

Adaptation of Scripted Television Formats: Factors and Mechanisms of Cultural Identity in a Global World

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Television content has traditionally been associated with the cultural identity of a given territory, although in an increasingly global world, this relationship is under debate. From a comparative qualitative analysis of the Spanish scripted television format (STF) series *Los Misterios de Laura* and its adaptations for the United States and Italy, this research identifies differences between these versions in terms of narrative approach, television conventions, production context, and the use of the cultural imaginary. The findings imply the existence of aesthetic and narrative mechanisms associated with the production of cultural identity in STF fiction. They also reveal the existence of a belief within television culture that some audiences have tastes and expectations that depend on their cultural proximity to the content. This research highlights the relevance of the cultural and televisual productive contexts of each country to understand their adaptation processes.

Keywords: scripted television format, cultural identity, adaptation, qualitative analysis, globalization

The relationship between cultural identity and the specific territory is currently an intensively discussed topic (Beck, 2006). Traditionally, cultural identity has been defined as a set of symbols and practices belonging to a particular country or region (Tomlinson, 2003). However, these symbols and practices have been expanding worldwide in recent decades, largely driven by globalization. This has not only produced major interactions but have also reduced the differences between cultural identities. Different theories and concepts have been proposed to explain this phenomenon: from those that suggest major homogenization between cultures, even cultural imperialism or colonialism (Said, 1978; Schiller, 1976), to those that defend a more heterogenic interaction, such as hybridization (Kraidy, 2005), and others that identify a universal culture as a result of convergence (Baker, 2003).

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The circulation of entertainment products has been also linked to globalization and culture. The television industry is a good example of that. It has taken advantage of new technologies to increase the transnational distribution of its products and developed financial, commercial, and corporate mechanisms to operate at a global level (Chalaby, 2016; Mirrlees, 2013). In doing so, the television industry has fostered interaction between cultures from different parts of the world, and consequently the blurring of their boundaries (Lipovestky & Serroy, 2010; Straubhaar, 2007). In addition to commercial products, television contents are also cultural and symbolic artefacts that are closely linked to the sociocultural environments where they are created and broadcasted. Therefore, television products may themselves reflect the changes resulting from interaction between cultures (Oren & Shahaf, 2012).

Within this context, the intellectual property rights to television formats are sold globally for the content to be adapted to specific television markets and the particularities of their sociocultural environments. Therefore, the study of television formats reveals the mechanisms of cultural identity that are still relevant in an increasingly more global world (Moran, 2009; Oren & Shahaf, 2012). Indeed, Oren and Shahaf (2012) point out that formatted programs are “cultural areas where tensions among local, regional, national and global identities are articulated and experienced in new, inter-mediated ways” (p. 4). As stated by Esser and Jensen (2015), television formats work internationally because of two aspects: First, they are related to issues that transcend cultures, and secondly, they generate a sense of belonging that elicits debates at local and national levels. In turn, Kraidy and Murphy (2008) propose that formats have a cultural value because they allow us to understand the increasing complexity of the local markets, which is caused by the greater mobility of populations and cultural products, the interactivity, and the new technologies. In general, we propose that formats achieve cultural value within the localization processes, while reflecting political, economic, and social changes within the transnational television market.

The aim is to advance our understanding of the mechanisms used to express cultural identities in adaptations of television formats. This information will be useful for understanding the aspects that best reflect the local appropriation of television formats and, consequently, the way that specific cultures identify and represent themselves in fiction.

Television Fiction and Cultural Identity

The relationship between television fiction and sociocultural context has been investigated since the earliest studies of television narratives. In particular, there has been an interest from cultural studies in how television series interrelate with the societies in which they are produced and consumed. Series are analyzed from different variables, such as their aesthetics, narrative, genre, reception, production, or social impact. Three main aspects arose from these early investigations: television genre, social functions and representation concept.

The television genre has been defined as the combination of social practices, meanings, and texts emerging from social, cultural, and professional spheres (Mittel, 2004). Authors such as Liebes and Livingstone (1998) or Chicharro-Merayo (2012) have stated that television genres are reappropriated by the television industry of each country. For instance, Liebes and Livingstone (1998) took an ethnographic approach to identify three distinctive subtypes of American soap opera developed in different European

countries, while Acosta-Alzuru (2003) shows how Latin American telenovelas have been adapted to the cultural idiosyncrasies of non-Latin American audiences around the world.

Regarding the social function of television, studies highlight the power of this medium to create a common cultural imaginary in which stereotypes, social values, and cultural practices are portrayed (Buonanno, 1999, 2012). In particular, Buonanno (1999) proposes three functions of television fiction: storytelling, familiarization with the social world, and maintenance of community, the latter being linked to the sociocultural representation that television fiction might depict. Television series use their own codes to refer to objects, people or events from the real or imaginary world (Fiske, 1987; Thornham & Purvis, 2005). Following Thornham and Purvis (2005), this representation is not pure or realistic; instead, its value is more ideological.

Along with these approaches, television series have also been explored in relation to the notions of cultural or national identity (Castelló, 2009; O'Donnell, 1999), which are generally considered to result from factors that belong to the social, political, and media contexts in which television series are produced. Likewise, O'Donnell (1999) proposes that national identity is produced in soap operas via such nontextual aspects as the international capitalist system, social class, governments, regions, the media industry, TV channels, television genres and audience. Similarly, Castelló (2009) identifies political-economic and institutional contexts as constraints on the production of cultural and national identity in televised fiction.

Generally, previous research indicates that most of the textual mechanisms for producing cultural and national identity in fiction can be grouped into three aspects: realism, aesthetic style, and genre. Realism is related to the reflection of recognizable and common elements (Castelló, Dhoest, & O'Donnell, 2009; Chicharro-Merayo, 2012; Geraghty, 1995). According to Castelló et al. (2009), realism is culturally specific because realistic elements are different in each region. As for aesthetic style, some authors claim that aesthetic codes are cultural and contextual because they are part of the symbolic repertory that connects a society's cultural identity (Burch, 2002; Silj, 1988; Van Keulen, 2016). Finally, Creeber (2006) and Mittel (2004) have pointed out that television genre produces social cohesion and cultural belonging. Specially, these authors defend the superiority of fiction over other television genres, such as news, for offering flexibility and creativity in the construction of messages.

Adapting Scripted Television Formats

The main definitions and theories on the adaptation of a scripted television format (STF) take the basic idea that it consists of deciding which elements are invariable and which are not. Typically, the invariable elements are set out in the documents that are negotiated between the holder of the rights to the format and the adaptation team (Moran & Malbon, 2006). However, the mechanisms and factors of cultural identity production may affect and influence the number and type of elements to be modified when adapting STF. Consequently, authors such as Adriaens and Biltereyst (2012) and Moran (2009) argue that the process is linked to nations as imagined communities (Anderson, 1983), because these TV products use national and cultural identities and discourses to make them appear recognizable, authentic, and true.

Following the previous ideas, some studies have sought to understand the factors involved in the adaptation of a scripted television format. From a general perspective, three main factors have been

identified: (1) media system and television channel, (2) social and political context, and (3) television conventions. The first refers to such elements as particular industrial practices and standards (García Avis, 2016; Jensen, 2009); duration and number of episodes per season (Larkey, Digeon, & Er, 2016); scheduling style (Akass, 2015); production resources (Diego González & Grandío, 2010); and target audience (Van Keulen, 2016). The second includes the historical, economic and social setting to which a television format is adapted (Moran, 2009; Pousa & Fornasari, 2017; Zanger, 2015), social idiosyncrasies (Er, 2016; Turnbull, 2015, and the common imaginary belonging to a certain culture (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Van Keulen, 2016). Finally, the third factor includes narrative and dramatic traditions (Jensen, 2009; Mikos & Perrota, 2011), local conceptions of television fiction (Perkins & Verevis, 2015), and audience preferences and sensitivities (Canovaca de la Fuente, 2013).

Aside from those factors, authors such as Kraidy and Murphy (2008) and Ribke (2016) suggest that the different versions of the same original format influence each other. According to those researchers, a new version of a format is influenced both by the original format and by the rest of the previously available versions. According to those authors, it is unavoidable to take into account the existent versions of the original format which have been adapted for different markets when a new adaptation process occurs. As a matter of fact, the owners of the television formats use the expertise generated during each adaptation process to add it into the sale formula (Chalaby, 2016). Consequently, as stated by Ribke (2016), the trajectory of a television format and its adaptations affect its perception on a global television market.

Most of these studies have also identified the textual elements that are usually modified after the adaptation process. For instance, García Avis (2016) and Mikos and Perrota (2011) have identified genre interpretation and adaptation. Narrative structure is another textual element that has been detected. In particular, Canovaca de la Fuente (2013) and Diego González and Grandío (2010) have identified that the number and complexity of plots as well as the kind of dramatic conflicts may vary. Canovaca de la Fuente (2013) and García Avis (2016) also highlight the changes to character complexity and narrative role. Larkey and colleagues (2016) have also identified topics, the time spent on them, how they are treated, and their inclusion or not in each adaptation. Finally, Van Keulen (2016) identifies visual style (i.e., variations in camera, editing, or audio techniques).

In contrast, other authors argue for the emergence of a transnational television culture (Esser, 2002; Kuipers, 2011; Van Keulen, 2016) in which formats play a crucial role. Increasing circulation of television formats leads to the transfer of knowledge and practices, which may provoke greater convergence between television industries around the world (Keinonen, 2016). Along the same lines, Ganguly (2019) states that the professionalization and consolidation of the adaptation of television format processes affect the productive cultures of each market. According to the author, the format fluxes produce cultural trends within the global market while influencing the local markets.

Taking into account the preliminary evidence, the present research seeks to advance knowledge of the mechanisms of cultural identity that are used to adapt a scripted television format. Specifically, this study has two main objectives: (1) to identify differences between versions of an STF, and (2) to identify the factors that might explain them. Traditionally, preliminary investigations have studied the processes of adaptation of television formats by exclusively focusing either on the analysis of texts or on the analysis of

the production context. However, this research considers it essential to analyze and interpret the versions of the television formats by taking into account the aspects of the production context. The next section contains a detailed explanation of the analysis model designed specifically for this research.

Method

A case study was conducted to achieve the specific objectives. This research strategy is an appropriate approach, because following Weerakkody (2009) and Wimmer and Dominick (1994) it allows for the combination of different methodological tools. The selected case is the fictional Spanish scripted television format *Los Misterios de Laura* and its adaptations to the United States (*The Mysteries of Laura*) and Italy (*I Misteri di Laura*). *Los Misterios de Laura* is a general-interest family television series that blends humor with mystery. Each episode narrates a crime-solving scenario along with plots that develop the characters' personal lives. It focuses on Laura, the main character.

Los Misterios de Laura is a fictional television format distributed by Boomerang TV, a Spanish television producer company. As indicated by María García-Castrillón, sales executive of the company and responsible of the television format, the show has been presented at the most important international television markets, such as MIPCOM.

One of the *Los Misterioso de Laura*'s sales slogans was: "There is not a better path than a mom solving crimes" (García-Castrillón, personal communication, September 20, 2017). The format has been adapted to four countries so far: Italy, The Netherlands, Russia, and the United States. Together with *Pulseras Rojas*, it was one of the first Spanish fictional television format adapted to U.S. television.

In Italy, Mediaset became interested in *Los Misterios de Laura* and sought for a local company, Casanova Multimedia, to produce it. Its adaptation was aired by Canale 5, in 2015. In the United States, the format was produced by Warner Brothers and aired by NBC between 2014 and 2016. In both cases, the adaptations were produced totally independently from the Spanish team, according to the person responsible for the original format, María García-Castrillón (personal communication, September 20, 2017).

A research model was designed to analyze the context and text of each version. The context analysis entails aspects of the production and broadcast environment, while the textual analysis examines all the episodes of each version. The latter is prioritized as it reflects the entire set of actions and decisions throughout the adaptation process (Thornham & Purvis, 2005), but the resources and conditions of the production context must also be taken into account because they may influence the adaptation of television formats (Jensen, 2009; Keinonen, 2016) and be decisive for understanding cultural identity (Castelló et al., 2009).

Both analyses employed a set of variables selected from the most recent studies of the adaptation of television formats (Chalaby, 2016; Diego González & Grandío, 2010; García Avis, 2016; Larkey et al., 2016; Mikos & Perrotta, 2011; Moran, 2009; Pousa & Fornasari, 2017; Puebla Martínez, Carrillo Pascual, & Copado Sánchez-Rico, 2014; Turnbull, 2015), along with academic works on the relationship between cultural identity and television fiction (Buonanno, 2012; Castelló et al., 2009; Dhoest, 2003; O'Donnell, 1999).

There are three variables for context: (1) aspects of the television system (e.g., network; Chalaby, 2016; García Avis, 2016; Jensen, 2009); (2) production aspects (e.g., casting, budget, scheduling; Diego González & Grandío, 2010; García Avis, 2016; Moran, 2009; Puebla Martínez et al., 2014), and (3) reception (e.g., audiences and media critics; Castelló et al., 2009; Moran 2009). Two methodological instruments were applied to study these variables: (a) semistructured interviews with the creators and sales manager of the original television format and (b) a critical analysis of 193 news items from the digital television press related to the three analyzed versions.

Meanwhile, there are five variables for textual analysis, each with an associated category system. In turn, the category system has dimensions (which identify elements defining the variables) and categories and subcategories that indicate values in which the dimensions may be described or classified. The text variables and their dimensions follow:

1. Narrative structure, analyzed in three dimensions: premise, plots and dramatic conflicts.
2. Characters, in which main and secondary characters are observed as dimensions.
3. Audiovisual style, analyzed through *mise-en-scène*, visual narrative, and audio narrative.
4. Space-time structure, through two dimensions: diegetic spaces and time. Topics which have an inductive category system that emerges during the analysis.

The category system is the analysis template applied to a sample composed of all of the episodes in the three versions (Spanish, Italian, and United States). Data is codified and collected in a data set.

The data were explored through three different analyses. The first sought to characterize each version, whereby the content was described, enumerated, and grouped according to its redundancy and saturation across episodes. The second analysis aimed to compare the variables and dimensions of the three versions by pairs (Spanish version versus U.S. version; Spanish version versus Italian version, and U.S. version versus Italian version). The differences were identified qualitatively. A difference was considered to exist when the examined element was not present in both versions or slightly changed. The third and final analysis sought to establish the factors that might explain the differences found. In doing so, the academic literature and previous studies were discussed in relation with the results of the two previous analyses.

Results

The analysis led to the identification of a set of four factors that might explain the differences found between the three analyzed adaptations: narrative approach, television conventions, production context, and use of cultural imaginary. The elements associated with each factor are discussed in the following sections.

Narrative Approach

Narrative approach refers to the weight within fiction of different character spheres (e.g., personal, loving, family, working), and how the selection of one approach affects the development of the narrative elements in the story. When the narrative approach is changed during the adaptation of a television format, this set of narrative elements must be restructured for the story to be coherent too, which relates to García

Avis's (2016) claim that the adaptation of a scripted television format requires analysis of how the changes made affect the narrative as a whole. This factor also follows the narrative principle that the content of any story must be coherent (McKee, 2003).

In the analyzed case, narrative approach is observed to play a large role in the differences found between the three versions. Likewise, the Spanish version is characterized by the greater weight of the main character's career-related issues in the narrative development. For instance, it is only in the Spanish version that the main character confronts a dramatic conflict between her professional career and taking care of her family, and the Spanish version also dedicates more time to the crime plots than the others. In turn, the narrative approach of the U.S. version focuses more on friendship and social spheres, with more episodic plots about the personal relations between the main characters than in the other versions. Indeed, a bar is one of the main settings for the narrative, unlike in the other versions. Finally, the Italian version is centered on the family and loving spheres. For example, the Matteo character (Laura's main work partner in the three versions) is also Laura's love interest, and Laura's daughter appears as a new character, while all the main characters are involved in love issues.

There would be two main reasons for selecting a particular narrative approach: the characteristics of TV series and their historic tradition in each country. For instance, according to Barra and Scaglioni (2015) and Buonanno (2012), the favorite genre among Italian audiences is romantic melodrama. Moreover, in Italy, television series are traditionally targeted at the whole family and all generations, which is especially true of Mediaset, the channel that produced and broadcast *I Misteri di Laura*, and may explain the love and family narratives identified in the Italian version. In addition, the way in which concepts such as family or friendship are understood within a social and cultural context may affect the narrative approach. Stories have a referential connection with reality (García Avis, 2016), and so the Italian version presents the sociocultural models with which its audiences identify.

Television Conventions

A television format must not only be adapted to a given social and cultural context, but also to its television conventions (i.e., traditional genres as well as the conception and functions of television series in a given country). This factor is largely related to studies that view television genre as a cultural category (Creeber, 2006; Mittel, 2004; Neale, 1981), which is linked to other characteristics such as industry, audience, a particular territory, and historic era. Therefore, an understanding of the adaptations of *Los Misterios de Laura* requires appreciation of each territory's principles with regard to a family television series that mix crime, mystery, and comedy genres.

Considering traditional genres, the plots of the U.S. and Spanish versions differ the most. The crime plots in the Spanish version tend to raise enigmas, are more mysterious and are inspired by classical film and novel mysteries, while in the U.S. version they are more procedural and technical, and also try to combine action and reality. These differences are reflected in almost every crime narrative and stylistic aspect. For instance, in the Spanish version, the objective is to work out how the crime was committed, each crime has its own dramatic universe, the underlying motives are more individualistic and personal, the characters linked to the crime are stereotyped and there are always suspects. In turn, the crime plots in the

U.S. version are about discovering who committed the crime, the motives are related to large-scale organized criminal activities (e.g., drug trafficking), and there are a lot of action scenes.

Other conventions, such as the concept and functions of television series, may explain some other differences found. One typical example is in the topic of the family, whose balance with work, together with parental relations, is addressed in the three versions, but with some differences. For instance, in the Spanish version, this balance is represented by showing the main character shopping or cleaning while she is working on a crime investigation. In the U.S. version, the reconciliation of work is represented by her house being depicted as messy and through situations in which she is judged as a mother. Finally, in the Italian version, the topic is addressed with more scenes showing her everyday family life, and her problematic relationship with her adolescent daughter. This reflects Larkey and associates' (2016) study, which identifies how topics can change when a format is adapted to the way television series are conceived and function in each industry.

Production Context

Different factors, such as production standards and resources, and the characteristics of the television channel may be grouped within the production context variable, which refers to the influence of economic, industrial, and institutional circumstances on the decisions taken during the adaptation of a television format. Therefore, the constraints and conditions of the production context affect the resulting content and the production of cultural identity (Castelló, 2009; O'Donnell, 1999).

The case study shows that episode length, which is part of production standards, may lead to changes between the three versions. Episodes are of different duration in each version (the Spanish version is 60 minutes long, the U.S. version is 40 minutes, and the Italian version is 80 minutes). This also influences the amount of time spent on the development of topics within each story. Indeed, the showrunner of the U.S. version, Jeff Rake, has pointed out that the shorter duration of episodes led them to cut out part of the characters' family and personal lives, and conceive simpler crimes (Rake, 2014). As for production resources, the budget of each version would explain the differences found in the audiovisual style and settings of the three versions, following previous literature and as revealed by the semistructured interviews conducted in this research. The U.S. version had a bigger budget than the Italian version, which may explain why it has a more dynamic and fast-paced audiovisual style with more action scenes and special effects. In turn, its smaller budget might explain why the Italian version has a slower visual style and fewer secondary characters.

Finally, the television channel could also affect how the adaptation process works. The networks of all three versions are general interest and family oriented, but there are differences in ownership: TVE in Spain is public, whereas NBC in the United States and Canale 5 in Italy are private. However, all three versions share a similar idiosyncrasy: *Los Misterios de Laura* is a pleasant, family-toned TV series.

Nonetheless, according to the results of the context analysis, the particular demands and intentions of each network could influence the changes made during the adaptation process. In the Italian case, Mediaset, the media group that owns Canale 5, was looking to put the family comedy genre back on its schedules, which may explain why family drama carries more weight in the show and a teenage daughter was added to the cast. In the United States, NBC wanted the production team to adapt the series to include action scenes on the

streets of New York and typical elements of the crime and detective genre. These demands may also explain the differences between the U.S. version and the others in the terms of crime plots and audiovisual style.

The Search for Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude is about making story elements recognizable to an audience (Chicharro-Merayo, 2012), which also makes them see it as more realistic and links to the relationship between television fiction and cultural identity. Studies on this topic have identified different strategies to achieve realism, such as the inclusion of current affairs topics, well-known urban locations, references to local cuisine or sport and popular actors (Buonanno, 1999; Castelló, 2009; Geraghty, 1995). The results of the analysis of the three versions indicate that verisimilitude strategies were used in each of the versions, especially the U.S. and Italian ones, which led to differences between them.

One of the clearest examples of the above is observed in the differences found between settings. The two main settings are certainly presented in the three versions: Laura's family home and a police station (where the main characters work). However, the sets are different in each version since they are made to look realistic in each country. For example, the national police logos and symbols appear in each version's police stations along with other *atrezzo* related to the country. For example, an Italian flag together with a portrait of the president of the Italian Republic in the Italian version. Meanwhile, in the U.S. version, the city of New York features prominently in the series. According to showrunner Jeff Rake, this was used as a strategy to make the adaptation more relatable to the U.S. audience.

The Use of Cultural Imaginary

The case study reveals that the way references to cultural imaginaries are used is a factor that triggers differences between the versions. Preliminary studies have broadly pointed out that references to everyday life and popular culture may be a relevant factor in the relationship between cultural identity and television fiction as well as between society and television (Buonanno, 1999, 2012; Castelló, 2009; Chicharro-Merayo, 2012; Dyer, 1981; O'Donnell 1999). The results of our analysis show that each version uses references to the cultural imaginary in a different way. In the Spanish version, they relate to characters, situations, books, and movies that form part of the cultural references shared by the Western collective imaginary, such as allusions to the classic mystery and crime novel genre (e.g., Agatha Christie's or Arthur Conan Doyle's novels), while there are hardly any references to news, events or characters belonging to any specific Spanish cultural imaginary.

On the contrary, in the U.S. version the crimes are based on real-life scenarios, and there are many nods to popular and current American cultural imaginary, such as singers (e.g., Madonna), social media (e.g., Facebook or Instagram) and famous television series (e.g., *Orange Is the New Black*). In the Italian version, there are references to classic mystery narratives due to its fidelity to the crime plots of the Spanish version, and there are references to Italian popular culture (such as football teams), but to a lesser extent than in the U.S. version.

These results suggest two main ideas. First, that it is feasible to use different references to those of the collective imaginary for creating content. This takes us to recall the concept of "textual localizations" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 63), which proposes the existence of millions of references to movies, television programmers, books and magazines that do not belong to the physical environment of individuals. All this set of references produces an increased greater and complex collective imaginary formed by layers that transcend local contexts, as suggested by Kraidy and Murphy (2008) and Tomlinson (1999). The second idea is that cultural identity strategies or mechanisms may be more necessary in the adaptations of television formats than in their original versions. Stressing the local identity would be then a peculiar characteristic of the successive adaptations rather than of the original proposal.

Conclusions

The audiovisual representations generated by adaptations of television formats reflect a cultural negotiation that occurs when different cultures interact. This is largely because television fiction plays an important role in the production of cultural identity and is closely related with the society in which it is created and consumed. Hence, the cultural power of television series for storytelling is manifested along with their function as the bearers and builders of the values, beliefs, practices, and meanings of every culture (Buonanno, 1999; Castelló, 2009). Identification of the differences arising from adaptation of a scripted television format leads to an understanding of how narratives are related to their context within an increasingly more global world, in which entertainment products are supposedly created with more universal values.

This study shows that the television conventions of each country can influence the way television fiction is made to be more culturally suitable. From a general perspective, television conventions refer to the typical characteristics, conceptions and functions of television fiction in a particular given country (e.g., being more pedagogical, subversive, or conservative). Television conventions are also the result of the historic evolution of television fiction, and are linked to the social context since they are widely influenced by the most accepted discourses on social and political issues. This agrees with the idea that these discourses are socially produced and build a sense of social identity (Morley & Robins, 1995).

Television genre and the search for verisimilitude are two representative aspects that affect the adaptation of a television format and both are connected to television conventions. On the one hand, television genre as a cultural category and discursive practice (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005; Liebes & Livingstone, 1998; Mittel, 2004; Neale, 1981) is an aspect to consider when adapting television formats since it makes them appeal to a new audience. Therefore, the characteristics of the genre of a given format in each country affect the adaptation and imply the need to modify narrative elements and audiovisual language resources.

On the other hand, verisimilitude is sought between the audiovisual representation and the society reflected in fiction, especially in the aspects and issues related to the main characters' everyday lives, and this entails making changes when a television format is adapted. However, the final representation is not usually a credible recreation of that society as the elements used to achieve realism are influenced by television conventions and audience expectations. In the case study, this can mostly be appreciated in the representations of cultural diversity that appear in each version of the format, which do not correspond to

how different cultures really live together in the society being represented. This is different in each case. In the U.S. version there is major multicultural representation in many aspects, and this may be due to political correctness (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Griffin, 2008). In the Italian version, there is diversity in the representation of the cultural differences between Italian regions, while the Spanish version has no representation of cultural diversity, which has been identified as a characteristic of Spanish television series by authors such as Castelló and colleagues (2009) and Chicharro-Merayo (2012). Therefore, each version's representation of cultural diversity follows local television conventions.

Consequently, this study highlights the importance of taking into account variables of the television context (e.g., productive, industrial, cultural) to understand the adaptation of fictional television formats' processes. As it has been argued, the industrial and economic market resources, together with the traditions and conventions of the fictional television from each place, are fundamental in identifying what the changes are, and how they are implemented on the new adaptations of television formats.

The studied scripted television format is general interest (Creeber, 2006; Thornham & Purvis, 2005), so the identified conventions refer to this genre. However, these conventions may differ in other genres. Broadly speaking, general-interest television series avoid controversial issues and conflicts, opt for intellectual and narrative simplicity, and offer a positive perspective of the reality (Creeber, 2006), and usually draw on hegemonic social discourses, and legitimize or normalize them, and thus may exert a conservative function (Thornham & Purvis, 2005). Future studies should study conventions in other genres and observe how they affect the adaptation of television formats.

This study has also indicated that content may be created with references from a greater cultural imaginary, which is increasingly complex since it is formed by aspects from the past, present and different local contexts. This is in agreement with the authors who defend that the increased circulation of cultural products leads to the formation of a cultural imaginary on different levels—namely, geographical (global, national, local; Beck, 2006; Tomlinson, 2003) and temporary (past, classical or current). Narratives can therefore be created with references to a global cultural imaginary, as in the case of the Spanish version, while it is also possible to create content with references linked to a national cultural imaginary, such as in the U.S. and Italian versions. However, the demands of production resources and television channels have been proposed as constraints because both determine the adaptation process and hence the resulting text. Consequently, although the three versions were created by general-interest television channels and follow similar commercial logic and criteria, each adaptation had to deal with the aforesaid demands, and these provoked differences between the versions.

To conclude, because the increase in global consumption of entertainment produces a more complex characterization of the local contexts (Kraidy & Murphy, 2008), the identification of what is local becomes a harder task, since there are multiple factors defining it beyond the global-local contraposition. Within this context, the present research considers that through the identification of the localization mechanisms of television contents and of the factors which determine them, it is possible to understand the changing cultural markets. First of all, the existence of television formats and their consolidation within the transnational television industry confirms that there is still a belief within television culture that some audiences have tastes and expectations that depend on cultural proximity to the content—hence, the

demand for contents to be adapted at a national level. Secondly, this research has revealed the existence of aesthetic and narrative techniques and mechanisms that belong to the production of cultural identity in television fiction and are still being used in the adaptation of scripted television formats despite the proliferation and expansion of increasingly more global narratives. Thirdly, there is asymmetry in the worldwide television industry as shown by the inequality of resources and possibilities between countries' television industries, leading to differences that affect the production of contents, and which should be taken into account to truly understand the global production, adaptation, and circulation of cultural products.

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