

Vehicle Analysis: Independent Films

A Unique Flow of Communication

Leah Kay

Overview

The movie industry has been constantly developing and changing since it began. New genres have been created, and old have been left behind. The independent film industry is a more recent “genre”, as some refer to it as that, and there is a lot to be said about this specific industry.

Independent films became more common when directors, writers, and producers did not want to work in the large corporation Hollywood studio system. As these films were being produced more, and more, they developed their own characteristics. Independent films now have expectations from audiences, which lead them to be their own genre; typically referred to as “indie”. The “indie” genre typically follows the characteristics of low-budget films, risky content, and created with unique visions by the producers. Based off of these characteristics, independent films are overall defined by their spirit, and the perception of audiences.

The independent film industry uses various theories and methods to develop knowledge about the audiences consuming this vehicle. This allows marketers to focus attention on certain relationships, make observations and predictions, and generate ideas about control and change. Possible criteria when understanding theories related to independent films include: the scope of implications, testability of the claims, and practicality.

There are various important questions to ask when understanding the independent film industry. What audiences does the independent film industry reach? How is this vehicle reaching its audiences? What are the most effective methods in spreading messages to its audiences?

Diffusion of Innovations in Independent Film

Diffusion of innovations theory is a linear model, with limited effects, but a rather active audience. It is understood in this theory that through the characteristics of innovation perceived by social systems, the rate of adoption is determined. In the independent film industry, films are released, and then it is up to the audiences to process and decide whether the films will be adopted or not. Through research, it can be assumed that with the risky spirit of indie films, the linear model proves indie movies will either be accepted or rejected by its audience.

There are various factors affect the rate of adoption of independent films:

Compatibility

- Many indie films are adopted quickly because they include characteristics that are not unique to mainstream movies.
- Buzzwords are used in marketing strategies for audiences to pick up on adoption of the movies.

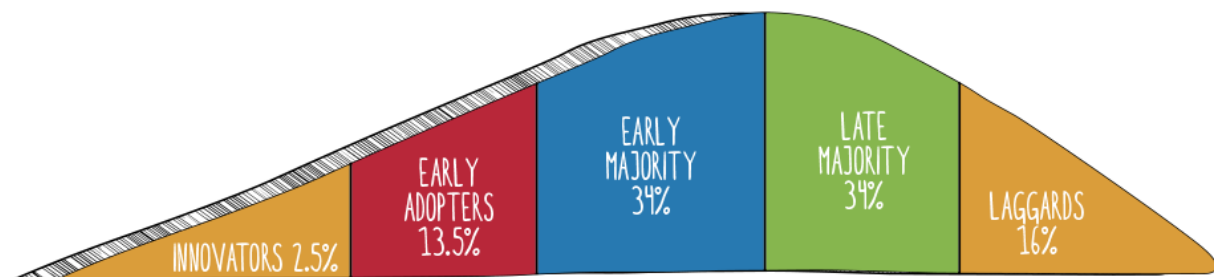
Trialability

- Independent filmmakers embrace the possibilities of releasing movies on multiple platforms to ensure various audiences are exposed to the movies.

Relative Advantage

- Independent filmmakers measure their relative advantage through reading blogs from audiences written about satisfaction, or lack thereof, about the movies.

DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION MODEL



ESSENTIAL MARKETING MODELS [HTTP://BIT.LY/SMARTMODELS](http://bit.ly/smartmodels)

Uses and Gratifications of Independent Film

In a slight contrast to the previous theory, uses and gratifications utilizes a similar linear model, but with direct effects and an active audience. The audience directly reflects behavior from media and their actions are responsive to adapting media. Understanding why audiences attend independent films is important because it is based off of their environments, events in their environments, and their social heritage. Consumers are looking for whatever interests them, thus creating a blurred boundary with mainstream and independent producers.

There are many main functions of media for society proposed by various uses and gratifications theorists:

Correlation

- Time Warner created Warner Independent, which included low-budget, persona, taboo-breaking, and experimental films. This defined a new branch company to a mainstream, well-known company in society. Audiences trust this company based on previous successes.
- In order to make meaning of understanding independent films, audiences create expectations for this new genre. They have assumptions of how the films will be marketed, what the characters will be like, and what the overall feel of the films will be.

Integration and Social Interaction

- A key target audience for independent films is adults' ages 60 and older. They tend to go to movie theaters more often than younger generations, as it is a key social interaction for them.
- People connect with each other when they see movies that they appreciate and can have further discussion about.
- Independent movies create a unique community where people have a real understanding and recognition about the movies and their culture.

Entertainment

- The do-it-yourself culture has become more significant, and creates the entertainment of independent films.
- The Film Independent Organization promotes a "community of artists who embody diversity" in independent filmmaking.



The Contrast of the Two-Step Flow Theory

Research shows many examples of why the two-step flow theory can be applied, but also rejected by independent films. This theory is a linear model with limited effects, and an occasional active audience. The two-step title comes from the first step of opinion leaders gaining information, and then the second step of the opinion leaders passing information to others. In independent films this flow can be seen through the producers having releasing the films to audiences, and then the audiences passing their opinions and reactions of the films to others. This causes the spread of the independent film genre.

It is important to understand the characteristics that apply and do not apply to independent films.

Application to Independent Films

- Marketers use the term “indie” to advertise films with the typical “indie” characteristics – audiences have expectations for “indie” films
- As independent films become more known, more people are interested in seeing them, as going with what other people are seeing in the movies.

Rejection by Independent Films

- The two-step flow reports that mass media has limited affects on people, whereas the increasing popularity of independent films is heavily influenced by mass media.
- Independent film marketers utilize the Internet a lot to promote and distribute the films, ensuring as many audiences are reached as possible.



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