

Cinematic blueprint on Social Media: A comparative analysis

Huella cinematográfica en las redes sociales: un análisis comparativo

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Abstract:

This paper aims to analyze the activity of the three biggest movie studios in social media, 20th Century Fox, Warner Bros and Universal Studios, and how that is affecting in the numbers and importance of each. Through deep searches, professional advice and the use of some statistic programs, we were able to pull out some interesting assumptions that will be discussed. We have focused in different parts of each Social Media since, we think, each one is designed to fulfill one specific aspect, for example create discussions or just present a piece of work or trailer in our case. With that approach we expect to determine which of the companies has understood better the way they have to be used and if they had won any kind of advantage through the good use of this medias presented as more interaction between themselves and the viewers and a more effective way to present their products. We conclude a correlation between movie studios impact and social media in terms of posts and comments. YouTube is the main social media for movie studios companies.

Resumen:

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la actividad de los tres estudios de cine más grandes del mundo en las redes sociales: 20th Century Fox, Warner Bros y Universal Studios, y cómo este hecho está repercutiendo en el desarrollo de cada uno de ellos. A través de una búsqueda profunda, asesoramiento profesional y el uso de algunos programas estadísticos, se han obtenido diversos hallazgos. Nos hemos centrado en diferentes partes de cada red social, ya que creemos que cada una de ellas está diseñada para cumplir un aspecto específico, por ejemplo, crear discusiones o simplemente presentar un trabajo o avance. Con ese enfoque, esperamos determinar cuál de las compañías ha entendido mejor la forma en que deben ser utilizadas las redes sociales y si han obtenido algún tipo de ventaja a través del buen uso de estos medios presentados como las herramientas con mayor interacción entre ellos y los espectadores. Concluimos una correlación entre el impacto de los estudios de cine y las redes sociales en términos de publicaciones y comentarios. YouTube es la principal red social para las compañías de estudios de cine.

Palabras clave: Marca; Redes sociales; Estudios de cine; YouTube; Interactividad

Keywords: Branding; Social media; Movie studios; YouTube; Interactivity

1. Theoretical framework

The art of cinematography makes it possible for actual events, ideas and imaginations to be manifested into a piece of celluloid that can be enjoyed by many viewers. The rise of many movie studio industries (Gomery, 1996, Lombardi, 2013) pioneered the emergence of many movie genres and sequels. Hence, movie studios become more eager to create an unprecedented plot twists and redefine their storylines that are expected to blow the mind of the viewers (Klecker, 2013; Armes, 1994). In this present day, movie is not just a monotonous entertainment like it once was. The industry has transcendent itself to involve its customers through the creation of ambience and social trends. The power of storytelling that the cinema conveys (Brown, 2013) is essential in the representation of societies (Denzin, 1991; Basu et al, 1981). Because of this, it becomes a need to research and to understand the power that this industry holds in the Social Media.

The three main players in the market of movie industry that are known all across the continents are: Universal Pictures, 20th Century Fox and Warner Brothers. These three companies not only have dominated the market; however, they have successfully established a brand image that is trusted by the viewers (Dick, 1997; Solomon, 1998; Sperling et al, 1998). Some of the movies that will still be appreciated for more centuries to come are as the following: E.T – Extraterrestrial (Universal Pictures), Titanic (20th Century Fox) and the Harry Potter franchise (Warner Bros.). As can be seen that these examples are just three of the many state-of-the-art movies that have defined the odds and therefore mediocrity will never be tolerated for the upcoming movies that are about to enter the box office (Terry et al, 2011).

About cinema and possible impacts of social media, the analysis is centered in the status of the promotion, distribution and exhibition in Spain (Deltell and García Fernández, 2013), and in the activity in Twitter (Deltell, Claes and Osteso, 2013) and Facebook and Twitter by the Spanish producers (Deltell Escolar and

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Clemente Mediavilla, 2016). In this sense, brand longevity is progressively linked to social media activity (Preece, Kerrigan and O'reilly, 2018), which is active in mobile and new television (Neira, 2015).

From the very beginning of the appearance of social media, it has been anticipated it will be the tool that allows people from all corners of the world to connect and conduct numerous activities (Shirky, 2011) especially in terms of social engagement such as current affairs, politics, entertainment, economy (Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2016, 2017a, 2017b), or even civil unrest and activism (Perelló-Sobrepere, 2017, 2018) – topics that are of great interest to the cinematic industry as well (Duvall, 2017; Mazierska and Kristensen, 2015). As one scholar defines social media that it is not about what each one of us does or says, but about what we do and say together, worldwide, to communicate in all directions at any time, by any possible means (Jenkins, 2011). In this current time, there are many types of social media equipped with its specific attributes and functions that are available for both private users and enterprises (Shirky, 2011). Due to the many types of social media, acquiring one of them will not be sufficient enough. That is the reason most people and companies do acquire accounts in multiple social media such as: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. In the interactive environment, thanks to Hybrid broadband broadcast Television (HbbTV) standard (Fondevila-Gascón, Botey-López & Rom-Rodríguez, 2017), this activity in social media is more decisive. With the rapid growth in both the movie industries and the development of social media, the presence of both of these industries becomes inseparable (Fondevila-Gascón, Del Olmo-Arriaga & Bravo Nieto, 2012).

The level of engagement that are tried to be formed by movie studio companies among their customers, will not be possible without the involvement of social media (Dolan et al, 2016). Since each social media is different, movie studios have to be wise and smart in terms of the strategies that they (Pardo, 2013). The best utilization of social media can indeed bring an immense benefit towards the company and its attempt in delivering values. The customers' enjoyment of the movie will not instantly be terminated when the ambience and customers' involvement are still strongly emphasized using the benefits of social media (Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2020). In this terrain, media content, along with brand

purpose (Fondevila-Gascón, Mir-Bernal & Rom-Rodríguez, 2018), appears as some of the main forces (Goeldi, 2013, Perelló-Sobrepere, 2020) that business (Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2013) have to appeal their fans on social media. It is not enough being there: you have to offer quality content on a regular basis, and the content must be both attractive and meaningful.

Nevertheless, we have to take in consideration, as a limitation of the results, the fact that among professionals in marketing, advertising, or even film industry workers such as directors or executive producers, there exist a high activity of companies that falsify the followers and interactions on different social networks (Acker, 2018: 15). In Hollywood and in the case of studios of such a large size, this intensifies a lot plus.

2. Methodology

Cinematography is a topic that may spark curiosity in the minds of many people (Denzin, 1991). The movie industry is perhaps one of the only industries that receive the most amount of enthusiasm from people all across the globe. At the very center of it all, regardless the many movie industries that exist in this present time, Hollywood is indeed the most well-known and internationally recognized motion picture industry. There are many film studios that have emerged and are competing to create a milestone through their movie productions. The three film studio companies that will further be discussed in this paper are: Universal Pictures, 20th Century Fox and Warner Bros. We chose it because we avoid the top one (Disney, the film studio with more market share) to limit results deviation.

From the business perspective, the value propositions that are offered by these movie studios are immensely unique. Once a movie was successfully created and played in cinemas or theaters throughout the world, it will not only create an instant joy in the mind of its customers, but also it will generate a sense of everlasting euphoria. Hence, this phenomenon was not just a coincidence. There must be a certain stimulus that triggered this eagerness, the one that makes customers exuberant towards these movies both old and new.

In the age of social media, there is no better way to bring about a viral promotion that would increase the level of enthusiasm from the customers. Hence, the three research questions of this paper aim to further investigate the length that different movie studios undertake in efficiently using social media as a platform to promote their movies and to establish an atmosphere that will enhance the level of curiosity of their customers. The research questions also focus on analyzing the attempt of movie studios to create social media as a bridge between them and their customers.

Methodologically, the appropriate strategy to analyze the presence of different movie studios on social media is through explicitly observing their activities in the online world. The social media platforms that will be observed are as the following: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, because they were the main platforms in the moment of the research. Furthermore, each activity made by the movie studios will be examined through several distinct factors.

The factors include the next: frequency of posts, special events, types of post, the number of likes and comments retrieved from the viewers and also the number of shared posts. It is based in a combination of methodological indicators about social media from Fondevila-Gascón et al. (2013: 161-163), Fondevila-Gascón (2014), Fondevila-Gascón and Perelló-Sobrepere (2014: 115-116), Fondevila-Gascón et al. (2017a), Fondevila-Gascón et al. (2020a: 44-45, and 2020b: 1424-1425). Hence, the result from this observation will be converted into numerical values that can be further interpreted using graphs and charts. This will allow us to compare and contrast the differences in their marketing strategy and to analyze which of them is the most appealing to the audience.

Each social media has its own uniqueness in terms of its usage and its ability to help businesses to promote their products or events. Facebook is a social media that acquires some attributes that allow companies to conduct some marketing strategies and observe the result. Facebook also allows its regular users to 'like', 'share', 'comment' and use different emoticons to express a specific emotion. Longer videos and Instagram uses photos or shorter videos, that is something that these companies should take into account in order to gain more visibility.

The first initiated research question was carried out due to the many social media platforms that are available and shared similar competitive advantages.

Companies from different industries including movie studios acquire the freedom to use any of these platforms. As a consequence, these film studio corporations must know how to appropriately make the most impact through their marketing attempts. Similarly, these corporations also need to know the best way to engage their target viewers as adequate as possible. In this sense, it is very important to create segregation between the general targeted viewers. People tend to use the different types of social media for different purposes depending on their wants, thus these movie studios are expected to use different procedures to approach different market segments.

Through the point of view of the purpose of Social Media as a link between the studios and viewers to interact and be engaged in a relationship that can sometimes have an effect on the final product they deliver. They use the feedback received through their posts to anticipate how the movie is perceived and act according to the consequence of it, this way they are able to enhance the plan they used in the previous attempts.

Our paper aims to contrast the interaction (Fondevila-Gascón & Beriain, 2013) between the different movie studios and the reactions that come from different customers. It also tries to reveal the level of engagement that customers have with the movies. This aspect is immensely important since it is capturing the point of view of different movie studios towards their customers is part of their core value proposition. To be more specific, these movie studios are essentially making values for their own corporations through their movies. As a result, the values of these corporations increase when they become even more popular on the social media platforms.

The first step that the team did was conducting research and observation of all social media activities of the movie studio companies stated on the report. We did observation in the 2019-20 season (the period of time analyzed) on their activities in 4 types of social medias which are: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. The country of origin of the accounts is Spain, attending these studies support different profiles for adapt its contents to multiple countries and cultures. We collected an accountability of likes in all the studied social media, likes in Instagram, views retrieved by movie studios on YouTube, posts and comments in

each social media. The criterion was to collect the sum of impacts, attending multimedia, interactivity and hypertext basis.

Then, we recorded the findings on Excel Spreadsheet to be further processed. The process of recording was not only focused on the number of posts, but also the type of publications that the movie studios did. We considered also the interactions that they had with their audiences.

After having all the data available to study, we transformed the Spreadsheet into a language that Python, an interpreted and general-purpose programming language, can read. The reason of choosing Python was it supports multiple programming paradigms (structured, procedural, object-oriented and functional programming), adapted to our study object. We made all the calculations, examples and modifications needed to better ensure the realistic expressions of the results. Through this program we were able to separate the posts in all kinds of ways, not only comparing the companies alone but also having, for example, all the images together regardless the origin of the publication. Taking advantage of the mentioned program, we compared the performance of all the observed variables from the three different movie studio companies.

Also taking into account the number of events created by the three movie studios when it comes to promoting their new box office movies also extended the observation wise. There are many types of events such as: 'meet and greet', the 'interviews' and also the 'premiere of the movie' that are promoted using the social media. This allows the viewers to always be updated about the promotional campaign and create the need of knowing more about the details of the movie.

Another observation that is equally important is regarding the reactions that people are creating as the result of the hype that have been posted on these social medias. People generally tend to comment, re-share the posts and leave a 'like' signs. This gives the freedom for the viewers to express their thoughts regarding those upcoming box office movies. In a sense, these reactions can measure how popular are these movies perceived by the many customers both positive and negative.

To summarize, the questions are to what extent does movie studios take the advantage of different social media platforms to create engagement among the

viewers, how do movie studios and the viewers interact using social media and does movie studios adapt their strategies depending on the type of social media they use? Such a question has sparked many interested recently among scholars worldwide (Tejada, 2015; Oh et al., 2017; Namda and Pattanaik, 2018) and this is why we felt that such a study needed to be conducted.

The hypothesis, are the next:

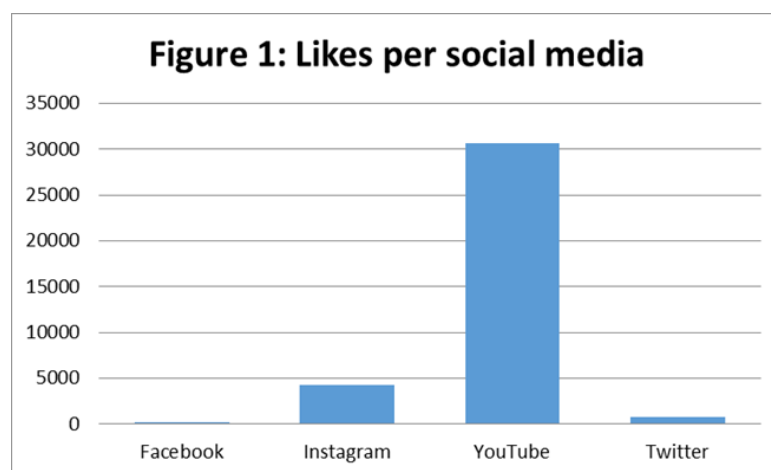
H1. YouTube is the main social media for movie studios companies.

H2. The use of Instagram is different between movie studios companies.

H3. The number of comments received by movie studios companies in social media is relevant.

3. Results and Findings

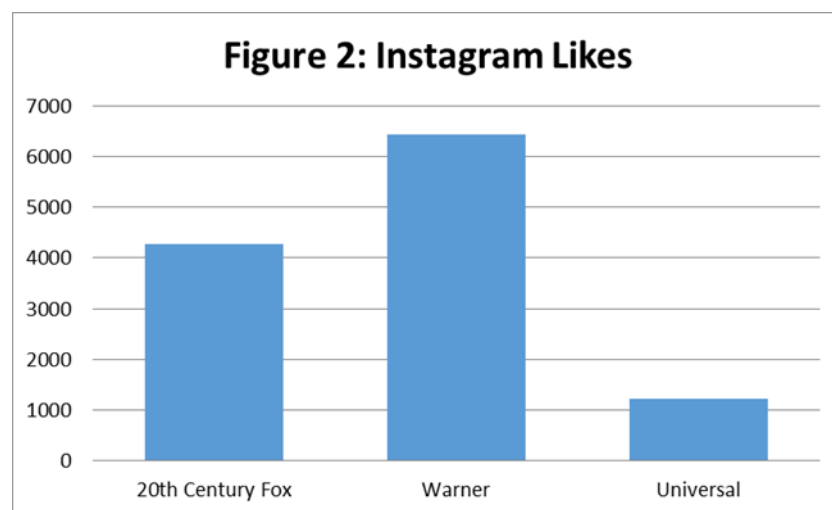
From the data collection process that has been done earlier, it allows us to interpret them using charts by the mean to observe and compare those findings. The first aspect that will be observed from the different movie studios profiles they have on each post. Likes provide the users a tool to give their feelings and reactions towards a specific post. However, the first aspect that this paper aims to further investigate is the amount of 'likes' that people leave in each of the social media. Since we are comparing 4 different types of social media, we will observe in which of them people use the 'like' button in the most frequent way. In the graph presented below (F1), there is an account on the amount of likes from each of the social media.



F1. The number of 'likes' per social media. Self-elaboration

Taking 20th Century Fox as an example, we can observe that YouTube is the social media in which people leave the most amount of 'likes'. Out of the many accounts that 20th Century Fox, apparently their posts receive the most amount of 'likes' in comparison to their posts in other social medias. However, we notice that the fundamental purpose of YouTube is not for observing the amount of 'likes' a video has, instead it supposed to be the amount of 'views' it has. It confirms H1 (YouTube is the main social media for movie studios companies).

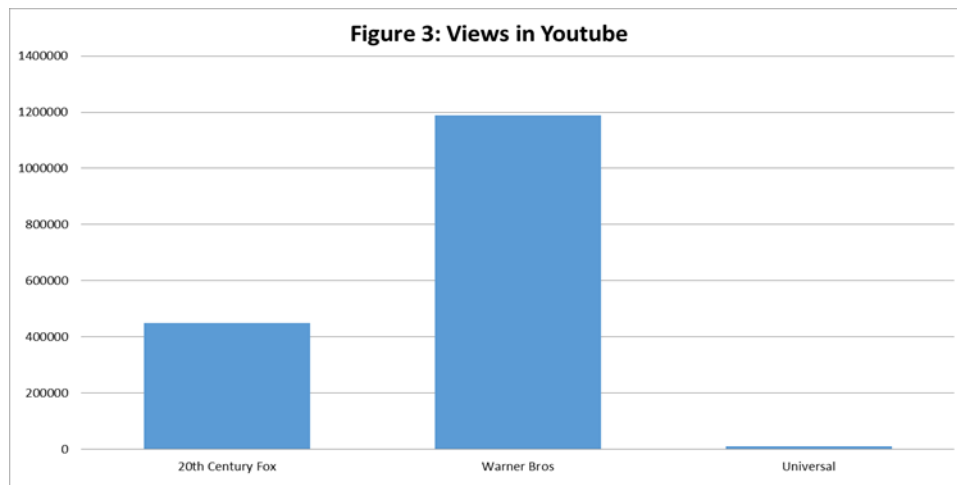
There is another social media that its core usage is to allow its users to leave their 'likes' when they are in favor with a certain type of post. Beyond its distinct visual appearance, the value of a post on Instagram lies in the number of 'likes' it has (Mesquita, & Peres, 2015). That is the reason we will choose Instagram to compare the number of likes between posts retrieved per social media. The data is presented on the (F2).



F2. The number of 'likes' retrieved by different movie studios on Instagram. Self-elaboration

Figure 2 shows that Warner Brothers has the most amounts of likes retrieved for the posts that they published on Instagram. This result may occur from many reasons. One of the main reasons is that Warner Brothers has been very successful in delivering their contents that intrigued more people to like more of their posts in comparison to the other movie studios. It is very important to note that this superior like does not have anything to do with the frequency of posts made by Warner Brothers. Publishing the most amounts of posts with a good content makes people keener in leaving their 'likes'. It validates H2 (The use of Instagram is different between movie studios companies).

The next discussion is focused on the amount of views that movie studios receive based on their posts. YouTube is a social media that allows its private and corporate users to post their videos and the key observation that is measured is the amount of views that each video gains. Hence, it is the main reason we compare and contrast the amount of views that movie studios acquire through Facebook.

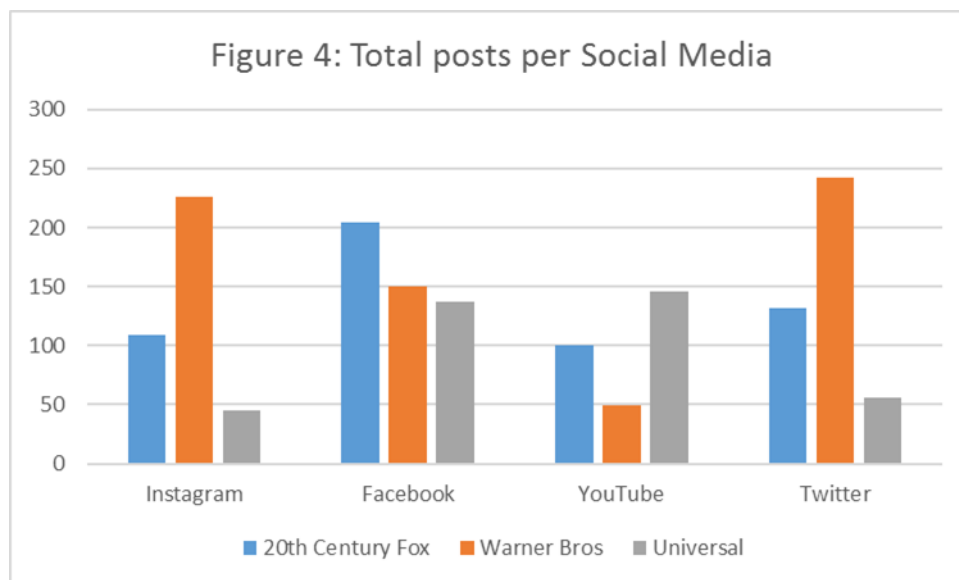


F3. The number of 'views' retrieved by movie studios on YouTube. Self-elaboration

The Figure 3 shows the different rate of 'views' that the 3 movie studios received based on their video posts on Facebook, especially regarding movie trailers on YouTube. As can be seen on the unit of measurement that all of these scales were measured in millions of the number of viewers. It can be comprehended that YouTube is one of the most effective mediums that can reach millions of viewers when it comes to video promotions.

There is also a specific feature on YouTube that allows enterprises to promote their products through advertisement (ad) that every so often appeared before the desired video was about to play. Some of these ads can be skipped without the need of having a premium account, but some of those ads could not be skipped without acquiring the premium privilege. This type of ad is an example of 'viral advertising' that is available on social medias such as: YouTube. Viral advertising refers to an advertising technique in which video advertisements are distributed from one user to another via e-mail and online social networking (Golan, & Zaidner, 2008).⁴ With the rapid evolution in social media, viral marketing becomes an even powerful tool that allows companies to endorse their products in a more aggressive manner.

The figure above shows that Warner Brothers receives the most amounts of ‘views’ from the videos that they posted on YouTube. This can be seen from the many videos that they posted on their main channel and the abundant number of viewers that have played those videos. This shows that Warner Brothers is indeed a prominent player with an average of more than 1,100,000 total views from their videos on YouTube. This also implies that Warner Brothers has successfully created contents that sparked curiosity and pleasure in the minds of its viewers. This may also have a relation with the quality of movies that they create. People become more aware and interested when they saw an advertisement about Warner Brothers movies.



F4. Total posts made by movie studios in each social media. Self-elaboration

Figure 4 shows the rate of posts conducted by the 3 movie studios that we observed in different social media platforms. It can be seen that Twitter and Instagram are the most used social media platforms for Warner Brothers. This result might derive from the fact that Instagram allows the movie studio to posts many photos regarding its movie premiere or an event. On the other hand, Twitter has a rather interesting unique feature. To a certain extent, it is true that the user of Twitter only has the ability to post ‘tweets’, comments and also to ‘retweet’ an existing tweet. Even though it may sound that the use of this social media platform is considered to be limited, it still has an incredible power to engage the customers. In some cases, such as during the election period, the candidates running for office would post tweets that often generate all different

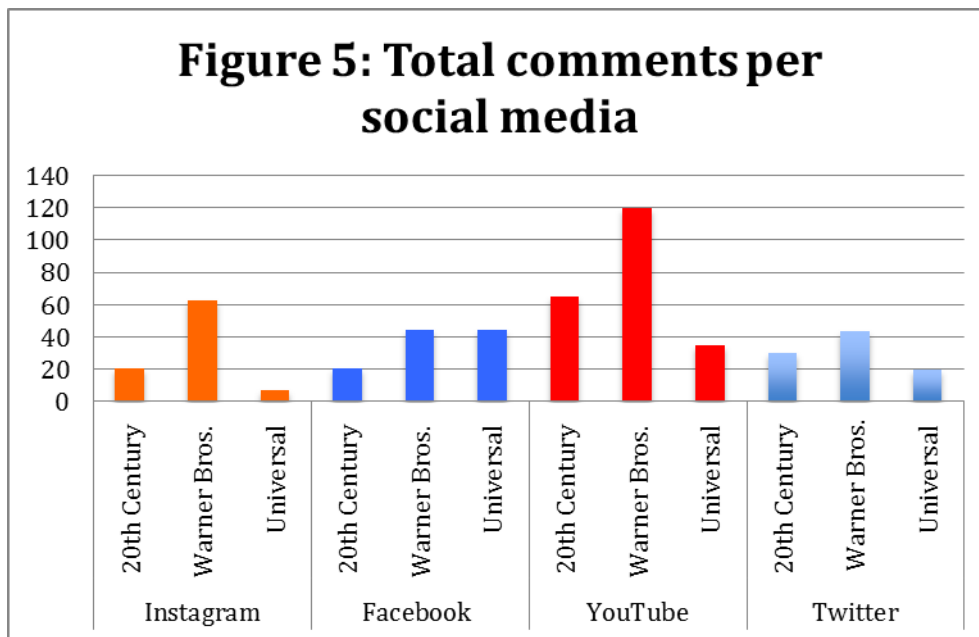
sorts of reactions and even featured in news as to provide the general public with information (Fondevila-Gascón, & Perelló-Sobrepere, 2014; Perelló-Sobrepere 2017, 2018). As a matter of fact, it has been asserted that one of the most unique features of Twitter is the user's ability to increase engagement and voter interactivity with the candidates (Parmelee and Bichard, 2012). The same case scenario also applies to the movie industry (Tejada, 2015; Oh et al, 2017; Namda and Pattanaik, 2018). Movie studios would often 'tweet' specific topic regarding a release date of a movie, a certain quote from the actor and actress or regarding a specific event related with a movie premier on Twitter and to generate enthusiasm in the customers' minds. It confirms H3 (There is a high use of posts by movie studios companies in social media).

Another different strategy can be seen from the way the way 20th Century Fox maximizes their posts on another social media which is Facebook. It can be seen from the graph that 20th Century Fox publish more posts on Facebook rather than on Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. The reasoning behind this may derive from the fact that Facebook allows its users to publish more types of posts, for instance, photos, videos and also simply just some comments. This social media platform also provides a possibility of more interactive interactions between its users. Hence, when 20th Century Fox produced a new movie or create an event, the general public have the ability to show their reactions through leaving a like, share or comment on a specific post.

In addition, Universal Pictures tends to publish more posts in a form of video on YouTube. This means that they are totally focused on the public's reactions toward their movie trailers, sneak peek and other types of short videos promoting a specific content. It can be analyzed that perhaps Universal Pictures focuses more on the amount of views that they receive from their posts on YouTube, which indicates the popularity of that post.

Figure 5 presents the statistics of the amount of comments made towards a specific post in different types of social media platform. Generally, the distributions of the amount of comments retrieved in different types of platforms distributed quite similarly. Even though, we did have an extreme minimum and also an extreme maximum amount of comments. It can be seen that the Universal Pictures received the least amount of comments on its posts on Instagram. On the

other end, we can observe that Warner Brothers received the most amounts of comments on YouTube. It is interesting to observe these two extremes. It validates partially H3 (The number of comments received by movie studios companies in social media is relevant), because it is difficult to consider less 250 post a relevant number for a major, and there are national producers and Spanish profiles of international studies with more activity in these networks.



F5. Total comments per social media. Self-elaboration

The amount of comments can help to indicate the level of engagement that the viewers have on a specific post, since it does take more time to comment on something rather just leaving a 'like' or sharing a certain post. Based on observing the amount of posts that Universal Pictures made on Instagram, it shows that they made the least amount of posts in this social media platform. The amounts of people responding on their posts are reflected very clearly on the figure above. However, an interesting case can be seen from the unprecedented amount comments retrieved by Warner Brothers. It is indicated that the Warner Brothers posted the least videos on YouTube, however they managed to receive the most amount of comments. This really does help us to better understand that the amount of posts does not necessarily affect the amount of comments they receive. In this sense, the content of the video is what truly important and not its amount. Therefore, we can say that people are in favor to comment on the fewer video

posts made by the Warner Brothers in comparison to the many video posts made by other movie studio companies.

4. Conclusion and discussion

Based on the data that have been gathered and the interpretation thereof, it is realized that there is an immensely important correlation that exists between enterprises and social media. In the world of marketing, the advantage that social media platforms offer for businesses and enterprises are unquestionable. Within the film industry, the final and perhaps one of the most important stages is the selling process of that movie itself. In order for a movie to be recognized and known by the general public, a persistent and effective marketing effort is highly needed. The real challenge that these movie studios have is to efficiently promote their movies to all corners of the globe. The existence of social media really provides the aid for these film studios to advertise their movies and to reach as many viewers as possible.

The purpose of advertising a movie is not limited to the creation of awareness alone. Movies are basically tangible products that have a certain sense of uniqueness in its nature. When a movie managed to achieve its most successful stage, for instance receiving an award or some sort, the reminiscence of it will remain for more years to come. Hence, when a movie receives an incredible level of appreciation and popularity from its viewers from around the world, it really shows the power that movie has to influence its viewers and to create a euphoric atmosphere among them. Due to this unique value proposition, endorsing a movie is also an activity of establishing a level of engagement and building that jubilant ambience.

The results and findings part of this report have given us a clarification that each social media has its own particular characteristic and purpose to create different levels of engagement between enterprises and customers. For instance, when Universal Studios published a video of a movie trailer on YouTube, it means that the company focuses on observing the amount of views and the number of times that particular trailer has been played. Even though YouTube also give the possibility for its viewers to leave a like and also a comment, those were not meant

to be the main observation. Another example would be for a movie studio that uses Instagram as a platform to promote its movies. Since Instagram is a type of social media that considered to be quite limited in terms of its usage, the main observation should be focused on the amount of 'likes' that a post receives. A post becomes more popular when it receives more amounts of likes. It is also important to note that the frequency of posts in any type of social media does not guarantee that those posts will generate a great deal amount of views, likes or comments. It was the case of Universal Studios that this film studio tends to post a lot of videos on their main channel on YouTube, however they too receive the less amount of likes in comparison its competitors. This is one of real examples experienced by the Universal Studios. They tend to post many varieties of post with a considerably low level of content. Therefore, it can be analyzed that people tend to be more favorable for a post that has a more specific and valuable content. In this report, the social media platforms that have been observed are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Each of these platforms acquire their own unique characteristics, however one of the attributes that these 4 platforms have in common is a special feature where users have the ability to leave some comments on a certain post. The level of engagement of the general public can also be measured through observing on the number of comments that they make on a specific post. As has been discussed previously that creating a comment takes more effort than just simply leaving a 'like', sharing or 'retweeting' a post. The trend shows that for posts that have the most favorable level of content at the same time would have the most amounts of comments. There are also great deals of strategies that movie studios acquire in order to endorse their new and also those movies that have the most amount of appreciation. From conducting the research and data collection, we were able to notice that there is a good amount of posts made by each movie studio regarding special events, interview with the casts of the movie and also behind the scenes of some of the making process of those movies. It turns out that these kinds of posts generate an even more engagement from the public than the regular movie trailers. This may be derived from the fact that people tend to connect more with the casts of the movie and also, they tend to seek for more information about the movie that trailer does not provide them.

From the 3 movie studios that we have observed, it seems like Warner Brothers is the movie studio that stands out the most in terms of the public enthusiasms that they generated from their posts in all social media platforms. It is compelling to truly realize that Warner Brothers retrieved the most reactions even though they were not the most frequent one to publish variety amount of posts. It is simply because they put a lot of thoughts to make their posts to have a diminishing level of content that intrigued many viewers.

It can be concluded that social media really does enhances the level of engagement between the general public with the movie studios. It is also a valid statement to mention that movie studios need to adjust the best strategies from using each of the social media platforms, and to include some interactive strategies in the way of linking screens and television conventional activity with new languages like HbbTV and the possibility of talking with producers.

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