

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTS VIOLENCE HAS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR WITHIN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

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Abstract

As long as the entertainment industry has existed, it's always been assumed violence not only sells, but overall has a positive effect on consumer behaviour. Not only has it always been accepted violence sells but it's always been accepted the outrageous quantity of violence we witness within the film and Tv series industry. Industry experts and authors have always agreed advertisers are to blame for the absurd levels and quantity of violence as advertising is the act of spreading awareness of a product in an attempt to increase purchase intention and brand image. Not only have movie fans and critics agreed upon the concept that violence sells but researchers have also attempted to prove numerous times the extent to which humans are evolutionary hard wired to pay attention to violence and aggression.

The purpose of this research is to view the concept of violence within entertainment from a different perspective and attempt to shed light on the possibility that violence may in fact hinder consumer behaviour. Aspects of consumer behaviour analysed were brand awareness, initial interest levels, purchase intention and brand memory. Evolutionary theory suggests humans are hard wired over thousands of years to pay attention to violence and therefore cannot be neglected. However, just because humans evolved to pay attention to violence doesn't mean we find it interesting over lasting periods of time.

Both qualitative and quantitative research was conducted in the form of focus groups and interviews to gain the best possible understanding of how violence effects consumer behaviour within the entertainment industry. The overall findings were presented in the form of a discussion. This research discovered violence has a huge effect on consumer behaviour in more aspects than one and can in fact hinder or discourage consumer interest levels, loyalty and further purchase intention.

Submission of Dissertation

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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Chapter 1 – Introduction | 6 |
| Introduction..... | 6 |
| Background | 6 |
| Research Problem and Question..... | 7 |
| Research Objectives..... | 8 |
| Why this is an important area of research | 8 |
| Dissertation Structure | 9 |
| | |
| Chapter 2 - Literature Review | 11 |
| Introduction..... | 11 |
| Consumer behaviour and definition of terms | 12 |
| Brand attitude | 12 |
| Brand awareness, Recall and Recognition | 13 |
| Defining violence | 15 |
| Violence as a form of entertainment | 16 |
| Literature Gap and conclusion..... | 20 |
| | |
| Chapter 3 - Research question | 21 |
| Objectives..... | 22 |
| The effect violence has on attention and movie or series interest..... | 22 |
| The possibility of violence hindering consumer loyalty..... | 22 |
| The possibility of violence in video advertising hindering purchase intention.... | 22 |
| The possibility of violence acting as a motivator for brand awareness regarding word-of-mouth marketing | 23 |
| Hypothesis..... | 23 |
| | |
| Chapter 4 - Research methodology | 24 |
| Research strategy and design | 24 |
| Procedure chosen and reasoning..... | 27 |
| Data source, population and sample | 30 |
| Research implementation | 32 |
| Limitations of research..... | 33 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Collection and treatment of data | 34 |
| Chapter 5 – Results and Findings..... | 35 |
| Demographic analysis | 36 |
| Industry related data analysis | 37 |
| Violence within the entertainment industry data analysis..... | 39 |
| Interview analysis and themes..... | 43 |
| Theme 1 – Violence must add to the storyline | 43 |
| Theme 2 – Violence can be too extreme..... | 44 |
| Theme 3 – Advertising using violence receives mixed reviews..... | 44 |
| Theme 4 – Violence has a huge impact on Word-of-mouth marketing..... | 44 |
| Theme 5 – Violence hugely effects consumer behaviour regarding people under the age of 18 | 45 |
| Chapter 6 – Discussion and conclusion | 46 |
| Discussion | 46 |
| The effect violence has on attention and movie or series interest..... | 46 |
| How violence can hinder consumer loyalty | 47 |
| The possibility of violence in advertising hindering purchase intention | 48 |
| Violence acting as a motivator for brand awareness regarding word-of-mouth marketing | 49 |
| Recommendations for further research | 50 |
| Conclusion..... | 50 |
| Reference list..... | 53 |

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Introduction

Violence has been the backbone of the entertainment industry for many years. Across films, Series, and video games violence is present and commonly assumed to be a selling point for advertisements and general attention for the public. However, just because violence has been ever so present for many years doesn't mean it needs to be. A countless number of experts have searched the field of violence within the entertainment industry and its correlation and relation to violence in society and found it has a direct impact. The purpose of this study is to find out if this absurd amount of violence we are exposed to is truly necessary. Could it be a case of there are better ways of advertising other than with violence and aggression? Leading research in recent years has questioned does violence truly sell but no conclusive answer has been drawn. Regular exposure to violent media has been showcased to have negative consequences so it makes for good reason to question is there really a need for so much violence or would films, series and video games sell equally successfully if violence wasn't present?

Background

For many years it's always been assumed that violence sells, and humans are entertained by blood, guts, fighting and any other type of aggressive act we can think of. However some research has been conducted in recent years to argue against this long-standing concept and try make the point violence isn't always the best way of grabbing the consumers valuable attention. With the overwhelming number of statistics that prove violence is rampant within the entertainment industry such as films and series we must now question is this really the best strategy to sell films or series. Could it be possible that advertisements with no violence whatsoever could have the same marketing effect. This question is worth examining because the sheer quantity of films or series that obtain violence and therefore so does their marketing efforts. According to Lyons (2013) over half of TV programmes contain violence in some form. When discussing this topic one of the most discussed opinions is from former CBS and NBC president Jeff Sagansky who famously claimed "The number one priority in television

is not to transmit quality programming to viewers, but to deliver consumers to advertisers. We aren't going to get rid of violence until we get rid of advertisers." (Kim, 1994) This famous quote claims advertisers are the reason violence is so prevalent within the entertainment industry or basically that "violence sells".

According to Lull and Bushman (2015) who examined the top 100 highest grossing programmes of all time, the top 100 grossing films of all time and the top 50 highest grossing video games of all time 48% all contained some type of violence. A statistic this high is quite unbelievable and makes it easy to create the assumption the general public and industry related journalists would agree that violence sells.

Research Problem and Question

Over the history of the entertainment industry one the key selling points has always been violence, or at least that's what's assumed. The problem with this train of thought is the lack of research and study on the topic. In 2015 a study by Lull and Bushman firstly predicted violence doesn't sell but actually has the opposite effect, after their prediction they attempted to back this up with facts and statistics. This paper was successful and encouraged people to question the true value of violence but still left many doubters in query. Since then there have been a couple more studies on the topic but the topic itself is still up for debate. There have been hundreds of studies attempting to prove the marketing pull of violence and papers showcasing how effective they can be but there's been truly little work conducted coming at this debate from a true non bias point of view and open to the possibility violence could in fact hinder sales when it comes to the consumer behaviour aspects of films and TV Series. For instance, a study conducted by Monk and Turner et al (2004) found the most popular films from each decade were becoming increasingly more violent. Monk and Turner et al (2004) then conclude violence is a key selling point for the film industry and cannot be avoided or disrupted because humans are simply just attracted to gore, aggression or violence of in any form. This is the most common train of thought for movie critics and fans. To summarise, the research problem is the lack of studies being conducted attempting to prove violence isn't an effective motivator and the overwhelming amount of people who simply conform to the hypothesis violence sells. The quantity of research on this topic is scarce. This research problem then leads to the question: What are the effects of violence on consumer behaviour within the entertainment industry?

Research Objectives

The research problem and question leave this study with some key objectives. The aim of this research is to examine and discover:

- *The effect violence has on attention and movie or series interest*
- *The possibility of violence hindering consumer loyalty*
- *The possibility of violence in video advertising hindering purchase intention*
- *The possibility of violence acting as a motivator for brand awareness regarding word-of-mouth marketing*

Why this is an important area of research

Does violence within the entertainment industry lead to an increase of violence in society? In recent years it's become a common question within the entertainment industry, many studies would agree exposure to regular violence as a form of entertainment often leads to negative consequences. The belief on the negative impacts of violence within entertainment makes this question a worthy area of study. The continuing debate has seen much research on the effect violent media has on children and young adolescents and the results are worrying. In one of the largest public health projects of modern times within the entertainment industry that researched over 1000 studies the experts concluded that there is a direct positive association between exposure to violent entertainment and aggressive behaviour in society. (Browne, K and Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005)

Another large study, which reviewed the viewing tendencies of a large sample of kids discovered more correlations between media and violence. A sample of over 700 individuals were monitored over the course of 17 years in the US. It found that on average 20 to 25 accounts of violence is shown in children's television each hour, it also found on average 3 to 5 acts of violence were shown during prime time each day.

This same study with 700 individuals over 17 years then found a significant association between the amount of time spent watching children's television to aggressive behaviours and tendencies within children over the course of childhood and adolescents. These aggressive behaviours were cases such as antisocial behaviour, verbal aggression and likelihood of physical aggression. (Browne, K and Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005) These

statistics make this area of research worthwhile purely because of the harm it may be producing on young people and the possibility that violence may not be necessary to sell the entertainment being provided. It's now time to find out if violence really sells entertainment or would advertisements which don't include violence reach top grossing sales figures.

Dissertation Structure

This Dissertation has been split into 6 sections including:

Introduction: The introduction has the purpose of giving the reader some background on the topic and a better understanding on the context relating to the topic at hand. The introduction has the purpose of providing the reader with a background to the topic and showcasing some recent studies or research that are valuable to the Dissertation and help the reader understand the reasons for research.

Literature Review: Whilst the Introduction provides the reader with a brief conclusion of recent research on the topic at hand the literature review should provide an in-depth analysis of the most vital and important information surrounding the topic. This section should examine recent research of the highest standard and view papers from an unbiased perspective offering facts from both sides of the argument or research.

Research Question: The purpose of this section is to help the reader understand the logical flow and reasoning of how this research has arrived at the point of "An Investigation into the effects violence has on consumer behaviour within the entertainment industry."

Methodology: This section refers to the method of research both primary and secondary or qualitative or quantitative. This section provides information on the strategy behind this research project and what tools will be used to implement this strategy of research. This may include survey design and reasoning, sample distribution and geographical reasoning or strategies.

Results and analysis: Results of the methodology and findings will be presented in an easy-to-read manner detailing the tools or software used to find such results. The results will be processed and analysed using software to gain a better understanding of the methodology and analysis of the data will be shown.

Conclusion: This will be the final chapter and end of this dissertation; this section will include findings of the research and discover the meaning of these findings. A link between the literature review and findings of the methodology will be drawn to make accurate conclusions and provide the reader with valuable information on the topic. Assumptions will be made using all information in this dissertation.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

The sheer quantity of violence within the media and entertainment industry is immense. A study regarding the occurrence of violence in television advertisements found from 2014 to 2015 of the 25 most expensive programmes to purchase for ads 44% percent of them contained violence. (Poggi, 2015) An analysis of gun violence from 2013 found that the quantity of weapon violence from 1985 to 2013 in the films industry had tripled. (Bushman, Jamieson, Weitz, & Romer, 2013) The most expensive ad to run in television world wide is to obtain air time during the Super Bowl. The Super Bowl had a viewing attendance of 111 million in 2021. (NFL, 2022) According to Nielsen (2014) the advertisements aired during the Super Bowl in 2013 had a percentage of 40% obtaining some type of violence. Lastly, a recent study found over 80% of movies aired in the US contained some form of violence or aggression. (Furnham et al, 2018) These studies showcase the extreme occurrence of violence within entertainment and lead to the requirement of further research. The aim of this literature review is to examine and critique the most important and prominent existing theories regarding consumer behaviour, defining violence, the attraction of violence and popular theories as to why experts believe violence is a major part of the entertainment industry. The goal of this literature review is to define terms and discover whether experts believe violence is a key selling point for entertainment. This section will present the most important and influential research conducted on the topic. The opening of this literature review shall contain information and definitions of key wording that's relevant to this research. The exploration of key terms such as consumer behaviour, brand attitude, recall and recognition will be conducted. The following section will examine and critique violence as a definition and attempt to gain a better understanding of the term. Finally, research, studies and experiments regarding the leading scientific work within this topic will be presented to give the reader a complete overview of violence within the entertainment industry and its effects on consumer behaviour.

Consumer behaviour and definition of terms

The core research objective of this paper is to examine the effects of violence on consumer behaviour regarding the entertainment industry. Firstly, we must define and understand consumer behaviour. According to Kailash Barmola (2010) a consumer is a person who buys, and has the ability to purchase, either goods and services that are being offered by marketing agencies or sellers to meet the requirement of fulfilment in that purchase. In other words of simpler terminology: a consumer is someone who purchases a good from a company or person attempting to sell. As this is the act of buying on an emotional level a consumer can be influenced by psychology and marketing attempts to purchase a product or service.

(Kailash Barmola, 2010) To examine an early viewpoint of consumer behaviour we can explore Walters (1979) who stated consumer behaviour in the process in which a person decided where, what, when, whether and how they purchase either a good or service.

According to Schiffman & Wisenblit, (2019) there are many factors that can contribute to consumer behaviour such as culture and social class, social activities and groups, family roles, personal and individual aspects including age, job, economic power, life style, and psychological motivations. Other theorists argue the dominant factors effecting consumer behaviour are culture, social and wealth. (Kotler et al, 2022) Consumers decide what to purchase based on previous experiences, usual habits and normal social standards.

(Kahneman, 2011) The regular consumer thrives for consistency in purchases and usually intends to familiarise themselves with a brand or product. (Solomon et al., 2017)

Understanding consumer behaviour and the need consumers have for wanting consistency and matching social norms helps marketers specify their advertisements through market research.

Brand attitude

Brand attitude refers to the understanding a consumer has with a specific brand, each aspect of the consumers mind and relationship with that brand refers to the attitude, this may include how the brand makes the consumers feel and how those emotions effect consumer behaviour.

(Keller, 1993) The state of mind a consumer has regarding a brand considering various idiosyncrasies such as quality, value, safety, assurance, or performance. (Aaker and Keller, 1990) Brand attitude often effects by a consumers own individual set up beliefs because these

beliefs are based off emotional stimuli, for this reason it's hard to find a one size fits all approach for marketers to increase the satisfaction of brand attitude. Research also suggests brand attitude can be changed by marketing attempts over time. According to Keller and Lehmann (2006) marketing signals such as advertisements and especially word of mouth can influence consumer behaviour and increase the reception of a consumer's attitude towards a certain brand over time. Brand attitude is imperative to for marketers to understand as it makes it easier to predict consumer behaviour. If brand attitude is positive within the mind of the consumers theirs a higher possibility of that brand being considered for purchase. Research suggests the most important aspect of brand attitude leading to higher chances of purchase intention was quality, if the individual has a perception a certain brand was of the highest quality this is the leading aspect that may influence consideration of buying. (Thorma and Williams, 2013)

Brand awareness, Recall and Recognition

Brand awareness regards the level to which the person or consumer understands a company or brand and this awareness then plays a role in other consumer behaviour such as purchase intention. (Lin and Ryan, 2014) The higher the levels of brand awareness the higher the chances of the consumer purchasing said brand. There are two sub categories of brand awareness which include brand recall and brand recognition. (Rossiter, 2014) The goal of marketing is to encourage and influence consumers to purchase a product or service. Marketers follow this goal by trying to increase brand awareness within consumers. These two conceptual ideas of brand recall and brand recognition can be targeted differently. Examples of strategies attempting to increase brand awareness may be audio such as radio advertisement, or visual components such television advertisements, marketers also rely on word of mouth to increase awareness. (Sweeney and Swait, 2008) According to Prashar et al (2012) brand recall considers the extent and the ability a consumer has to remember or recall a brand given a specific situation or predicament. According to Bagozzi and Salik (1983) brand recall is the ability for a consumer to remember the specific targeted item, brand or service in which they had previous experience or previous knowledge with. When experts are discussing different strategies, companies use to analyse brand recall they have identified two different examining methods. This can be either aided or unaided recall. (Khurram, Qadeer

and Sheerez, 2018) Aided recall occurs if a consumer given certain details and made knowledgeable of them, this could be the brand name from an advertisement.

If the consumer is not provided with any details or any information this can then be classified as unaided recall abilities. (Khurram, Qadeer and Sheerez, 2018) Both are said to be equally important. There are different forms of brand awareness and brand recall is one of them.

Brand recall is the form of awareness that analyses the ability of the consumer to recognize or identify and brand from their memory or experiences with that brand. (Baumann, Hammin and Chong, 2015) Aided brand recall occurs when brand cues are given and allows for the consumer to activate their memory to recall the brand cues.

Brand cues can be in the form of visuals or audio advertisement. (Prashar et al, 2012) Experts also believe brand recall can be subjective for a number of reasons, personal opinions and emotions can affect the individual's ability for brand memory, so can attitude and feeling of past experience. As each person is different the attempt for marketers to achieve higher levels of brand recall can differ from person to person. (Sweeney and Swait, 2008) Another key factor which can influence brand recall abilities that marketers have no control over is the intelligence of the individual person. Research has found individuals of higher intelligence have higher possibilities for greater brand recollection. (Khurram, Qadeer and Sheerez, 2018) Brand recognition refers to how much a brand is recognized by the consumers based on brand attributes and the individuals past experiences with that brand. According to Morrison and Crane (2007) Brand recognition is what influences the consumers to purchase a brand when the options are a brand, they recognise versus a brand they never heard of. Brand recognition is vital for marketers as it's the component of brand awareness that allows consumers to distinguish one product from a competitor's product. (Samiee, Shimp, and Sharma, 2005) Some theorists argue brand recognition isn't the most valuable aspect of consumer behaviour, however other experts such as Freeling, Leiter, and Person, (1997) make the argument "it is the brand recognition which hangs over the company door, the name of the product, or the name that describe a service."

Defining violence

Firstly we must understand violence and define it. Defining violence isn't easy as it can be subjective in many cases. Some definitions offer a more extreme reading whilst others offer a more social reading and relate the word violence closely to aggression. When discussing scientific literature to help define the act of violence four different pathways to definitions can be identified. Scientific literature suggests we can use the exemplar approach, the social psychology approach, the public health approach, or the animal research approach. However, to break down what violence may include Sherry Hamby (2017) offers her perspective, this idea is there are 7 variations of violence which include Gore, swearing, use of weapons, sexual violence, bodily mutilation, death and aggressive behaviour. Previously it was stated violence can be difficult to define because it can be subjective. Some authors would disagree with Hamby (2017) and state that aggressive behaviour or swearing may not always be a form of violence. According to Bufacchi (2007) there is a distinction between aggressive tendencies or behaviours and the act of violence.

To examine the four most important aspects in understanding violence the exemplar approach should be first. This approach is to listen to exemplars from the industry, for example the American psychological association define violence as "An extreme form of anger such as assault, rape or murder". (APA, 2022) Definition of violence coming from the exemplar approach may be logical and consistent but offers some issues of their own. According to (Natarajan & Caramaschi, 2010) these definitions don't consider social and humanistic reasoning and present only matter of fact and emotionally unrealistic circumstances which isn't always the norm. The social psychology approach tends to view violence not from an extremist point of view but rather from an everyday life and social point of view. For this reason this view tends to relate the word aggression to violence and that's often a part of their definition. (Parrot and Giancola, 2017) To examine a viewpoint from this approach we can look to expert and authors DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2011) who define violence as any type of aggression or act that's intended to hurt another person. Whilst this definition is perhaps more realistic and relatable to society a criticism of the social psychology approach is how closely they relate aggression. An example of this is their definition for aggression reads "any act that its goal is to cause injury of emotional or physical to another person." (DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2011) To critique this approach of defining violence it's easy to come to the opinion its lack of distinction between violence and aggression. Another issue found

with these definitions was the lack of understanding that sometimes-inflicting pain on another person is purely for long term benefits. According to Truman & Morgan (2016) this definition of violence is insufficient as it doesn't consider the positive effects of intended pain such as a dentist causing mild pain to ensure long terms advantages. Overall, we can make the clarification this definition excludes prosocial harmful actions. The animal research approach provides a better description of the true meaning of violence. This approach describes violence as a pathological form of aggressive behaviour that has lost its function in society. (Koolhaas et al., 2010) This provides a consistent basis of what violence is and relates it to social communication which are the main strengths, however the word intention is missing from this definition, so this once again excluded the benefit of prosocial intentional harm.

Finally, this leaves us with the public health approach to gain a better understanding of violence and what it means to be violent. The public health approach offers the most logical explanation of the word and receives the least amount of criticism from industry experts and psychologists. The World Health Organisation (WHO) define violence as "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (WHO, 2020) This definition should provide the reader of this paper with the best definition of violence and help the reader gain the best understanding of what it means to be violent. This quote should be the basis of the understanding of violence for the rest of this paper as deeper concepts are discussed such as why humans are attracted to violence and the concept of violence within the entertainment industry. Refer back to this quotation when exploring or pondering the concept of violence.

Violence as a form of entertainment

What effect does violence have on consumer behaviour? One side of this debate argues humans are attracted to violence because of evolutionary theory and the other side argues humans have moved past that stage of existence and people no longer want to see fighting and aggression within their standard entertainment. This next section will examine and discuss the leading academic theory of the effects of violence on consumer behaviour. Firstly, we must understand the sheer quantity and occurrence of violence within films, and TV

series. Most consumers living within developed geographical structures are exposed to violence within entertainment on a regular basis. The percentage of violence in movies and TV shows is alarming, the public concern is the consideration this regular exposure to violence may have on society. Since the early 2000s research have been attempting to find a correlation between exposure to violence within entertainment and real-life aggressiveness and violent tendencies, they have clearly succeeded. The sheer amount of empirical evidence stating the direct positive correlation between exposure to violence in movies, series and gaming to violence in society is overwhelming. (Anderson and Bushman, 2015) One of the earliest pieces of research regarding the quantity of violence on TV is from the NTV – National television violence study which found in 1998 more than 60% of programmes that was being broadcasted in the USA contained violence, this research considered more than 8000 hours of broadcast TV time. (Debling, 1998)

Evolutionary theory suggests humans have become hard wired to pay attention to violence over hundreds of years because historically the humans who paid more attention to violence had a lower chance of being attacked by another person or predator. (Maner, Gailliot, Rouby, & Miller, 2007) Evolutionary theory also suggests that interest or attention to violence is selective as the human mind evolved from the environment it originated from, this means geographically some heritage of people may have had higher threats to safety so they may have evolved to being more attentive towards violence. (Neuberg, Kenrick, & Schaller, 2010) These civilisations of people who required higher attention to violence then had higher chances of survival and the opportunity of reproduction possibilities or advantages. (Neuberg, Kenrick, & Schaller, 2010) As a result of attention to violence being mandatory for survival this thought humans throughout history to evolve into favouring stimuli associated with danger or aggression. This is the reason many experts today claim violence or aggression has such a unique effect on consumer behaviour. (Nairne, 2010) This is also the reason we see today that the entertainment industry has an overwhelming amount of violence. According to a study examining the occurrence of violence within the entertainment industry it was found that over half of TV programmes in western society contain violence or aggression in some type of formality. (Lyons, 2013)

There are many studies confirming the evidence of evolutionary theory effecting attention to violence. The empirical evidence suggests the initial attraction to violence is factual and can't be disputed. According to Mogg & Bradley (2002) the attractional bias humans have to danger is more saliant among cultures in which survival and reproduction has been of the

highest value. This concept leads to the theory that geographical location can affect evolutionary theory and interpretation. In a large study in which the objective was to find the effects violence or threat has on memory and recall it was found that humans attend quicker to threatening faces and are more likely to remember a threatening face than a happy or friendly one. (Ohman, Lundqvist, & Esteves, 2001) According to Matthews (1990) threat and danger have a higher impact on attentional bias from people who are socially awkward or of lesser confidence. In another study regarding social reaction to threats or danger it found socially anxious people responded faster to threatening faces in specific locations than people of higher social comforts. (Mogg and Bradley, 2002) When examining these case studies and experiments it's clear to say there is empirical evidence supporting the claim humans are hard wired to pay higher attention to violent cues or acts of aggression. These reasons are why many experts within the film and movie industry concede to the hypothesis violence does in fact sell. However, just because humans are hard wired through evolution to be attracted to violent cues this doesn't mean violence is the best strategy of effecting consumer behaviour in a positive way. A sub product of evolutionary theory and attraction to violent cues is the fact that these cues are emotionally arousing. (Nueberg, 2010) Many previous studies also prove this to be factual, for example Geer and Melton (1994) conducted weapon focus studies of investigative crimes, what they discovered was the existence of a deadly weapon at a crime scene caused the investigators to obsess over the weapon rather than the enforcer, investigators remember features of the scene less accurately when a weapon is involved.

To relate this example to the effects violence has on entertainment it also correlates to violence negatively effecting brand call and brand recollection. According to an experiment conducted by Otgaar and Howe (2014) violence being present in the scene of a film has a direct negative effect of brand recall or brand memory. It's also important to view the most important scientific studies of the brain ability and function to understand the effects of violence in terms of consumer behaviour. Neuroscience documentation and efforts found violent stimuli have priority of attention because of their arousal abilities. Heightened action of the body's limbic structures has been associated with viewing acts of violence. (Karama et al, 2002) The limbic structures of the body are what's responsible for behavioural and emotional responses, these structures have a direct impact on consumer behaviour. (Karama et al, 2002) Research also suggests the limbic structures play a key role on attentional stimuli which has a direct impact on memory recognition. (LaBar and Cabeza, 2006) This neuroscience documentation provides further support for the hypothesis that violence is

attentive and attractive due to evolutionary theory. Although what's important to note is just because neuroscience and evolutionary theory suggests humans are hard wired to be attentive of violence this doesn't mean violence is a key selling point for the entertainment industry. In fact, the idea of violence makes the human mind unaware of other stimuli this could be direction to the idea violence may have a direct negative effects on brand awareness.

There are two types of cues that effect our memory and consumer behaviour, central cues and peripheral cues. Central cues are responsible for direct memory and leave an impression in the consumers mind, peripheral cues on the other hand may gain the consumers attention but don't necessarily leave a lasting memory. (Parker & Furnham, 2007) Recent experiments has found advertisements which contained violence were processed by consumers as peripheral advertisements, this meant the violence was the main attraction of the ad and people paid little attention to the brand that was on offer. (Sparks & Lang, 2015) The same study also found advertisements with no violence had a higher chance of the brand been seen as a central cue. This gives reason to suggest violence has a hindering effect on consumer behaviour. Further research that experimented with print advertisement found similar results. Bushman (2007) conducted research which the results found brands that used sex and violence within their print advertisement where less likely to be remembered compared to brands that used no sex or violence. Scientific studies suggest the reasoning for this is violence is seen by the brain as a central and demanding cue. This results in the violent scenario taking central focus of the consumer and attentional bias to solely violence occurs. Continued research supports this theory as Sparks and Lang (2015) found violent content within an advertisement or media increased the attentional resources of the brain, however these advertisements were also less likely to be remembered for their branding or product concluding violence has a contradictory ramification on consumer behaviour and brand memory and recognition.

Literature Gap and conclusion

Research has outlined the experiments and testing put into the effects violence has on consumer behaviour within the entertainment industry. We can now comprehend the various factors which sway consumers to buy products or services based on their emotions and environment. (Lin and Ryan, 2014) Research has confirmed the true existence of evolutionary theory resulting in humans being attentive of violent or aggressive cues, this is further backed up by neuroscience theory and brain functionality and persuasion. Although many of these studies have searched for the same theory, a theory of violence being an effective selling point. Here lies the gap in the research. A monumental amount of research has been conducted attempting to prove the existence of evolutionary theory suggesting humans have evolved to be attracted or attentive toward violence. Whilst this may have been proven, true theorists have placed very little attention on the possibility of violence having a hindering effect on consumer behaviour. It's been confirmed we are attracted to violence and this paper is not disputing that fact but, that doesn't prove violence within entertainment has a positive consequence on consumer behaviour aspects such as brand attitude, brand recall or brand recognition. The possibility of violence playing a hindering role on these aspects must be explored in greater depth.

Chapter 3 - Research question

The overwhelming number of authors and industry experts who conform to the hypothesis violence sells films or Tv series is staggering. The former CBS and NBC president claimed the entertainment industry wont discard violence until they discard advertising. (Sagansky, 1994) In other words Sagansky believed violence is a key selling point for films or Tv Series. One of Hollywood's most well respected and successful directors of all time Quentin Tarantino simply argues "Violence sells because violence is fun". (Tarantino, 2013) His stance on the topic in the last ten years has hardly changed as his most recent film Once Upon a time in Hollywood (2019) showcased some of the most violent and gruesome scenes in recent cinematic times. Other recent research by Gochhait (2015) backed up previous neuroscience studies to argue humans are drawn to violence and aggression in any form. However, further research (Sparks and Lang, 2015; Parker & Furnham, 2007; Bushman, 2007) all found violence is attractive to humans backing up evolutionary theory; but they also found violence acts as a central attentional cue meaning everything else regarding scene is easily forgotten apart from the violent act itself. This leads to the hypothesis if this brain function acts in the same system regarding viewing acts of violence through entertainment. Is it possible violence within the film is a central cue therefore taking away attention and interest from the storyline and plot? Could violence have the opposite effect and hinder consumer behaviour? This proven system in which we view and perceive violence leads to the research question:

An investigation into the effects violence has on consumer behaviour within the entertainment industry.

Objectives

The following objectives have been selected as they will provide this study with the most clear and logical findings to better understand the overall goal of how violence effects consumer behaviour within the entertainment industry. As previously outlined the research objectives have been broken down into four sections:

The effect violence has on attention and movie or series interest

Neuroscience research found violence has a direct impact on the limbic structures of the brain which are responsible for emotional responses and attentional bias. (Karama et al, 2002) These limbic structures functionality regards where a humans attention lies. This results in meaning a person is hard wired to be attracted to violence. The intention of this objective is to evaluate this theory and see if it can be proven through using the film or series industry as the topic. The goal is to examine the effect violence has in films on our attention or in other words our limbic structures.

The possibility of violence hindering consumer loyalty

For the entirety of the entertainment industry's history it has been assumed that violence sells, however how often do you hear someone say, "I couldn't watch, it was too gruesome I had to turn it off"? Movie fans, critics and authors have long agreed violence is an attraction point for the entertainment industry but perhaps there's a limit to violence and how much people of varying interests or tolerances are willing to endure. The goal of this objective is to find out if violence could in fact turn people away from a film or series if it's too gruesome or too prevalent within the storyline.

The possibility of violence in video advertising hindering purchase intention

In 2022 its rare an advertisement for a film or series would be in anything other than video format. The entertainment industry now advertises in the form of trailers, often released across various social media platforms so that's why video advertisement has been specified in this objective. This ensures the most common form of advertisement is examined. In order to understand how violence effects consumer behaviour its vital we determine the effect it has through marketing on sales and purchase intention.

The possibility of violence acting as a motivator for brand awareness regarding word-of-mouth marketing

Word of mouth marketing is one of the most effective tactics for spreading awareness within the film and Tv Series community. (Meiners, Seeberger and Ulf, 2020) the goal of this objective is to examine the possibility of violence being a talking point among peers when discussing a film or series. Its often a film or series might be so violent or include so much gore one of the key talking points would be the attentional bias this violence may receive. One of the most popular Tv Series of the last ten years was squid games (IMDb, 2022). This over the top highly violent and entertaining series has been the best example of word-of-mouth marketing in recent years. According to research by Ahmed, Fenton, Das and Hardy (2022) no show in history has had a larger impact from word-of-mouth marketing than squid games. This gives basis and reason to explore violence effecting word of mouth marketing and its possible effect on awareness and purchase intention.

Hypothesis

Based on previous studies, experiments and research regarding how the brain reacts and perceives violence as a central cue which holds dominance over non- central cues it is the prediction of this research that violence in some cases may have a negative impact on consumer behaviour. It is also the prediction this study will result in some cases violence may hinder sales of films and series. It is proposed that violence may affect the consumers interest or loyalty to a Tv series depending on variables such as consumers age or gender. It is likely violence will have a positive effect on marketing efforts in some situations such as word of mouth marketing. It is also likely violence may have negative consequences regarding consumer purchase intention from a marketing standpoint involving video advertisements.

Chapter 4 - Research methodology

Research strategy and design

There are many varying forms in which research can be conducted. The two basis of research for these different strategies are qualitative research or quantitative research. According to Pawar (2020) qualitative research is a method which incorporates the use and findings of information such as text, opinion, and quality of subject. These answers cannot be numeric, or stat based and instead search for answers to subjective topics. Quantitative research is the opposite as this method asks questions which can be labelled and understood through statistics or numbers. Quantitative research methods often attempt to support a hypothesis or prediction with facts whereas qualitative methods are typically more exploratory. (Creswell, 2003) An example of a qualitative question may be “what’s your opinion on persons under the age of 18 watching violent films?”. Whereas a quantitative question may be “how much money do you spend each month for your Netflix subscription?” A mixed approach is often used for primary research as it blends the two methods together providing the highest quality data and information. In order to gather the most relevant and useful information on this topic this study has chosen to use a blended approach as a method of primary research.

According to Malhotra, Nunan and Birks (2017) research can follow one of two designs, either exploratory or conclusive. Exploratory design is often used when a flexible and changing approach can be used as research, usually occurs when the study is attempting to understand a marketing hypothesis or something that can be troublesome to measure. A conclusive research design is rigid and generally incapable of change, this is typically used attempting to further prove an already established marketing concept that is measurable. (Amrit Pal Singh, 2014) As this study is searching for an answer to a possible hypothesis that requires a strategy in which requires flexibility and analysis of information an exploratory design has been selected. A conclusive design wouldn’t suffice this project as it requires the knowledge of an already established marketing concept that backs up details with facts and figures. In a study of investigating the effect violence has on consumer behaviour, exploratory research which gathers descriptive and emotional information from a smaller

quantity of people is the logical design and strategy to follow. An exploratory design can include both quantitative and qualitative research. (Thomas, 2001)

The objectives and characteristics of exploratory design or conclusive design differ. (Tejinde, Jeet and Kumar, 2015) These core attributes of exploratory design are better suited to this study. Exploratory design's objective is to gather insights and understanding of a concept whereas conclusive designs objective is to test specific hypothesis and well-established theory. (Nunan, D. and Di Domenico, 2013) As the concept or possibility of violence hindering sales within the entertainment industry is rather unknown or unstudied an exploratory approach which aims to gather insights and understanding is far more valuable.

Characteristics of the exploratory design include:

- Data required may be flexible and subjective
- Data needed may be loosely defined
- Samples are of smaller quantity
- Data examination can be either qualitative or quantitative

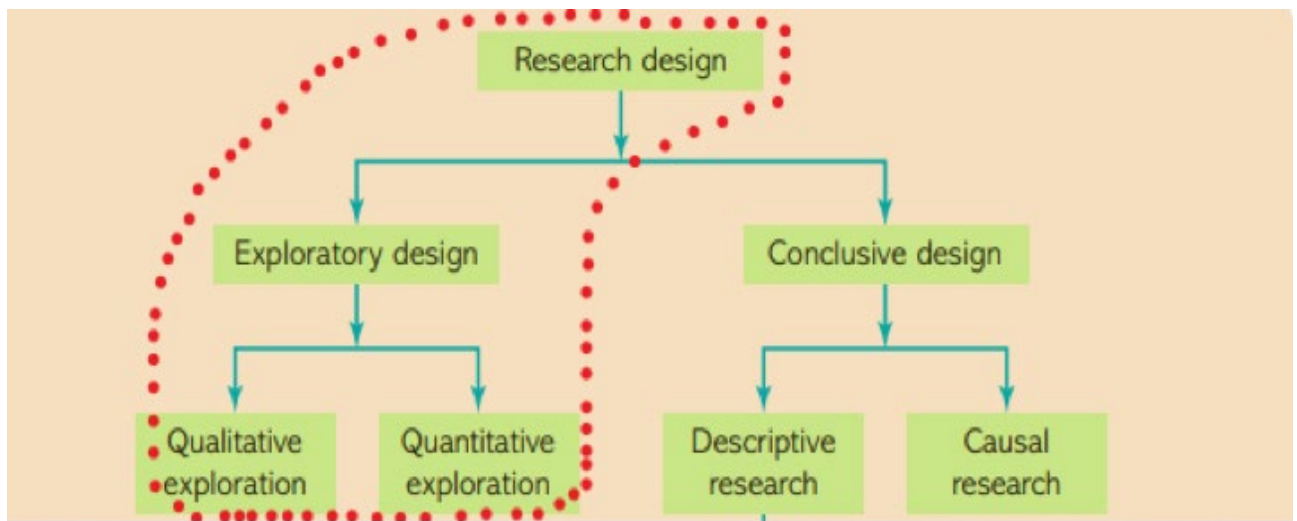
(Malhotra, Nunan and Birks, 2017)

Characteristics of the conclusive design include:

- Data required is strict and precise
- Data process is formal and clear
- Sample is of large quantity as its attempting to generalise
- Data examination can only be quantitative

(Malhotra et al, 2017)

In the case of this research the characteristics of the exploratory approach have been applied. The information needed was flexible, subjective and opinionated to better understand the concepts of the topic at hand. The Data required was loosely defined as in certain aspects the answer required was yet to be discovered but evolved through on the spur follow up questions. Another key element of the characteristics was the examination variance. Exploratory design allowed for a blended approach which is imperative to this method.

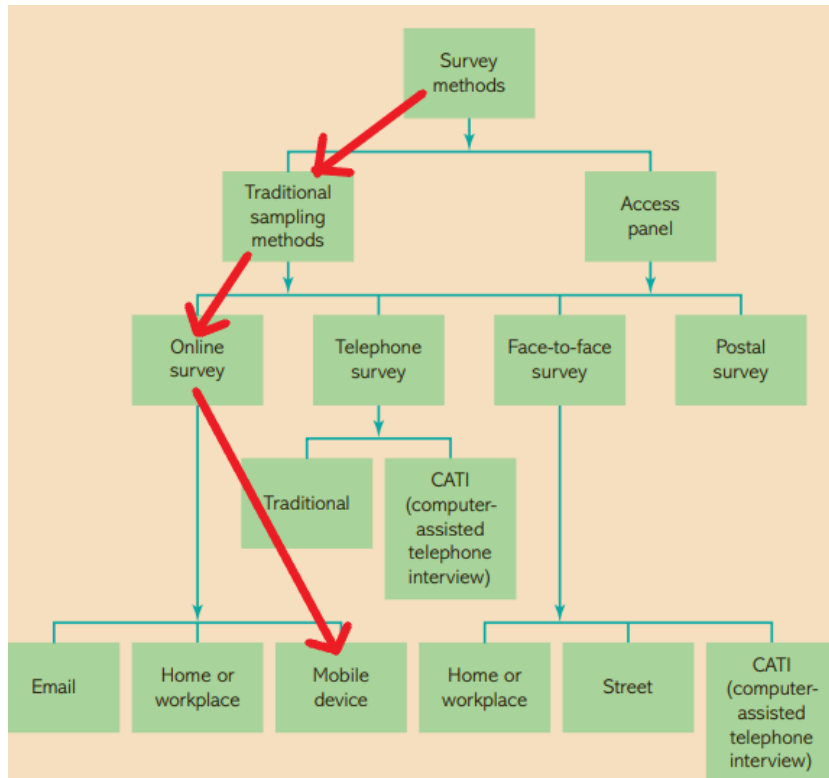


Research Design route (Malhotra, Nunan, and Birks, 2017)

The approach to the exploratory design proposed is a blended approach. A blended approach is typically combining elements of both qualitative exploration and quantitative exploration. (Lynn Driscoll, 2011) This blended approach which integrated the two forms of data involves philosophical estimates and theoretical frameworks and strategies such as implementation designs of surveys or interviews. The core belief of this blended strategy is that combining the two designs together provides the researcher with the most complete and comprehensive form of investigation. (Bryman, 2008) If this study were conducted with just one of either approach quantitative or qualitative, an in depth understanding of violence effecting consumer behaviour would not be plausible.

Procedure chosen and reasoning

To proceed with this exploratory blended approach two forms of primary research has been conducted: A survey and in-depth interviews. The survey was chosen and implemented following a set design. Please see below for survey process chosen.



Survey process (Malhotra et

al, 2017)

A survey was used as a way of quantitative research as they are well organised and well-structured forms of gathering data across a sample base. (Showkat and Parveen, 2017) According to Kraemer (1991) a survey has three core distinguishing features that make it a valuable form of quantitative description. The three features are population, external validity and variety. The reasoning for choosing a survey is because it's a valuable form of exploratory search that allows the knowledge of a larger sample of people. The survey allowed for the collection of data regarding trends and representation of topics.

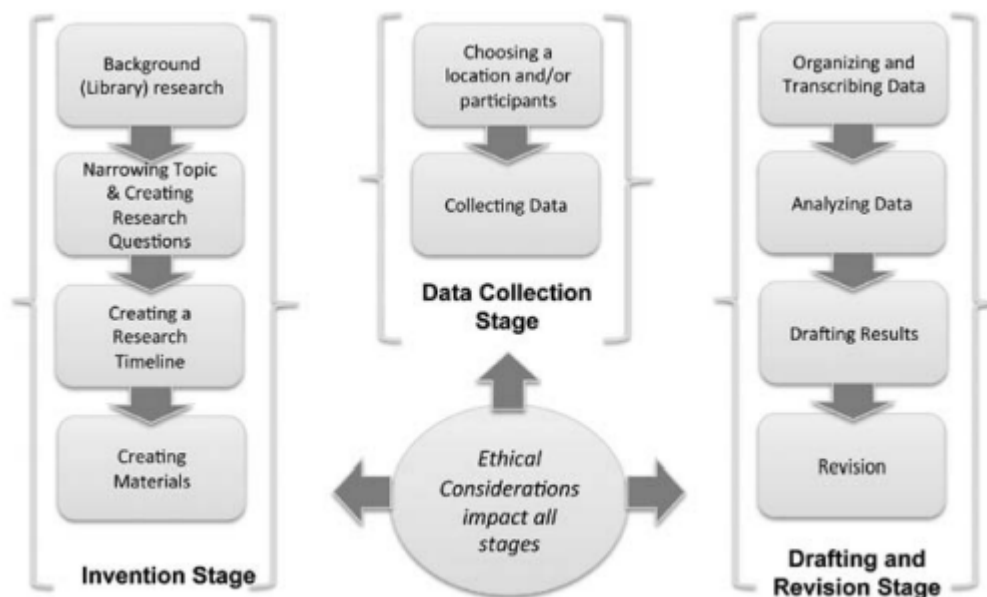
Online surveys were chosen as the preferred procedure as they are the quickest and most efficient way of gathering precise and important instant results. (Salih Gurbuz, 2018) Other benefits of choosing online surveys for this study are flexibility, efficiency, and quality of information. Surveys allow the researcher to gain instant information from large samples of the public. They can also be targeted at a certain type of person based on demographics. The

flexibility of surveys also allows them to be an attractive tool in gathering primary research data, this flexibility allows them to be paired with other forms of research. (Leeuw, Hox, Dillman, 2008) This is ideal for this study as the survey has been conducted alongside in-depth interviews to gather both qualitative and quantitative information. Finally, surveys are also considered to have a high external validity. (Mathers, N., Fox, Hunn, 2007) In other words, they can generalise from larger samples of people to spot trends and common attitudes among the sample base.

Interviews are an excellent form of primary research that helps build a hypothesis with qualitative information. A detailed interview is unstructured, this is a characteristic of exploratory research as mentioned above. A detailed interview is direct and personal to the individual in which the goal is to discover underlying beliefs, ideals and emotions towards a specific topic. (Coughlan, 2009) This is generally classified as a qualitative piece of research as its uncovering opinions which may be subjective through the act of conversation and questioning. (Robson, 2001) The objective of the interview completed in this study was to place emphases on meaning and interpretation of wording rather than facts from listening to the participant. (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007) Opinions and knowledge were extracted from the participants through active listening and questioning.

Detailed and in-depth interviews bring many positive aspects to research. Interviews can discover in great detail the attitudes and emotions a individuals feels toward a specific topic. (Ahuja Ram, 2010) This is harder to uncover in focus groups as the researcher must divide attention to all participants equally. Ahuja Ram (2010) argues one to one interviews are more personal and informational. Another benefit of interviews and further reasoning for why they were selected for this research project is the ability to attribute replies and information directly to the participant. Focus groups differ as its often hard to associate a response to the individual but rather the group as a whole. (Gupta and G, Deepa, 2011) In-depth interviews also portray security and freedom of opinion for the participant, this allows for comfortable exchange of information between the participant and researcher. Group interviews often place individuals under group pressure to conform with social opinions and standards. (Akhtar. I, 2016) This was vital to this study as dealing with sensitive topics such as violence and aggression may have placed the participants in uncomfortable positions to speak freely in group format. Finally, interviews are easier and more efficient to conduct them focus groups as organisational and communication aspects differ from person to person. (Malhorta et al, 2017)

The process of conducting primary research is similar no regarding which type of data is required to being collected. For the purpose of this study the survey and interviews followed through the same process. There are three stages to this primary research process: invention stage, data collection stage, and revision stage. (Thomas, 2001) The invention stage requires the researcher to conduct a background check of secondary data. The data is then process and understood to create a timeline and research materials such and questioning and designs. Once the material has been invented the data collection stage commences. In this stage the core purpose is to choose participants and conduct the survey and interviews. The revision and analysis stage are the most important as this allows conclusion and discussion to portray results and finding. (Thomas, 2001) Both the online survey and in-depth interviews went through this same process to ensure the primary research was conducted in a timely, efficient and professional manner.



(Thomas, 2001)

Data source, population and sample

Data can be collected in two ways, either primary data or secondary data. This research featured an adaptation to previous research as this study was conducted using primary research to draw analysis. Previous work by Lull and Bushman (2015) which attempted to prove the hypothesis “violence doesn’t sell” was completed using solely secondary research of past studies, and there lies the adaptation to previous work. According to Hox and Boeije (2005) primary data is conducted directly by the researcher whilst secondary data is data already collected by another piece of work and examined by the researcher. Primary data is typically factual as its being collected by the research at hand whilst secondary data requires analysis, examination and interpretation. (Hox and Boeije, 2005) As previously mentioned, primary data conducted in this study was in the form of In-depth interviews and a survey.

According to Statista (2021) on average 46% of 18–34-year-olds watch a film or series at minimum once per week, 60% of 35–44-year-olds, and 46% of 45–64-year-olds. The age group that streams the least films or series is over 65 years old. These statistics were taken under consideration for the sampling method. According to Coleman, Williams and Wilson (1996) there are two classifications of sampling, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In a probability sample the opportunity of people of the wider population being selected are known, differing to this is the non-probability method in which the opportunity of the wider population being chosen are unknown. (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007) the probability method allows for the same opportunity of each individual from the wider population being picked, no bias to selection can occur. Non-probability ensures some members of the wider population will certainly be excluded from selection, this exclusion list is typically based on demographic attitudes or interests. (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007) Non-probability ensures specific types of people will be selected to complete the survey to gather the correct information. (Coleman et al, 1996)

The proposed method for this study was the non-probability method of sampling. Non-probability sampling was selected as this sampling strategy seeks to not represent the wider population and generalise, but to represent itself as the differentiated population. (Taherdoost, 2016) The sampling strategy was to gather participants over younger age groups as statistically speaking they watch the most films or series (Statista, 2021) According to Taherdoost (2016) a sampling strategy to follow to ensure the correct tactic is implemented is to follow the steps: Define target population, select sample frame, choose sampling tactic,

determine sample size, and collect data and analyse. Target population was defined through examination of secondary data and industry research, it was discovered people who watch the most films or series are from the ages of 18-64 years old. This led into the definition of the target population as this demographic is people desired to complete the survey. The sample frame selected was everyone who watches films on a weekly basis. The sampling tactic was non-probability as previously mentioned. The sample size required was over 100 participants to ensure informative and non-bias results. Finally, the data and analysis were both collected and conducted through the software programme survey monkey. The above tactics for sampling brought successful results as the data subjects or participants mirrored the goals of the target audience. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The sampling strategy used for the in-depth interviews was a purposive sampling strategy. A purposive sampling strategy is a Non-probability-based strategy to ensure a specific set of people of a certain demographic are the participants. The reasoning for employing this tactic is the researcher assumes or predicts these individuals belonging to this category have knowledge about a specific topic they value. (Nagerifar, Goli, and Ghaljaei, 2017) For the purpose of this study the type of people required was people who regularly watch films or Tv Series. As this study investigates the effects violence has on consumer behaviour within the film and series industry it was the logical step to interview consumers who regularly interact and make purchases within the industry. The referral chain process is a form of purposive strategy best suited to case studies, (Robinson. C, 2014) this was the process followed. The referral chain process involves interviewing specific people the researcher believes has knowledge on a set topic, then asking for referrals of other people the participant may know with a different set of topic knowledge. (Hechathorn, 2002) Asking participants for recommendations and referrals then create referral chains which allows the researcher greater access to this set of people with topic knowledge. This was the strategy adopted for this topic. The first participant interviewed was a film and series enthusiast. After the interview the participant was then asked for recommendations of other friends or acquaintances who shared the same interest or hobbies as him in being a cinematic / streaming enthusiast. This led to the interview of five people who had valuable knowledge of the entertainment industry. These people are movie and series enthusiasts and regularly spend money on the industry. This is the perfect sample base for exploring how violence may or may not affect their behaviours.

Research implementation

The survey and interview design were created and implemented using specific type of questions. According to Fowler (1995) the questions asked are the most important aspect of primary market research as an excellent worded question can produce answers of huge depth and validity. The different type of questions asked were as follows:

Close ended questions: close ended questions are often referred to as the basis of quantitative research. (Hyman and Sierra, 2016) In regard to the survey most questions were close ended as a survey is generally quantitative research. The in-depth interviews which focused on insights and opinion used more open-ended questions. A close ended question is something you can answer yes or no to, or something that provides an answer for the respondent and the respondent picks their choice. An example of this in the survey created would be “have you ever watched a violent film or series?”.

Open ended questions: Open ended questions whether it be in a survey or in-depth interviews allow for valuable insights and responses. An open-ended question gives respondents the opportunity to express their opinion or answer in their own words. (Salant and Dillman, 1994). These are questions you cannot answer with either yes or no. Often associated with qualitative research.

Combination sequence questions: A great tactic used in delving into the minds of participants during market research. A combination sequence question typically has the first question as a close ended question then follows up with an open-ended question to retract insight and opinion from the participant. An example of this would be “If a film advertised using violence would this increase your intention of purchase?” then the follow up question requires an opinionated response “Please explain why you said yes or no”

Questions that measure responses to concepts or ideas: These questions offer great knowledge by respondents as they can give the researcher an insight into consumer behaviour. In this study questions like this were used to examine marketing concepts such as word of mouth marketing. An example being “Would you agree or disagree violence can be a talking point of a film or series amongst friends?” options for answers would range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This informs the researcher of the respondent’s output on the concept.

The goal motivating the different format of questions and overall primary research was to understand elements within consumer behaviour such as how violence affects brand attitude, brand recall, purchase intention, and word of mouth marketing. Brand attitude required measurement as it's vital to note how consumers feel regarding entertainment obtaining violence. Violence may affect brand recall or film/series memory in a negative light and these questions aim to expose that answer. The driving force behind advertising is sales, so the aim of specific questions was to understand the effect has on both purchase intention and word of mouth marketing. The above style of questions was carefully designed to extract this information and knowledge from participants.

Ethical considerations were also considered during the creation and implementation of this research. Firstly, the survey and interview data subjects had to be strictly over the age of 18 to participate in this research. This was for the purpose of two reasons. To gather data of informative and knowledgeable adults, but most importantly for censorship and ethical consideration as the topic of violence must be dealt with great sensitivity. Quality control, testing and time management were also considered during the creation phase. Before the survey was sent out to participants it was tested a number of times to ensure highest quality questioning with no bias, or subconscious bias present. Time to complete (TTC) was also taken into consideration as the estimated TTC was 7 minutes. Analysis was also run on the software or data tool which was SurveyMonkey – free trial and research deemed this the best software tool available for survey creation and analysis.

Limitations of research

The information and strategy from the primary research were factual, unbiased and fair in approach. However, the methodology of online surveys and in-depth interviews come with some limitations. Pinsonnault and Kraemer (1993) argue unintentional bias may occur in surveys in the form of lack of response or nature of accuracy and truth from the respondent. Also, according to Bell (1996) unreported or misreporting may occur as participants attempt to hide mildly inappropriate or socially contrasting opinions or attitudes. In an attempt to lessen this possibility all participants were made aware prior to the survey all answers are fully anonymous. The final possible limitation of this survey conducted was the difficulty assessing participants' poor understanding of their own behaviour or recall abilities. There are two core challenges or limitations of in-depth interviews, they include assessment of

information and societal pressure. (Malhorta et al, 2017) The information provided by the data subject can be difficult to interpret or examine because hidden information and messages can often be found within answers. According to Fowler (1995) participants comfortability often effects their willingness to speak freely and accurately. Societal pressure may be present and restrictive in this study as the topic of violence can become debatable and subjective. It is the requirement of the researcher to attempt to allow the participant to feel comfortable to speak freely to overcome societal pressure or social norms.

Collection and treatment of data

The In-depth interviews were collected in face-to-face meetings using recording devices and later written up to record key points and noticeable opinions or knowledge. Recording devices used were phone(s) and laptops. Each participant was asked and made aware prior to the interview about the recording. The interviews strictly contained no video recording, only voice recording. This allowed for quality data control and easy analysis of data. The data collected from the in-depth interviews was then taken under analysis and evaluation and compared and contrasted with data collected from the survey. The survey was designed, collected and analysed using the software tool SurveyMonkey. This tool allowed for quick and easy collection of data and factual information. Data treatment was in the form of analysis and examination through SurveyMonkey and compared and contrasted with data collected from the in-depth interviews.

Chapter 5 – Results and Findings

The results and finding section will be broken down into two sections, first the survey results then the interview results. After the results and findings a discussion section will commence linking the findings from the survey and interviews together. This information discovered in this research will then be examined, compared and contrasted to previous research outlined in the literature review. The previous research on the topic of violence effecting consumer behaviour within the film industry is scarce. However, previous research by Lull and Bushman (2015) found violence hinders aspects such as purchase intention and general movie interest. This 2015 study was the only piece of research conducted to attempt to prove violence plays a hindering effect on consumer behaviour. Practically every other credible and reliable piece of research on the topic has argued the point of violence being an effective motivator towards purchase intention and overall consumer interest. The questions created in the survey and interview were designed to gather results that lead to further exploration and findings on the topic at hand. The goal of this research was to discover is their further depth to the findings of Lull and Bushman (2015) and could their controversial research be proven correct and provide a new way of viewing the entertainment industry.

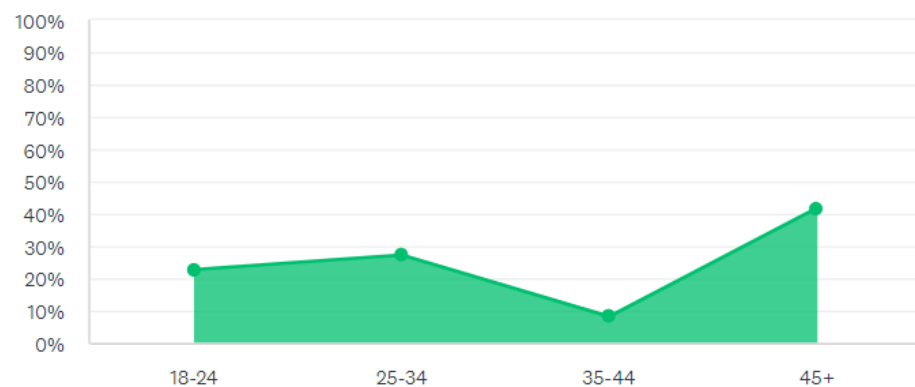
The survey contained 36 questions, broken down into three sections. The first section contained 6 demographic questions to gain better insights into the type of participants such as their gender, occupation, age, ethnicity and education. The next set of 6 questions contained questions industry related, but not in-depth information about this research. This included questions such as type of entertainment the participants usually watch, how they watch, and amount spent monthly etc. The final and most important section to this survey was made up of 24 questions containing vital in-depth information regarding this topic. These questions provide valuable knowledge to this study and require close consideration of analysis to uncover truths and hypothesis. The total number of participants who completed the survey was sample size $N = 110$.

Demographic analysis

As statistics previously mentioned (Statista, 2021) a variety of age groups regularly watch films or series. The goal was to get a sample base of a mix of age groups completing the survey. This was successful as results show:

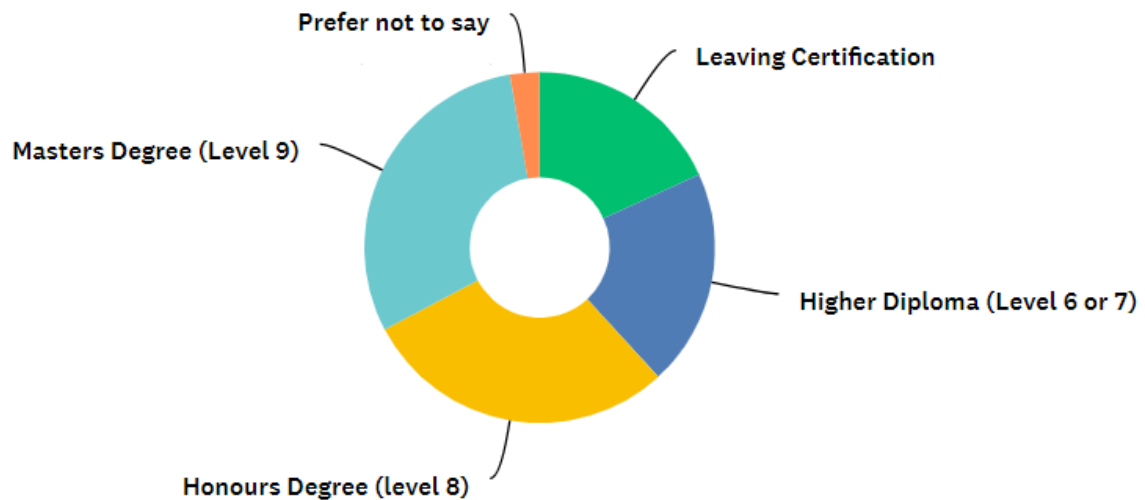
How old are you?

Answered: 110 Skipped: 0



22.73% of participants were between the ages of 18-24, 22.27% of participants were between the ages of 25-34, 8.18% of participants were between the ages of 35-44, and finally 41.82% of participants were over the age of 45 years old. This shows a good range of ages spread across the participants. However the age group of 35-44 was lowest and the age group of 45+ the highest. Although this was to be expected considering 45+ offers the widest range of age to represent.

Another goal of the sample of population was to find a reasonably equal balance between male and female respondents. This was also successfully completed as 42.73% of respondents were male and 56.36% of respondents were female. 0.91% selected the option “Prefer not to say”. The ethnicity of the respondents was a mix of every race, but most respondents answering either “White Irish” or “Caucasian”.



In terms of education the highest bracket of respondents obtains a masters level qualification with 30%. 29.09% of respondents obtain a level 8 degree, 20% a level 6 or 7 diplomas and 2.73% prefer not to say. Overall, the results show a healthy mix of education in terms of demographics. With the highest bracket choice the level 9 masters then level 8 degree it's fair to make the statement the respondents who participated are overall highly educated people. In terms of employment 80.91% of participants currently work and 19.19% are currently unemployed or retired. Overall, to analyse the demographics of the respondents we can say we are dealing a reasonably equal mix of age groups, an equal mix of genders, and highly educated people which of whom the vast majority are currently employed.

Industry related data analysis

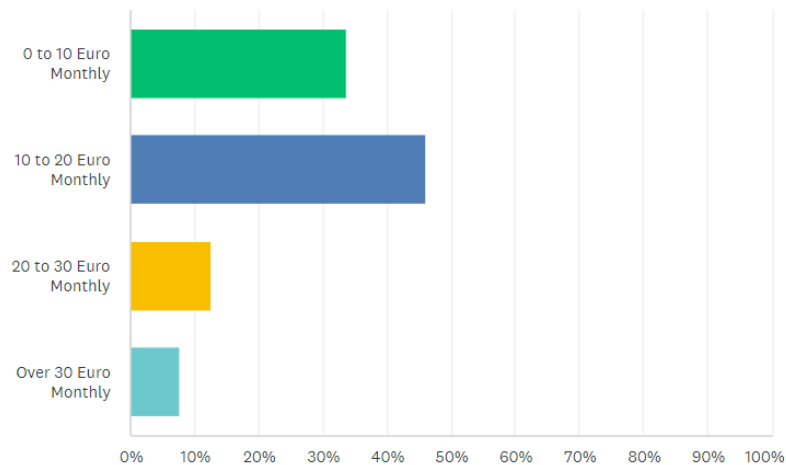
The opening question to this section asked participants what type of entertainment they usually watch, films, Tv series or both. The answer was 8.18% usually watch films, 8.18% usually watch Tv series, and 83.64% of people watch both. To gain further insight into how these films and series are consumed the following question asked how they watch their typical entertainment. In regard to films/movies 39.09% of people watch on television, 24.55% of people often go to the cinema, and the overwhelming majority of people stream online with 82.73% of people choosing that option. These results are interesting as its often-claimed television is a dying form of entertainment (Gunn Enli and Syvertsen, 2016; Dominion, 2022) yet according to the survey conducted for this research just under 40% of

people often watch television. The results for consumption of Tv Series slightly differ. Cinema wasn't an option so 77.27% of people watch series through online streaming and 34.55% percent of people watch series on television. These results show either way, television broadcasting is still a popular option amongst people who consume film or series on a regular basis.

When participants were asked about how often they consume films or series the results also differed. Results show the average consumer now spends more time weekly watching series than films overall. The most popular answer for weekly consumption of films was 2-4 hours and the most popular answer for weekly consumption of series was 4-6 hours. Also, 26.36% of respondent claim to watch 0-2 hours of films weekly whereas only 19.09% of respondents suggest they watch 0-2 hours of series weekly. This entails how Tv series have now become more popular than watching films. Another goal of the survey was to obtain respondents who consume regular entertainment. According to these statistics the sampling method was successful as 74% of participants watch more than 2 hours of films weekly and 81% of participants watch over 2 hours of series weekly.

Do you currently pay membership for an online streaming service? If yes, how much?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 6



Finance spent on the entertainment industry is another vital part of this research as one of the key aspects to be analysed is violence effecting purchase intention. Results of the survey show the highest percentage of people spend 10-20 euro monthly on an online streaming service with 46.15% of people picking this option. The second highest response was 0-10 euro spent monthly with 33.65%. 12.5% chose 20-30 and 7.69% of people spend more than

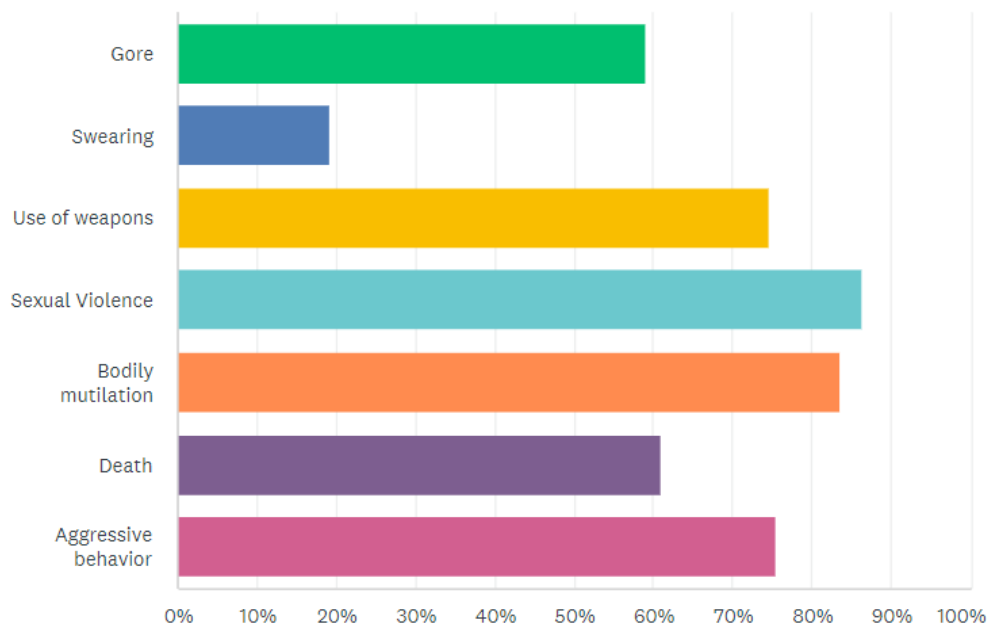
30 euro monthly on an online streaming service. Of the 110 participants only 6 people claimed to not spend any money on an online streaming service subscription. To summarise the findings in the industry related data analysis we can say the survey has collected responses from participants who often watch both films and series. It can also be claimed television is absolutely not dying out and still a popular form of entertainment. Other trends spotted amongst this section was the fact the overwhelming majority of people pay a monthly subscription for an online streaming service with 104 of 110 respondents claiming to do so. Analysis shows survey respondents obtained have exceedingly high consumption of the entertainment industry and spend a lot of finances on the industry.

Violence within the entertainment industry data analysis

This is the most vital and important section of this research paper as it contains the information specifically related to the topic at hand – how violence within films and series effects consumer behaviour. The opening question eases the participant into the section as it allows them think about their own interpretation of violence and what it means to witness a violent scene. The question asks, “In your opinion, what do you recognize as violence?”

In your opinion, What do you recognize as violence?

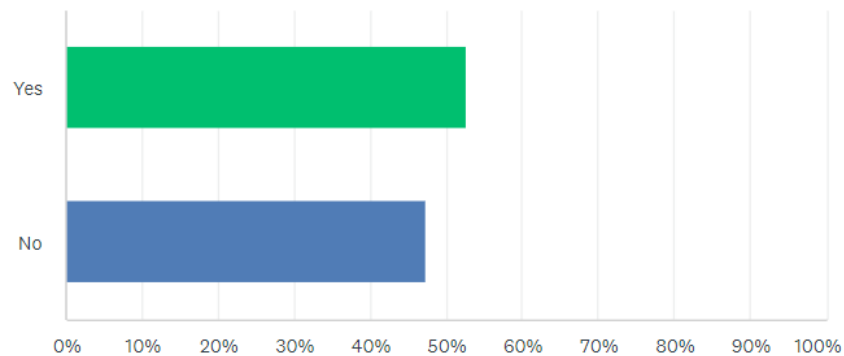
Answered: 110 Skipped: 0



Only 19.09% of people recognize swearing or using bad language as violence. Gore, then death follow with 59.09% and 60.91%. Use of weapons (Such as firearms) contain 74.55% of the votes and aggressive behaviour 75.45%. More people view sexual violence as violence over bodily mutilation. Body mutilation received an 83.64% of respondents vote and sexual violence 86.36%. Its interesting to view these statistics from a perspective of reversing the figure. We can make the statement 16.36% of people don't view bodily mutilation as violence and 13.64% of people don't view sexual violence and violence surprisingly. Perhaps a possible limitation of this answer is a small minority of respondents didn't understand you can pick more than one answer.

Has Violence ever discouraged your interest in a film / Tv Series?

Answered: 110 Skipped: 0



Attempting to find the effect violence has on consumer loyalty to a film or series the next question simply asked if violence ever discouraged your interest in a film/series. Results how just over half the respondents (52.73%) have at some stage been discouraged from watching a show or film with violence. This answer is key to research as we can propose just over half of consumers have been negatively affected by violence within entertainment. The follow up question provided opinionated and subjective answers, but a common theme was uncovered. Almost all respondents who were asked to explain their reasoning for saying Yes to the above question said one of two things: I simply just don't enjoy violence OR If it has nothing to do with the storyline or not necessary, I turn it off. They were the two most common themes although some other answers claimed, "I think violent content makes people feel that violence is normal". The following question also keeps align with this trend as 80.91% of respondents agree violence is too prominent within the entertainment industry.

The intention of the next three questions was to gain insight into the opinion of respondents and how they feel about persons under the age of 18 consuming violence. Every participant was over 18 so a certain degree of accuracy can be expected through memory and hindsight of the respondents. 67.27% of respondents claim people under the age of 18 should watch violence, 80% of respondents agree people under the age of 18 are more likely influenced by violence, and 76.36% of people agree using violence in marketing would be a successful strategy to sell to people under the age of 18.

The following group of three questions intend to uncover truths about word-of-mouth marketing and how its effects by violence. Analysis shows just over half the participants (58.18%) have watched a tv series which contained a lot of violence and still recommended it to a friend. 60% of respondents then claimed at some stage in the past they would find themselves discussing a very violent scene from a film with a friend. Finally, 83% of respondents then either agreed or strongly agreed that violence can be a key talking point regarding a film or series. To analyse these results we can clearly see violence is a key talking point of films or series and hugely effects word of mouth marketing.

The final section of the survey was created to monitor and compare consumers interest levels of movie posters that either have violence or don't have violence. This section also inspected the possibility of purchase intention for movies containing violence against movie posters containing no violence. Key findings show interesting results. This section contained two questions / options:

Question 1 – “Please select which poster looks more appealing to you or better sparks your interest”



Question 2 – “Please choose which poster or imagine would convince you to go see this film in cinemas if it were out today”



Each set of two questions displayed a poster from a film or series with one containing violence and the other containing no violence. The first question was designed to measure initial interest and the second question was designed to measure purchase intention. The same set of poster was used for both questions as this research wanted to see if there was a difference between initial interest and purchase intention like suggested from previous research in the literature review.

For the question above on Reservoir Dogs' initial interest the poster containing violence got less votes with 31.48%. For the question on purchase intention the violent poster got 33.02% of votes. In this case the violent poster was inferior to the nonviolent poster in terms of both initial interest and purchase intention. The same set of two questions was asked for Famous films and series named Scarface, James Bond, and The Sopranos. More key findings include:

Scarface: The violent poster got 54.53% of votes for initial interest. The violent poster got 58.88% of votes for purchase intention.

James Bond: The violent poster got 52.34% of votes for initial interest. The violent poster got 53.70% of votes for purchase intention.

The Sopranos: The violent poster got 21.5% of votes for initial interest. The violent poster got 16.82% of votes for purchase intention.

Interview analysis and themes

To discover some demographic aspects about the participants being interviewed opening questions were asked that were easy to answer. These questions also eased into the interview and helped the participant feel more relaxed and comfortable talking with recording devices. Demographic questions found interviewees ranged from 23 to 58 years old both male and female. Interviewees were of Caucasian ethnicity. Of the five people interviewed four were currently employed. Jobs included: refrigeration trade, general operative, recruitment specialist, and procurement specialist. One of the participants has obtained a level 9 qualification, two a level 8 qualification and two a leaving certificate.

After some informative demographic questions more in-depth questions were asked that were closer related to this topic. This section of the interview opened with generalised questioning and then closed in on the detailed questions regarding violence and consumption. Each participant interviewed consume both films and tv series on a weekly basis. The average weekly hours they spend watching films or series is in between 8-20 hours weekly. Each participant also pays for an online streaming service spending a minimum of 15 euro monthly.

Theme 1 – Violence must add to the storyline

The first question asked specific to violence in entertainment was 'What is your opinion on films or series that contain a lot of violence, does this interest you and why'. Of the five participants a common theme was found amongst their answers. Everyone felt the same way regarding violence as a form of entertainment. The common perspective was that violence can be interesting if it adds to the plot or the storyline, but if violence is present purely just for the sake of entertainment and not adding to the plot its boring or simplistic. Person 1 stated "If violence adds to the storyline I want it there, if it doesn't then it's pointless and bores me." Person 4 had a slightly differing view as they claimed violence must add to the storyline but if it doesn't it would still catch their attention momentarily, but they would quickly lose interest after that. Overall, the common theme found amongst violence affecting interest levels was it must add to the storyline to improve the film. If violence is simply just raw violence with no meaning to it, then it's boring or discouraging to interest levels.

Theme 2 – Violence can be too extreme

When posed the question ‘Have you ever stopped watching or turned off a film or series that was extremely violent?’ A common trend was discovered amongst the majority of interviews. 4 of the 5 people being interviewed all admitted to being particularly squeamish at times and how at some stage in the past they have decided to stop watching either a film or tv series because the violence was too extreme. Person 2 stated “it was too graphic, and it upset me” when discussing when she turned a series off that was too violent. Person 3 stated “I wouldn’t be good with blood or guts if that comes on my tele I’m turning it off”. Of the five people interviewed only person 1 claimed to never be turned off by too much violence. This theme found proves violence can in fact hinder consumer loyalty to a film or series.

Theme 3 – Advertising using violence receives mixed reviews

Asking the people being interviewed about how they feel regarding their interest levels of movie trailers containing violence led to mixed opinions. 3 people claimed it would lessen their interest and two claimed it would most likely heighten it. Person 3 claimed a film trailer including violence would seem appealing because its different to what she witnesses in everyday life, it’s an escape from reality. Other participants being interviewed had a differing opinion. Person 2 discussed how violence can be a complete turn off as they assume if that’s what’s on show in the trailer then the storyline must not be interesting. Person 1 had a unique view on this topic as they said going to the cinema violence is expected and interesting but watching from home not so much. Overall, advertising using violence doesn’t provide a definitive trend or theme as views and opinions are very mixed.

Theme 4 – Violence has a huge impact on Word-of-mouth marketing

A very clear theme was found amongst the participants being interviewed regarding word-of-mouth marketing. When posed the question “Do you ever find yourself discussing violent scenes?” every person said yes, the follow up question then asked them to elaborate on how and why they think that is. Person 1 even recalls how he would have talked about violent scenes with friends, he brings up a scene from a Quentin Tarantino film Reservoir dogs (1992) as body mutilation occurs. This showcases not just the effect violence has on word-of-mouth marketing, but also its effect on brand memory / film memory. Every participant provided a similar answer with most people mentioning the shock value of violence can make

it a talking point. Person 2 was so against the thoughts of extreme violence that she will go out of her way to tell friends and family members not to watch a series if its too violent. This information makes for interesting discussion as we can see in this case violence effects word of mouth marketing, but in a negative fashion.

Theme 5 – Violence hugely effects consumer behaviour regarding people under the age of 18

Every participant agreed on the same concept when asked the question “Do you think people under the age of 18 are more attracted to films or series containing violence?” Each person claimed people under the age of 18 are more effected by violence and all admitted when they were younger violence would have been more of a selling point for them. Person 2 stated violence would get her attention quicker when she was under the age of 18.

Chapter 6 – Discussion and conclusion

Discussion

The aim of this research was to discover and investigate the effect violence has on consumer behaviour within the entertainment industry. Previous research has hugely favoured the concept that violence has a positive effect on consumer behaviour and helps sell entertainment such as films or tv series. The prediction of this research was that violence may in fact hinder sales of entertainment in some scenarios and play a negative role in purchase intention. This chapter will further discuss the key findings and compare and contrast them with not only a mixture of the survey and interviews, but also the previous research outlined in the literature review. The conversation surrounding the key findings from the primary research will be broken down by the original research objectives of this study. This section is broken down into four major discussion points that have been derived from the findings and analysis.

The effect violence has on attention and movie or series interest

Previous research outlined in the literature review (Karama et al, 2002) found that neuroscience studies discovered violence has an immediate and direct effect on the brain's limbic structures which in turn, attract a human's attention. The same study then claimed because we are genetically hard wired to be attracted to violence we can't escape it, therefore the reasoning with the quantity of violence within the entertainment industry. The goal of this objective was to discover the effect violence has within entertainment on our interest levels. As the key findings above from both the survey and interviews found violence doesn't necessarily heighten our interest of films or tv series. It was discovered from the survey analysis that only 22.73% of respondents would have increased levels of interest in a film or series if violence were present. Under one out of four people enjoy violence for entertainment purposes according to the survey results. 20.09% of people said it depends then when asked to explain their why it depends on a common theme was found – it must add to the storyline to increase interest levels. The interview findings showcase a similar path as every person

agreed violence must add to the storyline to increase interest levels. Each person being interviewed was in fact turned off by the idea of violence with no context as one person even stated its “pointless and bores me.” Overall, the goal was to discover if previous research was accurate in modern day times in saying humans are attracted to violence. However, this old hypothesis was studied in further detail here. This research of both a survey and interviews found that violence alone doesn’t in fact increase interest levels of consumers, but instead must add to the storyline to spark awareness and entertainment value. This finding doesn’t prove previous research incorrect, but instead adds to the depth of the research and helps provide reasoning as to why previous theorists once believed violence alone is a form of entertainment.

How violence can hinder consumer loyalty

The idea of violence hindering consumer loyalty hasn’t been provided with a huge amount of attention in previous research by industry authors or academics. Most studies simply just state how violence sells and positively effects consumer behaviour. For instance, as showcased in the literature review, Gochhait (2015) argued humans are hardwired to be drawn to any form of violence or aggression and therefore its immensely popular amongst entertainment channels. The goal of this objective was to evaluate that hypothesis and discover if violence is always playing a positive impact on consumers attention to films and series. The analysis of the survey results found that 52.73% of respondents at some stage have been discouraged by violence within a film or series and 80% of people agree violence is too prominent within the film industry. These figures absolutely and indefinitely contrast in views of that by Gochhait (2015) who suggested violence is always attractive to consumers. Further primary research including the interviews also backed up the findings of the survey analysis. 4 of the 5 people interviewed all admitted to turning off a films or series because of an excess level of violence. The theme of violence being too extreme at times was present throughout most of the interview questions. Some people interviewed even recalled overuse of violence and went as far as discouraging friends and family not to watch a particular show to avoid high levels of gore scenes. Only one of five people interviewed claimed to never be discouraged by violence. Coupling these interview findings with statistics such as 80% of people agree violence can be too prominent within the entertainment industry led to the overwhelming

conclusion that violence can in fact be too extreme and discourage consumer loyalty within a film or series.

The possibility of violence in advertising hindering purchase intention

One of the most discussed opinions on the matter of advertising using violence and its effect on purchase intention has already been covered in the literature review. This statement is by Jeff Sagansky the former president of NBC and CBS who argued “The number one priority in television is not to transmit quality programming to viewers, but to deliver consumers to advertisers. We aren’t going to get rid of violence until we get rid of advertisers.” (Kim, 1994) Advertisers attempt to increase sales by increasing interest and purchase intention. The goal behind this objective was to evaluate this hypothesis and evaluate if advertising using violence truly was an effective strategy of improving interest levels of consumers and overall increasing purchase intention.

The final section of the survey which asked participants to vote on their ideal movie poster based on initial interest and purchase intention provided some key findings in regard to this topic. Regarding the answers to the survey and combining each choice together on average it was found that 39.93% of the time a poster containing violence is selected over a poster containing no violence regarding initial interest of the consumer. Also, it was found on average that 40.6% of the time a poster containing violence is selected over a poster containing no violence regarding purchase intention of the consumer. This disproves the claim from Jeff Sagansky that advertising using violence is an effective strategy as analysis here finds both initial interest and purchase intention of violent posters was negative in percentage compared to posters containing no violence.

In terms of the interview’s mixed opinions were discovered but delving deeper into the thoughts of the participants led to some key insights. The interviews aided this research in discovering that consumers are only attracted to violence in advertising as long as further context is provided. This also falls in line with previous answers of the interviewees that violence must add to the storyline. For instance, a poster in the survey of the Sopranos that had no visual or intriguing background that simply just showed a gun and a text box “Sopranos” received the smallest number of votes of any poster for both interest and purchase

intention. Overall, what this means is that advertising using violence may in fact be an effective strategy, but only if there's further context to the advertisement such as plot development or a character's emotional development. Violence with no context that's simply just aggression for the sake of aggression has a hindering effect on consumer behaviour.

Violence acting as a motivator for brand awareness regarding word-of-mouth marketing

One of the most popular Tv series of the last ten years was also one of the most violent (IMDb, 2022) of course this series is Korean squid games. Often accredited with being highly entertaining and highly violent this famous series captures the violent capabilities of humanity. According to Ahmed et al (2022) this series exemplified the opportunities of word-of-mouth marketing as no show has ever been more successful in this form of advertising. The goal of this objective was to understand the effect violence has on word-of-mouth marketing and understand if very gruesome scenes are a talking point amongst friends or piers. Research discovered violence has a ginormous effect on word-of-mouth marketing, backing up previous research in saying it creates a great strategy of free advertising. As discovered in the analysis section each participant discussed how at some stage in the past, they have found themselves discussing a violent scene with a friend or family member. Further to this the survey also discovered that 83.64% of people agree violence can be a talking point of films.

Taking this into consideration along with the qualitative information from the interviews its easy to make the analysis that violence has a monumental effect on word-of-mouth marketing. Also discovered from the interviews, this is most likely due to shock value. However, what's important to note and must be discussed is what type of word-of-mouth marketing is adequate. As stated in the key findings person 2 being interviewed admitted to discussing violent scenes from films with friend or family, however she also admitted she would purposely go out of her way to recommend her friends or piers don't watch this show. Person 2 telling her piers to avoid a film or show because of too much perceived violence proves violence has an effect on word-of-mouth marketing, but sometimes results in negative marketing that hinders brand image or in this case film/series image or reputation. Regardless of if the word being spread is positive or negative about the films or series in discussion, either way it's still further advertising and marketing for that film which is the original

objective set out to investigate. Overall, this objective found violent scenes does in fact have a direct consequence on word-of-mouth marketing.

Recommendations for further research

There is a distinct lack of research placed into the effects violence has on consumer behaviour within the entertainment industry so here lies a huge opportunity for further research. The findings in this research indicate positive and negative consequences violence may have on consumer behaviour and leaves the door open for further investigation and research to explore the same topic but on a larger scale. Another opportunity to explore would be how people under the age of 18 are affected by violence within advertising. This research focused on adults and how they perceive violence within entertainment, but a section of this research discovered that the vast majority of participants claimed to be more enticed by violence when they were under the age of 18. The vast majority of participants also agreed people under the age of are far more likely to be attracted to a film or series obtaining violence. This provides a large opportunity for further research to better understand that topic and delve deeper into the attraction of violence to people under the age of 18.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to add further investigation to past studies on the effects violence has on consumer behaviour within the entertainment industry. The aim was not simply just to figure out if violence sells, but to understand which aspects of consumer behaviour are affected by violence. This research attempted to unravel information on violence such as how it effects consumer loyalty, interest, purchase intention and word of mouth marketing. Four research objectives were identified as key areas of interest that would help in discovering more information on the overall goal.

The hypothesis was developed and based off previous studies regarding how the brain reacts to violence and perceives it as a central cue holding dominance over non central cues. This research laid the foundation to the possibility of violence gaining our attention, but perhaps not our lasting interest. It was the prediction of this research that violence would hinder sales and consumer loyalty in certain circumstances. It was also the prediction of this research that violence may sometimes be too prominent and too extreme for consumers within the

entertainment industry. Lastly, it was the prediction of this paper that violence within films and tv series would have a monumental effect on word-of-mouth marketing. As proven in the findings, analysis and discussion these original predictions or theoretical hypothesis were found true. Further analysis provided reasoning for some of these hypothesis and provided the research with answers as to why these hypothesis was true and discovered them in further depth.

It's too simplistic to suggest violence sells, or contrary, doesn't sell. However what this research has found is aspects of violence effect consumer behaviour in both positive and negative consequences. The first and arguably most important objective of this research was to discover the effect violence has on attention and movie or series interest. As mentioned, the answer discovered isn't simply just a case of violence makes people more or less interested in a film. In conclusion, what was discovered is that violence can increase interest levels but only when other variables are present. The central variable that must be present to make violence entertaining within a film or series is context to that violence. The primary research from qualitative and quantitative information in the form of survey and interviews both discovered the same answer: *in order for violence to increase the interest of the consumers it must add to the plot or storyline of the film or series.* Mindless and simple violence for the sake of violence is off putting to the vast majority of fans and doesn't add any perceived depth or interest to a film. To sum up if violence adds interest, we can say it depends on if the violent scene adds to the plot of the story. What the research found was random contextual violence doesn't just play an invisible role to interest levels but instead acts as a hindering aspect to interest levels within a film or tv series.

It was also discovered violence absolutely can be too extreme and pay negative consequences to consumer loyalty of a film or tv show. Research found through both the survey and in-depth interviews that the vast majority of people have either stopped watching a films or series or lost interest due to excessive violence or violence without true meaning or context. The hypothesis was that violence will play a hindering effect to consumer loyalty in certain circumstances and in the case of extreme violence its absolutely factual to suggest It can hinder consumer loyalty. However, violence can have positive effects on consumer behaviour in other aspects such as shock value effecting word of mouth marketing. The literature review found one of the most popular series of all time obtained its global sales through predominantly word of mouth marketing and the research in this study also found violence has a monumental effect on consumer behaviour. Considering over 80% of people at some

stage have found themselves discussing a violent scene from a film or series with a friend or family member its easy to make the statement violence has a colossal effect on advertising in the form of word-of-mouth marketing. This in turn, is an effective strategy for marketers to spread brand awareness or brand image. Contrary to the concept violence within entertainment has a positive effect on marketing efforts this research also discussed and uncovered how violence in advertising can hinder interest levels and purchase intention. Both the survey and interviews concluded the same answer. Violence must have context in advertising to make that advertisement attractive. This was best showcased in the movie poster of sopranos that contained a gun with no further context, no setting, no background, no characters. This blank but violent showcasing of a movie poster was deemed fully inadequate or insufficient to another poster containing characters of the series sitting around a table. This perfectly demonstrated that violence must include context to make the violence interesting – not just in advertising but also in the film or series itself.

To summarise and conclude, violence can have a direct positive or negative impact on consumer behaviour depending on the context behind the violence and how its portrayed. Gone are the days films or series can showcase guns, blood, guts and violence and fans and movie critics will be entertained. Perhaps simple and numb violence was a good strategy to create interest and entice consumers many years ago, but in modern day times the average consumers require a certain level of plot development and storyline arc to stay interested and entertained in a film or series. Yes, violence can aid that entertainment, but it must be used in a fashion that adds to the storyline. Finally, violence showcased within entertainment purposes which adds to the movie or series plot can have positive effects on consumer behaviour aspects such as brand/film interest, purchase intention, loyalty and word of mouth marketing.

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