows the product itself to escape the control of those who create it, so it is left to the imagination of those who follow it (Scolari, Jiménez & Guerrero, 2012). Along these

lines, series such as *Skam* have expanded interactivity with “the development of digital identities of their characters [...] where followers were able to stay informed of all their activity through publications linked to the story, thereby deciding for themselves who and who not to follow” (Ortega Fernández & Vaquerizo Domínguez, 2022).

Playz goes one step further by offering productions specifically designed not to complement each other, but instead to be developed through parallel narratives on different platforms. Maroto González and Rodríguez Martelo (2018) had already observed a prominent presence of interactive and transmedia content in Playz's offering. As a public broadcaster, the use of these narratives is imperative for RTVE. The European Broadcasting Union (EBU, 2014) considers innovation to be one of the six essential ingredients of public audio-visual productions, and Campos Freire (2016) describes it as a fundamental strategy for public operators.

In this regard, as pointed out by Miguel, Zallo and Casado (2017), innovation in public broadcasting involves not only the use of all existing technology, but also being proactive in exploring new uses, languages and television formats. Other research, such as that of Azurmendi (2018) has analysed the development of transmedia products by European public broadcasters in the context of a “justified” public service mission, which is bolstered by the development of innovation, new formats, and their mandate to seek large audiences. Therefore, the aim is to attract young people through other types of products and to fight for their attention in the face of competition from other online operators, such as HBO and Netflix (Vázquez-Herrero, González-Neira & Quintas-Froufe, 2019).

2. Objectives and methodology

The aim of this article is to identify transmedia features in the fictional series offered by RTVE on its Playz platform. On the one hand, the analysis addresses the interest in knowing the level of development of audio-visual innovation on this platform, due to the fact that such advances are specifically linked to its growth. The second objective is to determine how these tools are used reach young audiences. As the development of transmedia features has become widespread in a large proportion of fiction, the aim of this article is to determine whether Playz' products are native transmedia, or in other words, whether they are conceptualised before the content is produced, which will allow the authors to determine the level of RTVE's development in this field. Based on this objective, the following secondary objectives are proposed:

- O1. To assess the presence of transmedia features in the series offered on Playz.
- O2. To assess the extent to which they can be considered “native” transmedia series.

In transmedia narratives, the audience plays an active role in the expansion of the content (Scolari, 2013). Yet in this article, the main focus is not on User-Generated Content (UGC), but rather on RTVE's strategy to reach young people and the position held by transmedia narratives in attaining this objective. Therefore, this paper focuses on innovation and its close relationship with audio-visual public service.

This article is part of a wider research effort that analyses the offering of three youth-oriented platforms: Playz, MTMAD and Flooxer. In line with the objectives of the research, we have analysed all the platform's fictional series (15 in total), excluding documentaries and special content such as coverage of the Goya awards. Series are one of the privileged formats on Playz. Moreover, they promote further development of transmedia strategies as well, due to their being longer than feature films, so the creators have more options for broadcasting the content (Tur-Viñes & Rodríguez Ferrándiz, 2014).

Table 1. Fictional series on Playz (2017-2020).

Title	Year of the premiere	Seasons	Originally created for Playz	No. of prog./ ep.	Length (mins)
<i>Drama</i>	2020	1	Yes	6	25
<i>Bajo la red</i>	2018	2	Yes	6/8	20
<i>Boca Norte</i>	2019	1	Yes	6	20
<i>Antes de perder</i>	2019	1	Yes	7	15
<i>Neverfilms</i>	2108	2	Yes	20/20	4
<i>Mambo</i>	2017	2	Yes	6	20-25
<i>Wake up</i>	2018	1	Yes	6	13-23
<i>El punto frío</i>	2018	1	Yes	6	20
<i>Abducidos</i>	2018	1	Yes	6	15
<i>Cupido</i>	2018	1	Yes	6	10
<i>Colegas</i>	2018	1	Yes	6	20
<i>Si fueras tú</i>	2017	1	Yes	7	10
<i>Inhibidos</i>	2017	1	Yes	7	15
<i>Dorien</i>	2017	1	Yes	5	
<i>Limbo</i>	2018	1	Yes	8	7-10

Source: Own elaboration based on data from Playz.

All the series were released on Playz between October 2017, when the platform was launched, and the beginning of 2020. All of them were available on the website at the time when the content was gathered, followed by an analysis of the available material (January–April 2020). The period in question was not random, as it coincided with a period of growth, but also with the definition of Playz' programming model, which was not easy to determine and led to significant internal debates (Casado, Guimerà, Bonet & Pérez, 2022).

The content was formally analysed based on a model defined by Cascajosa-Virino (2018), which was in turn based on Creeber (2006) and Points (2007). The production context, format, and content of the audio-visual products were examined (Table 1). Additionally, in order to verify the existence of transmedia extensions, the conversion of series into films was checked and the categories proposed by Costa Sánchez (2013) were introduced: diegetic, extradiegetic, and mixed elements (Table 2). In the extradiegetic section, we have included whether or not the series have official profiles on three social networks: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

To delve deeper into the “native” aspects of these transmedia products, the presence of interactivity has also been analysed, but not only as the mere participation of the audience through comments. Instead, this is offered in a more complex way, such as giving the audience the option of identifying with the plot by allowing them to engage with the characters through their “digital identities,” choosing the points of view of such identities, receiving information, and even making decisions about the direction the series will take (Table 2). As shown in Table 3, the data sheet was applied to the 15 components of the sample, collecting both quantitative and qualitative information.

Table 2. Data sheet analysis.

Innovation/Transmedia aspects	Indicators
Film based on the fiction series	The episodes of the series have been made into a film by merging them together.
Transmedia content	
a) diegetic	The narrative line of the story is extended (books, films).
b) extradiegetic	The transmedia world is extended more than the storyline (blogs, marketing, events). Social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.
c) mixed	Both the transmedia world and the storyline itself are expanded (websites).
Interactivity	Having the option of interacting with the plot and the digital identity of the characters, choosing points of view, receiving information, and making decisions about the series.

Source: Own elaboration based on research by Cascajosa-Virino (2018) and Costa Sánchez (2013).

The information used to fill in the data sheets was collected by watching the programmes and, when necessary, the sheets were completed with data from RTVE's website or specialised portals, such as *FormulaTV*, *Vertele*, *Elrincon.tv*, and *IMBD*.

3. Results

3.1. Fiction on "Playz"

All the series were developed specifically for this platform, although some, such as *Mambo* and *Si fueras tú* [If it were you], were also broadcast on television. Most have between 6 and 9 episodes per season, lasting between 15 and 20 minutes. Some are shorter, as in the case of *Cupido* and *Si fueras tú*, and others are longer, such as the second season of *Mambo*, with episodes that last more than 30 minutes.

The most common transmedia feature analysed, which is used by Playz' producers, is to turn fiction series into feature films. The short episodes encourage this second format, which is the result of linking the episodes together. The only exception is *Neverfilms*. It has no corresponding feature film, probably because it is composed of a series of sketches, which does not encourage this kind of transformation.

3.2. Types of transmedia content

According to the classification of Costa Sánchez (2013), we find transmedia features in the Playz series that are diegetic, extradiegetic, and mixed. It bears clarifying a distinction with regard to social networks: on the one hand, the official profiles of the series that promote the products through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have been categorised as extradiegetic; on the other hand, the series themselves create accounts of the fictional characters that provide information for the plots, so these have been classified as diegetic.

3.2.1. Diegetic

These features extend the storyline, and the most common are precisely the social network profiles of the series' protagonists, through which they share their activity and show aspects of the narrative that are not seen in the episodes, something which is common in *Bajo la red* (Under the net) and *Boca Norte* [Northern mouth]. Moreover, as will be seen below, in some cases this option enables audience participation.

Another good example is the development of the characters' digital identities on the networks. In *Si fueras tú*, the profile of Alba Ruiz's character on Instagram offers diverse content, such as the interrogations of different members of the community after Cristina's disappearance. For its part, *Inhibited* also offers interaction on social networks, as well

additional and exclusive information about the plot, and podcasts that help the audience understand the characters' personalities and have access to their private conversations and musical playlists.

The proliferation of spin-off series can also be included under this heading, with characters taken from other series, as in the case of *Criminalística* [Criminology] from *Mambo*, or the male nurses of *Pequeñas dosis* [Small doses], which was taken from *Antes de perder* [Before losing], a three-minute miniseries isolated from the main plot.

Likewise, along with its episodes, *Bajo la red* also offers a video tutorial that invites the audience to follow both the Instagram profiles of the main characters and those of the series as well. *Antes de perder* does something similar, which is to enrich its content with transmissions on Instagram that allow the audience to know the perspective of the story of one of its protagonists.

3.2.2. Extradiegetic

Extradiegetic content, which expands the transmedia world beyond the narrative, is the most prevalent. Among such content, there is an abundance of material in which the main cast is present, which draws attention to the series. The development of some of these projects is quite ambitious, such as *El punto frío* [The cold spot], *Wake up*, and *Mambo*, yet only a scant amount of resources have been observed in others.

For example, *El punto frío* is complemented with a videoblog of several episodes starring the paranormal researcher Javier Daga, who explains the type of instruments used in his field, which can be seen in the fictional series. Similarly, the series offers five episodes of a podcast where its protagonist, Martín Vivas, presents his findings on a programme of *Radio Nacional de España* entitled *Espacio en blanco* [Blank space], which deals with the same subject. This is a flagship space that has been on the air since 1987.

In *Wake up*, the transmedia content was developed on social networks before and during filming, with the hashtag #despertareselsueño. Moreover, this content accompanied the weekly broadcast of the series and, after the last episode of the season, a new character named *Omega* delved into the world of *Wake up* with exclusive content. Lastly, in the first season of *Mambo* the creators of this fictional series produced more than twenty original themes and music videos, all of which are available on the networks, the Internet, and the Playz mobile app.

Another common practice is organising fan events. In 2018, one was held in Madrid to commemorate the success of *Bajo la red*. The actors and directors of the series gathered together with fans in an event that was also attended by the band *Naranja*, which composes the music for the fictional series. After a brief presentation, the fourth episode was screened. This was followed by a concert, which was a tribute to the scene that opens the series. Finally, the team of *Bajo la Red* chatted with the audience. Along the same lines, the actors and directors of *Antes de perder* chose the City of Santiago de Compostela as the site to bring this series closer to its followers, while in April of 2018 the first episode of *El punto frío* was broadcast in Carballo, La Coruña, with the attendance of actor David Solans and director Alberto Ortega.

In the extradiegetic category, we have also included the presence of these series with their own accounts on the social networks Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, yet not within the Playz profile. Approximately two thirds of the series had their own accounts on these networks, with a balanced presence among the three platforms analysed (Table 3).

On Facebook, photos of promotional events of the series and the characters were published, along with video teasers, promotions, and either clips or entire episodes. In addition, on the *Wake up* profile, mini interviews of the characters were broadcast in which they give their opinions on other characters or plot situations. On the other hand, in the *Si fueras tú* account, the protagonists post videos talking to the audience, asking for help, and

praising their support. In *Inhibited*, photos from several emails exchanged between José's character and his tax advisor were published.

The Twitter profiles also gather photos of events related to the fictional series, interviews with actors, reminders of upcoming premieres of episodes, trailers, gratitude to fans, links to the RTVE portal with news related to the productions, and more. On this social network, it is common for the creators to interact with the official accounts of their series, examples of which include David Sainz and *Mambo*, or Alberto Utrera and *Neverfilms*.

With regard to Instagram, the series that have their own accounts publish promotional photos, stills from the episodes, images of actors during filming, and more. There are fewer videos containing fragments of episodes, or short *making of* videos, with the exception of *Boca norte* and *Si fueras tú*, which upload both still and moving images. In all of the cases, this material is generally the same as that which appears on Facebook. Another difference in terms of content is found in *Inhibited*; in addition to photos, it also offers true or false games to the audience. *Bajo la red* has several profiles, as many as two that are official, and some created by their fans. In the case of *Neverfilms*, they post stories about the making of the film, as well as outtake videos and promotional material.

3.2.3. Mixed

In terms of mixed content, we can cite the series *Cupid*, which includes entries on the Playz website dedicated to each character and diverse material such as video previews. Not everything is available on the mobile app, although it does include a conversation between two of the main actors in a live Instagram feed.

Similarly, as *El punto frío*, *Wake up* and *Mambo* are series with extensive transmedia development, they offer very complete websites where extra content can be viewed, such as scenes from the filming, news, interviews with the main characters, and previews; in the case of *Mambo*, there is even a visit by those in charge of the RTVE programme *Operación Triunfo*. The series *Colegas* [Colleagues] does not display as much, although it does provide the soundtrack of the series, videos, promotions, and a presentation of the characters.

3.3. Interactivity

Regarding interactivity, while it is less common, some highly ambitious developments have been noted, such as that of *Si fueras tú*; at the end of each episode, the protagonist is presented with two options, on which the audience can vote.

Based on the winning choice, the scriptwriting team writes the next episode, which is recorded every week. In fact, 60,000 votes were received for the final episode. Additionally, the audience had the option of being included in the protagonist's phone book and receiving WhatsApp messages and exclusive content.

Inhibidos [Inhibited] is the other noteworthy case, because it offers different levels of interactivity: At the basic level, within the player, the story can be seen from another point of view; At the higher level, by using Google or Facebook, the user is sent a fragment of the episode in which his or her image is included and, by providing their telephone number, they can receive calls from the characters with messages about the plot.

Table 3. Transmedia features in the Playz series.

Title	Film	Extra content					Interactivity with the plot
		Diegetic	Extradiegetic	Has its own profile on SNs			
				Twitter	Facebook	Instagram	
<i>Drama</i>	Yes	No	Meet the creators; phrases from Africa; play with the actors; and a quiz –which character are you?	No	No	No	No
<i>Bajo la red</i>	Yes	Profiles of the protagonists of the series who are active during the series. Spin-off: <i>El despertar de Gabriel</i> [Gabriel's Awakening]	Interviews and filming logs on SNs, platforms, and YouTube.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Boca Norte</i>	Yes	SNs profiles of the main characters giving extra details about the plot.	Interviews, previews and highlights from the series.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Antes de perder</i>	Yes	Three-episode web series based on two characters from the main series; Diana's Instagram, and photographs of the protagonist during her journey.	Instagram transmissions of the perspective of the story by one of its main characters	No	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Neverfilms</i>	No	No	Stories about the filming; a preview of the role of a character in the parodies; outtake videos and promotional material about premieres	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Mambo</i>	Yes	Parallel series that shares part of its world, but not the plots, with <i>Criminalística</i> , a parody of Latin American crime shows and soap operas	Independent songs (video clips), content about the filming, and videos with other songs or versions on SNs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Complete website: extra content (scenes from the filming, news, interviews with the main characters, and previews); a visit from its producers to the RTVE programme <i>Operación Triunfo</i> .
<i>Wake up</i>	Yes	Video clip with an original song recorded by the main characters;	Content that complements the series through SNs (<i>making of</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Full website: extra content, such as scenes from the filming,

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		Omega delves into the world of <i>Wake up</i> with exclusive content and reflections on what happens to the protagonists	videos on Facebook, etc.); short videos; and the “ <i>Wake up</i> challenge,” where the actors participate in contests				news, interviews with the main characters, and previews	
<i>El punto frío</i>	Yes	The podcasts of Martín Vivas (the main character) related to paranormal phenomena	Vlogs of paranormal investigator Javier Daga, who is a friend of Martín Vivas, the main character. Javier explains the exploratory instruments that appear in the series. Also, the <i>El punto frío</i> website: reports on paranormal phenomena and <i>RNE</i> 's programmes since the 1970s.	Yes	No	es	Complete website: extra content, including scenes from the filming, news, interviews with the protagonists, and previews	No
<i>Abducidos</i>	Yes	This series could be considered an extension, or spin-off, of <i>El caso</i> , [The case], which is a series developed on another platform.	Images of the filming, exclusive videos, live feeds on Instagram, and interviews on <i>Facebook Live</i>	No	No	No		No
<i>Cupido</i>	Yes	No	Promotional clips (trailers)	No	No	No	Lots of content on the website: interviews on <i>Instagram</i> , news, information about each character, and more.	No
<i>Colegas</i>	Yes	No	Promotional clips (trailers) on SNS, and “nostalgia” of the 1990s with <i>OBK</i> , <i>Chimo Bayo</i> , and the protagonists of <i>Colegas</i> in series of that decade	Yes	Yes	Yes	Content on the web: soundtrack, videos, promotions, and character introductions.	No
<i>Si fueras tú</i>	Yes	Content that expands the world of this series through social networks, which has not been seen in the episode. From that moment on, you have 24 hours to vote for one of the two options. The series offers on the Facebook and Instagram accounts of the series	<i>Making of</i> videos for all the episodes; interviews with the main characters; 7' video of María Pedraza (the protagonist) about her experiences on the series.	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes

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<i>Inhibidos</i>	Yes	Personalised scenes with your own image and name; interaction on SNs, along with additional and exclusive information about the plot; and podcasts to understand the characters' personalities with access to private conversations.	Videos of the actors, interviews, previews, clips, etc.	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
<i>Dorien</i>	Yes	On the Instagram profile of the main character, photos of the sessions that take place during the series are published.	Vlog known as <i>Entre libros</i> [Between books]: one of the main characters recommends books; extra material from the series, photographs and <i>making of</i> videos that show the behind-the-scenes activity of the series.	Yes	Yes	Yes		No
<i>Limbo</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No	No		No

Source: Own elaboration based on data from Playz.

4. Conclusions

This article attempts to identify the level of transmedia development in the projects hosted on RTVE's platform known as Playz. To this end, after examining 15 fictional series, it can be affirmed that these products are specifically created to be consumed online and are produced exclusively for Playz. Its line-up is mainly composed of series and musical programmes, which are adapted to young people's online consumption habits (Izquierdo Castillo, 2017), with a smaller number of episodes of short duration.

The omnipresence of digital devices as essential tools for making connections between the characters is striking, to such an extent that many of the dialogues are developed by superimposing images of dialogues conducted by mobile phone. In all likelihood, this common feature of Playz' products aims to recreate the daily communication of today's youth in order to encourage them to identify with the images (Etayo, 2015; Torre-Espinosa, 2019). In this regard, it bears mentioning that Playz belongs to RTVE's *Medialab*, the broadcaster's innovation centre, which is mainly dedicated to attracting young audiences (Pozo Montes & Larrondo Ureta, 2020).

Concerning the first objective of this study, in order to evaluate the type of transmedia content developed by the series on Playz, it has been confirmed that nearly all of the series become films after juxtaposing their episodes. In general, these feature films neither expand the storyline nor the transmedia world which, according to Scolari (2013), dismisses their status as a transmedia narrative. However, this author also advocates a broader notion of this concept, in reference to the producers of audio-visual products, for whom this type of phenomenon allows them to obtain greater rewards and, in the case of Playz, enriches the original series and opens new doors for the franchise.

With regard to the native nature of these transmedia products, there is a strong presence of diegetic elements (spin-offs, video tutorials, podcasts, etc.), as well as interactivity with the plot to a lesser extent (digital identity profiles, for example), which suggests that in nearly all of the cases these are native products. RTVE's effort to use Playz to reach out to young people also bears mentioning, as this age segment is showing signs of weariness with traditional television, as confirmed above. Consequently, this platform has made a firm commitment to the transmedia narrative which, far from being a sudden impulse, is the result of strategic planning developed even before the content itself is designed (Scolari, Jiménez & Guerrero, 2012).

Consequently, Playz has collaborated with the changing trend in content production in Spain through these native transmedia projects with stories that are complex, attractive, and well-planned (Costa Sánchez, 2013). This coincides with RTVE's pioneering stance when it launched *A La Carta*, an Internet platform with general on-demand content. However, this has clashed with its activity regarding youth programming, where instead of taking action, it reacted, thereby lagging behind its competitors in being the last one to launch its youth-oriented platform in 2017, whereas Atresmedia created Flooker in 2015, and Mediaset did the same with MTMAD in 2016.

Finally, the limitations of this research should be mentioned. This paper analyses the endeavour made by Playz in creating programmes that reach out to young audiences through transmedia narratives, yet it does not address the contributions made by the viewers themselves. This would undoubtedly be an enriching line of research to develop in the future in order to complete this study. Another constraint while analysing the series was the inability to gather some of the content approaches *in situ* on the social networks, so we had to resort to secondary sources that described them. The dynamic nature of these platforms and the constant changes they undergo make them a complex object of study, as demonstrated by the transformation experienced by Playz up to the present time. In any case, we believe that this

article has made a significant contribution to this subject, due to the fact that it focuses on the analysis of strategies that are vital for the survival of public media in the future.

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