Black Panther vs The Help, the battle of inclusion versus tokenism:

A Comprehensive Examination of Underrepresentation of Minorities in Hollywood Films

MASTER THESIS MARKETING ANALYTICS

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Management summary

In recent years, the issue of minority representation in Hollywood films has become increasingly prominent. Countless studies have been published on this topic, and there is a growing demand for clarity about the relationship between representation and its effects.

This paper addresses the pressing issue of diversity and representation within the film industry, specifically focusing on Hollywood films. Films are powerful cultural influencers that shape societal beliefs. The lack of representation in films can perpetuate negative stereotypes and marginalization, which can have a harmful impact on individuals and communities. The study highlights that films with diverse casts tend to perform better at the box office due to their wider appeal. This suggests that diversity is not only a moral imperative, but also a financial necessity. The study highlights the economic significance of the film industry, which generates billions of dollars in annual revenue and produces some of the most profitable products in the world.

Despite recent improvements in representation, the study underscores that existing measures often overlook the nuances of representation and the need for authentic inclusive representation (AIR). AIR is a comprehensive approach to representation that accounts for effective representation rather than mere tokenism. The study argues that AIR is essential for creating films that resonate with diverse audiences and positively impact society.

Preface

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Chapter 1 . Introduction

* 1. Problem indication

The film industry is a major part of our global economy. Films generate nearly $100 billion annually through theaters and home channels. Moreover, the economic impact is evident in successful products. For instance, Disney's "The Force Awakens" earned a net profit of $780 million (MPA, 2022), displaying that films are a serious, high-return industry despite their light-hearted nature. Besides this economic significance, films are related to cultural aspects of society.

Films are not only a form of entertainment, they also reflect and shape the cultural context in which they are created. They mirror societal values, attitudes, and perspectives and can effectively convey ideas, emotions, and perspectives through their visual and narrative nature. As a result, they have the potential to shape how people perceive the world and the cultures around them. (Belton, 1995)

In today's increasingly diverse and socially conscious world, this responsibility currently translates that the Hollywood film industry is under increasing pressure to be socially conscious and to address issues of representation, particularly in relation to gender and people of color (Sperling, 2021). The common consensus is that representation in films is important because it counteracts narrow viewpoints regarding groups depicted in the media, which can reinforce negative stereotypes and biases that result in discrimination and marginalization (The Annenberg Foundation, 2018; Castañeda, 2015; Ross, 2019; Kubrak, 2020; Buchanan, 2005).

Moreover, representation in films is not only important for social factors, but also for financial reasons. Studies have shown that films with more diverse casts tend to perform better at the box office. For example, a study by McKinsey & Company in 2021 found that films with casts that had at least 30% minority actors were 1.3 times more likely to be profitable. This is caused by a diverse cast appealing to a broader demographic of viewers, making the film more relatable and interesting to a wider range of people. (The Annenberg Foundation, 2018) This is supported by a study in 2018 by the University of Southern California, which found that films with diverse casts were 1.4 times more likely to be seen by broader audiences.

By prioritizing diversity and representation, filmmakers can not only create more inclusive and authentic stories, but they can also attract larger audiences and boost their bottom line. (Whitten, 2019; Bunche, 2018; Reporter, 2021).This suggests that diversity is both a moral and financial imperative for the film industry.

Efforts to increase diversity and representation in film have led to a significant increase in the proportion of films featuring minority actors. For example, a study by UCLA found that in the years from 2011 to 2021, films went from 51.2% having less than 11% of colored actors to 28.8% of films featuring a cast that has a majority of colored actors.

Nevertheless, the public, media, and most studies adopt a narrow approach measuring diversity. (Malik, 2022) Most studies do not make a distinction between different minority groups and measure diversity based on the share of minorities in the cast. This study argues this approach has caused two major issues.

Firstly, the approach of treating minority groups as a homogenous unit has resulted in uneven representation across the different minority groups. For instance, while African-Americans have been overrepresented in films for the past three consecutive years and the Asian community is ‘rightfully’ represented, the Latin community remains severely underrepresented, with a gap of 13.2% (compared to an actual population of 20%) respectively. (UCLA, 2021; MPAA, 2021). As a result, this group still experiences the social consequences of being underrepresented.

Secondly, measuring diversity based solely on minority share overlooks crucial information about the nature of the representation. (Malik, 2022; Lazar, 2020) To effectively address the social dimension associated with diversity, authentic inclusive representation (AIR) is necessary. This concept refers to the practice of accurately and respectfully depicting characters from diverse backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and more. (Lazar, 2020). Therefore, this study argues by neglecting to consider AIR alongside diversity, previous studies have fallen short to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the effects of racial diversity. This causes that the true effects on both the social dimensions and financial implications are not being properly studied.

Lastly, as discussed racial representation in film is a social construct. Nevertheless, most studies use box office revenue as the dependent variable to analyze film success (Malik, 2022; Kuppuswamy, 2016). While box office revenue is a useful measure of commercial success, it does not necessarily reflect the quality of a film or its impact on audiences, as it is highly influenced by marketing , advertising and hype. Therefore, this study will choose long-term audience engagement as dependent variable. As discussed later this concept entails both social and economical constructs regarding films which makes it a better measurement for a films success.

1.2. Problem Statement

Following the problem background this studies problem statement is formulated as follows: “*What is the relationship between racial diversity in Hollywood films and LTAE, and to what extent does the AIR mediate this relationship?”*

1.3 Academic contribution

Previous studies on racial diversity in films have taken a narrow approach, either by focusing on only one or two ethnic groups (Patel, 2015; Hall, 2020; Dixon, 2000 ; Kuppuswamy , 2016) or by grouping all minority groups together (Aumer, 2017). This study addresses these limitations by including multiple minority groups and distinguishing between them. This is important because different minority groups have different experiences and perspectives, and their representation in films should be considered separately. Moreover, analyzing all minority groups separately but at the same time displays real world scenario’s, improving the generalization of the results.

Second, as noted by Malik (2021, p. 1), 'there are no clearly defined, standardized, and scalable metrics for taking stock of racial minorities’ cinematographic representation'. Methodologies used in previous work Weitzman et. Al (1972) and Smith et al. (2013) has been done by manual annotation. Which does produce high quality insights, but requires intensive time and are often expensive. This study uses an automated process to measure the concept of AIR and racial diversity. By doing so this the study includes an approach that is as inclusive as possible but also can be automated and therefore easily applied to large sums of films.

Third, most studies use box office revenue as the dependent variable to analyze the success of a film. (Madongo, 2023; Eliashberg, 2014; Gemser, 2007) Box office revenue is a useful measure of commercial success, but it does not necessarily reflect the quality of a film or its impact on audiences. By using Long-term audience engagement (LTAE), this study uses a more comprehensive measure of success, as it takes into account factors such as word-of-mouth, social media engagement, and re-watching.

Using this approach, this study builds upon previous research and provides a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the relationship between representation and long term audience engagement in films.

1.4 Managerial contribution

This study offers valuable insights for filmmakers, studios, and stakeholders, helping them make informed decisions that can significantly impact a film's success in both financial and cultural terms. By intentionally casting diverse roles and developing characters that genuinely represent a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures, filmmakers can attract a wider audience, which can increase a film's potential for financial success and profitability—a key goal in the commercial film industry.

Furthermore, the information is crucial for studios as it allows them to assess whether embracing diversity in their casts and themes can expand their audience reach over time. This would signal a necessary shift in focus from short-term box office results to long-term audience engagement.

Moreover, if the research findings confirm that minority groups respond more favorably to films where they are authentically represented, marketers and distribution teams can leverage these insights to develop targeted marketing strategies. This could lead to more effective marketing activities.

Lastly, the study underscores the significance of Authentic Inclusive Representation (AIR) in films. By emphasizing this concept, filmmakers can understand that simply including minority characters is not enough; authenticity is essential. Focusing on crafting narratives that genuinely reflect the diversity of human experiences enables filmmakers to create stories that resonate emotionally with audiences. Ultimately, this understanding can lead to long-term social and financial benefits for both creators and the film industry as a whole.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

To address the research questions stated earlier, a quantitative research approach was employed in this study. This paper will first present a theoretical framework to contextualize the research, followed by a detailed description of the research methodology. Afterwards it will be discussed how the data collection and processing went. Finally, the results will be discussed.

Chapter 2. Literature review and hypotheses

This literature review delves into the current existing literature on the relationship between racial diversity in Hollywood films and LTAE. Before delving into the relationships for clarity purposes an explanation of the main components LTAE, racial representation are provided. What is also discussed is that and AIR is a crucial part of racial representation.

2.1 LTAE (Long-term audience engagement )

Audience engagement is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses the active involvement of an audience. In this study, the focus is on long-term audience engagement (LTAE), which goes beyond passive consumption and encompasses factors such as word-of-mouth, cultural impact, and sustained interest over time. (Broersma, 2019; Kumar, 2022)

Before delving into the social attribute of LTAE it’s important to clarify that LTAE actually has financial purposes as well. LTAE encompasses dimensions of ancillary revenues such as engrossed viewing, longevity in distribution channels, and the purchase of film-related merchandise (Kumar, 2022). These factors signify a lasting connection with the film beyond its initial screening and address the mechanism that LTAE is able to provide financial components over a longer period of time. These financial constructs exist through the social components of LTAE.

LTAE is a key factor in the media's capacity to shape attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. It allows for a deeper and more sustained connection between the audience and the film, which can have a lasting impact on their lives. (Tan, 2018) The effect of LTAE and changing behavior is demonstrated by Bard research in 2006, which discovered that individuals highly interested in violent video games over time were more prone to displaying heightened levels of aggressive behavior, aggressive cognitions, feelings of anger, and physiological arousal.

Furthermore, the effects of long term engagement with media and changing our beliefs was displayed by Mastro et al. in 2007 which found that white people who were constantly exposed to negative racial stereotypes in the media were more likely to hold those stereotypes themselves. This was especially true for white people who don't have much real-life contact with people of color. When we're constantly exposed with negative portrayals of certain groups of people, it's hard not to start believing them. Therefore, the importance of racial representation in media will be discussed in the following paragraph.

2.2 Racial representation in films

Representation of minorities in films pertains to the presence and portrayal of characters from minority groups, including people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalized groups. (Buckingham, 2008). Representation is essential because it allows people from different groups to see themselves on screen, which can lead to a greater sense of inclusion, empowerment, and validation. (Annenberg Foundation., 2018; Dixon, 2000)

In contrast, the absence of representation has negative impacts on self-worth, as individuals from underrepresented groups do not see themselves or their experiences reflected in mainstream media (Castañeda, 2015; Ross, 2019; Kubrak, 2020; Buchanan, 2005) The spread of positive and accurate portrayals in the media is therefore essential for people to explore their racial identities.

Racial identity is a complex concept that is constantly evolving, and it allows people from different backgrounds to connect with others who share their experiences. This study uses the defintion of Umaña-Taylor AJ, (2014 p. 3) which defines racial identity as “a multidimensional psychological construct that reflects the beliefs and attitudes that individuals have about their ethnic group memberships”. The four ethnic groups used in this study are Black, Hispanic, White and Asian.

Furthermore, our racial identity is not solely a product of our own perspective but is also shaped by how others perceive us. In multicultural societies, building positive relationships among diverse groups presents a significant challenge. In densely populated areas characterized by ethnic segregation, individuals often encounter other cultures and ethnicities solely through media portrayals (Kidd, 2015).

This in combination of the powerful impact of media representations on shaping perceptions. Positive depictions of communities of color can diminish feelings of threat and social distance among white audiences (Dalisay & Tan, 2009; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007), whereas negative portrayals, such as associations with criminality, can exacerbate negative stereotypes and widen divisions among ethnic groups (Abraham & Appiah, 2006; Hurley et al., 2015).

As this section of the study progresses, the ongoing debate regarding the extent to which films should mirror the diversity of the real world continues to evolve, with diverse perspectives on its necessity. Ultimately, filmmakers must remain cognizant of the potential impact their creative choices can exert on viewers. As the following paragraphs will highlights how to represent these ethnic minorities in a successful manner is equally important.

The representation of minority groups in films takes on various forms. Some films and studies focus on the experiences of minority characters, while others simply include them as part of the larger cast (Malik, 2021). However, overlooking authenticity in representation can result in films being mistakenly categorized as racially diverse while still perpetuating stereotypes and contributing to marginalization. (Dixon, 2000) These stereotypes in the film can perpetuate biases and misconceptions about minority groups. (Umaña-Taylor AJ, 2014) Therefore, the concept of Authentic Inclusive Representation (AIR) emerges as a crucial element in portraying marginalized groups authentically.

The pursuit of authenticity in the representation of minorities in films is not a recent development. In 2014, Ralph Roughton emphasized in his essay on the film 'Brokeback Mountain' that the most important factor in changing attitudes is getting to know someone who is different in a way that allows for genuine understanding and empathy, rather than relying on dismissive stereotypes. In essence, for representation to be effective in shaping attitudes, viewers must genuinely strive to understand characters to foster empathy.

AIR, as a concept, measures how accurately and respectfully a film portrays underrepresented groups in a nuanced manner. Building upon prior research on gender biases in film (Agarwal et al., 2015; Kagan et al., 2020), this study seeks to standardize the concept of AIR. This is through the Bechdel-Wallace test (1985). Originally also designed to measure the authentic representation of women in a film.

The test asks a series of questions which can be simplified to: Do two named non-white characters in {movie} have a conversation that does not center around a white character? An example for such a conversation would be a conversation between the main character and his wife in the movie ‘12 years a slave’ :

**ANNE**

Solomon...

**SOLOMON**

Come, Anne. Jump.

**ANNE**

I will not ruin my dress. Catch me!

**SOLOMON**

I will catch you, Anne. I will.

**ANNE**

You will.

Even though it is not a very thorough and meaningful conversation the characters both are African Americans they are named characters and not a white person is present or mentioned in the conversation.. So this movie would have AIR for black people. This study is not the first time the Bechdel test regards to racial representation is applied. The REM test was developed by the UCLA CSS in 2020.

2.2.1 Racial diversity and LTAE:

It is widely recognized that viewers tend to connect with characters who possess relatable qualities or admirable traits. (Murray, 1999; Appiah, 2001; Hall, 2020) This connection is strengthened when there are similarities in demographic factors such as race, age, and gender, creating a sense of affinity between viewers and the on-screen portrayals. (Hall, 2020) As a result, when individuals see themselves or their own experiences represented in a story, they are more likely to form a strong emotional bond and become deeply engaged with the film and its characters. (Murray, 1999; Appiah, 2001; Hall, 2020) This suggests that when a film embraces racial diversity, it has the potential to attract a broader audience and foster greater overall LTAE. (USC Annenberg, 2018)

The demand for greater racial diversity in film is not universally embraced. A study by King (2020) identifies a group while not opposing racial representation in film, prioritize the quality of the storyline. Moreover, recent efforts to increase racial diversity in films have faced criticism, particularly from those who fear change and the increased visibility of people of color. This backlash for initiatives regarding racial equality is claimed by Patel (2015), to be a stem from a persistent culture of colonialism or systematic racism.

Some studies have argued that whitewashing is an audience preference, meaning that diversity will not have a positive effect on long-term audience engagement (LTAE) (Weaver, 2011). This is based on the assumption that white majority audiences will not be interested in watching films with racially diverse casts. One way that has been implemented to mitigate financial risks is to reduce the budget allocated to projects with higher racial diversity. This is supported by research showing that films featuring racial minorities in lead roles receive significantly less production budget (Smith et al., 2020). Lower production budgets are a key predictor of lower box-office sales (Eliashberg, 2014; Michel Clement, 2014). This means that underfunding these specific films makes them less likely to be successful.

However, the preference for whitewashing is shown to not hold true for all scenarios. (Katherine-Aumer , 2017) Furthermore, recent studies also put doubt to the idea that white actors are financially necessary for successful films. (Chow, 2016) Displaying whitewashing might be a product of industry habit rather than actual audience preferences.

Moreover, a study by Teresa Correa (2011) explored the relationship between racial diversity and social media buzz, finding that minority groups tend to create online content more frequently. (Kuppusway) When a film attracts these audiences through representation, it is more likely to generate online discussion, fostering more LTAE (Kumar, 2022).

Ethnic and racial minorities currently comprise 40% of the U.S. population and demographers predict that by 2050 the U.S. will be majority-minority (Desilver, 2015). Notably, White audiences currently account for less than 50% of moviegoers, while Black and African-American and LatinX communities engage in traditional and digital entertainment in greater proportions than their population shares in the U.S. (Gonzalez, 2014; MPAA, 2014). Meaning attracting these minority groups might actually help attracing more audience.

Finally, it is argued that diverse casts can better reflect the diversity of the real world, which can help viewers to connect with the characters and the story. (USC Annenberg, 2018) Despite the challenges the prominent consensus is that increased racial diversity in films has a positive influence on LTAE. Based on the considerations, the hypothesis for the relationship is as follows:

**H1:** Increased racial diversity has a positive influence on LTAE.

2.4.1 Diversity , AIR and LTAE:

There is an intuitive belief that racial diversity leads to authentic inclusive representation (AIR). This is because the more people from different races are included, the more likely it is that one of them will provide an authentic representation for that ethnicity. Moreover , others argue that diversity encompasses a variety of perspectives and experiences, which can enhance authenticity of characters. This is because diverse casts can help to challenge stereotypes and assumptions about different cultures. As a result, they can help to create more nuanced and complex representations of people from different backgrounds. (Smith, 2020). As a result, the hypothesis is as follows:

**H2:** The likelihood of a film featuring AIR increases with a rise in racial diversity.

Potential challenges and critiques of diversity in films include questions of tokenism, where underrepresented characters are included without fully developed storylines. Such instances can lead to backlash and diminish LTAE if viewers perceive the diversity as insincere. (Smith, 2016) This insincerity is also transferred to the quality perceived of the movie. People mention that when minorities introduced through tokenism it can create the perception of a ‘racial agenda’ which are disliked by viewers. (King, 2020)

Specifically, negative stereotypes are seen as a gross misrepresentation by the balanced critics who advocate for avoiding films with stereotyping regardless of representation. As mentioned before these critics are drivers of LTAE on their own. Films that receive positive reviews from critics are more likely to be successful than films that receive negative reviews. This is because positive reviews can help generate interest in the film and encourage people to see it (Hofmann, 2016; Ghiassi, 2017; Kuppuswamy, 2016; Kumar et al., 2022).

Moreover, these negative stereotypes can lead to complete deferral towards the medium from the minority groups. For example, a study by El Hazzouri (2019) found that ethnic minorities who saw public health advertisements featuring their own ethnic group reported lower intentions to take the advice from the ad than those who saw ads featuring white models. The authors found this is driven by that the fact that for minorities it creates perceptions of being negatively stereotyped by the advertisers.

In contrast AIR can have a positive effect if done correctly. According to research, large-budget films in 2021 performed better when they had more racial authentic representation. (Lazar, 2020) The study emphasizes that racial representation must be authentic in order to foster empathy, understanding, and connection among viewers. There is a growing body of research that suggests that authentic representation of diverse individuals on screen, free from stereotypes, has a profound educational and socially engaging impact on audiences. (Bamford, 2018)

This transfers to all types of media, as shown by a study by Roberts, (2021) which found that news stories that portrayed diverse cultures and identities in an authentic way were more likely to foster empathy and understanding among readers. This is likely because seeing oneself and one's own experiences reflected in the media can lead to a deeper emotional connection with the characters and the story, making the media more engaging

Strong predilection for the idea that accurate representation is paramount and that misrepresentations are unethical. Therefore, the hypothesis will be the following:

**H3:** The presence of AIR in a movie positively influences its ability to capture LTAE.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the research on the relationship between racial diversity in Hollywood films and long-term audience engagement (LTAE). The review defines and elaborates on key concepts, such as LTAE, racial representation in films, authentic inclusive representation (AIR) and cultural resonance. The review also included factors that have previously shown to have an effect on a films succes. Even though these were initially focused on a movie’s finanical succes these most likely provide important input in this study. The review concludes that there is a complex and nuanced relationship between racial diversity and LTAE. And most importantly it identified the gaps in current literature. The findings of this study could have important implications for the film industry and for society as a whole.

2.8 Theory

A diagram of a person's relationship

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Figure 1 Conceptual model paper

The conceptual model consists of three multiple regressions and one diff in diff analysis for culture resonance which also will be used in a regression. Thorough model specification can be found in the research methodology. For the relationship between Diversity and AIR, it will be a logistic regression.

3. Research Methodology

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between cast diversity and LTAE. Besides this main analysis AIR is also introduced and cultural resonance is taken into account. The following paragraphs describe the data collection process this is followed with the separate studies of this paper.

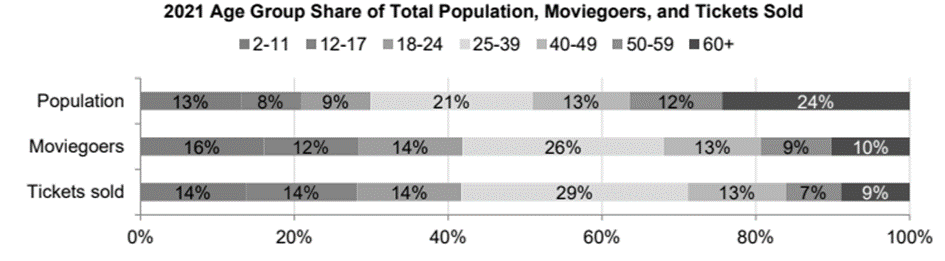
3.1. Data sources

IMDb is the primary data source for this study, with Numbers and The Movie Database (TMDB) used as alternative sources. IMDb is a trusted platform with millions of registered users, ensuring credibility and diverse perspectives (Ghiassi, 2017).

To check the generalizability of our findings, we collected demographic data on IMDb users. Last month, IMDb had 503 million visits, but 62% of those users were men.(Similarweb, 2023) This is a significant gender imbalance, given that movie audiences are generally split evenly between men and women with 53% of moviegoers being men. (MPA, 2022) However, the gender distribution of ticket sales is more comparable to that of IMDB, with 59% of tickets sold to men. This suggests that male viewers mostly pay for their female companions.

The age distribution on IMDb is very similar to that of moviegoers. However, Similarweb provides only data on the number of IMDb users who are 18 or older, while the MPAA provides data on all moviegoers. Additionally, the age groups used by the two organizations are different.. While you see a spike and a typical normal distribution in both. With the ages 25-39 being the largest age group. It needs to be noted that the oldest age group is not represented as such on IMDB. Lastly, we do have to take into account that IMDB users are very American populated. (Similarweb ) And tastes do differ across countries.

We must consider these limitations when interpreting our findings. However, we believe that IMDb is still a reliable source of data for this study, given its large user base and diverse perspectives.

A screenshot of a graph

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3.1.1 Resources for determining race

The casts for the different films where collected by the API of TMDB. In our research methodology, we employed the Kairos API, which harnesses the power of deep learning algorithms to discern the ethnicity of individuals depicted in images. This API was used to detect around 100000 from the 120000 actors for which images could be found on TMDB or IMDB. This list does include duplicates if actors were listed in more films than one. It is noteworthy that the absence of an actor or actress's image on these platforms generally signifies a lack of significant roles in films, rendering such individuals relatively less influential for our analysis. Therefore, meaning that these actress and actors most definitely did not performed a character which can be seen as AIR.

Nevertheless, in the cases where we did use all actors the remaining actors and actresses were assigned ethnicities based on their first and last name through the R package Rethnicity. Which has an accuracy around eighty percent. For which studies the entire list of actors is used will be discussed later in this part of the paper. (Maybe use only named characters)

3.1.2 Resources for determining AIR

The results for the R.E.M test can be collected using two possible approaches. Firstly, the test can be conducted through text analysis of the scripts obtained from websites that were utilized in previous studies (Hunter, 2016; Eliashberg, 2014). Alternatively, subtitles for the hearing impaired can be used. The subtitles used in this study were collected from “opensubtitles.org” which has an user friendly API. From the around twenty-four films in our dataset for eleven hundred films subtitles which could be used to standardize where collected.

3.1.4 Cleaning data

The sample will be carefully chosen, likely limited to a specific timeframe of a few years, to minimize heterogeneity. We chose to only have films with the country of the production company to be from the United States to indicate that it was the Hollywood industry. We chose to remove the genre animation due to the fact that due to voice actors not being displayed on the screen. Therefore, not being able to represent an ethnicity. Following Joshi and Mao (2012) this research focused on films that had a wide release (minimum of 500 screens at launch) which filters out films that are independent. Finally we filtered the NA’s. Following the criterion we ha a final sample of 2,418 unique films.

We started by identifying what films we would be interested in. The dataset we used as a base to build upon was ‘The Films Dataset’[[1]](#footnote-1) found on the website Kaggle. Which was filtered as mentioned in the next section of this paper. The dataset consisted of forty five thousand films which after cleaning was brought down to eight thousand six hundred and sixty. The dataset consisted among other off genre, production company etc. The dataset was constructed with the API of The Movie Database further referred to as TMDB.

We had a total of around 20000 films. First there were some key filtering. Such as the movie having a value for all of the control variables in this study. Lastly we controlled for all films having at least 500 opening theaters. After all cleaning the dataset concluded of 2418 films. Budget was the variable where we used multiple sources. Due to differences in the budget value from these different sources the average was taken.

What do you want to show:  
1. Differences in diversity in main leads and non main leads. The already finished dataset of IMDB has only fur characters those are the four most important players.

2. Point in time, difference in diversity in the films will probably not change. Because 2016 but how it was perceived is that changed. So rating before, just right after and a longer period of time after. Plus the diversity in the films . before just right after and after a longer period of time.

3.

3.1.5 Final sample/ Data description

Data summary

After collection and cleaning we had four major datasets.

1. One with the films and the characteristics of the films based on the control variables.
2. One with the films and their popularity scores
3. One with the actors of the films and their ethnicity distribution
4. One with the movie’s subtitles for the hearing impaired.

3.2 Studies

3.2.1:Relationship Racial representation and LTAE

*Variable operationalization* : LTAE will be measured using IMDb's movie score, which is derived from popularity rankings. The movie score includes direct indicators of LTAE, capturing factors such as online conversations, reviews, and word-of-mouth discussions. By analyzing movie scores over time, the study aims to track enduring engagement, where lower scores indicate higher popularity. This approach goes beyond a purely financial perspective, and instead utilizes a more comprehensive predictor. Additionally, comparing movie to movie directly helps eliminate variations caused by factors such as seasonality, providing a more accurate assessment. We used IMDB pro to collect the popularity scores of the films. The scraper for this process can be seen in the Appendix. Nevertheless, this scraper was specific for the computer used for scraping and therefore would not work for anyone else. This is due to IMDB pro acquiring a login.

A graph with a line going up

Description automatically generated

3.2.2 Simpson diversity index

With regards to measuring diversity the inverse Simpson index (1949) will be used. The Simpson diversity index is a measure of diversity that takes into account the number of species present, as well as the relative abundance of each species. D = 1 - / (Σ ni(ni-1)/N(N-1)) where n is the number of organisms that belong to species i and N is the total number of organisms. Nevertheless, as discussed in the following paragraph representation is more than just mere including actors.

The dataset finally consisted of four ethnicities all with their respective probabilities. These probabilities where on average Asian(0.248), black (0.25) , Hispanic (0.249) and White (0.25) meaning that looking at overall probabilities that people belong to an ethnicity was somewhat similar. These probabilities meant that there was a initial filtering process needed to have a threshold to assign people different ethnicities. Sadly Kairo’s is way better in predicting ethnicity when someone is white.

The distribution of the different ethnicities can be seen in the table below . This means when we do different thresholds and filter people out this will not be equally distributed among the different ethnicities. Therefore, we assigned two thresholds. One of 0.6 if the probability is higher than this the person is assigned a value one for the ethnicity. If the value is between 0.25 and 0.6 the person is assigned a value of 0.5. This could mean that some people have four ethnicities assigned. This threshold is aimed to eliminate all values with no meaning while still trying to remain most of the information. [[2]](#footnote-2)

A graph of different colored lines

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

*Model* :

Main relationship:

LTAE = β0 + β1*series+* β2*actor+* β3*director +* β4*rating* + β5*MPAArating +* β6*numberofscreens +* β7*critical+* β8*awards+* β9*budget+* β10- β22*genre* + β22*release +* β23*diversity +* ε

3.2.3 : Introducing AIR as a mediator

*Variable operationalization* : In addition to the main objective, this study seeks to investigate the feasibility of conducting a partial mediation analysis to examine the role of AIR in the main relationship. Following

This study builds on previous work (Agarwal, 2015) to automate the Bechdel test. Furthermore this approach has been used by CSS

AIR is treated as a dichotomous variable, with a value of 1 indicating the presence of AIR and a value of 0 indicating its absence. To determine the presence of AIR, the study will utilize the R.E.M. (Race in Entertainment Media) test developed by Lazar et al. (2020) inspired by the Bechdel Test (1985). This test consists of four questions that can be condensed into a single question, which increases accessibility and objectivity in measuring and analyzing (refer to Appendix B)

A graph with a line

Description automatically generated

Test for AIR:   
Test 1: are there at least two named people from the ethnicity {} in the movie?

Test 2 : Do two characters from the ethnicity {} talk to each other

So far we have the ethnicity for the different characters and their actors or actresses. The following step was to automate the process of analyzing screenplay or subtitles to identify if these characters in the films had an interaction with one another. The choice between the different files either subtitle or screen play was a difficult one. While screen plays where mostly not available and possibly not displaying the actual dialogue in the movie. The subtitle file even though they would be for the hearing impaired where not always going to be naming the person talking.

*Model*s : In this study the two hyptotheses related to AIR will be tested.

Relationship diversity and AIR (A path mediation):

p(AIR) = e ^ (β0+ β1*series*+ β2*actor*+ β3*director* + β4*rating* + β5*MPAArating* + β6*numberofscreens* + β7*critical* + β8*awards*+ β9*budge*t+ β10- β22*genre* + β22*release* + β23*diversity)/ (1 +* e ^( β0+ β1*series +* β2*actor …)*

Relationship AIR and LTAE (B path mediation):

LTAE = β0 + β1*seriesl+* β2*actor+* β3*director +* β4*rating* + β5*MPAArating +* β6*numberofscreens +* β7*critical+* β8*awards+* β9*budget+* β10- β22*genre* + β22*release +* β24*AIR* + ε

4

* 1. Covariates

Although demand factors are not the substantive focus of the paper, controlling for their effect allows for more precise testing of the effects of the market factors. In order to account for additional factors that have been identified as influencing a film’s success, this study draws upon previous research. Combinations of the following variables explained at 60% of the variation in box office revenue for certain studies. The variables considered in this study include Series, the star power of Actors and Directors, MPAA rating, Number of screens, critical acclaim as measured by ratings from Critics, Awards, Budget, Genre, and Release date. Table 1 provides detailed information on how these variables are measured.

*Series:* A film that is part of a series, such as a sequel or prequel, is more likely to be successful than a stand-alone film. This is because fans of the series are already familiar with the characters and the story, and they are more likely to see the new film. (Hofmann, 2016; Michel Clement, 2014; Kuppuswamy, 2016; Kumar et al., 2022). *Star power of actors and directors:* Films with well-known actors and directors are more likely to be successful than films with lesser-known talent. This is because audiences are more likely to see films with actors and directors that they know and like (Hofmann, 2016; Michel Clement, 2014; Ghiassi, 2017; Kuppuswamy, 2016; Kumar et al., 2022).

*Critical acclaim:* Films that receive positive reviews from critics are more likely to be successful than films that receive negative reviews. This is because positive reviews can help generate interest in the film and encourage people to see it (Hofmann, 2016; Ghiassi, 2017; Kuppuswamy, 2016; Kumar et al., 2022). *Awards:* Films that win awards, such as Oscars or Golden Globes, are more likely to be successful than films that do not win awards. This is because awards can help legitimize the film and make it more appealing to audiences (Kuppuswamy, 2016; Kumar et al., 2022; Hunter et al., 2016).

*MPAA rating:* Films with a PG-13 or R rating are more likely to be successful than films with a G or PG rating. This is because audiences are more likely to see films that are considered to be more mature and exciting (Hofmann, 2016; Michel Clement, 2014; Kuppuswamy, 2016; Kumar et al., 2022).

*Number of screens:* Films that are shown on more screens are more likely to be successful than films that are shown on fewer screens. This is because more screens mean that more people will have the opportunity to see the film. (Hofmann, 2016; Michel Clement, 2014; Kuppuswamy, 2016; Kumar et al., 2022; Hunter et al., 2016).*Budget:* Films with a higher budget are more likely to be successful than films with a lower budget. This is because higher budgets can be used to produce higher-quality films with better special effects and production values (Michel Clement, 2014; Kuppuswamy, 2016; Kumar et al., 2022; Hunter et al., 2016).

Seasonality, based on. Possibly dummy variable year.

*Genre:* Some genres, such as action and comedy, are more popular than others, such as drama and documentary (Hofmann, 2016; Michel Clement, 2014; Ghiassi, 2017; Kuppuswamy, 2016; Kumar et al., 2022). *Release date:* Films that are released during the holiday season or during summer are more likely to be successful than films that are released at other times of the year (Hofmann, 2016; Michel Clement, 2014; Kuppuswamy, 2016; Kumar et al., 2022).

It is crucial for this study to be cautious in every step of the process to possibly achieve causality. Therefore, every factor previously mentioned will also be analyzed on its influence on the racial diversity of the movie before it is included as a control variable. Two significant factors that have demonstrated a correlation with racial diversity in films are the film genre and budget. In 2019, action films exhibited a notably higher likelihood of including characters from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, films with larger budgets tend to have more diverse casts, as they possess greater resources to hire a wide range of actors (Smith, 2020).

*Variable operationalization* Following Clement, Wu and Fischer (2014), this research uses log-log linear regressions. However, because table 2 shows that many films did not receive any award nomination and taking the log of ‘0’ would lead to an error, all films receive a ‘+0.001’ on award nomination before taking the log.

Due to hetregneoty this study uses a log-log model. Due to with a log log model the vairablea are not able to be negative or equal to zero or control variables therefore to every control variables small constant of 0.001 was added.

Nomination:   
This research will, just as most previous research, use the actual number of award nominations as a proxy for award nomination because this does not only show if star or director power affects award nomination, but also to how many nominations it would lead. Because there is an abundance of available movie awards of which some are more known and valuable than others, there is focussed on a select group of awards following the research of Gemser, Leenders and Wijnberg (2008). The awards used in this research are the following: Academy Awards, Critics’ Choice Awards, Directors Guild Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Golden Laurel Awards, Independent Spirit Awards, Los Angeles Film Association Awards, MTV Awards, National Board of Review Awards, National Society of Film Critics Awards, New York Film Critics Circle Awards, People’s Choice Awards and the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

Relationship cultural resonance and diversity

- Prove no multicollinearity

Year = significant , weird because it is 3 years after release so it should not be affected by . IS this due to the growth of IMDB? And that more people look up more films pushing less relevant films back?

Na 2016 niet meer sig voor 2016 wel een negatieve relatie. Komt dit door AIR?

Regressions models

Main relationship: Is there a relationship between racial diversity and LTAE

Affect cultural resonance: Does cultural resonance cause more diversity in films.

* Is the affect of diversity on LTAE more when cultural resonance appreciates representation more.

Mediator: AIR, does part of the relationship run through AIR?  
**Stat video: How to test for moderation if you have one categorical variable and one in scale?**

Text

Description automatically generated

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated  
Check for multicollinearity

Check observation independent

Check if the variances equal across treatment groups

Check if the dependent variable is normally distributed.

Basically is racial diversity higher after oscarssowhite.

Distinguish three groups?

Simple effects is possible to do a diff in diff with simple effect,   
A picture containing text, font, screenshot, algebra

Description automatically generated

Stereotyps

**African americans**

(NMAAHC) National museum of african american history and culture. “laziness, as well as characteristics of submissiveness, backwardness, lewdness, treachery, and dishonesty, historically became stereotypes assigned to African Americans”. Mammy’s is also seen as stertypes related to African American woman these are overweight, self-sacrificing domestic worker.

The stereotype of Uncle Tom is innately submissive, obedient and in constant desire of white approval. depicted African American women as aggressive, loud, and angry - in direct violation of social norms.

Watermelon , Mandingo as animalistic and brutish

**Hispanics** , lazy, less financial independence   
  
positive characteristics; strong family, tradition-loving, religious, and old-fashioned. uneducated, poor, rebellious, physically violent, dirty/smelly, noisy, and criminally inclined. Additional characteristics that distinguished Hispanics were more ambiguous with respect to their valence. Hispanics were viewed as less conservative, materialistic, competitive, self-centered, progressive, and individualistic, and as more oldfashioned.

less value on physical fitness, mature love, recognition by the community, a good life for others, national greatness, delaying pleasure to achieve success, the pursuit of knowledge, good health, economic prosperity, and financial independence.

(Jackson, 1995)

Asian:  
The so-called “model minority” stereotype, one of the most pervasive and harmful assumptions about Asian Americans, holds that Asian Americans are a uniformly high-achieving racial minority that has assimilated well into American society through hard work, obedience to social mores and academic achievement. Asian American men are often seen as effeminate or asexual, while Asian American women are viewed as sexually desirable, exotic and passive.

The difficult part about this factor is that the movie will most of the time only receive a sequel if the initial movie was a success. This makes it difficult to analyse it’s impact on LTAE because is a movie popular because it’s part of a collection or the movie was successful and therefore it’s part of a collection.

4. Results

Additional analysis

The last remark this study would like to make is that as explained previously, films and culture are deeply intertwined. In today’s society the following values are seen as highly important belonging, community, and personal growth, which are all closely related to representation. (Neufeld, 2020) It is proven that films that properly represent the cultural zeitgeist in which the film is made are more successful. (Ettema, 2005)

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that films that reflect the values related to representation will be more successful in today's cultural landscape. However, as societal norms and values evolve, this appreciation might wonder off. This study aims to explore how much of a movie's success is due to the effects caused by representation, and how much is due to the degree the films is displaying the current cultural zeitgeist which is focused on representation.

Finally, prior studies (Malik, 2022; Kuppuswamy, 2016) have overlooked cofounding variables and macro environmental factors, and have largely focused solely on the relationship between racial diversity and movie success. This study introduces cultural resonance to the analysis, arguing that it is a crucial factor in the success of films with diverse casts, as it may influence how one's cultural values shape their perception of these films.

2.5 Cultural resonance

Cultural resonance, as discussed in this study, refers to how well a film connects with the cultural values, experiences, and zeitgeist of its audience. It can be achieved by either reflecting or challenging the audience's own culture, values, and experiences in a thought-provoking way. (Ettema, 2005) Representation is key, as films that represent different cultures and experiences can broaden audiences and create a sense of connection. (Bamford, 2018)

For the sake of clarity and illustration, the film Black Panther was praised for its positive portrayal of African culture and its representation of African people. It was released at a time when representation was a major topic of discussion, and its popularity amplified the conversation about race and representation. Additionally, its positive portrayal of African culture helped to promote African fashion. Thus, Black Panther is both a product of culture, parts of its success is caused by culture and it is a force for change in culture.

2.5.1 Culture as cofound/moderator

Culture has a big impact on how long audiences stay engaged with a film. Racially diverse films often explore important social and cultural issues, which can lead to lasting discussions about race, identity, and social justice. As Garrett (2020) points out, "Films about race offer us the chance to grapple with past and present constructs of racism, power, and oppression." This shows that cultural shifts are driving conversations about racial diversity, which are essential for keeping audiences engaged in the long term. This underscores the idea that when films activate these conversations they will remain more under the attention for longer periods of time.

*Brokeback Mountain, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19359705.2013.792128*

Moreover, contemporary film critics place a high value on representation and inclusion in media. (Akser, 2021) As a result, films featuring racially diverse casts tend to receive more favorable critical reception, which in itself contributes to LTAE. Finally, cinema's transformative capacity on culture extends to its influence on the hiring practices within the industry, resulting in increased racial diversity in films. (Khrebtan-Hörhager, 2011) With regards to the above considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4**: The relationship between racial diversity and LTAE is cofounded by culture resonance.

.2.3 Study 3: Cultural resonance as cofounding variable

Oscars so white   
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15205436.2017.1409356?src=recsys

*Variable operationalization* : for the relationship studied a diff in diff analysis was seen as the most fitting. Quantifying whenever racial representation started to become a major topic in today’s culture. Eventually the event #oscarssowhite was chosen as natural schock. n the context of a difference-in-differences (DiD) analysis, a "natural shock" refers to an external event or occurrence that affects one group or entity being studied but not another group, and it is not caused by any deliberate intervention or treatment by the researchers.

*Model* :

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1. https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/rounakbanik/the-films-dataset [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I acknowledge that race ethnicity is not binary and reducing it to only four separate ethnicities is simplistic, however the software programs used don’t allow for a more complex understanding of race. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)