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The Commerce-Art Dichotomy in Cinema: A Thematic Analysis of Interviews of Filmmakers in the Canadian Film Industry

Wolf Virgo

Abstract: Many scholars argue that the artistic merit of films is diminishing as directors opt for producers' more business-oriented approach. However, research discussing the impact of commercial success on filmmaking lacks focus on directors and their perspectives. This study seeks to understand the effect of commercial success on directors' artistic visions for films. Using semi-structured interviews with Canadian filmmakers, this study aimed to learn from filmmakers by gaining direct access to their perspectives. This study found that while many directors are keen to add "commercial elements" to their films, this is generally in the hopes of appealing to a wider audience, not to generate commercial success alone. Moreover, most directors value artistic recognition from critics above the desire to garner commercial success. The findings of this study can be used to inform critics and audiences about how commercial pressures impact the artistic elements in a film.

Keywords: Commercial success, artistic merit, director artistic vision, popular appeal, critical recognition/acclaim

Introduction

Cinema provides avenues of cultural and artistic commentary to society. The contemporary film industry has been marked by immense growth in the scale of box office results. In 2002, Sony's *Spider-Man* cost about \$175 million to make and received \$403 million in domestic earnings (Simonton, 2009). With so much potential for commercial success, numbers like these are becoming benchmarks for many filmmakers (Simonton, 2009). As motion pictures become more profitable, the sunk investment becomes larger to ascertain the greatest benefits. Moreover, as film success hinges more and more on popular appeal, filmmakers now focus heavily on marketing as they try to uncover what kind of film will gross the highest return (Simon-

ton, 2009). Furthermore, gaining a track record of commercial success means that directors will add value to their subsequent projects through name recognition alone (ex. "A Steven Spielberg Film") (Carmen-tay, 1989). However, as scholars like Turnbull (2022) point out, the Canadian film industry has always been in the shadow of the US. The industry faces difficulty competing in terms of box office results and commercial success as a whole (Finn, Hoskins, & McFayden, 1996). In short, reduced potential for commercial success elicits questions surrounding what success means in Canada and how filmmakers can attain it.

With the growing impact of popular appeal on commercial success, it seems that filmmakers would feel increasing pressure to appeal to consumers. The duality of film as a product attaining profit and as an

art occasionally positions directors and producers at odds with each other (Hadida, 2010). Producers mainly aim to put out a product that appeals to consumers, thus, reaping the greatest box office results, while directors hope to fully realize their artistic visions for films (Hadida, 2010). As Hadida (2010) explains, cinema's growth as a business hinders the artistic value of motion pictures as filmmakers struggle to find a balance between business and art. To tackle the concept of art vs commerce, the question must be asked: has the growth in the commerciality of cinema inclined directors and producers to alter their artistic vision for motion pictures in the Canadian film industry?

Through the use of a qualitative study, involving interviews between directors and producers, this study will aim to understand how filmmakers feel impacted by the potential for commercial success. Further, this study will encompass a wide range of genres from the popular sphere including action/adventure, drama, and horror. These findings will be used to either confirm or deny Hadida's (2010) thesis. This study seeks to understand whether the artistic value has diminished due to increased pressure on directors to appeal to the masses. This study can be used to inform experts' judgement on the extent to which films are yielding artistic value to commercial pressures.

Literature Review

Industry background

Understanding the relationship between commercial success and artistic recognition of motion pictures is vital in assessing its effects on filmmakers. Hadida (2010) offers insight into the competing visions of directors and producers and how they manifest in cinema, and further describes how commercial success often comes at the expense of artistic merit as directors sacrifice their artistic visions in favour of some producers' more business-oriented approach. This could be because depictions of commercial performance in the creative industries are more straightforward than those of artistic merit, meaning that box-office success is more quantifiable than recognition from critics (Hadida, 2015). While Hadida's (2010) thesis provides a reference point for the current industry

predicament, they lack qualitative substantiation for their claims. Offering a contrast to Hadida's (2010) perspective are Alvarez et al. (2005) who explain how art and business are complementary forces in cinema. Art adds exclusivity and innovation to cinema while business rewards film directors capable of attracting audiences and yielding profits (Alvarez et al., 2005).

Simonton (2009) describes how marketing has become an integral aspect of filmmaking strategy. Producers often seek out ways to craft films that will attract popular appeal and, thus, garner greater box office returns (Simonton, 2009). Despite their input into producers' marketing decisions, Simonton's (2009) analysis lacks research into how those marketing decisions impact directors. Using a two-path model, art versus commerce, Holbrook and Addis (2008) research how reviewer-and-consumer evaluations and "buzz" respond to a film's marketing clout (i.e. production budget, opening screens, and opening box office) (p. 87). They find that "big-budget wide-release films with marketing clout" seem to generate popular buzz along a commerce-oriented path (commercial success), yet they lack distinction by critics and consumers along an art-related path (Holbrook & Addis, 2008). This means that film producers are tasked with choosing between opposing strategies for a film release (Holbrook & Addis, 2008). While Holbrook and Addis (2008) attempt to understand the relationship between marketing and commercial success, their research does not address directors' inclinations to follow either a commerce or art-related path.

As Hadida (2010) explains, producers and directors operate as CEOs who incur sunk costs as part of the film process. These sunk costs come in the form of intellectual capital (copyright), as well as financial costs like hiring teams and equipment (Hadida, 2010). Moreover, these often-large-scale investments mean that producers run the risk of considerable financial losses to attain above-average performance (Hadida, 2010). The "precarious nature of the film industry," as Simonton (2009) describes it, further incentivizes producers to use marketing strategies that focus on releasing films that appeal to the masses to reap the greatest return on investment. Ebbers and Wijnberg (2012) add to this dialogue surrounding investment by studying the effects of cultural and commercial reputations (of producers and directors) on investors' willingness to invest. Producers with a reputation for

commercial success attracted greater investment from contributors (Ebbers & Wijnberg, 2012). Conversely, directors with a reputation of artistic recognition (by professional critics), tend to receive a lower level of investment (Ebbers & Wijnberg, 2012). Nevertheless, Ebbers and Wijnber's (2012) research lacks input into whether these investment dynamics create conflict between directors and producers, especially when considering the effects of expert judgment. Simonton (2009) suggests a similar phenomenon, explaining how a producer's box-office success in prior films predicts better-than-average box-office results for their current film.

Expert judgement and commerciality

Scholars like Hofmann et al. (2017) have researched the effects that movie stars have on the economic success of films. Consumption capital describes many consumers' selection of stars depending on their knowledge of and associations with that star (Hofmann et al., 2017). Moreover, Hofmann et al. (2017) indicate that consumers often watch films with certain stars for the purpose of sharing their opinion of that star's performance with other fans of that star. As they explain, success at the box office—rather than artistic merits—initiates the accumulation of consumption capital (Hofmann et al. 2017). Zuckerman and Kim (2003) provide another layer to this question of expert judgment's influence on popular appeal. They analyzed the box-office success of 396 feature films released in 1997 to understand whether there is a correlation between critic classification of films “as fit for the mass market,” and popular appeal (p. 27). They find that very few critics prefer major releases, rather more display a strong preference for independent releases (Zuckerman & Kim, 2003). Nevertheless, classification as an independent hinders a film's chances of breaking out into the larger market, thus lowering the film's cumulative box office gross (Zuckerman & Kim, 2003). While Zuckerman and Kim (2003) open the possibility for independent films to succeed in the mass market due to expert favourability in judgment, it remains clear that “reception from critics—both in terms of the number and valence of the reviews made—increases a film's share of the broad market” (p. 54). Providing additional insight into this query is Holbrook (1999) who finds that critics gravitate

toward more challenging artworks of more elevated complexity and intellectual tax. Thus, there is a weak but significant propensity for consumers and critics to share mirrored preferences (Holbrook, 1999). While Hofmann et al. (2017), Zuckerman and Kim (2003), and Holbrook (1999) all add value to this discussion surrounding expert judgment and popular appeal, they lack producer and director perspectives on the impact of film classification by critics.

Director artistic vision

Alvarez et al. (2005) studied the ways that many directors act in the market to achieve optimal distinctiveness. Optimal distinctiveness is the balance between conformity to receive funding, and differentiation to achieve artistic recognition (Alvarez et al., 2005). Through studying three successful European directors, Alvarez et al. (2005) find that in the quest for optimal distinctiveness, directors not only break away from conventional cinema, but often manage the malleability of art and business through their production hub, close collaboration with a committed producer, and/or personally synthesizing creative and production roles. A clear caveat of this study is that optimal distinctiveness was only studied in directors with an already established standing of commercial and artistic success, and thus may not be representative of film directors as a whole. Most directors do not have the freedom to seek optimal distinctiveness as it may come at the expense of either artistic value or commercial success.

Parallels in methodology

The only paper whose methodology closely mirrors this study is that of Durand and Hadida (2016) who analyze the extent of logic combination in cinema. They explain logic combination as an occupation merging responsibility and/or taking on the roles of another occupation. Through a mixed method approach of quantitative analysis of variables and qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 12 key persons in the film industry (directors, producers, cinema experts, and financiers), Durand and Hadida (2016) attempt to uncover the extent to which directors and producers merge roles effectively and whether artistic and commercial value is affected by this logic com-

bination. While Durand and Hadida (2016) serve as a methodological reference point for this study, their interviews lack depth with little focus being put on them in their paper. The vast majority of Durand and Hadida's (2016) research consists of a quantitative analysis of 983 films released between 1988 and 1997 in France. Moreover, they do not provide a detailed report of the questions asked and answers given and lack a thorough analysis of the interviews conducted. In short, while this study can use Durand and Hadida (2016) to inform its method, a gap remains and directors' views are still not represented in this field.

Gap

The current research surrounding commercial success and films focuses mainly on quantitative analysis of feature films over the past 20 years. Moreover, there is a general lack of focus on filmmakers and their perspectives. Most studies infer filmmakers' feelings based on data, rather than gaining direct access to their experiences. Studies like Zuckerman and Kim (2003), Holbrook and Addis (2008), and Ebbers and Wijnberg (2012) add valuable insight into how factors like critics, consumers, and investors impact the commercial success of a film. However, very few studies have discussed the impacts that commercial pressure from consumers and investors and artistic pressure from critics have on filmmakers and their art.

Methodology

Study Design

This study involved semi-structured interviews of directors and producers in the Canadian film industry. The goal was to see how commercial success and the pressures to attain it impacted directors and producers and their artistic visions for films. The responses of the participants were analyzed using thematic analysis to see if any trends or patterns emerged. Thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used methods in qualitative papers and it is employed by many scholars. One such scholar, Langhorne (2020), used thematic analysis after conducting semi-structured interviews with five school principals to uncover their experiences in managing the mental health of their

students. After recording and transcribing the questions asked and answers given in various appendices, Langhorne (2020) then created four thematic analysis tables (one for each theme) where he included quotes from each principle that fit the theme, ultimately using these themes and quotes to compare with his research question. Similarly, this study used four thematic tables that aimed to represent the issue of art and business in film by tying in factors like popular appeal and critical acclaim/expert judgment. The thematic tables are in Appendix C. This study hypothesized that common themes would include the growth in the commercial success of films, the effect on artistic vision, pressures to appeal to consumers, and critical appeal. This is because each theme closely relates to the questions asked of the participants. A theme was determined to be present if more than half of the responses referenced that particular theme. As seen in Appendix C, specific quotes from various interviews are featured and additional subthemes, called codes, are used and referenced by those quotes. The analysis process extrapolates to the greater film industry while continually comparing with scholars like Hadida (2010). This is the most suitable method for the research question because, unlike other papers that infer directors' feelings based on quantitative data, this study will convey views directly from directors and producers. The analysis will provide insight into how the commerciality of cinema has impacted directors and producers and the art they produce.

Participants

Eight filmmakers (5 directors; 3 producers) were interviewed across many genres (horror, drama, action/adventure). This sample size was derived from an anchor paper by Durand and Hadida (2016), who interviewed 12 key members of the film industry. However, this study took into account the time constraints and the availability of many directors and producers. To obtain interviews, this study used connections to the Canadian film industry through a family member of the author. Emails were sent out to all interviewees regardless of personal connection. After receiving confirmation of the interviewee's interest in the study, follow-up emails were sent about scheduling. Informed consent forms were also sent out to each participant. Most of the interviews took place virtu-

ally on Zoom as the interviewees hailed from across Canada. A phone was used to record the interviews for the few in-person interviews. Since most of the interviews took place on Zoom, the recording feature was used. Notes were jotted down as the answers were given. The interviewees were asked a series of questions that varied from their relationships with their film partners, to the rise in the profitability of films, and pressures to appeal to consumers or critics. A total of seven questions were asked, four of which were the same for both directors and producers while two questions were producer-specific and three were director-specific. These questions can be seen in Appendix A. All questions addressed various aspects of the research question and were assumed to align with certain sections of the thematic tables.

Ethical Review

Each interviewee was sent an informed consent form which asked them whether they wish to remain anonymous for the study. The letter of consent sent to interviewees is seen in Appendix B. Interviews took place mostly on Zoom with each one taking around 20 min. This time frame took into account the availability of directors and the number of questions the interviewees were asked. Lastly, this study received IRB approval.

Findings

In the five interviews with directors, an emerging theme discussed what commercial success means in Canada and how the funding process is fundamentally different from that of the United States. Across the five interviews, one main question asked was “What is your definition of commercial success in Canada?” While this question elicited varied responses, one central theme emerged: money is easy, but results are scarce. As one director explains, the public process of acquiring funds through Telefilm Canada is much easier and more subsidized than in the US. However, since the Canadian market is much smaller than the US market, it is much harder to quantify commercial success. He explained that if you make the film with all Canadian money, you will have to start paying the money back to funders immediately. Building

on this point, award-winning Canadian independent filmmaker, Bruce McDonald, illustrates how very few films make their money back and that commercial success in Canada often means just breaking even. McDonald clarifies that “nobody really knows what financial success is” in Canada. Conversely, one director wants to break the mould of what commercial means, arguing that anything can be “commercial” if it is marketed correctly. She explains how “more genre gets made than less genre,” meaning funding is more likely to occur if a film fits a specific genre rather than one that is more malleable. Contrary to what most directors have voiced, one director highlights the regulation present in the Canadian system and how it has hurt her chances of receiving funding. She explains how “the Canadian system is a very closed shop” and “definitions of what constitutes Canadian content are so narrow.” Moreover, regulatory bodies like the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) regulate what films are classified as Canadian films based on factors like the amount of money spent in Canada. Without meeting these qualifications, many Canadian films are shut out of funding and distribution within Canada. Lastly, one director takes a more innovative approach, arguing that with the advent of streaming platforms like Netflix and HBO, there is more value from both a director and consumer standpoint. He explains how the business model for streamers is so different and that independents like him can tap into a broader range of communities through these services.

One central theme among the interviewees was the change in attitude toward the business side of their films. Many directors explained that their first feature films were created without the audience in mind. For Maxime Desmons, it was about telling an LGBTQ theatre story through art, unaware of the niche genre that he entered into. However, ten years after his first feature, Desmons discusses what he would change to appeal to a larger audience. “Rather than to be completely dark, I would go back to the script, the music, and [change] the way of shooting it, which was very rough,” explains Desmons. He emphasizes that adding “more life” to his first feature would have attracted a larger audience rather than appealing to a specific niche. Building on this theme of altering attitudes towards business, Bruce McDonald reflects on success later in his career. McDonald describes how art always

came first at the beginning of his career. He tells me that as a young director, especially as an independent filmmaker, it is best to follow your heart and make something that genuinely interests you. Nevertheless, he realized that as he got older, the commercial aspect of filmmaking became more important. Looking back, he would add more “commercial elements” into his films like changing the script and looking to cast a star. He looks to find these elements to draw larger audiences and increase the likelihood of his films performing well commercially. McDonald believes that focusing on business within the filmmaking process is a way of practicing your craft as a director. Other directors focus less on attaining commercial success. One director emphasizes her desire to have her films connect with as many people as possible. She explains that “you want as many people to be heard” through your films. Another director focuses on a community approach to film marketing, seeing value in reaching out to never-before-tapped markets to tell their stories. Moreover, this director is less concerned with the dollar amount that his films garner. “It’s an ego thing,” he explains. “If you know people watched the movie and you know people were moved by it, then that has to be enough.” Award-winning independent film Producer Damon D’Oliveira explains that the lower your budget, the more leeway you have regarding artistic freedom. Moreover, he gives insight into the difficulty of getting greenlit because of a lack of cast (prevalence of stars). He believes there is so much more noise as an independent, meaning it’s harder for your films to gain traction. “You want a happy distributor but you also want to stay true to your vision,” he explains in discussing the dynamics of artistic vision vs commercial success. Producer Julia Rosenberg also adds that “cast is a huge determinant of commercial viability”.

Lastly, directors emphasized the importance of exposure and the dichotomy between critical acclaim and popular appeal. Many directors identified critical recognition as the main engine toward broader success. Independent filmmaker Maxime Desmons tells the story of how his first feature garnered critical success but was not broadly popular until he translated the film into English from French. This change helped tap into a different market, specifically Anglophones who wanted insight into LGBTQ stories through a French lens. Bruce McDonald also added a commercial angle to this, explaining how “artistic success

can be the stepping stone to making future investors more inclined to invest.” This means that having that first major critical success makes commercial success more possible in the long run. McDonald emphasizes the importance of finding an equal balance of critical and commercial success. One director highlighted the importance of critical recognition in his career. He explains how the “word-of-mouth buzz that comes out of festivals” allows his movie to be seen by a wider audience. He illustrates how it’s hard to find a community audience base without “that critical push” so that people can see the value in an independent film. Another director explains how she is more concerned about garnering critical acclaim because it can help promote and market the film. Producer Julia Rosenberg believes that commercial success in Canada is notoriety. When discussing the effects of critics on film she explains how if the ideas are there, success will come.

Discussion

After performing eight semi-structured interviews with directors and producers in the Canadian film industry, a thematic analysis of the findings and the implications is required. Four common themes were identified including the value of commercial success, seeking commercial success, the importance of critical reception, and the value of artistic vision. The analysis of these key themes provides insight into whether filmmakers are altering their artistic visions for films in favour of commercial success.

The value of commercial success in Canada

Scholars Finn, Hoskins, and McFayden (1996) highlight the difficulty that English Canadian films have in competing with American films in terms of box-office results, and thus, the standard for commercial success is significantly less in Canada. Turnbull (2022) illustrates how in Canada, “filmmaking has floundered in the shadow of Hollywood” (p. 110). Dreves (2013) argues that publicly subsidized film industries are economically non-viable because artistic merit “often carries greater weight for producers than economic considerations or potential market success”

(p. 255). Since public funders like Telefilm Canada look to fund distinctively Canadian films (with artistic merit), many Canadian films don't appeal to international markets (Finn, Hoskins, & McFayden). Further, Canadian films are just not built to succeed outside of Canada because of the culturally distinct subjects they mention, alienating foreign markets (Lorimer, 1981). Films that receive Telefilm funding, despite being more artistically recognized by critics, were less likely to be commercially successful overall (Finn, Hoskins, & McFayden, 1996). The findings of this study are consistent with Finn, Hoskins, and McFayden's (1996) analysis as many directors voiced the lack of potential for commercial success in Canada. Turnbull (2022) emphasizes the role of the government in Canadian filmmaking and how it can be both life support for the industry, and a major headache. This sentiment is also borne out in this study's findings as filmmakers share conflicting views on the benefits of a publicly funded film industry. Many filmmakers acknowledge the importance of Canada's publicly funded model for films and how it has personally helped them in their careers. Funding bodies like Telefilm made it easier for them as independent filmmakers in helping to get their careers started. Thus, it seems that filmmakers generally accept the tradeoffs of the Canadian film industry. The feelings expressed by filmmakers indicate that while definitions of commercial success are warped due to a large-scale public presence, the Canadian film industry allows for greater creative freedom and an easier path to receive funding.

Seeking commercial success

A key aspect of the findings of this study was changing attitudes toward commercial success. Scholars like Elberse (2007) find that star participation positively affects movies' revenues, specifically that stars can be "worth" millions. Many filmmakers in this study express an increasing focus on the cast as an avenue toward commercial success, concurrent with Elberse's (2007) conclusion. The sentiment that cast, specifically stars, is so desired shows that filmmakers value popular appeal to generate commercial success. On the contrary, some filmmakers also clarify that the push to cast stars is in the hopes of appealing to a wider audience, not to perform financially. These contrasting motivations exemplify the "art vs commerce"

divide present among filmmakers in Canada. Other commercial elements highlighted by filmmakers include marketing strategies. The value placed on marketing by both producers *and* directors indicated that reaching a larger audience was a top priority among filmmakers. Mohammadian and Habibi (2012) find that word of mouth, movie reviews, television commercials, press ads, movie posters, radio advertisements, and film websites were key marketing strategies that led to commercial success (in box-office settings). However, filmmakers' indication that these measures were overwhelmingly used to attract a wider audience (not necessarily for commercial gain) once again shows a lack of value placed on commercial success alone.

The importance of critical reception

Many filmmakers emphasized the value critics have in their careers. As previously established, critics seem to gravitate toward more complex and "artsy" films (Holbrook, 1999). Conversely, Youngblood (1992) shows that historically, critics criticized art "for not speaking to the masses" (p. 93). The propensity for Telefilm to fund films with greater artistic merit shows that Holbrook's (1999) findings are consistent with what filmmakers have voiced in this study. The expression of many directors valuing critical recognition above commercial success shows that Canadian filmmakers see immense value in artistic merit. Moreover, this shows that directors may not be altering their artistic visions in favour of commercial success. Despite some filmmakers demonstrating a desire to add more "commercial elements" to their films, it is abundantly clear that staying true to the director's artistic vision in the hopes of receiving critical acclaim is the number one priority among directors.

The value of artistic vision

In interviews with former members of the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) De Valck (2014) finds that film festivals work to platform independent "niche" films with artistic merit. Further, there is little space for "selling out" to commercial pressure" within the film festivals (De Valck, 2014, p. 56). The findings of this study are consistent with De Valck's (2014) analysis as many directors see the potential for word-

of-mouth promotion from festivals as motivation to stay true to their art. Scholars Pogrebnik et al. (2021) provide insight into director self-fulfilment. They find that directors of the 20th century stayed within their vision and did “not change [it] for the better or for the worse” (Pogrebnik et al., 2021, p. 1104). Carmentary (1989) adds to this dialogue by explaining how directors have become stars in their own right, having the final say on all aspects of production during filming. Thus, directors demonstrating a desire to stay true to their artistic vision shows a trend toward “director self-fulfilment” in the Canadian film industry.

Limitations

The process of collecting interviews for this study was not easy. Despite missing the goal of 10-15 interviewees, performing eight interviews is adequate when compared with the 12 done by Durand and Hadida (2016). The initial goal of 10-15 interviews was based on Durand and Hadida’s (2016) number and no interviewees had been confirmed at the time that goal was set. The goal was expected to be met through family connections alone; this was not the case. Time constraints and filmmaker availability were major factors in missing the goal. There was a short window of time for performing these interviews. I also had difficulty scheduling all the interviews as I tried to work around the availability of some filmmakers. As many of them are constantly working on new projects, it was hard for them to find time. Additionally, the interviewees of this study, while generally representing a diverse range of perspectives and backgrounds, lack a diversity of experience. Nearly all interviewees had at least 20 years of industry experience which could have elicited biased responses. Moreover, producer voices could have been more represented in this study to add more diverse perspectives including film production, licensing, and distribution. One reason for the lack of producers interviewed was based on the view that directors should occupy more space in this paper so that issues of artistic vision could have greater representation. Lastly, additional research is needed on certain findings. For example, the question of whether filmmakers’ marketing strategically highlights the more commercial elements of films (as opposed to artistic elements) is still unclear. Thus, future research

is needed to understand how directors apply artistic visions and so-called “commercial elements” to their films. These next steps would provide insight into how directors and producers alter their creative visions for films.

Conclusion

Through the use of interviews with eight filmmakers from the Canadian film industry, four main themes surrounding the art vs commerce divide were identified: the value of commercial success in Canada, seeking commercial success, the importance of critical reception, and the value of artistic vision. Previous research informed this study on how growing commerciality and marketing in films have come at the expense of artistic merit. The findings of this study help to inform critics and consumers on how filmmakers balance art and commerce, gaining direct access to director and producer perspectives. This study sought to understand whether Canadian filmmakers were altering their artistic visions for the purpose of appealing to the audience in the hopes of generating commercial success. This study finds that the lack of potential for commercial success in Canada coupled with a general desire (by filmmakers) to receive critical recognition means that filmmakers are staying true to their artistic visions. Despite some filmmakers adding more “commercial elements” to their films, these efforts were by and large in the hope of reaching a wider audience, not to generate commercial success.

Future directions

This study added to the existing literature by providing conflicting results to those of scholars like Hadida (2010) and Simonton (2009) who argue that artistic merit is diminishing. Thus, it is recommended that future research be conducted in other publicly funded film industries around the world to see if filmmakers there are preserving artistic vision. Lastly, the limitations of this study suggest that future research should include a larger sample size with more variety of interviewee experience.

Implications

The interviews conducted in this paper added a new layer to the current research. Unlike previous studies that used data to infer the impact of commercial success on directors, this study asked directors and producers specifically and gained direct access to their perspectives. This study can be used in future research that discusses the impact of certain business practices in the filmmaking process on directors and producers. Moreover, the findings of this study can be used to inform critics and audiences about how commercial pressures can affect the artistic elements put in a film. In short, this paper gained insight into how the growth in commercial success in cinema has impacted the artistic value of films.

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Appendix A

The three mutual questions:

What's your definition of commercial success in Canada?

Do you feel that the Canadian film industry is a market in which your films can succeed commercially?

In your relationship with your film partners (director/producer) do you have competing philosophies on what carries value in a film (i.e., artistic vs commercial merit)?

Do you feel pressure or a need to conform to popular or critical appeal to achieve success?

To producers only:

Has the growth of the commerciality of cinema as a whole inclined you to devote more time to business practices within the filmmaking process, like marketing, for example?

Do you believe that there is value in critic classification of your film as an independent, which has been demonstrated to lower the chance of it achieving commercial success in the public sphere?

To directors only:

Is the commercial success of your film important to you?

Would you rather achieve recognition from critics over commercial success?

Do you feel like you are sacrificing the artistic merit of your films to achieve success in the public sphere?

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in Interview-Based Study

Title: The Commerce-Art Dichotomy in Cinema: A Thematic Analysis of Interviews of Filmmakers in the Canadian Film Industry

Researcher

120 Howland Ave, Toronto, ON M5R 3B5
Royal St. George's College

Description:

THE COMMERCE-ART DICHOTOMY IN CANADIAN CINEMA

You are being asked to participate in a 15–20-minute interview where you will answer questions about your experiences in balancing commercial success with art as a filmmaker/producer. The interviews will be conducted either in person or through Google Meet. The meetings will be recorded using the recording feature on google meet. If we are online, I will be sending you an e-mail on the day of the interview where there will be a link to the Google Meet application.

Option #1

_____ Confidentiality Option #2

Risks and benefits:

There are no evident risks in participating in this study. The outcomes are based solely on what you say during the interviews. While there may not be direct benefits to you, your willingness to participate in this study will provide great insight into the effects of commerce on art in the film industry.

Confidentiality:

If you wish to have your name referenced in this study, sign the first and second lines. If you wish to remain anonymous throughout this study, sign the first and third lines.

Right to Withdraw:

By signing this form, you will have the option to withdraw from this study at any time. We will negotiate dates and times for interviews after you sign this consent form.

IRB Approval:

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Royal St. George's College Internal Review Board (IRB).

Statement of Consent:

I have read, understood, and accept all of the information as stated above. I have been given a copy of this form. I have been allowed to ask questions, and those questions have been answered. I consent to participate in this study.

_____ Signature of Participant

_____ Confidentiality

Appendix C

Themes	Codes	Quotes
<p>The value of commercial success in Canada</p>	<p>Commercial success in Canada</p> <p>Funding dynamics in Canada</p>	<p>Commercial success in Canada</p> <p>“We did both commercial and critical success”</p> <p>“A film is a success if it has both critical and commercial success”</p> <p>“Nobody really knows what financial success is”</p> <p>“You have to pitch it...show why it can be a good return on investment [for investors]”</p> <p>“Traditionally, certain films are more profitable than others...horror sells better than comedy in an international community”</p> <p>“If I wanted to just make a commercially successful film, I’m just gonna make a horror movie”</p> <p>“If the ideas are good, you can succeed [in Canada]”</p> <p>“Commercial success in Canada is notoriety”</p> <p>“Getting the film made is a commercial success”</p> <p>“Massive box-office success doesn’t happen in Canada”</p> <p>“The traditional private model doesn’t apply in Canada”</p> <p>Funding dynamics in Canada</p> <p>“A lot of content is subsidized to help compete with the US”</p> <p>“If you make it with all Canadian money, you will have to start paying that money back immediately”</p> <p>“[Canadian] business model is access to subsidies”</p> <p>“You want a happy distributor but you also want to stay true to your vision”</p> <p>“The Canadian system is a very closed shop”</p> <p>“Definitions of what constitutes Canadian content are so narrow”</p>

THE COMMERCE-ART DICHOTOMY IN CANADIAN CINEMA

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Seeking commercial success	<p>Growing as a director and producer</p> <p>The value of cast</p> <p>The importance of marketing</p>	<p>Growing as a director and producer</p> <p>“It was a very artistic project. Very artistic. now 10 years later, I would certainly do things differently.”</p> <p>“Rather than to be completely dark, I would go back to the script, the music, and [change] the way of shooting it, which was very rough”</p> <p>“I’m trying to break the mould of what’s commercial”</p> <p>The value of cast</p> <p>“Cast is a huge determinant of commercial viability</p> <p>The importance of marketing</p> <p>“Audiences are attracted to higher production value”</p> <p>“I want my films to connect with as many people as possible”</p> <p>“Traditional marketing techniques don’t work”</p>

Themes	Codes	Quotes
The importance of critical reception	Importance of critics in advancing careers	<p>Importance of critics in advancing career</p> <p>“Artistic success can be the stepping stone to making future investors more inclined to invest”</p> <p>“Critical recognition has been big for me”</p> <p>“If you know people watched the movie and you know people were moved by it, then that has to be enough.”</p>

THE COMMERCE-ART DICHOTOMY IN CANADIAN CINEMA

Themes	Codes	Quotes
<p>The value of artistic vision</p>	<p>The value of film festivals in promoting art</p> <p>Director self-fulfillment</p>	<p>The value of film festivals in promoting art</p> <p>“Word-of-mouth buzz that comes out of festivals”</p> <p>“There’s something free-flowing about making something you want”</p> <p>“Best to follow your heart”</p> <p>“If I were just in it for making money, I wouldn’t be where I am”</p>