LUISS

*Department of Business and Management*

*Master's Degree in Marketing*

*Chair of Consumer Behavior*

# Spoiler-free Trailer: Director's cut

## What impact do spoiler disclosure in trailers have on viewers' willingness to watch the promoted film?

SUPERVISOR

Simona Romani

CO-SUPERVISOR

Antonella Buonomo

CANDIDATE

Filippo Nicastro

744281

Academic Year 2022/2023

*Ai miei genitori, per avermi messo al mondo.*

*A mia nonna Nenè, per avermi trovato un posto nel suo, di mondo.*

*Al Cinema, all'arte delle luci che brillano lontano,*

*in un mondo sconosciuto che si chiama Futuro*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# CHAPTER 1

# Theoretical background & Aim of the thesis

## 1.1 *Topic Interest*

The cinema market appears to be the most fervent and active driver of the entertainment industry, with its $4.5 billion in box office revenue in the US borders only in 2021, and the 981 million tickets sold by Indian film theatres in 2022, its health has now returned to pre-pandemic levels (MPAA 2022).

The industry's resilience and ability to innovate is evidenced by the recent development of streaming platforms, with SVOD (Subscription video-on-demand) services generating global and total revenues of $99 billion, a figure estimated to reach $124 billion by 2028 (Digital TV Research 2023). Although these, like Netflix or Amazon Prime Video, have emerged as 'lifesavers' for the film industry in the pandemic era, they have also been the trigger for a progressive process of increasing the level of competitiveness, such that the success factors and strategies to be implemented have radically changed.

The advertising of a complex product such as a film requires in fact special precautions. The "consumer" of the film market is in fact looking for an intricate experience capable of involving him in a satisfying emotional whirlwind, but he is overwhelmed by the excessive quantity of marketing stimuli present, at various levels, in his macro-environment and its purchase decision, represented both by the cinema ticket and by subscribing to a streaming platform, is confused (Carrillat, F.A., Legoux, R. & Hadida, A.L. 2018).

Researchers are now convinced by the fact that the main marketing tool in the cinematographic field is the trailer: a few minutes long video necessary to intrigue the consumer and to give him a "taste" of the film. The management of the same requires an adequate and intelligent choice of scene sequences to be shown, respect for narrative consequentiality and the exploitation of the names and features of the cast, as well as minimal publicity of basic information (title, release date, etc.) (Boksem, M.A. & Smidts, A. 2015).

The modern film industry consumer turns out to be an active social media user, thus overwhelmed by a plurality of advertising stimuli against which the trailer inevitably competes. This attention problem is aggravated by the fact that the trailer is a much more complex and longer video than the posts on any user's screen, less attractive because less intuitive (Liu, X. Wei Shi, S. Teixeira, T. & Wedel, M. 2018).

Considering the effectiveness of the trailer, in terms of induced willingness to watch the promoted film, directly proportional to the degree of emotional reaction aroused in the potential spectator, it becomes essential to consider the movie as an experiential product capable of catapulting its involved spectator into a fictitious narrative plot.

By plot we mean a complex and sequential set of narrative junctions, the set of events that lead the various characters from the beginning to the end. Researchers are convinced that the enormous success of cinematic

entertainment derives precisely from its ability to make the spectators identify with the characters, from the induced, emotionally active, submission of the spectators (considering the first viewing) to the events of the fictitious world that flow on the screen. In particular a 1% desired change in perceived emotional involvement corresponds to a 1.97% increase in ROI, which is equivalent to a $1.24 million increase in revenue (Paulich, B.J. & Kumar, V. 2021).

The Spoiler, understood as violent disclosure of narrative junctions or important elements of the film, becomes in this sense a dangerous element of breaking the illusion and therefore the identification on which, as explained above, the success of the film is based (Ryoo, J. H., Wang, X. & Lu, S. 2020).

Despite the fact that a trailer, in order to be effective and attractive, must highlight the likely success factors of the promoted film, it risks ruining the viewing experience for those who actually go to see the film, damaging the reputation and brand loyalty of the cinematographic production company.

In today's world, the dissemination of information is an unstoppable process, the beginning of the advertising of a movie follows its entire production process, involving a plurality of interconnected channels for a rather long time, so the spoiler danger is particularly aggravated that in the past. The skill of marketing managers therefore lies in the ability to "hide" the movie characteristics enough to intrigue the potential viewer. Create Hype without revealing too much thanks to effective teasers (shorter trailers particularly suitable for native advertising) and trailers.

## 1.2 *Literature Review*

### 1.2.1 Success factors of up-coming movies

Film, due to its complex nature, turns out to be a particularly articulated experiential product whose success depends on a series of distinct but interconnected elements (e.g., the cast, the screenplay, the generated critical and public attention) being very difficult to predict before the film's theatrical release (Basuroy, S., Desai, K. K., & Talukdar, D. 2006).

This uncertainty involves both the production companies, confused about which projects to invest in, and the potential audience, overwhelmed by the available choices.

A number of factors, some internal such as the presence of stars, others external such as positive reviews by audiences and critics or awards won at major international festivals, simplify the process that leads to the consumer's decision to purchase a ticket (Akdeniz, M. B., & Talay, M. B. 2013). It is mainly on these factors, intrinsic and extrinsic, that the efforts of academics have been spent over the years, interested in finding an effective method of predicting the box-office performance of upcoming films.

#### 1.2.1.1 *General Considerations*

Star presence refers to the artistic participation of a well-known figure within the cinema world in the production of the film, in the roles of actor (leading or supporting), director or producer (Luo, L., Chen, X., Han, J., & Whan Park, C. 2010). The disclosure of the cast and professional figures involved within the

movie project turns out to be quite important for creating awareness and interest, which is why actors and directors hold important contractual power within the industry (Anand, N., & Watson, M. R. 2004). Potential viewers use reviews posted on social networks or main specialised sites (e.g., IMDB.com) to support their purchasing decisions (Hennig-Thurau, T., Wiertz, C., & Feldhaus, F. 2015). Indeed, it is estimated that 95 per cent of consumers search online for reviews before going to the cinema and that 84 per cent trust them (Brightlocal 2016), but critical reviews by experts, as well as the winning of major international awards (Oscar, Golden Globe, Venice Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival) in key categories, such as Best Picture, enable the long-term success of the film by being able to actively influence consumers' choices (Flanagin, A. J., & Metzger, M. J. 2013). In the current market, there is, unfortunately, a problem of accessibility and difficulty in reaching the 'professionals' of critics, immersed in the generalist sea of common opinions, for which personal contacts and friends, the word of mouth, remains the most trusted source of information, both offline and online (Liu, Y. 2006).

In order to summarise the box office effects of these three factors (star presence, reviews and award wins), an empirical study was conducted which showed that the popularity of actors and directors (there are no significant differences in popularity between the two categories) exerts a greater impact on box office at the time of a film's release than artistic achievements (nominations or wins), an effect which, however, fades as the film's theatrical release period increases, during which the critics' specialised reviews become more important. Their dual role involves directly influencing the choices and passively reflecting the film tastes of the moment. The assumption that the impact of non-expert reviews remains unaltered over time has no foundation (Carrillat, F.A., Legoux, R. & Hadida, A.L. 2018).

However, these studies were carried out within the peculiar Hollywood system and deserve independent study in the more complex European and Italian contexts, which is a different setting both economically and culturally.

#### 1.2.1.2 *The Impact of Critics' Reviews*

Different studies have been carried out to understand how specialised critics determine their opinions and by which factors they are, in turn, influenced. According to some of these, their judgement appears to be independent of the market (Debenedetti, S. 2006), whereas according to others there is at least a sphere of mutual influence between consumers and critics (Béra, M. 2003). The two groups represent, in any case, rather different categories in terms of taste, because if the first one’s privilege intrinsic characteristics such as entertainment and involvement, the second ones focus on purely technical and artistic aspects, considering the single film as a piece in the more general history of cinema (Verboord, M. 2014). It seems that, thanks to the proliferation of social media, there is a normative influence of audiences on critics motivated by the need of industry professionals to retain and be appreciated by the generality of potential viewers and film production companies (Pang, J., Liu, A.X. & Golder, P.N. 2022). In this sense, the production budget seems

to be a rather influential variable in the process of elaborating a professional review and an important factor in predicting the positive and conforming response of audiences and critics.
These academic findings, while comforting in terms of predictive ability, find validity exclusively in the narrow, somewhat antiquated, world of movie theatres, and do not consider the recent advent of streaming platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+), whose unique characteristics would merit in-depth independent studies.

#### 1.2.1.3 *The Impact of Social Media*

Thanks to the recent development of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence, it is now possible to analyse social networks and its dynamics to predict the success of upcoming films. Promotional strategies on such applications are particularly important in the entertainment sector given the experiential nature of products such as films, which require an activity between producer and consumer of value co-creation (Swami, S. 2006).
Researchers have been investigating how the different digital channels of film production companies are able to influence box office results. From a CEB (Consumer Engagement Behavior) perspective, effective communication on Facebook and YouTube turns out to be positively correlated with increased box office (Oh, C. Roumani, Y. Nwankpa, J.K. Hu, H.F. 2017), while Twitter turns out to be the best platform to generate eWOM (with all the positive repercussions mentioned above).
A modern academic approach to the study of social media marketing involves a priori the acceptance of the 'gratification theory', according to which users actively use a social platform to satisfy specific needs (Stafford T., Stafford M., Schkade L. 2004), we can in this sense distinguish between a personal and an interactive type of engagement. If the first derives from the intrinsic experience of using the platform, from the pleasure and gratification derived from the passive assimilation of information from other users, the second depends instead on the active relationships established by users with the community of reference (Karahanna E., Xu S., Xu Y., Zhang N. 2018).
Considering the seven days prior to a film's theatrical release, it has been shown that an increase in social-media-driven personal engagement, on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, is linked to an increase in eWOM volume and a decrease in uncertainty, particularly if the source is perceived as particularly trustworthy (Castillo A., Benitez J., Llorens J., Braojos J., 2021).
Simultaneously, an increase in social-media-driven interactive engagement, in the same time interval, increases the likelihood that users will decide to see the film once it is released (Oh, C. Roumani, Y. Nwankpa, J.K. Hu, H.F. 2017).
Monitoring user activity around an upcoming film product is, considering all the above points, essential for predicting its success. Thanks to modern tools, cases such as the success of Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope in the 1970s, resulting from the astonishing word-of-mouth generated, become partly predictable (Guynes S.A. & Hassler-Forest D. 2017).

#### 1.2.1.4 *Screenplay & Genres*

The effort of the researchers, who were interested in predicting film revenues, also focused on the intrinsic and inherent characteristics of the film. In this sense, the element that has catalysed their attentions has been the screenplay, the backbone of production, which determines a film's genre, plot and moral, as well as its target audience (Simonton, D.K. 2005).

In the last century, academic literature has tried to find correlations between a film's genre and its box-office success. In the 1960s, a negative correlation between adventure and action films and box office and a positive correlation between the latter and erotic films was highlighted (Anast, P. 1967). Considering the 1980s, however, such a positive correlation is only verified for films in the science fiction genre (Litman, B. 1983), in the 1990s a negative correlation between genre and box office is only true for the drama genre (Prag, J.J. & Casavant, J. 1994). Finally, using Bayesian statistical models, it was discovered at the beginning of the new millennium that the thriller has become the most successful genre at the expense of the romantic (Neelamegham, R. & Chinatagunta, P. 1999).

Such an oscillating trend of successful film genres can only be explained if one considers the history of cinema as a constant alternation of 'new waves' (e.g. Neorealism in Italy, the Nouvelle Vague in France or Cinema Novo in Brazil), each capable of bombarding audiences with its own explosive and potentially destructive momentum, of creating new preferences and new interests (Cousins, M. 2017).

As regards the mechanisms of plot involvement and identification with the characters, these will be discussed in more detail in the third section of this chapter.

In any case, considering the aleatory nature of the present, it is necessary to study and understand new genres and trends in the film industry to predict, and guide, future developments.

#### 1.2.1.5 *Release date*

The question of what the best time of year is to release a film in cinemas has been answered differently by academics. The number of tickets sold by cinemas varies drastically depending on the release period of a film, the most attractive weeks (or more precisely weekends) therefore become the object of fierce competition by production companies. The most attractive dates, traditionally the Christmas holidays and the beginning of Summer, are usually overcrowded with films of the most important production companies (i.e., with the highest potential takings, considering all the above-mentioned variables), the scheduled supply is in fact adjusted to the high demand guaranteed by the historical analysis of the periods considered, reaching equilibrium (Yang, J. & Kim, W. 2014). According to this view, a movie's revenues would derive from deliberate competitive strategies of the film production companies and the agreements established by them with distributors and cinema owners (Caves, R.E. 2000). This model, which suggests and introduces the importance of the seasonality variable, is certainly true in the US market, where the film industry is close to the oligopolistic model (Einav, L. 2007).

Other analyses, still interested in identifying the perfect release timing, have considered the individual film and its "life cycle" in the theatres, explaining the irregular fluctuations in cinema attendance as variations in the demand curve due to changing and developing opinions and views (i.e., online reviews and interactions) around the same product (Peers, Y. Fok, D. Franses, P.H. 2012). The latter model excludes, or at least limits, the importance of the release date as such, but considers the entire period during which a film remains available as an 'active' interval in which appropriate marketing strategies can compensate for an error (or forced choice) in timing.

These considerations apply, however, once again, in a system as peculiar as the American one. The Italian reality (in which, in any case, the relative importance of seasonality is demonstrated by phenomena such as the "cine-panettoni") is more complex given the lack of real vertically integrated majors like the American ones and would deserve independent in-depth studies (O'Leary, A. 2013).

#### 1.2.1.6 *Final considerations*

In conclusion, there are several factors that contribute to the success of a film, most of which are difficult to predict. Although, trying to generalise superficially, the movies with guaranteed success are those with high budgets, released by major production companies, winners of important international awards and perhaps sequels of films that have already become cult (Pangarker, N.A. 2013), the concept of box office also becomes relative and difficult to define. The total revenues from the exposure of a film are in fact consolidated along the entire distribution chain, from the theatrical release to the home video market and merchandising (Marzulli, A. 2011), a difficult flow to manage which becomes even more complex if we consider the advent of streaming platforms. All these arguments lead to the exclusion of an ambiguous and generic variable strictly related to box office in an empirical study, in favour of behavioural variables such as the willingness to watch a film.

Appropriate marketing and advertising strategies, the analysis of which will be dealt with in the following section, must start from the exploitation of the factors analysed in this section, which can be interpreted as levers to be activated to increase the probability of success.

## 1.2.2 Advertising techniques in the film industry

Advertising is undoubtedly the most important element of the marketing mix strategies applied to the cinema industry. This is proven by the fact that on average 35% of a film's production budget is allocated to promotion (Investopedia 2022). This huge investment is necessary because the film is a product with a rather low life cycle in a market that is highly competitive in the short term and characterised by continuous new product launches (Rennhoff, A.D. & Wilbur K.C. 2011). Most of this budget is spent well before the actual release of the film in what is called the pre-production phase, an interval in which potential investors and viewers can be influenced through appropriate marketing strategies, implemented to highlight the strengths

and to emphasise the success factors, already discussed in the first paragraph, of the film (Joshi, A.M. & Hanssens D.M. 2009).
This phase is particularly delicate and important, as advertising has been shown to actively influence shareholders and that high levels of brand awareness and perceived product quality are associated with increased production budgets, revenues and profitability, and decreased investment uncertainty and risk (Joshi, A.M. & Hanssens, D.M. 2010).
Film previews, teasers and trailers turn out to be the most frequently used tools at this stage; they are usually videos of short but variable length (in principle, a trailer is longer than a trailer) created to build valid expectations about the main elements of the film, both intrinsic and extrinsic (Wasko, J. 2004). In addition to directing funding, the importance of trailers, and the reason why millions are invested in them, is that 54% of potential viewers form their preferences and decide which movies to watch based on the scenes and snapshots shown in them (MPA 2022).
The next paragraphs will analyse the main elements that make a trailer a successful communication strategy, and then focus on the new perspectives of social media marketing in the film industry.

#### 1.2.2.1 *Movie trailer as a source of information*

The hedonic experience of which the film becomes a vehicle is, as with all highly experiential products, difficult to evaluate before actual consumption (Eliashberg, J. & Sawhnay, M.S. 1994). The sampling of the filmic product guaranteed by its trailer mitigates this problem by providing the possible viewer and investors a preview already assessable in terms of expected entertainment and emotional transport (Moe, W.W. & Fader, P.S. 2001).
The trailer is inserted rather early during a film's production, given the determined nature of contracts with all the professionals involved, in a rigid structure with precise deadlines and predetermined stages (Marich, R. 2005).
A very well executed trailer is perceived as a symptom of a healthy production, quite far ahead in filming and already aware of its strengths and weaknesses (Su, M. & Rao, V.R. 2010), a result that cannot be taken for granted in a market characterised by rather articulated and complex production processes that easily run into delays and mistakes (Hollywood Reporter 2012).
Various empirical researches have shown that the first useful element to catalyse the attention of the viewers of a trailer are clues about the plot, in particular the 'design' of the characters (Eliashberg, J. Hui, S.K. Zhang, Z.J. 2007) and in detail the existence of a central conflict around which the plot develops according to logical or causal connections (Sokoloff, A. 2009).
An effective trailer must be able to reveal just enough of these narrative junctures to intrigue and arouse the viewer's curiosity; however, it must not reveal too much of the storyline by deliberately leaving out key parts of the plot (Gilbey, R. 2006).

The choice of scenes (more accurately fragments of them) to be edited together in the trailer thus becomes of crucial importance to trigger the appropriate emotional responses to increase the willingness of possible viewers to watch the film once it has been released. Several empirical studies have shown that violent and sexual contents are the most effective in increasing selective attention, as are generally all shocking and high-emotional-impact contents (Xie, G.X. & Lee, M.J. 2008) and possibly humorous ones (Devlin, M.B. Chambers, L.T. Callison, C. 2011).

A separate discussion deserves to be given to the special effects shown: a film is in fact, first and foremost, an experience with a high visual impact, anticipating the effective use of avant-garde special effects (computer-generated images, CGI, innovative sound effects, etc.) therefore has the double result of sensually stimulating the audience and conveying that the advertised movie belongs to the category of high-budget blockbusters (Horn, G.M. 2007).

The possibility of predicting the audience's response to a film by observing their reactions to trailers has also been demonstrated by empirical studies conducted according to Neuromarketing techniques and modalities. Neural measurements recorded via EEG (electroencephalogram) of trailer viewers seem to provide unique and reliable information on the preferences of a population (Boksem, M.A. & Smidts, A. 2015). On the optimal duration of this important communication medium, the efforts of academics have not been expended.

Instead, researchers have studied the role of stars within the film industry, focusing on the mechanisms that make an artist (actor or director) a cult phenomenon. There are many 'sub-cultures', even inhomogeneous categories of loyal consumers gathered around a celebrity, whose presence within a movie project is decisive in shaping purchasing decisions (Williams, R. 2013). Within the Hollywood industry (where the very concept of a star originated with Florence Lawrence), the cast is decisive in shaping expectations of the film and is therefore largely shown through trailers, which function as a 'trial parade' for the artists involved in the advertised film (McDonald, P. 2013). The majors play a decisive role in generating "cult-ification" phenomena around their celebrities, a mechanism referred to as the "star system", thanks to which it is possible to generate close, long-term relationships with fans, who are also subject to nostalgic marketing strategies after years (Egan, K. & Thomas, S. 2012). Few studies exist on how important the amount of acting time an actor should be given to "trigger" and reach his fan base, how proportionally this should be included in the trailer to generate awareness and selective attention, as well as the joint effects of the presence of several stars within the same production.

In conclusion, the intrinsic factors of a film turn out to be the most important in determining its distinctive and constitutive features, characteristics that make the trailer a true artistic medium, which is why directors themselves often shoot and edit their own film trailers, such as Stanley Kubrick for 2001: A Space Odyssey (McLuhan, M. 1997). To implement successful film marketing strategies, it is therefore necessary to consider the trailer as a work of art that is assessable but deeply connected to the advertised movie, capable of enhancing and amplifying its innovative impulses and elements of probable success.

1.2.2.2 *Movie trailer as a medium*

Taking the absolute qualities of the trailer for granted, there are a several factors, in the first paragraph referred to as extrinsic, which can alter its effectiveness. It is now common practice to include short statements or quantitative reviews within trailers (e.g. the decimal system of Filmpost or IMDb) that testify to the positive reception of the previews by specialised critics (Dhar, T. & Weinberg, C.B. 2016), they function, in the ways already analysed, as supporting elements for the purchase decision and reducing uncertainty in the potential viewer (Verboord, M. 2014). For essentially the same reasons, nominations and awards won are included in the trailer through predefined display modes, the symbols tending to be laureled branches and the name of the festival (Pangarker, N.A. & Smith, E. 2013).

In addition to these supporting techniques aimed at emphasising the informative role of the trailer, the media through which the trailer itself is viewed by the user deserves independent analysis.

If they were originally shown to the public directly in cinemas, as advertisements before the screening of the film or during the intermission, over time they have increasingly conquered space in other channels: television, DVDs and Blu-rays as well as, of course, on the Internet and various social platforms. Each channel, presenting different characteristics, requires special care and adjustments to be effective (Hixon, T.K. 2006).

Trailers shown in cinemas are not very interactive and impossible to rewatch, however they have the important advantage of being reproduced on the big screen with the same visual impact as the film they promote (Johnston, K.M. 2009). The placement of trailers on television, albeit with differences arising from channel, time and frequency, must consider that the target audience's environment is overcrowded with distractions, the plot and involvement therefore become, more than the visual impact, the variables that guarantee success (Jerrick, D. 2013).

With respect to the declining physical media market (DVD, Blu-ray), it seems that the most effective trailers are those that are homogeneous with the genre of the film already purchased and contained in the support, there is, however, a diversity of purpose in them: to persuade DVD buyers to purchase more DVDs (Whitten, S. 2019). Finally, the Internet turns out to be, according to academics, the most disruptive medium and the one that has changed the way trailers can be effective. They compete with other sharable content displayed on social platforms for users' attention by being able to be revisited and shared an indefinite number of times, generating short electronic word-of-mouth (Shen, Y. Chan, H. C. Heng, C. S. 2016).

Having understood the impact of the extrinsic and intrinsic factors on the effectiveness of a promotional movie-trailer the analysis of the most important tool of cinema marketing can be considered exhaustive and complete.

#### 1.2.2.3 *Post Poster Era*

The concept of the film poster has evolved over the course of cinema history. Initially, it played, within the primordial marketing campaigns, the role of a primary source of information for the audience who could essentially deduce from it the title and genre of the film (Osborne, R. 2003). Over time, it was realised that style and colours (Chadha, H. Madan, D. Rana, D. Sharma, N. 2023) as well as taglines, short and catchy phrases printed on posters (Mahlknecht, J. 2015), play an important role in attracting potential viewers and forming superficial and initial expectations about the movie.

With the advent of the internet and streaming platforms, the use of posters (the physical version of which has become obsolete) has changed: they are now used, in their electronic reworking, by sites such as Amazon Prime Video or Netflix as the film icons shown on users' home screens (Kundalia, K. Patel, Y. Shah, M. 2019). The algorithms behind these platforms are able to dynamically classify, organise and personalise these icons for each user, becoming the frontline marketing strategies used. The ability of computers to process user-specific images, supported by technological innovation and the development of Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), makes this tool quite flexible and also suitable for the purposes of Native advertising on social networks (Krizhevsky, A. Sutskever, I. Hinton, G.E. 2012).

A film promotion campaign today cannot be dissociated from an adequate social media marketing strategy for all the reasons already analysed in the first paragraph. Especially on Facebook and Instagram (platforms mainly based on image sharing), creating attractive content and posts is crucial to generate the electronic WOM on which the success of films is based (Gong, T. & Tung, V.W.S. 2017), it becomes the focus of media debates, being criticised by the most important influencers and personalities of the sector, and it acquires cult status and success (Pittman, M. & Sheehan, K. 2015). Today, it is the film production companies themselves, through their official and verified channels, that create such content, mostly interesting 'behind-the-scenes', sharing positive reviews or various images, the characteristics of which (colours, taglines, etc.) do not seem to have changed particularly since the era of manifestos and billboards (Moses, C. Maxwell, A. Adegbuyi, O. Akinbode, M. Inelo, F. 2016).

The evolution of the poster, and its metamorphosis into a 'post', represents one of those marketing techniques capable of adapting to the potentially disruptive changes caused by the digital transformation, an infeasible process in full development that invests everything.

Thanks to it, cinema marketing now has at its disposal a plurality of assets, channels to be integrated into holistic communication strategies, whose complex interconnections and characteristics have not yet been fully understood by the academic literature.

### 1.2.3 Impact of storyline disclosure in entertainment experience

Spoilers are defined as leaks of information, intentionally or unintentionally induced before the release of a film, concerning key plot points of a story (Booth, P. 2010).

They have become, especially due to the advent of social media, a rather common phenomenon in the market of narrative products and have catalysed the attention of communication researchers (Jeon, S. Kim, S. Yu, H. 2016). Some studies have shown a positive correlation between knowledge of the basic plot lines and enjoyment, proposing fluency in information processing as a possible mediator and explaining this result in terms of facilitating comprehension and reading of a narrative (Leavitt, J.D. & Christenfeld, N.J. 2011). Other studies have shown how "spoilered" films are ruined because they drastically reduce the viewer's levels of suspense and involvement (Gilbert, D.T. & Wilson, T.D. 2007).
These contradictory results, underlying what has been called the 'spoiler paradox', can be explained by considering the subjectivity of consumers in the market for narrative products. This dichotomous behavioural difference may derive from subjective differences of the audience (Rosenbaum, J.E. & Johnson, B.K. 2018), or construct levels such that we can ascertain the existence of two categories of individuals: those with low levels of NFC (Need for Cognition), who prefer spoilered stories, and those with high NFA (Need for Action) for whom uncertainty about the plot's evolution is crucial to enjoyment (Yan, D. & Tsang, A.S. 2016).
This section will first focus on understanding the peculiar characteristics of narrative products, then reason about the possible and controversial effects of spoilers on consumers' minds, and finally clarify how they can be exploited for cinema marketing purposes.

#### 1.2.3.1 *Film as a Narrative Product*

To understand how important the narrative structure is, it is good to briefly place the birth of cinema in the timeline of the general history of Art. Starting with man's innate and conscious desire to narrate, the oral form of storytelling was born, followed by literature. On its way to realism and verisimilitude, this need evolved into theatre and, thanks to the technological innovations of the early 20th century, finally became Cinema, the art of light and images placed in studied motion to create stories (Khatib, L. 2013).
Because of this evolution, film, the object of cinematic art, can be considered in the first analysis in the same way as other 'narrative' products (along with novels, some video games, comics, etc.) in the general entertainment market, which also includes non-narrative or abstract products (Shiller, R.J. 2020).
The success and attractive power of movies derive precisely from its unique ability to engage the audience, capture their attention and trigger the mental processes underlying the biological gratification system (Escalas, J.E. 2007). According to recent studies, the narrative transport generated by watching a film is so strong that it actively influences consumers' intentions, behaviour, emotions and attitudes (Van Laer, T. De Ruyter, K. Visconti, L.M. Wetzels, M. 2014).
Narrative transport, understood as the transformative experience of being swept away by a story, consists of three fundamental behavioural processes: reception and interpretation, empathy and imagination, and loss of connection to reality in a psychological sense (Van Laer, T. De Ruyter, K. Visconti, L.M. Wetzels, M. 2014).

The screenplay, understood as the verbal and textual representation of a film's narrative structure, is thus a constitutive and fundamentally important element of a film, and its analysis can explain a great deal about the success of the final product (Eliashberg, J. Hui, S.K. Zhang, Z.J. 2007).
First, it frames the film within a specific cinema genre, which can be defined as a homogeneous set of movies built around the same subject, concerning the same themes or produced within the same context, a generic concept that presents a wide margin of interpretation (Dimock, W.C. 2007).
Recent studies have shown that film genres do not turn out to be static concepts but dynamic categories that evolve over time in a predefined life cycle, involving a succession of phases of primitivism, classicism, revisionism and the parodic period. In general, a series of conventions are formed in the beginning, these are then accepted and developed by an increasing number of filmmakers (the pioneers of the film industry), revised and subverted in a third phase and finally ridiculed and historicised (Neale, S. 2007).
Classifying films based on genre turns out to be a rather complex task. A multi-label problem since a film's belonging to a genre is not unique and the same product can belong to several genres at the same time (Wehrmann, J. Barros, R. C. Dôres, S.N.D. Cerri, R. 2017).
To address this problem, recent academic studies propose the application of CTT (Convolution Through Time) modules to map video sequences and individual snapshots to include them within intangible categories assimilated to movie genres (Wehrmann, J. & Barros, R.C. 2017).
The latter approach has been empirically applied to the LMTD (Labelled Movie Trailer Dataset), a dataset comprising approximately 10,000 movie trailers produced between 1920 and 2016, and has come to define the 9 'core' genres, from which all others seem to derive: Action, Adventure, Comedy, Crime, Drama, Horror, Romance, Science Fiction and Thriller (Wehrmann, J. & Barros, R.C. 2017).
These genres present different dependencies with the narrative structure, e.g., in Comedy films the quality of jokes and dialogue are the most important element, whereas for Action films the visuals, graphics, and special effects play the most decisive role in creating emotional transport. For the purposes of this thesis, it is necessary, beyond the arguments that can be made for each of the defined genres, to distinguish two macro-categories of motion picture products: the narrative-based and the non-narrative-based, in the first category, that of films highly dependent on narrative structure, we can include the movies already labelled as Comedy, Crime, Drama, Thriller, and Romance, in the second all others (Li, Y. Luo, X. R. Li, K. Xu, X. 2022).
To conclude, the variable of narrativity is crucial to understand what effects spoilers and revelations may have on the mind of a consumer immersed in the process of choosing a film to watch. A factor that has important managerial consequence in the elaboration of marketing plans.

#### 1.2.3.2 *The effects of spoilers on consumer's mind*

The ways in which the film product entertains the viewer have been studied for years by academics, who have proposed various theories and models. Some have explained the attitude towards media in terms of the satisfaction of intrinsic motivations, such as autonomy, relationality or competence (Tamborini, R. Bowman,

N. D. Eden, A. Grizzard, M. Organ, A. 2010), reducing everything to the entertainment generated. Other scholars have tried to define entertainment in multi-dimensional terms, differentiating the already defined enjoyment from appreciation, the variable that allows movies to emotionally move and deeply affect viewers (Oliver, M.B. & Woolley, J.K. 2010). Finally, some studies have focused on the subjective differences of audiences and how they respond differently to all cinema genres based on their previous experience (Klimmt, C. 2011). Such subjective differences of the audience seem to be able to reinforce the potentially destructive effect of plot disclosure, in a manner not entirely clear to scholars.

The solution to the already defined 'spoiler paradox' thus becomes the answer to the question: How and to what extent does the revelation of the salient points of a narrative structure change a film's entertainment capacity? Scholars have given rather divergent and contradictory answers to this question. Based on the theory of perceptual fluidity and the discrepancy scheme, it has been shown that spoilers would even increase the enjoyment of the film experience. Reading a synopsis (plot summary) facilitates the process of processing sequences and the ability to deeply understand the content (Leavitt, J.D. & Christenfeld, N.J.S. 2013). According to this theory, elements such as interpretation and identification become disturbing for the consumer.

Other studies have focused on entertainment components such as uncertainty, suspension of emotions and frustration in response to mysteries. It has been shown that these complex variables (each triggering a subjective plurality of emotional states) contribute to increasing the enjoyment induced by the film experience, and that spoilers are dangerously capable of destroying them (Knobloch-Westerwick, S. & Keplinger, C. 2006).

Given the demonstrated articulated and dual nature of entertainment perhaps movies, spoilered and unspoilered, simply elicit different experiences in the bud, if the first one’s appeal to appreciation, the second ones convey enjoyment.

In addition to these two components, Transport has already been defined as crucial to the success of a narrative product such as a film. Once again, the relationship between spoilers and the 'sense of being there' is not fully explained. The parallel reality into which an effective motion picture can transport its viewers has a certain degree of independence from the story per se; a distinction must therefore be made between scenario and narrative. By eliminating, or at least altering, the effects of plot 'reproduction', spoilers allow the viewer to focus on the fictional world depicted, to transport themselves into it in a contemplation-like experience (Vaughn, L. A. Childs, K. E. Maschinski, C. Niño, N. P. Ellsworth, R. 2010). In contrast, the beauty of the context and scenery (or more technically scenography) are the exclusive prerogative of large productions, take for instance the budgets of fantasy films, a sub-category of Action and Adventure genre movies, and 3D films (Solimini, A.G. 2013), for most other products the narrative remains the 'transporting' tool, with all the repercussions mentioned above.

To conclude, the main gap found in this section turns out to be the theoretical and simplistic generalisation of the movie genre variable. The lack of literature on the different effects of spoilers on films, already divided and categorised into narrative and non-narrative based, screams to be filled.

#### 1.2.3.3 *Spoiler sources in the digital age*

Having already analysed the main advertising and marketing techniques applied to the film industry, it now appears necessary to link and modify them to the already defined concept of spoilers. An urgency in this regard arose with the proliferation of social networks and the development of eWOM. Different volumes, valences and variances of the same seem to be able to amplify the possibility of spoilers spreading freely in the network (Wang, F. Liu, X. Fang, E.E. 2015).

There are three main sources capable of generating spoilers: the production company itself through its communication strategy, critics' reviews and word of mouth generated by non-specialist users through comments, posts or interactions (Peng, L. Cui, G. Li, C. 2013).

As far as professional reviews are concerned, it has been verified that 31% of them contain spoilers (IMDb 2023), critics engaged in writing a review find themselves entangled in solving a problem: On the one hand, in order to prove their theses about the success of a film, they need to rely on the plot, on the other hand, by spoiling, they alter the film experience of those who have not yet seen the film (Goh, K. Cheng-Suang H. Zhijie L. 2013). To solve this problem the “Spoiler Alert” is increasingly widespread, a pre-emptive and externalised declaration of the intentions of a review and its target reader: those who have seen the film or those who have not. The spoiler policy is now adopted by most specialised sites, which are interested in generating eWOM around upcoming film products without altering their success (Boyd-Graber, J. Glasgow, K. Zajac, J. S. 2013).

Different considerations apply to non-professional users, for whom the policies are difficult if not impossible to apply and their intentions are free from any opportunistic purpose but only from the desire to reduce uncertainty in their choice process (Ryoo, J. H. Wang, X. Lu, S. 2021). The existence of an inverted U-shaped relationship between spoiler intensity and average informal review has been empirically verified, such that the need to reveal the plot is exaggerated for films with an intermediate rating and not for those unanimously considered excellent or bad (Tang, T. Fang, E. Wang, F. 2021).

A result that once again testifies to the necessity of the spoiler as a reassuring factor.

The analysis of the role of production companies in disseminating plot clues has not been addressed by academic researchers. Nevertheless, the trailer, being the primary and initial source of information about the characteristics of a movie to the public, cannot be detached, for all the considerations already made, from the narrative structure of the film it is intended to promote.

## 1.3 *Literature Research Gap*

In the above-mentioned literature review, the most generalised gap and limitation is certainly to consider the US market as the main and only reference market.

Although enormously important from an economic point of view, the American film sector turns out to be the undisputed world leader (MPAA 2022), it presents peculiar characteristics that make the generalisation of the theoretical results obtained complex.

First, the Hollywood system can be considered, from the point of view of the competitive structure, as an oligopoly, because it is characterised by the presence of a few players, the so-called majors or Big Five, Disney, Paramount, Sony, Universal and Warner Bros. hold 81% of the market share and are vertically integrated (Statista 2023). The concentration of production efforts makes it possible to achieve cinema marketing budgets unattainable for European industries, whose different characteristics would deserve focused studies. First, from a formal point of view, there is not even a real European film industry, as due to linguistic and more generally cultural fragmentation, each European national film market can be said to be independent, with at most sparse and temporary co-productions crossing national borders (International Union of Cinemas 2022).

Another important gap appears to be that related to the advent of streaming platforms, which have radically changed the way the user accesses film content and potentially its success characteristics. If the cinema ticket turns out to be an irretrievable and idiosyncratic purchase, the subscription cost to the platform appears to be generalised and amortised for the hundreds of contents present. A feature that certainly changes the selective process of the potential viewers involved and needs to be considered (Castro et al. 2021).

There are also important gaps regarding the study of individual movie genres, their future development and, in how differently they stimulate the spectator. The main gap in this sense is the detailed analysis of the relationship between film genre and narrative structure, and how important the plot is in engaging the viewer. The enjoyment induced by the film product, which is directly proportional to the willingness to watch the film, is a variable about which frighteningly little is known (Gilbert & Wilson 2017). Even if it is not possible to understand the totality of definable genres, because they are inhomogeneous and changeable categories, new studies should be carried out to at least understand the substantial and intrinsic differences between the different types of films, on products based on visual involvement and those based instead on emotional and mental engagement.

The latter problem is closely linked to the confusion existing in the literature concerning the effects of spoilers on the minds of consumers exposed to film marketing stimuli (i.e. essentially trailer viewers), the discordant and contradictory opinions in fact all derive from generalisations concerning the degree of dependence of the promoted film with its synopsis and the subjective differences of the audience (Rosenbaum & Johnson 2018), which can be explained through the identification of homogeneous

categories and subjective differences of the audience that can be studied nevertheless and which justify the need for new studies and the need for new findings.

## 1.4 *Research questions*

Considering the analysis carried out so far, the aim of this thesis is to fill the main gaps found in the reported literature on cinema marketing and consumer buying behaviour in the film industry. First, having realised the absolute importance of the trailer as a marketing tool, it will play the role of the main argument around which any proposal will have to rely on to be relevant from a managerial point of view.
The ways in which spoilers, already defined as leaks of information about a plot, alter the propensity and willingness of potential viewers in their choice of movies to watch will be explored, considering them as fragments of scenes or snapshots inserted in the trailers created by the production companies, a source of direct spoilers not yet fully analysed and understood. Approximate and non-exhaustive variables such as box office, which cannot unambiguously explain the success of a film, the aim of the marketing campaigns implemented, will be excluded in the analysis. The main research question (MRQ) is therefore as follows:

MRQ: *What impact do spoiler disclosure in trailers have on viewers' willingness to watch the promoted film?*

Considering previous arguments on the subjective nature of reaction to plot revelations, the individual differences of the audience exposed to the trailer will be explored to understand whether subjective and subjective differences of the audience can influence the answer to the first and main research question. Drawing from the huge database of trailers available on the internet, two marketing stimuli will be created through video editing, to demonstrate the role of subjective differences of the audience as a moderating variable between spoiler disclosure and willingness to watch the movie.
The second secondary research question ($SRQ_1$) then becomes:

$SRQ_1$: *Can subjective differences of the audience moderate the relationship between the disclosure of spoilers in movie trailers and willingness to watch the promoted film?*

Finally, in continuity with the theory that wants to distinguish and divide film products into 'narrativity-based' and 'non-narrative-based', the experiment will be duplicated for the two categories of films, the one strongly dependent on the plot and the other dependent on visual impact and, to some extent, untethered from the storyline. Differences between the various sub-genres, which are in any case difficult and ambiguous to define, will be excluded from the analysis to consider the promoted movies selected only as being part of the two aforementioned macro-categories.
The first secondary research question ($SRQ_2$) thus results:

SRQ$_2$: *Is the moderating effect of subjective differences of the audience maintained regardless of the narrative structure of the film promoted?*

# CHAPTER 2

# Conceptual Framework

## 2.1 *The impact of Spoiler Disclosure on Willingness to watch the film*

The answer to the MRQ passes through the univocal definition of the two fundamental variables of this study: the so-called Spoiler Disclosure (SD), i.e., the manipulated existence/absence of a scene (or fragment of it) in a movie trailer, relevant to the plot of the film promoted, as independent variable (IV). Then the Willingness To Watch the Film (WTWF), i.e., the expressed and declared propensity of the viewer of the trailer to watch the promoted film, as dependent variable (DV) in the model.

It is appropriate to define SD based on the intensity of the spoiler disclosed, that is the degree and extent to which the 'leaked' information reduces the uncertainty of the plot (Ryoo, J. H., Wang, X. & Lu, S. 2020). First and foremost, it depends on the details provided by the trailer source (it is different, for instance, to reveal the name of the character who dies or even the manner in which he dies), and it varies according to how many key plot topics are captured: it has been shown that stories, and films are no exception, share pre-established narrative patterns. Particularly widespread is the three-act structure involving exposition, in which the characters are introduced, escalating action, in which the characters go into crisis, and the climax, the moment of maximum tension and resolution (dramatic or not) of the crisis created (Trottier 1998). The three predetermined 'moments' of the film correspond, when revealed, to increasing levels of spoiler intensity.

On the basis of this, it is therefore possible to define as spoilerant a trailer which presents, many scenes that significantly reduce the uncertainty of the plot, as providing viewers the underlying reasons for the occurrence of a highly decisive event (e.g., the death of the main character) possibly anticipating the climax, the moment of maximum emotional intensity of the movie or the finale. The non-spoiler trailers, on the other hand, deal with topics such as 'cinematography' and 'acting performance', thus leveraging the objective qualities of the film to reduce the ever-present uncertainty of the potential viewer, and mainly concern the first act, the introductory one introducing the characters (Ryoo, J. H., Wang, X. & Lu, S. 2020). They do not contain any scene anticipating crucial events or solving the plot.

The WTWF considered in the model turns out to be a measurement of the mental propensity of the trailer viewer to watch the promoted film, it is unrelated to the effective decision of whether or not to buy a cinema ticket or otherwise take action (subscription to a streaming platform, purchase of the physical medium, etc.) to actually perform the behaviour of watching the film (Shieh & Lin 2022).

The measure of this DV is a good proxy of the effectiveness of the trailer in terms of the interest, knowledge and curiosity aroused in the subject exposed to the marketing stimuli.

This assumption is in continuity with the theory of planned behaviour (TBP), according to which the best prediction of future behaviour derives from a present intention, dependent on subjective attitudes and norms (Ajzen 1991). The relevance of intentions, and the consistency of such a variable in the film market, has already been demonstrated by all the studies concerning the impact of WOM and eWOM in determining purchase choices, according to which the propensity to watch a film, the already defined WTWF, is directly correlated with an increase in user activity around the promoted product, with all the already analysed repercussions (Jalilvand, Esfahani & Samiei 2012).

Having finally clarified the nature of the variables at play, it is necessary to analyse the relationship between them in order to formulate coherent hypotheses to be tested empirically.

Researchers, as already pointed out, have given different and contrasting answers to the 'spoiler paradox', but it is certainly capable of modifying the entertainment experience induced by watching a film. The main and proven effect of plot revelations is the reduction of uncertainty and suspense, which alter interest and emotional transport in a 'conscious' viewer (Knobloch-Westerwick, S. & Keplinger, C. 2006).

The impact of SD on WTWF is thus to be found in the answer to the general question: how does uncertainty alter the choices and preferences of consumers immersed in purchase decision processes? Framed within the peculiar market of entertainment and in particular the film sector.

According to signalling theory, uncertainty arises from information asymmetry, which signals are able to reduce by reassuring the confused consumer (Li et al. 2019). There is, according to the same, a further problem related to the reliability of the signal source, the origin of the classic problems of moral hazard and adverse selection, which can be mitigated through trust.

If we consider the specific case, given the fact that the film market consumer has a problem of information asymmetry (Akdeniz, M. B. & Talay, M. B. 2013), then the trailer can be considered among those signals that can mitigate the problem of uncertainty, since it contains valuable information regarding the cast, plot clues and intrinsic qualities of the promoted film, already defined as reassuring factors for predicting success (Su, M. & Rao, V.R. 2010).

The inclusion of scenes and snapshots concerning topics such as 'cinematography' and 'actor performance' would thus, in continuity with this theory, facilitate decision-making and increase WTWF if included in the trailer.

It is however necessary to clarify, once again, that the experience sought by the consumers of the film industry is always entertainment, and that it is based, for all narrative products such as movies, on the ability to generate the sensation "like being there", an inhomogeneous set of emotional states deriving and induced by the perceived verisimilitude of the parallel reality into which the film is able to transport (Van Laer, T. De Ruyter, K. Visconti, L.M. Wetzels, M. 2014).

In this perspective, the trailer turns out to be the instrument through which the spectator "tastes" the world of which the promoted film is a "portal". This simulation must be constructed in such a way as to generate interest and curiosity, and plot revelations, i.e., spoilers, are capable of destroying and altering important

components of the actual viewing experience, such as suspense and frustration in the face of uncertainty about the plot progression, and not about the intrinsic quality of the movie (Knobloch-Westerwick, S. & Keplinger, C. 2006).
Inserting therefore in the trailer fragments of scenes narratively frameable in the moment of climax, the one with the highest emotional transport, such as the "death of a character" and the explanation of an "important relationship between the protagonists" (the topics most discussed in reviews that contain declared spoilers), would therefore diminish the WTWF as the promise of the trailer turns out to be a spoilt experience, unattractive.
Having explained the relationship between IV and DV, the primary hypothesis, the one concerning the main effect and whose study is necessary to answer the MRQ, can be formulated as follows:

$H_1$: *Trailers without spoilers lead to more positive consumer responses, in terms of willingness to watch the promoted film, than trailers containing spoilers*

## 2.2 *The moderating effect of Subjective differences of the audience*

In order to appropriately answer $SRQ_1$, it is first necessary to define the nature and characteristics of the variable generically named 'subjective differences of the audience', a synthesis of the subjective differences of the audience, which according to previous literature could resolve and explain the spoiler paradox (Leavitt, J.D. & Christenfeld, N.J. 2011).
Researchers have attempted to determine an unambiguous parameter to be able to divide the audience into defined, homogeneous categories. In particular, two different and opposing approaches to Spoiler Disclosure were discovered, derived from particular preferences on the entertainment sought in stories: The Need For Affect (NFA) defined as the tendency to pursue potentially exciting situations (Appel, M. Gnambs, T. & Maio, G.R. 2012), and the Need For Cognition (NFC) defined as the propensity of individuals to pursue critical thinking and mental involvement (Cacioppo, J.T. & Petty, R.E. 1982).
Empirical studies have shown that individuals in the first mentioned category, i.e., those with higher NFA scores, seek uncertainty about the plot progression, being damaged by manipulated SD, and that those with low NFA scores are immune to the effects of SD, indifferent to prior knowledge of the plot of the film viewed (Rosenbaum, J.E. & Johnson, B.K. 2016). This opposite psychological response to communicative stimuli would result from the mind's different propensities to process new information, a faculty known as 'processing fluency'. Factors such as experience and expectations appear to alter the ease and speed with information (as well as emotions) is processed (Reber, R. Schwarz, N. & Winkielman, P. 2004).
According to the 'hedonic model of fluidity', people prefer symmetrical, average and prototypical information that is easy and fluid to process. An alleged propensity for spoiler stories would thus derive from the personal relationship with processing difficulty, which for some is endurable and surmountable, for others unbearable and unsurpassable (Winkielman, P. & Cacioppo, J.T. 2001).

Further individual differences have been highlighted with reference to the variable of involvement, which appears to be a motivational factor that is configured, when considered in relation to the narrative, as a demonstrated empathy towards the characters (Tal-Or, N. & Cohen, J. 2010). Involvement, or transport, is configured in this sense as the motivator capable of speeding up the fluidity of processing, which, by making the information received on that particular topic (the plot understood as the fate of one or more characters) particularly important, makes it possible to circumvent the hedonic model (Schwarz, N. 2004).
The latter, which is actually particularly difficult to measure, because it is specific and peculiar to each film product (and to the characters involved in it) is nevertheless relevant in the so-called 'sequel operations', i.e. the continuous reworking of movies that have already become cult, and has been proposed in the literature as a moderator between process fluidity and evaluation (Schwarz, N. 2004).
Starting from the verified assumption that an involved mind turns out to be an active mind, then the already defined NFA and NFC can be seen, under this particular lens, as the 'symptoms' and a priori conditions of an involved spectator (Galbraith, M. 1995). The moderator can now specifically be broken down into its two fundamental and measurable components, the variables capable of influencing the relationship between SD and WTWF as vehicles of transport and involvement, namely the NFA and NFC.
The affection on which the first of the proposed moderators is based turns out to be an inhomogeneous category involving emotions and moods. Despite the generalised rule that individuals prefer positive to negative affective states, there are substantial subjective differences in the approach, avoidance, of one's inner self (Maio, G.R. & Esses, V.M. 2001).
Whereas constructs such as affection intensity and emotional repression are based on the reaction to the outburst of an emotional state, the NFA focuses instead on individuals' attitudes towards their generalised emotions, in which the analysis of emotional intelligence and the alexithymia deficit converges (Cooper, A. & Petrides, K.V. 2010).
High levels of NFA, corresponding to a declared and latent need for emotion, could emphasise the potentially destructive effects induced by SD and lead to a significant reduction in WTWF, because an experience ruined in terms of emotional suspension is clearly less appealing to subjects who always seek that suspension, particularly in their purchasing decisions. These considerations lead to the elaboration of the first moderation hypothesis:

$H_{1m}$: *The need for affect moderates the effect of Spoiler Disclosure on the propensity to watch the film, specifically the negative effect of SD on WTWF is more likely to occur when the NFA is high, rather than low.*

If NFA concerns the relationship of individuals with their irrational sphere, the need for cognition concerns the tendency to elaborate rational patterns of knowledge about reality, the need to understand and explain it

to oneself. The analysis of this particular need began rather early in the history of modern psychological science (Cohen, A.R. Stotland, E. & Wolfe, D.M. 1955).
High levels of NFC lead individuals to elaborate coherent, vertical and organised patterns of lived experience that enable them, with less effort, to deduce fundamental experiential information in a kind of 'fun of thinking' (Murphy, G. 1947).
This variable has often been used as a moderator for a variety of research concerning entertainment and transportation, however only for very short traditional advertising videos, film synopses and teasers of TV series episodes, never for film trailers (Levine, W.H. Betzner, M. & Autry, K.S. 2016). It has been shown that subjects with high levels of NFC are initially motivated in their comprehension of the communicative stimuli of the advertisement, thus SD, associated with high levels of the same, would lead, as already shown for NFA, to a reduction in the effectiveness of the trailer in terms of induced propensity to watch the promoted film, the previously defined WTWF measure. This consideration leads to the explication of the second moderation hypothesis:

$H_{2m}$: *The need for cognition moderates the effect of Spoiler Disclosure on the propensity to watch the film, specifically the negative effect of SD on WTWF is more likely to occur when NFC is high, rather than low.*

Having defined the main hypotheses that this thesis intends to test empirically, the theoretical research model can be graphically represented as follows:

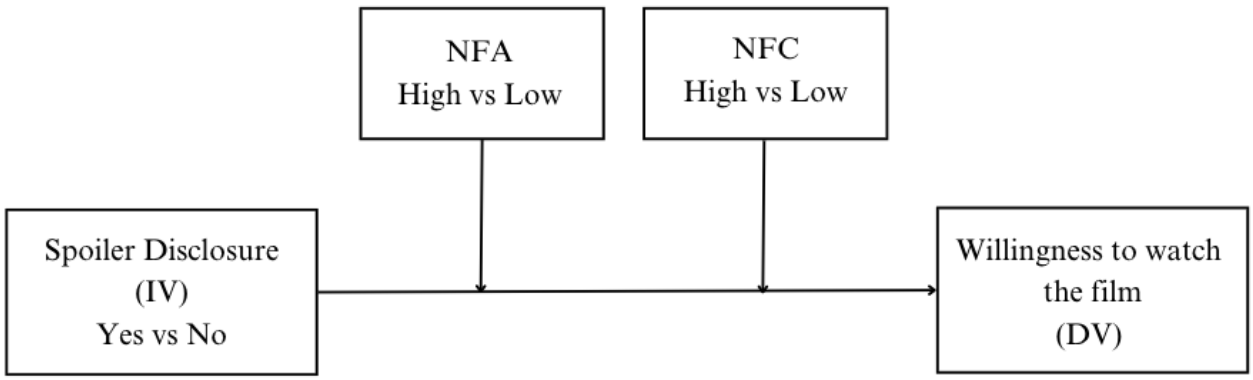



*Figure 1 (Research model)*

## 2.3 *Narrative structure as reinforcing factor*

The main limitation of this research arises from the difficulty of isolating the individual and innumerable components underlying a product as complex as a film. If the problem of the cast's desirability can be remedied by choosing as the specific object of the research little-known films with low media prominence (a

characteristic that in any case requires effective verification), the same cannot be done for the narrative structure.

The latter turns out to be a variable that is too important to be omitted from the model, and its exclusion would entail important limitations in the generalisation of the research results.

In addition to being an experiential product, in fact, the film turns out to be a narrative product, which implies that the script (understood as the textual representation of the narrative structure) is the backbone of the production and that the narrative transport is an important component of the film's entertaining capacity. Narrative transport theory implies that when consumers get lost in a story they change their attitudes and behaviour to reflect that story (Green, M.C. 2008). This state of mind derives from the feeling of identification which the movie, little innocently, seeks via all its components (Green, M.C. & Brock, T.C. 2002).

Through believable characters, the screenwriters, aided by the playing ability of the actors involved, allow the audience to identify with the protagonists, to see the world in the same way as them, and thus to be transported (Escalas, J.E. & Stern, B.B. 2003).

Regarding realism (a central concept in the history of cinema and its close connection to documentary filmmaking) there are two different notions in academic literature: fiction and verisimilitude.

Stories, and thus films, of fiction turn out to be those stories that do not attempt, through the characters involved and the events narrated, to replicate the real world (Green, M.C. 2004). In contrast, verisimilitude stories attempt, while maintaining the fictional suspension of lifelikeness, to replicate the world as it is (Stern, B.B. 1997). Empirical studies have been conducted to show that the more verisimilar the plots and characters turn out to be, the more the viewer is able to empathise with them, thus mentally preparing for transportation into an experience more closely linked to the narrative structure (Van Laer, T. De Ruyter, K. Visconti, L.M. Wetzels, M. 2014).

On the basis of the differentiation, already addressed in the literature, of narrative-based and non-narrative-based films, it is possible to use the concept of realism to understand how the belonging of the promoted film to one of the two aforementioned categories can change the research results and influence the relationship between the variables at play, to such an extent that it merits two separate studies.

Films in the first category (which includes products already labelled as Comedy, Crime, Drama, Thriller or Romance) rely on the realism of the plot and characters to entertain the viewer, engaging him emotionally and irrationally through a narrative structure built to convey mental transportation (Bilandzic, H. & Busselle, R.W. 2011). Beyond subjective audience differences (included in the research through NFA and NFC, the proposed moderators), the effects of SD, undermining through its destructive potential the pivotal element of the film's artistic production, are maximised on WTWF. After all, who would ever watch a Crime film knowing the name of the murderer?

On the contrary, non-narrative-based films (identified under the labels Action, Adventure, Horror and Science Fiction), even though they must have scripts for production purposes, rely on fiction to impress the

audience, conveying an entertainment experience similar to contemplation, limited in terms of narrative transport (Vaughn, L. A. Childs, K. E. Maschinski, C. Niño, N. P. Ellsworth, R. 2010). The effects of SD on WTWF would thus be, considering a film of this category in the research, rather limited.
These considerations, which justify the need to duplicate the study addressed by maintaining the same exposed research model, lead to the elaboration of the last hypothesis, the one necessary to answer the already explicit $SRQ_2$:

$H_3$: *While maintaining the moderating effect of NFA and NFC, the impact of Spoiler Disclosure on Willingness to watch the film will be more strongly marked when considering a narrative-based rather than a non-narrative-based film*

# CHAPTER 3

# Research methodology & Results

## 3.1 *Experimental design*

The aim of this research is fourfold: firstly, it is intended to test H1 and thus the existence of a significant effect of Spoiler Disclosure (SD; Yes vs No), the manipulated independent variable, on Willingness To Watch the Film (WTWF), the measured dependent variable. In particular, it aims to see whether the presence of spoiler content in the trailer shown decreases the viewers' propensity to watch the film. Subsequently, in order to test the $H_{1m}$ and $H_{2m}$ hypotheses, the moderating effect of the Need For Affect (High vs. Low) and the Need For Cognition (High vs. Low), measured empirically by means of pre-validated scales, on the relationship between SD and WTWF will be tested to see whether high levels for both moderators will be associated with an accentuation of the negative effect of the independent variable on the dependent.

These considerations lead to the design of a between-subjects experiment, built on the Qualtrics Online Platform, and distributed and administered online. Since the moderators are a priori characteristics of the audience, independent of each other, no interactions between them are expected according to literature. The risk of carryover, whereby a participant's membership in one experimental condition influences his or her subsequent membership in another experimental condition, is reduced with a between-subject design (Charness, G., Gneezy, U., & Kuhn, M. A. 2012).

To test $H_3$, the study will be duplicated, including a film unambiguously defined as narrative-based (object of Study 1) and a film, for reasons that will be clarified, that can be classified in the non-narrative-based category (object of Study 2). The two studies, which are distinct but equal in research methodology, will be constructed as follows: each participant will be randomly assigned to one of the two scenarios created (Spoiler Disclosure: Yes vs. No), then a scale, created specifically for the experiment, will be proposed to him/her for the manipulation check. This will be followed by two subsequent scales to measure the NFA and NFC, aimed at understanding the subjective characteristics of the respondent, and finally a scale aimed at measuring how the propensity to watch the film varies as the scenarios vary.

Finally, the demographic data of the sample, in terms of gender, age and occupation, will be recorded. Data collection will be carried out by selecting participants through the non-probability sampling technique, using convenience sampling on social channels (WhatsApp and Instagram) and guaranteeing anonymity to respondents.

In any case, prior to the actual launch of the two studies, pre-tests will be launched to verify the manipulation of SD and the perception of a significant difference between the trailer containing spoilers and the spoiler-free one. The following section will be devoted to them.

## 3.2 *Stimuli Building*

In the design of the scenarios, it is not possible to disregard, for all the reasons already analysed, a careful selection and modification of the trailers of the films shown.

About Study 1, the one dealing with narrative based films, the trailer of the film 'Triangle of sadness' by Swedish director Ruben Ostlund will be taken as reference. The latter palme d'or at the 75th Cannes Film Festival is perfect for the purpose of this research for several reasons: First of all, it is a "Drama" and "Comedy" film that focuses on the screenplay and plot as its strong point (Rollingstone 2023), therefore it can be considered narrative based; it is structured according to a strict division into three acts, defined as chapters (Carl and Yaya, the Yacht, the Island) that allow the climax to be unambiguously identified; and finally, it presents a trailer that is perceived as spoiler-free, focusing on topics such as cinematography and actor performance (Rottentomatoes 2023).

Therefore, the first stimulus will be the same trailer, lasting 2:45 minutes, without modification. The construction of the second stimulus, on the other hand, involves, through the application of iMovie video editing, the modification of the same and in particular the addition of three short scenes to be considered spoilerish: a 4s scene of the ship's explosion, in the film at 01:23: 29, decisive because it marks the end of the second act and the beginning of the third; the 5s romantic scene between Carl (male protagonist) and Abigail, because it explains an important and relevant relationship between two important characters, in the film at the time 02:02:55; lastly, the final 7.4s scene of the murder of Yaya (female protagonist), the scene of maximum emotional impact of the film, at 02:16:55. Through the removal and substitution of scenes, and the slight modification of the playback speed, this second altered trailer of "Triangle of sadness" is still 2:45 minutes long.

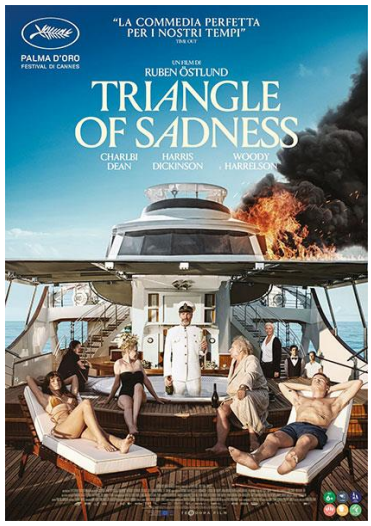



*Figure 2 (Triangle of Sadness Poster)*

The object of Study 2 will instead be the trailer of the film 'Titane', the latter labelled as 'Horror' and 'Science-fiction' turns out to be a perfect example of a non-narrative-based movie relying on visual and scenic effects (IGN 2021). It has the advantage of being comparable with the first one having won the same

award at the same festival, albeit in the 74th edition. As with the first movie, the scenarios were constructed by first keeping the spoiler-free trailer present online unchanged (YouTube 2021) and later modifying it by adding three scenes to be considered as the fundamental plot twists: a sequence of 7s, in the original film at frame 00:11: 41, which shows Alexia's first victim (the film's sole protagonist); the 9s scene at the moment 00:27:03 through which it is possible to catch the likeness of the protagonist's second victim-lover; finally the 10s climax, at the moment 01:35:54, in which Alexia gives birth to the baby-machine, closing the film. Also, in this case homogeneity, in terms of duration, is ensured, the two stimuli are in fact 2:00 minutes long.

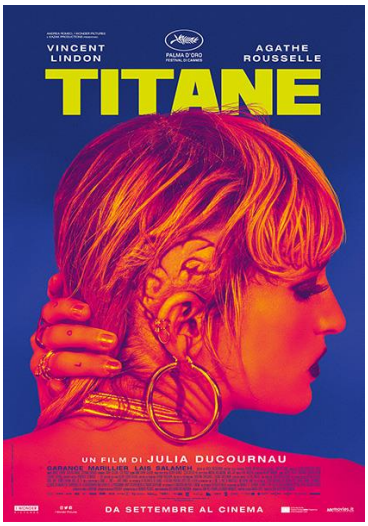



*Figure 3 (Titane Poster)*

## 3.3 *Pre-Tests*

### 3.3.1 *Pre-Tests Design*

In order to verify the effective manipulation of the independent variable, the Spoiler Disclosure, two Pre-Tests concerning the two studies will be constructed on Qualtrics: Pre-Test 1 concerning Study 1 (the one with the narrative-based film Triangle of Sadness as its subject), and Pre-Test 2, concerning Study 2 (with the non-narrative-based film Titane as its subject). The tests appear to be united in purpose and design. As a preliminary step, before the start of the test, the respondents' lack of knowledge of the promoted films and ignorance of the actors shown in the trailer will be checked, which, net of appearances, turn out to be Charlbi Dean, Harris Dickinson and Woody Harrelson for Triangle of Sadness, and Vincent Lindon and Agathe Rousselle for Titane. In this way, the test results can be considered independent of the viewers' prior knowledge of the plot and immune to secondary effects induced by the popularity of the professional figures involved in the film productions under study.

Subsequently, respondents will be randomly, but uniformly, assigned one of the relevant scenarios constructed as indicated above, thus in Pre-Test 1 each respondent will be exposed to only one of the created trailers of Triangle of sadness, either the one containing spoilers or the spoiler free one, while in Pre-Test 2 the trailers, with spoilers or without spoilers, of Titane will be used.

To investigate the perceived Spoiler Disclosure, as no pre-developed scale was found in the literature, an original scale will be developed. The latter turns out to be a 7-point Likert scale of 5 items, constructed according to the literature review on the nature of spoilers, thus aiming at understanding how much the information shown in the trailer is able to make one understand the plot of the film, make one guess the fate of the characters involved, reduce the degree of uncertainty of the plot, explain the relationships between the characters and anticipate the ending of the film.
This is followed by a final block concerning the socio-demographic characteristics of the analysed sample, i.e., age, occupation and gender.

### 3.3.2 *Reliability check*

As the 5-item scale for measuring Spoiler Disclosure is not pre-validated, it needs to be checked for reliability, which is why it is necessary to carry out a reliability analysis using SPSS software.
The resulting Cronbach's Alpha turns out to be .971, a value that the elimination of no items can increase. Therefore, the 7-point Likert scale thus composed can be said to be complete, reliable and exhaustive for the measurement of the independent variable.

### 3.3.3 *Pre-Test 1 Results*

The aim of Pre-Test 1 was to verify the effective manipulation of the independent variable in Study 1 (the one with the subject Triangle of sadness, the narrative based movie), thus the existence of a different perception in terms of the identification of spoilers in the trailers used as scenarios, the one containing spoiler and the one not containing spoilers.
100 answers were collected, of which 91 were complete but 81 valid for the purpose of the test, in fact 10 respondents stated that they had already seen the film under study, rendering their answers unusable.
People from 16 to 65 years of age took part in the experiment (the age group most covered was 20 to 30 years with a cumulative percentage of 64.2), 45.7% female and 48.1% male. 46.9% of the analysed sample stated that they were students, the most declared occupation.
An independent t-test was conducted to compare the averages of the two groups (Spoiler vs. Spoiler free). As shown by Levene's statistics, even though the Homoskedasticity hypothesis of equality of variances is not verified, the means turn out to be significantly different ($t(79)= -12.06$, $p= 0.001$). Scenario 1, the one with the trailer without the added scenes, was perceived as less spoilerish ($M =2.39$, $SD = ,920$) than the altered and edited one ($M= 5.41$, $SD= 1.30$). The difference, in terms of Spoiler Disclosure, can therefore be said to be correctly perceived by the respondents, so the manipulation of the independent variable, due to the success of Pre-Test 1 can be considered effective.

### 3.3.4 *Pre-Test 2 Results*

The objective of Pre-Test 2 was to demonstrate the successful manipulation of the variable Spoiler Disclosure (IV) in Study 2, the one with the subject Titane, the non-narrative-based film.
101 responses were collected, of which 6 were incomplete and therefore invalid and 9 were unusable because they contained the respondents' declaration that they had seen the promoted film.
Individuals aged 18 to 67 years took part in the experiment, with an average age of 27.37 years, 48.8% female and 45.3% male. By far the most common occupation was Student, with 51.2% of the responses.
The averages of the two groups (referring to exposure to the Spoiler rather than Spoiler free scenario) were compared by means of an independent t-test; Levene's statistics in addition to verifying the equality of variances (Sig. = 0.036) demonstrate the statistically relevant difference of the two averages (t(50)= 26.10; p= 0.001), in this sense scenario 1 (M= 6.00, SD= 1.00) was correctly perceived as more spoilerish than scenario 2 (M= 1.88, SD= 0.29).
Again, the manipulation of the independent variable can be said to have been perceived effectively as intended to.

## 3.4 *Main Study Results*

### 3.4.1 *Study 1 Results*

Two hundred and nineteen respondents were recruited online in the same manner as the pre-tests.
Of these, 18 responses were incomplete and 20 were unusable for the purposes of the study as they contained explicit statements of having already seen Triangle of Sadness or of knowing at least one of the actors involved (Charbi Dean, Harris Dickinson, Woody Harrelson).
Individuals between 18 and 68 years took part in the experiment (the most covered age group was 20 to 30 years with 81.7% of the responses), females 56.4% and males 41.4%. 54.7% of the respondents stated that they were students, while 23.2% described themselves as freelancers.
The results of the Independent t-test launched to re-check the results of Pre-Test 1 show the successful manipulation of the independent variable Spoiler Disclosure. Levene's statistics, while not supporting the equality of variances (t(179)= -43.86; p= 0.001), show a significant difference in the averages of the two groups, the one exposed to the spoiler trailer (M= 6.16; SD= 0.56) and the one exposed to the spoiler free trailer (M= 2.09; SD= 0.65).
To measure NFA (Need for Affect), the pre-validated 7-point Likert scale of 10 items by Appel, Gnambs and Maio (2012) was used, the latter included some reverse items that were modified in positive meaning to make the scale uniform. The modification required a study of its reliability, which nevertheless found a Cronbach Alpha of 0.993 and no need to remove any items.
To measure NFC (Need for Cognition) on the other hand, the pre-validated 7-point Likert scale of 18 items by Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein and Jarvis (1996) was used, which also required the modification of the

reverse items and the launching of a reliability study that demonstrated the validity of the scale (whole and without the need to remove any items) on the basis of a Cronbach Alpha of 0.993.
Finally, Adwait, Lauren and Anthony's (2011) 3-item 7-point Likert scale was used to measure Willingness to watch a film (DV), which when subjected to a reliability study found a reassuring Cronbach Alpha of 0.972.
Two 2-way ANOVAs were run, one assuming NFA as a potential moderator and one instead taking NFC into account. Considering the first case (SD, NFA, WTWF), the results confirm that NFA and SD have an impact on WTWF ($F(3,177)= 286.65$, $p= 0.001$). The main effect analysis shows that Spoiler Disclosure ($F(1,177)= 469.76$, $p= 0.001$) has a differential effect on the propensity to watch the film of the viewer exposed to the trailer. In particular, the presence of spoilers in the trailer decreases this propensity ($M= 2.78$, $SD= 1.34$) compared to viewers of spoiler-free trailers ($M= 5.43$, $SD= 1.22$).
NFA significantly influences this attitude ($F(1,177)= 3.98$, $p= 0.047$). Statistical confirmation of the moderating effect of NFA on the relationship between SD and WTWF was also found, the interaction between Spoiler Disclosure and Need for Affect was indeed significant ($F(1,177)= 317.78$, $p= 0.001$).

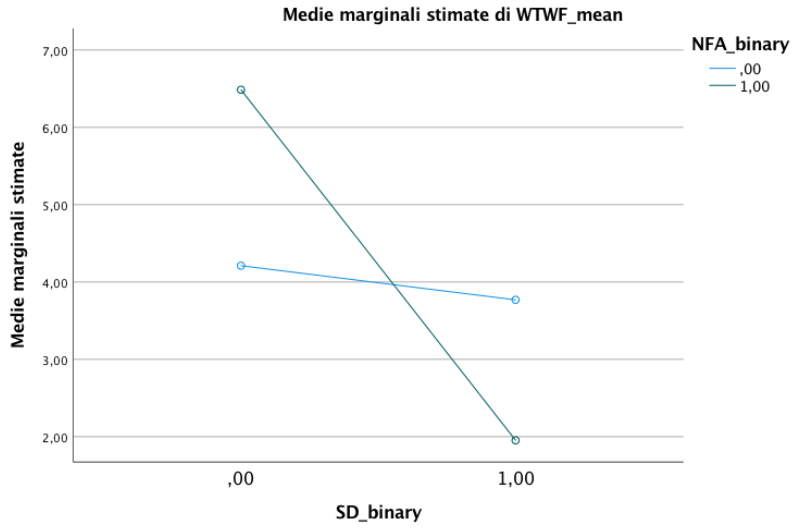



*Figure 4 (NFA-SD in Study 1)*

In the case of spoiler-free trailers and high levels of NFA ($M= 6.48$, $SD= 0.22$) the propensity to watch the film in the spectator turns out to be significantly higher than in the case of the same high levels of NFA but with trailers containing spoilers ($M= 1.95$, $SD= 1.25$).
This difference is much less pronounced when referring to the group of respondents with low NFA levels, exposed to the spoiler trailer ($M= 3.76$, $SD= 0.51$) or the 'neutral' trailer ($M= 4.21$, $SD= 0.22$)
From the graphical representation shown, the disordinal crossover nature of the interaction between the two variables is evident.
Considering the second analysis (SD, NFC, WTWF) the results confirm the existence of an effect of Need for Cognition and Spoiler Disclosure on the propensity to watch the film ($F(3,177)= 117.09$, $p= 0.001$).

NFC per se does not appear able to explain this relationship (F(1,177)= 1.68, p= 0.231), however the interaction between NFC and SD is statistically significant (F(1,177)= 87.60, p= 0.001) confirming the moderating nature of the second variable used to record the subjective characteristics of the audience.

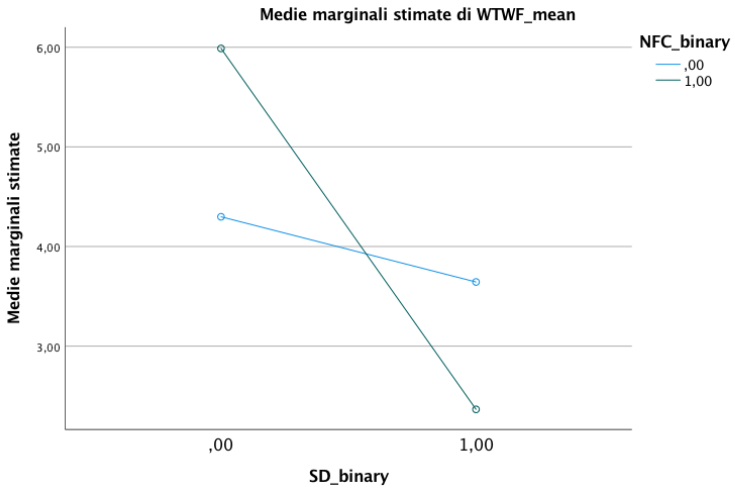



*Figure 5 (NFC-SD in Study 1)*

Specifically, high levels of NFC and trailers containing spoilers (M= 2.36, SD= 1.43) are associated with a significantly lower propensity to watch the film than respondents with high levels of NFC but exposed to trailers not containing spoilers (M= 5.98, SD= 1.11).

As in the first case, low levels of NFC also seem to be associated with a kind of immunity to the effects of Spoiler Disclosure, so that the difference in terms of propensity to watch the film is much subtler between subjects exposed to the spoiler-containing trailer (M= 3.64, SD= 0.41) and those exposed to the neutral trailer (M= 4.29, SD= 0.21).

Again, the interaction between the two variables is of the natural crossover type.

A linear regression was then run, including all the variables considered (also the significant interaction relations SD*NFC and SD*NFA). The coefficient of determination of the model thus considered turns out to be rather high: R-squared= 0.862; Adj R-squared= 0.864. Thus, 86.4% of the variability of the WTWF (dependent variable) is explained by the variables in play. The model fit was good because the F-test was significant (F(5,175= 230.51, p= 0.001). By inspecting the individual coefficients of the regression, the results turn out to be: Spoiler Disclosure (B= 0.445, p< 0.025); Need for Affect (B= 0.628, p<0.025); Need for Cognition (B= 0.468, p<0.025); Spoiler Disclosure*NFA (B= -0.136, p<0.025); Spoiler Disclosure*NFC (B=-0.118, p<0.025). The linear regression thus run can then be summarised in the following equation:

$$WTWF = 2.063 + 0.445*SD + 0.628*NFA + 0.468*NFC - 0.136*SD*NFA - 0.118*SD*NFC$$

The main problem with the model turns out to be that of multicollinearity, the VIF values, except for SD turn out to be rather high (<10), indicating the existence of strong correlation relationships between the

variables involved. This problem is detrimental to the generalization of the results presented but can be taken as a starting point to investigate the relationship existing between NFA and NFC, characteristics of individuals that are not independent but closely connected. Indeed, the Pearson correlation coefficient calculated between them is predictably high (0.825) and significant (p= 0.001).

### 3.4.2 *Study 2 Results*

For the study with the subject 'Titane' (non-narrative-based film) 209 respondents were reached, 5 responses were however incomplete and 6 were invalid as they were made by individuals with prior knowledge of the film under investigation or of Vincent Lindon (lead actor), no one claimed to know Agathe Rousselle.
People from 18 to 67 years of age took part in the study, although 86.9% were in the 20-30 age group. Females accounted for 52% and males for 44.9%, more than half of the respondents (57.6%) said they were students.
The Independent t-test launched confirms the results of Pre-test 2: Levene's statistics, although not supporting the hypothesis of equality of variances in fact show a significant difference in the two scenarios created in terms of perceived Spoiler Disclosure (t(196)= 35.84, p= 0.001).
The trailer containing relevant scenes from the film was in fact perceived to be more spoiler-intensive (M= 6.20, SD= 0.66) than the unedited trailer (M= 2.38, SD= 0.83).
Using the same scales validated in Study 1, two 2-way ANOVAs were run to understand the relationships between the variables involved. The first assuming the measured NFA as moderator, the second taking the NFC into account.
Regarding the first model (SD, NFA, WTWF), the results show an effect of SD and NFA on the propensity to watch the film (F(3,194)= 1050.17, p= 0.001).
SD per se has a statistically significant and differentiating effect on WTWF (F(1,194)= 3042.73, p= 0.001), in particular the existence of spoilers in the trailer (M= 5.61, SD= 1.40) decreases the viewer's intention to watch the film compared to the hazy trailer with no relevant plot information (M= 2.26, SD= 1.25).
Although NFA alone cannot explain this effect (F(1,194)= 0.052, p= 0.821), its interaction with Spoiler Disclosure was statistically significant (F(1,194)= 295.35, p= 0.001) proving the moderating role of the NFA variable within the model.

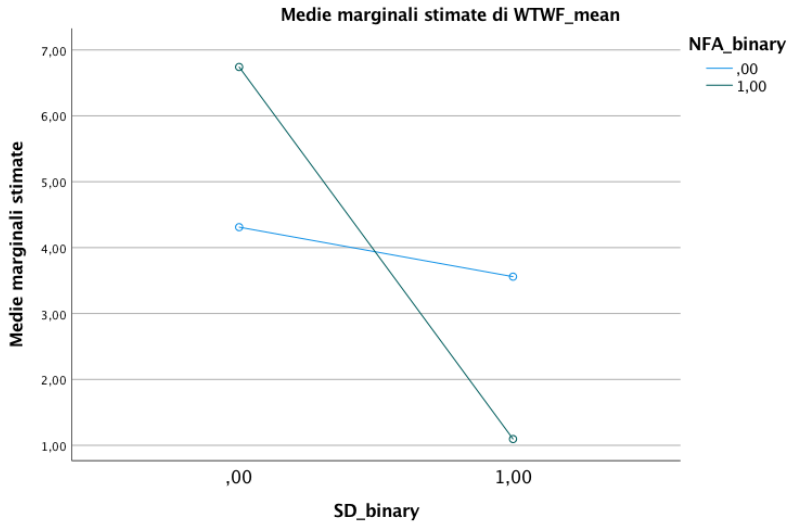



*Figure 6 (NFA-SD in Study 2)*

Trailers without spoilers are significantly more interesting and attractive to the viewer with high levels of NFA (M= 6.74, SD= 0.92) than spoiler trailers (M= 1.09 SD= 0.26), confirming the results obtained in Study 1.

Considering instead the second model (SD, NFC, WTWF), the results confirm the statistical significance of the model fit (F(3,194)= 104.59, p= 0.001), again signaling the existence of a meaningful effect of SD on WTWF (F(1, 194)= 310.47, p= 0.001), but deny the statistical validity of the effect of NFC on the dependent variable (F(1,194)= 0.169, p= 0.682), as well as its moderating effect on the same (F(1,194)= 1.54, p= 0.216). Indicating an actual difference from the results of the first study.

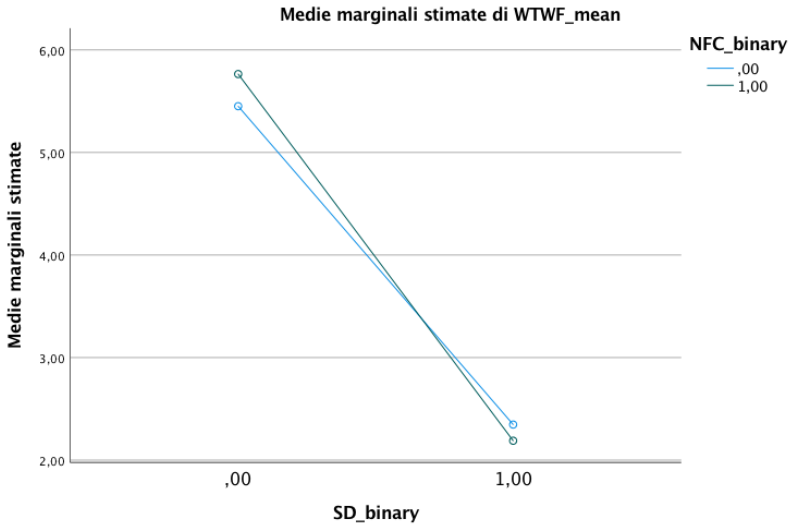



*Figure 7 (NFC-SD in Study 2)*

As can also be deduced from the graphical representation, Need for Cognition does not seem to change the trailer viewers' propensity to watch the film.

Placing all variables within a summary linear regression yields a fairly high coefficient of determination: R-squared= 0.816; Adj R-squared= 0.811. 81.1% of the variability of WTWF is thus explained by the variables considered.
Given the significant F-test ($F(5,192)= 170.51$, $p= 0.001$) the model fit can be said to be correct.
In detail, the coefficients of the regression are as follows: Spoiler Disclosure ($B= 0.391$, $p < 0.025$); Need for Affect ($B= 1.235$, $p < 0.025$); Need for Cognition ($B= -0.02$, $p= 0.767$); SD*Need for Affect ($B= -0.281$, $p < 0.025$); SD*Need for Cognition ($B= 0.019$, $p= 0.252$).
The regression line can then be expressed through the following equation:

$$WTWF= 1.921 + 0.391*SD + 1.235*NFA - 0.02*NFC - 0.281*SD*NFA + 0.019*SD*NFC$$

The fact that there are no problems of multicollinearity between the variables (all VIFs are less than or equal to 10) makes the relationship between the variables chosen to record the subjective characteristics of the audience even more complex and ambiguous; in Study 2, in fact, NFA and NFC are, unlike in the first study, independent of each other and not linked by a correlation relationship.

## 3.5 *Results Discussion*

Regarding $H_1$, the one investigating the direct relationship between the Spoiler Disclosure and the willingness to watch the film, both Study 1 and Study 2 unequivocally demonstrate that trailers free of spoilers, i.e. without scenes explicitly concerning the fundamental parts of the plot of a film (framed in the climax and approximately on the ending) and the destiny of the characters, are more appealing, interesting and attractive to the spectators. On the other hand, it has been shown how the inclusion of spoilers in the trailer diminishes the attractiveness of the main tool of film marketing, which loses its effectiveness regardless of the subjective characteristics of the audience exposed to the stimulus.
This result can be said to be purged and independent of the control variables considered, i.e. knowledge of the film being promoted or of the actors involved in the film project.
As far as $H_{1m}$ is concerned, the one regarding the moderating role of the Need for Affect, it finds total agreement in both Study 1 and Study 2.
The need to get excited seems to be the fundamental mental process that potential viewers seek in advertised films; the presence of spoilers in the trailer appears to ruin the expected emotional impact of the advertised film, which becomes the promise of a ruined and therefore unattractive experience.
This negative effect is, however, 'asymmetrical', as it appears to be decidedly more pronounced for subjects with high levels of NFA than for subjects with low levels of the same, so that a sort of immunity to the effects of spoilers in trailers is evident, which does not eliminate the negative impact, but significantly mitigates it.

This consideration is, in the light of the results obtained, independent of the narrative structure of the film, thus univocal and always true, regardless of the concreteness and definition of the screenplay and consequently of the centrality of the plot.
More complicated is the discussion on $H_{2m}$, the one concerning the moderating role of Need for cognition, i.e. the need to engage in complex reasoning in order to be entertained.
Confirmation of this hypothesis is only found in Study 1, the one concerning narrative-based films. The existence of a complex and articulated narrative structure thus seems to make the film viewing experience more complete, comprising a multiplicity of interconnected needs.
The rejection of the same hypothesis in Study 2 also emphasizes the greater 'superficiality' of the experience induced by non-narrative-based films, based essentially on irrational processes such as astonishment and surprise instead of rational and cognitive processes, which take second place.
Finally, as far as the last hypothesis, $H_3$, is concerned, the difference between the two studies is not so much to be found in the differentiated effect of Spoiler Disclosure (similar and absolutely comparable) as in the different role of the subjective and individual factors of the audience which, for the reasons already stated, concretize, on the basis of the relative importance of the narrative structure, two profoundly different entertainment experiences.

## 3.6 *Theoretical and Managerial implications*

From a theoretical point of view, the results of this thesis provide support for a multiplicity of implications: Firstly, they fit into that academic vein interested in proving the potentially destructive effect of plot revelations on a film's entertainment potential. In line with this assumption, they indirectly demonstrate how important identification and uncertainty are in the enjoyment of an experiential product such as a film, which is first and foremost an adrenalin trigger. In continuity with the principle that consumers base their purchasing decisions on future expectations, this thesis demonstrates how experiential products that are 'intact' in terms of their expected emotional impact are more appealing and interesting than products that are spoiled and emotionally drained due to spoilers, now to be considered dangerous leaks of information with a degenerating impact. A finding that belies the solidified academic belief that reducing uncertainty around a film's plot increases its commercial desirability (Ryoo, Wang & Lu 2020).
This thesis also tries to fit into the lively, as yet unresolved, discussion on the difference between film genres (considered in limited relation to narrative structure), in terms of the emotional levers activated. In this sense, it demonstrates how the perception of the existence of an articulated and complex plot lends sophistication and depth to the expected experience induced by the viewing of a film trailer, activating latent needs such as the need to get excited and the need to engage in complex reasoning.
On the contrary, the non-existence of a solid script seems to be able to 'lighten' the expected mental involvement of which the promoted film is the vehicle, which excludes the triggering of rational-cognitive

needs connected to the increase in processing fluidity, already identified in the literature as a factor positively correlated with the propensity to watch a film (Schwarz 2004).
Finally, again from a theoretical point of view, this thesis certifies the importance of individual differences in the formation of purchasing decisions on experiential products, how much the individual sphere is able to filter marketing stimuli, arriving at totally different conclusions and effects, sometimes opposite to those hoped for. It confirms the same immunity, common to low scorers on the NFA and partially on the NFC, already found in the literature (Rosenbaum & Johnson, 2016).
From a managerial point of view, it emerges from the results of this research that there is a need to limit spoiler leakage as much as possible in the implementation of the marketing plan parallel to the production of a film.
Attention must be paid firstly to the choice and editing of the scenes selected during the production of film trailers, which must be intriguing and attractive but 'harmless' from the point of view of plot revelation. Secondly, as trailers are like all marketing stimuli launched through a multiplicity of channels, managers should make sure that in the discussion around the same (particularly relevant in the social media world) no important information about the narrative structure of the promoted film leaks out, so as not to grant prior interpretative keys in anticipation of the actual viewing of the film.
Furthermore, bearing in mind the different mental mechanisms triggered by narrative-based or non-narrative-based experiences, managers should exploit the most appropriate levers within trailers (however as spoiler-free as possible). Content with a high emotional and cognitive impact in the first case, aimed at emphasizing the verisimilitude and lifelikeness of the story to convey narrative transport and identification with the characters and consequently increase the willingness to watch the film (Van Laer, T. De Ruyter, K. Visconti, L.M. Wetzels, M. 2014); Only impressive scenes in the second, perhaps emphasizing the underlying fiction of the world where the film takes place, an unrealistic place that makes the very lack of realism and rationality its strong point, already identified as an attractive factor for the target audience (Green 2004).

## 3.7 *Limitations & Future Research Agenda*

The main and general limitation of any research focusing on cinema marketing appears to be the difficulty of isolating the multiple and individual components on which the success of a film is based. As analyzed in the first paragraph of the literature review, there are several factors, both internal and external, which determine the willingness of potential viewers to watch a film, the dependent variable of this study.
Through the control variables considered in this study, i.e. prior knowledge of the cast as well as viewing the film prior to the trailer, only a few, albeit more important, internal factors were considered.
Although the two films chosen (Titane and Triangle of sadness) are comparable from the point of view of audience reception (in terms of average reviews on specialized sites) and critical reception (in terms of film

awards won), the extent to which this parameter directly influenced the measurement of the propensity to watch the promoted film was not measured.
Future research in this respect could focus on the direct impact of film festivals in shaping purchase decisions.
Furthermore, as much as the study was duplicated in order to understand the narrative structure variable within the research, it lacks a specific insight into the film genre of the promoted film, a complex categorization process that cannot be based solely on narrative characteristics but involves a whole series of factors not considered in this study, such as setting, iconic and linguistic characteristics.
From the perspective of external factors, the analysis of the impact of the distribution channel of the trailer was also omitted from this study. The substantial differences, in terms of selective attention and effectiveness, of the different distribution channels, i.e. cinema, social networks and physical digital media, have already been analyzed in the literature and each with its own specific characteristics is able to change the viewer's reactions to trailers.
Future research could focus on understanding these differences and concretize the general propensity to purchase into an effective call to action that considers the different ways through which one can watch a film (cinema ticket purchase, streaming platform subscription, physical media purchase, etc.).
An important limitation on the generalization of the results of this research is the lack of understanding of the correlation between the variables proposed as moderators, i.e. NFA and NFC. This ignorance makes it difficult to isolate the effect of each and makes the deep understanding of consumer individuality vague and superficial.
Future studies could focus on bridging this gap, perhaps by identifying more suitable variables to summarize the subjective characteristics of the audience.
Finally, considering that social platforms are becoming more and more important and can now be considered real places of information exchange and interaction, future research should focus on the potential viewer not as an independent individual in the formation of his or her own purchasing decisions but as a pawn embedded in a dynamic context in which information (thus also plot revelations) may be hidden not only in the trailer and other marketing tools but also in user comments and specialized reviews published online.

# References

Ajzen, I. (1991) The theory of planned behaviour. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50(2), 179-211.

Akdeniz, M. B., Talay, M. B. (2013). Cultural variations in the use of marketing signals: A multilevel analysis of the motion picture industry. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 41(5), 601– 624.

Anand, N., Watson, M. R. (2004). Tournament rituals in the evolution of fields: The case of the Grammy awards. Academy of Management Journal, 47(1), 59 –80.

Anast, P. (1967) Differential movie appeals as correlates of attendance, Journalism Quarterly, 44: 86-90.

Appel, M., Gnambs, T., Maio, G. R. (2012) A short measure of the need for affect. Journal of Personality Assessment, 94, 418–426.

Basuroy, S., Desai, K. K., Talukdar, D. (2006). An empirical investigation of signaling in the motion picture industry. Journal of Marketing Research, 43(2), 287 –295.

Béra, M. (2003). Critique d'art et/ou promotion culturelle. Réseaux, 117, 155–187.

Bilandzic, H., Busselle, R. W. (2011) Enjoyment of films as a function of narrative experience, perceived realism and transportability, 36 (1), 29-50

Boksem, M. A., Smidts, A. (2015). Brain responses to movie trailers predict individual preferences for movies and their population-wide commercial success. Journal of Marketing Research, 52(4), 482-492.

Booth, P. (2010) Digital fandom: New media studies. Peter Lang.

Boyd-Graber, J., Glasgow, K., Zajac, J. S. (2013) Spoiler alert: Machine learning approaches to detect social media posts with revelatory information. Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 50(1), 1-9.

Brightlocal (2016). Local consumer review survey. Retrieved from https://www.brightlocal.com/learn/local-consumer-review-survey (accessed March 1, 2023)

Cacioppo, J. T., & Petty, R. E. (1982) The need for cognition. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 42, 116–131.

Carrillat, F.A., Legoux, R., Hadida, A.L. (2018) Debates and assumptions about motion picture performance: a meta-analysis. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 46, 273–299.

Castillo, A., Benitez, J., Llorens, J., Braojos, J. (2021) Impact of social media on the firm's knowledge exploration and knowledge exploitation: The role of business analytics talent, J. Assoc. Inf. Syst. 22(5), 1472-1508.

Castro, D., Rigby, J. M., Cabral, D., Nisi, V. (2021) The binge-watcher's journey: Investigating motivations, contexts, and affective states surrounding Netflix viewing. *Convergence*, *27*(1), 3-20.

Caves, R.E. (2000) Creative Industries. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Chadha, H., Madan, D., Rana, D., Sharma, N. (2023). Analysis of User Inclination in Movie Posters Based on Color Bias. In: Dutta, P., Bhattacharya, A., Dutta, S., Lai, WC. (eds) Emerging Technologies in Data Mining and Information Security. Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing, vol 1348. Springer, Singapore.

Charness, G., Gneezy, U., & Kuhn, M. A. (2012). Experimental methods: Between-subject and within-subject design. *Journal of economic behavior & organization*, *81*(1), 1-8.

Cohen, A. R., Stotland, E., Wolfe, D. M. (1955) An experimental investigation of need for cognition. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, SI, 291- 294.

Cooper, A., Petrides, K. V. (2010) A psychometric analysis of the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Short Form (TEIQue–SF) using item response theory. Journal of Personality Assessment, 92, 449–457.

Cousins, M. (2017) La storia del cinema, UTET Università

Debenedetti, S. (2006). The role of media critics in the cultural industries. International Journal of Arts Management, 8(3), 30–42.

Devlin, M.B., Chambers, L.T., Callison, C. (2011) Targeting mood: Using comedy or serious movie trailers. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media 55 (4): 581–595.

Dhar, T., Weinberg, C. B. (2016) Measurement of interactions in non-linear marketing models: The effect of critics' ratings and consumer sentiment on movie demand. International Journal of Research in Marketing, 33(2), 392–408.

Digital TV Research (2023). Subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) revenue worldwide from 2016 to 2028 (in billion U.S. dollars). In Statista. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/483096/svod-revenue-worldwide/ (accessed March 27, 2023).

Dimock, W. C. (2007) Introduction: Genres as fields of knowledge. PMLA, 122(5), 1377–1387.

Egan, K., Thomas, S., (2012) Cult film stardom; offbeat attractions and processes of cultification. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Einav, L. (2007) Seasonality in the U.S. Motion Picture Industry. The Rand journal of economics. 38.1: 127–145.

Eliashberg, J., Hui, S.K., Zhang, Z.J. (2007) From story line to box office: A new approach for green-lighting movie scripts. Management Science 53 (6): 881–893.

Eliashberg, J., Sawhney, M.S. (1994) Modeling goes to Hollywood: Predicting individual differences in movie enjoyment. Management Science 40 (9): 1151–1173.

Escalas, J. E. (2007) Self-referencing and persuasion: Narrative transportation versus analytical elaboration. Journal of Consumer Research, 33(4), 421-429.

Escalas, J. E., Stern, B. B. (2003) Sympathy and Empathy: Emotional Responses to Advertising Dramas, Journal of Consumer Research, 29 (4), 566–78.

Flanagin, A. J., Metzger, M. J. (2013). Trusting expert-versus usergenerated ratings online: The role of information volume, valence, and consumer characteristics. Computers in Human Behavior, 29(4), 1626–1634.

Galbraith, M. (1995) Deictic shift theory and the poetics of involvement in narrative. In J. F. Duchan, G. A. Bruder, & L. E. Hewitt (Eds.), Deixis in narrative: A cognitive science perspective (pp. 19–59). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gilbert, D. T., Wilson, T. D. (2007) Prospection: Experiencing the future. Science, 317(5843), 1351-1354.

Gilbey, R. (2006) Trailer trash. New Statesman 135 (4783): 42–44.

Goh, K., Cheng-Suang, H., Zhijie, L. (2013) Social Media Brand Community and Consumer Behavior: Quantifying the Relative Impact of User- and Marketer-Generated Content. Information Systems Research, 24 (1), 88–107.

Gong, T., Tung, V. W. S. (2017) The impact of tourism mini-movies on destination image: The influence of travel motivation and advertising disclosure. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 34(3), 416–428.

Green, M. C. (2004) Transportation into Narrative Worlds: The Role of Prior Knowledge and Perceived Realism, Discourse Processes, 38 (2), 247–67.

Green, M.C. (2008) Transportation Theory, in International Encyclopedia of Communication, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 5170–75.

Green, M.C., Brock, T.C. (2002) In the Mind's Eye: Transportation-Imagery Model of Narrative Persuasion, in Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations., ed. Melanie C. Green, Jeffrey J. Strange, and Timothy C. Brock, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 315–41.

Guynes, S.A., Hassler-Forest, D. (2017) Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling, Amsterdam University Press.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Wiertz, C., Feldhaus, F. (2015). Does twitter matter? The impact of microblogging word of mouth on consumers adoption of new movies. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 43(3), 375–394.

Hixon, T. K. (2006) Mission possible: Targeting trailers to movie audiences. Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing. vol. 14. pp. 210-224.

Hollywood Reporter (2012) Brad Pitt's zombie nightmare: Inside the troubled ‘world war Z’ production. Retrieved from https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/brad-pitt-world-war-z-production-nightmare-336422/ (accessed March 2 2023)

Horn, G.M. (2007). Movie soundtracks and sound effects. Pleasantville, NY: Gareth Stevens Publishing. https://it.ign.com/titane/187151/review/titane-la-recensione (accessed April 29, 2023)

IGN (2021) Gloria e vita alla nuova carne! Retrieved from https://it.ign.com/titane/187151/review/titane-la-recensione (accessed April 21, 2023)

IMDb (2023) Updates to User Reviews. Retrieved from https://getsatisfaction.com/imdb/topics/update-to-user-reviews (accessed March 10, 2023).

International Union of Cinemas (2022) Domestic films' attendance as a percentage of movie tickets sold in selected countries in Europe from 2019 to 2021. In *Statista*. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/458685/local-films-share-of-admissons-in-european-countries/ (accessed March 28, 2023).

Investopedia (2022) Why movies cost so much to make. Retrieved from https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0611/why-movies-cost-so-much-to-make.aspx (accessed March 2, 2023)

Jalilvand, M. R., Esfahani, S. S., Samiei, N. (2011) Electronic word-of-mouth: Chal-lenges and opportunities. Procedia Computer Science, 3, 42-46.
Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Jeon, S., Kim, S., Yu, H. (2016) Spoiler detection in TV program tweets. Information Sciences, 329, 220-235.

Jerrick, D. (2013) The Effectiveness of Film Trailers: Evidence from the College Student Market. UW-L Journal of Undergraduate Research. vol. 14.

Johnson, B. K., Rosenbaum, J. E. (2018) (Don’t) Tell me how it ends: Spoilers, enjoyment, and involvement in television and film. Media psychology, 21(4), 582-612.

Johnston, K. M. (2009) Coming Soon: Film Trailers and the Selling of Hollywood Technology. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Joshi, A.M., Hanssens, D.M. (2009) Movie advertising and the stock market valuation of studios: A case of great expectations? Marketing Science 28 (2): 239–250.

Joshi, A.M., Hanssens, D.M. (2010) The direct and indirect effects of advertising spending on firm value. Journal of Marketing 74 (1): 20–33.

Karahanna, E., Xu, S., Xu, Y., Zhang, N. (2018) The needs-affordances-features perspective for the use of social media, MIS Q. 42 (3) 737-756.

Khatib, L. (2013) Storytelling in World Cinemas: Contexts (Vol. 2). Columbia University Press.

Klimmt, C. (2011) Media psychology and complex modes of entertainment experiences. Journal of Media Psychology, 23(1), 34-38.

Knobloch-Westerwick, S., Keplinger, C. (2006) Mystery appeal: Effects of uncertainty and resolution on the enjoyment of mystery. Media Psychology, 8, 193-212.

Krizhevsky, A., Sutskever, I., Hinton, G.E. (2012) ImageNet classification with deep convolutional neural networks. In: Part of: Advances in neural information processing systems. NIPS 2012, vol. 25, pp 1–9.

Kundalia, K., Patel, Y., Shah, M. (2020) Multi-label Movie Genre Detection from a Movie Poster Using Knowledge Transfer Learning. Augment Hum Res 5, 11.

Leavitt, J. D., Christenfeld, N. J. (2011) Story spoilers don't spoil stories. Psychological science, 22(9), 1152-1154.

Leavitt, J. D., Christenfeld, N. J. S. (2013) The fluency of spoilers: Why giving away endings improves stories. Scientific Study of Literature, 3, 93-104.

Levine, W. H., Betzner, M., Autry, K. S. (2016) The effect of spoilers on the enjoyment of short stories. Discourse Processes,53, 513–531.

Li, X., Zhuang, Y., Lu, B., Chen, G. (2019) A multi-stage hidden Markov model of customer repurchase motivation in online shopping. Decision Support Systems, 120, 72-80.

Li, Y., Luo, X. R., Li, K., Xu, X. (2022) Exploring the spoiler effect in the digital age: Evidence from the movie industry. Decision Support Systems, 157, 113755.

Litman, B. (1983) Predicting success of theatrical movies: An empirical study, Journal of Popular Culture, 16(spring): 159-175.

Liu, X., Shi, S. W., Teixeira, T., Wedel, M. (2018). Video content marketing: The making of clips. Journal of Marketing, *82*(4), 86-101.

Liu, Y. (2006). Word of mouth for movies: Its dynamics and impact on box office revenue. Journal of Marketing, 70(3), 74–89.

Luo, L., Chen, X., Han, J., Whan Park, C. (2010). Dilution and enhancement of celebrity brands through sequential movie releases. Journal of Marketing Research, 47(6), 1114–1128.

Mahlknecht, J. (2015) Three words to tell a story: the movie poster tagline, Word & Image, 31:4, 414-424.

Maio, G. R., Esses, V. M. (2001) The need for affect: Individual differences in the motivation to approach and avoid emotions. Journal of Personality, 69, 583–614.

Marich, R. (2005) Marketing to moviegoers: A handbook of strategies used by major studios and independents. 1st ed. Burlington, MA: Focal Press.

Marzulli, A. (2011), Il valore del prodotto cinematografico lungo la filiera di sfruttamento, Economia della Cultura, Rivista trimestrale dell'Associazione per l'Economia della Cultura, pp. 133-144

McDonald, P. (2013) Hollywood Stardom. Walden: Wiley-Blackwell.

McLuhan, M. (1997) Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. Cambridge, MA; London: The MIT Press.

Moe, W.W., Fader, P.S. (2001) Modeling hedonic portfolio products: A joint segmentation analysis of music compact disc sales. Journal of Marketing Research 38 (3): 376–385.

Moses, C., Maxwell, A., Adegbuyi, O., Akinbode, M., Inelo, F. (2016) The overriding influence of social media as the key driver of cinematic movie sales. International Business Management, 10(6), 718–725.

MPA (2022) Entertainment industry market statistics report. Retrieved from https://www.motionpictures.org (accessed March 2, 2023)

MPAA (2022). Leading box office markets worldwide in 2021, by revenue (in billion U.S. dollars). In Statista. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/243180/leading-box-office-markets-workdwide-by-revenue/ (accessed March 27, 2023).

Murphy, G. (1947) Personality: A biosocial approach to origins and structure. New York: Harper.

Neale, S. (2007) Questions of genre. In B. K. Grant (Ed.), Film genre reader III (p. 636). University of Texas Press.

Neelamegham, R., Chinatagunta, P. (1999) A Bayesian model to forecast new product performance in domestic and international markets, Marketing Science, 18(2): 115-136.

O'Leary, A. (2011) The Phenomenology of the cinepanettone, Italian Studies, 66:3, 431-443

Oh, C., Roumani, Y., Nwankpa, J.K., Hu, H.F. (2017) Beyond likes and tweets: consumer engagement behavior and movie box office in social media, Inf. Manag. 54.

Oliver, M. B., Woolley, J. K. (2010). Tragic and poignant entertainment: The gratifications of meaningfulness as emotional response. In E. Döveling, E. von Scheve, & E. A. Konijn (eds.), The Routledge handbook of emotions and mass media. New York, NY: Routledge, 134-147.

Osborne, R. (2003), in Dianna Edwards, Picture Show: Classic Movie Posters from the TCM Archives, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2003, 9.

Pang, J., Liu, A.X., Golder, P.N. (2022) Critics' conformity to consumers in movie evaluation. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 50, 864–887.

Pangarker, N. A., Smit, E. (2013) The determinants of box office performance in the film industry revisited. South African Journal of Business Management, 44(3), 47-58.

Pangarker, N.A. (2013) The Determinants of Box Office Performance in the Film Industry Revisited. South African journal of business management. Suid-Afrikaanse tydskrif vir bedryfsleiding. 44.3

Paulich, B.J., Kumar, V. (2021). Relating entertainment features in screenplays to movie performance: an empirical investigation. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 49, 1222–1242.

Peers, Y., Fok, D., Franses, P.H. (2012) Modeling Seasonality in New Product Diffusion. Marketing Science 31 (2).

Peng, L., Cui, G., Li, C. (2013) The comparative impact of critics and consumers: Applying the generalisability theory to online movie ratings. International Journal of Market Research, 55(3), 413-436.

Pittman, M., Sheehan, K. (2015) Sprinting a media marathon: Uses and gratifications of binge-watching television through cinema. First Monday, 20(10).

Prag, J.J., Casavant, J. (1994) An empirical study of the determinants of revenues and marketing expenditure in the motion picture industry, Journal of Cultural Economics, 18(3): 217-235.

Reber, R., Schwarz, N., Winkielman, P. (2004) Processing fluency and aesthetic pleasure: Is beauty in the perceiver's processing experience? Personality and Social Psychology Review, 8, 364–382.

Rennhoff, A.D., Wilbur, K.C. (2011) The effectiveness of post-release movie advertising. International Journal of Advertising 30 (2): 305–328.

Rollingstone (2023) "Triangle of Sadness": Instagram, vomito e lotta di classe, così finisce il '900. Retrieved from https://www.rollingstone.it/cinema-tv/film/triangle-of-sadness-instagram-vomito-e-lotta-di-classe-cosi-finisce-il-900/678222/ (accessed April 21, 2023)

Rottentomatoes (2023) Triangle of sadness. Retrieved from https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/triangle_of_sadness (accessed April 21, 2023)

Ryoo, J. H., Wang, X., Lu, S. (2021) Do spoilers really spoil? Using topic modeling to measure the effect of spoiler reviews on box office revenue. Journal of Marketing, 85(2), 70-88.

Schwarz, N. (2004) Metacognitive Experiences in Consumer Judgment and Decision Making. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 14(4), 332–348.

Shen, Y., Chan, H. C., Heng, C. S. (2015) The Medium Matters: Effects on What Consumers Talk About Regarding Movie Trailers. Information Systems. International Conference. 37 th 2016. (ICIS 2016).

Shieh, H. S., Lin, S. Y. (2022) A study of the relationship between online movie reviews and the intention to watch the movie. Journal of Economics and Management, 44(1), 344-375.

Shiller, R. J. (2020) Narrative economics: How stories go viral and drive major economic events. Princeton University Press.

Simonton, D.K. (2005) Film as art versus film as business: differential correlates of screenplay characteristics, Empirical studies of the arts, Vol. 23(2) 93-117

Sokoloff, A. (2009) Screenwriting tricks for authors (and screenwriters!). Working Paper

Solimini, A. G. (2013) Are there side effects to watching 3D movies? A prospective crossover observational study on visually induced motion sickness. PloS one, 8(2), e56160.

Stafford, T., Stafford, M., Schkade, L. (2004) Determining uses and gratifications for the internet, Decis. Sci. 35 (2) 259-288.

Statista (2023) Combined market share of the "Big Five" major film studios in the United States and Canada from 2000 to 2022. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/187261/combined-market-share-of-major-film-studios-in-north-america/ (accessed March 28, 2023).

Stern, B. B. (1997) Postmodern Consumer Research Narratives: Problems in Construct Definition, Structure, and Classification, Advances in Consumer Research, 24 (1), 68–69.

Su, M., Rao, V.R. (2010) Timing decisions of new product preannouncement and launch with competition. International Journal of Production Economics 129 (1): 51–64.

Swami, S. (2006) Research perspectives at the interface of marketing and operations: applications to the motion picture industry, Mark. Sci. 25.

Tal-Or, N., Cohen, J. (2010) Understanding audience involvement: Conceptualizing and manipulating identification and transportation. Poetics, 38, 402–418.

Tamborini, R., Bowman, N. D., Eden, A., Grizzard, M., & Organ, A. (2010) Defining media enjoyment as the satisfaction of intrinsic needs. Journal of Communication, 60, 758-777.

Tang, T., Fang, E., Wang, F. (2014) Is neutral really neutral? The effects of neutral user-generated content on product sales. Journal of Marketing, 78(4), 41-58.

Trottier, D. (1998) The Screenwriter's Bible: A Complete Guide to Writing, Formatting. Los Angeles: Silman-James Press.

Van Laer, T., De Ruyter, K., Visconti, L. M., Wetzels, M. (2014) The extended transportation-imagery model: A meta-analysis of the antecedents and consequences of consumers' narrative transportation. Journal of Consumer research, 40(5), 797-817.

Vaughn, L. A., Childs, K. E., Maschinski, C., Niño, N. P., Ellsworth, R. (2010) Regulatory fit, processing fluency, and narrative persuasion. Social & Personality Psychology Compass, 4, 1181-1192.

Verboord, M. (2014). The impact of peer-produced criticism on cultural evaluation: A multilevel analysis of discourse employment in online and offline film reviews. New Media & Society, 16(6), 921–940.

Wang, F., Liu, X., Fang, E. E. (2015) User reviews variance, critic reviews variance, and product sales: An exploration of customer breadth and depth effects. Journal of Retailing, 91(3), 372-389.

Wasko, J. (2004) How Hollywood works. London: Sage.

Wehrmann, J., Barros, R. C. (2017) Movie genre classification: A multi-label approach based on convolutions through time. Applied Soft Computing, 61, 973-982.

Wehrmann, J., Barros, R. C., Dôres, S. N. D., Cerri, R. (2017) Hierarchical multi-label classification with chained neural networks. In Proceedings of the Symposium on Applied Computing, 790-795.

Whitten, S. (2019) The death of the DVD: Why sales dropped more than 86% in 13 years. Retrieved from https://www.cnbc.com/2019/11/08/the-death-of-the-dvd-why-sales-dropped-morethan-86percent-in-13-years.html (accessed March 3, 2023)

Williams, R. (2013) Tonight's the night with…Captain Jack! Torchwood's John Barrowman a celebrity/subcultural celebrity/localebrity. In: R. Williams, ed. Torchwood Declassified: investigating mainstream cult television. London: I.B. Tauris, 154–172.

Winkielman, P., Cacioppo, J. T. (2001) Mind at ease puts a smile on the face: Psychophysiological evidence that processing facilitation elicits positive affect. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81, 989–1000.

Xie, G.X., Lee, M.J. (2008) Anticipated violence, arousal, and enjoyment of movies: Viewers' reactions to violent previews based on arousal-seeking tendency. The Journal of Social Psychology 148 (3): 277–292.

Yan, D., Tsang, A. S. (2016) The misforecasted spoiler effect: Underlying mechanism and boundary conditions. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 26(1), 81-90.

Yang, J., Kim, W. (2014) Seasonality in the Non-U.S. Motion Picture Industry: A Case of South Korea. Journal of Media Economics 27: 38–55.

YouTube (2021) TITANE Trailer. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5_w2W5G9OM (accessed April 29, 2023)

# *APPENDIX A*
## *SCALES & REALIBAILITY ANALYSIS*

## SPOILER DISCLOSURE (SD)

### Reliability statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha based on standardised elements | No. of items |
|---|---|---|
| ,971 | ,972 | 5 |

### Item-total statistics

| | Scale mean if the item is deleted | Scale variance if the item is deleted | Corrected item-total correlation | Quadratic multiple correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if the item is deleted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Considero le scene mostrate nel trailer particolarmente rilevanti per comprendere la trama del film | 15,74 | 58,919 | ,924 | ,867 | ,963 |
| Dopo aver visto il trailer mi sento già in grado di indovinare il destino dei personaggi | 15,68 | 58,421 | ,925 | ,862 | ,963 |
| Dopo aver visto il trailer ritengo la trama del film decisamente meno incerta | 15,62 | 55,489 | ,920 | ,856 | ,964 |
| Ritengo, dopo il trailer, di aver già capito come il film andrà a finire | 15,64 | 57,208 | ,927 | ,866 | ,962 |
| Le relazioni tra il protagonista e gli altri personaggi mi appaiono particolarmente chiare | 15,79 | 58,718 | ,892 | ,809 | ,968 |

# WILLINGNESS TO WATCH THE FILM (DV)

## Reliability statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha based on standardised elements | No. of items |
|---|---|---|
| ,972 | ,972 | 3 |

## Item-total statistics

| | Scale mean if the item is deleted | Scale variance if the item is deleted | Corrected item-total correlation | Quadratic multiple correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if the item is deleted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ho trovato il film promosso nel trailer attraente/interessante | 8,18 | 13,472 | ,952 | ,907 | ,950 |
| Prenderei in considerazione la visione del film | 8,14 | 13,620 | ,938 | ,885 | ,960 |
| Consiglierei questo film ai miei amici | 8,21 | 14,378 | ,930 | ,867 | ,966 |

# NEED FOR AFFECT (MOD)

## Reliability statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha based on standardised elements | No. of items |
|---|---|---|
| ,993 | ,993 | 10 |

## Item-total statistics

| | Scale mean if the item is deleted | Scale variance if the item is deleted | Corrected item-total correlation | Quadratic multiple correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if the item is deleted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Se rifletto sul mio passato, noto che tendenzialmente mi sento sicuro nel provare emozioni | 39,13 | 362,771 | ,983 | ,972 | ,992 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sento che ho bisogno di provare regolarmente emozioni forti | 38,81 | 356,135 | ,950 | ,939 | ,993 |
| Le emozioni aiutano le persone ad andare avanti nella vita | 39,09 | 362,781 | ,956 | ,943 | ,992 |
| Trovo che le emozioni forti siano travolgenti e quindi cerco di perseguirle | 39,09 | 359,948 | ,970 | ,950 | ,992 |
| Penso che sia importante esplorare i propri sentimenti | 38,96 | 357,715 | ,963 | ,946 | ,992 |
| Mi piace sperimentare picchi emozionali | 38,97 | 360,371 | ,961 | ,946 | ,992 |
| So come gestire le mie emozioni, quindi le inseguo | 39,03 | 364,254 | ,960 | ,943 | ,992 |
| È importante per me essere in contatto con i miei sentimenti | 38,99 | 359,917 | ,961 | ,942 | ,992 |
| È importante per me sapere come si sentono gli altri | 38,96 | 364,154 | ,960 | ,948 | ,992 |
| Le emozioni sono sicure: tendono a mettermi in situazioni in cui mi piace stare | 39,00 | 359,467 | ,971 | ,951 | ,992 |

# NEED FOR COGNITION (MOD)

## Reliability statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha based on standardised elements | No. of items |
|---|---|---|
| ,993 | ,993 | 18 |

## Item-total statistics

| | Scale mean if the item is deleted | Scale variance if the item is deleted | Corrected item-total correlation | Quadratic multiple correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if the item is deleted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Preferisco i problemi complessi a quelli semplici | 72,18 | 911,761 | ,968 | ,961 | ,992 |
| Mi piace avere la responsabilità di gestire una situazione che richiede molta riflessione | 72,23 | 896,798 | ,940 | ,928 | ,992 |
| Pensare è la mia idea di divertimento | 71,98 | 920,455 | ,906 | ,899 | ,992 |
| Preferisco fare qualcosa che metta alla prova la mia capacità di pensare piuttosto che qualcosa che richiede poca riflessione | 72,10 | 915,012 | ,948 | ,929 | ,992 |
| Cerco di anticipare e perseguire le situazioni in cui è probabile che io debba pensare in modo approfondito su qualcosa | 72,09 | 908,863 | ,945 | ,918 | ,992 |
| Trovo soddisfazione nel ragionare intensamente e per lunghe ore | 72,19 | 912,724 | ,927 | ,905 | ,992 |
| Penso anche quando non è necessario | 72,02 | 912,733 | ,925 | ,897 | ,992 |
| Preferisco ragionare a lungo termine piuttosto che su piccoli progetti quotidiani | 71,99 | 915,806 | ,935 | ,911 | ,992 |
| Mi piacciono i compiti che richiedono una riflessione continua una volta appresi | 72,17 | 908,898 | ,945 | ,922 | ,992 |
| L'idea di affidarmi al pensiero per arrivare in alto mi piace | 72,13 | 909,249 | ,937 | ,912 | ,992 |
| Mi piace molto svolgere un compito che implica l'elaborazione di nuove soluzioni ai problemi | 72,02 | 915,039 | ,939 | ,916 | ,992 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Imparare nuovi modi di pensare mi entusiasma molto | 72,12 | 904,541 | ,949 | ,937 | ,992 |
| Preferisco che la mia vita sia piena di enigmi da risolvere | 72,15 | 912,954 | ,927 | ,916 | ,992 |
| L'idea di pensare in modo astratto mi attrae | 72,12 | 915,330 | ,929 | ,898 | ,992 |
| Preferisco un compito intellettuale, difficile e rilevante a uno meno importante ma che non richiede molta riflessione | 72,13 | 910,945 | ,930 | ,908 | ,992 |
| Provo soddisfazione piuttosto che sollievo dopo aver completato un compito che ha richiesto un grande sforzo mentale | 72,09 | 909,625 | ,932 | ,910 | ,992 |
| Per me non è sufficiente che una cosa venga portata a termine, mi interessa sapere come e perché funziona | 72,18 | 914,602 | ,923 | ,881 | ,992 |
| Di solito finisco per riflettere su questioni che non mi riguardano personalmente | 72,02 | 912,472 | ,946 | ,919 | ,992 |

# *APPENDIX B*
## ***PRE-TEST 1 & STUDY 1 RESULTS***

## PRE-TEST 1 RESULTS

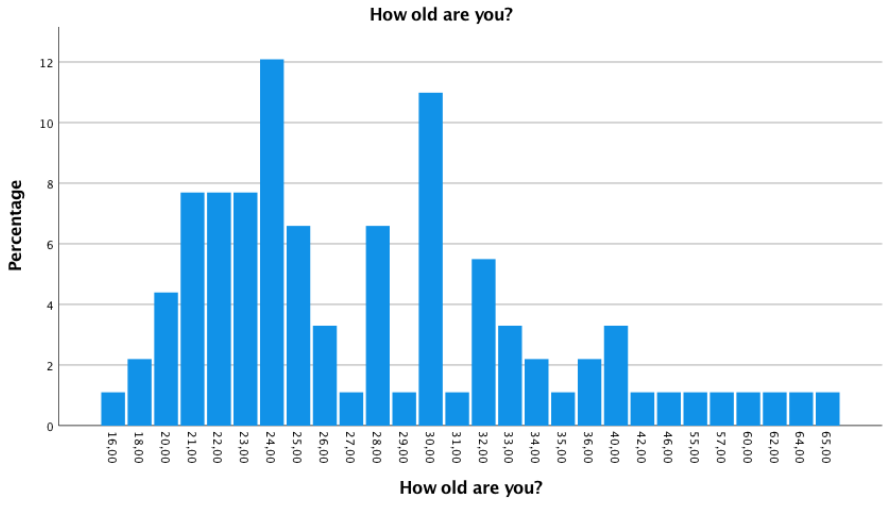
### Group statistics

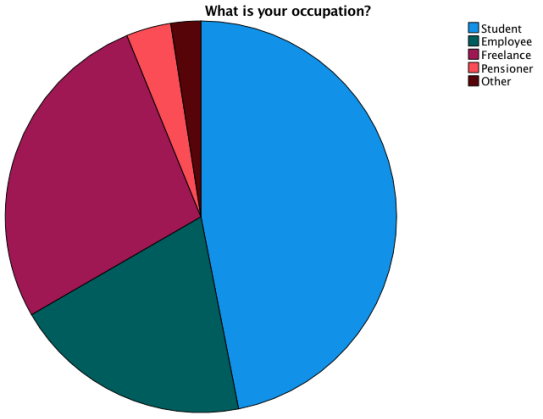
| | Conditions | N | Mean | Std. deviation | Standard error of the mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| mean_SD | 1,00 | 40 | 2,3900 | ,92037 | ,14552 |
| | 2,00 | 41 | 5,4195 | 1,30216 | ,20336 |

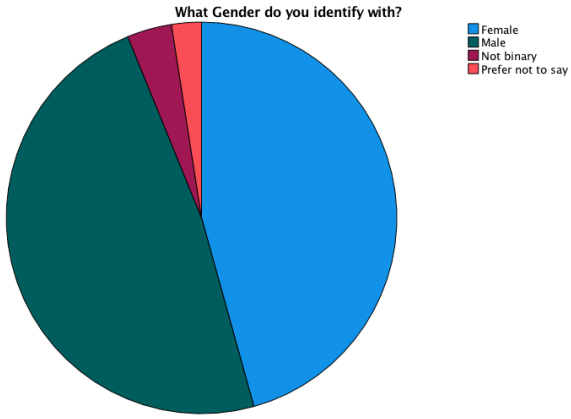
| | | Levene's test for equality of variances | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sign. |
| mean_SD | Assumed equal variances | 3,848 | ,053 |
| | Unassumed equal variances | | |

| T-test for equality of means | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Significance | | | | 95% confidence interval of difference | |
| T | Gl | P unilateral | P bilateral | Difference in the mean | Std. error difference | Inferior | Superior |
| -12,064 | 79 | < ,001 | <,001 | -3,02951 | ,25111 | -3,52934 | -2,52969 |
| -12,115 | 72,071 | < ,001 | <,001 | -3,02951 | ,25007 | -3,52800 | -2,53102 |

### Socio-demographic statistics






# MAIN STUDY 1 RESULTS

## Manipulation Check

### Group statistics:

| | SD_binary | N | Mean | Std. deviation | Standard error of the mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SD_mean | ,00 | 89 | 2,0966 | ,56497 | ,05989 |
| | 1,00 | 92 | 6,1630 | ,67543 | ,07042 |

| | | Levene's test for equality of variances | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sign. |
| SD_mean | Assumed equal variances | ,186 | ,667 |
| | Unassumed equal variances | | |

| T-test for equality of means | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Significance | | | | 95% confidence interval of difference | |
| T | Gl | P unilateral | P bilateral | Difference in the mean | Std. error difference | Inferior | Superior |
| -43,860 | 179 | <,001 | <,001 | -4,06641 | ,09271 | -4,24936 | -3,88346 |
| -43,990 | 175,371 | <,001 | <,001 | -4,06641 | ,09244 | -4,24885 | -3,88398 |

# Two-way ANOVA (NFA)

## Descriptive statistics

Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

| SD_binary | NFA_binary | Mean | Std. deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ,00 | ,00 | 4,2114 | ,22056 | 41 |
| | 1,00 | 6,4861 | ,55844 | 48 |
| | Total | 5,4382 | 1,22020 | 89 |
| 1,00 | ,00 | 3,7698 | ,51265 | 42 |
| | 1,00 | 1,9533 | 1,25629 | 50 |
| | Total | 2,7826 | 1,34012 | 92 |
| Total | ,00 | 3,9880 | ,45217 | 83 |
| | 1,00 | 4,1735 | 2,47703 | 98 |
| | Total | 4,0884 | 1,84613 | 181 |

## Levene's test of equality of variances of error[a,b]

| | | Levene's statistics | gl1 | gl2 | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WTWF_mean | Based on Mean | 19,302 | 3 | 177 | <,001 |
| | Based on Median | 9,375 | 3 | 177 | <,001 |
| | Based on Median and with the adjusted degree of freedom | 9,375 | 3 | 77,176 | <,001 |
| | Based on cutout Mean | 16,829 | 3 | 177 | <,001 |

It tests the null hypothesis that the variance of the error of the Dependent variable is equal between the groups.

a. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

b. Design: Interceptor + SD_binary + NFA_binary + SD_binary * NFA_binary

## Test of effects between subjects

Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

| Origin | Sum of type III squares | Df | Quadratic Mean | F | Sig. | Partial Square Eta | Noncent. Parameter | Observed power[b] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model fit | 508,761[a] | 3 | 169,587 | 286,656 | <,001 | ,829 | 859,968 | 1,000 |
| Interceptor | 3028,518 | 1 | 3028,518 | 5119,164 | <,001 | ,967 | 5119,164 | 1,000 |
| SD_binary | 277,917 | 1 | 277,917 | 469,769 | <,001 | ,726 | 469,769 | 1,000 |
| NFA_binary | 2,358 | 1 | 2,358 | 3,986 | ,047 | ,022 | 3,986 | ,510 |
| SD_binary * NFA_binary | 188,000 | 1 | 188,000 | 317,780 | <,001 | ,642 | 317,780 | 1,000 |
| Error | 104,714 | 177 | ,592 | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 3638,889 | 181 | | | | | | |
| Correct total | 613,475 | 180 | | | | | | |

a. R-square = ,829 (Adjusted R-square = ,826) b. Calculated using alpha = ,05

## Two-Way ANOVA (NFC)

### Descriptive statistics

Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

| SD_binary | NFC_binary | Mean | Std. deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ,00 | ,00 | 4,2989 | ,20596 | 29 |
| | 1,00 | 5,9889 | 1,11987 | 60 |
| | Total | 5,4382 | 1,22020 | 89 |
| 1,00 | ,00 | 3,6444 | ,40997 | 30 |
| | 1,00 | 2,3656 | 1,43430 | 62 |
| | Total | 2,7826 | 1,34012 | 92 |
| Total | ,00 | 3,9661 | ,46194 | 59 |
| | 1,00 | 4,1475 | 2,22642 | 122 |
| | Total | 4,0884 | 1,84613 | 181 |

### Levene's test of equality of variances of error[a,b]

| | | Levene's statistics | gl1 | gl2 | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WTWF_mean | Based on Mean | 33,611 | 3 | 177 | <,001 |
| | Based on Median | 18,839 | 3 | 177 | <,001 |
| | Based on Median and with the adjusted degree of freedom | 18,839 | 3 | 131,182 | <,001 |
| | Based on cutout Mean | 30,759 | 3 | 177 | <,001 |

It tests the null hypothesis that the variance of the error of the Dependent variable is equal between the groups.

a. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

b. Design: Interceptor + SD_binary + NFC_binary + SD_binary * NFC_binary

### Test of effects between subjects

Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

| Origin | Sum of type III squares | df | Quadratic Mean | F | Sig. | Partial Square Eta | Noncent. Parameter | Observed power[b] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model fit | 407,929[a] | 3 | 135,976 | 117,092 | <,001 | ,665 | 351,277 | 1,000 |
| Interceptor | 2640,023 | 1 | 2640,023 | 2273,386 | <,001 | ,928 | 2273,386 | 1,000 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SD_binary | 181,875 | 1 | 181,875 | 156,617 | <,001 | ,469 | 156,617 | 1,000 |
| NFC_binary | 1,680 | 1 | 1,680 | 1,447 | ,231 | ,008 | 1,447 | ,223 |
| SD_binary * NFC_binary | 87,607 | 1 | 87,607 | 75,441 | <,001 | ,299 | 75,441 | 1,000 |
| Error | 205,545 | 177 | 1,161 | | | | | |
| Total | 3638,889 | 181 | | | | | | |
| Correct total | 613,475 | 180 | | | | | | |

a. R-square = ,665 (Adjusted R-square = ,659)

b. Calculated using alpha = ,05

# Regression

## Variables entered/removed[a]

| Model | Entered variables | Removed variables | Method |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | NFC*SD, NFA_mean, SD_mean, NFC_mean, NFA*SD[b] | . | Entering |

a. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

b. All required variables have been entered.

## Model summary

| Model | R | R-square | Adjusted R-square | Std. error of the estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ,932[a] | ,868 | ,864 | ,67978 |

a. Predictors: (constant), NFC*SD, NFA_mean, SD_mean, NFC_mean, NFA*SD

## ANOVA[a]

| Model | | Sum of squares | gl | Quadratic Mean | F | Sign. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regression | 532,606 | 5 | 106,521 | 230,514 | <,001[b] |
| | Residual | 80,868 | 175 | ,462 | | |
| | Total | 613,475 | 180 | | | |

a. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

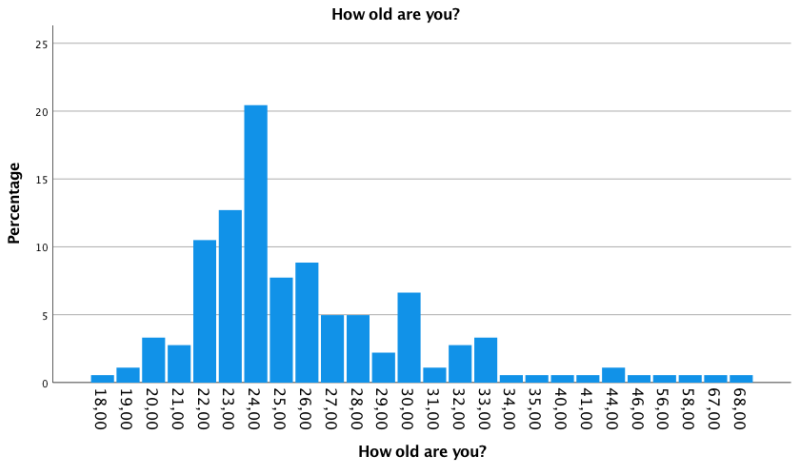
b. Predictors: (constant), NFC*SD, NFA_mean, SD_mean, NFC_mean, NFA*SD

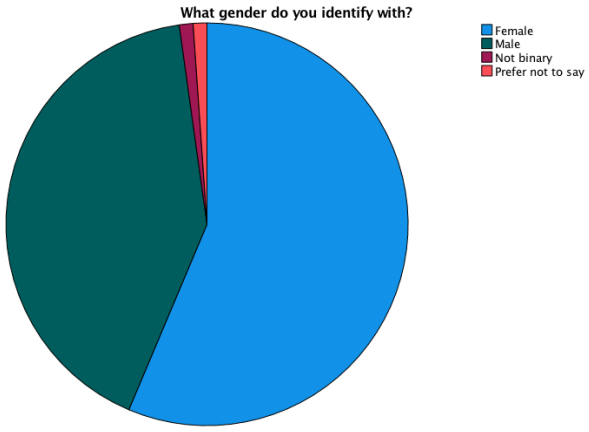
## Coefficients[a]

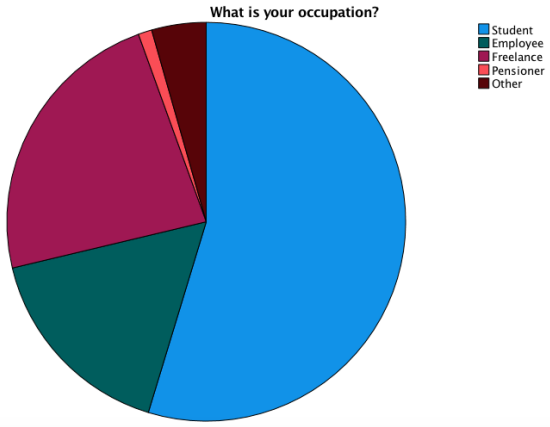
| | | Non-standardised coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | Collinearity Statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | | B | Error standard | Beta | T | Sign. | Tolerance | VIF |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2,063 | ,283 | | 7,286 | <,001 | | |
| | SD_mean | ,445 | ,060 | ,514 | 7,432 | <,001 | ,158 | 6,343 |
| | NFA_mean | ,628 | ,096 | ,717 | 6,538 | <,001 | ,063 | 15,985 |
| | NFC_mean | ,468 | ,111 | ,450 | 4,200 | <,001 | ,066 | 15,264 |
| | NFA*SD | -,136 | ,021 | -1,003 | -6,567 | <,001 | ,032 | 30,969 |
| | NFC*SD | -,118 | ,024 | -,781 | -4,874 | <,001 | ,029 | 34,047 |

a. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

# Socio-demographic statistics



# *APPENDIX C*
## ***PRE-TEST 2 & STUDY 2 RESULTS***

## PRE-TEST 2 RESULTS

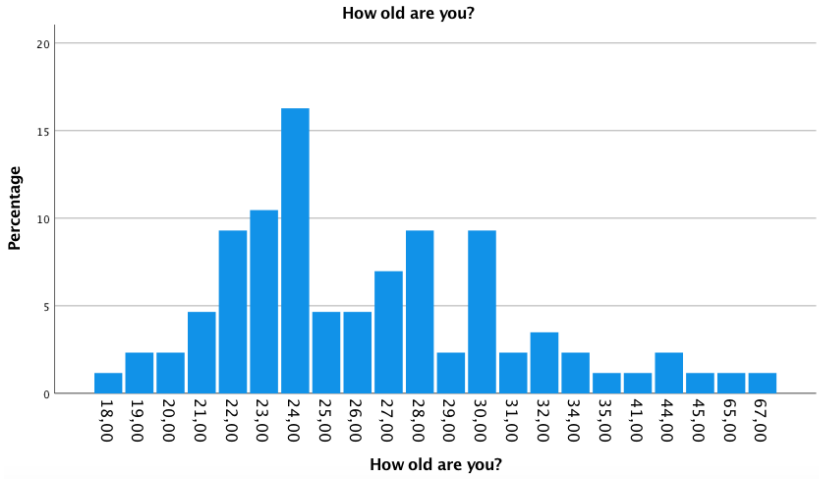
### Group statistics

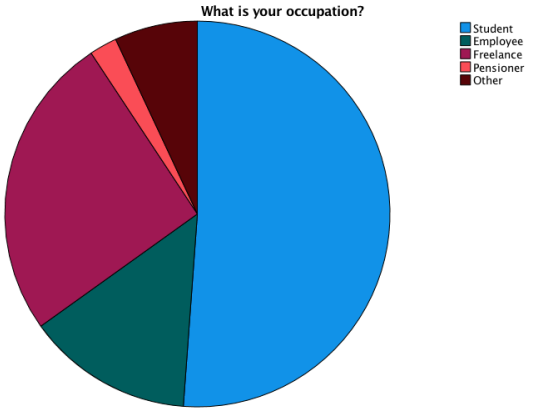
| | Conditions | N | Mean | Std. deviation | Standard error of the mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| meanSD | 1,00 | 44 | 6,0045 | 1,00370 | ,15131 |
| | 2,00 | 42 | 1,8857 | ,29014 | ,04477 |

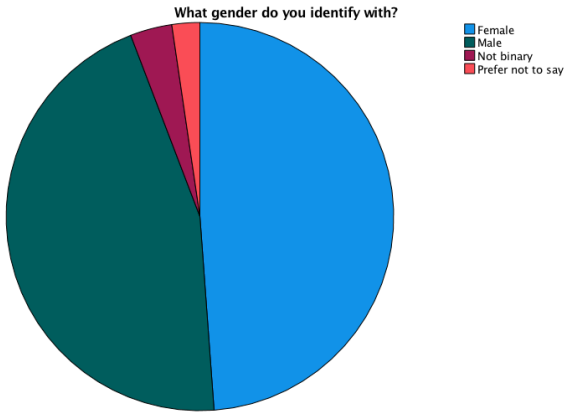
| | | Levene's test for equality of variances | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sign. |
| meanSD | Assumed equal variances | 4,535 | ,036 |
| | Unassumed equal variances | | |

| T-test for equality of means | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Significance | | | | 95% confidence interval of difference | |
| T | gl | P unilateral | P bilateral | Difference in the mean | Std. error difference | Inferior | Superior |
| 25,588 | 84 | <,001 | <,001 | 4,11883 | ,16097 | 3,79872 | 4,43894 |
| 26,102 | 50,452 | <,001 | <,001 | 4,11883 | ,15780 | 3,80195 | 4,43571 |

### Socio-demographic statistics






# MAIN STUDY 2 RESULTS

## Manipulation check

## Group statistics

| | SD_binary | N | Mean | Std. deviation | Standard error of the mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SD_mean | 1,00 | 99 | 6,2061 | ,65805 | ,06614 |
| | ,00 | 99 | 2,3838 | ,83234 | ,08365 |

| | | Levene's test for equality of variances | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sign. |
| SD_mean | Assumed equal variances | 1,230 | ,269 |
| | Unassumed equal variances | | |

| T-test for equality of means | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Significance | | | | 95% confidence interval of difference | |
| T | Gl | P unilateral | P bilateral | Difference in the mean | Std. error difference | Inferior | Superior |
| 35,843 | 196 | <,001 | <,001 | 3,82222 | ,10664 | 3,61191 | 4,03253 |
| 35,843 | 186,092 | <,001 | <,001 | 3,82222 | ,10664 | 3,61184 | 4,03260 |

## Two-Way ANOVA (NFA)

### Descriptive statistics

Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

| SD_binary | NFA_binary | Mean | Std. deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ,00 | ,00 | 4,3116 | ,22665 | 46 |
| | 1,00 | 6,7421 | ,92367 | 53 |
| | Total | 5,6128 | 1,40028 | 99 |
| 1,00 | ,00 | 3,5603 | ,22096 | 47 |
| | 1,00 | 1,0962 | ,25851 | 52 |
| | Total | 2,2660 | 1,25986 | 99 |
| Total | ,00 | 3,9319 | ,43837 | 93 |
| | 1,00 | 3,9460 | 2,91625 | 105 |
| | Total | 3,9394 | 2,13998 | 198 |

### Levene's test of equality of variances of error[a,b]

| | | Levene's statistics | gl1 | gl2 | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WTWF_mean | Based on Mean | 5,026 | 3 | 194 | ,002 |
| | Based on Median | 1,272 | 3 | 194 | ,285 |
| | Based on Median and with the adjusted degree of freedom | 1,272 | 3 | 70,414 | ,291 |
| | Based on cutout Mean | 2,027 | 3 | 194 | ,111 |

It tests the null hypothesis that the variance of the error of the Dependent variable is equal between the groups.

a. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

b. Design: Interceptor + SD_binary + NFA_binary + SD_binary * NFA_binary

### Test of effects between subjects

Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

| Origin | Sum of type III squares | Df | Quadratic Mean | F | Sig. | Partial Square Eta | Noncent. Parameter | Observed power[b] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model fit | 849,831[a] | 3 | 283,277 | 1050,170 | <,001 | ,942 | 3150,509 | 1,000 |
| Interceptor | 3042,732 | 1 | 3042,732 | 11280,069 | <,001 | ,983 | 11280,069 | 1,000 |
| SD_binary | 504,539 | 1 | 504,539 | 1870,435 | <,001 | ,906 | 1870,435 | 1,000 |
| NFA_binary | ,014 | 1 | ,014 | ,052 | ,821 | ,000 | ,052 | ,056 |
| SD_binary * NFA_binary | 295,359 | 1 | 295,359 | 1094,958 | <,001 | ,849 | 1094,958 | 1,000 |
| Error | 52,330 | 194 | ,270 | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 3974,889 | 198 | | | | | | |
| Correct total | 902,162 | 197 | | | | | | |

a. R-square = ,942 (Adjusted R-square = ,941) b. Calculated using alpha = ,05

## Two-Way ANOVA (NFC)

### Descriptive statistics

Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

| SD_binary | NFC_binary | Mean | Std. deviation | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ,00 | ,00 | 5,4514 | 1,48990 | 48 |
| | 1,00 | 5,7647 | 1,30689 | 51 |
| | Total | 5,6128 | 1,40028 | 99 |
| 1,00 | ,00 | 2,3472 | 1,26595 | 48 |
| | 1,00 | 2,1895 | 1,26184 | 51 |
| | Total | 2,2660 | 1,25986 | 99 |
| Total | ,00 | 3,8993 | 2,07977 | 96 |
| | 1,00 | 3,9771 | 2,20474 | 102 |
| | Total | 3,9394 | 2,13998 | 198 |

### Levene's test of equality of variances of error[a,b]

| | | Levene's statistics | gl1 | gl2 | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WTWF_mean | Based on Mean | 2,084 | 3 | 194 | ,104 |
| | Based on Median | ,258 | 3 | 194 | ,855 |
| | Based on Median and with the adjusted degree of freedom | ,258 | 3 | 184,076 | ,855 |
| | Based on cutout Mean | 2,325 | 3 | 194 | ,076 |

It tests the null hypothesis that the variance of the error of the Dependent variable is equal between the groups.

a. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

b. Design: Interceptor + SD_binary + NFC_binary + SD_binary * NFC_binary

### Test of effects between subjects

Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

| Origin | Sum of type III squares | df | Quadratic Mean | F | Sig. | Partial Square Eta | Noncent. Parameter | Observed power[b] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model fit | 557,496[a] | 3 | 185,832 | 104,598 | <,001 | ,618 | 313,794 | 1,000 |
| Interceptor | 3068,068 | 1 | 3068,068 | 1726,905 | <,001 | ,899 | 1726,905 | 1,000 |
| SD_binary | 551,584 | 1 | 551,584 | 310,467 | <,001 | ,615 | 310,467 | 1,000 |
| NFC_binary | ,299 | 1 | ,299 | ,169 | ,682 | ,001 | ,169 | ,069 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SD_binary * NFC_binary | 2,743 | 1 | 2,743 | 1,544 | ,216 | ,008 | 1,544 | ,235 |
| Error | 344,666 | 194 | 1,777 | | | | | |
| Total | 3974,889 | 198 | | | | | | |
| Correct total | 902,162 | 197 | | | | | | |

a. R-square = ,618 (Adjusted R-square = ,612)

b. Calculated using alpha = ,05

# Regression

## Variables entered/removed[a]

| Model | Entered variables | Removed variables | Method |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | SD*NFC, NFA_mean, NFC_mean, SD_mean, SD*NFA[b] | . | Entering |

a. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

b. All required variables have been entered.

## Model summary[b]

| Model | R | R-square | Adjusted R-square | Std. error of the estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ,903[a] | ,816 | ,811 | ,92934 |

a. Predictors: (constant), SD*NFC, NFA_mean, NFC_mean, SD_mean, SD*NFA

b. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

## ANOVA[a]

| Model | | Sum of squares | gl | Quadratic Mean | F | Sign. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regression | 736,337 | 5 | 147,267 | 170,513 | <,001[b] |
| | Residual | 165,825 | 192 | ,864 | | |
| | Total | 902,162 | 197 | | | |

a. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

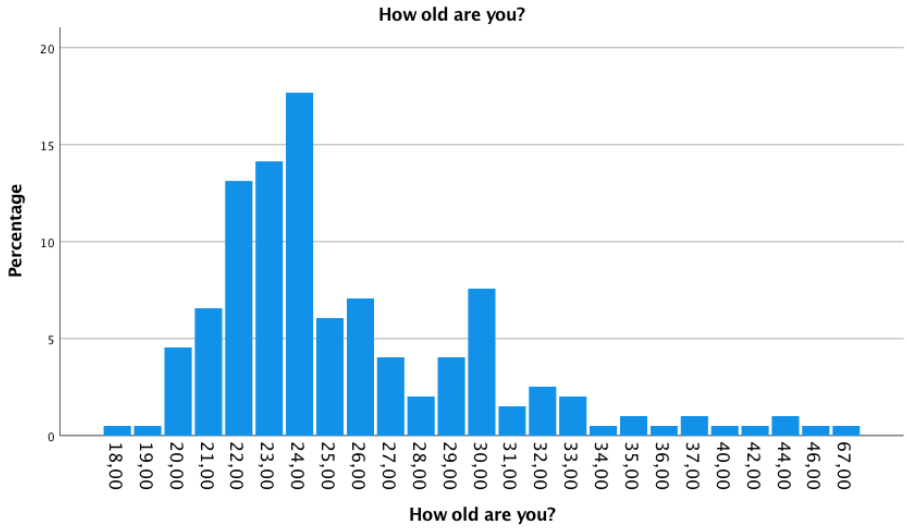
b. Predictors: (constant), SD*NFC, NFA_mean, NFC_mean, SD_mean, SD*NFA

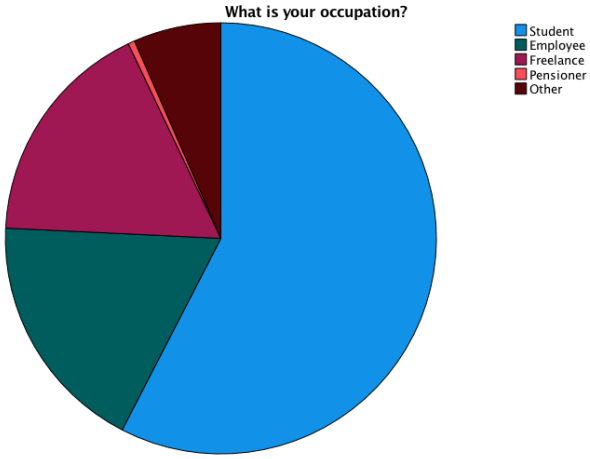
## Coefficients[a]

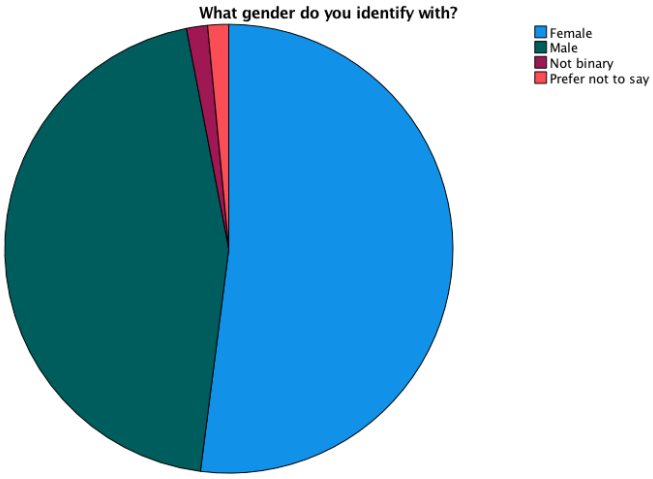
| | | Non-standardised coefficients | | Standardised coefficients | | | Collinearity Statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | | B | Error standard | Beta | T | Sign. | Tolerance | VIF |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1,921 | ,472 | | 4,068 | <,001 | | |
| | SD_mean | ,391 | ,100 | ,376 | 3,888 | <,001 | ,103 | 9,743 |
| | NFA_mean | 1,235 | ,077 | 1,154 | 16,089 | <,001 | ,186 | 5,371 |
| | NFC_mean | -,023 | ,078 | -,021 | -,297 | ,767 | ,183 | 5,467 |
| | SD*NFA | -,281 | ,016 | -1,741 | -17,463 | <,001 | ,096 | 10,387 |
| | SD*NFC | ,019 | ,016 | ,117 | 1,148 | ,252 | ,092 | 10,834 |

a. Dependent variable: WTWF_mean

# Socio-demographic statistics



# SUMMARY

## *CHAPTER 1: Theoretical background & Aim of the thesis*

### 1.1 Topic Interest

The advent of streaming platforms has radically changed the success factors in the film industry by increasing the level of competition between production companies.

Film turns out to be a rather complex experiential product that requires special precautions when developing a marketing plan. The main tool in this field turns out to be the trailer, a video of a few minutes whose purpose is to create interest around the advertised film product (Boksem, M.A. & Smidts, A. 2015).

It competes in the modern world with a plurality of stimuli but being longer and more complex than most other published content suffers from an attention problem (Liu, X. Wei Shi, S. Teixeira, T. & Wedel, M. 2018).

Considering the effectiveness of the trailer in terms of the propensity to watch the film a relevant factor for its success appears to be the inherent spoiler level of the selected scenes.

By spoiler we mean a violent explication of the film's most important narrative junctures, a dangerous element capable of ruining the illusion and the identification process of which the film is a vehicle, a problem aggravated by the uncontrolled spread of news that occurs every day on the Internet and that marketing managers must counter at all costs.

### 1.2 Literature Review

#### 1.2.1 Success factors of up-coming films

The film turns out to be composed of a plurality of interconnected elements, the quality of which is very difficult to assess before the actual viewing (Basuroy, S., Desai, K., & Talukdar, D. 2006).

This uncertainty involves both producers, who are interested in understanding which films to invest in, and consumers, who are involved in purchase decision processes.

1.2.1.1 *General Considerations*

The cast (director and actors) turns out to be one of the most reassuring elements of a film's success, which is why they hold significant bargaining power in the industry (Anand, N., & Watson, M. R. 2004).

Before seeing a movie, most consumers inform themselves about it by reading specialised reviews on the Internet or simply the comments of users who have already seen the film.

Winning important film festivals also appears to be a determining factor in the formation of consumer preferences.

#### 1.2.1.2 *The Impact of Critics' Reviews*

General audiences and critics appear to be two interconnected categories; although critics focus on the technical and artistic elements of the film while the average viewer focuses on the entertainment elements, there seems to be a normative influence whereby critics align themselves with the audience's opinion in order to be successful in the media, especially on social media (Pang, J., Liu, A.X. & Golder, P.N. 2022).

#### 1.2.1.3 *The Impact of Social Media*

Considering the week prior to the release of a film, it has been shown how an advertising campaign launched on YouTube and Facebook is able to generate a virtuous process of increased eWOM and a parallel decrease in uncertainty, especially if the source is perceived as trustworthy (Oh, C. Roumani, Y. Nwankpa, J.K. Hu, H.F. 2017).

Monitoring the social activity of potential viewers turns out to be an essential task in predicting the success of a movie release.

#### 1.2.1.4 *Screenplay & Genres*

The screenplay, the backbone of a film production, is one of the most important intrinsic factors in determining the success of a film.

Positive correlations have been found in the literature between the success of a film and the genre and current to which it belongs, a consideration that allows us to define the history of cinema as a constant alternation of "new waves" (Cousins, M. 2017); the task of producers turns out to be to anticipate the advent of these innovations and to ride them appropriately.

#### 1.2.1.5 *Release dates*

Academics have studied the relationship between ticket sales and the release date of the film and discovered the existence of time intervals in which the success of the film becomes incredibly more likely (Yang, J. & Kim, W. 2014). These dates change from country to country and are usually reserved for the most important productions (in terms of appeal and budget employed) and introduce the concept of seasonality and the film life cycle, an active period in which marketing can compensate for problems of timing or lack of resources.

#### 1.2.1.6 *Final Considerations*

The concept of box office is particularly difficult to define, as a film's revenues are in fact consolidated throughout its distribution chain (Marzulli, A. 2011), which starts with its release in cinemas, continues with the release on streaming platforms and ends (increasingly rarely) in the home-video market.

### 1.2.2 Advertising techniques in the film industry

Advertising is undoubtedly the most important element of the marketing mix strategy applied to cinema, in fact 35% of the production budget is on average invested in it (Investopedia 2022).
This investment is necessary since film is a product with a rather short life cycle in a market characterised by the continuous launch of new products (Rennhoff, A.D. & Wilbur K.C. 2011).
The communication budget, which is mostly spent before the actual release of the film, is mainly spent on the production of trailers, "tastes" of the film with a strong reassuring power.

#### 1.2.2.1 *Movie trailer as a source of information*

A well-constructed trailer is perceived by the audience as a symptom of a healthy production and generates interest around the film product in the making (Su, M. & Rao, V.R. 2010).
The choice of scenes to be edited together in the trailer turns out to be of fundamental importance in determining its success, the most effective in this respect being those with the highest emotional impact (Sokoloff, A. 2009).
A whole range of valuable information on the quality of the film can be deduced from the trailer, in particular its intrinsic factors, i.e. its belonging to a certain genre, publicity about the cast and clues about the plot, which have already been identified as reassuring factors on the success of a film.

#### 1.2.2.2 *Movie trailer as a medium*

Movie trailers also contain several reinforcing elements that can be assimilated into what have been defined as extrinsic factors. In this sense, it has become customary to include short phrases in the trailer that testify to a positive critical reception or declare the winning of a major film award (Verboord, M. 2014).
Researchers have also focused on understanding how the distribution channel of the trailer changes its effectiveness (Hixon, T.K. 2006). The theatre screen turns out to be the most attention-grabbing but cannot be replayed over and over again, the telephone screen (considering the trailer in the same way as other content published on the web) catapults the marketing stimulus into a highly competitive environment in terms of attention but always guarantees rewatch.

#### 1.2.2.3 *Post Poster Era*

In the earliest film marketing campaigns, the poster was the main source of information available to the public.
It was a highly superficial tool, effectively providing no reassurance about the qualities of the film, however its use has evolved over time and has now become the icon with which the film is presented on streaming platforms (Kundalia, K. Patel, Y. Shah, M. 2019). An evocative call to action that is particularly suited to the functioning of algorithms.

### 1.2.3 Impact of storyline disclosure in entertainment experience

Spoilers are defined as the voluntary or involuntary leaking of information about key plot points of a film before its release (Booth, P. 2010).

According to some studies they decrease uncertainty around the movie, facilitate understanding of it and generally improve the viewing experience (Leavitt, J.D. & Christenfeld, N.J. 2011). Other studies prove the destructive potential of spoilers on the engagement and excitement induced by watching a film (Gilbert, D.T. & Wilson, T.D. 2007).

These contradictory results form the basis of the so-called 'spoiler paradox'.

The resolution of the same according to academics may stem from subjective differences in the audience (Rosenbaum, J.E. & Johnson, B.K. 2018), such as levels of Need for Affect and Need for Cognition.

#### 1.2.3.1 *Film as a Narrative Product*

Film in a first analysis can be considered a narrative product, embedded in the more general entertainment market that also includes non-narrative products (Shiller, R.J. 2020).

In fact, the most important mental mechanism of which cinema is a carrier is narrative transport, i.e. the transformative experience of being 'enraptured' by a story (Van Laer, T. De Ruyter, K. Visconti, L.M. Wetzels, M. 2014).

The screenplay, understood as the textual transposition of the narrative structure of a film, is in this sense the element that creates transport.

On the basis of it, it is possible to distinguish different film genres, dynamic and inhomogeneous categories that present great margins for interpretation. A more rigorous way of dividing films into definite categories, on the other hand, turns out to be the categorisation into narrative-based (which make the plot their strong point) and non-narrative-based (whose plot only represents a line around which the strong elements of the film are built).

#### 1.2.3.2 *The effects of spoilers on consumer's mind*

The solution to the already defined "spoiler paradox" lies in understanding the ways in which spoilers alter the film's entertainment capacity.

From the analysis of the available literature on the subject, it seems that spoiled and non-spoiled stories elicit two completely different experiences, if the former convey appreciation in a contemplation-like experience (Vaughn, L. A. Childs, K. E. Maschinski, C. Niño, N. P. Ellsworth, R. 2010), the latter convey pleasure in a complex experience from both rational and irrational points of view (Oliver, M. B. & Woolley, J. K. 2010).

#### 1.2.3.3 *Spoiler sources in the digital age*

The advent of social media and the proliferation of eWOM have disproportionately increased the possibility of spoilers spreading across the web (Wang, F. Liu, X. Fang, E.E. 2015). Indeed, professional reviews need to rely on the plot to explain their reasons and users need to discuss the fate of characters to make their preferences explicit (Ryoo, J. H. Wang, X. Lu, S. 2021).

The film trailer, being placed in this context, becomes the object of discussion and confrontation, a flow of information that can be anticipated by managers.

## 1.3 Literature Research Gap

One of the most important limitations found in the literature analysis turns out to be geographical: all studies refer to the peculiar system of Hollywood, the centre of the American market, an oligopoly profoundly different from the more fragmented European market.

Another important gap appears to be the lack of research concerning the relationship between the relative importance of the narrative structure within a film and the levers to be activated to build successful trailers.

There is also a general confusion about the effects of spoilers on the mind of the consumer exposed to marketing stimuli and the understanding of the subjective characteristics on which their purchasing decisions are formed.

## 1.4 Research questions

The trailer, being the main tool of film marketing, will turn out to be the main topic around which all research questions will be built.

In order to understand how spoilers, inserted as scene fragments within trailers, alter the propensity to watch the film, the main research question turns out to be the following:

*MRQ: What impact do spoiler disclosure in trailers have on viewers' willingness to watch the promoted film?*

In order to understand how the answer to this question can change and be influenced by the subjective characteristics of the audience, the existence and possible moderating effect of variables capable of summarising the subjectivity of individuals will be investigated, therefore the first secondary research question turns out to be the following:

*$SRQ_1$: Can subjective differences of the audience moderate the relationship between the disclosure of spoilers in movie trailers and willingness to watch the promoted film?*

Finally, to understand the differences between narrative-based and non-narrative-based films, the study will be duplicated. The second secondary research question turns out to be the following:

*$SRQ_2$: Is the moderating effect of subjective differences of the audience maintained regardless of the narrative structure of the promoted film?*

# *CHAPTER 2: Conceptual Framework*

## 2.1 The Impact of Spoiler Disclosure on Willingness to Watch the Film

In order to answer the MRQ, it is necessary to univocally define the dependent and independent variables under analysis:

- Spoiler Disclosure (SD): the manipulated existence/absence of a scene in a film trailer, relevant to the promoted film.
- Willingness To Watch the Film (WTWF): the stated propensity to watch the promoted film in the trailer.

SD is the independent variable, WTWF the dependent variable.
The intensity of SD depends on the degree and extent to which the information provided reduces the uncertainty about the plot of the film.
It has been shown that all stories (thus also films) share predetermined narrative patterns, the most common being the three-act narrative: character introduction, escalating action and climax.
Since all important and decisive events are placed in the climax, the scene placed in the last act and concerning the underlying reasons why a certain decisive fact was reached can be said to be spoilerish.
Conversely, the scene placed in the first two acts and concerning topics such as "cinematography" and "actorly performance" may be considered non-spoilerising.
The WTWF, on the other hand, does not depend on the actual decision to see the film promoted but is simply a declaration of intent, the externalization of a positive perception towards the movie seen in the trailer.
Accepting the theories according to which spoilers are capable of spoiling the suspense and involvement of a narrative product and considering that individuals plan their purchasing decisions of experiential products on the basis of expectations, it seems clear that the promise of a spoiled experience is related to a decrease in the propensity to try that particular experience (viewing the film).
Having explained the relationship between IV and DV, the primary hypothesis, the one concerning the main effect and whose study is necessary to answer the MRQ, can be formulated as follows:

*$H_1$: Trailers without spoilers lead to more positive consumer responses, in terms of willingness to watch the promoted film, than trailers containing spoilers*

## 2.2 The moderating effect of subjective audience differences

In order to solve the 'spoiler paradox', academics have strived to define unambiguous parameters to be able to divide the audience into homogeneous and definable categories. In this sense, one of the most accredited theories allows individuals to be grouped on the basis of two latent needs:

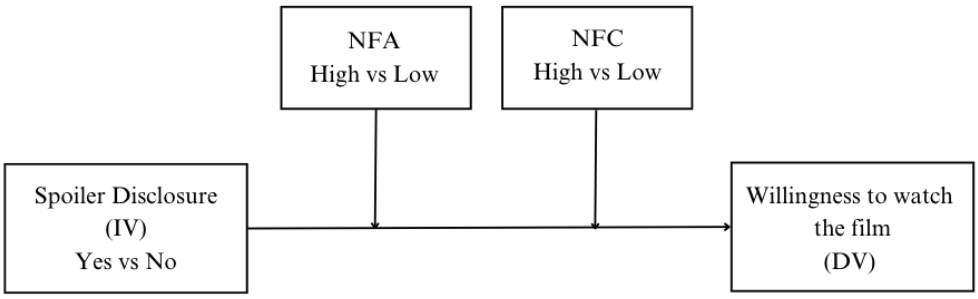
- Need For Affect (NFA): the tendency to pursue particularly exciting situations
- Need For Cognition (NFC): the tendency to engage in complex reasoning and formulate critical thoughts

High levels of NFA would be linked to a preference for uncertain, emotionally intact stories; low levels of NFC would instead be associated with a kind of immunity to spoilers, not being interested in understanding the underlying, rational reasons why plot events occur.
Starting from the verified assumption that an involved mind turns out to be an active mind, then the already defined NFA and NFC can be seen, under this particular lens, as the 'symptoms' and a priori conditions of an involved viewer. The moderator can now be specifically broken down into its two fundamental and measurable components, the variables capable of influencing the relationship between SD and WTWF as vehicles of transport and involvement.
This assumption leads to the explication of two further hypotheses:

*$H_{1m}$: The need for affect moderates the effect of Spoiler Disclosure on the propensity to watch the film, specifically the negative effect of SD on WTWF is more likely to occur when NFA is high, rather than low.*

*$H_{2m}$: The need for cognition moderates the effect of Spoiler Disclosure on the propensity to watch the film, in particular the negative effect of SD on WTWF is more likely to occur when NFA is high, rather than low.*

Having defined the main hypotheses that this thesis intends to test empirically, the theoretical research model can be represented graphically as follows:



## 2.3 Narrative structure as reinforcing factor

Fictional stories turn out to be those stories that do not intend, through plot and characters, to replicate reality. Stories based on verisimilitude, on the other hand, maintain the suspension of lifelikeness and intend to replicate the world as it is.

The concept of realism can be used to understand how narrative structure can change research results and the relationships between the variables at play.

Narrative-based films build their entertainment capacity on the creation of plots and characters that are realistic (from the point of view of behaviour and personality rather than appearance), that excite and engage from both rational and irrational perspectives. The effects of SD on WTWF are in this sense maximised.

In contrast, non-narrative based films exploit fiction to impress and unsettle the spectator who, distracted by the plot, searches for exciting oneiric flashes between the images. The effects of SD on WTWF are thus present but mitigated.

These considerations lead to the development of the last research hypothesis:

*$H_3$: While maintaining the moderating effect of NFA and NFC, the impact of Spoiler Disclosure on Willingness to watch the film will be more strongly marked when considering a narrative-based rather than a non-narrative-based film*

# *CHAPTER 3: Research methodology & Results*

## 3.1 Experimental design

A between-subject experiment was constructed on the Qualtrics online platform and distributed and administered online. The study consists of two studies, distinct in subject matter but identical in form, the first (Study 1) has as its object a narrative-based film, while the second (Study 2) a non-narrative-based film. For each study, each participant is randomly assigned to one of the two scenarios created (Spoiler Trailer vs. Spoiler-free Trailer), followed by a check on the manipulation of the independent variable, two scales measuring the respondent's NFA and NFC levels, and finally a scale measuring how the WTWF varies as the scenario changes.

Finally, the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample in terms of age, gender and occupation are recorded.

## 3.2 Stimuli Building

For Study 1, the trailer of the film "Triangle of Sadness" was chosen as the object; the latter, winner of the 75th Cannes Film Festival, is perfect for the purposes of the research because it is perceived as spoiler-free by the users and because it makes the screenplay its declared strong point (a symptom of its belonging to the category of narrative-based films).

The first stimulus turns out to be the same trailer without modifications, the second involves the modification and alteration of the same (realised through the iMovie application) and in particular the insertion of three scenes rather relevant and determined for the plot of the film.
Both trailers are 2:45 minutes long.
For Studio 2, on the other hand, the trailer of "Titane", winner of the same award as the first one but in the previous edition, was used. It turns out to be a horror film that makes visual impact and stage presence its strong points, so much so that it can be defined as a non-narrative-based film.
Again, the first stimulus turns out to be the unedited trailer, while the second includes the addition of three scenes, relating to the two murders perpetrated by the protagonist and the finale.
Both trailers turn out to be 2:00 minutes long.

## 3.3 Pre-Tests

### 3.3.1 *Pre-Tests Design*

Prior to the start of the two studies, two Pre-Tests were launched in order to verify the effective manipulation of the independent variable SD. The two Pre-Tests appear to be similar in design.
Prior to random exposure to one of the two simuli, the respondent is asked about previous knowledge of the film and the actors involved in order to exclude all flawed answers from the test.
As there is no scale in the literature to measure Spoiler Disclosure, a 7-point Likert scale of 5 items was specially created.
A final block concerning the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample concludes the survey.

### 3.3.2 *Reliability check*

Using SPSS software, a reliability check was launched on the SD scale.
A reassuring Cronbach Alpha of .971 was found and no items needed to be removed so that the scale, in its entirety, could be said to be reliable.

### 3.3.3 *Pre-Test 1 Results*

An independent t-test was carried out to compare the averages of the two groups (Spoiler vs. Spoiler free). As shown by Levene's statistics, even though the Homoskedasticity hypothesis of equality of variances is not verified, the means turn out to be significantly different ($t(79)= -12.06$, $p= 0.001$). Scenario 1, the one with the trailer without the added scenes, was perceived as less spoilerish ($M =2.39$, $SD = ,920$) than the altered and edited one ($M= 5.41$, $SD= 1.30$). The difference, in terms of Spoiler Disclosure, can therefore be said to be correctly perceived by the respondents.

3.3.4 *Pre-Test 2 Results*

The averages of the two groups (referring to exposure to the Spoiler rather than Spoiler free scenario) were compared by means of an independent t-test; Levene's statistics in addition to verifying the equality of variances (Sig. = 0.036) demonstrate the statistically relevant difference of the two averages (t(50)= 26.10; p= 0.001), in this sense scenario 1 (M= 6.00, SD= 1.00) was correctly perceived as more spoilerish than scenario 2 (M= 1.88, SD= 0.29).

Again, the manipulation of the independent variable can be said to have been perceived effectively as intended to.

## 3.4 Main Study Results

3.4.1 *Study 1 Results*

Two hundred and nineteen respondents were recruited online in the same manner as the pre-tests.

Of these, 18 responses were incomplete and 20 were unusable for the purposes of the study as they contained explicit statements of having already seen Triangle of Sadness or of knowing at least one of the actors involved (Charbi Dean, Harris Dickinson, Woody Harrelson).

The results of the Independent t-test launched to re-check the results of Pre-Test 1 show the successful manipulation of the independent variable Spoiler Disclosure. Levene's statistics, while not supporting the equality of variances (t(179)= -43.86; p= 0.001), show a significant difference in the averages of the two groups, the one exposed to the spoiler trailer (M= 6.16; SD= 0.56) and the one exposed to the spoiler free trailer (M= 2.09; SD= 0.65).

To measure NFA (Need for Affect), the pre-validated 7-point Likert scale of 10 items by Appel, Gnambs and Maio (2012) was used. To measure NFC (Need for Cognition) on the other hand, the pre-validated 7-point Likert scale of 18 items by Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein and Jarvis (1996) was used. Finally, Adwait, Lauren and Anthony's (2011) 3-item 7-point Likert scale was used to measure Willingness to watch a film (DV).

Two 2-way ANOVAs were run, one assuming NFA as a potential moderator and one instead taking NFC into account. Considering the first case (SD, NFA, WTWF), the results confirm that NFA and SD have an impact on WTWF (F(3,177)= 286.65, p= 0.001). The main effect analysis shows that Spoiler Disclosure (F(1,177)= 469.76, p= 0.001) has a differential effect on the propensity to watch the film of the viewer exposed to the trailer. In particular, the presence of spoilers in the trailer decreases this propensity (M= 2.78, SD= 1.34) compared to viewers of spoiler-free trailers (M= 5.43, SD= 1.22).

NFA significantly influences this attitude (F(1,177)= 3.98, p= 0.047). Statistical confirmation of the moderating effect of NFA on the relationship between SD and WTWF was also found, the interaction between Spoiler Disclosure and Need for Affect was indeed significant (F(1,177)= 317.78, p= 0.001).

Considering the second analysis (SD, NFC, WTWF) the results confirm the existence of an effect of Need for Cognition and Spoiler Disclosure on the propensity to watch the film (F(3,177)= 117.09, p= 0.001).

NFC per se does not appear able to explain this relationship (F(1,177)= 1.68, p= 0.231), however the interaction between NFC and SD is statistically significant (F(1,177)= 87.60, p= 0.001) confirming the moderating nature of the second variable used to record the subjective characteristics of the audience.
A linear regression was then run, including all the variables considered (also the significant interaction relations SD*NFC and SD*NFA). The coefficient of determination of the model thus considered turns out to be rather high: R-squared= 0.862; Adj R-squared= 0.864. Thus, 86.4% of the variability of the WTWF (dependent variable) is explained by the variables in play. The model fit was good because the F-test was significant (F(5,175= 230.51, p= 0.001). By inspecting the individual coefficients of the regression, the results turn out to be: Spoiler Disclosure (B= 0.445, p< 0.025); Need for Affect (B= 0.628, p<0.025); Need for Cognition (B= 0.468, p<0.025); Spoiler Disclosure*NFA (B= -0.136, p<0.025); Spoiler Disclosure*NFC (B=-0.118, p<0.025).

3.4.2 *Study 2 Results*

For the study with the subject 'Titane' (non-narrative-based film) 209 respondents were reached, 5 responses were however incomplete and 6 were invalid as they were made by individuals with prior knowledge of the film under investigation or of Vincent Lindon (lead actor), no one claimed to know Agathe Rousselle.
The Independent t-test launched confirms the results of Pre-test 2: Levene's statistics, although not supporting the hypothesis of equality of variances in fact show a significant difference in the two scenarios created in terms of perceived Spoiler Disclosure (t(196)= 35.84, p= 0.001).
The trailer containing relevant scenes from the film was in fact perceived to be more spoiler-intensive (M= 6.20, SD= 0.66) than the unedited trailer (M= 2.38, SD= 0.83).
Using the same scales validated in Study 1, two 2-way ANOVAs were run to understand the relationships between the variables involved. The first assuming the measured NFA as moderator, the second taking the NFC into account.
Regarding the first model (SD, NFA, WTWF), the results show an effect of SD and NFA on the propensity to watch the film (F(3,194)= 1050.17, p= 0.001).
SD per se has a statistically significant and differentiating effect on WTWF (F(1,194)= 3042.73, p= 0.001), in particular the existence of spoilers in the trailer (M= 5.61, SD= 1.40) decreases the viewer's intention to watch the film compared to the hazy trailer with no relevant plot information (M= 2.26, SD= 1.25).
Although NFA alone cannot explain this effect (F(1,194)= 0.052, p= 0.821), its interaction with Spoiler Disclosure was statistically significant (F(1,194)= 295.35, p= 0.001) proving the moderating role of the NFA variable within the model.
Considering instead the second model (SD, NFC, WTWF), the results confirm the statistical significance of the model fit (F(3,194)= 104.59, p= 0.001), again signaling the existence of a meaningful effect of SD on WTWF (F(1, 194)= 310.47, p= 0.001), but deny the statistical validity of the effect of NFC on the dependent

variable (F(1,194)= 0.169, p= 0.682), as well as its moderating effect on the same (F(1,194)= 1.54, p= 0.216). Indicating an actual difference from the results of the first study.
Placing all variables within a summary linear regression yields a fairly high coefficient of determination: R-squared= 0.816; Adj R-squared= 0.811. 81.1% of the variability of WTWF is thus explained by the variables considered.
Given the significant F-test (F(5,192)= 170.51, p= 0.001) the model fit can be said to be correct.
In detail, the coefficients of the regression are as follows: Spoiler Disclosure (B= 0.391, p < 0.025); Need for Affect (B= 1.235, p < 0.025); Need for Cognition (B= -0.02, p= 0.767); SD*Need for Affect (B= -0.281, p < 0.025); SD*Need for Cognition (B= 0.019, p= 0.252).

## 3.5 Results Discussion

Analyzing the results obtained the H1 can definitely be accepted, regardless of the previous knowledge of the film and the possible influence of the cast, regardless of the categorization of the film on the basis of its narrative structure, it can be stated that trailers without spoilers make the promoted film more interesting and attractive to the viewer than trailers containing spoilers.
The same unambiguity can also be said for the validation of the H1m, the moderating effect of the NFA is always confirmed, indicating that the need to get excited is the most important subjective factor in determining the propensity to watch a film promoted through a trailer.
As far as H2m is concerned, the results appear contradictory: confirmation of the moderating role of the NFC variable is only obtained from Study 1, a sign that narrative-based films turn out to be more complex experiences, in terms of rational involvement, than non-narrative-based films.
Finally, as far as H3 is concerned, it cannot be said that Spoiler Disclosure has a differentiated effect on the two categories of films, but that they convey two different experiences, both of which are damaged by marketing that is not attentive to the release of relevant plot information.

## 3.6 Theoretical and Managerial implications

From a theoretical point of view, the results of this thesis support a number of implications:
first, they show how important uncertainty and suspense are in the enjoyment of experiential products and how spoilers, in the more specific category of narrative products such as films, are capable of ruining these factors.
It then demonstrates how gender differences (understood as a function of narrative structure) alter the mental processes involved of the consumer immersed in a purchasing decision-making process, how expectations about the potential rational and irrational involvement of watching a film change from subject to subject.
From a managerial point of view, the results of this thesis testify the need for special attention in the implementation of film marketing plans in the choice of scenes to be included in trailers, both from the point of view of the intrinsic intensity of the spoiler and in relation to the categorization of the film: scenes with a

high emotional and cognitive impact for narrative-based films, impressive scenes for non-narrative-based films.

## 3.7 Limitations & Future Research Agenda

The main limitation of this research turns out to be the isolation of certain intrinsic and extrinsic factors of the movie which are decisive in the formation of purchasing decisions.

Firstly, although the two films researched were comparable in terms of audience and critical reception, it was not measured how decisive film festivals are in influencing audiences.

Secondly, the analysis of the distribution channel through which the viewer watches the trailer, a factor which, as seen in the literature, is capable of modifying the consumer's selective attention, was completely omitted.

Future studies should focus on concretizing the propensity to purchase into an actual call to action that varies depending on how the film is to be viewed (cinema, streaming platform, etc.). Finally, in the light of the advent of social networks, the consumer in the cinema market should not be considered as an isolated individual but as the node of a complex network in which information (thus also spoilers) circulates uncontrolled.