



Relationship marketing and brand community: the case of Netflix

Marketing Relacional y Comunidad de Marca: El Caso de Netflix

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine the relationship marketing model and the concept of brand community based on a case study of the content platform and production company, Netflix. Relationship marketing places a strong focus on the strategic management of collaborative relationships with customers and other stakeholders as a way of creating and distributing value in an equitable and mutually beneficial way. This study focuses on the idea of 'community around the brand', understood as a structured

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Forma de citar este artículo: González Chans, C., & Membiela Pollán, M., & Cortés Cuns, M. (2020). Marketing Relacional y Comunidad de Marca: El Caso de Netflix, *Redmarka. Revista de Marketing Aplicado*, vol 24, núm. 2, 251-274. <https://doi.org/10.17979/redma.2020.24.2.7157>

set of social relationships between the 'fans' of a brand and between the brand and its customers, who often dictate brand decisions. A theoretical analysis of the subject and a review of the relevant literature are followed by a case study of the leading content streaming company, Netflix, which analyses the company's relationship marketing and community-building strategies and their role in the brand's success.

Keywords: relationship marketing, brand community, social media, Netflix, engagement marketing

Resumen

El objetivo del presente artículo es profundizar en el paradigma del marketing relacional y en el concepto de comunidad de marca, desarrollando el caso de estudio de la empresa Netflix. El marketing relacional otorga alta relevancia a la gestión estratégica de las relaciones colaborativas con los clientes y otros grupos de interés, con el propósito de crear y distribuir valor de manera equitativa y mutuamente beneficiosa. En concreto, el texto destaca la idea de "comunidad en torno a la marca", entendida como un conjunto estructurado de relaciones sociales entre los "fans" de una marca y entre la marca y dichos clientes que a menudo se convierten en prescriptores. Tras el estudio teórico sobre estos motivos y la pertinente revisión de la literatura, se desarrolla el caso de estudio la mencionada empresa líder en el sector del *streaming*, destacando las estrategias de marketing relacional y de creación de comunidad que la marca Netflix viene desarrollando y que se configuran como una de las principales claves de su éxito.

Palabras clave: marketing de relaciones, comunidad de marca, redes sociales, Netflix, marketing de compromiso

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the theory and practice of marketing have advanced towards the so-called market-oriented approach (Kotler and Armstrong, 2013). Long ago, a more self-centered vision of the product prevailed, and a "decisive" importance was given to aggressive communication and sales policies. Market orientation gives prominence to the analysis of consumer needs, and seeks to satisfy them through the concept-product that the company makes available to the demand; because it is the prospect, with his reality, who ultimately participates in the exchanges and transactions with the reference organization.

In this context, the so-called relationship marketing has advanced strongly to the detriment of the so-called transactional marketing (Santesmases, 2012). Today the bond with the customers becomes decisive, with a quasi-personalized attention; with determination to retain them, also responding to their new demands. Even more so

when we are in an environment with high competition, saturation of demand and uncertainty.

Within relationship marketing, the brand community concept is relevant and very useful as a generator of value, having proven to be an important asset of companies such as Nike, Apple or Harley Davidson (Wirtz et al., 2013).

Under this prism, the objective of this article is the development of the Netflix company case study, a media phenomenon that has transcended our time, even modifying consumer behavior with regard to audiovisual content (McDonald et al., 2016). The analysis will be carried out under the indicated approach of relationship marketing and the brand community, issues that have been decisive in the success achieved by this leading content streaming platform.

The text is structured as follows. Section 1 deals with the methodology followed in this work. Section 2 deals with the concepts and elements of relationship marketing and the brand community from a theoretical point of view, paying attention here to aspects such as community manager, engagement marketing, corporate reputation and influencer marketing. Finally, section 3 deals with the Netflix case study and includes the relational marketing and community building strategies that this company / brand has followed, aspects that have been configured as decisive in the success achieved.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to prepare this work is based on an exploratory and descriptive analysis. Therefore, it consists of a review and flexible study. It uses secondary sources, specifically, a review of the scientific literature regarding "relationship marketing" and "brand community"; and bibliographic and statistical information regarding Netflix company, object of the case study.

3. RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND THE BRAND COMMUNITY

3.1 What is the relational marketing

The "relationship marketing" approach is driven by the organization's difficulty in expanding its markets; in an environment where innovation and the launch of new products require high investments, and there is no significant incorporation of new customers (Faus, 2004).

In this context of mature and saturated markets, relationship management has proven to be a good alternative to create superior value for the prospect (Best, 2007).

In this sense, a series of elements have led to the development of relationship marketing. Among them we highlight: the increase in the cost of attracting costumers, the internationalization of companies, the reduction and unforeseenness of marketing and product cycles, increased competition, new business management models, the development of technology that allows process and analyze high volumes of information

(Data Warehouse, CRM, Data Mining, ...), the decrease in the power of the brand to retain customers, and changes in consumer behavior together with a growing desire of consumers to personalize the product (Reinares and Ponzoa, 2004).

In short, we can define relationship marketing as the strategic management of collaborative relationships with costumers and other actors, with the aim of creating and distributing value equitably (Faus, 2004); and as a decisive step to achieve a competitive advantage and maintain and increase business (Kotler and Armstrong, 2013).

Relationship marketing means greater profitability and growth; it is not a procedural change but a structural change. Relationships stop being confrontational and become cooperative; the objectives move from market share to customer participation (Tavira et al., 2015).

3.2 Differential elements of relationship marketing

The relationship marketing strategy seeks to direct to each costumer (or small group of costumers), current or potential, the offer that maximizes the value for said agent (functional, social and emotional) and for the company (in terms of success rate, income, cost and duration) (Talaya, 2008).

In order to create this offer, it is necessary to substitute “acting for the costumer” by “acting with the costumer”, that is, being in constant contact with the focal subject and making him participate in the value creation proposals.

That is, relationship marketing seeks knowledge of the customer, constantly measuring their needs, tastes, behavior (social, cultural, political), taking into account that these characteristics vary rapidly, so the company must adapt in order to maintain the satisfaction of consumers or users and attract new ones (Mesa, 2005) (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison between the main characteristics of transactional marketing and relationship marketing (source: Own elaboration based on Torres Gómez (2019))

| Transactional marketing | Relacional marketing |
|---|--|
| Focuses on individual sales | Focuses on customer retention |
| It is oriented to the characteristics of the products | It is oriented towards the benefits of the product |
| Short term vision | Long term vision |
| Little emphasis on customer service | Great emphasis on customer service |
| Low level of commitment to customers | High level of commitment to customers |
| Moderate level of contact with customers | High level of contact with customers |
| Quality is fundamentally focused on the product | Quality is everyone's concern |

Advertising communication begins to be complemented by prolonged customer-company dialogue, taking advantage of any “moment of truth” —when the consumer or user comes into contact with the organization— to promote mutual learning (Faus, 2004).

The benefits for the company derived from maintaining high levels of customer retention are reflected in significant vegetative growth, in the creation of entry barriers to competitors, in the provision of a wide user base for new products and in the consolidation of the service quality model (Talaya, 2008).

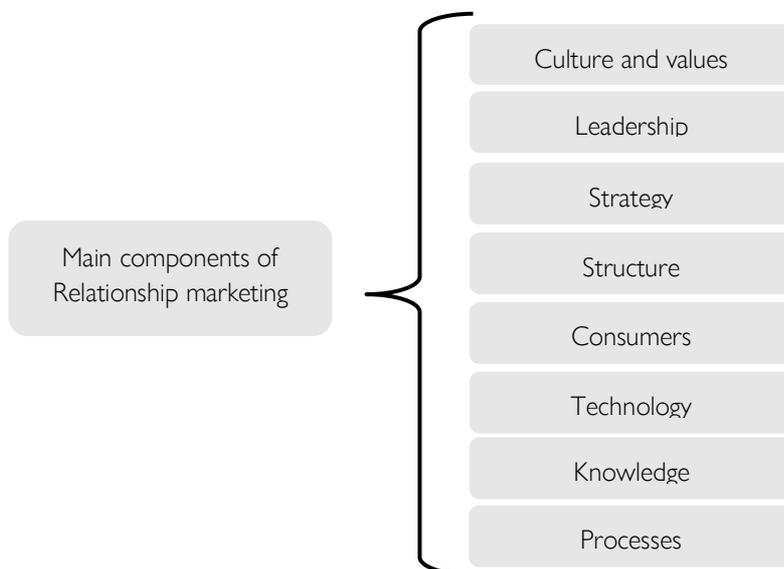
The organization must decide what position it wants to occupy in the continuity line —whose extremes are transactional marketing and relationship marketing— to adapt to the prevailing requirements in the market.

However, it is necessary to be aware that today the degree of consumer demand has grown. That is why companies know the importance of customer loyalty, being a constant challenge to attract new prospects, always based on service and communication strategies to have a long-term connection with the customer; unlike traditional marketing which has a short-term approach (see Mamani and Lenin, 2019). In 1989, Grönroos (1994) highlighted as dimensions of relationship marketing:

- "- Long-term consumer focus.
- Make and keep promises to consumers.
- Involve the entire organization in marketing activities.
- Implement interactivity in marketing processes.
- Develop a culture of service to consumers.
- Obtain and use information from consumers."

In a complementary way, Gordon (1998) points out that relationship marketing is based on eight components (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Components of relationship marketing (source: Own elaboration based on Gordon (1998) and Reinares Lara et al. (2004))



We can finish by emphasizing the importance of "collaboration" as a fundamental pillar of relationship marketing. Along the lines already outlined, it must have a long-term vision and favor all the integral parts. And it is that as Hunt and Morgan (1994) argue, "The paradox of relationship marketing is that being an effective competitor in the era of online competition also implies being an effective cooperator".

3.3 The brand community and the community manager

3.3.1 The brand community

For the majority of authors of the 19th and 20th centuries, the concept of community designates the various types of relationship characterized by affective ties and by a commitment of a moral nature (shared norms and values), and a type of common adherence to a social group (Nisbet, 1984). This conception of the community shows its essence through the attributes: social interaction, collective self-sufficiency, common goals, a certain sense of belonging and commitment to the group and other specific rules (Siles, 2005).

However, the characterization and attributes cited will vary according to the type of reference community. Along these lines, Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 412) introduced the concept of brand community in the marketing literature, defining it as a specialized community, not geographically linked, based on a structured set of social relationships between "fans" of a brand.

Organizations are interested in promoting in the customer a "sense of belonging" to the brand, and in doing it offline and online (Internet) (Membiela-Pollán, 2019); three notable examples are those of the Harley-Davidson, Apple and Nike brands, with high symbolic content and iconic status (Wirtz et al., 2013).

Communication and data transmission technologies, mainly the internet, have had a great impact in today's society and in everyday life.

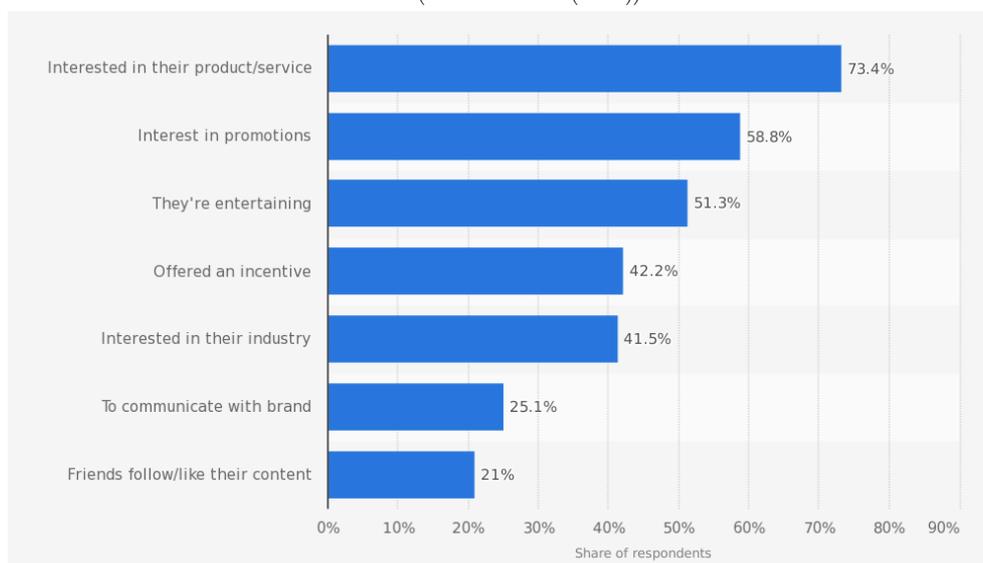
Progressively and together with certain traditional communication actions such as mailing, a whole paradigm has been configured around digital marketing. Social networks are today a basic element in the communication and loyalty strategy of the company (Palazón et al., 2014).

Organizations take advantage of the power of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or YouTube to induce a closer bond with the current and potential consumer, strategically satisfying basic needs of the individual such as belonging to a group and social interaction. The objective is to reach a high number of followers or "fans", promoting a large community, through promotional and communication strategies.

Despite this desire to get a high number of followers in order to increase sales, experts insist that this idea is erratic, since there is not necessarily a causal relationship with the

taste for the brand and with the determination of you are going to make a purchase, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Main motivations why internet users began to follow a brand on social networks in Spain in 2016 (source: Statista (2018))



3.3.2 The Community Manager

A concept closely linked to the brand community is that of the *community manager*. Although the term community manager is popular today within the organization chart of a company, there is no generally accepted definition of it.

According to the AERCO (Spanish Association of Responsible for Online Communities), a community manager is "the person responsible for increasing and, in a certain way, defending the company's relationships with its customers in the digital field, thanks to the knowledge of the needs and the strategic approaches of the organization and the interests of customers. A person who knows the objectives of the organization and acts accordingly to achieve them" (Martos et al., 2012).

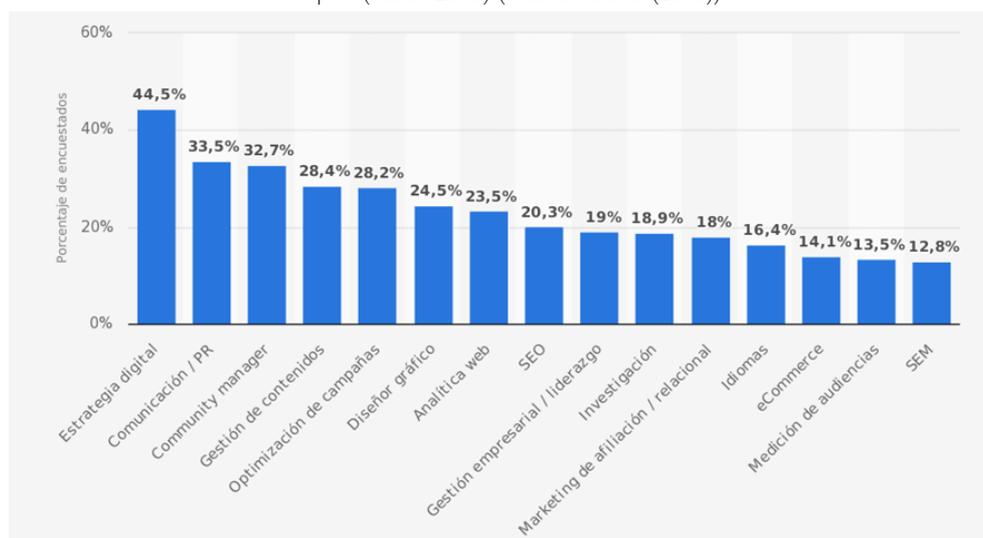
As can be seen in Figure 4, the community manager is one of the main professional competencies in the marketing area in Spain, with 32.7%, only behind jobs with specific weight in digital strategy (44.5%) and communication (33.5%).

The community manager must know the brand in depth in order to make it circulate naturally on the Internet and all the social media; defines the most appropriate strategy for the company in social networks in order to achieve its objectives in the medium-long term; in addition to looking for and outlining the different types of costumers the organization should focus on (Editores, I. C. B., 2017).

Actions for this purpose are more complex than might be expected. Activities related to the humanization of the company, the promotion of online marketing, public relations, technical support, sales, business association or partners, monitoring of the quality of the product, and the services attached to it, are included.

The community manager must be trained to handle Internet platforms and new technologies, such as Social Networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram) and mobile platforms (apps). In addition, this position creates a sense of belonging and contributes synergistically to the development of the company or the brand (Morales et al., 2013).

Figure 4. Ranking of the most used professional skills in marketing according to professionals in the sector in Spain (March 2018) (source: Statista (2018))



This figure is in a way considered an advocate for the community, he must respond effectively to the needs of consumers and actively participate in conversations with them, through forums, blogs, podcast, twitter, etc. In addition, he is responsible for gathering information about the community's requirements and transmitting them internally to the organization. He also performs functions of promoting events and products (Saavedra et al., 2011).

3.3.3 Other elements in brand community management: engagement marketing, corporate reputation and influencer marketing

Engagement marketing

Business management must take into account relationships (the *client first* philosophy), the generation of social branding, the segmentation and personalization of messages, the “evangelization” through prescription, and the virality and implementation of a marketing that generates customer engagement (Piñeiro, 2015).

The term *engage* means to “grab or attract” an individual's attention intensely. In the multimedia field, *engagement marketing* is a process in which the system captures and retains the interest of the user (Vázquez-Casielles et al., 2018).

The advertising saturation has caused the need to find new ways to capture the user's attention, so the professionals of the advertising agencies must present proposals to

the advertiser that generate virality and allow the prospect to become a participant in the content and interact with the brand. As an example, this happened with the choice of the new flavor of the Lays brand in the “Casting the flavors” campaign (Piñeiro, 2015).

Digital platforms are very useful in market research, to understand consumer behavior and to identify different potential niches. In this sense, Twitter should be highlighted, since through this platform information is continuously obtained from users thanks to its publications.

In order to improve the image of a certain brand and make it unique and recognizable to individuals, the organization must focus on the following aspects: the information provided must be relevant and truthful, offer a useful and intuitive website, be original to attract attention, and be accessible to all; In this last sense, users with disabilities should not have obstacles to find such information (Guerrero, 2017).

Corporate reputation

Likewise, it is absolutely essential to manage corporate reputation online and offline, and that it is not damaged. For this purpose, according to Piñeiro-Otero (2015) there are three fundamental pillars:

- Listen to know what to share.
- Share to build a participatory community.
- Monitor to identify and take care of the branders (true fans).

Attention should be paid to and learned from customer complaints and negative comments, but also incentivize satisfied consumers or users to post their opinions, which will help the company to somewhat control and guide the conversation about the brand.

Influencer Marketing

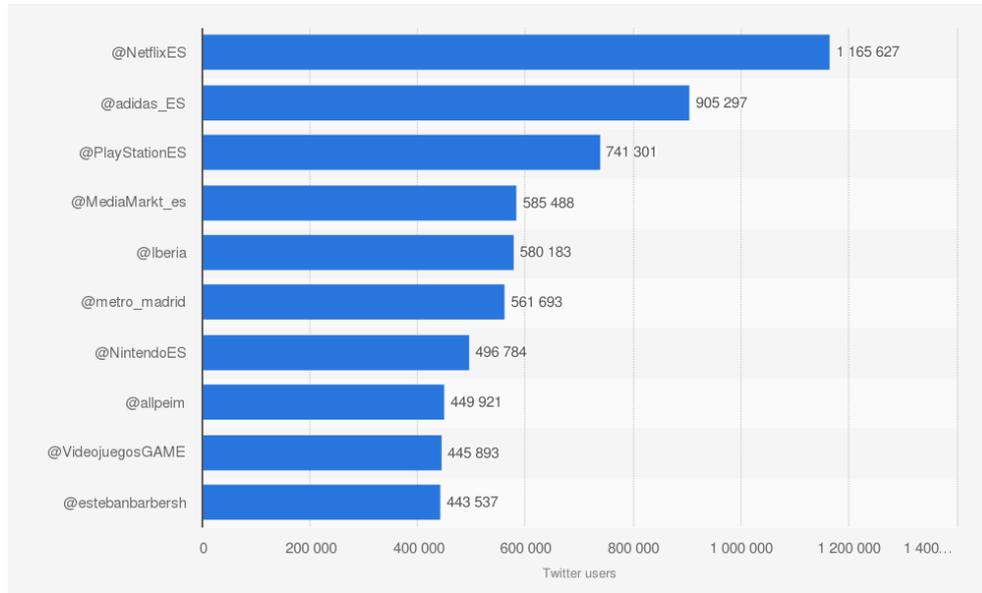
In Figure 5 we see the brands with the most followers on Twitter (Spain, April 2020). Netflix led the ranking with 1,165,627, ahead of other international companies such as Adidas, Playstation or MediaMark, which, although they had a good legion of followers, did not reach the figure of the leader in streaming audiovisual platforms.

Currently, of all the social networks used as a marketing tool, Instagram is one of the most influential and is growing at a dizzying speed in the influencer marketing market, above Twitter or Facebook. In addition, it is efficient in the objective that brands can interact with users, since being based on images the content becomes very visual and attractive, connecting quickly and easily with individuals, and allowing interaction with celebrities and large brands.

Influencers are people who through social networks manage to exert influence in society, transmitting their lifestyle, aesthetics, tastes and hobbies; being followed by a

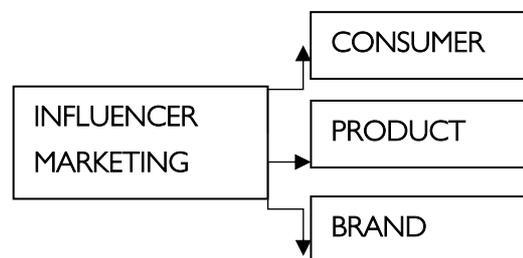
large number of people. This figure is used strategically in media such as Instagram (*instagramers*) and YouTube (*youtubers*), among others, because such networks and platforms allow to increase the memory of the brand in the mind of the consumer, as they are based mainly on the visual (Guerrero Hueso, 2017).

Figure 5. Brands accounts with more followers on Twitter in Spain as of April of 2020 (source: Statista (2020))



In sum, and as highlighted in Figure 6, the consumer, the product and the brand must be thoroughly analyzed before undertaking an influencer marketing action, in order to find the figure that is most favorable when building the brand community; being in accordance with the principles and values that the organization tries to communicate; creating a bidirectional brand-consumer relationship in the medium and long term (Iglesias, 2017).

Figure 6. Components of Influencer Marketing (source: Own elaboration from Iglesias (2017))



4. THE CASE OF NETFLIX

4.1 Introduction to Netflix

Netflix was founded in 1997, in Delaware, by Reed Hastings, Mitch Lowe and Marc Randolph, who had been part of the Pure Software company (owned by Hastings and sold in 1997). Their initial goal was to offer online movie rentals. In 1999 it launched the subscription service that offered unlimited rental for a reduced monthly subscription. It is in 2007 when Netflix introduced streaming, allowing its partners to watch programs and movies on their PC (Sachon, 2016).

This company legally offers programming of diverse nature through the network (documentaries, series, films, short films or miniseries). Initially, it distributed third-party content, but since 2013 it has also produced and distributed its own content. It is currently considered an OTT (Over the top, free transmission) company, with significant international expansion (Ruiz, 2017).

This leading streaming platform (42% market share in Spain according to EGMmobile, 2019) is responsible for the transformation of the entertainment industry. With an innovative marketing strategy, combining strategy with content, the formula for its success lies in knowing the tastes and habits of its audiences and in providing each user with what they want to see (Leclercq and Teijeiro, 2019).

This is achieved largely thanks to the big data generated by the vast public, which has led to the isolation of more than 2,000 micro communities of tastes or clusters. Big data is also useful in terms of content awareness. Netflix's *taggers* and *juicers* play a key role in this, assigning a series of tags to said content. Based on this system, the architecture of its recommendation system is built (Neira, 2019).

In this way, Netflix has anticipated and differentiated itself from the beginning, ensuring customer satisfaction through its programming, with a subscription system that provides convenience and ease of payment to the user.

On its home page, the content is organized and recommended through several criteria that can be summarized as: (a) what is trending, (b) what is popular, and (c) content similar to other previously consumed by the user. This is very interesting for the client, because it takes into account the social dimension of consumption and the importance of wanting to see the content that is popular (Subias et al., 2018).

This 21st century company took the premise of knowing-satisfying the consumer to the extreme. Todd Yellin, the company's vice president, compared the platform to a courtship: "We are the most caring couple you could have. We observe everything that users like, we pay attention to what they watch, what time they do it and on what device. We use all this data with one objective: that the service is easier to use and that the user can find something great to look at and continue to subscribe" (Leclercq and Teijeiro, 2019).

4.2 Relationship Marketing and Brand Community on Netflix

Relationship marketing has played an important role in the success of the Netflix platform; establishing a relationship of mutual benefit between the customer and the company itself by achieving user satisfaction while increasing the profitability of the organization. Through relationship marketing, not only in satisfaction but also in the loyalty of subscribers are deepened (Mondragón-Cabellos, 2018).

For a brand to create community, it must have well-defined values that add value to the user, such as a surprising user experience, a positive price-benefit ratio, or the clarity of the guarantee and quality it offers; strong enough to justify the creation of a two-way relationship and cause a feeling of commitment on the part of the customer (Vargas, 2018).

Commitment is a psychological state that can be defined as the continued desire to maintain a relationship that is considered valuable. This factor has become very important in marketing due to its power to establish and maintain long-term links. However, it is convenient to differentiate between "calculated commitment", based on economic or non-affective factors (sunk costs, change costs, lack of alternatives, ...) and "affective commitment" (based on emotional aspects), the latter being the one that it really allows building lasting relationships and creating a brand community (Casaló et al., 2013).

Each consumer committed and satisfied with a brand spreads among his or her friends and acquaintances the passion that seems logical and natural to him or her (Ruiz et al., 2005); thus becoming prescribers of said brand (Marín-Rives and Ruiz de Maya, 2007). Participation in the activities carried out by a community is of vital importance for its survival. Through these activities the community shares with its members information and experiences about the brand or product, favoring the creation of a feeling of belonging to the group. However, the level of participation of each individual depends on their personality and the degree of affection for the brand. A member may not participate in such activities and remain a mere observer, or act actively in them. Without the latter, the community would end up weakening (Casaló et al., 2013).

Netflix considers customer retention to be essential, which is why it places great weight on series and the distribution of its own content. This promotes long-term relationships with viewers, who are satisfied based on the analysis of their needs. The consumer offers information about their opinions and preferences on social networks and other platforms, or also indirectly through the data that they unconsciously provide on each visit to this streaming platform.

This point constitutes one of the most relevant elements in the success of Netflix, since today the personalization of communication is of great importance, serving individually the different market segments taking into account the specificity of each group, even dealing each individual as unique and different.

Netflix strives to take care of the detail to give comfort to the subscriber. The user can play and pause the content, download it, have options according to her preferences, all without advertising, thus being an opposite model to traditional television financed by advertisers. It allows access to a wide range of films and series at an affordable price and "convenient" for the prospect.

The company is aware that consuming online video can be a frustrating experience if one cannot do it with the same ease and comfort as when watching traditional television, so it has reached agreements with the most relevant television manufacturers so that the remote controls include the Netflix button (Figure 7), thus avoiding cumbersome tasks such as having to connect the computer to the television through the HDMI cable (Siri, 2016).

Figure 7. Netflix in one click (source: Baños Expósito (2015))



The company offers the user three different payment rates according to their requirements: Basic rate (€ 7.99 per month, can be viewed on 1 screen with standard definition), standard rate (€ 11.99 per month, can be viewed on 2 screens at the same time. HD available) and Premium rate (€ 15.99 per month, can be seen on 4 screens at the same time in HD and Ultra HD) (netflix.com, 2020). Below, Table 2 shows the prices of Netflix and its main competitors (October 2020).

Table 2. Netflix prices and its main competitors (source: Own elaboration)

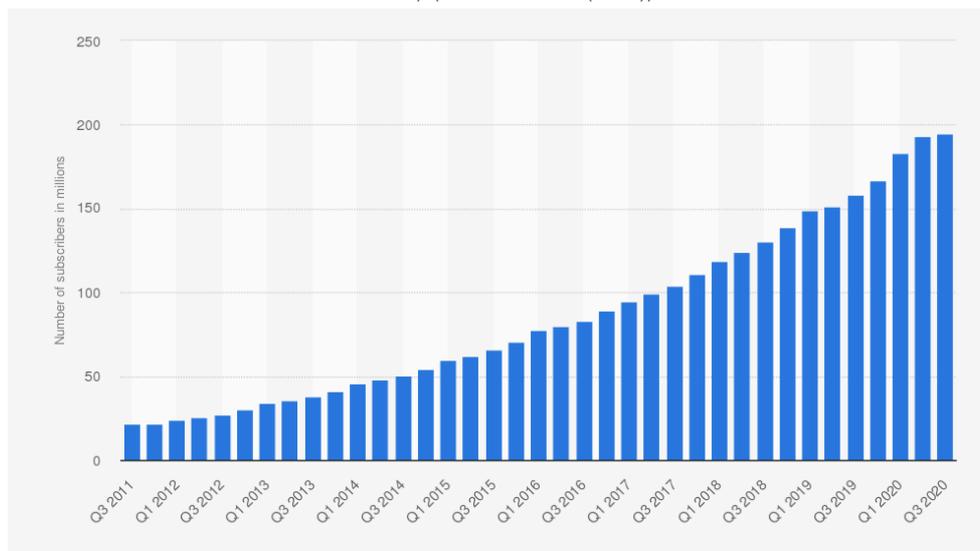
| Streaming platforms | Prices |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Netflix | Three offers, from 7,99 € / month |
| Amazon Prime Video | 36 € / year |
| HBO | 8,99 € / month |
| Disney + | 6,99 € / month |

Netflix is the streaming platform with the most content and, as can be seen in the previous table, at a highly competitive price. Its most basic rate is even cheaper than the HBO rate and is only one euro higher than Disney +, a small difference considering the significant superiority in terms of content volume.

The success of its strategy has meant that this platform currently has a high level of loyalty and has created a large community around the brand, as can be seen in Figure 8.

Netflix is experiencing unprecedented growth. In the period between the second quarter of 2019 and the second quarter of 2020 it has grown by 27%, reaching the number of subscribers to the figure of 192.95 million.

Figure 8. Number of Netflix paid subscribers worldwide from 3rd quarter 2011 to 2nd quarter 2020 (in millions) (source: Statista (2020))



According to Ruiz (2017), Netflix has carried out a series of innovations that have generated ruptures in both the film and television sectors, thanks to the strategic combination of four aspects: 1) Convergent content (Internet + cinema + television). 2) New forms of distribution of cinema and television. 3) Production of own content. 4) Experience based on the recommendations and habits of the viewer.

In Netflix they do not operate through their own physical infrastructure, but through the internet (the main characteristic of Over the Top, OTT). This allows the user to enjoy audiovisual entertainment whenever and wherever the user wants, as well as having a global broadcast (presence in 190 countries). In addition, unlike traditional audiovisual entertainment, it allows the consumption of entire seasons of a wide range of series and films. On the other hand, the fact that Netflix creates its own and exclusive content gives it more control in the creative aspect and guarantees global access to the content (Siri, 2016).

As can be seen in Figure 9, Netflix has a worldwide presence; With the exception of China (where they are currently trying to incorporate their services), North Korea, Crimea or Syria due to various government restrictions.

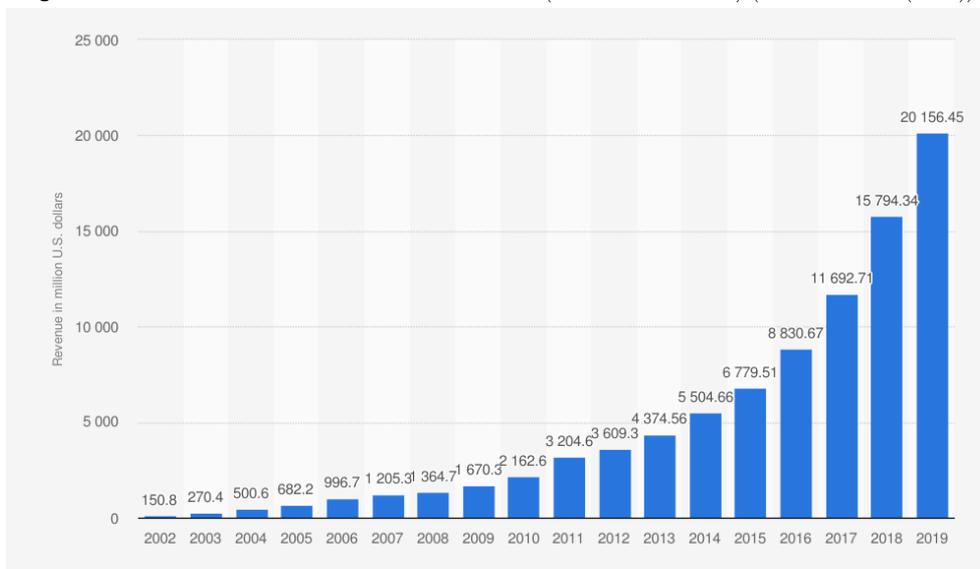
In recent years, a clear trend has been observed in which in many countries streaming services are gaining ground to the detriment of DTT, which experiences a progressive loss of audience (Gómez, 2018).

This growth in demand for streaming services, specifically for the Netflix platform, has led to a notable increase in this company's profits, to unprecedented levels, as can be seen in Figure 10.

Figure 9. Countries with Netflix availability (source: <https://help.netflix.com/es-es/node/14164>)



Figure 10. Netflix's annual revenue from 2002 to 2019 (in millions of dollars) (source: Statista (2019))



This streaming channel recorded worldwide revenues of approximately \$ 20,156 million in 2019, an increase of nearly \$ 4,500 million compared to the figure recorded just a year earlier.

4.3 Community building strategies on Netflix

4.3.1 *Netflix on social media*

The "conversation" between users, potential users and companies occurs mainly on social networks. It is in this scenario where it is sought to generate engagement or involvement with the audiences. The "likes", comments and shares measure that commitment or loyalty (Fernández et al., 2018).

Users of social networks feel the need to share information that they consider relevant, useful, or with which they identify. In this way, that the brand shares surprising or unexpected elements means increasing the probability of generating virality in networks such as Twitter.

Del Pino defines "viral marketing" as pieces with which a chain reaction is caused as a consequence of the contagion of the broadcast message, in a clear allegory that the means has surpassed the message. Slogans such as "The spark of life" by Coca Cola, or "Impossible is nothing" by Adidas, show that emotion is a good way to reach the consumer (Del Pino et al., 2012).

In this sense, Netflix's strategy to advertise its contents has been very effective, causing the public's conversation about them. Netflix presumes that purely promotional content can create rejection, so it is committed to snackable content, content that is quick and convenient for the user to consume, and easy to share and interact with, such as hashtags (#Narcos, #StrangerThings, etc.), videos, photos or memes (Lorena, 2018).

The meme is a new format widely used, consisting of adding the same text to different images, or adding a different text to the same image. It is usually a joke and manages to create engagement through humor. In social networks, community managers contact customers, and many times in their responses they use sarcasm using elements such as emojis, images or memes.

As for Twitter, there are practices that can help create tweets that generate conversation and interest in the audience. First of all, be brief (a concise tweet is more impressive; we can include a link to a website if we want to convey a longer message); use visual elements (image, gif...); incorporate labels; pose questions or surveys; or retweet relevant content and reply to users (Figure 11).

The aforementioned has given rise to the so-called branded content or brand content, whose maxim is "to offer experiences, not ads". Horrigan (2009: 51) defines it as: a fusion of advertising and entertainment in the same communication product at the service of marketing, which is integrated into the overall brand strategy of an organization and which is intended to be distributed as content entertainment with a high level of quality (Del Pino et al., 2015).

The series tend to generate more comments than other products on the platform. They increase engagement thanks to the desire to comment on episodes and seasons;

and also because of the commitment they pose to a film, as well as the intrigue they arouse.

Figure 11. Question to generate virality and to know the perception of the public (source: Netflix España)



Of the nine series that were cited in the most commented posts (Table 3), five are Netflix's own production, and three of them are in the top positions, thus evidencing the production success of this brand.

Table 3. Comments according to mentioned content (source: Own elaboration based on Fernández et al. (2018))

| Content | Number of tweets | Total responses | Average responses | Type of content | Production |
|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Narcos | 18 | 1.333 | 74,1 | Serie | Own |
| Stranger things | 6 | 405 | 67,5 | Serie | Own |
| Orange is the new black | 3 | 218 | 72,6 | Serie | Own |
| The walking dead | 3 | 127 | 42,3 | Serie | Alien |
| Friends | 2 | 94 | 47,0 | Serie | Alien |
| Big bang theory | 3 | 91 | 30,3 | Serie | Alien |
| Rick y Morty | 2 | 84 | 42,0 | Serie | Alien |
| Black mirror | 2 | 79 | 39,5 | Serie | Own |
| Daredevil | 3 | 75 | 25,0 | Serie | Own |

In addition, the content viewed in your application can be shared on Instagram stories. Followers who have the Netflix app on their smartphone have at their disposal the link “Watch on Netflix” and by clicking on it they can see what has been recommended to them. This function generates more recommendations from word of mouth among friends and followers on Instagram, also helping the content to go viral (Gleano, 2019).

Netflix also takes advantage of Facebook, responding quickly to users. Thus, they manage to increase their participation through comments or reactions, and make them feel heard.

4.3.2 *Email marketing*

Email marketing consists of sending a commercial message through email. It has been one of the most effective traditional communication and marketing tools. The survival of this avenue of promotion is proof of its undoubted efficacy. In addition, the Internet allows us to create emails with increasingly attractive content and at a lower cost, which will positively affect the loyalty of our customers, strengthening ties through regular communications (Ramos, 2016).

Understanding the audience is critical for marketers. A good segmentation of our database and the creation of increasingly specialized customer lists is of the utmost importance to obtain a good response and response rate.

Creativity is one of the key factors for your campaigns to be effective; especially if we talk about email marketing. In this area, even details such as the title of an email message can be of vital importance.

The messages should be quick and easy to understand. Netflix's simplistic approach to email design allows us to find the call to action. As an example, when it promoted *House of Cards*, Netflix only included the title, the date and the phrase "coming soon" (Egan, 2018). The syntax, word choice, tone, and structure of the text are critical to strategy. In the aforementioned series, Netflix does it in a natural way, under a presidential speech format, which is very consistent with the content, so we can appreciate an intelligent use of language (Serrano, 2017).

4.3.3 *Influencer Marketing on Netflix*

As we stated previously, for an advertising message to be effective, it is of all relevance to determine who make up the target audience and, thus, act accordingly, issuing messages that are understandable, meaningful, stimulating and inserted in the appropriate media.

The use of celebrities in marketing increases the credibility of the communication, increases the memory and recognition of the advertised brands, and increases the probability of acquisition, because viewers "lower their rational guard" to those they admire or respect. The collaborative strategy between companies and influential individuals in which both parties benefit is called influencer marketing. In the field of marketing, a prescriber is someone who, due to his personality or because of his belonging to an entity, has the capacity to affect the target market, through his opinions, evaluations and purchase decisions (Del Pino et al., 2015).

Netflix has suddenly become a major pool of influencers and prescribers. The virality caused by the series of this streaming leader has led to a notable increase in the followers of the actors and actresses of these productions on social networks. As an

example, this is the case of the actors of the series *Stranger Things*: Millie Bobby Brown (Eleven) and Noah Schnapp (Will Byers), who have 39 and 18 million followers respectively on Instagram (November 2020).

But while Netflix is a "quarry" of influencers, its content is also driven by familiar faces as a brand expansion strategy. That is, subscribers and the community in general around this platform are attracted and consolidated with the appearance of figures with weight in the artistic and media panorama. By way of example, Netflix Mexico has launched the series *Ingobernable*, placing the popular Kate del Castillo in fiction as the First Lady of that country; and in another of the productions it has used the actress Verónica Castro, widely known for her past as the protagonist of her in various telenovelas on the Televisa channel.

In addition, and as we noted when talking about Netflix and social networks, this platform has enabled an option for its users to become "influencers" in Instagram Stories, a simple way with low or no cost in which the costumer becomes a prescriber, extending the knowledge and attraction towards the contents presented to the market (Gleano, 2019).

5. CONCLUSIONS

This article has adressed the study of relationship marketing, which for some time has established itself as a new paradigm in the face of so-called transactional marketing. At present, not only the acquisition of the customers is essential, but also its conservation over time, always with an orientation in which the analysis and satisfaction of their needs prevail. In the field of relationship marketing, the brand community has become a decisive aspect that confers value on the organization, given the set of social interactions between the brand and its target audience, and among the costumers who meet with a brand with which they feel pleased and identified, to the point of becoming prescribers of it. In this context, social networks play a prominent role, helping to create a closer link with current and potential consumers, to communicate with them actively, and to make them feel like members of the community.

This work has directed its gaze to the outstanding rise of content streaming platforms, focusing on Netflix, a leader in the sector thanks, among other factors, to its ability for adaptation and innovation, with which it has managed to reach millions of households around the world.

This company shows a system capable of identifying the needs and habits of viewers and a continuous effort to make it easier for them to view their productions, together with a highly effective relationship marketing system at a low cost, based fundamentally on two-way communication through social networks, with an appropriate tone to generate the most virality. This allows the individual to generate conversation with and among Internet users, who not only see his publications but also actively participate by

commenting on them and sharing them on their profiles. Thanks to the success of its series, documentaries and movies, Netflix has turned the characters in its stories into mass phenomena, attracting a wide audience of all ages, and creating a community that grows at a remarkable rate worldwide.

Netflix is a model to be followed by other companies that are very often characterized by rigidity and inability to adapt and innovate, with costly and ineffective marketing strategies, based on short-term approaches and simply aimed at attracting new customers; without hardly worrying about establishing bonds of trust and loyalty with them through an adequate relationship marketing policy and community building around the brand.

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