



NARRATIVE STRUCTURES AND TECHNIQUES OF TRADITIONAL SERIES IN DIGITAL PLATFORM CONTENT The Case of Role-Playing Series in Minecraft

JAIME BARAHONA MARTÍNEZ¹, BEATRIZ LEGERÉN LAGO², DANIEL GOVANTES CARRASCO¹

¹ U-tad, Spain

² Universidad de Vigo, Spain

KEYWORDS

*TV Series
Digital Platforms
Content Creators
Minecraft
Role Playing
Narrative
Formats*

ABSTRACT

In the digital age, online video platforms have revolutionised the way in which we consume entertainment. YouTube and Twitch, two of the most popular platforms, have undergone a significant evolution since their inception, becoming containers for stories and narratives that go beyond simple improvised amateur content. The hypothesis is that the fundamentals and structures for storytelling are maintained, but we wish to ascertain specifically what endures through the different formats.

Received: 14 / 12 / 2023

Accepted: 31 / 03 / 2024

1. Introduction

In the digital age, online video platforms have revolutionised the way we consume entertainment. YouTube and Twitch, two of the most popular platforms, have evolved significantly since their inception, becoming containers for stories and narratives that go beyond simple improvised amateur content. Online platforms such as YouTube and Twitch have revolutionised the way we consume audiovisual content. These platforms allow content creators to use a variety of classic narrative devices from film and series to create unique and engaging storytelling experiences for their audiences. Classic storytelling devices such as narrative arcs, character development and the use of suspense have been widely adopted by content creators on YouTube and Twitch.

The ability to build compelling and immersive stories is crucial to keep audiences engaged throughout videos or live streams. Successful YouTubers and streamers know how to use the cliffhanger at the end of a video or broadcast to keep viewers eager for more. In addition, developing characters over time, whether through video series or regular streams, creates an emotional connection with the audience, which in turn builds loyalty and long-term engagement. It is important to note that although classic narrative resources are used on YouTube and Twitch, their adaptation on these platforms has particularities (Valverde, 2008). For example, the shorter duration of videos on YouTube and live streams on Twitch requires creators to be more concise and direct in their storytelling. In addition, the interactivity offered by these platforms allows viewers to actively participate in the narrative. For instance, viewers can influence the narrative through the comments section on YouTube or the chat on Twitch. They can ask questions, suggest ideas or interact directly with the content creator.

In essence, the online platforms YouTube and Twitch have enabled content creators to adapt and utilise classic narrative resources from film and series in a distinctive and engaging manner, with traditional elements becoming increasingly prevalent in the narrative and structure of these. This article examines the search for techniques and conventions of television series narrative within the audiovisual content consumed by young people on digital platforms such as YouTube or Twitch.

The hypothesis is that the fundamentals and structures of storytelling remain consistent across formats, but we aim to identify the specific elements that endure. To achieve this, we will analyse the technical bases of storytelling in television series, focusing on the transmission of the story through discourse, in order to generate a model for analysis.

1.1. YouTube: From Home Videos to a Diverse Narrative

YouTube was established in 2005 as a platform for the sharing of home videos. Its initial success was based on the democratisation of the creation and dissemination of audiovisual content. However, over time, YouTube has evolved into a platform with a wide variety of formats and genres, including specialised channels for entertainment, education, news and much more. In this context, storytelling has assumed a fundamental role on YouTube, with content creators developing formats such as vlogs, web series, short films and documentaries, utilising the platform to convey original narratives and engage with specific audiences.

Historically, as observed by Burgess and Green (2010), common narrative techniques in YouTube content have often revolved around audience acquisition and retention through various means. One technique is the creation of content that appeals to the 'lowest common denominator', which tends to attract large numbers of views by catering to broad interests and often sensationalist content. Another technique is the use of humor and satire, as demonstrated by Saturday Night Live's Lazy Sunday clip, which became a huge hit on YouTube for its humorous and relatable narrative. This suggests that humorous, culturally relevant narratives that tap into the zeitgeist tend to resonate with YouTube audiences. Furthermore, the platform's emphasis on user-created content implies that creativity is a valued narrative aspect. However, it is observed to be more challenging to identify as the volume of content increases. These techniques illustrate the significance of understanding audience preferences and cultural context in creating narratives that can be popular on YouTube.

1.2. Twitch: The Rise of Streaming and Communities

Twitch, founded in 2011, is a live streaming platform specialising in video games. The platform has experienced exponential growth in recent years, becoming a space where professional and amateur gamers share their games, interact with their followers and create communities around their interests.

Beyond gameplay, Twitch has given rise to a new form of storytelling in which real-time interaction between streamer and audience plays a key role. Streamers share personal stories, anecdotes and experiences, thereby fostering a deeper connection with their followers. YouTube and Twitch have redefined the digital entertainment landscape, providing a space for the creation and consumption of stories and narratives in a variety of formats.

2. Genres and Formats in Television Serial Productions

The discussion of storytelling in television is largely focused on fiction. Fiction is typically the programming with the highest relative cost in the schedules. Consequently, almost all fiction genres are aimed at prime time, at least in their premiere, and only daily series occupy some daytime slots (Miller & Tulloch, 2015).

2.1. Traditional Formats of Serialised Fiction Productions

In terms of the order of highest to lowest level of production (cost and resources), the following items are among the first:

2.1.1. TV-Movies. Also known as telefilms or films for television

- These are feature films designed to be released directly on TV, without first being shown in cinemas. In the United States, TV movies were born from three different assumptions:
- Pilot episodes. In order to examine the potential audience interest of a series project, a first episode of feature film length is produced. In case the series does not go ahead, this pilot is exploited as an independent TV film.
- Film of the week. The advent of television networks led to the commissioning of low-cost feature films that strictly met their criteria, both in terms of broadcasting (providing for up to six commercial breaks and thus establishing a seven-act dramatic structure) and in terms of interest for the target audience. These types of productions typically employ one of three narrative premises: (1) Stories based on real events found in the news pages; (2) Stories of the protagonist's self-improvement; (3) Instant movies, films based on very recent political or social events and designed to reach the audience before they have forgotten the event.
- Quality TV movies. HBO, the pay channel, inaugurated this line of production. Telefilms are commissioned from leading figures in the film industry and are not constrained by the structural and narrative premises of the usual TV movie.

In Europe, the TV movie is a frequent genre in countries such as Great Britain, Germany and France. Public television in these countries hosts TV-movies along similar lines to HBO. In Spain, in recent years and especially in the sphere of FARTO (Federation of Autonomous Radio and Television Organisations), there has been a trend towards the production of TV-movies inspired by the guidelines of North American networks (seven acts, type of stories...). It is curious that this commitment to production has not been reflected in broadcasting. Indeed, the cases in which TV movies have been broadcast at an opportune time and have been well received by the audience have been exceptional. TV movies, as well as two-episode miniseries, benefit from a legal measure designed to support cinema, which obliges broadcasters to dedicate 5% of their budget to the production or purchase of rights for this type of product.

2.1.2. Miniseries

Miniseries are a form of narrative that employs a closed-ended structure, typically comprising two to four episodes. They are similar in production level to television movies, and they offer a high degree of loyalty to their audience, although they are naturally of a shorter duration.

2.1.3. Series

Series are typically broadcast on a weekly basis and comprise one-hour episodes. They encompass a wide variety of proposals, with thematic criteria often employed to identify them. Two particularly common lines are series based on a professional (such as police, doctors or lawyers) or family field.

In terms of genre, a pragmatic division leaves three possibilities: drama, comedy and dramedy. The latter is a relatively recent success in Spain, characterised by a combination of dramatic and comedic plots. Finally, in terms of dramatic structure, series can be classified as either closed or open. Closed series, such as *24* or *Roma*, tell a single, self-conclusive story. Open series, the most common, are potentially eternal and continue to be produced as long as there is sufficient interest. Their episodes can be self-conclusive or have an arc plot, which is a plot that begins in one episode and is completed in subsequent ones (Greco, 2019). Each episode can be considered a standalone story or part of a larger arc plot. This is a common structure for series, with each episode presenting a self-conclusive plot and an arc plot that is gradually revealed over subsequent episodes.

2.1.4. Sitcom

The sitcom (short for situation comedy) is a distinctive television genre that differs from other forms of fiction. Its unique characteristics include its length (typically half an hour with commercials), its rigid structure (two acts and the requirement to provoke gags every few seconds), and its production process.

The format of the sitcom is distinct from that of other forms of fiction, and in the American television industry, the sitcom is overseen by the Entertainment department. The sitcom is filmed with an audience present on set, in a manner similar to many other programmes, which reinforces its theatrical nature and serves to enhance the actors' comic vision. As with series, the approach to filming can be more or less similar to that of cinema, depending on the budget. In sitcoms, filming is only the end, the result of a rehearsal process. The sitcom is a weekly series, but it is common for there to be daily reruns in the case of successful sitcoms that have reached a significant number of episodes.

2.1.5 Serials

A variety of terms are used to describe daily broadcast fiction, including serial drama, serial, daily strip, and soap opera (*culebrón*). Produced with significantly lower budgets than other genres, the serial draws inspiration from the tradition of string literature, folklore, and the radio soap opera.

The most popular genre for this type of fiction is melodrama, although in recent years, when the genre has experienced a notable boom, variants tending towards comedy and even action have been introduced, diversifying the genre's targets. Two great traditions coexist in the serial:

- On the one hand, the Anglo-Saxon tradition (United States and Great Britain), which has given rise to the soap.
- On the other hand, there is the Latin tradition, of which Brazil and Mexico are the most prominent examples, each with its own distinctive characteristics. This tradition has also spread to other countries, including Venezuela, Peru, and Argentina. The term "*culebrón*" (soap opera) is derived from this tradition.

There is a significant distinction between soap and soap opera. While soap opera narratives are typically closed, with a clear conclusion (such as a wedding), soaps differ in that they have an open-ended, potentially eternal story arc. What both genres share is a strong plot structure that engages the viewer, often to the point of developing a sense of loyalty and addiction. To achieve this, the dramatic structure seeks to establish strong hooks, both in the daily rhythm of the broadcast and in its weekly schedule.

Finally, without departing from the field of genres, it is worth mentioning a couple of key concepts in the definition of television programmes. The first concept concerns the distinction between flow and stock programmes. A flow programme is understood to be one that exhausts its exploitation in its first and, therefore, last broadcast. In contrast, a stock programme has a longer commercial life and can be rebroadcast. Although there are numerous exceptions, fiction and documentaries are typically stock programmes, while the remainder of entertainment or news programmes constitute flow programming.

The second concept is that of format (Saló, 2003). In the field of television, format has two meanings. On the one hand, it is the number of episodes (or the periodicity, if this number is indefinite) and the duration of each episode. This is usually expressed as a multiplication (13 x 60', 65 x 30', etc.) and is an essential data point in the identification of programmes. However, it is also a programme model fixed for sale or export.

2.2. Narrative Structures and Resources in Current TV Series

The abundance of audiovisual content in the contemporary landscape necessitates that contemporary television series seek innovation and differentiation in the construction of their stories. Consequently, the scriptwriters who create them are obliged to employ a wide range of narrative resources to capture the viewer's attention and generate a memorable viewing experience in a highly competitive environment.

These technical bases of narrative, in the first instance, are written down in the script. However, what is a screenplay? As stated by Field (1994, p. 13), a screenplay is a story told in pictures about a person or persons in a place or places, doing a "thing". However, if we consider the screenplay from a purely cinematographic perspective, we find that the script delineates the sequence of events, character development, and the intended pace of the narrative. Even the transition between scenes and the indication of the passage of time are crucial elements that must be written as said by Espinoza & Montini (2021).

For some time now, there have been currents of thought advocating departing from the classic formula of script construction. In the case of Dancyger & Rush (2013), these currents consider a number of potential benefits of subverting writing conventions, particularly in relation to narrative innovation and audience engagement. By challenging established frameworks, such as the traditional three-act restorative form, filmmakers and screenwriters have the ability to create stories that reflect the complexities and uncertainties of real life, presenting a more nuanced and authentic representation of characters and situations.

Traditionally, when developing a script for a television series, the same narrative resources inherent to a classic film script are used. Although some of these are more recurrent in the serialised format, they also belong to the filmic universe. In order to create a script for a television series, contemporary storytelling often employs various narrative devices, tropes and effects that seek to be more in tune with today's audience. This audience demands constant stimulation and a much faster pace from narratives. Consequently, the traditional three-act structure of the first act in which the protagonist was traditionally allowed to flow in his comfort zone to understand his reality in depth before reaching the trigger that blew his world apart is no longer sufficient.

As proposed by Poon (2006), the opening act of *The Godfather* is designed to establish the universe of the Corleone family, introduce the essential characters and their cultural and familial principles, which are deeply rooted in Sicilian customs, with the intention of laying the emotional and narrative groundwork for the subsequent acts. This approach is intended to enhance the authenticity of the characters and the drama that unfolds in their lives in the American social environment. This investment of time in narrative discourse appears to be an unnecessary risk in the age of immediacy. Content creators must prioritise hooking an audience that is one click away from forgetting their "channel" discourse forever, unless they provide the narrative subversion that their audience is accustomed to.

This subversion also generates a more active and engaged audience, which is inclined towards critical analysis. Unconventional narratives often demand a deeper engagement in the interpretation of the story, which connects with the framework of analysis of this article. This deeper engagement is something that YouTube and Twitch content creators want to enhance in their channels. They are relentless in their pursuit of increasing their subscriber base, which allows them to monetise their creative effort and, at the same time, not lose them to the latest novelty that they can find at the click of

a mouse. The monetisation of creative effort is a goal that content creators on YouTube and Twitch seek to achieve. This is done in order to increase their subscriber base, which allows them to monetise their creative effort and retain their audience.

This unprecedented audiovisual competition directly affects the 'more traditional' content hosted by major online platforms such as Netflix, HBO, Prime Video, and demands that today's serialised storytelling leans towards more intricate narrative structures, and delves into exploring the fusion of characters, themes and motifs to create cohesive and captivating television series (Zoonen & Wring, 2012). This is consistent with the analysis of Dancyger and Rush (2013), who posit that deviating from predictable plot progressions allows series to move away from clichés and tropes, thus maintaining audience interest and potentially appealing to a wider demographic that craves novelty.

Furthermore, a paradigm shift can be observed in terms of the type of themes, characters, conflicts and genres most recurrent in the platforms' content grid. This shift is characterised by the promotion of more naive themes and a feelgood tone, as noted by Huasasquiche-Carbajal et al. (2022). The pandemic has led to a shift in digital consumption habits, with people becoming more dependent on streaming platforms. This has resulted in an increase in users and a corresponding rise in the consumption of narratives that offer a sense of satisfaction and well-being, as well as an understanding of the thoughts and intentions of others. It is pertinent to cite the study by Nuria García-Muñoz and Maddalena Fedele (2011), which examines series for teenagers. The study focuses on teenage characters aimed at a young audience and employs a case study methodology. The study examined the variables related to the characters, plot and main conflicts in the series Dawson's Creek. It reached the conclusion that the central themes are the acceptance of personal identity, love and friendship, and that the social relationships between the characters are crucial for the development of the plot and the conflict.

Similarly, the immersive nature of marathon behaviour serves to highlight the intense focus on the climactic endings evident in the narratives of the series. This is achieved through the use of narrative devices such as the cliffhanger and the plot twist at the end of each episode, which are employed with the intention of building loyalty and hooking the audience with purely narrative resources characteristic of the thriller genre.

In essence, the utilisation of alternative structures, the integration of characters, themes and motifs, in conjunction with the advent of content platforms and the shift in narrative paradigm that emerged in the wake of the post-COVID-19 pandemic, can facilitate a transformation in the art of storytelling. This phenomenon has the potential to be a revolution in the art of storytelling itself, stimulating a discourse on the essence of storytelling and the role of the audience in the construction of meaning. This, in turn, causes adjustments in the use of traditional narrative resources, transforming them and enhancing or lowering the intensity as the case may be.

2.2.1. Most Frequent Narrative Resources

In a similar manner to how the 20th century is regarded as the century of cinema, the 21st century could be considered the era of series. As Boutet (2015) posited, although it is too early to make a definitive statement, series have matured as a form of expression, offering a level of freedom that films no longer possess. Furthermore, their episodic structure allows them to adapt to the rhythms of our lives. The narratives employed by these series draw upon a number of narrative techniques that have their origins in Aristotle's Poetics (Aristóteles & Alsina Clota, 2000). These techniques are identified below:

Non-linear narratives: The use of flashbacks, flashforwards and time jumps is employed to enhance mystery, suspense and to maintain viewer interest. This approach breaks the classic linear structure and conveys a sense of modernity and difference (Prósper Ribes, 2019).

Complex and ambiguous characters: Multidimensional characters with flaws and grey areas are more attractive to today's audiences, who seek to identify with them beyond the simple hero-villain dichotomy. Concurrently, the figure of the anti-hero, which has consistently held a certain allure for younger audiences, is reinforced (Del Pilar et al., 2015).

Intricate plots replete with unexpected twists: The current series eschew the predictability of previous iterations, instead offering viewers an array of unexpected plot twists that maintain narrative tension. This approach is designed to elicit the cliffhanger effect, a strategy that has become a key component of binge-watching experiences on digital platforms (Pereira Pérez and del Campo Cañizares, 2022).

Relevant subplots and secondary characters: The incorporation of well-developed subplots and supporting characters enriches the main narrative and adds depth to the series' universe, thereby ensuring a longer run on the platform and a higher return on investment.

Relevant social issues: Current series address topical social issues, such as inequality, discrimination, or mental health, thereby generating debate and reflection in the viewer.

Metareferences and nods to popular culture: The incorporation of references to other audiovisual works or cultural phenomena fosters a sense of complicity with the viewer, thereby enriching the viewing experience (Blanco, 2015).

Open or ambiguous endings: Open or ambiguous endings prompt the viewer to reflect and engage in discourse about the fates of the characters (Storr, & Abásolo, 2022).

2.2.2. Table of Elements Associated with TV Serialised Productions.

In order to facilitate a comparison between the elements associated with classic serialised fiction narratives created by professionals and the products created by new generations of creators for alternative channels, we present below a table with the main elements that make up a serialised television fiction production.

Table 1. Formats and elements of serialised productions

	Formats	Narrative of Episodes	Characters	Duration
Series	Main plot and 2/3 secondary plots	3 acts. Self-conclusive dramatic arcs	1 to 3 characters	1 hour per week
Sit-Coms	Situations and gags	2 acts	No more than 5	½ hour per day
Serials	5 frames independent of each other	They are not self-conclusive	1 to 5 characters	1 hour per day
Miniseries	Main plot and 2/3 secondary plots	3 acts. Self-conclusive dramatic arcs	1 to 3 characters	1 hour 2 or 3 episodes maximum
TV-Movies	Main plot	Self-conclusive	1 to 3 characters	60 to 90 minutes

Source: Own elaboration, 2024.

The following analysis will utilise the sections of Table 1 for the selection of series, with the objective of identifying the common elements that have been previously studied, as well as establishing differences or evolved forms of the format.

3. Analysis of Series Produced on Digital Platforms via *Minecraft*

3.1. Body of the Analysis

3.1.1. Methodology and Sample

The case study will analyse the content series that have won first place in the three editions of the ESLAND awards in the "Best Content Series" category. The sample has been selected because they are Spanish-language series, because the relevance of their members and the impact of their content on viewers is recognised. Furthermore, the awards themselves have specific requirements that serve to reinforce their selection process. These include the development of the content series as a video game, the participation of multiple content creators, and a duration of more than seven days. The award is conferred on the basis of the peak audience on live streaming platforms, namely Twitch, YouTube and, more recently,

Kick, as well as the hours viewed by viewers and the average number of viewers per minute. Table 2 presents the key information from the sample.

Table 2. Sample analysis.

	Edition ESLAND	Year	Style	Number of participants	Creators	Visualised participants
<i>Tortillaland</i>	1	2021	Role	33	Auronplay Perxita Heberon JaviDMr10	Auron
<i>Dedsafio 2</i>	2	2022	Challenges	48	Elded	SpreenDMC
<i>Minecraft Extreme</i>	3	2023	Challenges	59	AuronPlay Heberon	Auron

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

In all three cases in the sample, one version of the content was broadcast live on the Twitch platform, which was the original. Subsequently, another edited version was uploaded to the content creators' own YouTube channels. The delayed version displays extensive use of ellipsis, which eliminates sections of content that the author had to elaborate upon due to the live nature of the broadcast. This could be in the form of interactions with the audience outside the fictional world or content that lacks narrative or entertainment value. Additionally, image enlargement effects are frequently employed to direct the viewer's attention to the content creator's camera, while sound elements are also frequently edited.

3.1.2. Body of the Analysis

It is first necessary to note that one of the series has a role-playing theme, while the other two are based on challenge and competition among its members. However, despite this, there are important thematic differences in their analysis. Furthermore, even within the challenge series, there is a strong role-playing and social interaction component, as free time is allowed, with characters developing plots parallel to the main plot, as well as positive and negative social relationships between them. Furthermore, the inclusion of non-professional or highly experienced participants in the game supports this reflection. It was not only looking for an experience focused solely on the skills of the players or a sporting competition; it sought to include their social characters and the interaction that arises from and between them.

In all three cases, each chapter was structured in a manner defined by the organisers of the series. This entailed that players were required to perform certain actions or were subjected to events that they had to overcome. However, the regularity of the latter was greater in the case of the challenge series. Conversely, in the case of *Tortillaland*, the various content creators utilise their broadcasting sessions to generate secondary plots between them, thereby creating rivalries and alliances with which to expand the richness of the narrative universe and introduce elements of their social character's personality. They do so by making use of the mechanics of the video game itself. In the series of challenges, these are defined on a daily basis. Despite the shorter duration of these challenges, players are permitted a brief period of respite to prepare or develop a new plot. During this period, players may engage in combat with one another, either automatically or intentionally, for dramatic effect. One example of such a challenge is the fight that was in progress and resulted in one of the participants' demise.

It is important to note that, although death in *Tortillaland* is not permanent, in *Dedsafio 2* and *Minecraft Extreme*, players have a limited number of lives or possibilities to resurrect, with a permanent death that would prevent them from continuing. This mechanic introduces a greater degree of risk for players, as their margin for error is reduced and they must adopt a more strategic approach. However, it also creates opportunities for comical situations with their audience and tension between content creators. Another consequence of the creation of plots and the introduction of tension is the generation of improvised dialogue. The lack of prior preparation or the nervousness of the situation makes it challenging to understand the characters, to endure long silences, or to avoid them talking over each other.

The following section presents a detailed analysis of the structural and content elements highlighted in the sections outlined in the previous sections and Table 1.

3.1.2.1. Format

The selected series all feature a primary plot that serves to structure the overall experience and justify the events that occur throughout the chapters. However, in the case of *Tortillaland*, we can identify the use of additional, secondary plots, as well as instances of comedic situations. It can therefore be argued that the event designers have attempted to structure the experience as a TV movie in its central experience. However, the participants have been given freedom to develop and achieve a serial-like scheme, which is then shown more clearly in the chapters of each content creator. With regard to sitcom situations, a greater amount of related content has been identified in the case of the role-playing series, although there are also cases in the challenge series.

In light of the fact that the action was streamed live, with the necessity for improvisation and constant action to entertain their respective audiences, the content creators were required to engage with events prepared by the event creators and participate in stories generated by non-human characters generated within the video game itself. In both cases, the participants were directed in an experience defined by others. One experience was more passive, while the other was more active. However, they developed the aforementioned plots specific to each character, which they carried out alone or with others. They had clear general lines of what they had to do, but without a closed script. The plots between participants, which encompassed both positive and negative interactions, incorporated elements of their real-life experiences with elements of their lives within the game. This resulted in the characters they presented to the public within the game embodying the limitations and possibilities offered by the game itself. Audience action, during broadcasts, was observed to occasionally influence the narrative. Donations or subscriptions can be identified as a type of non-diegetic impact, which may occasionally impede the narrative progression for the viewers if the content creator takes the time to express gratitude and may also lead to confusion among the participating characters. Comments from the viewing audience, when the action is live as in formats such as sitcoms, accompany the action of the events and enhance the comedic or dramatic nature of the events.

Conversely, the series employs a series of visual and auditory elements that are characteristic of the video game *Minecraft*. However, these elements have been augmented through modification systems, thereby expanding the range of actions available to players. Additionally, in the context of the challenge series, sound and visual effects have been incorporated to announce significant events and the demise of participants. Furthermore, cue-ins have been identified in *Minecraft Extreme*, as well as in the content creators' time-lapse videos and pre-prepared narrative events, which occur in accordance with a script defined within the parameters of the game. Dialogue sounds are generated through the game's internal audio and players' microphones, which are constrained by proximity to each other, as well as written messages within the game itself. This created the potential for social interaction, although on occasion in noisy and chaotic environments, allowing participants to engage in discussion or collaboration in a more direct manner, as well as to leave messages that can be read by their collaborators if they are not connected at the same time. This enables them to generate content in their absence or as omitted or passive subjects of some of the plots.

3.1.2.2. Narrative of the Episodes

In the role-playing series, antagonists are defined in a long-cycle main plot. This is presented through the aforementioned events that occur to the content creators and fictional characters from the videogames used, as well as others generated by the moderators for the series. Two levels of dramatised fiction can be identified. The first is defined by the directors of the experience to which the players react, while the second is driven by the characters' own actions. Both are governed by internal rules established from the beginning of the series and the limitations of the game.

In *Dedsafio 2* and *Minecraft Extreme*, the enemies are both the enemies of the environment and the players, depending on the challenge imposed. In *Tortillaland*, the selected video game is established as the setting for long-cycle plots and others of an episodic nature. Some of these plots are short-cycle self-conclusive, while others last over the course of numerous episodes. What is common to all three cases is that once the series is over, everything ends with a final event or competition. In the case of *Tortillaland*, this establishes a cooperative victory, whereas in the other two cases, it establishes an individual victory.

It is through *Minecraft* that participants express themselves and the directors generate the events, allowing the personal elements of each content creator to be produced and generate continuity between chapters.

3.1.2.3. Characters

In comparison to the aforementioned formats, the number of characters in this series is considerably higher. This is one of the defining characteristics of the series. The characters that appear in the series are generated by the expression of the social persona of the content creators within the series and the selected video game. This allows them to reinforce their public persona. In general, new characters are developed in each example analysed. A section of the content is devoted to learning about the game and preparing for subsequent events. Nevertheless, some of the original essence of the characters and links that exist in real life are maintained, in addition to their prior knowledge.

The characters become the main narrators of their own stories, as each of them is a content creator, addressing their respective audiences, with their own points of view. The same number of audiences as there are participants in the series. This generates a vast array of diverse perspectives on the same events, as well as being enriched by the interaction with their audiences, which generates a greater amount of content through the live broadcasts and the time-lapse videos generated afterwards. The primary mode of expression for the characters is through dialogues between the characters and the plots that they themselves develop, simulating naturalness and sometimes coincidence. This final element, in conjunction with the dramatic content of the relationships between characters, represents one of the most attractive aspects for the audience. The generation of content that does not adhere to a highly structured script fosters surprise among the audience, who seek to participate through their comments with their live impressions as the action unfolds.

Universal archetypes can be identified in the characters generated, with a focus on the development of strong personalities to differentiate them from others. Additionally, plots of conflict and friendship between them are observed, with a greater focus on the former in the case of challenge series. The importance of the characters within the plots generated by them varies depending on the case or the content creator who has proposed the main idea, and the same characters can be found in different roles.

3.1.2.4. Duration

The duration of the three content series analysed already demonstrates similarities with the structure of a serial, with numerous hours of live content broadcast over several consecutive days. However, the series focused on challenges has a shorter duration. Nevertheless, the amount of content generated in each case increases notably, with some authors generating deferred content pieces with the rebroadcast, which multiplies the impacts and the audience generated.

Table 3. Series analysis

	Formats	Narrative of Episodes	Characters	Chapters	Duration half
<i>Tortillaland</i>	Main and subplots Situations and gags	Dramatic arcs Episodic Conclusive and non-conclusive	33	198	1 hour per episode
<i>Dedsafio 2</i>	Main and subplots	Episodic Conclusive and non-conclusive	48	27	25 minutes per episode
<i>Minecraft Extreme</i>	Main and subplots	Episodic Conclusive and non-conclusive	59	9	1 hour per episode

Source: Own elaboration (2024)

This prolific generation of entertainment content, demanded by an increasingly demanding audience, as Huasasquiche-Carbajal et al. (2022) comment, is reinforced by the perspective that each of the series can be viewed from the perspective of one of the characters, as well as from the perspective of each participant, who represents a different window into the story. The length of each chapter varies slightly in accordance with the content or plot developed, as well as whether the plot is a main plot of the event or generated by the characters. However, the role-playing series tends to have longer chapters, as indicated in Table 3, which highlights the most relevant discoveries in each series.

3.2. Study Findings

3.2.1. Conclusion

The combination of elements typical of a fiction series with those of an entertainment series, including competitions, has led to the identification of other elements typical of entertainment series, such as the enrichment of the narrative with the multiple perspectives of the characters. However, despite the greater amount of content produced in terms of the number of hours of potential viewing, the narrative lacks the care of a written script that takes care of the characters' dialogue. It is noteworthy that a considerable number of events and plot elements align with a general planning by the organisers of the experience. This allows content creators to generate their own storylines within the created fictional universe, utilising the occasions of freedom to highlight the characteristics of their social characters and, by extension, their in-game avatars. This can be attributed to the live element of their series format, which necessitates a certain degree of improvisation to generate content over the numerous hours of each session or episode. Furthermore, it requires the integration of interaction with the audience.

Consequently, the creators of these initiatives utilise the series as a system for generating content for their audience. They do so by employing the video game as a scenario, the avatar as an extension of their character and the mechanics as generators of plots, whether they are actions carried out by the characters or events they suffer and have to deal with. The series analysed thus far have a similar structure to others in various genres that have been around for some time. However, they possess a sense of novelty due to the use of new platforms and technologies, which involve the viewers and also allow them to be the main actors in the products generated. This reinforces the brand.

3.2.2. Future Lines of Research

At this juncture, various lines of continuity remain unresolved, which can be augmented through an analysis of both the characters and the plots selected by creators of online content. This analysis should be conducted in comparison with the archetypes of classical authors, including the moulds of fictional characters based on the studies of Carl Jung and his 12 archetypes, as well as the 36 dramatic situations coined by the Venetian playwright Carlo Gozzi.

4. Acknowledgements

This text is written in the context of the Research Group, Video Games-Narrative, Persuasion and Creativity (V-NPC), which is attached to the University of Vigo but was formed within the Icono14 Scientific Association. We are grateful to the Association for its support in the development of initiatives focused on the field of Game Studies.

References

- Aristóteles, Alsina Clota J. (2000). *Poética*. [5a ed.]. Barcelona: Icaria.
- Blanco, N. (2015). *Evolución y revolución de género en las series de ficción contemporáneas. La última salida: La comedia*. Salamanca. Tesis Doctoral.
- Boutet, M., (2015) «Les séries télévisées sont-elles l'art majeur du XXIème siècle?», en Nectart 1 117. Cfr también Id., «Histoire des séries télévisées», en S. Sepulchre (ed.), *Décoder les séries télévisées*, Bruxelles, De Boeck, 2011, 11-46.
- Burgess, J., & Green, J. B. (2010). YouTube: online video and participatory culture. *Choice Reviews Online*, 47(06), 47-2989. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.47-2989>
- Del Pilar, L., Furió, G., & Pérez López, J. (2015). *El atractivo del mal: la figura del villano en la ficción televisiva actual*. Gandía. ValenciaTFG.
- Dancyger, K., & Rush, J. (2013). *Alternative Scriptwriting: Beyond the Hollywood Formula*. Taylor & Francis.
- Espinoza, L., & Montini, R. (2021). *Había una vez... Cómo escribir un guión* (2o Edición). Nobuko.
- García-Muñoz, N., y Fedele, M., (2011). *Las series televisivas juveniles: tramas y conflictos en una «teen series»* Television Fiction Series Targeted at Young Audience: Plots and Conflicts Portrayed in a Teen Series
- Field, S. (1994). *El libro del guión: fundamentos de la escritura de guiones: una guía paso a paso, desde la primera idea hasta el guión acabado*. Plot Ediciones.
- Greco, M. (2019). *Narrativa serial audiovisual: estructuras y procedimientos de la ficción televisiva*. *Toma Uno*, 9692(7), 45-66. <https://doi.org/10.55442/tomauno.n7.2019.26184>
- Huassasquiche-Carbajal, R. Y., Quiroz-Villavicencio, R. A., & Turriate-Guzmán, A. M. (2022). *Adaptation of Conventional Movie Consumers to Streaming Movie and Series Platforms during Lockdown: A Systematic Literature Review from 2019 to 2021*. IEEE 5th International Conference On Josep Prósper Ribes (2019): *El suspense cinematográfico: montaje y organización temporal*, en *Electronics And Communication Engineering (ICECE)*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/icece56287.2022.10048625>
- Miguel Hernández Communication Journal, Vol. 10 (2), pp. 303-321. Universidad Miguel Hernández, UMH (Elche- Alicante). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21134/mhcj.v10i0.30>
- Miller, T & Tulloch, J (2015). *The television Genre Book*. The British Film Institute, London
- Pereira Pérez, A., & del Campo Cañizares, E. (2022). *Binge-Watching. Análisis de un caso de éxito: On My Block*. SERIARTE. Revista científica De Series Televisivas Y Arte Audiovisual, 1, 138-163. <https://doi.org/10.21071/seriarte.v1i.13598>
- Poon, P., (2006). *The Corleone Chronicles: Revisiting The Godfather Films as Trilogy*. *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, 33(4):187-195. doi: [10.3200/JPFT.33.4.187-195](https://doi.org/10.3200/JPFT.33.4.187-195)
- Prosper Ribes, J. (2019). *El suspense cinematográfico: montaje y organización temporal*. Miguel Hernández Communication Journal (Online). 10(2):303-321. <https://doi.org/10.21134/mhcj.v10i0.309>
- Saló, G. (2003) *¿Qué es eso del formato?: Cómo nace y se desarrolla un programa de televisión*. Gedidsa. España
- Storr, W., Abásolo, O., (2022). *La ciencia de contar historias: por qué las historias nos hacen humanos y cómo contarlas mejor*. Madrid: Capitán Swing.
- Valverde, J. C., (2008). *Aprender a pensar históricamente con apoyo de soportes informáticos*. *Culture And Education*, 20(2), 181-199. <https://doi.org/10.1174/113564008784490370>
- Zoonen, L. and Wring, D., (2012). *Trends in political television fiction in the uk: themes, characters and narratives, 1965-2009*. *Media Culture & Society*, 34(3), 263-279.