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ORIGINAL

Effect of focus group opinions on final film making product: Sociological and marketing aspects

Efecto de las opiniones de los grupos focales en el producto final de la realización cinematográfica: Aspectos sociológicos y de marketing

Mirela Oktrova¹  

¹Institute of Media Opinion and Communication Studies. Tirana, Albania.

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Corresponding author: Mirela Oktrova 

ABSTRACT

Introduction: focus groups are widely used today for researching film product concepts, testing, advertising, and viewer satisfaction.

Objective: to reveal the ideas and concepts of focus groups in the film industry to form research hypotheses and understand the perception and attitude of group interview participants to the phenomena and problems of film production.

Method: Methodology used in this study was a survey with 354 respondents divided into 52 groups to cover various demographic characteristics (age, social status, ethnicity).

Results: the analysis of the study showed that group focus interviews can be used to collect additional data after quantitative surveys and help to interpret the results more fully. The analysis described the use of focus groups as a demand tool based on personal experience, paying particular attention to the purpose, stage, and content. The results showed that group discussions often lead to many ideas and inspirations that can be gathered on a topic in a very short time, efficiently and quickly, and respondents can compare and analyse their personal experiences, which is a valuable resource.

Conclusions: research relevance is highlighted by the effectiveness of focus group discussions in helping businesses in the film industry understand consumer insights better than general surveys.

Keywords: Cinema; Respondents; Film Industry; Sample; Interviews; Marketing.

RESUMEN

Introducción: los grupos focales se utilizan mucho hoy en día para investigar conceptos de productos cinematográficos, pruebas, publicidad y satisfacción del espectador.

Objetivo: revelar las ideas y conceptos de los grupos focales en la industria cinematográfica para formar hipótesis de investigación y comprender la percepción y actitud de los participantes en las entrevistas de grupo ante los fenómenos y problemas de la producción cinematográfica.

Método: la metodología utilizada en este estudio fue una encuesta con 354 encuestados divididos en 52 grupos para cubrir diversas características demográficas (edad, estatus social, etnia).

Resultados: el análisis del estudio demostró que las entrevistas de grupo focal pueden utilizarse para recopilar datos adicionales después de las encuestas cuantitativas y ayudar a interpretar los resultados de forma más completa. El análisis describió el uso de los grupos de discusión como herramienta de demanda basada en la experiencia personal, prestando especial atención a la finalidad, el escenario y el contenido.

Los resultados mostraron que las discusiones en grupo suelen dar lugar a muchas ideas e inspiraciones que pueden recogerse sobre un tema en muy poco tiempo, de forma eficaz y rápida, y que los encuestados pueden comparar y analizar sus experiencias personales, lo que constituye un valioso recurso.

Conclusiones: la pertinencia de la investigación se pone de manifiesto por la eficacia de las discusiones en grupo para ayudar a las empresas de la industria cinematográfica a comprender las ideas de los consumidores mejor que las encuestas generales.

Palabras clave: Cine; Encuestados; Industria Cinematográfica; Muestra; Entrevistas; Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of conducting focus groups is more than 20 years old. Following the successes achieved in the 1990s in the field of marketing research, focus groups also strengthened positions in the repertoire of film industry studies, including sociology. Despite the large number of studies using this method, only a few researchers have made the focus group interview a subject of in-depth methodological reflection. Focus interviews have been thoroughly studied by numerous authors, including Patton MQ and Patrizi PA,⁽¹⁾ who considered focus groups as a method of sociological and marketing research. Group interviews, due to their specificity, have a lot of sociological and marketing elements, and they are much more complicated than they are. Thus, they deserve close attention.

In the following years, focus group issues on film production were seen as specific focus areas for methodological, concentrated reflection, mostly with standardised tools. This approach is a logical consequence of the process of developing research methods, but it is the result of many years of empirical experience, both research and didactic. It also reveals a directly subjective view of the respondent as a fully autonomous and creative subject.⁽²⁾ Therefore, an attempt has been made to reconstruct the method of focus group interviews as accurately and in detail as possible, using the description of individual elements of the experiment procedure as an axis.

The cultural and creative industries have changed dramatically in recent years, both in terms of their operations and their attitudes to profit. This is due to the evolution of production technologies, the transformation of the innovation context, as well as changes related to data distribution capabilities and consumption practices.^(3,4,5,6) The film production chain includes all economic stages from production to exploitation. This chain can be divided into two main phases: production and marketing, which in turn are subdivided into successive stages that all films go through.

In general, the developmental stage, which is absent at the beginning of filmmaking, tends to become increasingly important with the participation of focus groups at this stage. In many cases, the value of data for marketing and sociological purposes depends not on the data itself, but on the ability of marketing decision-makers to interpret it. It can influence who consumers are, what they do, and what characteristics they exhibit, and even partially replace quantitative offline research. In other words, it is difficult to analyse such in-depth issues as consumer motivation, brand awareness, user pain points and potential needs using big data alone. The audience is very fickle, production times are very long, and therefore some films may be in line with the cinema of the past, but no longer meet current tastes.^(7,8,9,10)

In recent decades, the influence of group interviews has provoked and forced a constant revision of methodological rules and sociological research, as emphasised by Levinson A and Stouchevskaya O⁽¹¹⁾ in a study of the evolution of modern interview methods in general. In the process of following these changes, the importance of focus groups on the final product is not only steadily increasing, but the range of phenomena regulated is also expanding. This is an endless and dynamic process that cannot be accompanied by subsequent research statements. The consideration of the multifaceted process of influencing respondents' opinions relates directly to the focused group interview and finds its equivalents in the research tools. In this regard, the characteristics of those elements of the focus research method that are related to sociological and marketing decisions were addressed. The analysis of group interviews focuses on the selection of research participants, the phenomenon of group orientation, the role of participants during the session, their opinions, the dynamics of the group and the moderator in general.^(12,13,14)

The study aims to reveal the ideas and concepts of focus groups in the film industry to form research hypotheses and understand the perception and attitude of group interview participants to the phenomena and problems of film production.

METHOD

The methodological basis of the study was formed by the following approaches to the study of this topic: theoretical method of analysis and synthesis, logical method, and experiment.

The method of analysis and synthesis revealed various complex indicators to reflect and study the general characteristics and quantitative interrelationships of the general socio-economic phenomenon of focus groups. Its complexity is revealed in the forecasting process, requiring higher moderator skills. It starts from the inequality to be proved, analyses the conditions that ensure its fulfilment, and turns the proof of the inequality into a task of assessing the fulfilment of specific sampling conditions. This method uses the known conditions of the focus groups as a basis and then generates inequality properties to derive the required proof. This method was used to identify the primary modern logic for analysing and solving traditional problems in the field of film production through marketing and sociological contexts. Analysis and synthesis focus on the use of the respondent's experience and analytical skills and judgement, with logical thinking being the main tool. This approach was used to determine the direction of thinking and understand the essence of the problem when creating a focus group.

The logical approach determines the classification of the entire system of focus group opinions from the idea, where the system is divided into several logical units that implement their functions accordingly. The logical structural elements formed and emphasised the main operational functions of group interviews in terms of marketing and sociological aspects. To analyse the interaction of the logical structural elements, the work of the entire focus group system in film production was examined, and the processes associated with the flow of information from respondents were studied. The task of the logical method is to transform the basic conceptual model of a group interview into a logical structure of film production corresponding to a certain sample.

Preferring a detailed description of the discovery of the focus group results, this method is particularly accurate in emphasising the representation and importance of opinions in the process of implementation and reflexivity of research, similar to the explicit and voluntary experience of self-discovery. This is how logical induction works, leading from a puzzle to a plausible solution. By drawing a parallel between paradigm and activity, the current approach emphasises the extent to which logic is a fundamental marketing and sociological operation rather than a specificity of certain practices, which, paradoxically, allows to redefine the essence of scientific activity, including the science of experimentation.

The experiment identified the respondents to the film industry survey. It included a step-by-step application of expert assessment and the development of relevant tools - questionnaires. The development of questionnaires for interviewing respondents was used to systematise the content of opinions on the genre context of films. A survey was conducted on the perception of film genres, with 354 respondents divided into 52 groups. To cover different demographic characteristics, the age of the survey participants ranged from 18 to 55 years. Furthermore, the diversity of linguistic groups of respondents was emphasised: representatives of Indo-European and Turkic language groups prevailed in the survey. On this basis, the respondents came from the countries of Central Asia - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan - and Europe - France, Germany, Italy, as well as Turkey and India.

Most respondents were from middle-income groups, depending on the country, and about a quarter of respondents reported annual earnings above the average. The respondents were accountants, IT specialists, translators, lawyers and office managers. The peculiarity of the survey was the division of the audience into two subgroups that received different sets of initial data, which helped to achieve greater objectivity of the results. The survey, in turn, identified the genre chain of the film industry, which is related to the market economy and industrial model. A set of different functional entities comprised the core and revenue teams, where the core emphasises film production and is primarily responsible for formulating, implementing and discussing the film's marketing and advertising strategy.

RESULTS

There are many research methods in the social sciences and focus group interviews are one of the most useful research tools. Conducting a focused discussion group provides an opportunity to determine opinions about research, to understand it and to find out why people have these opinions. A cinematic work, in addition to being an artistic work, is an economic product that follows a production chain, from its conception to its consumption.

A focus group discussion provides a forum for exploring the views and experiences of people who share a common experience. It generates data from the interactions that arise from the discussion between participants, increasing the depth of content of individual and group ideas, and revealing aspects of the phenomenon that would otherwise be less accessible.^(15,16) Researching the effects of social and marketing policies on service users can move beyond tensions, where the quality of the data collected is highly dependent on the interaction within the group. A characteristic of a focused discussion group is that participants build on the points of view expressed by others while adding additional comments beyond personal initial responses.

The marketing and sociological aspects of the focus group context become apparent at every stage of the film industry, from the conceptual phase to the dissemination of the results. The choice of phenomena to be studied is not neutral in the measurement of film production. The development and interpretation phases are

also not free from such claims, arising from answers to leading questions or from viewing the material through the prism of the moderator's value system. In any information-gathering technique in which the subject comes into contact with the researcher, there is a source of possible problems specific to that industry.

It is not only the respondent who is in contact with the interviewer who is considered objectively. The latter is also obliged to turn off individuality because the moderator's function requires submission to the researcher and blind obedience to the role provided for in the interview script. The interest of focus group opinions is to capture product attitudes in interaction with each other, rather than in isolation. From this point of view, it can be used to analyse both common values and disagreements. When choosing a discourse within a group that shares a common experience or identity, commonality can be preferred by logical means. Respondents' opinions provide access to common sense, new commercial models and norms.^(17,18,19,20)

The few studies of film production that have systematically compared the results obtained through group interviews confirm that, through mechanical influence, opinions tend to reinforce elements of cinema and allow for clearer positions than in an individual interview. This is a good way to create polarisation and therefore to observe what social norms sometimes make difficult, namely the expression of dissent. The desired goals of capturing systems of common values and disagreements define the sample in terms of group composition.

An important point is that the mechanism of meeting the interviewer and respondents face to face not only induces a situation of interviewing relationship between these two types of participants but also creates conditions of co-presence between respondents. The analytical benefits and limitations expected from the possibility of considering the discourse generated by collective dynamics do not depend on the conditions of the constitution of the expressed collectivity. Therefore, justification for the criteria for respondent co-presence is required; otherwise, the goal of adequacy between the research question and the data collection method will be compromised. It is particularly necessary to determine the mechanisms of the interview system that determine group dynamics and whether they provide adequate material to test the research hypotheses.

Having identified communication as a group phenomenon, it is necessary to consider its consequences at the level of relations between focus group participants. As soon as the process of communication between people takes place, meanings circulate between the poles of communication. The circulation of meanings does not take place without the interlocutors being subjected to certain influences, changing in the short or long term. This potential for change, whether intentional or not, means that there is influence between respondents who communicate.⁽²¹⁾

In marketing, the influence of participants' opinions is not only on the processes of adopting innovations for the final product but also on inter-organisational issues. In addition, they provide proper reflection and further strengthen the concepts of influencers and initiators. To shed a little lighter on the spectrum of influence of focus groups, it is possible to identify the main elements they contain. For instance, there are informative, normative and evaluative influences on a product. In passing, it should be noted that these differences practically overlap with the outcome of the film production components. Opinion measurement involves initiating and controlling discussions on a given topic among group members.

The use of focus groups is based on the idea that it is not the isolated cognitive effort of the actor that produces reasoning, but the social mechanisms that restore interactions within the group. The more exchanges a respondent has with others, the more they will be able to present their opinions and communicate their preferences and reasons. Thus, the context of the collective interview is conducive to gathering judgements and opinions of the product. It is even possible to formulate a hypothesis that during these interactions, specific and sensitive moments will particularly reveal the structures of judgment.

The divergent dynamics of a focus group provide a structure to the interaction that is considered to be very favourable for explaining participants' reasoning.⁽²²⁾ By pushing speakers to defend their point of view, they create an emulation of explanation and clarification. Therefore, the identification and analytical management of discrepancies are invested in theories of discourse analysis and can find a research strategy through collective interviewing. To analyse opinion interactions, it is necessary to define a typology of the dynamics of discourse interaction, where membership consists of agreeing with a statement made by another participant. Confirmation deepens commitment because it consists of arguing for agreement, often by expanding on the original statement.

While commercial focus groups in the film industry guarantee the reliability of their incentives, the question of the sincerity of the participants can jeopardise any planned process. The scientific challenges are to diversify the types of configurations and to avoid interpretive bias, which leads to a tendency in sociological frameworks to work oppositely to that observed in business research. As quantitative methods continue to dominate the film industry to a lesser extent than statistical validity criteria, this leads to a desire to protect marketing functions from systematic sampling errors.

One of the best examples of global plot changes as a result of a mixed focus group assessment was one of Martin Scorsese's most famous films, *Goodfellas*. The test screenings of this film caused outrage and a bad reaction. Although some of the director's works had already been released by then, the audience was not ready

for a new project. Viewers did not like some shots of the characters taking drugs, and, according to the focus group, the deaths of some characters could have made viewers very angry. Executive producer Barbara de Fina said that the team working on the film even had to hide from a focus group because of rude comments from some viewers.⁽²³⁾ An important component of obtaining the highest quality and unbiased opinion from focus groups should be the coverage of all, or at least many age, national and social groups. At the same time, the objectivity of such an assessment can be levelled by the incompleteness and far from perfect result intended by the director, as product testing can take place six months before the official release, so colour correction, sound, picture quality, and sometimes even the presence of a green screen can affect the feedback from focus groups.⁽²⁴⁾

Another example of the qualitative impact of focus groups on the result in film production was a private screening of the film *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World*. The test audience didn't like the ending of the film, as the whole time the narrative was since the protagonist Scott was pursuing Ramona in every possible way, and in the end, he rejected her. This disappointment with the focus group prompted comic book writer Brian O'Malley and director Edgar Wright to revise the script, which led to a restructuring of the final scenes that became consistent with the emotional journey that had engaged the audience throughout the film.⁽²⁵⁾

Problems during the production of the film "The Blair Witch Project" also haunted Daniel Mirick and Eduardo Sanchez. By June 1998, it became known that the film's length, even after a series of restructurings, was two and a half hours. After that, the directors decided to cut the film to a reasonable 100 minutes. However, comments made after the test screening by a focus group at the University of Florida, such as "too long" or "I feel sick", made it clear to the team that further work on the film was needed. As a result, the final version of the film, released in 1999, lasted 81 minutes.⁽²⁶⁾

Although some producers are not enthusiastic about early screenings for focus groups, some are still pleased with the audience reaction. For instance, the test screening of the animated musical fantasy film *Wish* by Disney in 2023 left the audience delighted, and some viewers made it clear in their comments that they would like a sequel and regret the inability to continue to emotionally immerse themselves in the project's universe.^(27,28,29)

Thus, a survey on film genre perceptions was conducted with 354 respondents divided into 52 groups to cover different demographic characteristics such as age, social class, ethnicity and nationality, including different professional groups. Diversification strategies turned out to be the only valid type of reasoning. Furthermore, the interpretation of the opinions that attempt hypothetical representative recruitment does not apply reasoning and generalisations but rather attempts to characterise their types and convey their complexity from a filmmaking perspective (table 1).

Table 1. The results of the experiment on film genres conducted among the surveyed respondents	
Film genre	Number of respondents as a % of all respondents
Comedies	80 %
Historical cinema	74 %
Adventure films	66 %
Detectives	64 %
Cartoons	63 %
Dramas	60 %

The concern for reliability by crossing variables in the approach assimilated to random sampling is explicitly assumed in the experiment, which emphasises the selection of respondents by recruiting a population with an average level of film viewing. Self-selection bias, which led to a favourable response rate of approximately 10 % of the contacts in the representative sample, was eventually abandoned in favour of a diversification strategy that considered certain criteria, such as a balance between film genres.

This is how a focus group develops, and it also tends to take advantage of the smaller group size to achieve marketing goals more productively. In the film industry, it is difficult to predict audience demand and behaviour, which makes film marketing riskier.⁽³⁰⁾ The first strategy used in the focus group was to focus on the audience, which is essential to the success of a film. The embodiment of this commodity thinking includes the involvement of the audience in the production of the film. Audience research has been added in many key areas, such as scripting, production and editing, and advertising. Based on the audience's feedback on each test area, a specific plot was determined in conjunction with professional creativity.

At the stage of preparing the scripts for the film versions, the audience participating in the testing was divided into 2 groups. The first is those who have seen the original script, which falls under a specific plot, and the second is those who have collected and compared audience feedback in several dimensions and finally presented the genre in full accordance with the original directions, thus helping the filmmakers to complete

the creative focus and determine the final plan. Viewer comments also helped to optimise the films in aspects such as the handling of minor characters and editing of titles. In many cases, producers resort to test screenings of the finished film or at the end of post-production in front of a specific audience, more or less numerous, the results of which are analysed, and viewers are often required to fill out a preliminary questionnaire.

Other formulas include a specialised panel or discussion group. In some cases, the producer may make significant changes to less valuable aspects of the film, up to and including reshoots. The bigger the production, the more detailed the testing phase will be and the greater its impact on the final look of the film. Depending on the marketing goals, the release conditions include the choice of theatre complexes and sometimes, if the base is too thin for certain subgenres, the release is carried out directly in video format - on physical media or online. Depending on the methods chosen, the means and style of the advertising campaign will have different functions.^(31,32,33)

During the development of the experiment, the preliminary product form served as a starting point for subsequent versions of the scenario that emerged from the rewriting stages. His goal was to improve the script by eliminating problems, whether artistic - clarifying issues, improving the narrative, enriching characters, or economic - reducing the number of characters, filming locations or sets, removing difficult shots to shoot or special effects. In other words, the focus groups involved in the development had already considered the realities of the upcoming shoot. They range from the suitability of the main actors in question, whether they are firmly committed to the project or not, to the ability to give the film all the essential features within the cost management framework of the estimated budget that the film can realistically stick to.

The design phase often addressed suggestions from downstream, including formatting that went as far as the order forms. In a broader sense, scriptwriting is marked by elements that are very commonly used in mass production, although they are less marked and more varied in demanding works. These elements were aimed at connecting with the respondent, often through the mechanisms of identification with the character or plot. Characters are often formed from archetypes and are presented as allies or opponents of the configuration that emerges in the process of film production. They correspond to genres that have been formalised in the course of history, such as detective films, comedies, social films, and biographies, and evolve depending on modes and audience responses.^(34,35)

DISCUSSION

According to Sifaki E and Papadopoulou M,⁽³⁶⁾ the marketing aspect of focus groups in film production includes the creation of promotional materials for cinema operators and, depending on the case, a campaign with posters, advertising inserts in the general or specialised press, radio or television spots, and an online presence. An important element of cinema marketing is the concept of a “teaser”, whereby the distributor briefly reveals an aspect of a film to make the viewer want to watch the whole thing. The trailer, which can be shown in cinemas, broadcast on TV or posted online for months in advance, is the most important element, but there are also short reports or promotional interviews that play the same role.

The set of measures to develop production, in this case, plays a dual role: alongside its function as an additional source of revenue, it seeks to maintain the film’s visibility in the eyes of audiences, where the striking power of major global focus groups is disproportionate to more modest means of production. Early communication with the respondent will not necessarily help the film achieve a big leap in quality, but it is a means of identifying problems and key points. The goal is to derive a film genre rating system and parameters. This kind of reflexivity is essential for improving the instrument. In terms of production, this method brings innovation, as evidenced by the variety and even ingenuity of its uses.

Merton RK⁽³⁷⁾ is the father of focus group interviews. He stated that they have two main functions: the first involves further study of specific experiences, such as responses to films or radio programmes, and the second is in the fields of education and psychology, which aim to listen and collect information. According to him, the participants were selected because they had common characteristics that were relevant to the focus group topics. Researchers set up focus groups in a permissive environment where participants are encouraged to share their views and opinions, rather than being forced to vote or reach a consensus.

Since Merton’s time, focus groups have become an important research tool for applied sociologists. If the social sciences had concentrated only on their workshop as a research method, their current state would most likely be extremely poor. In the absence of other alternatives, all the disadvantages and limitations of this method would undoubtedly be exacerbated. The absence of a survey would have highlighted, first, the impossibility of conducting sociological analysis and the lack of opportunities for generalisation. Not using in-depth interviews would have limited access to knowledge, especially about the sensitive and complex phenomena of film production. The results of the survey are akin to a tacit resolution of conflicts, which makes the work of research managers difficult. The solution is to take the advice of both sides and make sure that their main concerns are included in the questionnaires that are distributed to the audience. After that, the final decision is up to the audience.

In the process of researching film and TV robots for production, Franklin M⁽³⁸⁾ analysed two aspects of understanding: competitiveness and playability. Based on these two components, it offers relevant research services and products at each stage of the project life cycle, which it can provide with the help of focus group insights:

- basic study of genres;
- optimization of the script's creativity;
- optimization of intermediate production and other services covering the main production process of the film.

In a fundamental study of the genre, research methods include interviews with experts, desk research, focus group research, and continuous market monitoring. When creatively optimising the script, Wessels formulated a framework of thought based on the uniqueness of the story and its subject matter, which helps to conduct a rough draft, allowing respondents to participate in the editing process. The group interview facilitates interaction with the audience at an early stage of production, where the film is fully market-oriented, as one way to reduce project risk is to allow the audience to participate in the creative process by applying audience research to the work in question, emphasising the role of managing their expectations. A focus group is focused on discussion, not on observing the actual use of the product by the user, so it is often impossible to get the true inner thoughts when using the product.

Merrington P y col.⁽³⁹⁾ believe that the artistry and quality of a film can be considered separately. Feature films should be given more respect for the opinion of creators, while quality films need an industrial system. The film industry lacks links in the production chain, and the process of industrialisation is slow, which in one way or another affects the improvement and division of labour in the industry chain to expand the boundaries of control through audience research to obtain information about film production and market feedback.

Of all the aspects of film production, focus group research is the least understood and most misunderstood. This love-hate relationship is because they are the most secretive part of the marketing process, and the results of the opinions are never known to the outside world. The most immediate goal of the survey is to get feedback from the audience in advance, which is a means of managing risks and allocating resources. This method can ensure the security and accuracy of subsequent transactions with a small amount of money. This approach is still no substitute for the keen sense and foresight of a creative director, but it can keep them from making rash decisions. Respondent research is about assessing market knowledge through sampling. If done correctly, survey results can accurately reflect the general population.

The main role of the focus group is to identify the target audience of the film and decide what kind of advertising and promotion will be most effective for them, to avoid inappropriate or unclear marketing messages. The peculiarity of the perception of films by age groups studied in the work of Munsch A,⁽⁴⁰⁾ indicated that digital marketing and advertising with music, humour and the involvement of famous and influential personalities on social media has a positive impact on both millennials and generation Z. The research was conducted through focus group discussions and individual interviews.

According to Allman S and Medeiros JL,⁽⁴¹⁾ respondents are conventionally divided into four large groups located in each of the four sectors of the quadrant. The horizontal axis divides the audience into men and women, and the vertical axis divides the audience into those over 25 and under. This classification applies to all types of audience research. Film industry executives tend to focus most on results in two quadrants: men under 25 and women under 25 because young people make up most filmgoers demographically. The first four steps are scenario evaluation, concept check, title check and positioning research, which are closely interrelated.

Researchers usually use two approaches: qualitative research and quantitative research.^(42,43) Qualitative research is when a moderator selects typical focus groups, usually from 6 to 12 filmgoers, to study their views. Quantitative research involves selecting a certain number of filmgoers, asking them the same questions and statistically summarising their answers. Respondents usually answer independently, not collectively. The film will be tested for a recruited audience, and the results of this test will have a major impact on the final version of the film. If these test viewers are unhappy or confused about a part of the film's plot, the creative team will fix it by strengthening the narrative, re-editing or adding footage, or reshooting.^(44,45,46) In addition to the above, the sample of respondents, when it comes to local or regional film production, may include citizens of a particular state and emigrants who have been adapting to life in other countries for several years.^(47,48,49,50)

Yao R and Yang J⁽⁵¹⁾ qualitatively revealed the features of villain characters in the marketing of the film industry. The focus group survey consisted of a questionnaire after the film, which took three and a half minutes to complete. Those questionnaires that were filled in later were considered invalid, and in total, 532 of the 550 questionnaires originally distributed were left for the final analysis. The conclusions of the survey showed that the charismatic leadership of fictional characters can cause strong emotional infection in the audience, and the theory of aesthetics of perception was confirmed, which confirmed the relationship between the charismatic leadership of the antagonist and the audience's sensitivity to the triumph of justice.

Stroube BK and Waguespack DM⁽⁵²⁾ explored an interesting approach to the dynamics of audience perceptions

of films, which can also be attributed to the influence of focus groups in film production. The article hypothesised whether status characteristics, such as gender, are related to the variability of assessments. Using a consumer rating of more than 4,000 films rated by 338 million consumers, it was found that gender-typed content had a strong influence on the higher quality of a film starring a female lead.

Another, but no less important aspect of film production is the public's influence on the finished film products. On the one hand, this may be due to the lack of focus groups in film production. On the other hand, as noted by Morales-Medina T and Cabezas-Clavijo Á,⁽⁵³⁾ half of the signatures in 249 petitions to cancel certain Netflix films as of 2024 came from the United States of America. This indicates either coordinated actions of civil activists or that most of the signatories did not see the full content of the film at all and made their decisions based on information in the media, comments on social networks and commercials. It is noteworthy that the scientific community is already proposing radically new approaches to the process of test-screening films in film production.

For example, Pelzer S. y col.⁽⁵⁴⁾ proposed a theoretical framework for how neural information systems (NeuroIS) can help determine what narrative material should be shown to the end audience, as well as the sequence in which the material should be arranged and the emotional value it should carry. In short, the relationship between what emotional experience the director intended and what emotional image will be transmitted to the viewer is important. In addition, focus group assessments indicated a better emotional perception of films in virtual reality (VR) format. Although this way of presenting the final product to the audience was not popular due to the novelty and ongoing development of VR technologies, respondents reported lower levels of positive emotions when watching films in the classic 2D format than when watching them in VR.^(55,56)

Focus group interviews have long been used in film production research, where they allow for diverse and high-quality work and are the basis for stimulating methodological debates. In terms of analysing the issue, there is still much to be done, as the interpretation of this type of material is particularly complex, as it is based on an intertwining of separate aspects. The intensive use of qualitative methods in marketing research was prompted by the fact that there is a growing interest in such areas as consumer needs, motives and personalities. They have proven to be a very good tool for studying motives, emotions and beliefs, helping to identify subconscious factors that determine the actions of respondents.

Therefore, the growing interest in group problems and specific effects stimulated by the group is a factor that has contributed to the greater popularity of focus groups compared to individual ones. The study has observed that when people are in a group, they begin to show different reactions and emotions than if each person was tested separately. Most audience research simply assesses consumer attitudes towards a single film, but sometimes unusual audience surveys are conducted, including screening venues, starring actors and other issues related to the film industry.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found that focus group interviews in the film industry are currently one of the most used methods of marketing research. Focus group discussions are the most effective way to help businesses and companies gain a deeper understanding of consumers' inner thoughts. The problem is that a focus group is not the most effective tool for a deep understanding of internal thoughts, but it is still useful for studying users' intentions, feelings, attitudes, and reactions. It is determined that focus groups in film production play an important role in determining the quality of the future product, along with basic aspects such as production, plot or sound correction. In addition, the different reactions of the focus groups to individual film clips help to determine which aspects are most relevant to use in trailers to attract the largest possible number of viewers. The problem with this approach to film production is that with the active involvement of focus groups in previews and surveys during film production, the role of the director in the final vision of the product is diminished, as large studios are interested in the highest box office.

The presented focus group interview approach contributes to a more comprehensive view of issues that may seem trivial when considering opinions. The focus group is a complex and multidimensional structure, and the relationship between the focus methodology and its marketing is a very important analytical perspective in the field of film production. This situation is determined by the fact that the reflection and the accompanying discussion emphasise the respondent's axiological nature, which usually takes place at a high level of generality. As a result, attempts have been made to demonstrate these relationships using specific examples of focused group interviews. Further research should identify the driving forces behind the use of focus group interviews in film production, which require modern approaches to transmission and distribution, and which in one way or another create and form an important layer of development in this area.

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Methodology: Mirela Oktrova.

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