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Universidad Rey Juan Carlos

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Communication & Society

ISSN 0214-0039

E ISSN 2386-7876

www.communication-society.com

2025 – Vol. 38 (2)

pp. 427-428

How to cite this book review:

Torres, L.J. (2025). La competitividad del ecosistema audiovisual español (Bibliography. Book review). *Communication & Society*, 38(2), 427-428.

<https://doi.org/10.15581/003.38.2.014>

Bibliography. Book review

La competitividad del ecosistema audiovisual español

José María Álvarez-Monzoncillo

McGraw-Hill Interamericana, 2024, 104 pp.

9788410066564

In the last decade, the Spanish audiovisual sector has undergone an unprecedented transformation, driven by streaming platforms and technological advancement. José María Álvarez-Monzoncillo, Professor of Audiovisual Communication at Rey Juan Carlos University, provides in his book an in-depth and up-to-date analysis of this phenomenon.

The book, structured in eight chapters, examines the key factors that have strengthened the Spanish audiovisual ecosystem. The methodology combines official data, surveys of 188 international opinion leaders, and interviews with Netflix providers, offering a broad and comparative view of the sector.

Álvarez-Monzoncillo explores how the emergence of streaming platforms has transformed the audiovisual landscape, forcing traditional players to evolve. The growth in content demand is highlighted, driven by fragmented consumption and the shift toward non-linear formats.

One of the book's central themes is the economic impact of SVOD platforms, particularly Netflix, whose arrival in Spain has been both celebrated and problematic. The establishment of its production hub in Madrid not only injected fresh capital into the sector but also created a collaborative ecosystem with local companies. However, this symbiosis is not without tensions: while Spanish production companies become "skilled labour" for global projects, their decision-making capacity and intellectual property are diluted in a sea of algorithms.

The survey results from international opinion leaders reveal encouraging data: Spanish productions enjoy prestige abroad. Post-production, in particular, has seen a qualitative leap thanks to the evolution of hardware and digital techniques. Series like *Money Heist* (*La casa de papel*) or *Elite* have not only succeeded in global rankings but have shown that Spain can compete in the major leagues.

The author analyses Netflix's business model, its original content strategy, and its ability to adapt to the Spanish market. The combination of a diverse catalogue and content personalization has facilitated its consolidation in Spain, driving innovation and collaboration within the local ecosystem.

As key conclusions, Álvarez-Monzoncillo highlights the emergence of a virtuous cycle where innovation, competitiveness, and talent feed off each other. This dynamism has positioned Spain as a benchmark in the global audiovisual industry, opening new opportunities but also challenges related to the sector's sustainability and autonomy.

Among the book's strengths is its multifaceted approach, addressing the audiovisual phenomenon from economic, technological, and cultural perspectives. However, the author could have explored concrete alternatives to reduce the power asymmetry between platforms and local creators. France, for example, has shielded its industry with national content quotas and public funding mechanisms—a path Spain still treads timidly.



Nevertheless, the study has some limitations—which do not detract from its overall value—such as the lack of a critical perspective on the Spanish audiovisual market’s growing dependence on platforms like Netflix. While this situation has boosted investment and increased the sector’s visibility, it also poses risks to its long-term autonomy and sustainability, such as algorithmic adaptation to global standards, which may dilute cultural diversity. Local production companies, relegated to service roles, may see their growth and distribution opportunities limited. Additionally, there is a risk of unequal income distribution, with profits concentrated in the hands of multinationals. Lastly, this model could hinder the sector’s sustainable development and lead to greater market concentration.

To counter these risks, public policy measures should be implemented to encourage equitable collaboration between platforms and local producers. A mixed model should be promoted where the public sector plays an active role in funding and promoting national productions. Strengthening the local industry would ensure greater participation of Spanish production companies in content ownership and distribution.

Like any pioneering work, *La competitividad del ecosistema audiovisual español* leaves doors open. It would be enriching, for example, to compare the Spanish case with other markets (such as the aforementioned French or Nordic models) or to incorporate more critical voices toward the streaming lobby. Moreover, the sector’s rapid evolution requires constant updates: even as this review is being written, some platform is likely announcing a new strategic shift.

In conclusion, Álvarez-Monzoncillo’s work is an essential contribution to understanding the strengths and challenges of the audiovisual sector in Spain. Its academic rigor does not come at the expense of clarity, and its perspective—though optimistic—does not fall into naivety. An essential text for academics, professionals, and, above all, for those who believe that Spanish cinema and series can be more than just a rented stage for others’ stories.