

Investigating Consumer Sentiment Toward Movie Posters: An Experimental Study

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The movie industry is constantly evolving and facing new challenges in marketing its films effectively (Lee & Chen, 2017). One challenge the movie industry faces is the changing media landscape, as audiences consume content through a wider range of platforms, such as streaming services and social media. Another challenge is the crowded marketplace, with numerous films competing for audience attention and box office success (Lee & Chen, 2017). This requires movie studios to create effective marketing materials that capture audiences' interest. Thus, those responsible for marketing movies must constantly improve their marketing strategies, and one way they can do this is by ensuring their movie posters are as effective as possible (Batra & Ray, 1966).

Movie posters remain an important part of a film's marketing strategy and can greatly impact a movie's success at the box office. When done well, movie posters can effectively capture the attention and imagination of potential audiences; they build excitement and anticipation for upcoming releases and help engage fans as new films are promoted (Lee & Chen, 2017). This is why it is important to study the effect movie posters have on people's opinions regarding the movie.

Understanding and analyzing consumer perceptions of movie posters is crucial for making effective marketing decisions, and it is a significant factor that affects a movie's success (Elliott & Maier, 2012). Studies have shown that color may impact consumer attitudes toward products, including movies (Batra & Ray, 1996; Chu, 2016). However, due to evolving consumer interests, the movie industry must stay resilient and continue to find effective ways to reach and engage audiences. Toward this end, this researcher conducted an experiment that seeks to investigate the following research questions:

RQ1: Does the color of the movie poster impact participants' opinions of the movie?

RQ2: Does the likelihood of participants watching a movie based on the movie poster impact the likelihood of them recommending the movie to a friend?

RQ3: Does having knowledge of the movie series itself affect the likelihood of participants to watch the movie?

RQ4: Does the color of the movie poster impact participants' perception of what the genre of the movie is?

Method

Participants

A total of 75 participants (39 males, 33 females, 1 preferred not to say, 2 null responses) were recruited through the promotion of the survey on social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn) for a study with the description "Movie Poster Experiment Survey". Participation was limited to participants located in the United States. The majority of participants (64.4%) were aged between 18-25. Most participants were Caucasian (32.9%), Asian-American (28.8%), and Hispanic/Latinx (20.6%). The other participants reported their ethnicity as Other (10%), Mixed Race (6.9%), and Black (1.2%).

Materials and Procedure

An online experiment was used to collect data from April 9, 2023 until April 10, 2023. The independent variable was the movie poster (color or black and white). The dependent variables consisted of four questions (see Appendix). The dependent variables were divided into four sections: Movie Opinion, Viewership Probability, Genre Perception, Inclination to Recommend, and Franchise Familiarity. The first section, Movie Opinion, assessed participants' opinions on the movie based on the movie poster. An example question from this section was

“What is your opinion on the movie based solely on the movie poster?” The next section examined Viewership Probability to identify how likely participants were to watch the movie based on the poster. “Rate how likely you are to watch this movie, from very unlikely to very likely.” is an example of the question from this section. The section Genre Perception assessed participants' perceived understanding of the genre based on the movie poster. An example question from this section is “What genre do you think this movie is?” The fourth section, “Inclination to Recommend” assessed how likely participants would recommend the movie. “Rate how likely you are to recommend this movie to a friend based solely on the poster, from very unlikely to very likely.” is an example of a question from this section. Finally, the last section Franchise Familiarity measured if participants had any bias towards the movie franchise. An example of a question from this section is “Are you familiar with the Guardians of the Galaxy franchise?” Half of the questions were answered by multiple choice questions, while the other half were answered via a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “*very unlikely*” to “*very likely*”.

Results

A series of statistical tests were conducted using the results of the “Movie Poster Experiment Survey,” and analysis of the results led to the following findings. A frequency analysis revealed that more participants were randomly given the colored movie poster (50.7%) compared to the black and white poster (46.7%).

A chi-square test was used to determine whether the movie poster color impacted participants' opinions of the movie. There was a tendency for those who saw the colored movie poster to have a positive opinion of the movie compared to those who saw the black-and-white one. However, this difference is statistically nonsignificant $\chi^2(2) = .002, p = 0.99$.

A correlation analysis was performed to see if how likely participants were to watch the movie impacted how likely they were to recommend the movie to a friend based solely on the poster. Analysis revealed that in the 73 responses given by participants, there was a significant positive relationship between how likely participants were to watch the movie and how likely they were to recommend the movie to a friend based solely on the poster ($r = .76, p = .001$).

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate if the likelihood of watching the movie differed depending on whether or not the participant was familiar with the Guardians of the Galaxy franchise or not. The independent variable, familiarity with the Guardians of the Galaxy franchise, included three subgroups: Yes ($M = 3.70, SD = 1.13$), Somewhat ($M = 2.83, SD = 1.12$), and No ($M = 2.22, SD = .83$). The dependent variable was the likelihood to watch the movie, measured on a 5-point scale. The ANOVA was significant, $F(2, 70) = 8.60, p = .001$.

A chi-square test was used to determine whether people who saw the poster with color or with black and white thought the movie had a genre of action, sci-fi, comedy, film noir, thriller, horror, or animation. There was a tendency for people who saw the black and white poster with color to be more likely to perceive the movie as having the genre of action. However, this difference was statistically non-significant, $\chi^2(6) = 8.32, p = .216$.

Discussion

According to the experiment results, people who saw the colored movie poster were more likely to have a positive opinion of the movie compared to people who saw the black and white movie poster. This is supported by Chu's (2016) article which discusses the importance of marketing materials being in color for a movie to be successful. Also, people who are more likely to watch the movie are more likely to recommend the movie to a friend. This is supported by Batra and Ray's (1966) article which explains how movie posters impact a person's intent to

watch a movie. In addition, the likelihood of watching the movie differed depending on whether people were familiar with the Guardians of the Galaxy franchise or not. This suggests that movie posters with color are critical for a movie's branding and success because the previous movie posters had color which led to more people wanting to watch the latest version of the same movie (Elliott & Maier, 2012). Lastly, people who saw the black and white poster were more likely to perceive the genre of the movie as an action movie, which supports Lee and Chen's (2017) argument that movie posters are key for influencing audiences' perceptions of a movie. This study aimed to investigate whether the color of a movie poster had an impact on the participants' inclination to watch the movie and their perceptions of the movie. A greater number of participants received the Guardians of the Galaxy poster in color rather than in black and white, and the overall positive responses support the inclusion of color in movie posters as an effective marketing strategy.

The findings of this study are useful for people in film, media, and television, especially for those in the marketing department. It is important for them to further understand how consumers perceive color in marketing materials to effectively attract consumers. The "Movie Poster Experiment Survey" results can assist professionals in the film and marketing industry in improving their marketing materials and tactics, increasing their likelihood of attracting more consumers, as a result. In addition, scholars of marketing, film, and psychology may find the results useful for their professions or areas of study.

There are a few limitations in the context of this study. Amazon Mechanical Turk was not used to recruit participants due to technical issues. As a result, the data sampling technique that was used is convenience sampling; social media platforms were used to recruit participants to take the survey, which may invite bias. In addition, there were a few participants who omitted

responses to the questions, which could affect the results of the study. To obtain more precise and impartial data in the future, several measures can be taken, including utilizing Amazon Mechanical Turks to diminish bias and mandating that participants answer demographic questions to gain a better understanding of their identity, as well as expanding the sample size to collect more responses for analysis. More research regarding consumer perceptions and opinions should be conducted to see whether the findings support or contradict the findings of this study.

References

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Appendix

Please take a close look at this image.



or



Movie Opinion

1. What is your current opinion of the movie based solely on the poster?

Viewership Probability

1. Rate how likely you are to watch this movie, from very unlikely to very likely.

Genre Perception

1. What genre do you think this movie is?

Inclination to Recommend

1. Rate how likely you are to recommend this movie to a friend based solely on the poster, from very unlikely to very likely.

Franchise Familiarity

1. Are you familiar with the Guardians of the Galaxy franchise?

Demographics

1. What is your gender?

2. How old are you?
3. What is your ethnicity?