

From digital cinema to cloud computing in the film consumption of young Ecuadorians

Del cine digital al *cloud computing* en el consumo cinematográfico de jóvenes ecuatorianos

Do cinema digital à *cloud computing* no consumo cinematográfico de jovens equatorianos

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on analysing how changes in cinematography since the advent of digital cinema have led to new forms of reception and appreciation of works of art by young people. To achieve this, a mixed methods analysis was used, which consisted of closed structured surveys and semi-structured interviews with those responsible for movie theatres in Quito. The results show that young people watch a considerable number of films, mostly of Hollywood origin, alone and at home. This indicates that young people are more focused on entertainment than on the cultural value of cinema, and they show a poor appreciation and identification with national cinema.

Keywords: seventh art; virtual cinema; movie perceptions; movie theatres; cultural policies; artistic value.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación se centra en analizar cómo los cambios en la cinematografía, desde el advenimiento del cine digital, han llevado a nuevas formas de recepción y apreciación de las obras de arte por parte de los jóvenes. Para ello, se utilizó una metodología de análisis mixto, con encuestas estructuradas cerradas y entrevistas semiestructuradas con los responsables de las salas de cine en Quito. Los resultados muestran que los jóvenes visualizan una cantidad considerable de películas, en su mayoría de origen hollywoodense, solos y en casa. Los jóvenes están más centrados en el entretenimiento que en el valor cultural del cine, y muestran una baja apreciación e identificación con el cine nacional.

Palabras clave: séptimo arte; cine virtual; percepciones cinematográficas; salas de cine; políticas culturales; valor artístico.

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa enfoca-se na análise de como as mudanças na cinematografia desde o advento do cinema digital levaram a novas formas de recepção e valorização das obras de arte pelos jovens. Para tanto, utilizou-se uma metodologia de análise mista, com questionários estruturados fechados e entrevistas semiestruturadas com os responsáveis de cinemas em Quito. Os resultados mostram que os jovens visualizam uma quantidade considerável de filmes, principalmente de origem hollywoodiana, sozinhos e em casa. Os jovens estão mais focados em entretenimento do que no valor cultural do cinema, e mostram baixa apreciação e identificação com o cinema nacional.

Palavras-chave: sétima arte; cinema virtual; percepções cinematográficas; cinemas; políticas culturais; valor artístico.

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INTRODUCTION

The different transformations that cinema has undergone over time have placed it at the center of numerous debates regarding its status as the seventh art, due to the incorporation of diverse technological advances that make it possible to recognize the following stages: pre-cinema, silent cinema, sound cinema, audio-visual cinema, expanded cinema, and cinema of simulation (Amorós, 2015; Gainza & Bongers 2018).

With the advent of digital cinema at the beginning of the seventies, some theorists associated the end of the celluloid with the death of the seventh art, while others believed that it was more alive than ever, alluding to how such a transformation made it possible to safeguard the cinematographic heritage against the *vinegar syndrome* of the cellulose acetate film (Cherchi, 2001), as well as to the possibility of renewing its language in a quest for survival in the face of changes in the market (such as a decrease in movie theatre attendance).

Regardless of the position adopted in this debate, it can be said that digital cinema, along with the emergence of VHS and later DVD, has contributed to the democratization of film production and a change in the viewer's habits, since consumption of films was no longer limited to the dark movie theatre. Video became the predominant medium for film viewing, which increased considerably despite the decrease in cinema attendance (Fischer, 2008), because it facilitated access to marginal cinematographies to both the general public and to cinephiles, despite Hollywood's hegemony (García, 2008).

Thus, a new cinephilia emerges that is no longer consistent with the classic way of viewing and talking about films (De Baecque, 2006), where visualization only took place in movie theatres by a multitude that participated in a social ritual of collective memory (Virno, 2003).

Within this context, in the nineties, exhibitors launched the multi-screening phenomenon, a business strategy through which, while the number of screens increased worldwide, those screens were concentrated within large cinematographic complexes, with the consequent closure of independent movie theatres. These megaplexes were characterized by an increase in the quality of infrastructure and by a technological commitment that could once again attract spectators to the movie theatre; in addition to diversifying the offer of recreational activities to include events designed for the whole family that invited visitors to stay longer at the site (Acland, 2003).

These complexes were located mainly in the largest cities, which made it very difficult for the inhabitants of smaller towns to have that filmic experience (García & Maestro, 2015). Subsequently, spectators were transformed into audiences understood as merchandise. The priority was the consumption of the film and not the relation to it (Valencia & Beltrán, 2016). This entailed a significant increase in the ticket price, which led to box office incomes becoming more important than the film itself and content being relegated to form. Additionally, entertainment was prioritized over the artistic and cultural condition, i.e., cinema was understood as a visual tidbit where the viewer was stripped from his or her ability to think (Ramonet, 2000). These elements still predominate nowadays.

This period was also marked by the emergence of a gap between production and exhibition interests, with the existence of two models: a) the continental model dominated by the United States and driven by an economic vision, in which Hollywood's strategy was to focus on being certain about market success rather than supporting and encouraging creativity (Brookey & Zhang, 2018); and b) the Latin-American model (all of the remaining cinematographies) which was characterized by the search for the cultural value of film (Cucco & Richeri, 2011).

This situation encouraged the implementation of cultural, regulatory, and promotional policies dedicated to safeguarding national cinematographies that did not fit within the market logic imposed by distributors-exhibitors and Hollywood cinema.

According to Néstor García Canclini's theory (2000) on the implementation of cultural policies in times of globalization, there are four strategic areas to be considered:

1. Cultural policies developed in conjunction with citizens, where best practices aimed at bringing culture closer to society must be evaluated in order to promote access to culture, considering both the creation and reception of the work of art. This strategy is presently the least developed; in this regard, the MERCOSUR Cultural Network is worth mentioning, with its Specialized Meeting of Cinematographic and Audiovisual Authorities occurring since 2004 and its Audiovisual Observatory (Getino, 2007).
2. Expansion of cultural heritage with the intervention of private intermediaries. International co-

production became the axis of action in the search for and creation of a transnational space (Morley & Robins, 1995). The best programmes include: a) within Europe, Eurimages (1989), made up of 37 European countries and Canada, and MEDIA (1991), in the frame of the Creative Europe Programme since 2014, and b) for Ibero-America, the Conference of Ibero-American Audio-visual and Cinematographic Authorities (1989), and Ibermedia (1997), with a total of 17 countries, including Ecuador as of 2007 (Izquierdo, 2010).

3. Obligation of the State to protect culture as a social good and to guarantee its transmission across generations (Munoz-Darde, 2013), which is why the state must act as regulator and mediator of the different policies aimed at promoting the cultural value of art as opposed to its reductionism to mere merchandise. All of those actions carried out by the different States in terms of legislation are included, such as the Law for the Promotion of Ecuadorian National Cinema approved in 2006 or the Cinema Communication adopted by the European Commission (2013), which focuses on establishing a common framework for the set of laws fostered by European countries (Díaz-González, 2016).
4. Creation of regional institutions that mediate between the different national and transnational efforts seeking commercial integration and intercultural cooperation, i.e., supranational bodies and social entities. Sub-national policies approved by the regions of different countries are worth highlighting: a) In USA there were approximately 40 in 2010, and b) until 2014, there were 53 or 41 in Europe, according to KORDA and Cine-Regio, respectively, with Germany and France at the forefront (González, 2014).

It is also important to mention the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, UNESCO (2005), which focuses on generating policies that are integrated within the four strategies mentioned above and which, in its first follow-up report and based on the policies implemented by the different member States, establishes the following goals: i) support sustainable systems of governance for culture; ii) achieve a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and increase the mobility of artists and cultural

professionals; iii) integrate culture in sustainable development frameworks; and iv) promote human rights and fundamental freedoms (UNESCO, 2015).

In the current context, while approved measures have made it possible to increase the number of independent productions carried out each year (mainly supported by fiscal aid, reimbursements, or subsidies), they have not managed to close the existing gaps in exhibition, since Hollywood films continue to dominate the billboards of the main commercial cinemas. This could be named the *to be continued* period, where programs mostly include sagas (prequels/sequels) or remakes based on pre-existing intellectual content (books or comics) (McClintock, 2016).

Additionally, OTT (over-the-top) audio-visual platforms have been fully consolidated. While YouTube was a precursor, Netflix has been instrumental in modifying the environment, becoming the first service to generate its own content, thus unifying production, distribution, and exhibition. This is a virtual cinema mostly visualized through the virtuality of the network or cloud computing, a computer model that allows data and applications to be stored on computer servers belonging to companies such as Google, IBM, Microsoft, or Amazon (Joyanes, 2010).

The decision to migrate to the cloud was motivated by the visualization problems suffered during the first years of life of these platforms, due to their unexpected success and to the high demand of connected users. An example of this was Netflix's migration to the Amazon cloud, which began in 2008 and ended in 2016, an action that improved access to data reliably, securely, and quickly with minimum management effort. However, far from democratizing the exhibition of films, Hollywood content continued to be prioritized over local content. This has caused a shift in current global debates, with cultural policy-makers trying to regulate these new actors.

The European Commission amended Directive 2010/13/UE in mid-2016 seeking to harmonize rules and unify standards, emphasizing the establishment of a 30% share of European content in the catalogues of these platforms and enhanced visibility on homepages with trailers or indication of the origin of the films (Lobato, 2019), as well as including the possibility for different countries to establish contribution methods for their cinematographies. In other countries, regulations were aimed instead at net neutrality; the best among them included a) The Neutrality Law approved by Chile in 2010; b) the inclusion of neutrality in article 9 of the

Civil Framework for the Internet in Brazil in 2014; c) Federal Law of Telecommunications and Broadcasting in Mexico, 2014, where sanctions have not yet been implemented; d) The Digital Argentine Law, 2014, which still does not impose effective sanctions (Fontanals, 2017); and e) The Open Internet Order of 2015 in the USA, which was replaced on December 14, 2017, by Chairman Pai's draft order to restore Internet freedom and eliminate heavy-handed Internet regulations (Federal Communications Commission FCC, 2017).

Finally, another possible alternative is the promotion of local OTTs for each of the countries willing to compete with these new platforms, seeking to strengthen their own cinematographies. In this sense, the creation of MUBI stands out, acclaimed by critics for using independent film programming strategies and supporting films with high cultural value (Smits & Nikdel, 2018), and Qubit.tv, which competes with Netflix by incorporating classic Hollywood cinema and an increased supply of motion pictures from other countries, including Latin-American and Asian movies. Following this preamble, questions that arise are as follows: What effects does this new reality have on the cinematographic consumption habits of young Ecuadorians? What are the perceptions of those in charge of the country's movie theatres? Do young people identify with national cinema or not? Why?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research paper is based on mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, with data collected using semi-structured interviews and closed structured surveys in Quito, Ecuador, the city with the longest cinematographic trajectory in the country, where the oldest movie theatres are located, and which concentrates the largest number of independent and commercial cinemas, as well as of spectators from different regions, educational levels, and social classes.

The data will help determine the variables that influence the cinematographic consumption habits of young Ecuadorian people aged 18 to 24 years old and will be compared with the perceptions of those in charge of commercial as well as independent movie theatres.

QUALITATIVE SAMPLE: INTERVIEWS

With a semi-structured questionnaire of 22 questions, information was collected from six key informants: three from commercial cinemas (Multicines, Cineplex,

and Supercines), and three from independent cinemas (Flasco Cine, Alfredo Pareja —Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana—, and Ocho y Medio).

The procedure for obtaining empirical information was carried out through: i) tracking the units of analysis that appeared in the responses of interviewees, ii) coding the results, and iii) building an analysis matrix that relates the resulting codes (thematic units, themes, and sub-themes).

QUANTITATIVE SAMPLE: SURVEYS

The collection of empirical data was carried out with an 18-24-year-old population, as this is the age group with the highest consumption and that is presently conditioning (and will be in the future) the forms of cinematographic visualization. For this purpose, a structured survey was designed with 40 close-ended questions consisting of three sections: a) demographic and socio-economic data, b) consumption habits, and c) popularity of the films.

A total of 402 surveys were collected, 395 of which were considered valid. The surveys were conducted by trained surveyors in areas adjacent to parks, shopping malls, and places most frequented by the target population.

To deepen the analysis of the statistical data, the following tools were used: a) contingency tables, b) the Chi-square test (χ^2), c) the Pearson correlation coefficient (r), and d) the conditional probabilities, $P(A|B)$, for events dependent on the Chi-square test.

RESULTS

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONSUMPTION HABITS

According to the perceptions of local exhibitors, the panorama of cinema attendance in the country is encouraging: three movie theatres claimed that cinema consumption has not decreased in recent years and two of them referred to "change" regarding the use of new technologies in movie viewing. Alternatively, two commercial cinemas claim that there has been an increase in consumption generated by the insertion of a film culture in many cities that had not previously existed.

However, despite the exhibitors' expectations of growth, the surveys applied to young people offered a different perspective on the subject. Although young people rate their taste for cinema as good (44.6%) or very good (37.5%), with a viewing frequency of once a week, the frequency of going to the cinema is mostly

monthly or every 15 days according to 38.5% and 29.1%, respectively, of the surveyed young people.

Considering the average number of films viewed per year (56.18) in relation to the monthly cinema attendance frequency, only 21% of films would be viewed in this space. For this reason, cinema consumption occurs primarily at home (82%) followed by viewings in commercial cinemas (13.4%) and independent cinemas (2.5%).

In all cases, most of the audience is composed of adults. However, Multicines and Cineplexes are specifically family oriented; consequently, young people can be considered as frequent and recurrent attendees (Supercines do not mention family directly). With respect to independent cinemas, although young people are scarcely represented among their attendees, they do recognize the influx of specific audiences, intimately linked to the working vision of each space. This is evidenced by Ocho y Medio and FLACSO Cine, with a majority specialized audience from —or educated in— academic, artistic and cultural spaces.

In commercial cinemas, the generalized habit of attending with another person(s) is significant among users. This coincides with the responses of young people, who said they are more likely to attend this space as a couple or with friends, while viewing at home occurs alone or with family. The perception of exhibitors that attending independent cinemas should be done with company is not an indispensable condition of watching good cinema, including the case of the Alfredo Pareja movie theatre, where unaccompanied attendance is the trend.

POPULARITY OF FILMS

As the results reveal, there are no studies of cinematographic consumption habits of people attending movie theatres in Ecuador, and according to the six interviewees, it is the programming that directly influences the audiences, not vice versa.

At Multicines, Supercines and Cineplex, the main priority is supply and demand. When it comes to defining spaces, movie running times, and time slots, the former two theatres emphasized the need to find a balance between what distributors offer and what the public demands. The latter emphasized commercial value, where the only thing that matters is box office figures.

In the case of independent cinemas, their characteristics, conventions, and mission make them spaces of a distinctive intimacy, where praxis allows for the recognition of the public's taste but, similar to

commercial cinemas, they lack studies for assessing the interests and needs of the local population.

In commercial cinemas, the programming methodology is homogeneous: they adopt the calendar of premieres offered by Hollywood. Conversely, Ocho y Medio schedules according to the needs of the working team; FLACSO Cine is dependent on the projects they promote together with CNCine and other related institutions, while the Alfredo Pareja movie theatre screens mostly upon request of entities such as embassies and cultural collectives.

Therefore, if the mission is to respond to the mercantile dictates of supply-demand, then highly commercial films are exhibited; if the mission is to maintain the space's identity (Ocho y Medio); to create audiences (FLACSO Cine); and to preserve, educate, or express the filmic memory (Alfredo Pareja), then we realize that such matters are not restricted to independent cinema but also reflect specific paths followed for specific movie theatres, as well as opportunities for concrete actions, such as workshops.

In the field of independent cinemas, cinematographic appreciation and education are dominant factors, while in commercial cinemas, the factors that have a positive impact are external to the filmic product: price promotions, publicity, comfort, and services. In contrast, young Ecuadorians ultimately select cinemas based on price/offers and choose entertainment as the primary reason for attending the cinema, while distraction, evasion, or watching a premiere were mentioned as other factors influencing film consumption.

With respect to the media used for watching films, young people mainly choose subscription TV (Netflix type) (31.9%), cable TV (28.6%) and Internet pages (16.5%), while movie theatres stand out as secondary and tertiary media, with 30.9% and 33.4% respectively.

The Chi-square test, $\chi^2(5, N=395)=9.608, p<.05$, makes it possible to reject the H_0 of independence between gender and the main medium for viewing films, where the probability of selecting subscription TV and cable TV is greater for the female group, as opposed to the male group, which prefers Internet sites and movie theatres. Therefore, film consumption in movie theatres is higher among men, with women consuming more movies in the home environment (see table 1).

If we look at the factors that contributed to making certain films have longer runs in the theatres, action, terror and fiction genres (superheroes and comics in particular) have the highest popularity in commercial

		Gender			
		Male (M)		Female (F)	
		f_i	% [P(A/M)]	f_i	% [P(A/F)]
Media to visualize films (A)	National TV	10	71	4	29
	Cable TV	50	44	63	56
	Subscription TV	60	48	66	52
	DVD / Blu-ray	18	46	21	54
	Movie theatre	23	61	15	39
	Internet pages	40	62	25	38

Table 1. Conditional probability between media used to screen films and gender

Source: Authors.

		Characteristics	Main %	Secondary %	Tertiary %
Factors for watching the film	Comments Social networks		7.1	7.3	8.6
	Synopsis		20.3	13.4	12.4
	Posters		2.0	3.5	2.8
	Origin		3.5	3.3	2.8
	Genre		13.9	16.7	11.9
	Director		6.8	8.1	3.8
	Cast		4.8	8.4	6.8
	Media advertising		5.3	5.1	7.8
	Reviews		1.0	5.3	7.6
	Trailer/advance		27.1	17.7	17.7
	Recommendation		8.1	11.1	17.7
Aspects to value a film	Edition		7.3	6.8	7.8
	Special effects		32.7	15.7	14.7
	Set		3.8	7.1	7.3
	Dialogues		7.1	12.7	8.6
	Photography		8.1	7.6	6.6
	Sound		5.3	19.0	11.9
	Storyline		26.3	16.5	18.0
	Performance		9.4	14.7	24.8
Other		0	0	0.3	

Table 2. Factors and aspects in watching and valuing films by young respondents

Source: Authors.

		Main media	First genre	Main aspect
Main media	Pearson Correlation	1	0.066	0.155*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.189	0.023
	N	395	395	395
First genre	Pearson Correlation	0.066	1	0.138**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.189		0.066
	N	395	395	395
Main aspect	Pearson Correlation	0.155*	0.138**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.023	0.006	
	N	395	395	395

Table 3. Correlation between media, genre, and main aspect for watching movies

Note. * Correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors.

cinemas. Among young people, this coincides with their first two options selected, but the third genre is surpassed by comedy.

According to Superpines, another relevant factor is that young audiences tend to prefer stories that are already known, in particular, prequels and sequels, an idea reaffirmed by the head of the Ocho y Medio movie theatre. However, according to young people themselves, the types of films they prefer to see, in descending order, are: original script, literary adaptation, prequel/sequel, other adaptations, and remake.

With respect to the interviews, the film genre seems to be the only determining factor in the popularity of the billboard, but, as shown in table 2, when young people were asked about it, they placed genre in third place, surpassed by trailer/advance and movie synopsis. As for the aspects most valued in films, we see special effects and storyline, with the latter in second place of the three options selected.

It is important to emphasize here that there is a correlation between the medium for watching films and the main aspects valued in the film. Since young people choose subscription TV and cable TV as their preferred choice for viewing, they are more likely to value special effects, while those who choose cinema or websites are likely to value the storyline (see table 3). This contrasts with the perception of those who run

movie theatres; for them, it is the story that prevails and not the special effects when deciding which films to screen.

Similarly, there is a correlation between film genre and the main valued aspect in a film, as those who chose terror and science fiction were more likely to select special effects as their first choice, while storyline tended to be more important for those who selected comedy and other genres.

NATIONAL CINEMA PERSPECTIVE

Finally, with regard to national cinema visualization, evaluation, and identification, it is worth noting that although the majority of young people claimed to have seen certain national production films (72%), this visualization did not occur in the last year (with 70% responding negatively), and an average of 4% of national films being seen in the last five years.

In fact, most films consumed are from Hollywood (77%), followed by independent cinema (21%), predominantly from Latin America or Europe and, finally, national films (2%).

The Chi-square test $\chi^2(12, N=395)=15,741, p<0.05$, makes it possible to reject the H_0 of independence between young people's age and the type of films they consume the most, demonstrating that consumption depends on age. To show this relation, young people

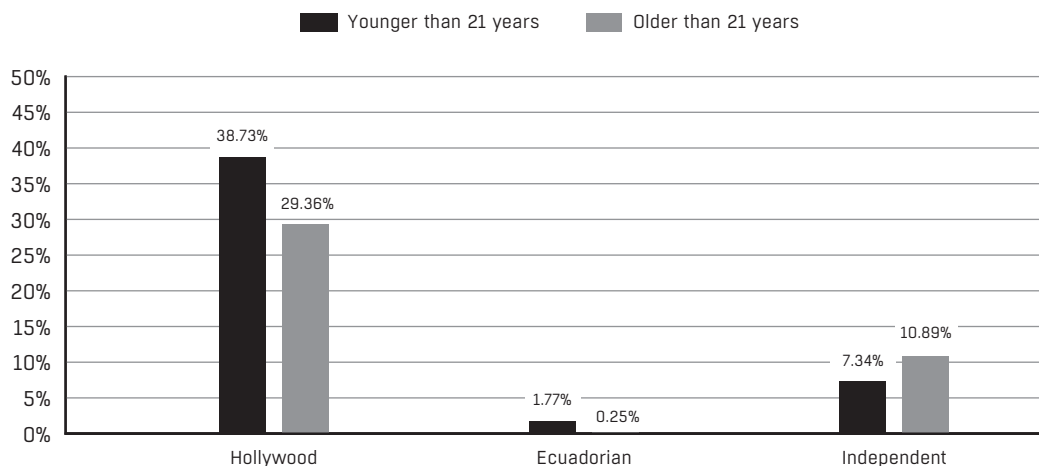


Figure 1. Relation between age and films consumed by young respondents, 2017

Source: Authors.

were grouped by age as younger or older than 21 years; see figure 1. We see that young people from the first group consume more Hollywood cinema than those of the second group, who watch a higher percentage of independent cinema. The least selected option was Ecuadorian cinema.

Additionally, the higher the academic background, the greater the consumption of national cinema. Those who are currently studying at the university level have seen more nationally produced cinema than those who are not currently studying. This reflects the importance of education in terms of consumption of the variety of films that do not come exclusively from Hollywood.

In regards to the responses of those responsible for movie theatres, four respondents catalogued the popularity of national cinema as low, one did not mention the subject, and only FLACSO Cine, sponsored directly by CNCine, placed it at an average level.

According to Supercines and Cineplex, the factor that explains this situation is related to the fact that national cinema does not take into account international programming, so, on repeated occasions, the premiere of local productions coincides with that of highly anticipated films, with the low box office revenue becoming a reason for why it is difficult for national cinema to remain in the movie theatres for long periods of time. That being said, the factors that have a positive impact on the median popularity of Ecuadorian cinema are curiosity about national reality and identification with the characters, rather than with the film itself.

As a result, six out of ten young people say they do

not identify with national cinema, mainly because of the lack of special resources/effects, the tragic storylines, and the excess of social realism, with poor visual quality tied for second place. The selection of favorite genres defines the precise reason why young people do not identify with national cinema. Young people who chose action and terror mostly respond that they do not identify with national cinema because of limited resources and poor visual quality, while those who choose comedy cited recurring themes and tragic storylines.

In contrast, four out of ten young people say they relate to issues of national reality (28.4%), to spaces or locations in the country (29.6%) or to the use of local scripts or dialogues (20.8%). All these factors determine that the best rated films are those from Hollywood, followed by independent films and finally Ecuadorian cinema.

Finally, the interviewees reflected on the future of cinema in Ecuador. Those reflections included an evaluation offered by independent cinemas, from which young people are almost entirely absent. As a result, an educational intervention that targets this sector of the population is required. This does not refer to levels of school education per se, but rather to education in the form of guarantees of access for young Ecuadorians to opportunities to increase their general and cinematographic culture. In this regard, figure 2 depicts that neither students from high school nor university students are identified with Ecuadorian cinema.

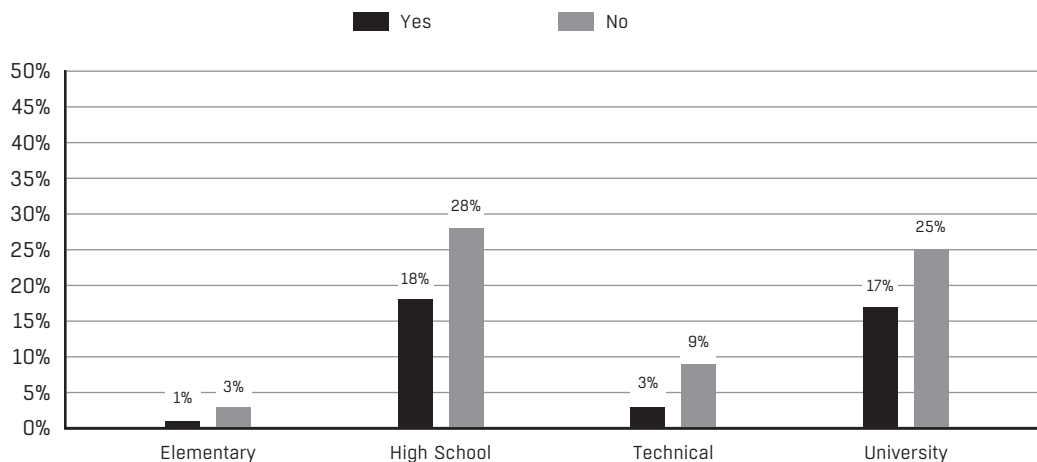


Figure 2. Level of education and identification with Ecuadorian cinema

Source: Authors.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results obtained, it can be affirmed that the seventh art has entered a new stage, one that can be called virtual cinema, where young people's consumption is mostly carried out virtually through the network or cloud computing on Netflix type OTT platforms. This shift is directly related to the rise of these platforms over the last two years, since a study conducted in 2015 for CNCine in Ecuador found that these platforms were in the last position on their list (Marketing Consulting, 2015).

It is the virtualization of the multitude turned into a neo-spectator who, accustomed to a permanent connection to the net, does not miss attending movie theatres very much (García, 2007). An e-cinema blurs the established boundaries between production and exhibition, giving the spectator the ability to choose which films to visualize (Marín, 2016) without the traditional mediation of distribution. This, in turn, gives way to other digital intermediation agents and marks the beginning of a new crisis in the cultural film industry.

All these events have made it possible for viewers to watch two types of films: a) those that demand a high financial investment, leading to the availability of films with special effects – entertaining films but lacking in originality, that nonetheless have conquered the big screen, and b) those that have been produced with more creative freedom, where unique stories, along with cultural and intellectual values, prevail over audiovisual effects, and that have been relegated to home

viewing. This results from the fact that independent filmmakers are allowed to practice their craft on these platforms, as was the case with television, where they were given total creative freedom to produce their own art films, as opposed to films lacking artistic merit, defined by the economic concerns of Hollywood's major production companies.

However, those responsible for movie theatres in Quito do not seem to be aware of this dilemma. By in large, they take for granted the "old" strategy of programming film premieres, sagas or remakes from Hollywood, favoring entertainment over cultural value, and peddling offers (in terms of price or food combos) as a sure-fire formula for attracting young people to the cinema.

This is evidenced by their lack of interest in understanding the relationship between audiences and films, as they do not conduct their own audience studies and focus only on box office totals. In doing so the spectator is reduced to merchandise (Valencia & Beltrán, 2016), a scenario in which, due to the new platforms and the creation of participation tools for rating and recommendation, users occupy a privileged position.

Similarly, cultural policies implemented thus far are insufficient. Although the number of productions carried out has increased, thanks to international cooperation agreements focused on the co-production of independent films, young people still do not identify with the Ecuadorian cinema production and give it only an 'acceptable' assessment. This also relates to the lack of studies on the preferences of young Ecuadorians by those responsible for producing

national films. Ultimately, these films lack access to the commercial exhibition circuits, they are given scant attention with respect to promotion and marketing, and there is a lack of educated audiences prepared to appreciate a cinematic work of art. As this research shows, it is older and better educated young people who are most likely to consume a cinema different from that from Hollywood.

These results are in line with the consumption dynamics of young people in other parts of the world, as shown by some of the latest studies carried out in Europe (Soto-Sanfiel, Villegas-Simón, & Angulo-Brunet, 2018) or even in Ambato-Ecuador (Jiménez-Sánchez, Medina, Martínez, & Lavín, 2018), and which are related to globalization and transnationalization that lead to homogenizing tastes, forms of processing, and modes of visualization.

We are faced with a new reality as cinema becomes more individual than collective and the net gradually replaces the traditional exhibition spaces, which were not only understood as meeting places for the multitude but also as constructors of the social imaginary through the necessary immobilization of the audience cinemas (Zunzunegui, 2010).

Thus, a new debate arises where it can be affirmed that the paratextual experience of the public (Liandrat-Guigues & Leutrat, 2003) disappears in front of the new screens and, with it, the capacity for critical reflection on the image that made it possible to both entertain and inculcate ideas, conducts, and values as well as provoke reflections, behaviors, and emotions (Pereira, 2005). In short, the progressive substitution of the social by the individual imaginary puts into serious doubt the innate quality of the seventh art to provoke critical judgement by means of the transmission of values (Ríos & Escalera, 2014).

This research upholds the importance of recovering the movie theatre as physical space for movie viewing with strategies such as a) the deceleration of price increases (Fernández, 1998); b) the distribution of state funds to encourage promotion, distribution, and exhibition; and c) the need to build a national film industry with strong investment in the development of specialized labor, infrastructure, and a supply of audio-visual services (González, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

An essential part of the cinema depends, to a large extent, on actions aimed at recovering the movie theatre

as a meeting place for the spectator of a film, where cultural values prevail over commercial values. For this purpose, it is necessary that both the production and the cinematographic exhibition perform reception, and not audience, studies in order to appreciate social trends and respond to the demands of the public, offering more suitable products that are over and above their personal wishes or commercial interests.

In relation to this study, young people demand original films (mainly action, terror, or comedy), where, in addition to an investment in special effects and audio-visual resources, the storyline becomes one of the key elements.

In addition, cultural strategies and policies focused on such recovery must be jointly implemented, where State intervention becomes essential. These include:

1. Generate policies aimed at online film distribution and exhibition platforms, where, in addition to setting a quota for the incorporation of national content in their catalogues, it is necessary a) to establish the requirement to show their cinematographic productions first in traditional cinemas, recovering the linear route for the exploitation of films, and b) that a percentage of the payment for the subscription of Ecuadorian users is used to fund and promote national cinema (production-exhibition).
2. Reducing the price of tickets to make movie theatres more competitive vis-à-vis the new forms of visualization existing in the market. To this end, budget allocations for the promotion of cinema must be increased, safeguarding exhibition to the same extent as film production by modifying the distribution of these funds to allow movie theatres to set lower entry prices that can attract audiences once again.
3. Movie theatres must program a greater number of national and independent films in addition to alternating premieres with the rerun of old films with high cultural and artistic interest. Taking South Korea's success as an example, it is recommended to establish a screen quota system that guarantees the projection of local productions on different screens for a minimum number of days per year. This measure seeks to protect the national cultural identity from the prevailing North American cultural standardization.

4. Developing media and film literacy programs focused on the education of audiences. Initiatives that have been implemented in Europe (Rengifo, 2018) could be taken as a model. A solution is to include cinema as a pedagogical strategy in educational institutions beginning in infancy, both inside and outside the classroom, generating spaces for information and reflection that allow for the elimination of prejudices about national cinema before they are created, encouraging cinema attendance through allowing experimentation from an early age, and fostering critical capacity, so that in the future they are able to demand a higher quality of film-programming in movie theatres.
5. Ensuring universal access to cinema for all citizens by creating independent exhibition networks in each city through collaborations between cultural and educational institutions.

In relation to the last two recommendations, associative models of citizen participation could be created, unrelated to the State, as a community social response that allows (with donations, cooperatives and/

or collaborations) to rescue threatened movie theatres in order to: a) recover the social ritual of cinema attendance, and b) reconvert them into spaces of cultural diffusion, i.e. multipurpose halls where programming is based on the community, alternating conventional and independent films with specialized workshops, concerts, sports events, theatre performances, parties, etc.

In this sense, it is worth highlighting the citizens' initiatives in Spain that imported the North American model of Community Supported Cinemas (Heredero & Reyes, 2018) and the proposals of the Art House Convergence group created in 2008 (Sinwell, 2018). This is a model that promotes culture in conjunction with educational institutions, the premise of which is based on the following: if it has been demonstrated that cinema is not born to be viewed exclusively in the movie theatre, these should not be devoted solely to showing films.

Finally, all these proposals can be extrapolated to the Latin American context, bearing in mind that there is a concordance between the dynamics of young people's consumption, and they should be debated and approved in a transnational community network, just as the countries belonging to the European Union do.

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