Transmedia storytelling and media representations: the case of #Luimelia

Narrativa transmedia y representación mediática: el caso de #Luimelia

Transmídia narrativa e representação midiática: o caso de #Luimelia

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ABSTRACT | This research analyzes the impact on social networks of the spin-off #Luimelia, broadcasted in February-March 2020 as a transmedia narrative extension of one of the plots of the Spanish fiction series Amar es para siempre, the most watched daily on television in Spain. Fans baptized with this label the affective-amorous relationship between two women, making lesbian relationships visible in a positive way in a fictional series. The success of their story gives rise to a new transmedia product, which promotes synergies between platforms and turns social networks into another narrative element. Based on the quantitative analysis of its impact on Twitter and three semi-structured in-depth interviews to the two scriptwriters of the series and a professional responsible for the measurement of audiences, as well as the quantitative analysis of its impact on Twitter, we show how the mobilization of fans was decisive for the emergence of #Luimelia and how its networking strategy contributes to the development of the plot and the construction of the main characters.

KEYWORDS: transmedia storytelling; social networks; fiction series; Twitter; fandom; media representation; #Luimelia.

RESUMEN | *Esta investigación analiza el impacto en las redes sociales del spin-off #Luimelia, emitido en febrero-marzo de 2020 como una extensión de narrativa transmedia de una de las tramas de la ficción española Amar es para siempre, la más vista a diario en España. Los fans bautizaron con esta etiqueta la relación afectivoamorosa entre dos mujeres, visibilizando de forma positiva las relaciones lésbicas en una serie de ficción. El éxito de su historia da lugar a un nuevo producto transmedia, que fomenta las sinergias entre plataformas y convierte a las redes sociales en un elemento narrativo más. A partir del análisis cuantitativo de su repercusión en Twitter y de tres entrevistas en profundidad semiestructuradas a los dos guionistas de la serie y a una profesional responsable de la medición de audiencias, se revela cómo la movilización de los fans fue decisiva para el surgimiento de #Luimelia y cómo su estrategia de redes contribuye al desarrollo de la trama y a construir los personajes protagonistas.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *narrativa transmedia; redes sociales; Twitter; series de ficción; comunidades de fans; representación mediática; #Luimelia.*

RESUMO | Esta investigação analisa o impacto nas redes sociais do spin-off *#Luimelia*, transmitida durante fevereiro-março de 2020 como uma extensão narrativa transmédia de uma das tramas da série de ficção espanhola *Amar es para siempre*, a mais vista diariamente na televisão na Espanha. Os fãs batizaram com este título a relação afetivo-amorosa entre duas mulheres, tornando as relações lésbicas visíveis de uma forma positiva numa série de ficção. O sucesso da sua história dá origem a um novo produto transmídia, que fomenta sinergias entre plataformas e transforma as redes sociais num outro elemento narrativo. Com base na análise quantitativa do seu impacto no Twitter e em três entrevistas em profundidade semiestruturadas com os dois roteiristas da série e uma profissional responsável pela medição da audiência, é revelado como a mobilização dos fãs foi decisiva para a emergência da #Luimelia e como a sua estratégia de rede contribui para o desenvolvimento do enredo e para a construção das personagens principais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: narrativa transmídia; redes sociais; Twitter; série de ficção; comunidades de fãs; representação na mídia; #Luimelia.

INTRODUCTION

In the current media ecosystem, fiction series are one of the projects most consumed by young people, both through digital video-on-demand platforms and social networks (Rubio-Jordán, 2021; García-Orta et al., 2019; Martínez Forteza et al., 2019; Raya et al., 2018). Their creators are increasingly thinking about the logic of expanding narratives without losing sight of commercial ends, proposing stories that are expanded, nuanced, or simply told differently (Varona Aramburu & Lara Toledo, 2015).

This article focuses on the transmedia universe generated around the first season of the series *#Luimelia* (ATRESplayer PREMIUM), broadcasted in February-March 2020. Its success leads to a second season between August and September of the same year, followed by two more during 2021. It comes from one of the plots of the original series *Amar es para siempre*[1], about the relationship between two female characters, Luisita Gómez and Amelia Ledesma, which extends and comes to life on *Atresmedia's*[2] pay platform and through social networks.

Along with *Veneno*, *#Luimelia* is an example of the company's commitment to add content about characters with non-heteronormative sexual identities. Both have been nominated in the 32nd edition of the GLAAD Awards (Seif, 2021), the leading international organization that advocates for the representation of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, intersex, and queer (LGTBI) people in the media.

It has also acted as a precedent for other Spanish series, such as *Acacias 38*, which replicates a romance between two lesbians (Maite and Camino), projected in networks as *#Maitino*. Examples in Latin American series are *#Jemma* and *#Aristemo* in Argentina and *#Juliantina* in Mexico (Acosta, 2020).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: TRANSMEDIA NARRATIVES AND REPRESENTATION IN FICTION OF HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN WOMEN

Different authors characterize transmedia narratives (Establés, 2020; Guerrero-Pico & Scolari, 2016; Jenkins, 2003, 2006; Jenkins et al., 2013; Scolari, 2014; Scolari

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1. It is one of the most popular series on *Antena 3* since 2013. Previously, for seven seasons, it was broadcasted on *Radio Televisión Española*, under the title *Amar en tiempos revueltos*.
2. *Atresmedia*: brand name of *Atresmedia Corporación de Medios de Comunicación*, S.A., a Spanish group that operates in several sectors, especially the audiovisual one. It has two main open generalist television channels, *Antena 3* and *La Sexta*. It owns the video on demand platform *ATRESplayer PREMIUM*.

et al., 2012; Scolari & Establés, 2017; Scolari & Ibrus, 2014) and distinguish four fundamental elements:

- The story must be spread across different media or platforms (TV series, books, videogames, etc.). It is crucial that each medium tells the story in the best possible way while providing new content, thus expanding the narrative universe.

- Spin-offs can be managed in different ways: top-down, i.e., by the creators or bottom-up, from the users.

- Transmedia narratives are based on the capacity of the narrative universe to be approached from any of the texts that compose it. Therefore, they have a certain autonomy.

- The two-types-of-development transmedia narrative theory distinguishes between strategy and tactics (Scolari et al., 2012). A strategic design implies that a series is devised from the initial scripts as a transmedia product.

Studies on the representation of love relationships between women in the audiovisual industry show that they tend to reproduce the cliché of the hot lesbian (Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009). That archetype of lesbian relationships has been more linked to "the construction of an object of desire intended to please a heterosexual male gaze than to offer a reference model on which lesbian women could feel identified" (Guerrero-Pico et al., 2017, p. 32).

Another cliché associated is that of the dead lesbian syndrome (Acosta, 2020; Guerrero-Pico et al., 2017; Guerrero-Pico et al., 2018; Tosenberger, 2008b; Waggoner, 2018), in which the consummation of an affective-amorous relationship between women is punished in many fictions with the violent death of one of the women in the couple (Ventura et al., 2019).

Other case studies on television fictions (Establés-Heras & Rivera Pinto, 2015; Guerrero-Pico, 2017; Jenkins, 2015; Rodrigues Lima & Cavalcanti, 2020; Tosenberger, 2008b) have analyzed how fandom has an impact on traditional representations, especially that which is highly involved in the creation of content and has an activist attitude that can claim the renewal of the series.

Fan communities of some audiovisual products are often characterized by defending and claiming a positive visibilization of different sexual tendencies, as well as normalizing characters that are not heteronormative through different transformative works, such as fanfics, fanarts or digital safe spaces to share conversations, impressions, and learning (Brennan, 2014, 2018; Condis, 2015; Masanet & Buckingham, 2015; Day & Christian, 2017; De Kosnik, 2016;

Pande & Moitra, 2017; Tosenberger, 2008b; De los Ríos Izquierdo, 2021a; García Muñoz, 2021). This is the case for fan communities where women are in the majority (De los Ríos Izquierdo, 2021b; Villa-Montoya et al., 2019; Brennan, 2014; Bacon-Smith, 1992).

Indeed, in recent years these vindicative discourses coming from fandoms have transcended their usual spaces. It can be seen that fictional series with non-heteronormative characters are gaining more prominence, both in traditional television networks and in video-on-demand platforms (Day & Christian, 2017; González de Garay et al., 2019; McNicholas Smith & Tyler, 2017; Ng, 2017; Raya et al., 2018; Symes, 2017).

#Luimelia as a strategic transmedia narrative

The choice of #Luimelia[3] as an object of study focuses on two fundamental pillars: it is a strategic transmedia narrative, with commercial purposes for the broadcaster, and it is an audiovisual product that provides a positive vision of affective-amorous relationships between women.

The series meets the four characteristics of a transmedia narrative, leveraged as a product of fandom culture by the culture industry itself as a new product. Indeed, it uses two different media: the *ATRESplayer PREMIUM* pay platform to broadcast the series, and Twitter and Instagram.

On the other hand, the creators promote continuous interaction between the series and the content published on social networks, seeking feedback from fans, amplifying certain plots; those plots that did not appear in the episodes broadcast on the digital platform are also included.

The story of Luisita and Amelia can be followed independently both on social networks and on *ATRESplayer PREMIUM*; this series –it can be said– has had a strategic design, as it was conceived from the initial scripts as a transmedia product.

It is a creation driven by a young audience that sympathizes with this plot of the original series. Through the shippeo created by the fans, the hashtag #Luimelia was created, which became a trending topic and later lead to transmedia expansion, with a series of its own. The shippeo refers to "the romantic involvement of two characters of a fictional work and/or celebrities. It can be relationships that are canonically established within the narrative universe; ambiguous relationships that are developing or relationships that are

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3. #Luimelia, in italics, refers specifically to the series; in round letters it refers to the transmedia strategy as a whole.

unlikely to happen. The typical shipping is the creation of a new word composed by the union of the characters' names" (Establés, 2020, p. 154). Therefore, the narrative universe of *Amar es para siempre* and *#Luimelia* is governed by the logics of transmedia narratives.

METHODOLOGY

As stated, the main objective of this research is to analyze the social media strategy that interacts with the broadcast of the series *#Luimelia* on *ATRESplayer PREMIUM*.

To observe the characteristics of #Luimelia, analyze its transmedia storytelling strategy in social networks, and measure its impact, we sought to answer the following questions:

- How did Luisita and Amelia go from being characters in a plot of *Amar es para siempre* to starring in a new transmedia product with great echo in social networks?

- Have fan actions influenced the rise of #Luimelia?

- Are there certain synergies between the social media strategy and the #Luimelia series?

- Do Luisita and Amelia's virtual Twitter profiles contribute to tell their story as a couple and build those characters by supporting the series?

- Does #Luimelia have any impact on overcoming prejudice around lesbians?

We chose a mixed methodology. The quantitative approach focuses on a Twitter sample, as it is the social network with the most advanced measurement possibilities, including very specific references to Instagram. The measurement is divided into two periods. The first focuses on the seventh season of *Amar es para siempre* (September 2018-August 2019). The second analyzes the first season of *#Luimelia* (from the promotional phase, on December 12, 2019, and during its broadcast on *ATRESplayer PREMIUM*, from February 14 to March 15).

Our measurement included one week after the last episode.

Indicator	Quantitative/qualitative nature
Followers number	Quantitative
Total number of tweets	Quantitative
Daily average number of authors	Quantitative
Number of total views	Quantitative
Total number of comments	Quantitative
20 most recurring hashtags	Quantitative/qualitative
Trending topics	Quantitative/qualitative
Keywords	Qualitative

Table 1. Analysis main indicators

Source: Own elaboration.

Commonly used indicators are selected to assess the success of a given Twitter strategy (table 1).

In both cases we accessed data from *Atresmedia*'s social media team. Their measurements were performed on a sample of 398,334 tweets, corresponding to the seventh season of *Amar es para siempre* (compared to 35,676 in the previous season) (https://www.instarsocial.com/), and on a second set of 263,901 tweets generated during the first season of *#Luimelia* (https://www.instarsocial.com/). Some indicators result from the network itself, but most are obtained with the Instar Social[4] tool. Monitoring reports for the series *Amar es para siempre*, *#Luimelia*, and documents from *Atresmedia*'s social media team have also been consulted.

The qualitative dimension of this research is given by three components:

- Information obtained from Twitter on recurring hashtags, trending topics, and keywords, referring to the analyzed creations.

- A brief *Atresmedia* style guide for publishing on the Twitter profiles of Luisita and Amelia, which defines the guidelines that characterize them both in language, expressiveness, and as users of that network.

- Three semi-structured interviews conducted with informed consent in July and August 2020 with two professionals knowledgeable about #Luimelia's transmedia strategy: Nuria Cano, Head of Production and Social Media

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4. A paid service provided by Kantar (a leading multinational social audience research company in Spain), it offers the actual number of views. It is not, therefore, a potential calculation.

Customer Service at Kantar (via email on July 27 and completed with new data and comments through the same mean on 28 and 29), and Diana Rojo and Borja González, creators and screenwriters of the #Luimelia series (interviewed in person and simultaneously on August 10). Our main purpose was to analyze whether the networking strategy has contributed to expand the universe of #Luimelia in the terms defined by the series' creators and screenwriters, with special focus on the characters' construction.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

These research results describe the impact of #Luimelia on social networks from different angles, such as the synergies between *Amar es para siempre* and #Luimelia, Twitter's role in the transmedia strategy of #Luimelia, with special focus in to its narrative value.

Amar es para siempre and *#Luimelia:* impact data and synergies

Regarding the impact of *#Luimelia* on the Twitter evolution of A*mar es para siempre*, we observe that the plot about the relationship between Luisita and Amelia in the series transforms the repercussion in social networks of this conventional fiction. Fans create the shippeo #Luimelia on Twitter and the social audience data skyrockets. The first tweet coining the aforementioned shippeo demands a happy ending between the two from the production company.

It suffices to look at the results of the previous season to corroborate the impact of the #Luimelia phenomenon. In 2017-2018, *Amar es para siempre* accumulated a total of 35,676 tweets, 60 authors on average per day, and 8,181,672 total views. These figures improved considerably in 2018-2019, reaching 398,334 tweets (+1,017%), 237 authors on average per day (+295%), and 83,955,420 total views (+926%) (Kantar, 2020). Likewise, the plot related to Luisita and Amelia reached a great projection, increasing by 1000% in Twitter comments compared to the previous season, as stated by Nuria Cano (personal communication, July 27, 2020).

Additional ratings (https://www.instarsocial. com/) allow us to ratify this success: of the total impressions in the 2018-2019 season, more than 40 million refer to this plot; "Luimelia" is the most used keyword on Twitter when talking about the series (51.6%), even above "amaresparasiempre" (41.3%); 15 of the 20 most used hashtags are related to this shippeo (among them we can highlight: #carolrovira; #paulausero ; #luisita; #amelia; #lgtb; #luimeliaorgullo or #luimeliaparasiempre), and fans create trending topics alluding to the couple almost daily, according to the plot of the corresponding episode (Kantar, 2020).

Porfavor @antena3com, @A3AmarSiempre y
@atresmediacom, como gran fan que soy de
amar es para siempre, os pido y os ruego que
@PaulaUsero (Luisita) y Amelia acaben juntas
PORFAVOR #Luimelia

23 Nov 2018 • 21:57

Image 1. First tweet with the hashtag referring to #Luimelia shippeo

Source: Twitter[5].

As Cano states, if we talk about social TV, perhaps the most striking result of the seventh season of *Amar es para siempre* is the almost 400,000 comments generated.

> *Amar es para siempre* is surprising because it breaks with all social TV trends. It is a daily series, in which the story unfolds slowly and the important or decisive moments take several chapters to happen. Moreover, it is broadcast in a time slot where its direct competition is one of the most commented daily programs (*Sálvame*) and its audience is a senior audience (70% of viewers are over 55 years old). The volume of comments is sustained throughout the day, although much of it is concentrated during the broadcast, as users continue to debate and generate content about the series throughout the day. In my opinion, it is a resounding social TV success, whether you analyze it in absolute or relative data (personal communication, July 27, 2020).

Explosion in social networks is accompanied by an increase in television audience: the audience share rises from 11.9% to 12.1% (+0.2%). Particularly noteworthy is the growth in the younger age groups, which are not normally the audience of these daily fictions: in the 13 to 15 it rises from 5.1% to 6.2% (+1.1%); from 16 to 24 years old, it goes from 7.9% to 8.6% (+0.7%), and from 25 to 29 years old, from 9.8% to 11.5% (+1.7%) (Kantar, 2020).

Narratively, it is appropriate to highlight the interaction between the original series and the transmedia strategy of *#Luimelia*. In the new series, its protagonists are fans of *Amar eternamente*, which also includes among its plots the love between two women: Lucía and Aurelia. In addition to picking up this plot (in the third chapter of the first season), the interest in this romance jumps to the Twitter profiles of Luisita and Amelia. The former expresses with special

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5. Due to ethical protocol, this image has been anonymized, to protect the user's identity on Twitter. This methodological practice is recommended in the already cited Guerrero-Picoand colleagues (2018).

vehemence her emotions while following the fictional series and sometimes adopts a critical stance (she reproaches the scriptwriters for censoring the sex scenes, for example). But above all, she coins the shippeo *#Lurelia* (coming from Lucia and Aurelia) and asks for a spin-off for this love story. Thus, #Lurelia is listed among the 20 most recurring hashtags (https://www.instarsocial.com/) in 17th position, with #jastalurelia in 15th position. Both terms are also registered among the keywords appearing on Twitter throughout the first season of *#Luimelia*. Therefore, a real situation is recreated, thus alluding to the genesis of the audiovisual fiction #Luimelia, which, as we know, originates from *Amar es para siempre*.

Continuing with the plot connection between these two creations, some characters from *Amar es para siempre* appear in #Luimelia, either in its chapters or interacting in the networks. Fake shares are used to give them a presence on Twitter and Instagram, thus introducing their friends and family to the story of Luisita and Amelia. The links between A*mar es para siempre* and *#Luimelia* exploited by the scriptwriters are reproduced in the social media strategy, amplifying a game that pays homage to the original creation and works as a lure for fans of both series.

#Luimelia as transmedia creation. Social media as a protagonist

The *#Luimelia* series begins airing on February 14, 2020 on the *ATRESplayer PREMIUM* video-on-demand pay-per-view platform. It is part of a transmedia environment completed with a detailed strategy on social networks (Twitter and Instagram), launched on December 12, 2019. Our research puts the focus on this second element, but contemplates the whole, highlighting the synergies between platforms, the narrative innovations, and the impact registered on a fandom enthusiastic about #Luimelia.

For Nuria Cano, "the spin-off of #Luimelia is at the forefront of social television (...). *Antena 3* has known how to monetize the interest in social networks of a plot, betting on creating content that its audience liked on Twitter, and derive it to its streaming platform" (personal communication, July 27, 2020).

#Luimelia: the series on ATREStresplayer PREMIUM

The first season of the romantic comedy *#Luimelia* on television consists of six chapters of approximately ten minutes, with a weekly broadcast. The periodicity largely defines the transmedia strategy, to generate synergies between the chapters broadcasted and the social networks, from Sunday to Sunday (except for the first one, on a Friday).

Unlike *Amar es para siempre*, which is in the seventies6, *#Luimelia* is set in 2020, and reveals a current plot and its protagonists have concerns of our own time. One of the challenges for the scriptwriters was to make this transfer in a credible way and without losing the idiosyncrasy of both characters. In the words of Rojo, creator and scriptwriter, on this occasion "they had the advantage of not being inhibited by the era" (personal communication, August 3, 2020). Freed from this limitation, they had to think very carefully about certain aspects to make the leap to the present day, taking care not to lose Luisita and Amelia in this process involving characterization, speech, sets, and lighting.

#Luimelia's creators say they felt free to tell their story without being pressured by the social media. Rojo declares: "We wrote the script without being subordinated to the platforms, but we have them *in mind* (...)". Borja González adds: "We know that there are plots that are enhanced on Twitter or Instagram" (personal communication, August 3, 2020).

Twitter's contribution to #Luimelia.

The reach on this network is remarkable (https://www.instarsocial.com/). *#Luimelia* accumulates a total of 10 trending topics on Twitter between February and March 2020, 263,901 tweets, more than 70,628,739 actual views, and a daily average of 507 authors (12 December 2019 - 22 March 2020). Its promotional content on @ATRESplayer social networks performs on average ten times better than the rest. Finally, *#Luimelia* holds the third position in the ranking of most commented programs (February and March 2020).

All of the above ratifies the viral effect of *#Luimelia* on Twitter, with an impact evident even before its broadcast. At the beginning of February 2020, it accumulated 14 million views while promoting (January and February 2020), and *#LuimeliaEstreno* was the trending topic in second position.

As for Twitter's narrative value, it expands the plot, so that the evolution of the sentimental relationship between Luisita and Amelia is kept alive in its publications beyond the weekly plots told in *ATRESplayer PREMIUM*. For the development in networks, it is decisive not to offer the chapters simultaneously. This makes it possible to move the narrative beyond the framework of the Sunday broadcast to other spaces where potential followers are (Twitter and Instagram). To this end, the profiles of the two protagonists are used, who have their own voice in

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6. It begins in the early years of Franco's regime. After 10 seasons, it reaches the moments prior to the democratic transition. Its predecessor, *Amar en tiempos revueltos,* occurs mainly during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the post-war period.

the networks, providing an element of closeness and activating the conversation with fans. This is a distinctive factor of *#Luimelia*'s social media strategy.

These progress at the same speed as the episodes, so that between one chapter and another there is an accompaniment. However, the shooting was recorded in a short lapse (between November and December 2019), a period in which the social media team took advantage to generate materials that they could use later (exploiting the sets, props, characterization, etc.) in the broadcast phase (February and March 2020).

The transmedia strategy of *#Luimelia* exploits the possibilities of the networks to generate feedback with the plot lines of each chapter. It starts from the analysis of the scripts to decide which elements of the plot can be enhanced and diversified. The narrative evolves in an integrated way in both universes, so that the series does not include everything that happens, and the networks are used to share certain exclusive content, recreate some details of the plot, qualify the characters and intensify communication with the fandom, where there is a clear presence of the LGTBI community.

#Luimelia's creators and screenwriters say they are aware of the possibilities of networks to extend plots. González states: "It's like when you cook with someone. If they add a touch of something you like, you use it the next time you make that dish. If something comes up in networks and we like it, we scriptwriters incorporate it. It's a very important synergy" (personal communication, August 3, 2020).

Focusing on Twitter's narrative function, we detected two fundamental features: the multimodal character of this network with the platform where the series *#Luimelia* is broadcasted and its contribution to build the main characters. We address them below.

Regarding the former, we highlight here some of the most representative elements used for this dialogue between the series and the networks on Twitter.

- The appearance of *Amar eternamente* in the script of *#Luimelia* and its networks. Its plot develops in parallel to that of the series, establishing a synchronization between the two: "We bet on that those who were watching *Amar es para siempre* would count on the interaction in networks of Luisita, who was following the fictional series", explains González (personal communication, August 3, 2020). Criticism on Twitter for censoring sex scenes is picked up in one of the chapters of *#Luimelia*, which ends with this scene: director says "cut" and at that moment Luisita's character rebels, demands that the action continues, and viewers can see how the two women make love. Thus, the closing is corrected and a wink is made to a narrative

element amplified in networks. Rojo states, "Luisita is very hooked on *Amar eternamente* and this has continued to this day, beyond the chapter focused on this plot" (personal communication, August 3, 2020).

- In connection with the above, a second interaction instrument is the controversy around the famous dead lesbian syndrome (Deshler, 2017; Guerrero-Pico et al., 2017, 2018), which refers to the dramatic ending of numerous series about lesbian relationships. This is launched in the networks by Luisita, who expresses her rejection of the traumatic outcome in *Los hombres de Paco* of the love story between a policewoman and her girlfriend, who dies in an ambush in her own arms (Gómez, 2020). This shows empathy with the LGTBI collective, implying a twist in the series' script.

- The series and the networks use a multimodal discourse to announce the second season of *#Luimelia*, giving visibility on Twitter to a character, Toñi, a neighbor of the protagonists. Her existence emerges at certain moments of the series, even though she never appears. Toñi becomes relevant in this network through a video, referring to the conversations between Luisita and Amelia that she listens to from her house. This humorous content recalls the term *manzanilla*, part of a word game that fans identified with the couple's first love encounter. Likewise, in this feedback between the platform and the networks, Luisita expresses on occasion on Twitter her displeasure with the neighbor's banging on her wall. The followers associate Toñi with a face that is only visible in the virtual environment.

- In this incorporation to Twitter of narrative elements absent in the first installment of the series, we highlight the tweets that appear in Amelia's profile, but written by Luisita, when she appropriates her partner's mobile phone. Fans detect this intrusion, because they recognize her impetuous style and this provokes numerous comments. The scriptwriters make the most of this anecdote discussed in the networks to incorporate it in the second season, in chapter 2. In another example, Luisita and Amelia kiss in the bathrooms of a well-known venue in Madrid. They are surprised by Luisita's sister, who supposedly records them and publishes the video on Twitter. These actions in networks provide verisimilitude to the story, activate fan participation, and highlight certain features of the characters.

The second fundamental characteristic of the network strategy is the concern for capturing the essence of the protagonists. The scriptwriters present two real women, with whom –beyond their sexual orientation– practically anyone

can empathize, which is reflected in their profiles. Rojo observes: "It is easy to relate with them, because they have their flaws and that is interesting to empathize with. They have a very everyday chemistry, so anyone in a relationship, whether lesbian or heterosexual, can identify with them" (personal communication, August 3, 2020).

Thus, Luisita and Amelia behave on networks as anyone would, sharing content from friends, interacting with celebrities they follow, showing their indignation or celebrating their joy, and even participating in real events.

An example are the publications of March 8, Working Women's Day, with both of them attending the big demonstration held in Madrid, or those of LGTBI Pride Day, when each of them poses with the multicolored flag.

According to Rojo, "Luisita is a very impulsive girl; she knows what she wants, but she screws up a lot, makes mistakes, and then has to ask for forgiveness" (personal communication, August 3, 2020). Referring to Amelia, González highlights as her most relevant traits to be "dreamy, sensitive, emotional, faithful (...). Dreamy and sensitive, above all" (personal communication, August 3, 2020). The virtual profiles perfectly reflect the personality of each one. A variety of resources, from the texts' wording to the use of certain visual elements, help to define the protagonists and bring them closer to their audience.

The networks' characters have their own style guide defined by the *Atresmedia* social media team, which describes the following aspects: the way they write, the type of content they publish, the elements with which they highlight their publications, and the expertise with which they handle the networks. This guide is a mirror of the prototypes represented by Luisita and Amelia. The former is clumsy in her management; she writes *jasta* because she does not know what a *hashtag* is, she writes without punctuation, reflecting an impulsive way of expressing herself, she publishes texts that are not very elaborate in which she says what she thinks without being shy, and uses few visual resources, except for the recurring emoticon of a croissant (thus revealing an aspect of her tastes) and some photos, sometimes shaky or poorly framed.

Amelia is an actress and uses her profiles to project herself professionally. She tries to give a sophisticated image. She takes care of her writing, selects content that she thinks should interest an artist, uses filters, and her interaction is not spontaneous. She shares music such as reggaeton, although in the series we discover that what she really likes is *copla*.

Image 2. Luisita's tweet exemplifying her use of Twitter
Source: Gómez (2020).

Image 3. Amelia's tweet exemplifying her use of Twitter
Source: Ledesma (2020).

Data from these profiles show their success after the first season, as they accumulated more than 29 thousand followers (Twitter and Instagram; February and March 2020) and more than eight million views in the publications generated in these accounts alone, as shown in table 2 (https://www.instarsocial.com; February and March 2020).

Followers	Twitter	Instagram	Total
@LuisitaGomezS	5,187	9,644	14,831
@AmeliaLedesmaOf	4,977	9,474	14,451
Total	10,164	19,118	29,282

Table 2. Twitter and Instagram followers of the series

Source: Own elaboration based on data from Instar Social
(https://www.instarsocial.com), March 2020.

To wrap up Twitter's role in the development of these characters, it is essential to point out how their lesbian condition is approached. It is an approach free of prejudice and far from the negative stereotypes normally linked to them and their relationships. The intention of the scriptwriters to present the love between two young girls without traumas is accurately projected in the networks: "We did not want a series where it was pointed out that because they are a lesbian couple, they are necessarily going to have certain problems. I think that the demand for representation from the LGTBI collective, what they ask for, above all, is to normalize their relationships", emphasizes Rojo (personal communication, August 3, 2020). González subscribes: "Our intention was to reflect the relationship between Luisita and Amelia in the best way. And for us, that was to tell this story just like we would tell any other" (personal communication, August 3, 2020).

This empathy is recognized by the LGTBI collective, as reflected in the most recurrent hashtags, where #luimeliagaypride appears in 19th place (https://www.instarsocial.com/). This reflects a trend registered in the seventh season of *Amar es para siempre*, in which #lgtb and #luimeliaorgullo appeared among the most frequent hashtags (https://www.instarsocial.com/).

The smooth communication with the LGTBI audience is evidenced in numerous publications, in which its members celebrate the relationship of this couple or express personal experiences related to their sexual orientation.

Nevertheless, *#Luimelia* presents a broader projection, connecting with an audience that sympathizes with the LGTBI cause but that, above all, is attracted by the evolution of a romantic story. Proof of this is that apart from the above mentioned, Instar Social's measurements do not detect on Twitter other terms related to this collective in the trending topics, the most recurrent tags or the keywords of the first season of #Luimelia.

Luisita and Amelia's posts on Twitter have, therefore, a positive impact on the media representation of lesbians, which distances these women and their relationships from retrograde prototypes and favors the empathy of a wider audience towards the LGTBI collective. There are plenty of examples among the tweets posted by the protagonists and the responses of their fans that support them. We highlight some that show the happiness of the couple and provide an image of each of them that is totally alien to the masculinized prototype that has traditionally accompanied lesbians[7].

CONCLUSIONS

In this research we have delved into the unique process that gives rise to *#Luimelia*. Its novelty lies in the context in which the fan phenomenon occurs around the couple formed by Luisita and Amelia, part of *Amar es para siempre*, a veteran and conventional daily broadcast series, aimed at a typical 55 years old viewer. However, and breaking with the trends of social TV, the relationship between the two women multiplies the impact on social networks of the fiction in its seventh season and generates a fandom that from the shippeo #Luimelia culminates in a new series. After detecting the success of the plot and boosting it, mainly on Twitter, *Atresmedia* channels its great popularity into a new transmedia creation in early 2020.

The relevant aspect of the new product is the effectiveness with which the different narrative resources are used, especially in the social media strategy. This is based on the virtual profiles of both protagonists, who from Twitter and Instagram generate new plots, expand certain plots, interact with other characters, interact with fans with special sensitivity for the LGTBI collective (Contreras

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7. Ledesma, A. [@AmeliaLedesmaOf]. (2020, marzo 7). *Estando a tu lado nada puede ir malamente* [With you by my side nothing can go wrong] [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/AmeliaLedesmaOf/status/1236390217227141125

Gómez, L. [@LuisitaGomezS]. (2020, agosto 8). *qué guapa mi novia* [My girlfriend is so beautiful] [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/LuisitaGomezS/status/1292131038798458883

Gómez, L. [@LuisitaGomezS]. (2020, marzo 2). *muy orgullosa de ti, te quiero* [So proud of you, I love you] [Tweet].

Twitter. https://twitter.com/LuisitaGomezS/status/1234591197882179584 Gómez, L. [@LuisitaGomezS]. (2020, septiembre 6). *amore te quiero* [Amore, I love you] [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/LuisitaGomezS/status/1302598970578001922

Ledesma, A. [@AmeliaLedesmaOf]. (2020, marzo 8). *#AmeliaLedesma #love #party* [Tweet]. Twitter.

Pulido et al., 2020) and make continuous winks about certain leitmotifs, including the fictional series *Amar eternamente* (in homage to *Amar es para siempre*).

The *#Luimelia* series and the social media environment feed off each other in an agile narrative, which enriches the story and also helps to profile the characters themselves. Both protagonists reflect their personalities in their use of Twitter and Instagram and they behave like any girl of their age, sharing special moments, expressing their joy, or showing indignation. Thus, we delve into the construction of these archetypes in the transmedia expansion, the most outstanding feature being the fact that they are two women, with whom a large part of the audience can see themselves identified in a positive way, avoiding clichés such as the dead lesbian syndrome (Cameron, 2018; Deshler, 2017; Guerrero-Pico et al., 2017; Guerrero-Pico et al., 2018; Tosenberger, 2008a; Waggoner, 2018).

The above is probably the main contribution of #Luimelia to the LGTBI collective, specifically to a media representation of lesbians that breaks with the negative prototypes surrounding their relationships. I.e., Luisita and Amelia situate their relationship within normality.

This ability to generate empathy makes #Luimelia a phenomenon of great magnitude, backed by a large and very active fandom community, with initiative and the ability to generate trending topics. Its high impact on social networks, from the stage in which it emerges from *Amar es para siempre,* is revalidated when premiering as a new series in *ATRESplayer PREMIUM*. Its repercussion continues to grow at the time of publishing this article, after its second season, in August-September 2020, and to broadcast two more seasons in 2021.

Future research lines could investigate two fundamental aspects. The first refers to the transmedia strategy of the second season, focused on developing multimodal discourses in social networks. The second focuses on fandoms, especially on the actions developed as a result of the positive representation of love relationships between LGBTI characters in fiction series, as discussed in the theoretical framework.

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