"No Results Found": Visibility of Spanish Audiovisual Content on Motherhood and Reproduction on Streaming Platforms (2013-2023)

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Audiovisual discourses play a key role at constructing and legitimizing new imaginaries about traditionally invisibilized topics, such as motherhood and the reproductive process. This study analyzes whether the current social context and new forms of audiovisual distribution have favored the proliferation of narratives focused on the reproductive process in Spanish audiovisual works available on streaming platforms (2013-2023). **Methodology**: A quantitative approach was used, which was divided into two phases: an exploratory phase based on systematic keyword searches and a second phase of cataloging and classification of the contents. **Results:** There is an increase in the number of works on motherhood, especially in the documentary and drama genres, being less common in comedy and horror. The search engines of the platforms show results for terms such as "embarazo" (pregnancy), "parto" (childbirth) and "aborto" (abortion), but these are scarce or non-existent for topics such as "reproducción asistida" (assisted reproduction), "lactancia" (breastfeeding), "posparto" (postpartum) or "pérdida gestacional" (gestational loss). Furthermore, it supports the idea that a significant proportion of works on these topics are not produced by women. **Discussion**: It is inferred that the increase in fictions is not definitive of the existence of a more diverse mindset about the process of motherhood and that the keywords that define these realities are not signifiers with sufficient autonomy to index contents in the algorithmic operations of the platforms' search engines. **Conclusions**: VOD platforms have facilitated the emergence of more works about motherhood, but have not contributed significantly to the construction of more complex and ethical imaginaries about the reproductive process.

Keywords: motherhood; reproduction; audiovisual fiction; VOD platforms; Spain; quantitative methodology.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly screen-mediated society, audiovisual works play a fundamental role in the transmission and legitimization of new social imaginaries, as well as in the creation of narratives with the potential to challenge, resist, adapt and reproduce dominant ideologies (Hall, 1982; Williams, 1983; Coludir, 2019; Couldry & Hepp, 2020). In this study we focus on the representation of motherhood in contemporary Spanish audiovisual distributed by video on demand (VOD) platforms. The analysis of the representation of reproductive processes, as well as the construction of these processes in cultural works, is particularly relevant in a social context as changing as the current one.

Over the last decade, major economic, social, political and technological changes have contributed to transforming and recreating traditional imaginaries regarding motherhood. The concept of family has evolved by diversifying its models (Allan & Crow, 2009; Giddens & Sutton, 1989/2014): childless couples, blended families (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), single-parent, homoparental (Mezey, 2015; Goldberg, 2023), or transgender, among other non-traditional configurations (Risman, 2009). In parallel, queer identities (Butler, 1990) have questioned traditional classifications of gender and sexual orientation, expanding the ways of experiencing motherhood and recognizing diverse individuals that can conceive life (Trujillo & Abril, 2020).

In turn, advances in assisted reproduction have generated a greater diversity of ways to access motherhood (Faircloth & Gürtin, 2017; Ekechi, 2021). Nevertheless, Spain is the second European country with the lowest birth rate and also the second where women postpone the age to have their first child the most. Moreover, according to recent studies on the perception of Spanish women about motherhood (Instituto Valenciano de Infertilidad[1] [IVI] and Growth from Knowledge [GFK], n.d.), the number of women who choose not to become mothers is increasing. This context has been linked to the difficulty in obtaining a stable job, the scarce job opportunities for women once they become mothers (López-Trujillo, 2019), the difficult access to housing and the lack of public policies to support motherhood (Álvarez & Marre, 2021; Comas-d'Argemir & Faur, 2023). In

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[1] Valencian Institute of Infertility

parallel, in recent years, the World Health Organization [WHO] (2018), the Ministry of Health and Social Policy (2010) and other institutions have begun to modify reproductive health care protocols to promote a holistic approach during childbirth and address obstetric violence (Llamas Palomar et al., 2023), dehumanized treatment, unjustified medicalization and pathologization of natural processes (Cook, 2017; Koblinsky et al., 2016).

In terms of technological change, linked to social change, there has also been a change in the screen society. In addition to the transition of the media model from broadcasting to narrowcasting (Waterman, 1992), characterized by the diversification of content according to audiences, there has been an exponential growth of content with the emergence of digital media, such as social networks and video on demand platforms. The profusion of audiovisual content from the emergence of platforms such as Netflix or Max (known as HBO Max until 2023) in the audiovisual distribution market, also implies a thematic diversification and the treatment of issues previously related to social minorities and, therefore, invisibilized, as is the case of the ethical and realistic representation of reproductive processes and motherhood. In this sense, the emergence of a feminist audiovisual product in the post #MeToo era, together with the consolidation of new narrative genres in formats such as self-fiction or autobiographical fiction, points to a permeability of the new audiovisual fiction to explore, on the one hand, the diversification of narrative genres (Altman, 1999; Dix, 2020) and, on the other hand, the diversification of the authorial genre, giving rise to the arrival of female authors in the construction of cultural narrative trends. Significantly, motherhood and female authorship have become two major slogans in recent Spanish audiovisual fiction, especially in the independent circuit and in national film festivals. Authors such as Bettaglio and Albarrán (2021-2023) have pointed to a considerable increase in motherhood-centered narratives also in music, literature, theater and graphic narrative, where examples abound of autobiographical and self-reflexive works that, "until now, had been underrepresented in a fundamentally androcentric culture" (Bettaglio & Albarrán, 2021-2023, p. 24).

1.1. The representation of motherhood in audiovisual fiction

In recent decades there has been an increase in publications focusing on the representation of motherhood in cultural works. Noteworthy are the international contributions by Walters (1992), Douglas and Michaels (2004), Addison et al. (2009), Bishop and Hall (2009), Podnieks, (2012), Feasey (2012, 2020), Kaplan, (2013), Lerner and D'Amelio (2017), Heffernan and Wilgus (2020), and national ones by Aguilar (2004), Gámez Fuentes (2004), Mercado Sáez (2007), Lanuza, (2012), Hidalgo-Marí (2017), Gimeno et al. (2021), and Visa et al. (2020).

The existing literature on the representation of biological processes linked to maternity is also becoming more and more extensive, although basically international in scope and focused on the analysis of American works. *Knock me up, Knock me down: Images of Pregnancy in Hollywood Films* (Oliver, 2012), *Pregnancy in Literature and Film* (Boswell, 2014) or *Fertile Visions: The Uterus as a narrative space in cinema from the Americas* (Carruthers, 2021) are key to the study of the visibility of these processes in the audiovisual media. They explain how during the first half of the twentieth century the reproductive stage was not part of the audiovisual plots. The establishment of the *Hays code of moral regulation* (1934-1967) censored all content considered inappropriate, so that processes related to motherhood were not shown in detail in classic American cinema. In Spain, during the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975), the censorship commissions and the strict control of the Catholic Church also prevented the representation of processes such as pregnancy on the big screen.

At the end of the censorship periods, pregnancy became the main plot element in some films. However, this visibility did not lead to greater standardization but to stereotyping, since the first works that incorporated it had as their genre either comedy or science fiction and horror (Oliver, 2012).

In the 1990s, there was a proliferation of romantic comedies with reproduction as a central theme, called *mom comedies* (Oliver, 2012), starring pregnant women, which created a new vision of these processes, dialoguing with the new assisted reproduction technologies and incorporating new family models, as well as the evolution of women's reproductive rights. Among them are *Nine Months* (Chris Columbus, 1995), *Knocked Up* (Judd Apatow, 2007), *The Back-up Plan* (Alan Poul, 2010), *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (Kirk Jones, 2012) or the Spanish *Embarazados* (*We Are Pregnant*. Juana Macías, 2016). These films present motherhood as an inevitable destiny for women. In the film Knocked Up the possibility of voluntarily interrupting the pregnancy is mentioned, but as an initial option that is discarded since according to the protagonist the correct moral decision is to continue with the pregnancy. It was on the threshold of the new millennium when some works began to show motherhood in a more transgressive way, although even the independent films of the first decade of the 21st century avoided touching on the subject of abortion (Hair, 2019), despite the fact that the women protagonists made clear at the beginning of some films, such as *Juno* (Jason Reitman, 2007), their will not to be mothers. In relation to voluntary termination of pregnancy, recent studies point out that, although the content is currently more progressive, in American television there is still progress to be made in relation to the diversity of the characters represented and the accuracy in the description of the forms of access and the medical risks of the abortion process (Herold & Sisson, 2020).

As far as the horror genre is concerned, the reproductive body has tended to be represented as abject (Kristeva, 1988; Creed, 1993, 2022), a source of disease and deficiency. Examples can be seen in films such as *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968), the Spanish film *¿Quién puede matar a un niño?* (Who Can Kill a Child? Ibáñez Serrador, 1976) or *Alien, the eighth passenger* (Scott, 1979). Horror as a genre is "neither inherently progressive nor reactionary" (Williams, 1983, p. 16). However, if one looks at the films from a feminist perspective, patterns emerge that turn women who transgress idealized motherhood into abject and grotesque sources of fear and horror (Williamson, 2023; Johansen, 2021). Arnold (2013) defined as 'maternal horror cinema,' works that focused on maternal figures perpetuating the archetypes of the good and bad mother and also noted how the arrival of menstruation or menopause has been linked in the horror genre to the onset of mental illness, criminality, and violence. In contemporaneity, Harrington (2017) describes with the concept "gynaehorror" the sociocultural construction of the female body that explores fears about sexual and reproductive capacities through monstrosity.

1.2. The Spanish VOD platform ecosystem

Subscription cable channels in North America, and the New York-based VOD platforms, have been incorporated into the audiovisual context and have given rise to the so-called Third Television Golden Age or Quality TV (McCabe & Akass, 2007). This stage is defined by following a subscription-based financing model, which leads to the creation of works aimed at more specific audiences (narrowcasting), allowing many thematic and narrative innovations. This circumstance led to an increase in audiovisual works that focus on the reproduction stage, in which motherhood is represented in a pluralistic way, including the detailed description of various processes from a realistic perspective, with women as protagonists of the story. These fictions are mostly international: *Smilf*, Showtime (Ravner, 2017-2019); *The Letdown*, Netflix (McCartney, 2017-2019); *Workin' Moms*, Netflix (Reitman, 2017-2023), although some of these narratives can also be observed in Spanish fictions: *Mira lo que has hecho*[2], Movistar+ (Buenafuente, 2018-2020); *Vergüenza*[3], Movistar+ (Sorogoyen & Peña, 2018-2020) or *Vida perfecta*[4], Movistar+ (Dolera, 2019-2021). While there is an extensive literature analyzing the scope of innovations (Hammond, 2005; Nelson, 2007; Carrión, 2011; Press, 2018, Fürst & Poole, 2020; Winckler & Huertas-Martín, 2022), the potential of works created on digital platforms to expand imaginaries of motherhood has been studied so far in a limited way.

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[2] Literaly, *Look What You Have Done*.
[3] Literaly, *Shame*.
[4] Literaly, *Perfect Life*.

Currently, VOD platforms are part of the Spanish media ecosystem, so that Spanish audiovisual works find in on-demand services an expanding channel (Albornoz et al., 2023).

Video-on-demand (VOD) platforms are part of the over-the-top (OTT) services. These consist of broadcasting content over the Internet without the mediation of distributors or traditional operators. Media ecology teaches us that one of the characteristics of the media is their capacity for hybridization, especially evident since the irruption of the Internet in the global telecommunications landscape (Scolari, 2019). Therefore, the presence of platforms is considered in media studies as an evolution of pay TV (Asociación para la Investigación de Medios de Comunicación [AIMC], 2023). In this respect, the Spanish media ecosystem presents VOD services of different nature. Alongside global platforms, such as Netflix, HBO Max, Disney+ or Prime Video, there are services operated by national media groups, such as Movistar+ or Filmin. In their origins, they were nourished exclusively by third-party content, but they have evolved over time towards a model also based on original and exclusive production (Neira et al., 2023). These services coexist with platforms such as RTVE Play, Atresplayer, Mitele or 3Cat, which represent an evolution of Internet television, initiated in Spain during the first decade of the century with the launch of online services by broadcasters such as RTVE.

According to data from the 2023 General Media Framework of the Association for Media Research, the consumption of television content through VOD platforms in Spain presents an exponential growth in recent years, from 4.3% to 62.8% between 2017 and 2022, with global platforms being more in demand, with Netflix leading the way, than national ones, with Movistar + in first place (AIMC, 2023). On-demand audiovisual services make up an expanding ecosystem at European level, which in the Spanish case presents a phase of development and growth. The Internet continues to be an underexplored category in traditional media studies, often treated as a parallel structure to conventional formats -radio, television, cinema and print media-. However, its nature as a heterogeneous transmission system allows it to host infrastructures as complex as digital content platforms, in addition to challenging and reconfiguring the classic paradigms of mass communication, transforming the way messages are produced, distributed and consumed in the digital era (Scolari, 2019; Orihuela, 2002). In this context, it is particularly relevant to analyze the impact of on-demand audiovisual services on local cultures, as proposed in this article.

2. OBJECTIVES

The aim of this article is to catalogue contemporary Spanish audiovisual fiction works that include plots related to reproductive processes (menstruation, infertility, pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, postpartum, breastfeeding and menopause), in order to analyze whether the social context and the new forms of audiovisual distribution have favored the appearance of a greater number of works on this subject.

The starting hypotheses are:

- Over the last decade there has been an increase in works that feature plots related to reproductive processes, focusing on stages of motherhood that have traditionally been silenced in the culture, such as infertility, abortion or postpartum.

- The current ecosystem of video-on-demand (VOD) platforms encourages a diversification of content through narrowcasting, targeting segmented audiences. This form of dissemination facilitates the proliferation of content focused on the reproductive stage, as there are specific audiences interested in motherhood and reproductive processes.

- Audiovisual productions on this topic tend to be created to a greater extent by women, who, in many cases, include their personal experiences in the narrative development, especially in documentary formats.

—   The reproductive experience is represented through a greater diversity of narrative genres, with documentary and drama standing out as the predominant formats, while comedy and horror, genres that have historically resorted to stereotypical representations of motherhood and associated processes such as pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding, may appear less frequently.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach of this study is quantitative and focuses on cataloguing the results obtained through a systematized search of contemporary Spanish audiovisual fiction works that address the phases of the reproductive process. The quantitative part of the study is conceived as an exploratory topography that enables for a systematic analysis of the context and the identification of broad trends (Fedele, 2021; Vanlee et al., 2020).

Fiction audiovisual content available on video-on-demand platforms operating in Spain, which had produced their own works in the country were considered, such as Movistar+, Netflix, Prime Video, Filmin, HBO Max and Disney+. It also included on-demand television services offered by the digital platforms of the main national television channels, such as RTVE Play, Atresplayer, Mitele and 3Cat. This process involved a structured and exhaustive search aimed at identifying relevant content through the introduction of keywords linked to the reproductive process: Maternity; Menstruation; Pregnancy; Infertility; Childbirth; Abortion; Breastfeeding; Postpartum; Assisted Reproduction; and Menopause. Since each platform adapts the display of its content according to the user's profile, searches were performed through the general search engine rather than based on suggestions or trends displayed on the home page. In addition, it was taken into account that each platform classifies its content in a specific way. In cases where keywords did not yield results, possible related collections were explored, as in the case of Filmin, which during the search period offered collections such as Mother, Babies, Parenting or Surrogacy. In addition, it was considered that, in the case of series, some platforms offered detailed results by chapter, while others only provided a single result related to the series as a whole. Before including the contents in the database created for data collection, each one was duly identified and corroborated as relevant to the topic of study, after a detailed reading of its synopsis. The search process was conducted in two phases, the first phase (or exploration phase) aimed at identifying all the contents available on each platform based on the search keywords. This phase was carried out by the three authors of the article between November and December 2023, based on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

1. Content present in the video-on-demand platforms operating in Spain: Filmin; RTVE Play; Netflix; Mitele; AtresPlayer, Prime Video; Movistar +; HBO Max; and Disney + and 3Cat.
2. Contents found from the search for keywords linked to reproductive processes.
3. Audiovisual content published between 2013 and 2023.
4. Works in all genres available on each platform. This includes film genres classified basically following the proposal of Romaguera (1999) and González (2002): comedy, drama, horror, science fiction, western, musical, adventure, historical, epic, thriller and documentary.
5. Audiovisual content offered on each platform. This includes: feature films, series, short films and documentaries.

The second phase (or cataloging phase) aims to catalog the contents of the initial phase, selecting only those works produced in Spain or co-productions with other countries. This phase was carried out between January and March 2024.

The technical file of each work that met the previously mentioned inclusion and exclusion criteria was recorded in a table developed by the authors themselves, based on analysis models previously used by international (Feasey, 2012; Harrington, 2017) and national (Medina et al., 2009, Hidalgo-Marí, 2017) researchers. Since this is a phase of systematization and general cataloging of the works, special attention was paid to ensure that the

analysis categories were objective and could be completed with the information provided by the platform and the technical file: keyword, title, year, country, format, platform, synopsis, genre, direction and script. After coding each work, a final sample (non-probabilistic intentional or discretionary) of 105 audiovisual analysis units was identified.

4. RESULTS

In the first phase of the search process, a total of 4630 works linked to the different keywords were identified. As shown in Table 1, the keywords that generated the most results were "embarazo" (pregnancy) (31%; 1420), followed by "maternidad" (maternity) (20%; 912), "parto" (childbirth) (19%; 866) and "aborto" (abortion) (15%; 705). On the other hand, keywords that yielded fewer results, either because of the low number of relevant works or because these words are not used as search terms in some search engines and therefore did not show results, were "postparto" (postpartum) (1%; 48), "menstruación" (menstruation) (2%; 89), " menopausia" (menopause) (2%; 102), "infertilidad" (infertility) (3%; 116), "lactancia" (breastfeeding) (4%; 183), and "reproducción asistida" (assisted reproduction) (4%; 189).

Another highlight of this initial phase was that 77.4% (3583) of the analysis universe was mainly found on the platforms Netflix (32.6%; 1509), RTVE Play (28.0%; 1295) and 3Cat (16.8%; 779). In contrast, platforms such as Atresplayer (0.2%; 11), Disney + (0.9%; 43), Filmin (2.0%; 93) and Prime Video (2.7%; 124) barely accounted for 5.9% (271) of the total content identified (Table 1).

Table 1. *Summary of the titles under analysis by year and consultation platform (Initial phase or exploration phase).*

Palabra clave	Plataforma										
	Netflix	Prime Video	Filmin	Movistar +	HBO Max	RTVE Play	Atresplayer	Mitele	Disney +	3cat	Total
Maternidad	32,9% (300)	2,2% (20)	0,4% (4)	2,0% (18)	1,5% (14)	23,6% (215)	0,0% (0)	5,4% (49)	0,0% (0)	32,0% (292)	20% (912)
Menstruación	53,9% (48)	1,1% (1)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	4,5% (4)	0,0% (0)	2,2% (2)	0,0% (0)	38,2% (34)	2% (89)
Embarazo	21,1% (300)	3,2% (45)	0,1% (1)	7,4% (105)	0,5% (7)	26,0% (369)	0,1% (1)	18,4% (261)	0,0% (0)	23,3% (331)	31% (1420)
Infertilidad	60,3% (70)	1,7% (2)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	1,7% (2)	25,0% (29)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	11,2% (13)	3% (116)
Parto	34,6% (300)	3,3% (29)	9,9% (86)	11,5% (100)	11,5% (100)	19,3% (167)	0,1% (1)	7,0% (61)	2,5% (22)	0,0% (0)	19% (866)
Aborto	42,6% (300)	3,0% (21)	0,3% (2)	1,0% (7)	0,4% (3)	45,0% (317)	0,7% (5)	4,1% (29)	3,0% (21)	0,0% (0)	15% (705)
Lactancia	58,5% (107)	0,5% (1)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,7% (5)	24,6% (45)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	13,7% (25)	4% (183)
Posparto	29,2% (14)	4,2% (2)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,1% (1)	4,2% (2)	0,0% (0)	4,2% (2)	0,0% (0)	56,3% (27)	1% (48)
Reproducción Asistida	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	66,1% (125)	2,1% (4)	3,2% (6)	0,0% (0)	28,6% (54)	4% (189)
Menopausia	68,6% (70)	2,9% (3)	0,0% (0)	1,0% (1)	0,0% (0)	21,6% (22)	0,0% (0)	2,9% (3)	0,0% (0)	2,9% (3)	2% (102)
Total	32,6% (1509)	2,7% (124)	2,0% (93)	5,0% (231)	2,9% (132)	28,0% (1295)	0,2% (11)	8,9% (413)	0,9% (43)	16,8% (779)	100,0% (4630)

Source: Elaborated by the authors

In the second phase of cataloging, after applying all the inclusion criteria, a total of 105 works relevant to the topic of study were selected. Table 2 shows the title, year of publication and the platforms on which each of the selected works could be viewed at the time of the research. During the systematic search analysis, content available on more than one platform was identified. It is important to note that these contents were coded only once. As shown in Table 2, the contents available on more than one platform are: *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (Remember When. 2016, RTVE PLay and Prime); *La luz de Elna* (Light of Elna. 2016, RTVE Play and 3cat); *La que se avecina[5]* (2017; Mitele & Prime); *Els dies que vindran* (The Days to Come. 2019; Netflix, Filmin & RTVE Play);

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[5] The title is both an expression meaning "the trouble that will happen next" and a pun on "la casa vecina" - the neighbouring house.

Madres[6] (2020; Prime & Mitele); *Nacer*[7] (2021; Filmin & Prime) and *La Hija* (The Daughter. 2021; Filmin & RTVE Play).

There may be more titles available on more than one platform, but here are those that appeared as results when performing the specific searches according to the inclusion criteria. An example is the series *Merlí*, which is also available on 3Cat, but was not shown as a result for any of the keywords entered in this service, although it did appear when searching for it in Prime Video. It should be noted that, for the purposes of this research, the fiction series found on the platforms have been indexed according to the broadcast date of the season during the period under analysis (2013-2023).

Table 2. Summary of the titles analyzed per year and consultation platform.

N	Title	Year	Plataform
1	Això no és Suècia	2023	3Cat
2	Com si fos ahir	2023	3Cat
3	Incidents	2022	3Cat
4	Noche de chicas	2023	Disney +
5	Aproveche la infancia que luego va la vida	2023	Filmin
6	Contigo, contigo, y sin mí	2023	Filmin
7	El cuco	2023	Filmin
8	Las buenas compañías	2023	Filmin
9	Las chicas están bien	2023	Filmin
10	Matria	2023	Filmin
11	Culpa	2022	Filmin
12	La Concha	2022	Filmin
13	Paola	2022	Filmin
14	Rosa	2022	Filmin
15	Tornar a casa	2022	Filmin
16	Aztarnak - Huellas	2021	Filmin
17	Club silencio	2021	Filmin
18	Hablemos, hermana	2021	Filmin
19	La primera mujer	2021	Filmin
20	Matar a la madre	2021	Filmin
21	Una mujer frente al mar	2021	Filmin
22	Ama	2020	Filmin
23	Baby	2020	Filmin
24	Isaac	2020	Filmin
25	Retrato de mujer blanca con pelo cano y arrugas	2020	Filmin
26	A media voz	2019	Filmin
27	Donde nos lleve el viento	2019	Filmin
28	La noche de las dos lunas	2019	Filmin
29	Mamá	2019	Filmin
30	María	2019	Filmin
31	La Espera	2016	Filmin
32	Madres invisibles	2016	Filmin
33	La señora Brackets, la niñera, el nieto bastardo y Emma Suárez	2015	Filmin
34	Loba	2015	Filmin
35	Paula	2015	Filmin
36	Pozoamargo	2015	Filmin
37	Zoe	2015	Filmin

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[6] Literally, *Mothers*.
[7] Literally, *To Be Born*.

38	Ártico	2014	Filmin
39	Hermosa Juventud	2014	Filmin
40	La hora del baño	2014	Filmin
41	Ana y Yo	2013	Filmin
42	La jungla interior	2013	Filmin
43	Partos Naturales	2013	Filmin
44	The Extraordinary Tale of the Times Table	2013	Filmin
45	Nacer	2021	Filmin y Prime
46	La Hija	2021	Filmin y RTVE Play
47	Mamá o papá	2021	HBO-MAX
48	Las niñas	2020	HBO-MAX
49	Tetas y tetinas	2020	Mitele
50	El accidente	2017	Mitele
51	Rabia	2015	Mitele
52	El príncipe	2014	Mitele
53	Gym Tony	2014	Mitele
54	Niños robados	2013	Mitele
55	La que se avecina	2017	Mitele y Prime
56	La Mesías	2023	Movistar +
57	Las buenas compañías	2023	Movistar +
58	Cerdita	2022	Movistar +
59	La Maternal	2022	Movistar +
60	Vida Perfecta	2019	Movistar +
61	Hacerse mayor y otros problemas	2018	Movistar +
62	El cuerpo en llamas	2023	Netflix
63	La chica de nieve	2023	Netflix
64	Nowhere	2023	Netflix
65	Tin y Tina	2023	Netflix
66	La jefa	2022	Netflix
67	Machos Alfa	2022	Netflix
68	Madres paralelas	2021	Netflix
69	Valeria	2020	Netflix
70	La caza	2019	Netflix
71	Lo nunca visto	2019	Netflix
72	Vivir dos veces	2019	Netflix
73	¿Qué coño está pasando?	2018	Netflix
74	La casa de papel	2017	Netflix
75	Las chicas del cable	2017	Netflix
76	Embarazados	2016	Netflix
77	Ma ma	2015	Netflix
78	Vis a vis	2015	Netflix
79	Els dies que vindran	2019	Netflix, Filmin y RTVE Play
80	Embarazo inesperado	2021	Prime
81	Merlí	2018	Prime
82	Pequeñas coincidencias	2018	Prime
83	Una familia de verdad	2017	Prime
84	Velvet	2014	Prime
85	Madres	2020	Prime y Mitele
86	Cuéntame cómo pasó	2016	Prime y RTVE Play
87	4 estrellas	2023	RTVE Play
88	La promesa	2023	RTVE Play
89	O Corno'	2023	RTVE Play

90	Salon de té la moderna	2023	RTVE Play
91	Dos vidas	2021	RTVE Play
92	Fortunata y Jacinta	2020	RTVE Play
93	Hospital Valle Norte	2020	RTVE Play
94	Derecho a soñar	2019	RTVE Play
95	Estoy vivo	2019	RTVE Play
96	La sonata del silencio	2019	RTVE Play
97	Mercado Central	2019	RTVE Play
98	Servir y proteger	2019	RTVE Play
99	Sabuesos	2018	RTVE Play
100	La peluquería	2017	RTVE Play
101	Acacias 38	2015	RTVE Play
102	Carlos, Rey Emperador	2015	RTVE Play
103	Seis hermanas	2015	RTVE Play
104	Águila roja	2013	RTVE Play
105	La luz de Elna	2016	RTVE Play y 3Cat

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding the timeline of publication of the 105 contents identified, and as shown in Figure 1, between 2013 and 2023, there was a significant growth in the themes related to the entire reproductive process. During the period under analysis, it was identified that 37.1% (39 works) of the selected audiovisual works are concentrated between 2013 and 2018, while between 2019 and 2023, 62.9% (66 audiovisual works). This indicates an increase of 64.3% in the last five years compared to the previous five years. It can also be observed (Figure 1) that the highest peaks occurred in 2015 (10.5%; 11 works), 2019 (14.3%; 15 works) and 2023 (18.1%; 19 works), with the latter year registering the highest number of premieres, such as *Matria* (Gago, 2023) and *O Corno* (The Rye Horn. Camborda, 2023).

The decline in production in 2020, 2021 and 2022 could be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on stalling or delaying shoots and releases.

Figure 1. *Content being released per year.*
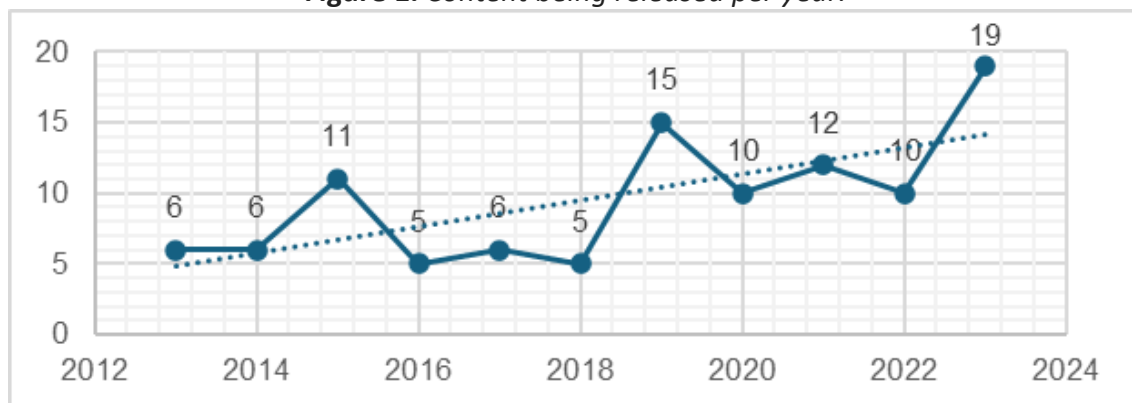
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Out of the 10 search platforms analyzed, Filmin has the largest number of available works, accumulating a total of 40.0% (42 audiovisual works), followed by RTVE Play (with 18.1%; 19 audiovisual works) and Netflix (with 17.1%; 18 audiovisual works), which occupy the second and third positions in terms of available content (Figure 2). Other platforms, such as Prime Video (6.7%; 7 works), Mitele (6.7%; 7 works) and Movistar + (5.7; 6 works) have a smaller number of Spanish titles, resulting in less diverse themes. On platforms such as HBO Max (1.9%; 2 works) and Disney + (1.0; 1 work), as can be seen, own-produced content on this topic has a very limited presence.

Figure 2. *Content available per platform.*
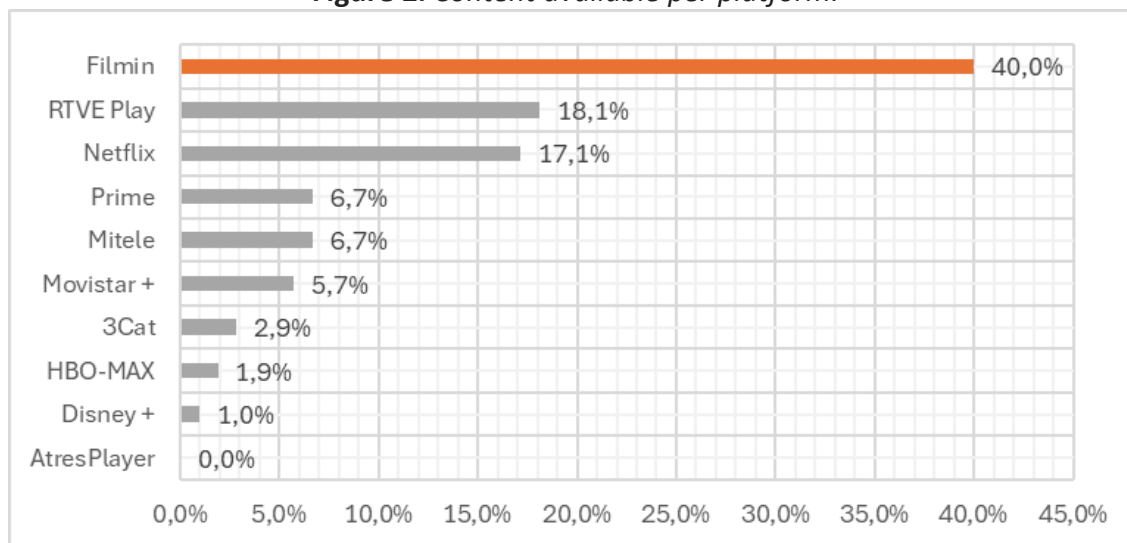
From the audiovisual content available on each of the platforms, it was identified that the predominant narrative formats are feature films (44.8%; 47 works) and series (with 42 works available; 40.0%). As shown in Table 3, the contents available on the platforms HBO Max (100.0%; 2 works), Filmin (66.7%; 28 works), Movistar + (66.7%; 4 works), and Netflix (50.0%; 9 works) are presented as films. The formats with the lowest presence were documentary (1.9%; 2 works) and short film (13.3%; 14 works), these being more common on the Mitele (14.3%; 1 documentary) and Filmin (33.3%; 14 short films) platforms.

Table 3. *Results sorted according to the format of the audiovisual content under analysis in relation to each one of the platforms.*

Plataform	Feature Film	Series	Documentary	Short film
AtresPlayer	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Disney+	0,00%	100,0% (1)	0,00%	0,00%
HBO -Max	100,0% (2)	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
3cat	0,00%	100,0% (3)	0,00%	0,00%
Movistar+	66,7% (4)	33,3% (2)	0,00%	0,00%
Mitele	0,00%	85,7% (6)	14,3% (1)	0,00%
Prime	28,6% (2)	71,5% (5)	0,00%	0,00%
Netflix	50% (9)	44,4% (8)	5,6% (1)	0,00%
RTVE Play	10,5% (2)	89,5% (17)	0,00%	0,00%
Filmin	66,7% (28)	0,00%	0,00%	33,3% (14)
Total	44,8% (47)	40% (42)	1,9% (2)	1,9% (14)

The 105 works that were analyzed had a direct association with each of the following keywords: Embarazo (Pregnancy); Madre (Mother); Parto (Childbirth); Aborto (Abortion); Maternidad (Motherhood); Lactancia (Breastfeeding); Menopausia (Menopause); Bebés (Babies); Crianza (Parenting); Reproducción asistida (Assisted Reproduction); Gestación (Gestation); Menstruación (Menstruation); Infertilidad (Infertility); and Posparto (Postpartum). Some of the selected works were linked to more than one keyword. For example, in the RTVE Play search engine, the keywords "embarazo" (pregnancy), "maternidad" (maternity), "parto" (childbirth), and "reproducción asistida" (assisted reproduction) were used and the result in each case was the series Mercado Central (2019). Similarly, the documentary Partos (2013), available on Filmin, was associated with the keywords: "parto" (childbirth), "bebés" (babies) and "madre" (mother).

Overall, the main keywords with the highest linkage to content were "embarazo (pregnancy)" (46 different works; 31.9%) and "madre (mother)" (27 different works; 18.8%). It is important to note that, although the keywords with the least linked content were "gestación subrogada" (gestational surrogacy) and ''menstruación" (menstruation) (each with 0.7%; 1 audiovisual work) the keywords "infertilidad" (infertility) and "posparto" (postpartum) were not associated with any specific content. Although in the initial phase (or exploration phase) 116 works linked to these keywords were identified, in the second phase (or categorization phase) they were discarded, since none of them was of Spanish production.

Figure 3. *Results linked to specific keyword searches.*
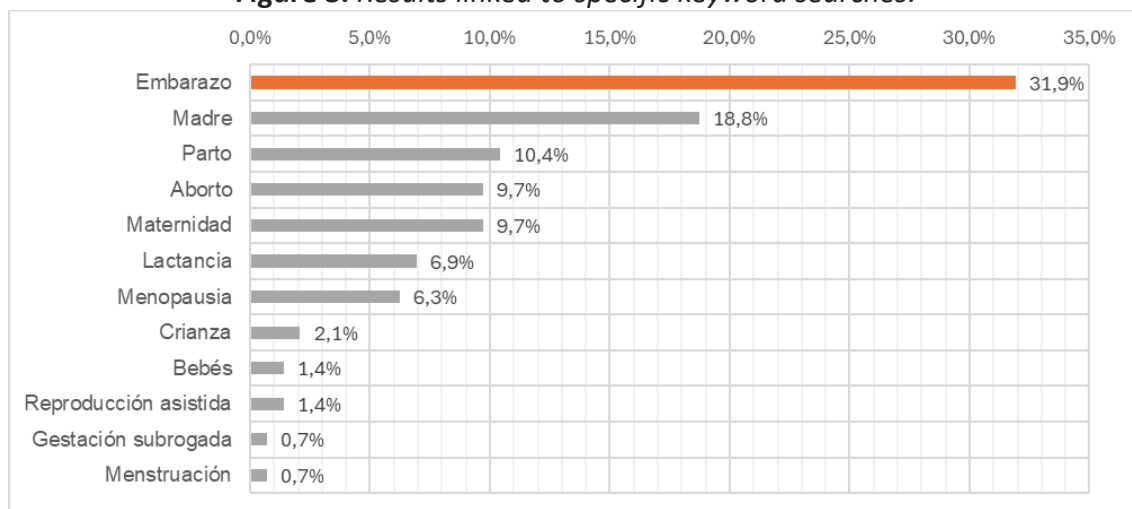
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Platform searches revealed a total of 14 abortion-related works (9.7%). As seen in Figure 4, interest in the topic of abortion seems to vary over the years, with periods of several releases (2015, 2018, 2019) followed by years with no new releases (2016, 2017, 2020-2022). The most active period was between 2015 and 2019, with a total of 8 works on abortion, followed by a re-emergence in 2023. The latter year stands out for a notable increase, with 6 works, the highest number of the decade, which could reflect a renewed interest in this topic. Among these contents, series and film titles were identified, such as *La promesa* (The Vow) available on RTVE Play, and *La chica de nieve* (The Snow Girl. 2023) available on Netflix.

Figure 4. *Results related to the specific search for keywords: abortion.*
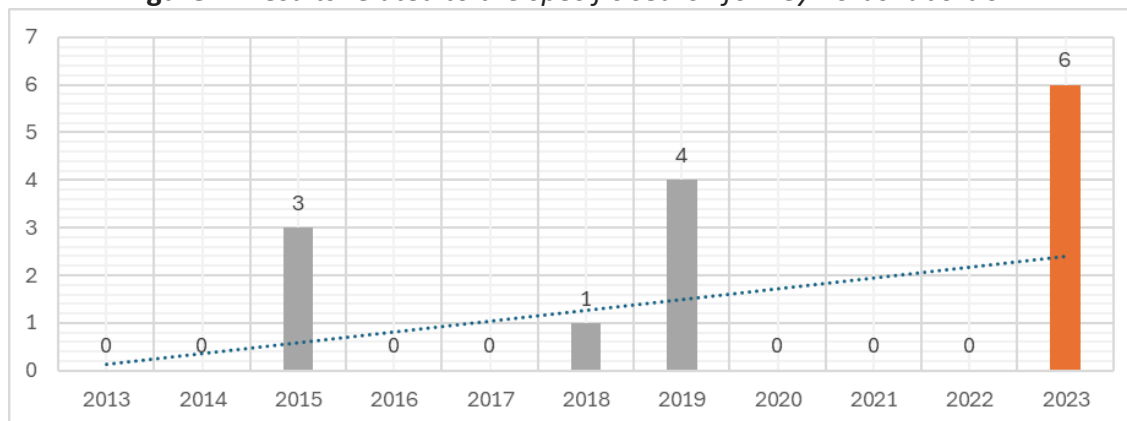
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding film genres (Romaguera 1999; González, 2002), 60.0% (63 works) of the total sample corresponds to the drama film genre in all its modalities (drama, adolescent, melodrama, police drama, family drama, romantic drama, etc.). This data is relevant, since this film genre has the ability to address universal and profound aspects of the human condition, which are often difficult to discuss in other film contexts. In fact, except in the case of Disney + (where the main genre is thriller with 100.0%; 1 work), drama predominates in the other platforms: RTVE Play (73.7%; 14 works), Movistar + (66.7%; 4 works), 3Cat (66.7%; 2 works), Netflix (61.1%; 11 works), Filmin (57.1%; 24 works), Prime (57.1%; 4 works), HBOMax (50.0%; 1 work) and Mitele (42.9%; 3 works).

Figure 5. *Film genres present in the works.*
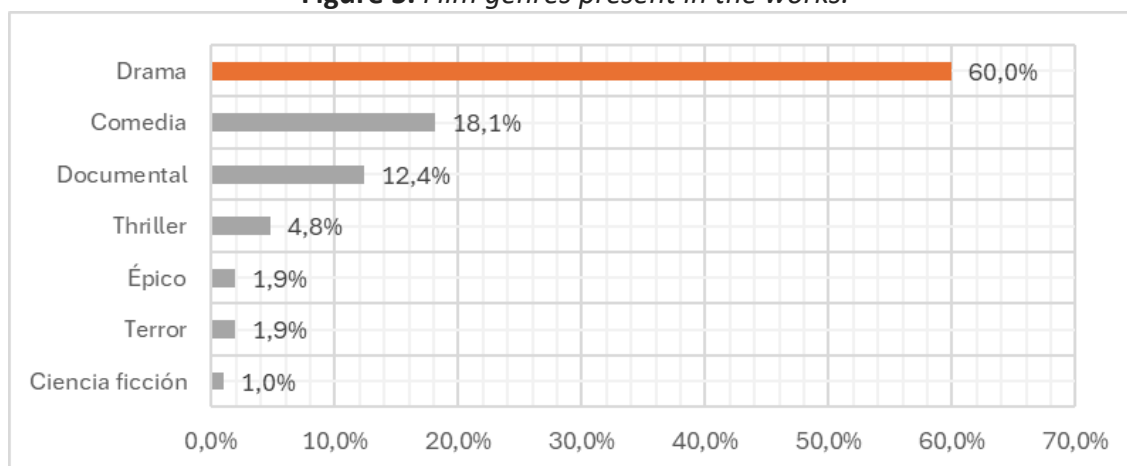
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In addition to identifying the names of the directors and screenwriters of each work, the genre of each of them was also recorded. In cases where there was only one person in charge of scriptwriting or directing, the record did not present difficulties. However, when more than two people were involved and their gender could be identified, the option "both" was recorded for those cases with both men and women. As Figure 6 shows, men have a prominent role as directors (55.2%; 58 works) and screenwriters (41.0%; 43 works). In comparison, women present a gap of 21.9% in directing (33.3%; 35 works) and 12.4% in screenwriting (28.0%; 30 works).

Figure 6. *Directors and screenwriters disaggregated by sex.*

	Guión	Dirección
■ Hombre	41,0%	55,2%
■ Mujer	28,6%	33,3%
■ Ambos	30,5%	11,4%
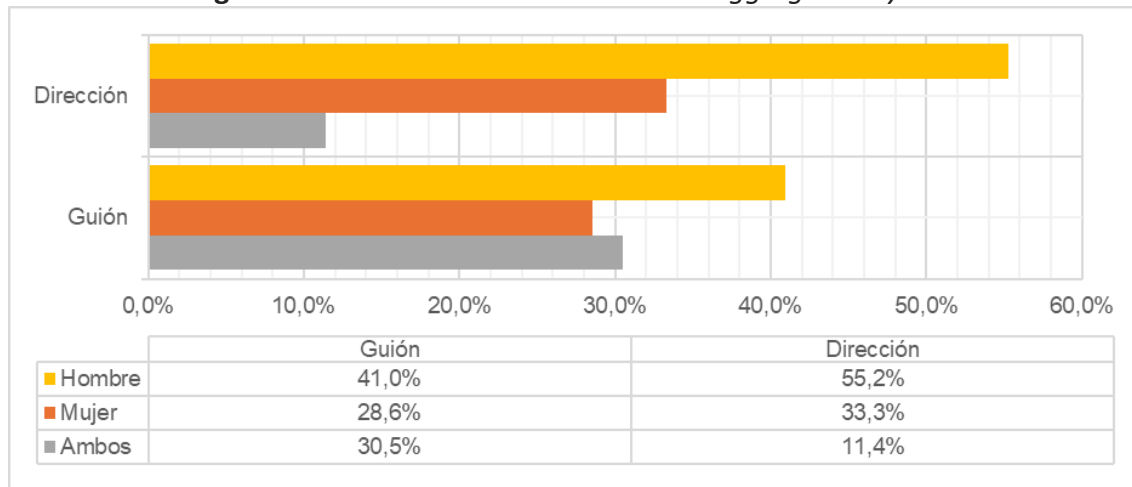
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Men as directors have a higher representation in general (55.2%), while the representation of women as directors is just over 30%. As shown in Table 4, if the formats and film genres are analyzed and related to the gender of the directors, it can be affirmed that, in the case of short films, drama (75.0%) is mostly made by men. In contrast, comedy (50.0%) shows a balance between men and women, while in the documentary format women predominate in the two works identified*: ¿Qué coño está pasando?* directed by Marta Jaenes and Rosa Márquez in 2018 and available on the Netflix platform and *Tetas y tetinas*, directed by Noemí Fidalgo in 2020, available on Mitele. Regarding the feature film format, it was identified that it is mainly dominated by men in the horror (100%), thriller (66.7%) and drama (64.3%) genres, while authorship in the documentary (75%) and comedy (57.1%) genres is mostly female. In the series format, the drama and thriller genres are dominated by men (55.5% and 100.0% respectively), while comedy is where there is a higher percentage of female directors (30%).

Table 4. *Directors' genre in relation to film formats and genres.*

Formato	Género			Hombre		Mujer		Ambos	
Cortometraje 13,3% (14)	Documental	**21,4%**	(3)	**33,3%**	(1)	**66,7%**	(2)	**0,0%**	(0)
	Comedia	**14,2%**	(2)	**50,0%**	(1)	**50,0%**	(1)	**0,0%**	(0)
	Terror	**7,1%**	(1)	**100,0%**	(1)	**0,0%**	(0)	**0,0%**	(0)
	Drama	**57,1%**	(8)	**75,0%**	(6)	**25,0%**	(2)	**0,0%**	(0)
Documental 1,9% (2)	Documental	**100,0%**	(2)	**0,0%**	(0)	**100,0%**	(2)	**0,0%**	(0)
Largometraje 44,8% (47)	Terror	**2,1%**	(1)	**100,0%**	(1)	**0,0%**	(0)	**0,0%**	(0)
	Thriller	**6,3%**	(3)	**66,7%**	(2)	**33,3%**	(1)	**0,0%**	(0)
	Documental	**17,0%**	(8)	**25,0%**	(2)	**75,0%**	(6)	**0,0%**	(0)
	Comedia	**14,8%**	(7)	**28,6%**	(2)	**57,1%**	(4)	**14,3%**	(1)
	Drama	**59,4%**	(28)	**64,3%**	(17)	**35,7%**	(10)	**0,0%**	(0)
Serie 40,0% (42)	Ciencia ficción	**2,3%**	(1)	**100,0%**	(1)	**0,0%**	(0)	**0,0%**	(0)
	Épico	**4,7%**	(2)	**100,0%**	(2)	**0,0%**	(0)	**0,0%**	(0)
	Thriller	**4,7%**	(2)	**100,0%**	(2)	**0,0%**	(0)	**0,0%**	(0)
	Comedia	**23,8%**	(10)	**50,0%**	(5)	**30,0%**	(3)	**20,0%**	(2)
	Drama	**64,1%**	(27)	**55,5%**	(15)	**14,8%**	(4)	**33,3%**	(9)
Total		**100,0%**	(105)	**55,2%**	(59)	**33,3%**	(35)	**11,4%**	(12)

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

These results show a greater representation of male authorship in most formats and genres, with some notable exceptions in comedy and documentaries where women have a stronger presence.

5. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to catalogue contemporary Spanish audiovisual fiction works that include plots related to reproductive processes (menstruation, infertility, pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, postpartum, breastfeeding and menopause), in order to analyze whether the social context and the new forms of audiovisual distribution have encouraged the emergence of a greater number of stories focused on this topic. After cataloguing, it is possible to confirm that there has been an increase in the number of works on reproductive processes in Spanish audiovisual production.

In line with the first hypothesis the data show a proportional increase in the last decade regarding works that incorporate plots related to reproductive processes in the Spanish field. Between 2013 and 2018 there is a total of 37.1% (39 works) of the selected audiovisual content, while between 2019 and 2023 a total of 62.9% (66 audiovisual works) were published. This, as shown in the corresponding graph, shows that in the last five years there has been a growth of 64.3% compared to the previous five years, despite the decrease in production due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding the visibility of specific stages of motherhood, in the first part of the search, the keywords that yielded the most results were "embarazo" (pregnancy), ''parto" (childbirth) and "aborto" (abortion). While those that offered the fewest results, either because of the low number of relevant works or because these words are not used as a keyword in some search engines and therefore did not show results were "postparto" (postpartum), "menstruación" (menstruation), "menopausia" (menopause), 'infertilidad' (infertility), "lactancia" (breastfeeding) and "reproducción asistida" (assisted reproduction).

As for the second phase of the cataloging, relating to Spanish works of the last decade, the most used keyword continues to be "embarazo" (pregnancy), and the least used keywords are '"gestación subrogada" (surrogacy) and "menstruación" (menstruation). The keywords "infertilidad" (infertility), and "postparto" (postpartum) did not get any results in this second phase. The fact that these terms, related to the up-to-date reality of reproductive processes, are not linked to audiovisual works is significant, as it suggests that the words defining these realities do not possess enough semantic autonomy to be effectively indexed in the algorithmic operations of the search engines of VOD platforms. These results refute the hypothesis that some previously rendered invisible processes are currently achieving a greater presence in the media.

In relation to the second hypothesis, the current ecosystem of platforms does offer an increase in production and thematic diversification with respect to the object of study, although access and indexing of these works presents limitations that it seems relevant to comment on. Previous studies have exposed the limitations that the lack of transparency of streaming platforms imposes on academic research (García-Leiva & Albornoz, 2017; González-Neira et al., 2020). In this research, however, the search systems of each platform made it difficult for users to collect data and access specific content. For example, Netflix provided plentiful results (an average of 145 per keyword), which were very generic and required to be contrasted with the reading of synopses. On the other hand, Filmin offered more precise results since it has its own packages or tags with titles selected by the platform according to the subject matter (e.g., "Embarazo" (Pregnancy) collection). RTVE, Mitele, HBO and 3Cat are the only platforms that gave detailed results by chapters in the case of series, although at a later stage the results were unified by complete audiovisual works in order not to duplicate content. The navigation criteria specific to each platform also hindered in some cases the accuracy of the results, as they could lead to inaccurate results through titles containing words similar to the form of the keyword, but not to its semantics (e.g. eternidad (eternity)/ fraternidad (fraternity)/ maternidad (motherhood)).

The limitation of the platforms' search engines when offering results is also found in the exclusion of keywords related to the reproductive process in titles clearly related to this topic. This would be the case of the serialized

fiction *Mira lo que has hecho*[8] (Buenafuente, 2018-2020) or the successful saga *Padre no hay más que uno* (Father There Is Only One. Segura, 2019), about the reproductive process from the paternal perspective, and which are not part of the sample because they are indexed with words such as "padre" (father) but not with 'embarazo' (pregnancy), "parto" (childbirth), etc. This leads to the conclusion that the indexing systems of most of the platforms do not favor the easy finding of works focused on the reproductive process, leaving out of the search results relevant works that contain diverse perspectives on this process. Therefore, works that incorporate stories about the reproductive process in environmental or secondary plots have also been left out of the search results, despite the fact that these have a clear influence in the construction of imaginaries and normalization of themes that were previously discarded in traditional or canonical stories. Recent studies highlight the relevance of secondary plots as vehicles for topics of interest to social minorities (Cabello, 2022; Furió Alarcón, 2020). In this sense, it would be appropriate for future research to examine the presence and representation of the reproductive process in such plots.

In addition to the limitations of each platform, there are the general limitations of the Spanish platform system, which despite being a consolidated model of digital entertainment in Spanish households (Neira et al., 2023) would be in a development phase in terms of its nature as a hybrid media system, between traditional media (in this case television) and digital media (Internet as a new and perhaps definitive interactive communication system). In this regard, the Spanish platform ecosystem would be in a phase of emergence rather than consolidation (Scolari, 2023) and it would show the impurities and limitations of a media landscape under transformation.

With regard to the third hypothesis, it is refuted that a significant part of the audiovisual productions on this subject are written and directed by women. Men as directors (55.2%) and scriptwriters (41%) play a very significant role. If the format is taken into account, it is in series where there is a higher proportion of male authorship in the direction of indexed content on this subject. As for films, the horror, thriller and drama genres are mainly directed by men, while the documentary and comedy genres are mainly directed by women. As to whether in some cases the works are based on personal experiences that are captured in documentary formats, it is confirmed that in this format there is an abundance of women directors and screenwriters, a fact that may represent a greater presence of testimonial stories.

The fourth hypothesis was that the narrative genres from which the reproductive experience is approached could currently be diverse, with a prominent presence of documentary and drama, with comedy and horror being less frequent. It is confirmed that drama is the most represented genre, followed by comedy and documentary. And that genres such as horror, thriller and science fiction give very minor results. These data point to a more realistic and plural representation of reproductive processes, due to the rise of the drama genre, and of comedy and documentary from a female perspective, although it would be necessary to confirm these data after a discourse analysis of these works.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The discussion of results converges in two main conclusions:

First, an increase in the number of fiction works focused on the subject of analysis is confirmed. However, this quantitative increase does not necessarily imply a significant qualitative change, since it does not guarantee more diverse, realistic or ethical perspectives on the reproductive process. Likewise, there is no substantial improvement in the participation of women as authors of these stories, which could indicate the persistence of gender biases in the representation of these topics within the cultural industries. This pattern could also extend to the new digital media ecosystem, including video-on-demand (VOD) platforms. Future research

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[8] Literally, *Look What you Have Done.*

should focus on analyzing the discourse of these works from a more qualitative approach to examine how these narratives are constructed and legitimized.

Secondly, content indexing systems in new media present some weaknesses. The absence of results related to keywords such as "infertilidad" (infertility) or "postparto" (postpartum) reflects that, although these phenomena occasionally appear in the plots of some fictions, they are not considered relevant for search engines. In addition, the non-existence of a genre dedicated exclusively to motherhood or reproduction further hinders the visibility and access to this type of content. According to Carruthers (2021), this absence not only prevents proper cataloging, but also reflects a structural bias in the audiovisual industry.

While all the results found are relevant, they do not make visible the full range of works that may exist on these topics, as some of the content remains unindexed under keywords, and therefore invisible to algorithmic searches. This happens more often on large-scale platforms, such as Netflix, and less often on more specific platforms, such as Filmin. This phenomenon leads to the conclusion that, despite being infrastructures with greater variety of content and greater distribution possibilities, in the context of narrowcasting, mainstream media are more resistant to plurality of discourses. In other words, although mainstream media are necessary to convey social change, it is not within them that the construction of new imaginaries around motherhood is taking place.

In conclusion, neither the observed increase in fictions is definitive of the existence of a more diverse cultural mindset about the process of motherhood, nor do the keywords that define this diversity have enough semantic autonomy to be properly indexed in the algorithmic operations of VOD platform search engines. Both circumstances hinder the visibility of the less normalized facets of the reproductive process, which is an essential step in the construction of more ethical imaginaries of motherhood. They are, however, circumstances that reinforce the relevance of this study, whose conclusions invite readers to reflect on the present and future drifts of our current audiovisual media, especially digital media, constantly changing and full of possibilities.

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[9] Maternities on screen. Representation of the reproductive process in contemporary Spanish fiction (MaterScreen)

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