



Navigating the Waters:

A Call for a Return to Factual
Depths in Shark Week
Programming

DATA-502-01 PDX
Noelle Matthews
Final Project

Diving In: Presenter Introduction & Audience Overview

Who You Are:

Discovery Channel / Discovery+ Executive Board and Shark Week Producers

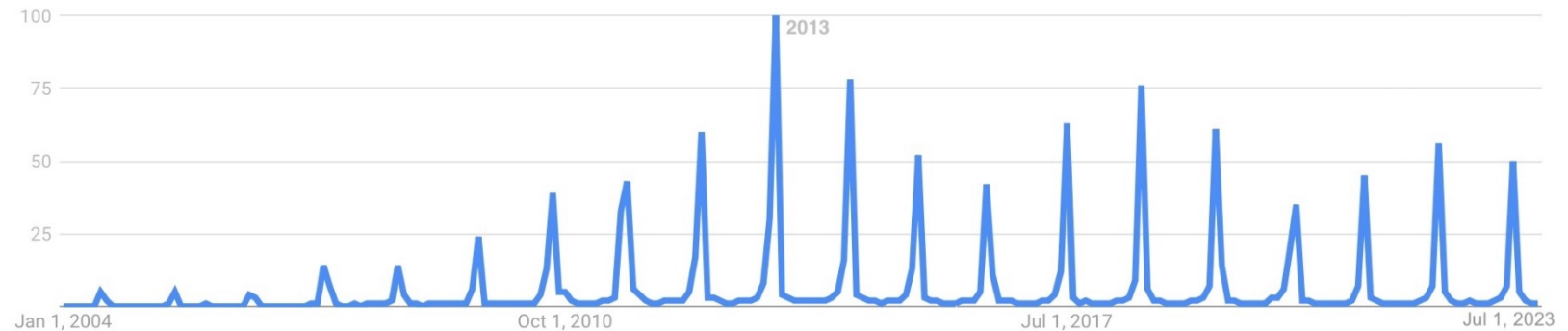
Who I am:

Shark Week Enthusiast, Aspiring Data Scientist



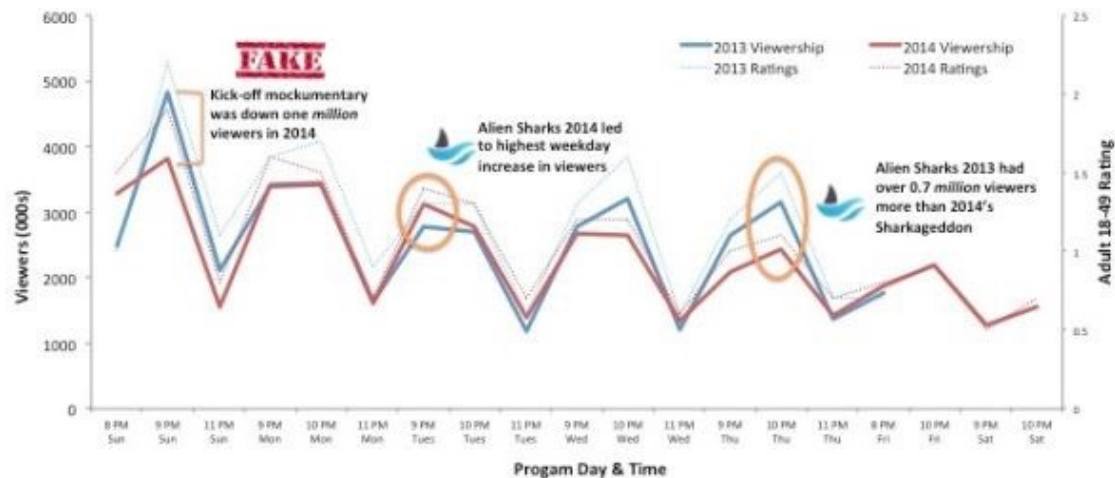
Fiction's Wake: The Viewer Exodus Post Pseudo-Documentary

“Shark Week” is the longest-running cable television series in history. It has been on the air since 1988. It was created to take the craze started from “Jaws” 13 years prior and dispel movie myths and encourage people to understand sharks.



SHARK WEEK SHOWDOWN

How did 2014 compare to 2013?



In an era where misinformation looms large, your audience demands truth and authenticity. The ill-fated venture into a 'historical documentary' that proved to be entirely fictional had a seismic impact on Shark Week viewership. As society grapples with the consequences of fake news, our audience, too, seeks the refuge of genuine and fact-based content. Let's learn from this dive into uncharted waters and reaffirm our commitment to truth, trust, and the awe-inspiring reality of sharks.

Beneath the Surface: Global Shark Attack File



**SHARK RESEARCH
INSTITUTE**

The GSAF has been maintained by SRI since 1992 and managed since 2010 by SRI team member Ralph Collier, a respected thought leader in shark conservation who has studied shark/human interactions for more than 40 years.

It contains almost 7,000 incidents dating back to 1555 and is updated continuously with current data.

Shark Week or Silver Screen: Can you spot the fiction?

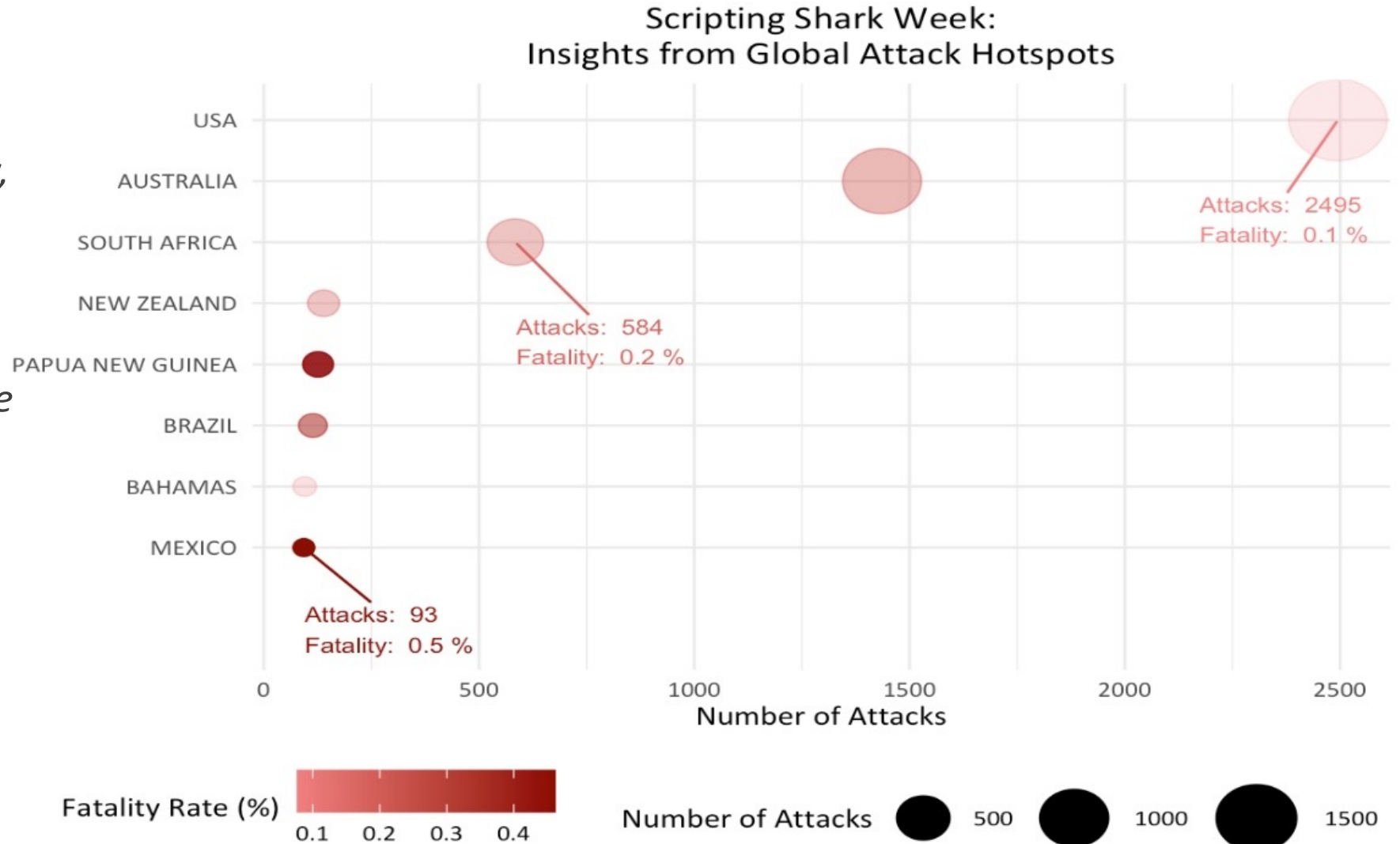
Brazilian Coast Guard aerial
footage spotted a 60-foot predator.
It was not a whale.



Lost Overboard: Hotspots Missing in Shark Week's Tale

*Despite Brazil and Papua New Guinea being clear “hotspots” of shark activity, they have been noticeably absent in Shark Week **Factual** programming.*

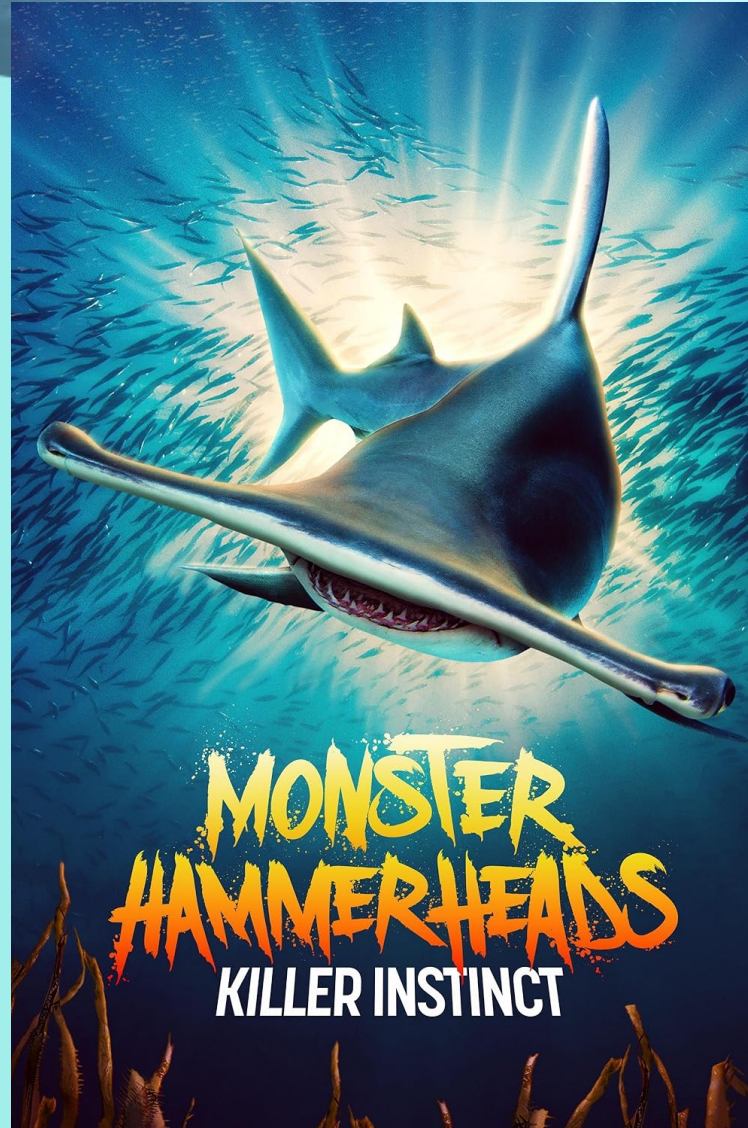
The inclusion of Brazil in the fake documentary compounds this oversight. Australia has also not been given the weight of programming it deserves considering the significant shark presence.



“Monster Hammerheads”

In 2016, Discovery’s film crew approached the research team at Shedd Aquarium, stating their intention to document their work on studying hammerheads. However, the footage was instead used for “Monster Hammerhead,” a sensationalist lie that falsely claimed the team was searching for a mythical hammerhead seen off Florida’s coast for 60 years.

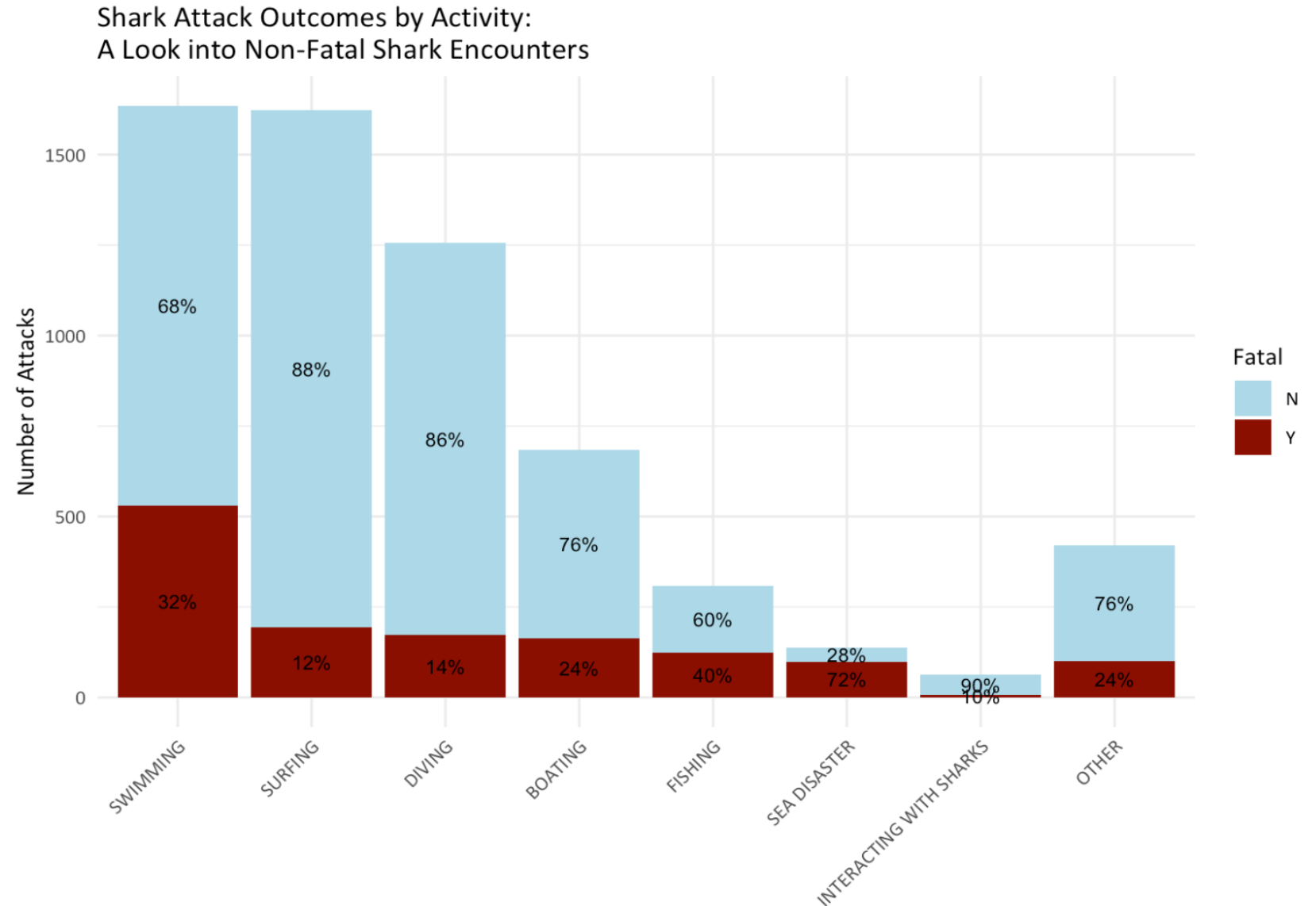
Regrettably, such programming persists; the accompanying promo poster is from 2023’s Shark Week.



Bitten, not Broken: Real-Life Narratives of Shark Encounters

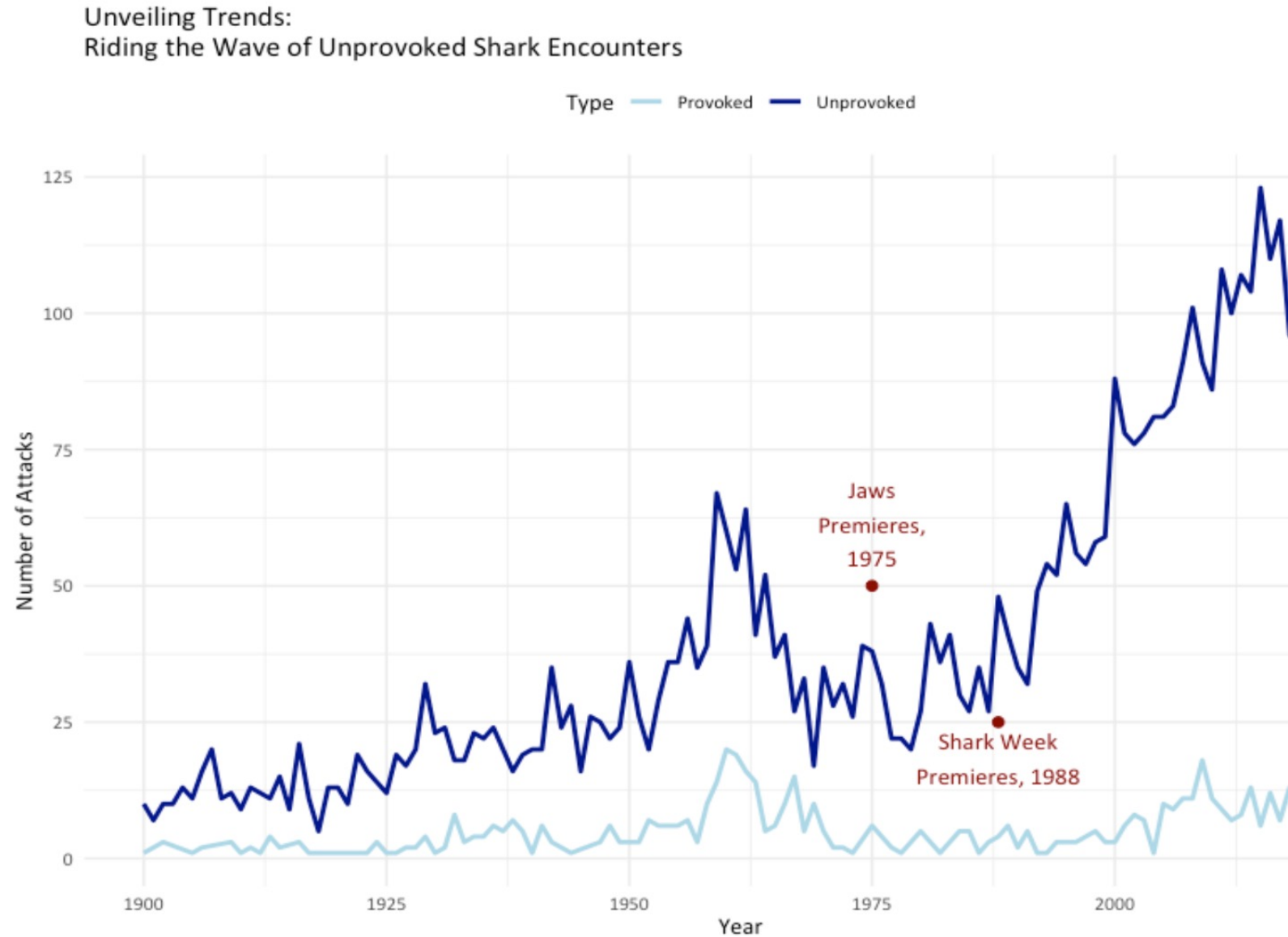
The story lines of these false narratives are always about shark attacks- or sharks “on the prowl”- but as you can see there is an opportunity to have programming about attacks and even “hunting grounds” (aka Hot Spots) based in reality.

My recommendation would be to create “Dateline-esque” programming with several shark attack survivors, either grouping by activity per episode or can even do multiple comparative episodes.

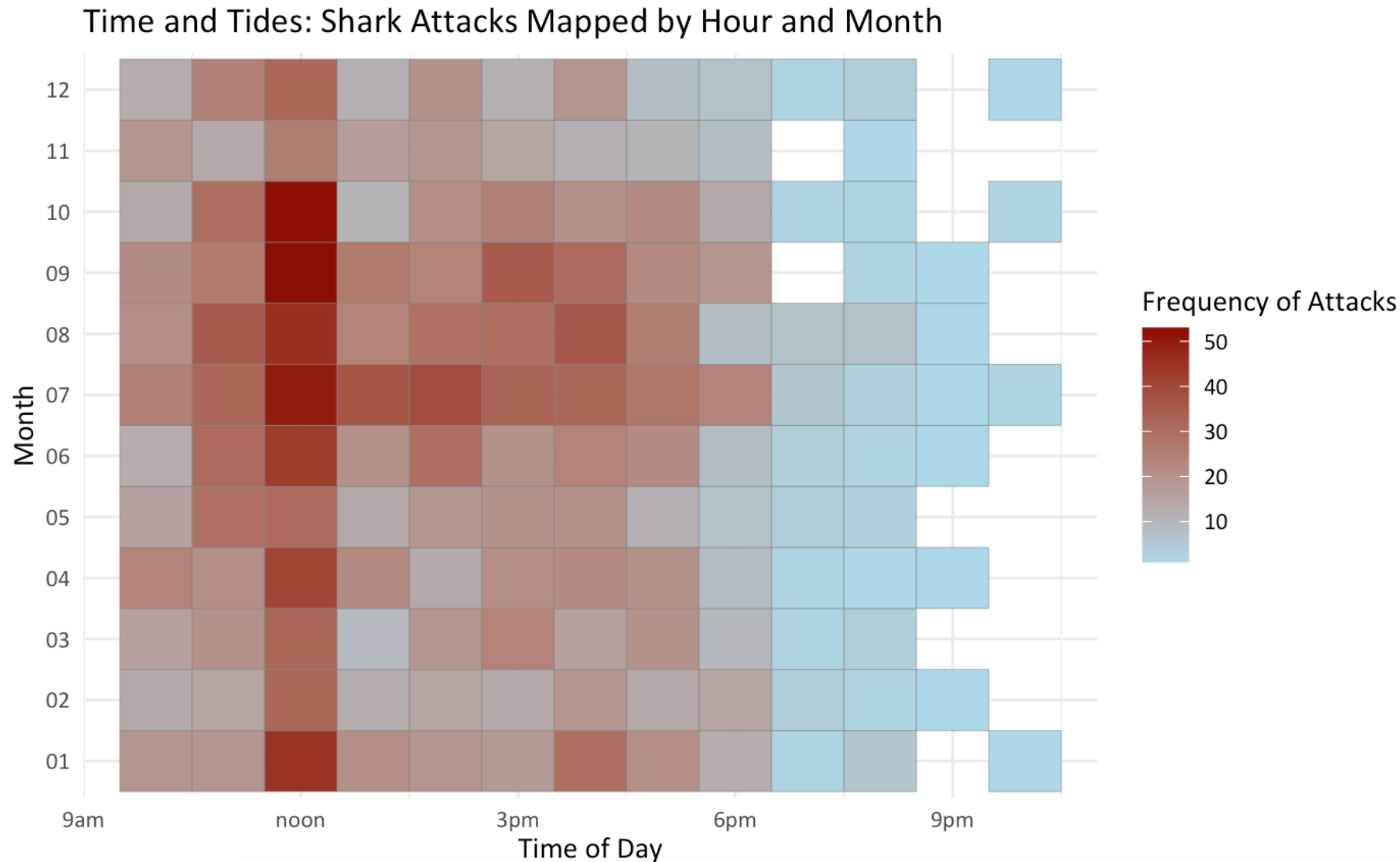


Narratives Over Nonsense: Authentic Shark Stories Aplenty

NAKED & AFRAID OF SHARKS



Heat of the Hunt: Aligning Shark Week with Peak Shark Activity



Historically Shark Week has premiered in Late July, sometimes early August, and even a few times in June, however Shark Activity truly peaks in September and October.

There is an opportunity to explore LIVE Shark programming, if you're looking for a new "gimmick", with the usage of drones or otherwise.

With the prevalence of social media and the desire for immediate information, this could prove to be a crowd-drawing tactic.



Charting a Course for Shark Week's Future

Since 2013, controversies surrounding fake, misleading, or deceptive programming have persistently plagued the legacy of Shark Week. Despite a 2015 vow to eradicate such content, it lingers. The repercussions have been evident — lower viewership and waning interest.

By shifting away from sensationalism and embracing fact and data-based programming there is a potential to revitalize Shark Week without relying on the presence of celebrity figures, ensuring its lasting impact on audiences worldwide.