

Message Analysis Project Report

Susan Chiano

Audience Analysis and Communication Research

Problem Statement

Films vary in many different ways. One of the most identifying parts of a film is its genre. As most people know the genre of a film will determine many different aspects such as theme, plot, and even technical. Much like genres differing between films, so do reviews and opinions. Whether it's the writing of a film or the technical effects there are many different reasons for a viewer to enjoy or dislike a movie. These many opinions that people can gain towards film can lead to many discussions towards what makes a good movie or not. Yet, does the genre of a film determine how people rate them? Are there certain aspects of a horror film that make or break the film, while a comedy would do the opposite? Often reviews for a film state different reasons as to why people should or should not watch a film. How much does the genre of a film play into these reviews? Are there different standards genres of films are held to when compared to others?

Justification and Research Question

Now, why should these questions be studied? Well, this type of research can help a lot with filmmakers. If there is a stronger understanding as to how the genre of a film can affect its ratings, filmmakers will be able to utilize certain aspects of the film in order to get better reviews. Such as putting more emphasis on the soundtrack of the film or the technical effects. Along with this, the research can help affect reviews and moviegoers. The research found in this message analysis project can help understand how film reviews speak to the needs of people who go to movies. As people will be able to fit reviews to their film-going experience before watching the movie. This problem has led to the research question: Do the standards of different film genres affect the reviews of films? This content analysis research will study film reviews of

films of varying film genres and the relationships between the differing standards of film genres and how it affects the review. The research found within this study will lead to whether or not the genre of a film plays a major role in what is considered good or bad within its review.

Method

The research for this study was found through an app known as Letterboxd. Due to the audience being moviegoers and how film reviews speak to the needs of people who go to the movies, the focus needed to be on a more varied form of film reviews. Letterboxd is an app that is organized similarly to Twitter, but it only consists of movie reviews and ratings. Through this social media stylized app, people can look at hundreds of reviews very easily. With so many reviews, each review differs in professionalism. Some reviews are conducted by professionals, while others are simply created by fans of movies. By keeping this variety, one can further determine universal standards of film genres whether the viewer is professionally analyzing, or simply watching it for entertainment. Due to there being hundreds of different film genres and subgenres, the decision was to focus on the most well-known and popular genres: horror, action, comedy, drama, and romance. Each review varied in enjoyment level, some reviews tore into and destroyed the film, while other reviews only praised the film.

Research Design and Procedures

Overall forty film reviews were analyzed. Each review was picked randomly as long as it was reviewing a film that matched one of the four genre variables. While studying, each review had to be broken up into individual units and variables to help categorize the content. First, each review was put into a variable of the specific genre the film fell under which was, horror, action, comedy, and romance. Along with this, to maintain consistency every movie that was reviewed had to remain around the same age range. So, each film that was being analyzed was made

within the last ten or so years. The variables used to study these reviews were: film genre, involvement in a franchise, relatability of characters, technical aspect, acting, directing, music and enjoyment. The variables of film genre consisted of the four genres stated previously. While involvement in a franchise had only two options for measurement which was yes or no. As for relatability of characters, technical aspect, acting, directing, and music these aspects were measured in the value of importance within the reviews. The value of importance consisted of: very important, important, and not important at all. This was analyzed through how much emphasis the reviewer put on these different aspects of the film. For example, if the reviewer frequently mentioned the soundtrack of the film and how much they loved it, it would be put as 'very important' under the music category. Finally, the enjoyment level the reviewer had was rated through: loved the film, liked the film, indifferent, disliked the film, hated the film. This was to primarily study whether aspects of film such as music could destroy an opinion of a movie just as much as it could create a fan.

Results and Discussion

After much analysis and review, forty varying film reviews were read and studied. The film reviews varied very evenly amongst the four genres, with the smallest genre being romance which consisted of seven reviews, and the largest being action which consisted of twelve reviews. Now with a slight gap in amount, one does have to take into consideration that this may affect results as the action genre will always have more units than the other three genres. Yet through this content, many different findings were found. First of all, under the premise of whether the film was a part of a series or not, a large majority of both horror and action films within the past ten years are connected to other films.

Count of Franchise	Movie Genre					
Franchise		action	comedy	Horror	Romance	Grand Total
no		4	9	3	7	23
yes		8	2	7		17
Grand Total		12	11	10	7	40

One can see that currently, horror and action films are oftentimes used as an extension of other films. This will often require viewers to have an understanding of the past films within the franchise to fully understand the movie they are watching. This makes a lot of sense considering some of the most popular action films tend to include Marvel movies and movies from the *Mission Impossible* franchise. The same can be said for horror films as there has been a rise in creating sequels for older horror films.

Within each review, the reviewer often talked about the relatability of the characters in some sort of way. Whether they simply mentioned it or heavily relied on it. There was a common recurrence where the reviewers of horror films did not find the actions of the characters that relatable.

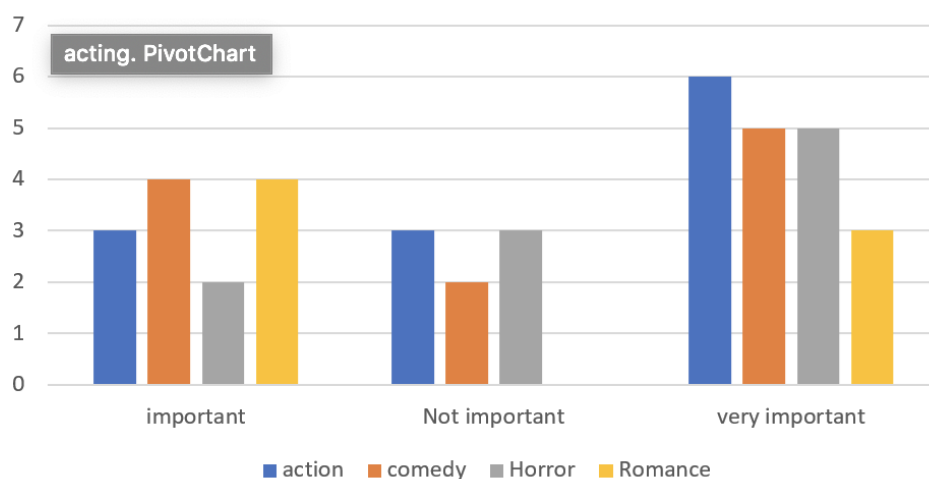
Count of Relatability	Movie Genre					
Relatability		action	comedy	Horror	Romance	Grand Total
no		3	6	7	2	18
yes		9	5	3	5	22
Grand Total		12	11	10	7	40

Often speaking over how one-dimensional and unrealistic the characters turned out to be. This hurt the reviews of the horror films in many ways, as the reviewers often used that as one of the reasons to rate the film lower than usual. This seems to be a common issue with horror films, which could easily improve reviews if they added more development to the characters involved with the film.

Overall the technological side to each film played a large role in reviews when it was necessary. Reviews for horror and action often discussed CGI and effects whereas comedy

and romance reviews discussed more nuanced aspects of technical aspects such as cinematography. Usually, the effects of a film were either heavily enjoyed or hated, there was never a middle ground towards the CGI within a movie.

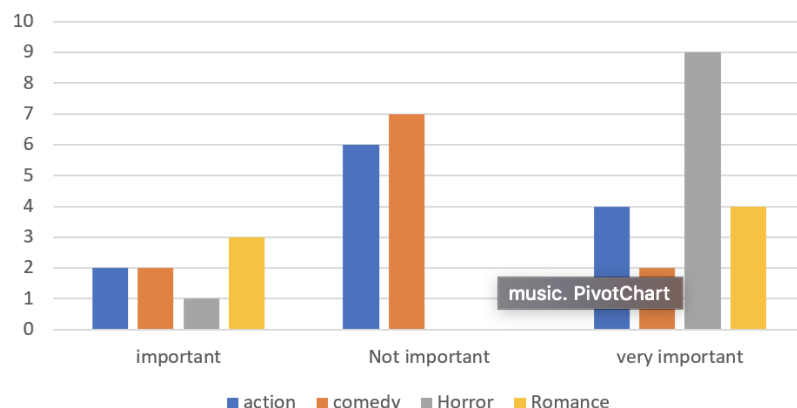
Within each genre, acting was very important within the film. Within each romance film review, the acting was always mentioned, there was never a review that did not mention the actor's performance.



Although Romance reviews treated acting as a priority, the other genres were not far behind, as 'not important' was the lowest unit for all four genres. This showcases how no matter the genre, the performance of the actor is important.

Not many results were found through the mention of directing a movie. Most of the time the reviewer would only mention the director if they had watched one of the director's previous films, regardless of genre. The only time the directing of a film played a role within the genre was whether the director only directed a certain genre or not. For example, in a review for the horror film *Midsommar*, the reviewer talked about the director Ari Aster, as he only directs horror films. So the reviewer frequently compared Aster's past films to his most recent ones.

The music of the film played a huge role in reviews for romance and horror films. Both genres seemed to have heavily relied on music to try to bring certain emotions out of their audiences.



We can see how music plays a very large role within both horror and romance film genres, while there is more variety of importance for action and comedy genres. This easily made or broke many of the films, especially for horror as music played a huge role in the overall tone of the film.

From the data collected, the standards of different film genres affect reviews in many different ways. With this research, we can see that each genre has differing aspects that may play a bigger role when compared to other genres. This leads to reviews for film genres such as horror and romance to put more of an emphasis on discussing the soundtrack than other aspects. Yet, although some parts differ amongst film genres, other aspects are universally discussed no matter the genre. Such as acting and directing, each is important to the film no matter the genre.

Limitations

Overall this study was very successful. The biggest limitation was probably the number of reviews. In the future, it would be best to analyze a larger amount of reviews to allow more film genres to be analyzed. Along with this, it should have been taken into account that some

franchises can be put into their other aspects are film genres. Such as Marvel, which is now such a large franchise has created a whole new genre of superhero films. Yet other than these few limitations and changes, the study turned out to have many results.