



## RELIGIOUS FILM CONTENT DISTRIBUTION FOR SEGMENTED AUDIENCES: PLATFORMS AND THE CROWD PHENOMENON CASE STUDY: Infinito+1 Productions

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this article is to analyse how the new distribution windows interrupt the distribution of audiovisual content. For this purpose, the case of the production company Infinito+1 is studied when it comes to targeting a specific audience segment: the religious community. The behaviour of this type of niche audience offers a variety of possibilities for content distribution, such as crowdfunding, crowdsourcing or platform on demand. These actions are analysed and studied with the idea of understanding the actuality of the audience and the distribution of the content. The main conclusion is the importance of branding to generate awareness.*

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## 1. Introduction

The emergence of new technologies in the distribution of content makes it possible to reach both existing and new audiences. Furthermore, interactivity and participation are presented as an element of this new era, allowing communication between content and audience to change in a different way. It is precisely here that alternative audiovisual products to conventional productions are finding their *raison d'être* and the best way to be distributed and exploited in the different windows. For this, the work and communication between the creative team and the community is fundamental, since in many cases it will be the audience that decides on the business model, the type of content and the form of consumption. This is therefore something very new for a traditional industry, the audiovisual industry, which for decades has put cultural products on the market, relying on good commercial performance, whether at the cinema box office or on the television schedule. In this context, and as mentioned above, the distribution of audiovisual content in the context of new technologies offers very valuable alternatives for content producers and creators to identify the audience, communicate with them and ensure real interest in the consumption of content.

For years, the audiovisual industry has been grappling with the segmentation of audiences caused by access to widely diversified content (Álvarez, 2011; Gruvi, 2017; Neira, et al. 2021). This, in part due to the penetration of new technologies and their multiple forms of consumption, has led to a change in behavioural habits, resulting in "the evolution of the audience in a transmedia continuum (Kalijonen, 2016). In this sense, and with reference to the current windows of exploitation of audiovisual content, on-demand platforms have achieved a large presence in consumption routines (Neira, 2020), with a high concentration in a few companies (Pakula, 2021) and the generation of new audiovisual habits. It therefore seems plausible to consider that, in the face of an initial difficulty in reaching diverse audiences interested in the current wide range of audiovisual offerings, there is a real opportunity to identify audience niches that allow the design of tailor-made actions. Thus, these streaming platforms recognise the existence of an amalgam of communities of taste, so that the business of these companies is always to offer specific content to an interested person, without the need to target a global consumption segment: "the selection of content, both acquired and produced, is based on the knowledge of the users. What is different, and very much so, is the way in which this knowledge is obtained and how it is used to design the offer" (Castillo, Latorre-Lázaro, 2022). Moreover, the current temporal context of cinema, particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a decrease in cinema consumption in cinemas in favour of on-demand platforms (Hennig-Thurau, et al., 2021). It therefore seems that the segmentation of audiences, modes of consumption and types of content will provide a roadmap.

The film industry has found big premieres or blockbusters to be the short-term solution to stem the loss of audience share. Blaming Hollywood content for the loss of originality, it has resorted to the production of content that minimises the risk of distribution, resorting to adaptations, remakes and even sequels and prequels of films, especially those released in the 1980s (*Ghostbusters*, *Blade Runner*, *Charlie's Angels*, *Rocky*, *Rambo*, *Top Gun*, *Star Wars*, etc.). Also noteworthy is the exploitation of content from universes and franchises inherited from other narrative worlds such as comics (Marvel, DC, etc.), following the strategy of minimising risks with the release of blockbusters (Elberse, 2014). The aim of this strategy is twofold: on the one hand, to regain the adult audience of Generation X by exploiting nostalgia and, on the other, to consolidate new audiences for serialised content and facilitate the creation of an important community of fans and followers. In the face of these releases, it is increasingly difficult for films to find a place in the dynamics of theatrical exploitation. Exhibitors are committed to programming the content offered by the majors, perpetuating the traditional practices of control by American distributors, monopolising the screening of their products by exhibitors (Pardo, 2007; Buquet, 2005) and helping them to minimise their risks in terms of cinema occupancy. During the pandemic and after the closure of cinemas, studios decide to postpone the release dates of their films. It is at this time that independent distributors offer content to exhibitors for their schedules, thus avoiding closures due to lack of content. Films of a riskier and more independent nature occupied the programming, along with reruns; up to 93% of film releases in the first months of opening after the pandemic closure were releases by independent distributors (ADICINE, 2021). After the period of restrictions, the release of event films and major productions, which increasingly monopolise cinemas and therefore audiences, recovers in 2022. However, once the initial period of the pandemic is over, both independent films and those belonging to multimedia groups such as Atresmedia or Mediaset fail in their commercial exploitation because they are not designed

as major releases, and in 2020 there is a drop in box office of more than 70% compared to the previous year in Spain (Comscore, 2021). In response to this trend, unconventional dynamics and proposals have emerged, far from commercial actions. Among these actions, we can highlight the screening of programmes such as the Phenomena Experience and the consolidation of a loyal community. We can also mention the community or associative cinemas that have been recovered by communities, such as Cine Ciutat in Mallorca or Numax in Santiago de Compostela. In addition, film festivals are becoming increasingly important as spaces for consolidating local and new audiences. Finally, on-demand premieres are worth mentioning, creating parallel forms and alternative circuits where this type of film finds an alternative means of exploitation.

The proliferation of screens, the dispersion of audiences or the negative effects of the COVID 19 pandemic are some of the reasons for the decline in cinema attendance. The difficulty of identifying the public's taste by means of a title has already been pointed out by professionals in the sector, such as the screenwriter William Goldman, who said that "nobody knows anything" (Goldman, 1983). In this situation, the identification of audiences and, in particular, of communities of interest is essential in order to find opportunities for minority cultural products, and it is essential to identify alternative dynamics to the marketing of mass products, such as Hollywood films. In this context, it is necessary to find communities that are oriented towards minority products, rather than looking for audiences, in which the relationship between the two parties changes and becomes a more collaborative, participatory and listening process for the artists (Kirsner, 2009). This idea of community underpins the specific case of analysis of this research, based on the exploitation of a film product on a highly integrated and defined community: the Catholic faithful, thus "the world of fans and other knowledge communities foster a sense of passionate affiliation or brand loyalty that ensures the longevity of certain product lines" (Jenkins, 2009:177) The identification of niches will facilitate the distribution of content, and in this particular aspect there are two specific cases that serve as inspiration for this article: on the one hand, the management of a global event such as the World Youth Day held in Madrid in 2011 (Abad et al., 2013), and on the other hand, the management of the global communication of the confrontation between Opus Dei and the controversial premiere of R. Howard's film *The Da Vinci Code* (Mora, 2009).

The process described above, involving content, platforms and audiences, develops in some cases with the creation of communities of people who are highly interested in the content, moving from being mere spectators to becoming proactive audiences and levers of change and initiative. The importance of these communities based on religious and faith-based content has led some companies to specialise in this type of product, as in the case of European Dreams Factory, a distributor with an important catalogue of "values" films. Moreover, the phenomena initiated by these communities are called "crowd", referring to the concept of "crowd", such as crowdfunding campaigns, which consist of raising funds from the group of fans, crowd labelling, which proposes organising the demand for tickets within the community itself, and crowdsourcing, which outsources the work and management processes to people (usually fans) outside the production company. These work dynamics will be analysed throughout the research.

### 1.1. Research Objectives

The primary aim of this article is to examine various communication and branding tools and practices that enable content creators and producers to engage with their target audiences effectively, thereby guiding their distribution and marketing strategies and attaining a substantial return on investment. Specifically, this study proposes a detailed analysis of the efforts undertaken by the production company Infinito+1 through its religious-themed film productions: *"The last summit"* (*La última cima*), *"Land of Mary"* (*Tierra de María*), *"Footprints"*, *"The greatest gift"* (*El mayo regalo*), and *"Let's have the party in peace"* (*Tengamos la fiesta en paz*).

To this end, the following secondary objectives are proposed:

- SO1. To identify and understand the current audience groups and their role in decision-making processes. Thus, the communication and distribution of content that promotes audience participation will be investigated.
- SO2. To research and comprehend the nature of crowd phenomena and communities, as well as their relationship with the generation of fans within audiovisual audiences.

## 2. Methodology

In general, current work on audience identification to create audience clusters makes it possible to identify unusual audiences for audiovisual productions. This is the case of the religious community, an audience that allowed the film "The Last Summit" (Cotelo, 2010) to achieve unprecedented success at the box office, even more so for a work in the documentary genre. Throughout the article, we will analyse how an effective strategy was implemented in two areas: on the one hand, the communication work of the film itself and of the production company, Infinito+1, as well as the design of on-demand releases to attract young audiences and audiences in the exploitation of religious films, following the distribution, marketing and communication strategy proposed by Jon Reiss (2010) for independent films.

A case study methodology (Yin, 2009) was used to conduct the research for this article, with access to primary and secondary sources. To this end, data from the company Infinito+1 (the website of the production company and the websites of the different productions carried out) were analysed, as well as interviews conducted by different media with the promoter of the case study in question, Juan Manuel Cotelo. Bibliographical research was carried out on specific communications for religious communities, especially those aimed at global events, such as the World Youth Day to be held in Madrid in 2011, or the communication of religious works in editorial and cinematographic environments, as was the case with "The Da Vinci Code" between 2003 and 2006.

This was followed by a review and analysis of the various databases, statistics on cultural habits and specific documentation on film production provided by the Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales (ICAA), as an autonomous body attached to the Ministry of Culture and Sport, which is therefore responsible for managing the State's functions in relation to film production. In this sense, the databases on cinema admissions, attendance and box office receipts were of great value in the development and execution of this article. These figures are extracted by the cross-media consultancy ComScore, grouped into historical data and offered on the official website of the ICAA from 2011 to 2022.

Finally, the timeframe of the study extends from the release of the first film "*The last summit*" in 2010 to the release of "Let's Have a Peaceful Party" in 2022.

## 3. Case Analysis: "The Last Summit"

Produced in 2010, "*The last summit*" is a documentary about the life of Pablo Domínguez Prieto, a priest who, knowing that he is going to die, decides to entrust himself to God by climbing a mountain. The play shows the effect that a priest has on people, so that his faith and his work transcend him as a human being. It is therefore a message, the power of faith, addressed to a specific community. It is worth introducing the figure of Pablo Domínguez, around whom the documentary revolves, a well-known figure in his community: a Spanish diocesan priest, philosopher and theologian, author of several books and dean of the San Dámaso Faculty of Theology in Madrid. A mountaineering enthusiast, he died after reaching the summit of Moncayo, which had a significant impact on his entire community.

The film is directed by Juan Manuel Cotelo, a reference in the audiovisual sector, founder and director of the Guadarrama Festival, actor, director and producer. In 2008 he founded the production company Infinito + 1, with "*The last summit*" as its first project. One of the first aspects to highlight about this film is that it belongs to the documentary genre, an aspect that is worth mentioning because, although the annual production of documentary genre films represents almost half of the total production of films in Spain, the economic results of their exploitation in commercial cinemas are a minority, with very few documentaries appearing among the 50 most watched Spanish films of the year (see Table 1). Therefore, as a first and significant difference, the creators of "*The last summit*", aware of the limitations of their natural audience, unaccustomed to this type of format, decided to create a narrative closer to fiction, with the use of epic music and narrative structures close to the forging of Campbell's hero, more recognisable to traditional viewers.

**Table 1.** Documentary production and collection data 2010-2020

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Films Fiction	134	129	115	144	126	143	135	121	135	128	102
Percentage	67%	65%	63%	61%	56%	56%	53%	50%	51%	49%	47%
Total Documentary Films	66	71	67	91	98	111	119	120	131	135	113
Percentage	33%	36%	37%	39%	44%	44%	47%	50%	49%	51%	53%
Total Films	200	200	182	235	224	254	254	241	266	263	215
Documentaries Top 50 fundraising	2	0	1	3	3	0	2	3	4	0	5
Documentary Infinite+1 (position)	The Last Summit (24)			Land of Mary (29)	Land of Mary (44)		Footprints (43)		The Greatest Gift (32)		

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from Comscore, ICAA (2011-2020) and European Audiovisual Observatory.

The management aspects of the production of *"The last summit"* give different figures depending on the source. For example, community-supported media such as Wikipedia indicate an initial budget of €200,000 for production, plus €2,000 for investment in promotion. Other sources put the budget at less than €40,000.<sup>1</sup> The director himself<sup>2</sup> explains the reason for these discrepancies by refusing to reveal the real budget of the film, as he believes that this could affect people's appreciation of the film.

The promotion of the film had its own website [www.laultima cima.com](http://www.laultima cima.com) and a distribution strategy based on platform on demand, a system that allows viewers to request the screening of the film in their city<sup>3</sup>. The advertising campaign focused exclusively on the web and social networks, with no investment in traditional media. On the day of the premiere, there were 176,000 video downloads and 4 screenings in cinemas, a figure that rose to 60 in just one week. The advertising investment of €2,000 was focused exclusively on the website.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.1. Segmented and Identified Audience

The identification of the target audience by the creative team and the production company is a key element in the definition of communication strategies, but also in the creation of content. In this sense, a specific and clearly defined audience is identified, so that the main target of infinite+1 (production company and distributor of the film) is defined as practising Catholics of different ages. For each age group, an adapted tool is designed, as in the case of the production of different trailers aimed at different profiles in the hope that they will become prescribers: a quick, choppy montage aimed at a young target, trailers with themes related to motherhood aimed at couples, etc. Moreover, in recent decades, except for the feature film *"The Passion"* (Gibson, 2004), there have been very few productions with religious themes, leaving an unsatisfied public eager to consume films that suit their tastes. On the contrary, the religious content produced in recent years has provoked controversies and crises, questioning the role of religion and the clergy, as shown by productions such as *"El palmar de troya"* (Santo, 2020), *"El joven papa"* (Sorrentino, 2016) and *"The Da Vinci code"*. In the case of the feature film *"The last summit"* on the other hand, its headline for the general public consists of the phrase "the only film that speaks well of priests", thus positioning itself in favour of the positive message towards the Church.

<sup>1</sup> Information taken from El blog del cine español on 24 May 2001 <http://www.elblogdecineespanol.com/?p=5243> web visited on 15 June 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Extract from an interview with Juan Manuel Coteló on 30 June 2010 in El blog del cine español, <http://www.elblogdecineespanol.com/?p=1766> web visited on 8 November 2012.

<sup>3</sup> *Paranormal activity* (Peli, O., 2007) was the first film to use this strategy with a worldwide success.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Infinity +1



According to the 2010-2011 Survey of Cultural Habits and Practices in Spain, only 49% of the population has ever been to the cinema, a figure that contrasts with the high annual film production shown in Table 1. Faced with this reality, it is imperative for independent film content production and distribution companies to know and understand their target audience. From the production company Infinito + 1, they are aware of the need to approach their audience in an alternative way, "the user is increasingly demanding and autonomous, the cinematographic offer in cinemas will require greater personalisation" (Linares & Baraybar, 2017). To this end, the origin of the phenomenon "*The last summit*" is located in the Palafox cinemas in the centre of Madrid, more precisely in the Chamberí neighbourhood, an old and classic neighbourhood, surrounded by dozens of churches and Catholic schools. Initially, the screenings were held on Sunday mornings, at a time that coincided with the end of mass, in order to widen the audience to include different age groups. The idea is also to make the screening an event in itself, a family event, just like the Sunday service. In this case, we are talking about a film event that unites a community with common interests, thus increasing the contagious effect of a screening. As for the exhibition hall, it was used to the full at times that did not interfere with the classical evening and night-time exhibition.

### **3.2. Distribution and Marketing to a Niche Audience: Release-on-Demand Strategy**

The film "*The last summit*" is considered the first use case of on-demand film release in Spain. This strategy, known as Platform on Demand, involves the spectators themselves requesting a premiere in a specific place through their request on social networks or specialised platforms. This involves a series of distribution, promotion and exhibition activities, which are new, and the key to which is the identification of the target audience. The main ones are highlighted below:

- Profitability of the distributor and exhibitor. When the fan community demands that a film be screened in a particular cinema, it blocks the cinema for a certain period of time in order to achieve a minimum occupancy rate that guarantees the cinema a certain income and thus allows the film to be shown to the public. In this way, the beneficiaries are the exhibitor, the distributor and also the audience itself, since it can decide what it wants to see. On the one hand, the cinemas will be able to recoup the cost of showing the film by having a guaranteed box office, i.e. attendance at the cinema, and thus avoid generating screenings where hardly any tickets are sold, "innovation is a survival strategy in a constantly changing environment that requires flexibility and adaptability" (Gutiérrez-Rubí & Freire, 2013). On the other hand, from the point of view of distribution, independent minority films are introduced to the market that would otherwise not find a place in an increasingly homogeneous and commercial exhibition (Monzoncillo & Villanueva, 2015). Furthermore, in the case of *The Last Summit's* application, the distribution to cinemas is carried out on DVD support, which allows all types of cinemas to be used, regardless of their technical requirements. This results in considerable savings in the production and distribution of prints, as the cost of producing and distributing a DVD is practically zero compared to a film print or DCP (Digital Cinema Package), as well as the VPF (Virtual Print Fee) costs required by some projectors. On the other hand, as mentioned above, the schedules offered by the on-demand release strategy do not compete with the distribution of traditional films, with the idea of obtaining greater profitability for cinemas by taking advantage of under-used schedules such as the morning session.
- Prescription. The mobilisation of audiences in an on-demand release strategy is carried out by people from the community itself who are able to spread the message (priests or leaders of Catholic communities) and who are responsible for programming the activity. In the case of "*The last summit*", this created a call effect by generating queues at the entrances to the cinemas where the film was screened, which attracted more people interested in seeing the documentary. Due to the subject matter and peculiarity of "*The last summit*", the production company is looking for influencers such as priests to use their sermons, religious teachers, monitors, etc. as prescribers. In other words, the work of identifying people who send the message is to identify specific cases and turn them into "speakers" or transmitters of the message. In this specific case, the aim was to spread the idea of going to the cinema, and to this end, the people who were prescribers in their daily lives, managed networks of contacts and forged bonds through faith, and were considered to be great influencers.

- Promotion. *"The last summit"* develops a website with the idea of being a useful tool for the community it addresses, through which they request and demand premieres and screenings throughout the country. The team is therefore creating an attractive Web 2.0 with the clear aim of creating a community, not just a promotional one. To this end, the following categories of the site stand out:
  - + "Make your campaign". Promotional material is made available to the internet public to promote the film. This is typical of low-budget and independent films and encourages word-of-mouth promotion.
  - + "I've already seen it". A forum-like space where members of the public who have seen the film can comment on it. Due to the high level of participation, this section was a success with hundreds of comments. In addition, the information provided by fans was mostly positive, as the audience that took the initiative to comment was the most likely and enthusiastic. Furthermore, the fact that both the film and the website were aimed at a loyal audience encouraged a certain dedicated audience to consume the film. In addition, one of the main values of the forum was to provide objective information to the production team, as they become "ears" at the door of the cinemas every time they read the comments posted. This first-hand information will be essential for their next productions.
  - + "I already knew him". This was another space for conversation around the character of Pablo, the protagonist. In this case, people who had met this public figure spoke and shared their experiences. This tool was ideal for identifying potential influencers, as the messages were authentic and therefore likely to generate interest in the film.
  - + "I have a friend who is a priest". As in the previous point, a forum is created that produces content of value to a community. Again, these are authentic reflections and comments, which makes it possible to identify the influencers.

All these spaces we have mentioned fulfil a fundamental function: to make the visit to the official website a recurring one. In general, low-budget independent films such as those studied in this article invest little in communication tools, as they consider the official website to be a key space for informing their community about events and screenings. Traditional distributors, on the other hand, believe that the public identifies the website as the distributor's own means of communication and therefore unreliable. For this reason, they prefer to offer the trailer on platforms such as Youtube, which is much more attractive to the public and cheaper. But in the specific case of *"The last summit"*, and for all films with this community profile, the website is a basic element and must attract and keep the audience coming back. With no money to invest in other media, the official website is the only place to announce screenings and events, so the best way to attract people is to create content, in this case thanks to forums that serve as a meeting place for the community and information.

In this context of a release-on-demand distribution strategy aimed at reaching a segmented and atypical audience, the following scenario of film consumption emerges. According to the data provided by Rentrak (now Comscore), in the first 6 weeks of its exploitation, the film has a total of 122 cinemas, with an increasing progression (starting with only 4 cinemas) and a weekly growth in the number of viewers of 327%. This growth is atypical for a film's economic exploitation. Normally, after the opening weekend, there is a decline in both the box office and the number of admissions and cinemas. We are therefore faced with a success that changes the traditional commercial life of a film.

In the end, the film earned a total of 804,185 euros, making it one of the twenty most-watched Spanish films of the year, a milestone not only for a religious film, but also for a documentary, which is far from these figures.

### **3.3. Evolution of the Distribution and Customer Service Model**

#### **3.3.1. Land of Mary. The Consolidation of a Different Distribution Model**

After the runaway success of *"The last summit"*, two problems were identified thanks to the information the creative team was able to glean from the web forum, particularly the "I've already seen it" section. On the one hand, despite the efforts to make a different kind of documentary, one of the main criticisms reflected in the forums was that the documentary genre was boring and difficult. The other problem

identified was the excessive geographical place, which meant that Pablo's story was too local and did not seem to connect with an international audience.

Thanks to the opportunity to listen directly to their audience's criticisms, the creative team decided to solve these problems in a second project called "*Land of Mary*" (Cotelo, 2013). This is a film with a much larger budget than "*The last summit*" and, in line with the criticism they received, they decided to combine the documentary genre with fiction, approaching the genre of docu-fiction or recreated reality, including fantastic effects. In this way, they try to bring the product closer to an audience that, although loyal, has its doubts about the documentary genre. Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013: 255) speak of the need to woo fans of independent content, pointing out that these "gifts often involve some form of reciprocity and that this is openly acknowledged"; in this sense, as a gift to their community, the creators of Infinity +1 make a trailer in the style of a spy film such as James Bond, aimed as a wink at those members of the community who view the documentary genre with suspicion.

On the other hand, they are committed to a film with international stories, now focusing on countries in different continents and in different languages, in order to reach a more international audience. They also decided to continue their strategy based on on-demand releases, finding alternative cinemas and schedules to avoid competing with films from the traditional industry. In this way, they avoid competition and find their niche in the market.

The box office results from the premiere on 5 December 2013 to 28 January 2014 follow the footsteps of the previous film, a release with a limited number of prints that grow over the next few weeks, as do the box office receipts and the number of admissions, which increase in relation to the previous week's box office figures. This film, like "*The last summit*", has an upward curve in its weekly receipts, which is unusual for new releases where, as mentioned above, each weekend's receipts and admissions fall in relation to the previous one.

Finally, "*Land of Mary*" earned 377,139.76 euros with a total of 59,289 admissions. It is clear that these figures are nowhere near those of "*The last summit*", which was an anomaly in terms of box office, but what they do show is a considerable box office for a film of this genre and the reality of an audience and community willing to consume it in cinemas. In addition, the film is being distributed in 25 countries, compared to 18 for the previous film. Once again, the success of the distribution strategy combined with the identification and knowledge of the segmented audience is evident.

### **3.3.2. *Footprints. Maximising the Model***

In 2016, the creative team of Infinito+1 decided to launch a new project: "*Footprints*" (Cotelo, 2016), a fully documentary film about the pilgrimage experience on the Camino de Santiago. The distribution strategy is practically the same as for the previous films. On the one hand, they are based on release on demand, but now, in addition to centralising requests on their website, they are using other platforms specialised in the distribution of films (theatrical on demand) that emerged in 2016, namely Youfeelm and Screenly. Both platforms offered a service of pre-sale of tickets to see a specific film in an exhibition hall, defined as a film crowdfunding or crowdticketing, in which the pass was produced if a minimum forum was reached, so that the business model covered the different interested parties: the production and distribution companies that hold the rights to the film, and the exhibitor who made the hall available to the public. It was therefore a commitment to the democratisation of cinemas, to letting the public decide which film they wanted to see in the cinema, and for this "*Footprints*" had a potential community that was familiar with the background of the creative team behind the project and the logic of the on-demand model.

The box office was lower in this case: €134,351, but still considerable for a documentary in cinemas, demonstrating the consolidation of a loyal community.

### **3.3.3. *"The Greatest Gift". When the Crowd Participates in Funding***

The film "*The greatest gift*" (Cotelo, 2018) revolves around the idea of forgiveness, and for this reason the production company Infinito+1 decided to organise an action that would allow them to finance their new film. To do this, they set up a crowdfunding or microfinance campaign, which consists of financing a project through a community, so that each person (called a patron) contributes a small amount that, when added up, becomes the amount that can make the project a reality. Crowdfunding campaigns offer so-called "rewards" in exchange for participation, which is a material associated with the project itself,



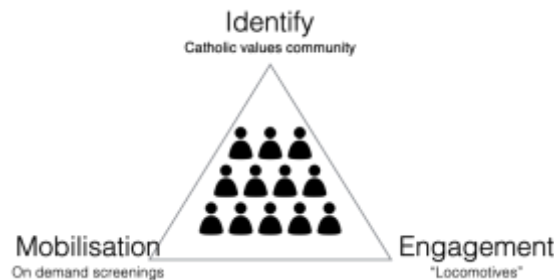
either a T-shirt, a photo, etc. Sometimes it also means that each person's name is linked to the project, as can be seen on The Greatest Gift's website, where each individual backer is listed. But the main reason to participate in crowdfunding is the perception of trust created by the creators, especially through communication (Baber & Fanea-Ivanovici, 2021), actions that the Infinito +1 team has been working on since the first production, creating a favourable culture for this type of community funding actions.

In terms of the microfinance initiative, not only will the community be financially empowered, but they will also be the potential audience and influencers of the project. Finally, the film will be released in 2018. The website offers a downloadable communication kit (photos, designs, texts, covers, social media photos, etc.) customised for 11 different countries, so that anyone interested can spread the message, become part of the community and become an influencer of The Best Gift.

Following the idea of on-demand exploitation and consolidating an alternative and participatory distribution model for the community, the so-called *Locomotives* have been created. These are contact persons who create a worldwide network with a high penetration in Central and South America and who altruistically offer to coordinate and manage the premieres and screenings of the films in their respective countries. Both crowdfunding and this involvement in distribution identify a working model based on community and crowdsourcing, understood as "opening up processes to be able to count on the involvement of a set of agents that are outside the formal logic of traditional organisations, such as work teams, departments, divisions or strategic collaborations between organisations" (Roig, et al., 2017). Botto explains how crucial it is to "identify, engage and mobilise the audience" (2018:57), which in this particular case is identified with a community based on Christian values, attracted by the content (all the films produced so far) and proposed to take action (either through financial contributions or involvement in distribution as so-called locomotives). The consideration of this group goes, in most cases, against the traditional logic of the market, as "you ask for a value in return for nothing" (Botto, 2018:63), and seeks the "emotional involvement" (Roig, et al., 2017) of the community.

The film was released in October 2018, and according to the same formula analysed so far, it achieved a box office of €381,233 in cinemas, a figure close to that of Land of Mary, which allows us to estimate where the average box office of a film with this community might be, as we will observe in the box office results of the rest of the films.

**Figure 1.** The keys to crowdsourcing. The Infinity+1 model



Source: own elaboration based on Botto (2018).

### **3.3.4. Let's Have the Party in Peace. The Effectiveness of the Model in Post-Pandemic Times**

Infinito + 1's latest film, *"Let's Have the Party in Peace"* (Cotelo, 2021), focuses on the concept of family togetherness and was released on 3 December 2021 with the clear aim of exploiting the synergies of the Christmas festivities. However, this film also evolves from the initial documentary genre of the creative team to produce a musical fiction that follows on from the success of recent family films such as the saga *"Father there is only one"*, *"The kids are alright"* and *"Papá o mamá"*. The proposal is to create a family film with Catholic values, a content that has been little explored in national cinematography in recent decades (far from productions such as *"La gran familia"* (Palacios, 1962), which were common in the cinematographic offer at the time), taking advantage of a community already created by the previous films.

Once again, the care for the community and their identification as prescribers is translated into the creation of the Family Lover Kit based on images from the film, posters, trailer, video, press kit, etc. Once again, the community is invited to watch the film and spread the message.

Following the same distribution style based on on-demand release and with a strong commitment to promotion through the web and the networks created in the community, the film manages to raise 332,383 €. Despite the drop in box office receipts due to the impact of the pandemic, it achieved good results (Top 20 films in 2021) and consolidated a trajectory in line with previous films (*“Land of Mary”* and *“The greatest gift”*).

**Table 2.** Box office and release data.

	Release date	Collection Spain €	New countries
<i>The Last Summit</i>	3/6/10	804.185,15	18
<i>Land of Mary</i>	5/12/13	377.301,76	25
<i>Footprint</i>	23/9/16	134.351,46	-
<i>The Greatest Gift</i>	23/10/18	381.233,22	15
<i>Let's Have the Party in Peace</i>	3/12/21	332.383,82	-

Source: Own elaboration based on data from ICAA, COMSCORE and Infinito+1.

## 4. Results and Conclusions

The main objective of this research is to analyse the different branding tools and actions that allow us to understand and guarantee the relationship between content producers and consumers. Thus, by analysing and understanding the work of the production company Infinito+1, it is possible to observe and understand how the use of new communication and branding tools allows the team that creates audiovisual content not only to identify its audience, but also to know its audience and therefore to address it.

Among the various films analysed in this article, the following results can be listed:

- The creation of a website as a meeting point for a community eager to consume content, but also to obtain information about the film. In this way, it is in this web space that the key aspects of organising on-demand distribution are communicated. In the same way, the above-mentioned communication kits are offered to facilitate the work of spreading the message.
- All the films are distributed worldwide thanks to people who join the project and take local responsibility for the premieres in different countries, the so-called "locomotives". The website itself features the profiles of these people and their direct contact details. These locomotives are responsible for promotion and premieres in the following countries: Portugal, Spain, Ireland, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Romania, Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Japan, United States, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay.
- In terms of box office, the results are entirely positive. Looking at the table of box office receipts for the films, we can see that an average of around 350,000 euros is the benchmark for establishing this specific model of films with this defined audience, with the exception of *“The last summit”* and *“Footprints”*. It is also worth noting that all of the productions have managed to place themselves in the top 50 Spanish films with the highest box office receipts.

The creative industries, and specifically the film industry, find an ally in new technologies in the sense that they allow for a greater circulation, and with more impact, of their content. In this sense, it can be seen how residual market segments are served to date, and it is therefore concluded that the adaptation of digital media to technological channels has a positive impact on audiences thanks to their reach.

In relation to S01, clusters or groups of minority audiences offer defined characteristics that make them unique and valuable when designing marketing strategies, in such a way that they work with very

defined codes that offer a high impact. An example of this is the on-demand release, discussed throughout the article, which allows us to understand the positive impact of community support in terms of content distribution for segmented audiences.

Religious themes offer an opportunity for content creation and distribution. Throughout the article, there is a significant and identified demand for this type of product, indicating an unsatisfied audience. Therefore, with regard to the case study of Infinito +1, we conclude that the success of their communication and content distribution strategy is based on understanding their niche audience and effectively using new digital resources to build a brand and community online.

The SO2 provides a roadmap for studying crowd phenomena and their relationship with audiovisual audiences. In this context, it is clear that the identification of audiences is crucial in the phases preceding the development of audiovisual products. This makes it possible to design narratives and marketing actions tailored to the audience that is genuinely interested in consuming the product. Consequently, we can discuss the production and distribution of personalised content. This is achieved through the design and use of digital platforms for content distribution, thus performing a content marketing function by directing users' attention to specific content. This aspect fosters the notion of community, where a group of like-minded users come together to enhance their ability to support each other. Phenomena such as crowdsourcing, crowdticketing or crowdfunding are therefore essential, contributing both to content creation and to fostering a sense of belonging and support.

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