



Research note

Examining genre success, co-occurrence, release, and production of 9,068 films over twenty years



C. Joseph Francemone ^{a,*}, Kevin Kryston ^b, Matthew Grizzard ^a

^a The Ohio State University, United States

^b Sam Houston State University, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Genre
Film
Audience response
Production trends
Content analysis

ABSTRACT

Understanding macro-level trends in the entertainment industry is vital to the advancement of mass communication theories. The current paper works towards this end by providing a representative layout of genre patterns across the film industry. We analyze 9,068 films released from 1997 to 2017, and examine genre in terms of success, co-occurrence, release, and production. Consistent with past work, results highlight differences between genres that garner popularity (e.g., Action) and acclaim (e.g., Drama). Moreover, we found four unique genre clusters within our data indicating that specific genres tend to be featured together more frequently than others (e.g., Adventure, Animation, Family, Fantasy, and Musical). We also demonstrate which genres have had increased (e.g., Adventure), decreased (e.g., Comedy), and consistent (e.g., Thriller) production across the 20-year span. Finally, we found differential release patterns across the calendar year, such that popular genres (e.g., Science Fiction) are frequently released during Summer and acclaimed genres (e.g., Biography) are frequently released during Fall and Winter. Taken together, the findings describe the mass-market film landscape and demonstrate variance in the production and appeal of different genres over time. Thus, these data can serve as a first step toward studying how the entertainment industry influences and reacts to audiences' media preferences.

1. Examining genre success, co-occurrence, release, and production of 9068 films over twenty years

Narrative fiction has played a special role in people's lives for centuries (Zillmann, 2000). In addition to filling leisure time and providing entertainment (e.g., Ruggiero, 2000), various macro-level communication theories have demonstrated that mass media trends profoundly influence viewers. For example, media can alter audiences' perceptions of the world (Gerbner & Gross, 1976), educate audiences (Moyer-Gusé, 2008), and facilitate the development of audiences' social identity (Slater, 2007). Thus, the study of large-scale trends in the entertainment industry remains an important endeavor for several macro-level media effects theories.

Macro-level media effects theories necessitate an understanding of broad-scale production and viewership trends to make predictions. For example, the model of intuitive morality and exemplars (MIME; Tamborini, 2013), explicitly suggests that two factors are crucial to understanding the macro-level media environment's influence on individual audience members: (1) the extent to which media featuring certain moral values are produced, and (2) large-scale audiences' appraisals of media featuring these values. Other

* Corresponding author at: School of Communication, The Ohio State University, 3055 Derby Hall, 154 N Oval Mall, Columbus, Ohio, 43210, United States

E-mail address: francemone.1@osu.edu (C.J. Francemone).

theories similarly posit that the production and reception of content featuring violence, social groups, and other themes play a role in widespread media influence. However, work in this area has yet to fully illustrate production trends in the contemporary entertainment industry. In the context of the MIME, empirical studies have described how moral values are presented in entertainment media (see [Eden et al., 2021](#) for review), demonstrated that these moral values are presented differently across genres ([Lewis, Grizzard, Lea et al., 2017](#)), and shown how different genres impact audience appraisals ([Lewis, Grizzard, Choi et al., 2017](#); [Oliver et al., 2014](#)). Yet, to our knowledge, no study – grounded in the MIME or another perspective – has provided a comprehensive description of temporal trends in modern entertainment production and reception. This information would be valuable not only for researchers studying the long-term effects of the MIME but also for scholars focused on the relationship between entertainment media trends and specific theoretical outcomes.

The current project seeks to address this gap in the literature by presenting data which depicts population-based genre patterns across the film industry. We present data from 9,068 major and minor film releases occurring from 1997 to 2017. Replicating past work ([Oliver et al., 2014](#)), we examine the associations between 22 unique film genres and various indicators of film success (e.g., box office, critic ratings) to determine which genres are popular among audiences. We also analyze production trends by determining the extent to which different genres feature in our sample and temporal trends in the production of these genres over time. Our findings describe trends in the contemporary film industry and highlight potential areas for future study of macro-level media processes, such as how large-scale selection behaviors influence production and the influence of production trends on audience response.

1.1. Literature review

One important theory for understanding the relationship between macro-level production trends and both social- and individual-level audience appraisals of content is the model of intuitive morality and exemplars (MIME; [Tamborini, 2013](#)). The MIME explicates how macro-level processes influence viewers through a reciprocal relationship between media producers and audiences. The MIME argues media producers are sensitive to their audiences' appraisals of content and are more likely to create content that features moral values that are positively appraised and subsequently selected by audience members. With time, these themes become increasingly prevalent in that culture's media landscape, and thus increasingly salient (i.e., important) in audiences. The effect of the increased salience of certain moral values not only impacts media appraisals and selection, but also has various implications in non-media settings (see [Eden et al., 2021](#) for review). With this in mind, determining the relative frequency and popularity of different themes present in media content are important to understanding macro-level processes and may provide insight into potential individual-level media effects.

Although the MIME explicates how macro-level production and appraisal processes manifest as individual-level effects, research of these macro-level processes is limited ([Eden et al., 2021](#)). However, the limited research has made three conclusions which are crucial to the current study. First, in line with the MIME's predictions, moral values that are salient or important to a given culture are more likely to be represented in media content produced in that culture ([Mastro et al., 2012](#); [Prabhu et al., 2020](#)). Second, the presentation of these moral values differs by genre, defined as categories of media content with shared characteristics that are commonly used by film studios, experts, and webpages like the *Internet Movie Database* (IMDb; [Shim & Paul, 2007](#)). For example, past work showed that Dramas and Documentaries are more likely to present complex moral themes, whereas Action and Adventure films are less likely to demonstrate moral complexity ([Lewis, Grizzard, Lea et al., 2017](#); [Oliver & Hartmann, 2010](#)). Third, metrics of film popularity and acclaim serve as macro-level indicators of the individual-level media appraisals identified in the MIME's short-term processes. Specifically, popularity metrics (e.g., box office numbers, number of ratings on IMDb) are indicative of audiences' *enjoyment* (a pleasurable experience marked by having fun and a good time), while acclaim metrics (e.g., critic and audience ratings on sites like *Rotten Tomatoes* and *Metacritic*) indicate *appreciation* (a meaningful experience marked by deliberative thought and feeling mixed emotions; [Oliver & Bartsch, 2010](#)). Furthermore, these macro-level indicators of appeal co-vary with genres in ways consistent with the MIME's predictions. For example, Dramas, which are more likely to present moral conflict, are both appreciated and acclaimed ([Lewis, Grizzard, Choi et al., 2017](#)). On the other hand, Action and Adventure films, which are less often associated with such conflict, are enjoyed and popular. As such, these publicly-available metrics have been used as tools for determining large-scale audience appraisals and selection behavior that may influence, or be influenced by, production trends ([Oliver et al., 2014](#)).

Taken together, research of the MIME's macro-level processes generally supports the model's claim that media producers are more likely to create content that is popular or acclaimed among its audience. However, no study has causally tested this claim, nor the potential influence of production trends on subsequent appraisals and selection. In fact, to our knowledge, no study has demonstrated variance in the production of different genres or themes over time. The lack of research on representative industry production trends makes studying the MIME's and other media theories' macro-level claims difficult. Thus, we designed a descriptive study which examines the co-variance of genre production and popularity over time. Although the goal of the current study is not to test the MIME's predictions, by using the MIME's logic to examine genre trends, our data should have a broader scope of theoretical and practical utility that stretches beyond MIME research alone.

1.2. The current study

In line with the suggestion of [Eden et al. \(2021\)](#), the current study describes media production and popularity trends, with hopes that future work can build upon this descriptive data to causally test macro-level media processes. Our overarching goal was to describe trends in the production and success of different types of films. We achieved this goal using publicly available film information, including genre tags, time of release, and metrics of popularity and acclaim. Given our interest in the relationship between

production and audience response, the present research questions are guided by the MIME's macro-level processes.

Our primary research questions concern production trends in the film industry. According to the MIME, film production should covary with audience appraisals. To test this claim, we examined the relative production of films tagged as different genres by *IMDb*, as well as macro-level indicators of audience response to these genres (Lewis, Grizzard, Choi et al., 2017; Oliver et al., 2014). Although we cannot quantify the direct effect of film genre on audience response, nor understand the reciprocal relationship between production trends and said responses, when presented in tandem, these data may help generate more pointed research questions that test causal relationships between production trends and audience response. Thus, we propose the following research questions:

RQ1: How do film genres differ in terms of their popularity and acclaim?

RQ2: How frequently are different genres produced by the film industry?

Although most prior work in this area considered genres as mutually exclusive, we go one step further to analyze genre co-occurrence patterns. This information can provide further nuance to understanding genre combinations that are more common in the movie industry versus those genres which are more likely to be independent of other themes. We thus propose our third research question:

RQ3: How do different film genres co-occur with one another?

Additionally, we pose two research questions relevant to the MIME's assertion that production varies with audience response (Stage 5). First, two necessary conditions of the MIME's Stage 5 are that production should thematically vary across cultures and over time. Previous content analyses provide evidence of the former claim (Mastro et al., 2012; Prabhu et al., 2020), but, to our knowledge, no data has demonstrated the latter claim. As such, we explore the frequency of genre production across time and pose our fourth research question:

RQ4: How has the production of each genre changed over time?

Second, we wonder whether producers are sensitive to audience response. If so, release schedules should coincide with the audience's whims. For example, Litman (1983) suggested that film release patterns coincide with periods when individuals have time off from other responsibilities (work, school, etc.). Litman's argument implies that certain seasons, namely Spring (e.g., Easter), Summer (e.g., summer break), and Winter (e.g., Christmas), should experience greater theater turnout. Thus, it would behoove producers to release films more frequently during these seasons to maximize profit. However, these patterns are not likely to be uniform across genres, and the themes conveyed by films released during holiday attendance peaks versus other seasons likely differ based on the target audience. By evaluating seasonal release trends across each genre, we can determine whether release schedules are sensitive to audiences' schedules, establish which thematic elements are most likely to be associated with films released during a given season, and determine how release schedules differ for popular versus acclaimed genres. Thus, we propose our final research question:

RQ5: When are different genres released across the calendar seasons?

2. Method

2.1. Data collection

We used two web services to gather film metrics. First, we purchased an initial dataset from OpusData (opusdata.com). OpusData is a compilation of financial and biographical information (box office, budget, universal identifiers, etc.) for over 25,000 films. Second, we used the Open Movie Database API (OMDb API; omdbapi.com). The OMDb API allows users to pull data across several film metrics from *IMDb* (e.g., release date, genre, critic ratings). By providing the API with either the title (e.g., *The Dark Knight*) or corresponding *IMDb* identifier (e.g., tt0468569) of a film, the API returns consolidated information extracted from the respective film's *IMDb* page. We ran OMDb API's publicly available R package ("omdbapi") across a list of film identifiers provided by OpusData. After collecting all available information from the OMDb API, we merged the extracted data with our original OpusData file. This process resulted in data across 11,023 total movies ranging from 1902 to 2018, which are shared in our online supplement (<https://bit.ly/3MAOz0o>). By using these two independent samples together, our dataset contained highly accurate financial information provided by OpusData and representative film rating, release, and genre categorization information provided by the OMDb API.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Film genre

Film genres were provided by the OMDb API and thus reflect *IMDb*'s genre categorization scheme. *IMDb* genres are determined by *IMDb* community members. Community members suggest their genre classifications for each movie, and these classifications are subsequently accepted or rejected by *IMDb* staff members. Each movie could have up to eight total genre tags, and these tags were non-mutually exclusive. 22 unique genre tags featured in the dataset. We recoded each genre tag into a binary present (1)/absent (-1) measure. For example, if a film was categorized as Crime and Drama, the film was scored as '1' for Crime, '1' for Drama, and '-1' for the

other 20 genre tags. Most films had two genre tags ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.22$, Median = 2, Mode = 2).

2.2.2. Film success

To assess film success, we utilized similar variables to those in [Oliver et al. \(2014\)](#). These variables are intended to capture film popularity and acclaim.

2.2.2.1. Film popularity. Indicators of film popularity included *inflation-adjusted domestic box office earnings*, *inflation-adjusted production budget*, and *number of IMDb reviews*. Inflation-adjusted domestic box office earnings represent the gross North American box office in US dollars, adjusted for inflation; inflation-adjusted production budget represents the estimated production cost in US dollars, adjusted for inflation; and number of *IMDb* reviews indicates the number of times a film was rated by an *IMDb* user.

2.2.2.2. Film acclaim. Indicators of acclaim included *IMDb rating*, *Rotten Tomatoes score*, *Metascore*, and *awards*. *IMDb* ratings represent the aggregate score from *IMDb* users ranging from 0 to 10. *Rotten Tomatoes* scores represent the proportion of positive critic reviews on

Table 1
Spearman correlations among film metrics and genre.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Box Office | -- | | | | | | |
| 2. Prod. Budget | .74*** | -- | | | | | |
| 3. # IMDb Reviews | .79*** | .57*** | -- | | | | |
| 4. IMDb Rating | .01 | -.05** | .08*** | -- | | | |
| 5. RT Score | -.13*** | -.16*** | -.10*** | .71*** | -- | | |
| 6. Metascore | -.09*** | -.14*** | -.04*** | .69*** | .92*** | -- | |
| 7. Awards | .32*** | .14*** | .37*** | .34*** | .28*** | .34*** | -- |
| Genre | | | | | | | |
| Action | .27*** | .40*** | .31*** | -.12*** | -.18*** | -.19*** | -.01 |
| Adventure | .31*** | .43*** | .27*** | -.06*** | -.07*** | -.07*** | .13*** |
| Animation | .15*** | .21*** | .10*** | .03* | .03** | .03** | .11*** |
| Biography | -.01 | -.05** | -.03** | .18*** | .15*** | .14*** | .11*** |
| Comedy | .15*** | -.01 | .12*** | -.24*** | -.19*** | -.20*** | -.04*** |
| Crime | .08*** | .00 | .17*** | -.03** | -.08*** | -.07*** | -.01 |
| Documentary | -.30*** | -.21*** | -.45*** | .33*** | .34*** | .28*** | -.08*** |
| Drama | -.09*** | -.25*** | .02* | .09*** | .07*** | .13*** | .11*** |
| Family | .25*** | .24*** | .12*** | -.08*** | -.06*** | -.07*** | .07*** |
| Fantasy | .22*** | .29*** | .21*** | -.08*** | -.09*** | -.09*** | .08*** |
| History | -.02* | .04** | -.04*** | .14*** | .11*** | .12*** | .08*** |
| Horror | .05*** | -.12*** | .17*** | -.20*** | -.13*** | -.15*** | -.08*** |
| Music | -.03** | -.08*** | -.08*** | .07*** | .06*** | .06*** | .02 |
| Musical | .05*** | .04** | .01 | -.01 | .00 | -.01 | .07*** |
| Mystery | .11*** | .01 | .18*** | -.05*** | -.07*** | -.05*** | .01 |
| Romance | .06*** | -.07*** | .07*** | -.08*** | -.11*** | -.08*** | .02 |
| Science Fiction | .20*** | .25*** | .25*** | -.07*** | -.09*** | -.09*** | .03** |
| Short | .04*** | -.02 | -.06*** | .02 | .04*** | .02 | -.01 |
| Sport | .06*** | .00 | .01 | .04*** | -.01 | -.01 | -.01 |
| Thriller | .16*** | .10*** | .31*** | -.13*** | -.16*** | -.15*** | -.02 |
| War | .02 | .04* | .04*** | .11*** | .05*** | .06*** | .10*** |
| Western | .02 | .04* | .03** | -.01 | -.01 | .01 | .02 |

Note. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. $n = 3,853$ for inflation-adjusted production budget, $n = 8,118$ for Metascore, and $n = 9,068$ for all other variables. The correlations between like indicators are bolded. Shaded cells represent correlations between our metrics and genre at an alpha $\leq .001$. Light gray cells highlight positive correlations and dark gray cells highlight negative correlations.

Rotten Tomatoes ranging from 0 to 100. *Metascores* represent the weighted average of critic reviews on *Metacritic* ranging from 0 to 100. Awards is a binary variable which indicates whether a film was nominated for or won an Oscar, Golden Globe, or British Association of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) award (1 = nominated/won, -1 = no nominations/wins).

2.2.3. Film release

The specific release date and release year were provided for each film. We recoded the release date by extracting each film's release month and then parceled them according to their respective calendar season (Spring [March – May] = 1, Summer [June – August] = 2, Fall [September – November] = 3, Winter [December – February] = 4; $M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.10$, Median = 3, Mode = 3).

2.3. Data cleaning

To be included in analyses, films needed complete data across dependent variables from [Oliver et al. \(2014\)](#): box office, number of *IMDb* votes, *IMDb* rating, *Rotten Tomatoes* score, awards, and year of release. Additionally, we filtered films whose production year fell outside of the 1997 to 2017 timeframe. This 20-year range was selected because (1) years prior to 1997 had substantially fewer datapoints ($n \leq 18$ per year from 1902 to 1995 and $n = 74$ for 1996) compared to 1997 and on ($n \geq 308$ per year from 1997 to 2018), and (2) since data were acquired in early 2019, most 2018 data had not been fully compiled. Using these criteria, our final sample included 9,068 films produced between 1997 and 2017. Production budget, *Metascores*, and release dates were not utilized as inclusion criteria since they were either novel metrics for the current study or that the number of cases that included these metrics was substantially smaller than the number of cases included in the total sample (e.g., $n_{\text{Production Budget}} = 3,853$).

3. Results

3.1. Genre success

To address RQ1, we examined the relationships between our measures and each genre. Given that some of our variables violate the assumptions of a Pearson correlation (e.g., inflation-adjusted international box office, inflation-adjusted production budget), we examined these associations using Spearman correlations ([Kendall, 1948](#)). We present the Spearman correlation matrix in [Table 1](#) (see Appendix A for Pearson matrices).

Regarding our measures, we found a strong association between our popularity indicators. All indicators also had nonsignificant, negative, or substantially weaker associations with the three critic-based indicators of acclaim ($r_s = 0.57$ compared to $r_s = 0.08$; Fisher's r -to- z transformation = 29.49, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, all three critic scores demonstrated strong positive associations with one another. A principal components analysis (PCA) using direct oblimin rotation ($\delta = 0$) suggested a two-factor solution wherein box office (0.92), production budget (0.90), and *IMDb* votes (0.75) loaded strongly on a single factor (popularity), while *IMDb* rating (0.87), *Rotten Tomatoes* score (0.96), and *Metascore* (0.96) loaded strongly on a separate factor (acclaim). The awards variable positively correlated with all metrics, indicating that award nominations/wins represent a broad indicator of success rather than a pure indicator of popularity or acclaim.

Across genres, the Action, Adventure, Family, Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Thriller genres positively correlated with all indicators of popularity and negatively correlated with all indicators of acclaim. A similar pattern emerged for the Comedy, Crime, Horror, Mystery, and Romance genres, except for the fact that these genres hold either nonsignificant or negative correlations with production budget. These results suggest that, even within popular film genres, there seems to be a distinction in the degree to which the film industry will invest in specific genres. The industry seems to devote more capital to genres associated with grandiose, wholesome themes compared to those with raunchy, dark, or romantic themes, despite the similar types of responses they garner from audiences. In other words, the film industry is aware of the fact that certain popular genres will have stronger box office performance than others based on their ability to reach the broadest audience possible (e.g., light-hearted superhero films vs. gritty suspense films). Importantly, we note again that the production budget results should still be interpreted with caution here given the fact that the number of cases that include production budget data is drastically smaller than the number of cases that include box office data and the number of *IMDb* votes.

In a similar vein, the Biography, Documentary, Drama, History, and Music genres positively correlated with indicators of acclaim, and all except Biography negatively correlated with either one or more indicators of popularity. Taken together, these findings replicate past work ([Oliver et al., 2014](#)) by representing a difference between genres with broad appeal and more distinguished genres. Other interesting trends that emerged in the correlation matrix (e.g., War correlating with both popularity and acclaim) are discussed in our supplement (see Appendix A).

Finally, we examined the relationships between the awards variable and each genre. We found that Adventure, Animation, Biography, Drama, Family, Fantasy, History, Musical, Science Fiction, and War genres seem to receive more nominations and wins from the entertainment industry, while Comedy, Documentary, and Horror genres receive fewer. These findings seem consistent with the notion that the entertainment industry recognizes work across the majority of film genres, while largely omitting those thought to be low-brow (i.e., Comedy and Horror). Importantly, Documentaries were also less recognized by the film industry. While this may surprise some, we believe this finding is largely due to the prevalence of the documentary genre in independent filmmaking ([Ortner, 2012](#)) and the lack of representation of independent films at major award ceremonies.

3.2. Genre frequency

To answer RQ2, we examined the relative frequency of each genre (see Appendix A). These frequency values indicate the percentage of the sample that featured the corresponding genre tag. Again, these tags were non-mutually exclusive. The eight most featured genres were Drama (57.47%), Comedy (33.70%), Romance (22.17%), Thriller (19.59%), Documentary (15.73%), Crime (14.09%), Action (13.66%), and Adventure (10.76%). The other 14 tags featured in less than 10% of the sample. In sum, the results largely reflect [Oliver et al. \(2014\)](#), which suggested the overwhelming preponderance of the Drama and Comedy genres. However, unlike Oliver et al., Romance was the third most represented genre in our sample rather than Action or Adventure.

3.3. Genre co-occurrence

To answer RQ3, we utilized a correlation-based clustering algorithm (e.g., `cluster_fast_greedy` provided by the `igraph` package in R; [Clauset et al., 2004](#)) to examine which genres tend to be more frequently featured together. We submitted our full genre correlation matrix (presented in Appendix B) to the algorithm. We utilized Pearson correlations to create our genre co-occurrence matrix given the lack of abnormalities in genre tag distributions. Additionally, given the substantial number of significant correlations between genres as a function of our sample size, we limited the analysis to only feature positive correlations that were greater than 0.10, as these correlations are large enough to represent meaningful associations between specific genres ([Cohen, 2013](#)). The network visualization of the identified clusters is presented in Fig. 1.

We found four genre clusters within our data. The first cluster consisted of Biography, Documentary, History, Music, Sport, and War, which we term the *Verisimilitude* cluster. This cluster represents films that focus on fact-based (e.g., *Citizenfour*, *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*) and dramatized (e.g., *Moneyball*, *Straight Outta Compton*) retellings of major historical events or figures. Importantly,

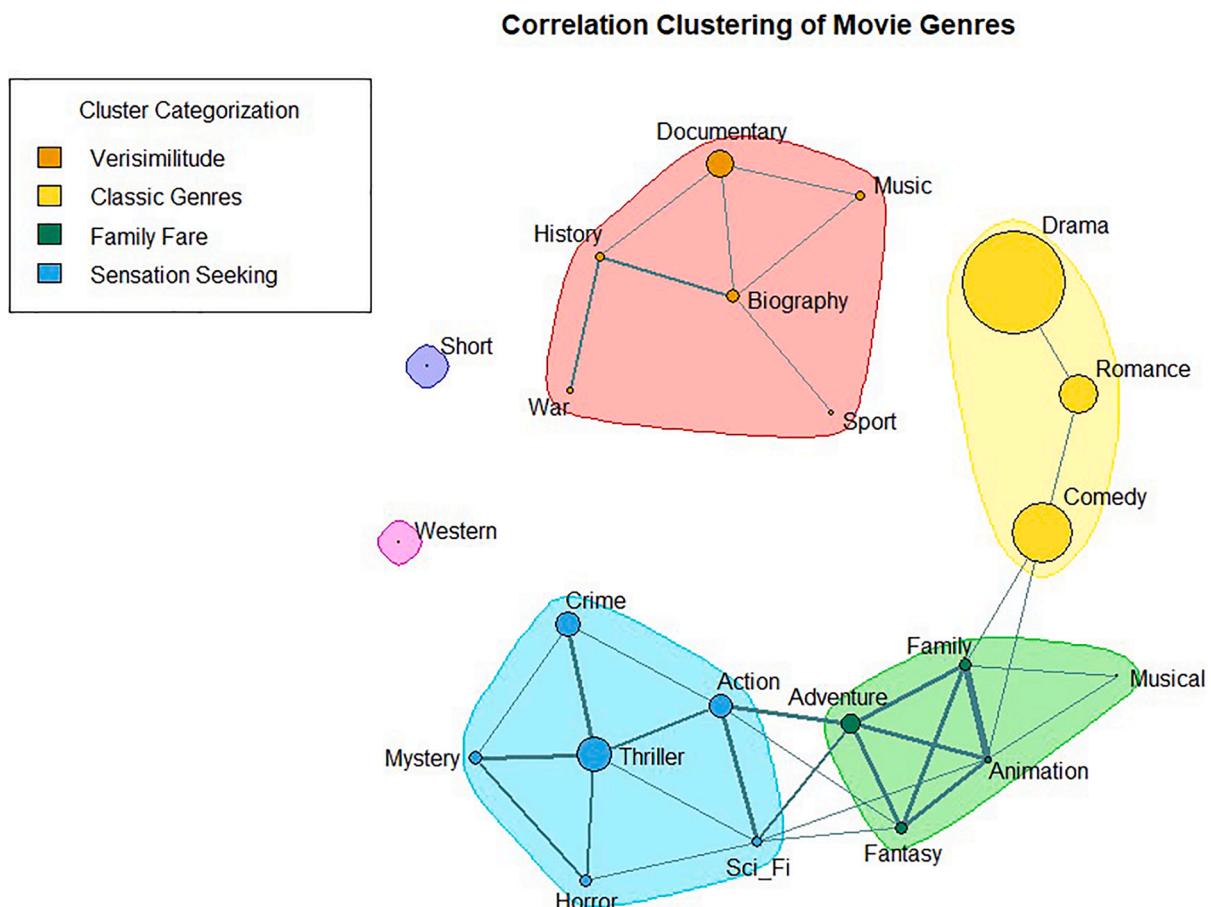


Fig. 1. Visualization of genre clusters identified by the correlation clustering algorithm.

Note. Different genre clusters are denoted by similarly colored nodes and shaded regions. Edge thickness represents the strength of association between two genres, with thicker lines representing stronger relationships. Node size represents the frequency with which the genre was featured as a tag within the sample, with larger nodes representing more frequently featured genres. The legend depicts the color of the nodes that belong to each cluster category discussed in the results.

Table 2

Hierarchical regressions examining linear and quadratic trends of each genre from 1997 to 2017.

| Genre | Step 1 | | | | | Step 2 | | | | | | |
|-------------|---------|-----|----------------|-----------|--------------------|---------|-----|-----------|-----|-----------------|----------|--------------------|
| | Linear | SE | R ² | F | Adj R ² | Linear | SE | Quadratic | SE | ΔR ² | ΔF | Adj R ² |
| Action | .25* | .11 | .23 | 5.63* | .19 | .25** | .07 | .06*** | .01 | .41 | 20.21*** | .60 |
| Adventure | .21*** | .05 | .48 | 17.43*** | .45 | .21*** | .04 | .02* | .01 | .16 | 7.94* | .60 |
| Animation | .11*** | .03 | .46 | 16.22*** | .43 | .11*** | .03 | .01 | .01 | .10 | 4.18 | .51 |
| Biography | .50*** | .05 | .82 | 85.05*** | .81 | .50*** | .05 | .02* | .01 | .04 | 5.19* | .84 |
| Comedy | -.83*** | .08 | .84 | 98.23*** | .83 | -.83*** | .08 | .01 | .02 | .01 | 0.78 | .83 |
| Crime | -.34*** | .08 | .53 | 21.18*** | .50 | -.34** | .07 | .02 | .01 | .05 | 2.32 | .54 |
| Documentary | .77*** | .10 | .77 | 63.62*** | .76 | .77*** | .05 | -.07*** | .01 | .18 | 59.76*** | .94 |
| Drama | -.27* | .11 | .24 | 5.87* | .20 | -.27* | .09 | .05* | .02 | .24 | 8.00* | .41 |
| Family | -.07 | .05 | .10 | 2.01 | .05 | -.07 | .05 | -.01 | .01 | .01 | 0.25 | .01 |
| Fantasy | .09* | .04 | .21 | 5.04* | .17 | .09* | .04 | .01 | .01 | .06 | 1.54 | .19 |
| History | .26*** | .05 | .63 | 32.35*** | .61 | .26*** | .04 | .01 | .01 | .05 | 3.07 | .65 |
| Horror | .18*** | .04 | .54 | 22.09*** | .51 | .18*** | .04 | -.01 | .01 | .02 | .72 | .51 |
| Music | .02 | .04 | .01 | 0.27 | -.04 | .02 | .03 | -.02* | .01 | .25 | 6.03* | .18 |
| Musical | -.04 | .02 | .16 | 3.62 | .12 | -.04 | .02 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .08 | .07 |
| Mystery | -.06 | .04 | .08 | 1.67 | .03 | -.06 | .04 | .02* | .01 | .20 | 5.07* | .20 |
| Romance | -.82*** | .06 | .90 | 174.63*** | .90 | -.82*** | .06 | -.02 | .01 | .02 | 3.36 | .91 |
| Sci-Fi | .04 | .05 | .02 | 0.47 | -.03 | .04 | .04 | .03*** | .01 | .55 | 23.33*** | .53 |
| Short | -.02** | .01 | .39 | 12.37** | .36 | -.02** | .01 | .00 | .00 | .08 | 2.64 | .41 |
| Sport | -.02 | .04 | .02 | 0.36 | -.03 | -.02 | .03 | -.02** | .01 | .36 | 10.31** | .31 |
| Thriller | .03 | .07 | .01 | 0.14 | -.05 | .03 | .07 | .03* | .01 | .24 | 5.80* | .17 |
| War | -.01 | .04 | .00 | 0.02 | -.05 | -.01 | .04 | .00 | .01 | .01 | 0.08 | -.11 |
| Western | .01 | .02 | .03 | 0.62 | -.02 | .01 | .02 | .00 | .00 | .03 | 0.62 | -.04 |

Note. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. The df for each model was (1,19) at step 1 and (1,18) at step 2. Linear = Unstandardized beta for linear trend. Quadratic = Unstandardized beta for quadratic trend. Shaded cells highlight which trend was more representative.

the types of stories covered by this cluster fall within a plethora of topic areas, as depicted by Music, Sport, and War featuring within this cluster.

The second cluster contained Comedy, Drama, and Romance, which we name the *Classic Genres* cluster. The cluster depicts films categorized as Rom-Coms (e.g., *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, *She's Out of My League*) and Rom-Drams (e.g., *Titanic*, *The Notebook*). Notably, the absence of a link between Drama and Comedy in this cluster indicates that these two genres are relatively distinct despite being in the same community, and thus this cluster seems to be driven by the presence of Romance. This cluster additionally represents the majority of film types within the industry, as it contains the three most featured genres within our sample, reiterating the notion that Comedy, Drama, and Romance serve as the most dominant themes within the film industry.

The third cluster consisted of Adventure, Animation, Family, Fantasy, and Musical, which we label the *Family Fare* cluster. This cluster represents those films that are more focused on family-friendly themes and include most Disney, Pixar, and DreamWorks Animation films (e.g., *Finding Nemo*, *Shrek*). Importantly, we see cross-cluster relationships within this cluster (e.g., Comedy related to Family and Animation, Adventure and Fantasy related to Action and Science Fiction) indicating that distinct elements from other popular genres (e.g., Action, Comedy, etc.) tend to feature within the films categorized by the *Family Fare* cluster.

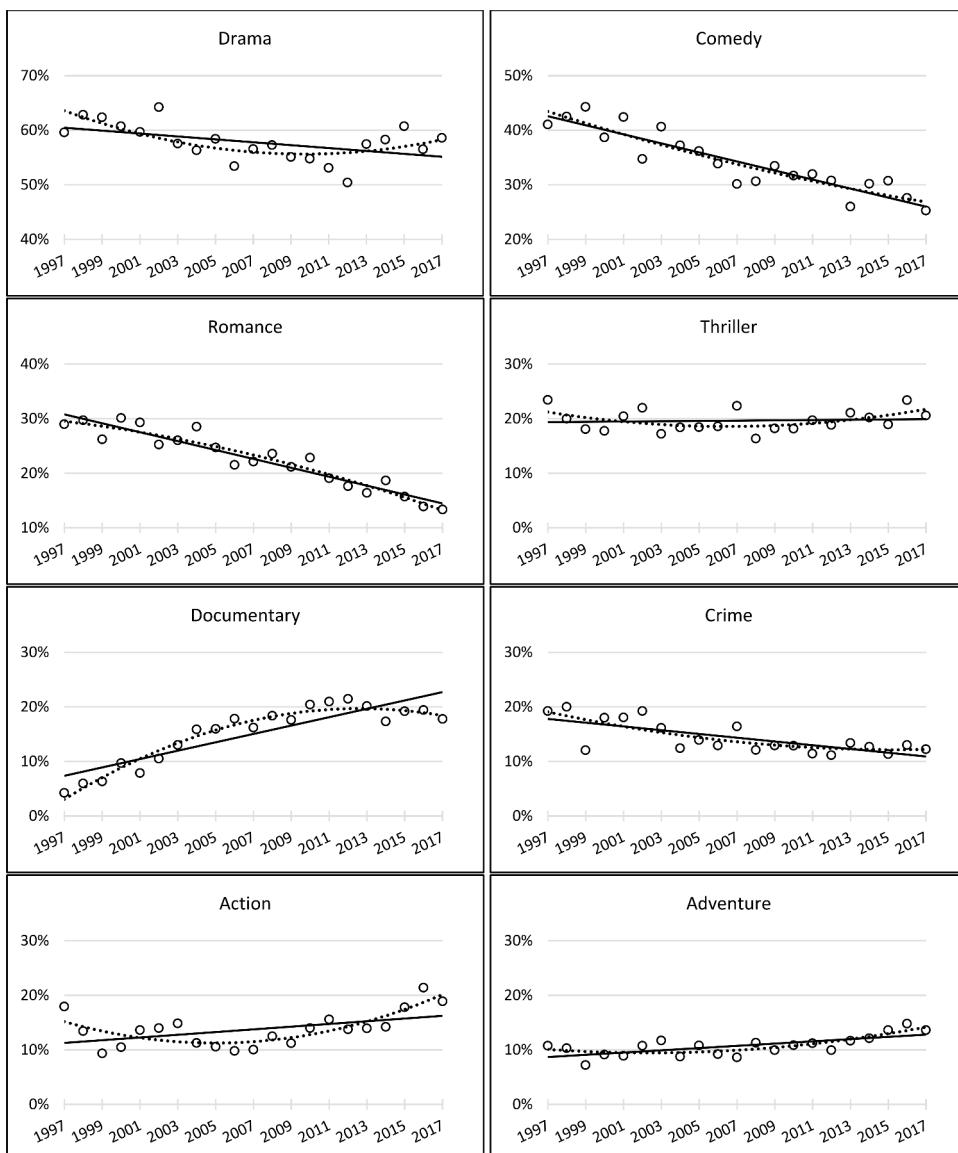


Fig. 2. Linear and quadratic trends for the top eight genres from 1997 to 2017.

Note. Solid lines represent linear trends. Dashed lines represent quadratic trends. Values along the y-axis represent the percent of films that included the genre tag each year. The y-axis was adjusted for Drama, Comedy, and Romance. See Appendix C for visualizations of all 22 genres, which include 95% confidence intervals around the data points and 95% error bands for the linear and quadratic trends.

Table 3

Chi-square results examining seasonal release trends for each genre.

| Genre | n | χ^2 | Spring | | Summer | | Fall | | Winter | |
|-------------|------|----------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| | | | Count | AS Resid. | Count | AS Resid. | Count | AS Resid. | Count | AS Resid. |
| Action | 1239 | 30.34*** | 317 | -0.9 | 357 | 5.3 | 309 | -3.1 | 256 | -1.0 |
| Adventure | 976 | 35.89*** | 245 | -1.2 | 291 | 5.4 | 225 | -4.1 | 215 | 0.2 |
| Animation | 326 | 13.21** | 70 | -2.2 | 99 | 3.3 | 96 | 0.3 | 61 | -1.4 |
| Biography | 752 | 20.76*** | 169 | -2.7 | 147 | -2.3 | 261 | 3.8 | 175 | 1.0 |
| Comedy | 3050 | 21.66*** | 820 | 0.3 | 767 | 3.6 | 793 | -4.0 | 670 | 0.3 |
| Crime | 1275 | 0.55 | 338 | -0.1 | 283 | -0.6 | 371 | 0.4 | 283 | 0.4 |
| Documentary | 1405 | 24.01*** | 430 | 3.6 | 317 | -0.3 | 412 | 0.6 | 246 | -4.2 |
| Drama | 5187 | 48.95*** | 1331 | -2.5 | 1083 | -5.3 | 1587 | 4.8 | 1186 | 2.9 |
| Family | 626 | 21.69*** | 140 | -2.5 | 189 | 4.5 | 165 | -1.3 | 132 | -0.4 |
| Fantasy | 661 | 6.08 | 158 | -1.7 | 169 | 1.7 | 178 | -1.0 | 156 | 1.2 |
| History | 467 | 8.88* | 107 | -1.9 | 94 | -1.5 | 146 | 1.3 | 120 | 2.1 |
| Horror | 623 | 3.09 | 155 | -1.0 | 140 | -0.3 | 197 | 1.7 | 131 | -0.5 |
| Music | 518 | 1.48 | 141 | 0.3 | 124 | 0.6 | 151 | 0.3 | 102 | -1.2 |
| Musical | 148 | 1.16 | 37 | -0.5 | 30 | -0.8 | 46 | 0.7 | 35 | 0.6 |
| Mystery | 700 | 5.90 | 162 | -2.2 | 167 | 0.6 | 220 | 1.7 | 151 | -0.1 |
| Romance | 2007 | 4.05 | 517 | -1.0 | 450 | -0.6 | 571 | -0.2 | 469 | 1.9 |
| Sci-Fi | 585 | 38.38*** | 164 | 0.8 | 188 | 5.5 | 139 | -2.7 | 94 | -3.5 |
| Short | 22 | 7.10* | 8 | 1.0 | 1 | -2.1 | 10 | 1.7 | 3 | -0.9 |
| Sport | 303 | 3.11 | 93 | 1.6 | 64 | -0.7 | 87 | 0.0 | 59 | -1.0 |
| Thriller | 1771 | 4.41 | 445 | -1.6 | 399 | -0.4 | 538 | 1.8 | 389 | 0.2 |
| War | 341 | 5.01 | 85 | -0.7 | 65 | -1.7 | 106 | 1.0 | 85 | 1.4 |
| Western | 79 | 1.21 | 24 | 0.7 | 20 | 0.5 | 20 | -0.7 | 15 | -0.6 |
| Total Films | 9019 | -- | 2405 | -- | 2065 | -- | 2584 | -- | 1965 | -- |

Note. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. df = 3. AS Resid. = Adjusted Standardized Residual. Superscript * indicates the use of Fisher's Exact Test. Shaded cells indicate observed counts which deviate from expected count. Light gray cells represent observed counts which are greater than expected. Dark gray cells represent observed counts which are less than expected.

The fourth cluster contained Action, Crime, Horror, Mystery, Thriller, and Science Fiction, which we dub the *Sensation Seeking* cluster. This cluster depicts those films that encapsulate most blockbuster releases (e.g., *Avatar*, *Interstellar*) that include popular film qualities distinct from the *Classic Genres* cluster. Interestingly, this cluster also captures films that feature horror themes (e.g., *The Ring*, *The Grudge*) as represented by the appearance of Horror, Mystery, and Thriller.

Importantly, both the Short and Western genres were identified as having their own clusters. Given there were no links between these genres and any other genres within the network, this fact highlights how both of these genres might contain qualities that are distinct from other genre themes. However, these two genres are the least featured within the sample (0.24% and 0.89%, respectively), and thus their standalone nature might simply be a function of their lack of representation and association with other more popular genres. Finally, we also examined the negative correlations between our genre tags and discuss these results in depth in our online supplement (see Appendix B).

3.4. Genre production over time

To answer RQ4, we conducted hierarchical linear regressions. In step 1, we regressed the linear trend of year onto the percent representation of each genre (i.e., % of films with the genre tag each year) to determine whether there was growth in production over time. In step 2, we added the quadratic trend of year to assess whether each genre's linear rate of change per year was shifting over time. Linear trends depict the average change in percent representation for each genre tag from year to year. Quadratic trends signify whether a genre's linear trend is increasing, decreasing, or constant. Results are presented in Table 2 and visualizations for the eight most represented genres in the sample are presented in Fig. 2 (see Appendix C for all 22 genre trend visualizations with 95% confidence intervals around the data points and 95% error bands around the linear and quadratic trends).

We found increases in the production of the Action, Adventure, Animation, Biography, Documentary, Fantasy, History, and Horror genres, and decreases in the Comedy, Crime, Drama, Romance, and Short genres. Notably, the production of Comedy and Romance genres experienced particularly steep declines. Conversely, Documentary and Biography production sharply increased (see Fig. 2). This finding lends credence to the notion that as filmmaking becomes more accessible (lower production costs, less reliance on Hollywood, etc.), independent filmmakers favor inexpensive, fact-based content rather than expensive, dramatized content.

Turning to the quadratic trends, we found positive trends for Action, Adventure, Biography, Drama, Mystery, Science Fiction, and Thriller. These results suggest that the linear trends for these genres, significant or not, are increasing across time. Thus, the Action, Adventure, and Biography genres, which had increased production over time, are being produced at even higher rates as time goes on. Similarly, the Mystery, Science Fiction, and Thriller genres, which had neither an increase nor decrease in production overall, saw increased production leading up to 2018. Finally, the negative linear trend of Drama suggests production was higher during the early years of our sample, decreased until the late 2000s, then experienced increased production during the 2010s.

Conversely, we found negative quadratic trends for the Documentary, Music, and Sport genres. These findings suggest that the stable production of Music and Sports films decreased in the years leading up to 2018. Interestingly, for Documentaries, we observed a negative quadratic trend paired with a positive linear trend. This indicates that while Documentaries had a rapid increase in production, this rate has slowed tremendously (see Fig. 2).

3.5. Genre release

To address RQ5, we conducted a series of chi-square tests to assess whether each genre was more or less likely to be released during each calendar season. After determining whether each chi-square statistic was significant, we evaluated the adjusted standardized residuals to determine which cells were driving the result. Adjusted standardized residuals outside of the +/- 2 range indicate that the genre is significantly more/less likely to be released during the respective season. Findings are presented in Table 3. Visualizations of genre by season are presented in Appendix D. Additionally, genre by month chi-square analyses are presented in Appendix B and corresponding visualizations are presented in Appendix E.

We found a relatively consistent release pattern across most genres. Popular genres were more likely to be released during the Summer, and less likely to be released at other times of the year. Conversely, acclaimed genres were more likely to be released during the Fall and Winter, and less likely to be released during the Spring and Summer. This pattern seems to suggest that the film industry understands that certain themes (e.g., Adventure, Science Fiction) are better suited as profitable summer blockbusters, while other themes (e.g., Biography, Drama) are more suited to be prestige pictures released ahead of film awards season.

Notably, the Documentary genre was more likely to be released during Spring compared to other seasons. We attribute this finding to the importance of specific film festivals like the International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam (IDFA; idfa.nl). IDFA submissions open during Spring (e.g., March), with deadlines to submit during early Summer (e.g., June). Thus, the increase in Documentaries during the Spring season is likely in preparation for the IDFA akin to how acclaimed genres are released during the Fall and Winter in preparation for other award ceremonies.

4. Discussion

Does the film industry communicate different stories to audiences over time? The current project seems to suggest yes. In line with past work (Oliver et al., 2014), genres likely to elicit hedonic responses (i.e., enjoyment) were associated with macro-level indicators of popularity, whereas those linked with mixed affect and deliberation (i.e., appreciation) had higher scores across indicators of acclaim. Furthermore, unique production trends occurred across each genre. Consistent with the MIME (Tamborini, 2013), these patterns

suggest that certain story types become more or less popular in the media landscape, whereas others seem to remain consistently popular. Implications to understanding broader entertainment trends, including the reciprocal relationship between the film industry and large-scale audience appeal, are discussed below.

4.1. Genre popularity and acclaim

When examining success metrics across genre, we found that popular films tended to separate from critically acclaimed films based on genre. In other words, films that had negative associations with popularity positively correlated with acclaim metrics, and popular genres were negatively correlated with acclaim. These findings support past work analyzing genre, success, and audience response by demonstrating the relationships between individuals' enjoyment and mass popularity as well as individuals' appreciation and mass acclaim at the macro-level (Lewis, Grizzard, Choi et al., 2017). In other words, enjoyed genres (e.g., Fantasy, Science Fiction) are more likely to be watched, whereas appreciated genres (e.g., Documentary, Drama) receive awards, recommendations, and accolades from critics and audiences. The results are promising for those interested in classifying genres based on content, audience responses, and other indicators.

4.2. Film production trends

The Drama, Comedy, and Romance genres (i.e., *Classic Genres* cluster) made up most tags in our sample, with each tag being featured more than 2,000 times. These results deviate from previous literature which suggested that Drama, Comedy, and Action/Adventure are the most popular film genres (Oliver et al., 2014). While our results might seem at odds with past work, these three genres have experienced negative production trends, with Comedy and Romance seeing substantial decreases over time. Conversely, both the Action and Adventure genres seem to be experiencing greater production in the film industry. In fact, aside from Documentaries, Action and Adventure films were the only two of the eight most popular genres that saw increased production over time. These findings likely reflect recent trends in major-market releases, which predominantly featured action-based superhero and Science Fiction/Fantasy themes (e.g., *The Avengers*, *Star Wars*). Such films dominate the all-time box office charts as, Action and Adventure had the strongest positive correlations with popularity metrics, and 19 of the 20 all-time highest-grossing films feature one of these tags (*BoxOfficeMojo*; boxofficemojo.com). Thus, although the Action and Adventure genres fall outside the top three genres of our sample, our findings still highlight the popularity of these genres among audiences and the industry's desire to capitalize on their popularity.

Our co-occurrence data not only help explain film production trends but also serve as a useful tool in identifying specific narrative themes present in the film industry. For example, significant genre co-occurrences seemed to reflect frequently produced exemplars of mass-market box office films. Although we cannot glean causal inferences from these data, the results provide identifiable genre groupings that could be of use to future entertainment researchers. Additionally, these findings highlight the utility of publicly available data in summarizing film production trends.

The co-occurrence and temporal production findings also point to new areas to research the MIME's long-term processes that could explain trends in the film industry. For instance, all eight of the most produced genres were also among the most popular and acclaimed in terms of popularity and acclaim metrics. Although our data do not focus on media representations of morality, consistent with the MIME, the results suggest the mutual sensitivity of producers and their audience. On the other hand, as of 2018, Comedy and Romance were not acclaimed and were waning in popularity (Oliver et al., 2014). Considering that genre tags were independent of one another, and films could have multiple genre tags, the results suggest that the industry is producing fewer Comedy and Romance films over time. While this may seem to suggest that these genres are "dying out," we propose that Comedy and Romances' distinctive elements might be *shifting* into other, more popular genres. In other words, unlike Drama or Documentary narratives which seem to carry a film on their own, audiences and critics might value comedic relief or romantic interests as supporting elements for other genres rather than being central features. If Comedies and Romances alone are not particularly liked, producers may pick up on this fact and emphasize other narrative aspects, leading to fewer explicit categorizations of either genre over time. Importantly, because our genre identifiers are binary in nature, we are unable to determine how particular genres may be blending together with the current data. However, future content analyses could look at the content of contemporary movies in greater detail and determine whether comic and romantic elements have become more common in distinct genres (e.g., Dramas) over time.

We also found differences in the season during which popular versus acclaimed genres were likely to be released. Popular genres were more likely to be released during the Summer compared to other seasons, whereas acclaimed genres were more likely to be released during the Fall and Winter, or, in the case of Documentary films, Spring. Consistent with the MIME (Tamborini, 2013) and Litman (1983), we posit that these release patterns suggest film producers use their sensitivity to their audiences' interests to capitalize on these films' specific appeal. Popular films, which are more likely to accrue widespread viewership, are released during Summer when audiences have more free time due to work or school vacations. Acclaimed films, which are more likely to be viewed by critical audiences, are released before awards deadlines, likely to ensure that the film is salient in the mind of award committees and those audiences who actively seek out critically acclaimed films. Of course, we cannot causally conclude this from our data, as we cannot rule out alternative explanations, but future work could consider interviewing film producers and executives or content analyzing relevant texts to identify the film industry's motivations to set release dates for specific film genres.

4.3. Limitations

The current study has various limitations. First, the data are not recent. We considered resampling, but since COVID-19 would have

affected the validity of our results, we opted to present pre-2020 data only. Perhaps analyzing pre- versus post-COVID trends would make for a worthwhile study. Second, we used the MIME to justify our analyses, but the MIME discusses different moral themes as the mechanisms influencing micro- and macro-level appeal and effects and offers little discussion of genre. Logically, certain genres should represent moral themes and conflict differently than others, but we cannot be certain which moral themes are more prevalent within a given genre. Thus, although the MIME was used to derive our research questions, the content analytical frame of the current study cannot definitively support or refute predictions regarding moral themes in different media or the long-term production predictions of the MIME without additional experimental work.

5. Conclusion and future directions

The current paper explored associations between genre, popularity, and acclaim across an array of Hollywood film releases. The results support past literature suggesting a longstanding preference for Drama, Action, and Adventure. We also identified the waning production of Comedies and Romantic films despite their general popularity. Likewise, analyses of the production of different genres by season and over time indicate the film industry's sensitivity toward their target audiences' preferences. Taken together, our data inform the current state of macro-level trends in the film industry and point to a variety of research questions that may address the mechanisms and effects of said trends.

Several important research questions are elucidated from our findings. Is the waxing and waning of production dependent upon consumption by audiences? If so, then movie producers may be tapped into the data and have a knack for understanding consumption patterns. At the same time, the film industry is relatively capricious. Films are produced long before they are consumed and so a direct correlation between consumption and production may be weak or non-existent. Although our data do not provide direct evidence supporting one answer or the other, the results generally support the former explanation that the film industry understands and subsequently serves its audience's entertainment tastes through the increased production of popular genres, themes, and narratives. Future work should include a more fine-grained and nuanced analysis of audiences' consumption of various genres over time, controlling for production trends, or longitudinal analyses exploring the predictive power of popularity and acclaim on genre production and vice versa. Doing so may illuminate the current entertainment landscape and broad cultural mores (Tamborini, 2013).

Declaration of Competing Interest

None

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Sam Wolken for his assistance writing the custom R function to collect these data.

Supplementary materials

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found in the online version, at [doi:10.1016/j.poetic.2023.101794](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2023.101794).

References

- Clauset, A., Newman, M. E., & Moore, C. (2004). Finding community structure in very large networks. *Physical Review E*, 70(6), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevE.70.066111>
- Cohen, J. (2013). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Routledge.
- Eden, A., Tamborini, R., Aley, M., & Goble, H. (2021). Advances in research on the model of intuitive morality and exemplars (MIME). In P. Vorderer, & C. Klimmt (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of entertainment theory* (pp. 230–249). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190072216.013.13>
- Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication*, 26(2), 172–199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1976.tb01397.x>
- Kendall, M. G. (1948). *Rank correlation methods*. Griffin.
- Lewis, R. J., Grizzard, M. N., Choi, J.-A., & Wang, P. L. (2017). Are enjoyment and appreciation both yardsticks of popularity? *Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications*, 31(2), 55–64. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000219>
- Lewis, R. J., Grizzard, M., Lea, S., Ilijev, D., Choi, J. A., Müsse, L., & O'Connor, G. (2017). Large-scale patterns of entertainment gratifications in linguistic content of US films. *Communication Studies*, 68(4), 422–438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2017.1340903>
- Litman, B. R. (1983). Predicting success of theatrical movies: An empirical study. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 16(4), 159–175.
- Mastro, D., Enriquez, M., Bowman, N. D., Prabhu, S., & Tamborini, R. (2012). Morality subcultures and media production: How Hollywood minds the morals of its audience. In R. Tamborini (Ed.), *Media and the moral mind* (pp. 75–92). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203127070>
- Moyer-Gusé, E. (2008). Toward a theory of entertainment persuasion: Explaining the persuasive effects of entertainment-education messages. *Communication Theory*, 18(3), 407–425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2008.00328.x>
- Oliver, M. B., Ash, E., Woolley, J. K., Shade, D. D., & Kim, K. (2014). Entertainment we watch and entertainment we appreciate: Patterns of motion picture consumption and acclaim over three decades. *Mass Communication and Society*, 17, 853–873. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2013.872277>
- Oliver, M. B., & Bartsch, A. (2010). Appreciation as audience response: Exploring entertainment gratifications beyond hedonism. *Human Communication Research*, 36 (1), 53–81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2009.01368.x>
- Oliver, M. B., & Hartmann, T. (2010). Exploring the role of meaningful experiences in users' appreciation of "good movies. *Projections*, 4(2), 128–150. <https://doi.org/10.3167/proj.2010.04040208>

- Ortner, S. B. (2012). Against Hollywood: American independent film as a critical cultural movement. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 2(2), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau2.2.002>
- Prabhu, S., Hahn, L., Tamborini, R., & Grizzard, M. (2020). Do morals featured in media content correspond with moral intuitions in media users?: A test of the MIME in two cultures. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 64(2), 255–276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2020.1757364>
- Ruggiero, T. E. (2000). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21st century. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3(1), 3–37. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0301_02
- Shim, J. W., & Paul, B. (2007). Effects of personality types on the use of television genre. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 51(2), 287–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838150701304852>
- Slater, M. D. (2007). Reinforcing spirals: The mutual influence of media selectivity and media effects and their impact on individual behavior and social identity. *Communication Theory*, 17(3), 281–303. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00296.x>
- Tamborini, R. (2013). Model of intuitive morality and exemplars. In R. Tamborini (Ed.), *Media and the moral mind* (pp. 43–74). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203127070>.
- Zillmann, D. (2000). Basal morality in drama appreciation. In I. Bondebjerg (Ed.), *Moving images, culture, and the mind* (pp. 53–64). University of Luton.

C. Joseph Francemone (M.A., University at Buffalo, SUNY) is a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Communication at The Ohio State University. His-research focuses on moral perceptions and judgments of media characters, and how these judgments influence subsequent narrative evaluations. His-research has been published in journals such as *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Research*, *Journal of Media Psychology*, and *Media Psychology*. Email: francemone.1@osu.edu

Kevin Kryston (Ph.D., Michigan State University) is an assistant Professor at Sam Houston State University. His-research focuses on entertainment media psychology, with a specific focus on social influences on audiences' selection and enjoyment of various forms of entertainment. His-work employs behavioral, psychophysiological, and self-report measures to determine the mechanisms underlying audience response to narrative and social cues. Email: kjk039@shsu.edu

Matthew Grizzard (Ph.D., Michigan State University) is an associate professor in the School of Communication at The Ohio State University. His-research examines narrative entertainment, moral emotions, and moral judgment processes related to the consumption of narrative and interactive media entertainment. He is on the editorial boards of *Media Psychology*, *Journal of Media Psychology*, and *Communication Research Reports*. His-research has been published in journals such as *Nature Human Behaviour*, *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Research*, *Communication Monographs*, and *Media Psychology*. Email: grizzard.6@osu.edu