

El Deseo S.A. in the Spanish Film Industry: Strategies and Evolution of an Iconic Production Company

El Deseo S.A. en la industria española: estrategias y evolución de una productora icónica

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Abstract:

This research analyzes the evolution, production strategies, and impact of the production company El Deseo S.A., founded in 1985 by Pedro and Agustín Almodóvar. Despite the extensive bibliography on the filmmaker's work, the role of his production company has been less explored. The study examines the proportion of productions directed by Almodóvar compared to other filmmakers, production frequency and patterns, the economic success of its films, and its participation in co-productions, among other key aspects. To achieve this, a quantitative methodology based on content analysis is employed, with a sample of 52 productions selected from specialized databases and distribution criteria in Spain. The results highlight the consolidation of El Deseo S.A. as a benchmark production company in contemporary cinema, emphasizing its adaptability to industry changes and its growing involvement in international co-productions. Additionally, the study underscores the impact of the dramatic genre on its profitability and the relevance of its distribution strategy in the international projection of Spanish cinema.

Resumen:

Esta investigación analiza la evolución, estrategias de producción e impacto de la productora El Deseo S.A., fundada en 1985 por Pedro y Agustín Almodóvar. A pesar de la abundante bibliografía sobre la obra del cineasta, el papel de su productora ha sido menos explorado. El estudio examina la proporción de producciones dirigidas por Almodóvar en comparación con otros cineastas, la frecuencia y patrones de producción, el éxito económico de sus películas y su participación en coproducciones, entre otros aspectos clave. Para ello, se emplea una metodología cuantitativa basada en el análisis de contenido, con una muestra de 52 producciones seleccionadas a partir de bases de datos especializadas y criterios de distribución en España. Los resultados evidencian la consolidación de El Deseo S.A. como una productora de referencia en el cine contemporáneo, destacando su capacidad de adaptación a los cambios de la industria y su creciente participación en coproducciones internacionales. Además, se pone de manifiesto el impacto del género dramático en su rentabilidad y la relevancia de su estrategia de distribución en la proyección internacional del cine español.

Palabras clave: Coproducción; cine español; drama; producción audiovisual; Almodóvar, Pedro; estrategia de distribución.

Keywords: Coproduction; Motion picture, Spain; Drama films; Audiovisual production; Almodóvar, Pedro; Distribution strategy.

1. Introduction: Almodóvar in scientific research. Contextualization

The figure of Pedro Almodóvar, like his film production, has been the subject of numerous studies from various perspectives, due to the uniqueness of his style and the thematic and visual richness of his filmography. His work, developed over several decades, has been analyzed from different disciplines such as film theory, aesthetics, semiotics, sociology and cultural studies, generating a body of research that addresses multiple dimensions of his work. Among the most frequent lines of research are those that study the photography of his films (Virués, 2012; Parejo, 2022), the design of credit titles (Pierre, 2008), the structure and narrative development of his scripts (Poyato, 2014; Sorolla-Romero, 2018), symbolism in scenography and decoration (Casanova, 2019), as well as the expressive use of color and its function in the construction of meaning (Sánchez-Alarcón, 2008). The music of his footage (Tovar-Vicente, 2015; Jiménez, 2016) and its relationship with the emotional construction of the story (Shulman, 2020) have also been analysed in depth, as well as the link between his cinema and Madrid (Camarero, 2019), a city that in many of his films acquires a fundamental role both in narrative and symbolic terms.

In addition to these formal and stylistic aspects, his films have been approached from thematic and socio-cultural perspectives (Bernal-Salgado, 2024; Gómez, 2024). Studies have been developed on the representation of gender identity and sexuality (García and Deltell, 2022; Pucci, 2024), recurrent elements in his filmography, as well as on family dynamics, motherhood and interpersonal relationships in his films (Pastor, 2021). Likewise, the influence of film genres such as classical melodrama, comedy and *thriller* has been explored, as well as their relationship with postmodernity and popular culture (Torre-Espinosa, 2020).

The extensive number of existing investigations has consolidated certain lines of analysis, which can be a challenge when exploring new approaches. However, his film production continues to offer opportunities for research, especially with regard to his artistic evolution, the reinterpretation of his work in the contemporary context and its impact on new generations of filmmakers.

In this sense, recent studies have begun to analyze its influence on global cinema (Green, 2024; Nieto-Ferrando, Lozano-Aguilar and Gómez- Morales, 2024), the relationship of its films with the social and political transformations of recent decades (Durán, 2023; Alcalde, 2024), as well as its foray into new distribution and audiovisual production platforms (Aranzubia and Gallego, 2021; Zurian and Vázquez, 2024). Thus, one of the least explored areas within academic research is the role of its producer, El Deseo SA, which is the object of study of this research.

2. El Deseo S.A.: History and trajectory

On June 14, 1985, Pedro and Agustín Almodóvar founded the production company El Deseo S.A., a family business that has played a fundamental role in contemporary Spanish cinematography. Its creation responded to the need to guarantee Pedro Almodóvar greater creative autonomy in the development of his films, allowing him to circumvent the limitations imposed by the producers he had worked with until then. An example of this can be seen in *Dark Habits* (1983), where Almodóvar had to accept the imposition of the producer Jacques Hachuel, who demanded that his wife play the lead role, thus restricting his freedom of artistic choice (Lane, 2016). The first film they made under this label was *The Law of desire* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1987), co-produced with Lauren Film, a feature film that would mark the beginning of a prolific career. The film won the award for Best Foreign Film at the Berlin Film Festival, consolidating the filmmaker's reputation internationally and evidencing the success of the production model promoted by the Almodóvar brothers (Zurian, 2017).

Agustín Almodóvar explains in *Almodóvar: The film of his life* (García, 2020) that the decision to found El Deseo was motivated by the need for Pedro to be able to exercise total control over his films, avoiding the interference of third parties in artistic and productive issues. Until then, the director had worked with different companies, but on many occasions he had encountered obstacles that limited his creative freedom (Strauss, 2000). In addition, the foundation of the production company coincided with the implementation of

the so-called Miró Law, a regulation that transformed the financing model of Spanish cinema by introducing a subsidy system similar to that existing in France, based on advances on income (Strauss, 2000; Zurian, 2017). This change gave many filmmakers access to greater economic resources that facilitated the production of films with greater creative independence, a context from which El Deseo was able to benefit.

Before taking the step of creating his own production company, Almodóvar had worked with various companies that trusted his talent, despite his limited experience and provocative narrative style. Among them are Fígaro Films, responsible for *Pepi, Luci, Bom and other girls on the heap* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1980); Alphaville S.A., which produced *Labyrinth of Passion* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1982); Tesauro, in charge of *What have I done to deserve this* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1984); and Kaktus Producciones Cinematográficas, which participated in *Dark Habits* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1983). Although these projects were successful both critically and with audiences, Almodóvar felt that he did not fully own them, as the final decisions were left to the producers (Strauss, 2000). This lack of control led him to acquire, years later, the rights to two of his first films: *Dark Habits* (1983) and *What have I done to deserve this* (1984).

The creation of El Deseo allowed Almodóvar to assume absolute control of all stages of the filmmaking process, from script writing to the distribution of his films. Thanks to this, he was able to direct the actors with complete freedom, design the scenic spaces according to his criteria, repeat takes until he obtained the desired result and manage the promotion strategy of his films. When preparing a work, the filmmaker has had the support of several national and international television networks, which did not hesitate to finance the director's new projects. As an example, *The Law of Desire* (1987) and *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988) were co-produced by El Deseo and the national company Lauren Films; in *Julieta* (2016) Canal+ France came into play and in *Live Flesh* (1997) the filmmaker worked side by side with CiBy 2000 and the French television company France 3 Cinéma.

One of the distinctive aspects of El Deseo is its communication and promotion

strategy. As José Luis Sánchez Noriega points out in his book *Universo Almodóvar: aesthetics of passion in a postmodern filmmaker* (2017), the production company not only deals with the distribution of its films, but also maintains a constant presence in the media throughout the production process. Through careful planning, they dose the information they share with the press and generate expectation in the public, which guarantees significant media coverage and contributes to the success of their premieres.

The El Deseo team has been made up of professionals of great relevance in the film industry. In addition to the Almodóvar brothers, figures such as Esther García, executive producer of numerous projects; Paz Sufrategui, head of the press for thirteen years until her departure in 2004; and José Salcedo Palomeque, better known as Pepe Salcedo, editor of all Almodóvar's films from *Pepi, Luci, Bom and other girls on the heap* (1980) until his death in 2017, stand out. Collaboration with these professionals has been key to consolidating the artistic and aesthetic identity of Almodovarian filmography.

In its beginnings, El Deseo was dedicated exclusively to the production of films by Pedro Almodóvar. Her first four feature films (*The Law of Desire*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* and *High Heels*) were conceived under this closed production model. However, in 1991, the production company broadened its horizon and began to support projects by other directors. His first foray into this field was with *Cold Earth* (1991), directed by Antonio Campos, which marked the beginning of a progressive diversification. Since then, El Deseo has combined Almodóvar's film production with that of other filmmakers, both national and international. Some of the most representative titles of this new stage include *Mutant Action* (1995) by Álex de la Iglesia, *Caiga quien caiga me caso* (Fallaitpas!, 1996) by Gerard Junot, *The Devil's Backbone* (2000) by Guillermo del Toro, *My Life Without Me* (2002) by Isabel Coixet, *Zama* (2017) by Lucrecia Martel, and the series *Mentiras Pasajeras* (2023), directed by Félix Sabroso and Marta Font.

From a business point of view, El Deseo has diversified its legal structure by creating different related companies. In the credits of his productions you can

find names such as El Deseo D.A. S.L.U., which appears in *My Life Without Me* (2002), or El Deseo P.C. S.L., registered in *Broken Embraces* (2009). According to data from the Instituto de Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales (ICAA), there are currently four entities associated with the production company: El Deseo S.A., El Deseo D.A. S.L., El Deseo P.C. S.L. and El Deseo S.L.U. While the first three are dedicated to film production, the last one is focused on the import and distribution of films.

The creation of multiple companies is a common practice in the audiovisual industry, since it allows to optimize the management of resources, facilitate the financing of projects and establish strategic alliances with other companies. However, public information about El Deseo's organizational structure is limited, suggesting a discreet business strategy aimed at consolidating its production and distribution model.

3. Objectives and methodology

The main objective of this research is to analyze in depth the audiovisual productions made by the company El Deseo S.A. from its foundation in the mid-1980s to the present. The aim is to examine the evolution of its catalogue, its production strategies and its impact on the film industry.

To achieve this general objective, the following specific objectives are proposed:

- Analyze the percentage of works produced by El Deseo S.A. that have been directed by Pedro Almodóvar, founder of the company, compared to those made by other filmmakers.
- Examine the volume of annual productions, identifying possible growth patterns or variations in their activity over time.
- Determine which productions have been the most successful in terms of economic collection and evaluate the factors that have contributed to their success.
- Investigate the type of co-productions in which the producer participates, identifying its main strategic partners and the percentage of participation of El Deseo S.A. in each of them.

- Explore the cultural and critical impact of his films, considering their reception at international festivals and their influence on contemporary cinematography.

To achieve the objectives set, this research uses a quantitative methodology based on content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019; Silverman, 2016). All the works produced by the company El Deseo S.A. from its foundation in 1985 to the present have been analyzed in order to examine their evolution, identify patterns in their production and evaluate their impact on the film industry. This methodological approach makes it possible to obtain concrete and measurable data, guaranteeing a rigorous study of the producer's activity. The universe of initial analysis is made up of a total of 73 works. However, due to previously established selection criteria and the need to limit the sample to ensure its relevance, this number is reduced to 52 productions¹. In order to ensure that the data collected are accurate and representative of the object of study, two fundamental criteria are established for the selection of the works. First of all, only those tapes that have been produced by El Deseo S.A., either entirely or in co-production with other companies, are included. In this sense, all those projects in which the production company was tangentially involved are discarded, such as those in which only audiovisual material or logistical collaboration had been provided without assuming a production role. Secondly, only audiovisual projects that have been premiered in Spain within the study period are considered. This decision is based on the need to analyse the impact of the producer in its context of origin and ensure the homogeneity of the data analysed.

The process of compiling and selecting the works involved an exhaustive search in the IMDb database, one of the reference platforms in the cataloguing of audiovisual productions at an international level (Sobchack, 2013; Canet, Valero and Codina, 2016; Sanz and Aguilar, 2018). Through the use of the label "El Deseo", all registered works are identified as belonging to the production company. It is important to note that the information contained in this

¹ The sample can be consulted by accessing the following link, from the *file* tab of the top menu in the project created on the OSF platform.

database is provided directly by the production managers, which gives it a high degree of reliability. Once this collection has been made, a first filtering is carried out in which those works that, despite appearing under the label of the producer, do not meet the selection criteria are eliminated. Among the exclusions are, mainly, reports, documentaries and other materials in which El Deseo S.A. only has a marginal participation, such as the transfer of archival images or advice on production.

After this first purification process, a second filtering is carried out in order to ensure that all the productions included in the sample had an official distribution in Spain. For this purpose, the catalogue of qualified films of the Institute of Cinematography and Audiovisual Arts (ICAA) is used, an official database in which all works intended for marketing, dissemination or advertising in the Spanish territory are registered. Those productions that do not appear in this catalogue are automatically discarded, thus ensuring that all the works analysed comply with the previously established criteria and that the data extracted is homogeneous.

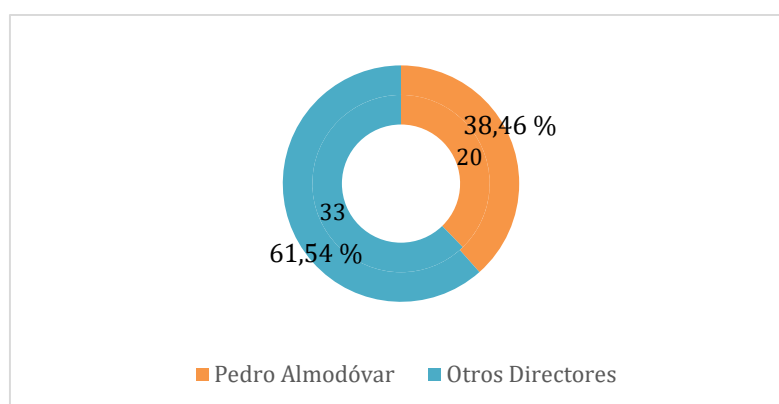
Once the final sample has been configured, an analysis sheet is designed in order to systematize the information and facilitate the comparison of data between the different selected works. This sheet is composed of a total of 15 variables, organized into three main categories, each of which is directly linked to the achievement of the main objective of the study and its specific objectives. The first category corresponds to the technical aspects of the work, including variables such as the name of the director, the year of production, the year of release, the length of the film, the type of work (feature film, medium-length film, short film, video, series), the nature of the project (fiction or documentary) and the film genre to which it belongs. The second category is related to the production elements and collects information on the nationality of the film, the co-producing countries, the co-production companies involved and the percentage of participation of El Deseo S.A. in each work. The third and last category focuses on the reception of the film, analyzing the collection obtained, the number of spectators and the awards received at national and international festivals.

Once the information collection is completed, a detailed analysis of the data obtained is carried out. This process involves the coding and crossing of data to identify production patterns, the evolution of the company over time and the factors that have influenced the success of certain works. Through this approach, it is possible to obtain a comprehensive analysis that not only allows us to understand the operation of the production company El Deseo S.A., but also to provide a detailed view of its impact on the contemporary film landscape.

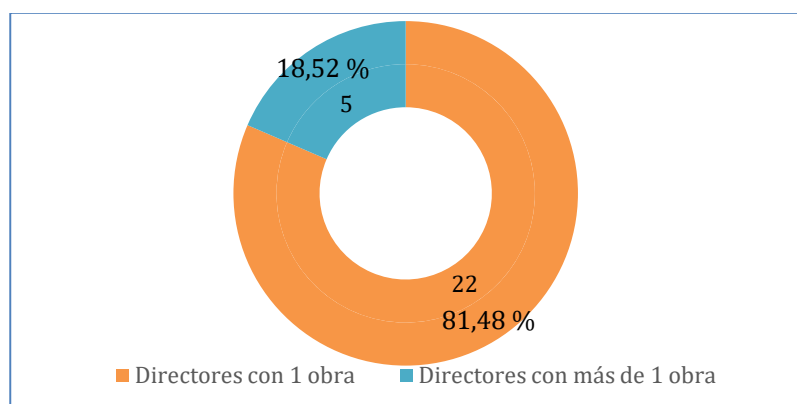
4. Results and data analysis

4.1. Data on technical aspects of the tapes

In the technical aspects of the production carried out by El Deseo, the variables of direction, number of works per director, type of work, nature and gender have been taken into account. Figure F1 shows that the volume of works directed by other directors during the time span analysed is higher, 33 works (61.54%) compared to works directed by Pedro Almodóvar, 20 works (38.46%).



F1. Films directed by Almodóvar vs. Other directors. Own production



F2. Statistics of the number of works directed by Other directors. Own production.

Graph F2 delves into the data of the Other Directors subgroup that has been seen in the previous one. The most numerous group is that of filmmakers who have only one film produced by El Deseo, with 81.48% (22) compared to 18.52% (5) of the filmmakers who have directed more than once with El Deseo: Isabel Coixet and Lucrecia Martel, both with three works each; and Diego Galán, Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso, with two films each.

Table 1 shows the crossing of data of three variables related to the cataloguing of the cinematographic work: type of work, nature and cinematographic genre. It should be noted that the different categories have been taken into account for each of the variables that can be located on the page of the Ministry of Culture in the cataloging that is carried out in the Database of qualified films and that can be consulted *online*. In the type of work we find that these can be feature film, short film, medium-length film, series and video. As for this taxonomy, the most abundant is that of feature films (48 works), followed by short films (2), a series and a videographic work. No record was found in the medium-length film category.

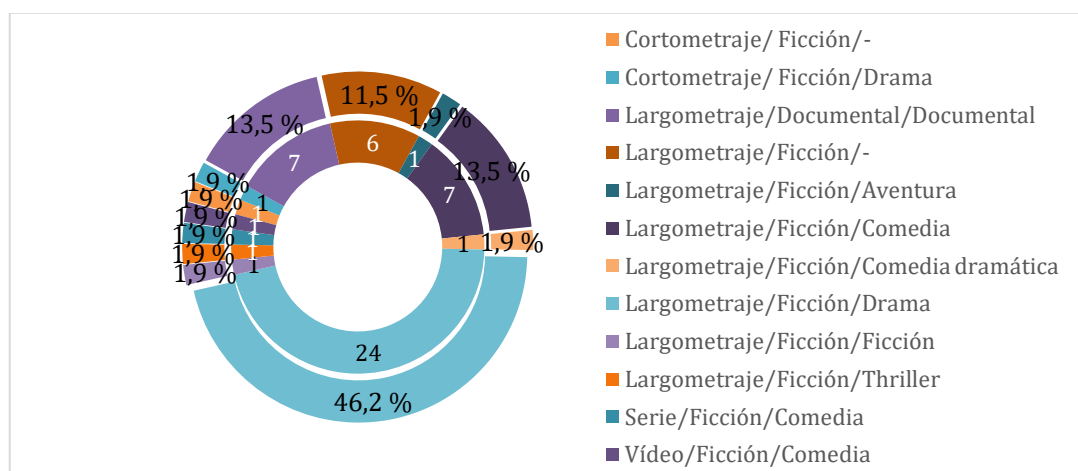
As for the nature of the work, a distinction is made between works of a fictional or documentary nature. In this section, fiction works have a greater presence, 45 productions obey this category (86.54 %) compared to 7 documentary productions (13.46%).

Type of work	Nature of the work	-	Adventure	Comedy	Drama Comedy	Documentary	Drama	Fiction	Thriller	Total
Short film	Fiction	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Feature film	Documentary	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
	Fiction	6	1	7	1	0	24	1	1	41
Serie	Fiction	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Video	Fiction	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total		7	1	9	1	7	25	1	1	52

Table 1. Data crossover between the variables Type of work / nature / gender. Own production.

As for the variable film genre, the categories of adventure; comedy; dramatic comedy; documentary; drama; *thriller*; fiction; or nothing (-) have been detailed. The most widespread genre and well above the second is drama with 25 plays (48.08%); followed by comedy with 9 films (17.31%). In third place, and tying with 7 works (13.46%), are the documentary and a series of works that have not been catalogued in their genre. Finally, *thriller*, fiction, adventure or comedy-drama genres have a residual presence with 1 work per category (1.92%).

Graph F3 makes explicit in a visual way the crossing made in the previous table and where it can be seen that the largest number of productions are feature films of fiction of the "drama" genre, representing 46.2% of the production volume of El Deseo throughout its history. Far below are the works with a cataloging of documentary feature film and comedy fiction feature film, with 13.5% for each of the categories, followed by fiction feature films that have not been identified with any genre by the ICAA, 11.5%. Finally, in the remaining cross-categories we only find one work, 1.92% in each of the categories; however, the sum of these categories implies 15.38% of the total volume of El Deseo's production throughout its trajectory.



F3. Statistics of the number of works according to the crossing of data Type of work / Nature / Gender. Own production.

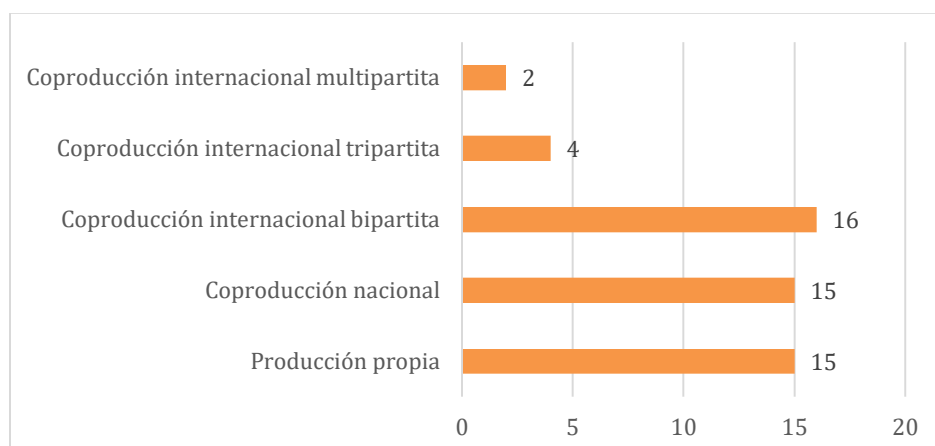
4.2. Data on tape production elements

As stated above, this section collects the data related to the production elements and collects information on the nationality of the film, the co-producing countries, the co-production companies involved and the percentage of participation of El Deseo S.A. in each work.

In relation to nationality, 100% of the works are classified as Spanish; regardless of the production model that has been used.

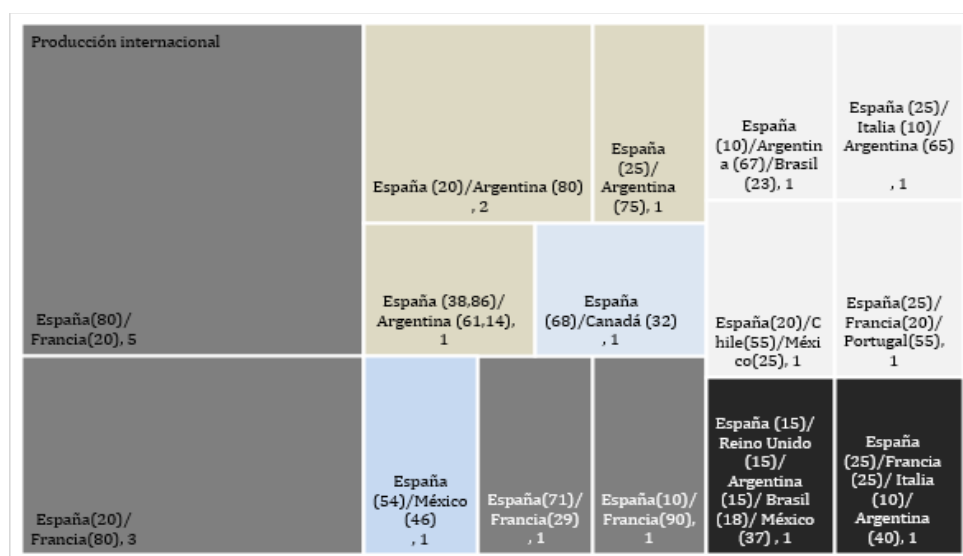
The most frequently identified production models are bipartite international co-production, 30.75% (16); national co-production, 28.85% (15); and own production, 28.85% (15). This implies that the bulk of works have a national production, 57.69% (30) compared to international co-production models (22). Within these, the bipartite modality is the most relevant with 16 works produced (30.77%), followed by tripartite and multiparty co-productions (see graph F4).

As for the national co-production model, the international pattern is repeated, the bipartite modality is established as the main form of production, 13 works, while the tripartite modality only occurs in 2 works.



F4. Models of production of the cinematographic work. Own production.

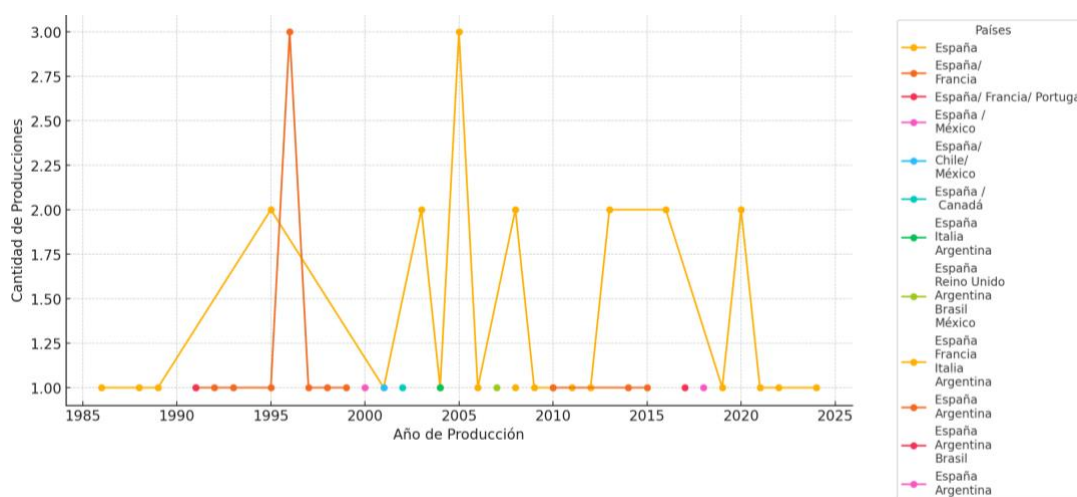
As for the main partner countries in the international co-production regime, France is in the bipartite modality (colored in medium gray in graph F5) with a total of 10 co-productions, 6 where Spain is the majority partner and 4 the minority and with different distributions in the percentages of participation. Argentina ranks second in the bipartite modality with 4 works (colored in light green in graph F5) and, also, with different proportions of participation; however, in this case it is always established as a minority partner. With only one co-production in the entire period, there are co-productions with Canada and Mexico, in both cases as the majority partner (blue color in graph F5). There are 4 tripartite co-productions (colored in light gray in figure F5) and in no case is any configuration of the countries in co-production repeated and in all of them it is a minority partner; however, there is a majority of Latin American countries compared to European countries in the formations: Spain, Argentina and Brazil; Spain, Chile and Mexico; Spain, Argentina and Italy; and Spain, France, Portugal. Finally, there are only two multiparty co-productions (indicated in dark grey in Figure F5), one with a line-up of 5 countries with a predominance of Latin American countries and another with a line-up of 4 countries with a predominance of European countries and, again, in neither of these two models is it the main producer.



F5. Distribution of works by production model and percentage of participation. Own production.

Trends in production models, as can be seen in graph F6 and has been developing throughout the data analysis, the trend with the greatest continuity is production as a single country, either in its own production mode or national co-production, reaching its peak in 2005 with 3 films produced. However, it should be noted that, in the period between 1989 and 2001, he only produced a single work, in 1995, that was not an international co-production. This period coincides with the development of the co- production model with France, which is practically the only one of the period and which results in a total of 10 works, reaching its peak in 1996 with 3 works.

Since 2001, there has been an atomization in the models and formations together with various countries in film production, being frequent the model of two works with Spain as the only producing country and one in international co-production. In this sense, the most fruitful alignment is the bipartite model with Argentina that between 2010 and 2018 results in 4 tapes.



F6. Volume of national and international productions per year. Own production

In relation to the percentages of participation, of the 52 works analyzed, 49 have been produced at 100% by El Deseo S.A.; that is, within the production modality that occurs in each of them, own production or international co-production, but always appears as the only Spanish production company. In the remaining 13, there are different percentages of national participation: *The law of desire* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1989) participates in 74.82% in a national co-production regime together with Lauren Films that puts the remaining 25.18%. The same model and companies produce *Women on the verge of a nervous breakdown* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1989) but this time in percentages of 70%/30%, appearing as the majority company. Until 2003 there will not be a co-production regime with *Chill Out!* (Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso) with which it participates with 42.25% together with Mediaproducción (42.25%), Telemadrid (13%) and Filmanova (2.5%). In the same year he co-produced the documentary *Eyengui, el dios del sueño* (José Manuel Novoa) with Transglobe Pictures at 50%. Together with Mediaproducciones, it repeats in co-production, again as a 75% majority partner in Isabel Coixet's work, *The Secret Life of Words* (2005) and together with Warner Bros. Entertainment, at 50% in *My Prison Yard* (Belén Macías, 2008).

In 2008, 2012 and 2013 he co-produced, respectively, the documentaries *Historia de las Montañas de la Muma* (Larry Levene); *The Labèque Way* (Félix Cábez) and *Con la pata quebrada* (Diego Galán). The first of these is

with the production company Levinver, S.A., with a 50% stake; the second with Roswell Producciones, again as majority shareholder at 80% and the last with Enrique Cerezo Producciones Cinematográficas S.L.U. at 50%. He will not co-produce another documentary until 2016, participating with 45.53% and repeating with Diego Galán in the direction and production of Enrique Cerezo (43.52%), together with the Spanish Radio Television Corporation (12.95%) in *Manda huevos*.

In 2015, he co-produced together with Telefónica Studios S.L.U. the *thriller The Clan* (Pablo Trapero); this being the only one in international co-production, Spain-Argentina, in this case 25% from Spain corresponds to the participation of El Deseo with 57.40% and the remaining 42.60% to Telefónica Studios.

The last three national co-productions have been carried out with three AIE-type societies and correspond to *Pain and Glory* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2019); *It Snows In Benidorm* (Isabel Coixet, 2020) and *Parallel Mothers* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2021). In all three cases, the participation of El Deseo has been 5%, with the AIEs contributing the remaining 95%.

4.3. Data on receipt of tapes

The third and final category focuses on the reception of the film, analyzing the collection obtained and the number of viewers. Table 2 shows the data relating to the ten works of the production company with the highest collection. It shows how the top 9 highest grossing works were all directed by Pedro Almodóvar, with the highest grossing being *Volver* (2005) with more than 10 million euros.

Name of the Work	Year of production	Collection	Director
<i>Volver</i>	2005	€ 10.243.788	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>All about my Mother</i>	1999	€ 9.966.725	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown</i>	1988	€ 7.022.322	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Talk to Her</i>	2001	€ 6.209.451	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Bad Education</i>	2004	€ 6.110.817	Almodóvar, Pedro

<i>Pain and Glory</i>	2019	€ 5.836.307	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>High Heels</i>	1991	€ 5.234.464	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Passenger lovers</i>	2013	€ 5.071.560	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Live Flesh</i>	1997	€ 4.990.933	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Wild Tales</i>	2014	€ 4.812.412	Szifrón, Damián

Tabla 2. *Top ten* fundraising. Own production.

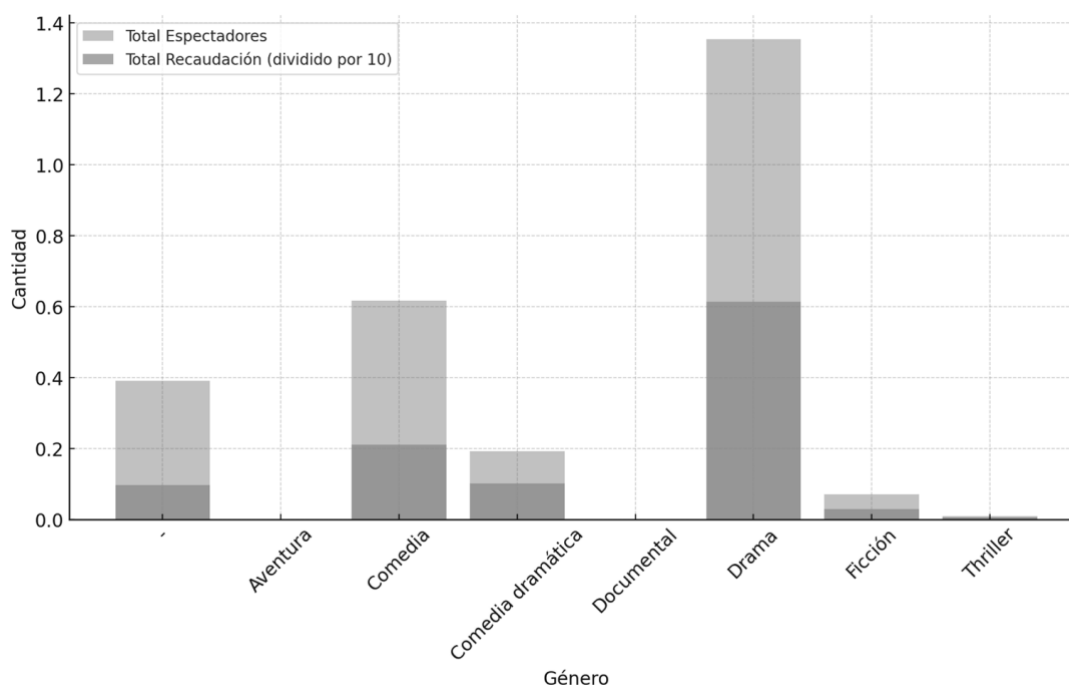
Something similar happens in relation to the number of spectators, in table 3 the first 10 films with the highest rate of spectators are collected and that all have been made under the baton of Pedro Almodóvar, with *Women on the verge of a nervous breakdown* (1988) being the one with the highest influx with more than 3 million spectators.

Name of the Work	Year of production	Spectators	Director
<i>Volver</i>	1988	3.348.520	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>All about my Mother</i>	1999	2.591.408	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown</i>	1991	2.073.064	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Talk to Her</i>	2005	1.932.119	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Bad Education</i>	1997	1.433.465	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Pain and Glory</i>	2001	1.367.655	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>High Heels</i>	1989	1.351.825	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Passenger lovers</i>	2004	1.241.794	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Live Flesh</i>	1993	1.038.568	Almodóvar, Pedro
<i>Wild Tales</i>	1995	981.846	Almodóvar, Pedro

Table 3. *Top ten* viewers. Own production.

In the F7 chart, these data of collection, viewers and genre have been crossed, with drama being the genre that accumulates the most viewers (13.5 million) and the highest total collection (61.3 million euros), followed by comedy with a cumulative total of 6.1 million viewers and 21.1 million euros in total collection. Also noteworthy is the dramatic comedy by individual impact in terms of a high average of viewers for a single film (1.93 million on average), which indicates a strong impact at the box office and which is, again, due to

Volver (2005).



F7. Data Crossing Spectators *Collection * Gender. Own production.

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1. Discussion

The analysis of the data obtained on the production company El Deseo S.A. allows several reflections on its evolution, co-production strategies and the reception of its works.

Throughout its history, El Deseo has maintained a balance between producing feature films directed by Pedro Almodóvar and participating in projects by other filmmakers. However, the data show that most of the works produced by the company have been directed by filmmakers other than the founder of the production company (61.54%). However, of these, only a small group of directors have worked on more than one occasion with the production company, indicating that El Deseo has diversified its production portfolio without establishing recurring collaborations with specific directors.

Although Pedro Almodóvar remains the central figure of the production

company, the opening to other filmmakers has made it possible to diversify the offer of El Deseo. *Wild Tales* (2014), by Damián Szifron, stands out as the only production of the company that has achieved a great impact without the signature of the director from La Mancha. Its success at festivals and at the box office shows that the production company has been able to identify projects with global potential, especially within Latin American cinema.

However, many of the productions directed by other filmmakers have not achieved the same level of commercial success as Almodóvar's. This suggests that, although El Deseo has tried to expand its reach by supporting new talent, the producer's association with the Almodovarian universe remains its main hallmark.

Relating the awards obtained with the production models, it is observed that co-productions with France have been key in the recognition of El Deseo. *All About My Mother* (1999) and *Talk to Her* (2001) are the only films to have won an Oscar, and both featured French participation.

In contrast, *Pain and Glory* (2019) was an entirely Spanish production that managed to compete in international festivals and was nominated for an Oscar, indicating that Almodóvar's authorial brand continues to be a determining factor in the international projection of the production company.

Another relevant case is *Julieta* (2016), which despite not obtaining the same repercussion as other Almodóvar films at festivals, represented a milestone in collaboration with actors and actresses of international trajectory and showed an attempt to approach a more contained narrative compared to the director's usual stylistic excesses. This evolution in the production strategy reinforces the versatility of El Deseo and its ability to adapt to different sensitivities of the international market.

As for the type of works, El Deseo's production focuses almost exclusively on fiction feature films, with 86.54% of its works in this category. Drama is the predominant genre, representing 48.08% of the total, which demonstrates a clear commitment to narratives with a strong emotional component and an aesthetic characteristic of Almodóvar's cinema. Despite its diversification into

other projects, documentary remains a smaller fraction of its production (13.46%), suggesting a preference for fiction film in its business strategy.

With regard to production models, it is observed that 57.69% of the works have been financed exclusively in national territory. However, international co-production has been a frequent practice, especially in the bipartite mode (30.77%). This aligns with the perception that until 2000, El Deseo prioritized collaborations with European countries, highlighting France as the main partner. In this sense, the analysis of co-production strategies with France carried out by Dr. Ana Mejón (2019) in her doctoral thesis, entitled *Transnational Cinema, is relevant. The Spanish-French co-production (1987-1999)*. Subsequently, Almodóvar expanded its network of collaborations with Latin America, mainly Argentina, which responds to a change in strategy to expand its market and diversify its financing.

In the collection table, the ten films with the highest economic performance have been directed mostly by Pedro Almodóvar, with the exception of *Wild Tales* (2014), directed by Damián Szifrón. This data reinforces the idea that the figure of Almodóvar remains the most profitable within the production company. *Volver* (2005) tops the list with a collection of more than 10 million euros, followed by *All about my mother* (1999), with 9.96 million.

In terms of grosses, *Volver* (2005) and *All about my mother* (1999) lead El Deseo's list of most successful films. Its great reception can be explained in part by its strong dramatic charge, the prominence of iconic actresses of Spanish cinema such as Penelope Cruz and Marisa Paredes, and the consolidation of the Almodóvar brand in the international market. In addition, its launch at international festivals and its well-structured distribution favored its impact at the box office.

However, at the opposite end of these successes is *I'm So Excited!* (2013), a comedy with a more commercial focus that, despite expectations, did not achieve the same impact at the box office or critically. This data reinforces the idea that drama has been the most profitable genre for the producer, while her forays into comedy have had a more irregular reception.

As for the number of viewers, the situation is similar: *Women on the verge of a nervous breakdown* (1988) leads the ranking with 3.3 million viewers, followed by *All About My Mother* (1999). Despite being a more recent film, *Pain and Glory* (2019) has also achieved a great reception, indicating that the trajectory of the production company continues to generate interest in the public.

The crossing of data between film genre, viewers and collection confirms that drama is the genre with the highest profitability and amount of audience, followed by comedy. This is reflected in the success of films such as *Pain and Glory* (2019), which achieved a great reception both at festivals and at the box office, compared to other genres less exploited by the producer. In this sense, it is pertinent to point out that this generic preference could be related to the authorial imprint of Pedro Almodóvar, whose filmography is characterized by a strong presence of drama and comic elements from a personal and stylized perspective. Although this correspondence between the production profile of El Deseo and the authorial brand of its founder has not been addressed as a central hypothesis in this study, it opens an interesting avenue for future research that wishes to explore how strategic production decisions can be influenced by the aesthetic identity of its main creative reference.

On the other hand, it is interesting to contrast this result with other incursions of the producer in different genres. *I'm So Excited!* (comedy) did not reach the same impact as his dramatic productions. On the other hand, *Bad Education* (thriller) had a lower number of viewers compared to *Hable con ella* or *All about my mother*, which indicates that the identity of the producer and her connection with the audience are more linked to dramatic narratives with a strong emotional charge.

All this confirms the idea that Almodóvar's narrative style, focused on stories full of emotional tension and human conflicts, has been key to the commercial success of the production company. Finally, it should be noted that, although the trajectory of El Deseo has sometimes been considered a singular case, it can be framed within a broader logic of restructuring of the Spanish film sector since the 1980s. Producers such as Fernando Colomo with Fernando Colomo

Producciones Cinematográficas or Andrés Vicente Gómez with LolaFilms also boosted their own production companies, betting on debut films by new filmmakers and diversifying their catalogues. In this sense, the creation of El Deseo could be read in parallel to these dynamics, accentuated after the implementation of the Miró Law.

5. Conclusions

This study aimed to analyse in depth the audiovisual productions made by the company El Deseo S.A., from its foundation in the mid-1980s to the present day. The aim is to examine the evolution of its catalogue, its production strategies and its impact on the film industry.

To achieve this general objective, the following specific objectives were proposed, together with the way in which they have been addressed in this study:

- Analyze the percentage of works produced by El Deseo S.A. that have been directed by Pedro Almodóvar, founder of the company, compared to those made by other filmmakers. This objective has been met, as the company's production data has been examined and it has been identified that a significant percentage of the films have been directed by Almodóvar, although in recent years there has been a greater openness towards other filmmakers. However, the director's productions remain the most profitable and recognized, consolidating their importance within the label of the producer.
- Examine the volume of annual productions, identifying possible growth patterns or variations in their activity over time. This objective has been met, since the production records from the 80s to the present have been analyzed, showing periods of greater and lesser activity. A pattern of sustained growth is observed in its first decades, with an increase in participation in international co-productions from the 2000s.
- Determine which productions have been the most successful in terms of

economic collection and evaluate the factors that have contributed to their success. This objective has been met by identifying the highest-grossing films of the production company, highlighting *Volver* (2005) and *All about my mother* (1999) as the highest-grossing. Factors such as international distribution, festival selection and the prominence of recognized figures have been key to its success.

- Investigate the type of co-productions in which the producer participates, identifying its main strategic partners and the percentage of participation of El Deseo S.A. in each of them. This objective has also been achieved since the main co-production alliances have been identified, highlighting France and Argentina as the most frequent partners. In addition, the bipartite, tripartite and multiparty co-production models have been analyzed, showing how these strategies have allowed the diversification of the financing and distribution of their films.
- Explore the cultural and critical impact of his films, considering their reception at international festivals and their influence on contemporary cinematography. This objective has been partially met, because, although the international recognitions obtained by the production company, such as Oscar, Goya and selections in prestigious festivals, have been analyzed, the impact on contemporary cinematography could be further explored in future research through qualitative and comparative studies with other production companies.

The study has managed to address most of the objectives set, providing a solid analytical framework on the evolution of El Deseo S.A. Through the analysis of quantitative data, key patterns in its production model, co- production strategy and commercial success have been identified. This has made it possible to identify patterns in its evolution, from its production model to its impact on the film industry through the analysis carried out. Through the study of its co-production strategy, the typology of its works and the reception of its films in terms of audience and profitability, key trends have

been outlined that explain its position in the market. The main conclusions of the research were:

- Consolidation of the production model: El Deseo has managed to remain a key producer in Spanish cinema thanks to a flexible production model that combines works directed by Pedro Almodóvar with projects by other filmmakers. However, the figure of the director remains the most profitable and recognized in the industry.
- Co-production strategy: the production company has gone from working mainly with European partners to expanding its network of collaborations to Latin America, especially Argentina. This evolution in the co-production strategy has made it possible to diversify funding sources and open up new international markets.
- Predominance of drama: throughout its trajectory, drama has been the predominant genre in its production, with a loyal audience and a significant economic impact. Although comedy also has a relevant presence, it does not reach the same levels of profitability and recognition.
- Evolution and persistence of public interest: despite the passage of time, Almodóvar's films continue to attract large audiences, which indicates the consolidation of his style and his ability to remain current within the film industry.

This study provides a detailed analysis of the evolution of the production company El Deseo S.A., but also presents certain limitations. Although it has been possible to identify trends in the co-production, reception and genre of the works, future research could deepen the qualitative impact of their productions and their influence on the international film scene.

New lines of study are open related to the specific impact of these strategies on the global film industry, as well as the future of El Deseo in a context of changes in audiovisual consumption and film exhibition models; for example, one area of study that could be further developed is the comparison with other auteur

film producers similar to El Deseo, analyzing the differences in production and distribution strategies, both in Spain and in other countries. This would make it possible to establish whether their production and distribution strategies are unique or whether they follow common patterns within independent cinema. It has also been left out of this research and it could be interesting to examine how the rise of *streaming* platforms has been able to affect El Deseo's distribution strategy and if it has had an impact on its business model or even investigate the profitability of international distribution, analysing in which markets El Deseo's films have worked best and which strategies have contributed to its success outside of Spain.

El Deseo S.A. has proven to be a fundamental producer in the history of Spanish cinema, combining auteur identity with an adaptable production and distribution strategy. Its evolution reflects the changes in the film industry and the way in which auteur cinema can sustain itself in an increasingly globalized market. Through its commitment to drama and its co-production strategy, the production company has managed to remain relevant over time, achieving a balance between art and profitability. This study has made it possible to trace these dynamics and offer a framework for future research on the impact of independent production companies on contemporary cinema. Beyond its past achievements, the challenge for El Deseo lies in how it will continue to adapt to the changes of audiovisual consumption in the digital age, maintaining its legacy without losing its essence.

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