



## **Film or film brand?**

### **Investigating consumers' engagement with films as brands**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Marketing

by

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#### **Abstract**

This study offers an in-depth account of how, when and why consumers engage with films as brands, using 38 exploratory, semi-structured consumer interviews and 1030 consumer survey responses. Extant film branding literature is scarce, dominated by filmmakers' and marketers' perspectives of films as brands and is confined to exploring points of parity associations films have as brands, rather than ways films may differentiate themselves as brands. Taking on a consumer centric view, our findings show although filmmakers, production houses and marketers may jointly develop and market films with the vision of becoming brands, this doesn't necessarily guarantee consumers' engagement with such films as brands. Instead, consumers initially evaluate the coherency of a film's identity and subsequently go on to engage with films as brands, a process which is fully mediated by the emotional bonding a consumer may develop for a film and partially mediated by a film's popularity and sequels. Films' marketing/franchising efforts, iconic status and sense of timelessness moderate consumer-film brand engagement, resulting in positive word of mouth and purchase intention. Our sequential, consolidated and specified film brand engagement framework guides filmmakers and marketers on how to tactically engage consumers with their films as brands, in order to differentiate themselves within this risky and competitive market.

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work, except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at Brunel University or other institutions.

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## Film or film brand? Consumers' engagement with films as brands

### Chapter 1 – Introduction

In 2015, UK film box office revenues have reached a staggering £1.2 billion (up by 14% from previous year), with 759 films releasing but only the top 100 films accounting for 93% of total box office collections (British Film Institute Statistical Yearbook, 2016). Furthermore, only three out of ten films break even and circa one out of ten actually generate box office profits (Vogel, 2001; Valenti, 2004; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2007), hence; although the film market is lucrative, it is also saturated. Consumers are now spoilt for choice, film production costs and marketing investments have been rising sharply (Bart, 1999; Holson, 2006; Grainge, 2007; Gong et al., 2011) whilst an increase in competition e.g. especially in Bollywood and Nollywood (Kerrigan, 2010) has led to instability and an industry-wide overproduction, with the movie to screen-space ratio vastly unbalanced (Connor, 2000; Shone, 2004). Consequently, filmmakers are struggling to generate feasible returns on their investments, in this costly, risk-filled and uncertain market (Eliashberg et al., 2006; Gong et al., 2011).

This thesis proposes that exploring consumers' engagement with films as brands has the potential to address these concerns, since: (1) engagement adds value for consumers through the feeling of special emotional and symbolic connections with brands (Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2012) (2) leading to long-term value (Kotler, 2000, p.408); measured through brand equity when consumers associate themselves with brands, subsequently leading to i.e. profitability and brand advocacy (Malar et al., 2011); (3) therefore acting as a key source of competitive advantage for



filmmakers/marketers which competitors cannot easily replicate (Keller, 2008) whilst branding's pervasive presence also simplifies consumers' choice making through risk reduction (4). Consumer-brand engagement (CBE), which originates from the relationship marketing domain (Vivek et al., 2012), is considered a priority by marketers in their branding strategies (Hollebeek, 2011) because it is a fundamental driver of the consumer decision-making process (Bowden, 2009; Sprott et al., 2009) and creation of brand equity (Schultz and Block, 2011).

This study therefore makes an initial attempt to explore how, when and why consumers engage with certain films as brands, with data collected using a mixed-method approach via two studies. Study 1 has been conducted using 38 semi-structured consumer interviews, to unravel the mystery of how, when and why consumers may go on to engage with certain films as brands. Study 2 led to 1030 consumer survey responses, with the purpose of validating the proposed film brand engagement framework. The research findings help filmmakers'/production houses with the opportunity to generate higher revenues and equipping film-marketers with the means of facilitating favourable consumer-brand behaviour, by guiding them on how to create effective brand engagement strategies wherein consumers actively participate.

Literature on film branding is scarce (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013) and has predominantly explored similarities films may have as brands from the filmmaker's/marketer's perspectives e.g. sequels and franchising as brand extensions (Grainge, 2007; Keller, 2008), merchandising (Kapferer, 2008, p.133) and branded entities within film projects (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013). However, scholars have not verged beyond such points of parity associations, furthermore, although filmmakers, production houses and marketers may jointly develop and market films with the vision

of becoming brands, this doesn't necessarily guarantee consumers' engagement with such films as brands.

This brings us to the second key theoretical gap, which is about the notion that extant literature is dominated by either the marketer's or filmmaker's perspective (e.g. Brown et al., 2003; Sood and Drèze, 2006; Grainge, 2007; Keller, 2008; O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013), thus adopting a *"purely managerial perspective on international branding issues"* (Cayla and Arnould, 2008, p. 87). Consumers subconsciously contribute towards brand equity and successful brand strategy, since brands are important to them (Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2012). Taking on the consumer-centric branding perspective, a brand's reality lies in the experience of its consumers (Topalian, 2003, p. 1119) and although organizations have legal ownership of brands, a brand's real value is derived from consumers and other stakeholders who take emotional ownership of the brand/corporate brand, attributed to highly emotional brand engagement (Balmer, 2013, p. 735). Marketers must concede that brands' powers predominantly reside in consumers' minds (Gardner and Levy, 1955; De Chernatony and McDonald, 1998; Keller, 2001; Keller, 2008; Heding et al., 2008; Laforet, 2010, p. 14) and that it is what they can do and be with the brand (Schmitt, 1999) that strengthens brands' positioning within consumers' lives (Arvidsson, 2005). The branding consultant 'The Cult Branding Company' urges practitioners to recognise that brands do not belong to marketers anymore (Laforet, 2010, p. 22) therefore consumers do not have a relationship with a product or service but the brand (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000) marketers need to subsequently view brand relationships not only through companies' eyes but also through consumers' (Varey, 2002; Pressey and Tzokas, 2006; Leahy, 2011) to better meet consumers' needs through suitable products and marketing messages (Schiffman,

Kanuk and Wiesenblit, 2010) and to gain a competitive advantage through consumer insights (Kapferer, 2012).

According to Heding et al. (2008), the consumer-centric approach has moved into an all-encompassing-direction, since it is founded on brand knowledge, which is apparent in all seven approaches to branding. This makes the consumer-centric approach more versatile and flexible in applying to a variety of conceptual brand management tools, especially since it is founded on affect and cognition (Heding et al., 2008). We believe the consumer-centric approach enables us to decipher consumers' engagement with films as brands, since this approach focuses on how and why consumers build relationships with brands and form relevant communities, as well as how brands take on meaning from their consumers (Heding et al., 2008).

Hence, responding to the call of Quester et al.'s (2006, p. 21) for research with a *"consumer-centric view of brand management, including a better understanding of consumer values and the socio-cultural contexts in which brands are consumed"*, this thesis strives to unfold the factors which influence consumers' engagement with films as brands, taking on a consumer-centric perspective.

### **1.1 Research aims and objectives**

The aim of this research study is to explore consumers' engagement with films as brands, hence unfolding the film brand engagement construct from the ground up. This is achieved by firstly reviewing extant works across various literature domains, undertaking exploratory, qualitative consumer-research and then empirically investigating the antecedents, consequences as well as other facilitators which contribute towards consumers' engagement with films as brands, through a mixed-method approach.

By doing so, this thesis develops a new film branding engagement model, suggesting that consumers initially view all films as movies that have varying combinations of identity. Coherency within a film's identity leads consumers to engage with films as brands in three ways: firstly, through the emotional bond they have formed with a film; secondly via the use of more than one part e.g. sequels/prequels/spinoffs etc. and thirdly through a film's popularity – the latter two being contingent upon a film's marketing efforts. These three mediators contribute towards consumers' engagement of films as brands, further moderated by a film's sense of timelessness, iconic status, franchising initiatives and merchandise availability. Once consumers engage with films as brands, filmmakers and marketers can benefit from positive word of mouth and purchase intention.

## **1.2 Theoretical Contributions**

The study's framework directly addresses the theoretical and managerial gaps identified, developing the film brand engagement construct by contemplating consumer-centric branding as a means to achieve points of differentiation within this competitive market, that has been predominantly explored from the filmmaker's and marketer's perspective. This study specifically highlights three mediating constructs that dictate consumers' engagement of films as brands – with the key one being emotional bonding, as well as other important moderators and outcomes of the construct.

Our sequential and consolidated framework guides film producers, makers and marketers on how to tactically facilitate engagement between consumers and their films as brands, in this risky, competitive market. This study contributes to extant literature by articulating the film brand engagement construct, the conditions under which

consumer-film brand engagement is likely to occur and flourish, whilst also developing an operational scale which sets out to measure film brand engagement.

Our comprehensive model firstly extends O'Reilly and Kerrigan's (2013) conceptual, macro-level cultural stance of branded entities within a film project contributing towards the view of a film as a brand, by proposing a more holistic approach, rooted from consumers at a consumer-brand level. This approach considers the emotional and cognitive factors which the cultural approach fails to acknowledge (Heding et al., 2008), advancing film branding literature further by exploring how, when and why consumers actually go on to engage with films as brands, which has several managerial implications.

The study's findings also extend Hart et al.'s (2016) work on a consumer's film consumption journey, by providing valuable insights into how, when and why consumers are likely to engage with films as brands and how this subjective process is embedded within consumers' film consumption journey, through our sequential film brand engagement framework.

This study also serves to contribute to the CBE literature domain, by exploring brand engagement from the consumers' perspective, whilst existing literature predominantly focuses on the practitioner's and academic's standpoint (Gambetti et al., 2012).

Our study also addresses Keller's argument (2008, p.24), who suggests that strong brands within the film industry combine elements into a formula that consumers find appealing, by providing a more specified formula for successfully engaging consumers with films as brands and providing insights into the behavioural outcomes which filmmakers and marketers can subsequently benefit from.

The study's findings also seem to provide support for Kapferer's (2008, p.133) thoughts, whereby a brand cannot exist to consumers without a supporting product/service that embodies the brand, which although is not mandatory – is demonstrated by the moderating effect of merchandise availability on consumers' engagement with films as brands in our framework.

Finally, our study also contributes to the film identity literature domain (Kerrigan, 2010), by proposing two new dimensions which constitute a film's identity, including its CCI (Creative Cultural Industry)/Reality origin and use of mise-en-scene.

### **1.3 Overview of thesis structure**

This thesis contains 6 chapters, the contents of which are summarised below:

**Chapter 2 – Literature review:** this section firstly discusses the journey of making and releasing films. Secondly, how films are marketed; the drivers behind a film's success; the key approaches to managing a brand and a debate on the infancy of existing film branding literature are explored. Thirdly, films' unique attributes as experiential goods, as well as the experience and enjoyment of film consumption are debated. Fourthly, the literature on consumer-brand engagement is examined, followed by a summative critique and research directions.

**Chapter 3 – Research methodology:** the chapter commences with the purpose and benefits of integrating qualitative and quantitative research via a mixed-method study; the research philosophy adopted, as well as the overall research design and approaches.

**Chapter 4 – Phase 1 (qualitative study):** the chapter discusses how the first study was conducted, consisting of 38, exploratory, semi-structured interviews of consumers. It seeks to justify the choice of methodology and sampling approach, how the data was collected and analysed, followed by an overview and analysis of the key qualitative findings – which has been further supported by existing literature.

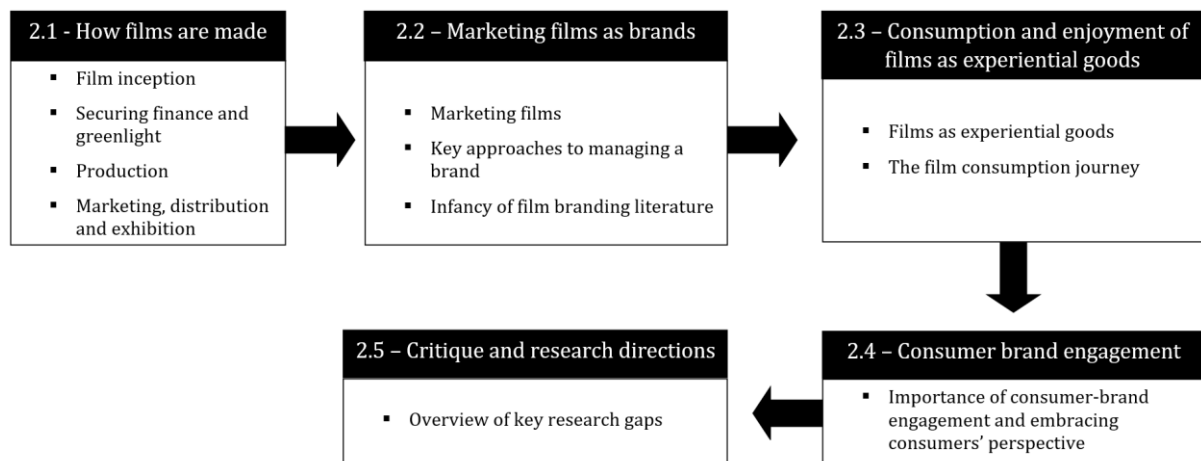
**Chapter 5 – Phase 2 (quantitative study):** the purpose of this second, quantitative phase, is to test and validate the conceptual framework that that was developed at the end of the previous chapter, using 1030 consumer survey responses. The chapter commences with how to go about operationalising a new construct. The chapter then shifts focus towards the methodology for Phase 2, discussing about the research method; pilot study, questionnaire design and structure; how the data was collected and the sampling strategy. The chapter concludes with how the data was analysed using SPSS and the key findings which have emerged from the Phase 2 study.

**Chapter 6 – Discussion and conclusion:** this chapter is an amalgamation of the findings of both studies, providing a detailed discussion on their implications for existing literature and theoretical contributions to the various academic literature domains of interest, mainly – film branding and marketing, consumer-brand engagement as well as film consumption.

The chapter then provides conclusive comments, discussing the managerial implications this study has on the film industry and offering recommendations on how production houses, filmmakers and film marketers could practically implement the findings of the research study for their own benefit and gain. The chapter concludes

with a reflection on the challenges encountered whilst undertaking the study, the limitations of the research study and recommends possible future research directions film branding research could head towards.

## Chapter 2 – Literature review



The following chapter firstly discusses the journey of making and releasing films. Secondly, how films are marketed; the drivers behind a film's success; the key approaches to managing a brand and a debate on the infancy of existing film branding literature are explored. Thirdly, films' unique attributes as experiential goods, as well as the experience and enjoyment of film consumption are debated. Fourthly, the literature on consumer-brand engagement is examined, followed by a summative critique and research directions.

### 2.1 How films are made

According to Merriam-Webster (2016), films are defined as: *"a recording of moving images that tells a story and that people watch on a screen or television"*. The process of making and releasing a film has many obstacles and can typically take four to five years of investment in time and resources (Durie et al., 2000; Squire, 2006;



Ferguson, 2009; Young et al., 2009). There are various phases of producing a feature film (Young, Gong and van der Stede, 2008), which have been summarised in four sections: 1) film inception, 2) securing financing and greenlighting process, 3) pre and post production, 4) film marketing, distribution and exhibition.

### **1) Film inception**

A producer firstly either purchases intellectual property (to obtain rights to make a film based on media texts) or hires script writer to operationalise a basic story into workable script (Ferguson, 2009) After developing a script, key cast members are finalised – this is not a linear process by any means (Young et al., 2008).

### **2) Securing financing and greenlighting process**

A film proposition is then pitched to a studio, studio decision-makers will then assess whether the movie is likely to be successful, typically through: brainstorming sessions where existing films are identified which closely resemble the prospective film project based on e.g. budget, theme, cast/crew, genre etc. (Young et al., 2008).

Scenario analysis is then conducted to predict potential box office figures and consult whether the film should be greenlighted, a decision which is usually guided by large financial databases, previous experience and gut feeling. Furthermore, in order to reduce risk of failure and share burden, studios may collaborate through limited partnerships. Slate financing has become a popular means of attracting finance, it involves hedge fund managers purchasing a slate of films from a single studio and split profits (Young et al., 2008).

With a continuous race to break box office records, Young, Gong and van der Stede (2010) have suggested that film studios are under enormous pressure to develop to obtain such results, hence there has been an industrial production shift, described by

Obst (2013) as the 'new abnormal', whereby studios are now producing far more tentpole films a year (6-8) than before (1-2). A tentpole film is usually a big budget, widely released and heavily promoted film that is supposed to return profits in a short-time and is designed to offset and spread the risk of investing in a slate of smaller films (tadpoles) and distribution rights to low-budget independent films (Epstein, 2012; Obst, 2013). However, this can be a very risky strategy since tentpole films have extremely high production and marketing costs, which may not necessarily guarantee a profit as demonstrated by Disney's John Carter (2012) which cost more than \$300 million to make and made circa \$285 million at the box office, with half of the revenue going to cinema owners (Forbes, 2014).

### **3) Pre and post production**

Once funding has been secured, the producer hires creative, technical and admin staff, scouts shooting locations, approves final script, budget and production schedule.

Interestingly, in their secondary financial data analysis, Young et al. (2008) have discovered that every sequel in the major Hollywood film franchises is found to have cost more to produce when compared to its predecessor, this is most likely because sequels are found to offer higher return on investment and are more profitable compared to films which don't have follow-up parts (Gong et al., 2011). Furthermore, studios also incur higher production/marketing costs for original films that are to be followed up with sequels, compared to those films that remain single, which suggests that studio managers consider a growth option when planning the original, further confirmed by interviews with industry executives (Gong et al., 2011).

After principal photography, post-production commences e.g. editing, composition, special effects etc. the producer then consults with the creative and financial teams

regarding marketing and distribution strategies for domestic and foreign markets – which have already been in development parallel to a film's production.

#### **4) Film Marketing, Distribution and Exhibition**

Circa 50% of a blockbuster/tentpole film's total budget is dedicated to marketing (Young et al., 2008) and 90% of a film's marketing budget typically spent before it reaches the theatres. Effective marketing investment is seen to be crucial for the film industry, since a 10% change in production costs is found to result in only a 2% change in cumulative box office results. Comparatively, a 10% change in marketing investment is found to be associated with a 10% change in cumulative box office results, hence higher marketing investment is likely to lead to greater box office returns (Young et al., 2008).

Also, interestingly, films can stay in cinema anywhere between 3 weeks and 8 months (depending on ticket sales), however, cinema earnings actually only make up 1/5<sup>th</sup> of a film's lifetime revenue. 4/5<sup>th</sup> are attributed to downstream sources e.g. Home video, pay TV, merchandise etc., however, negotiating such downstream contracts is largely dependent on a film's opening box office weekend - hence doing well at the box office is a prerequisite for maximising a film's lifetime revenue.

## **2.2 Marketing films as brands**

The following section commences with an overview of how films are marketed and the drivers behind a film's success, followed by a discussion of the key approaches to managing a brand and the infancy of existing film branding literature.

### 2.2.1 Marketing films

Kerrigan (2010) classifies film marketing mix as: actor/non-actor stars, genre, age classification and release strategy, whilst film posters/trailers, television/print advertising and media-buying are common film marketing materials. Existing literature focuses on marketing films as products, using *“activities that assist a film in reaching its target audience at any time throughout its life...to maximise a film’s audience and, by extension, its earning potential...”* (Durie et al., 2000, pp. 4–5). Nevertheless, recent research indicates that films’ box office success is often accredited to well-executed marketing campaigns (Lippman, 2002a, 2002b), designed to entice prospective viewers and to challenge competing studios through effective product differentiation (Elberse and Eliashberg, 2006). Aceland (2003) observes that we are in an era of ‘permanent’ marketing campaigns of the entertainment environment, wherein; marketing is no longer aligned with nor confined to the exclusive promotion of motion pictures. This development in practices has reformed public and domestic film culture at large, hence foreshadowing a new gestalt of ‘total entertainment’ (Aceland, 2003).

#### 2.2.1.1 The success drivers of films

When investigating success drivers of films, existing literature has sub-categorised these into marketability and playability studies (O’Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013). Marketability studies, defined as the degree of attractiveness a film has for their intended audience, in relation to box office performance are said to have been mediated by e.g. the role of the actor (Wallace, Seigerman, & Holbrook, 1993; Albert, 1998; De Vany & Walls, 1999), genre (Litman, 1983; Litman & Kohl, 1989; Eliashberg, Hui, & Zhang, 2014), age classification (Austin, 1980; Ravid, 1999; Young et al., 2008; Leenders & Eliashberg, 2011), and release strategy (Krider & Weinberg, 1998; Radas & Shugan,

1998; Elberse & Eliashberg, 2003; Young et al., 2008; Eliashberg et al., 2009). However, the vast number of existing studies that rely on box office data to interpret interest/disinterest in films are not able to articulate deeper insights behind the reason as to why e.g. a film is rejected by a consumer (Hart et al., 2016).

To measure playability, defined as the film itself, its production value, script/acting quality etc. studies have considered film reviews (Eliashberg & Shugan, 1997; Holbrook, 1999; Hennig-Thurau, Marchand and Hiller, 2012), awards (Dodds & Holbrook, 1988, Addis & Holbrook, 2010), and word of mouth (Dellarocas, Zhang, & Awad, 2007; van der Lans, van Bruggen, Eliashberg & Wierenga, 2010; Hennig-Thurau, Wiertz, & Feldhaus, 2014).

### 2.2.2 The key approaches to managing a brand

The following section explores the different schools of thought associated with brand management over the years, before reviewing the extant film branding literature.

Heding et al. (2008) have chronologically explored the seven core approaches to branding over time (economic, identity, consumer-based, personality, relational, community and cultural), which are not enlisted as strict 'paradigms' per se but schools of thought which overlap and represent particular eras in time.

The '**economic**' approach (mid-1980s) is centred on managing the brand via the marketing mix elements and subsequently influencing consumers' brand choice (Borden, 1984; Kotler, 1997). Its focus is transaction-specific and sender-led, with the assumption that consumers are rational beings who will decode marketing messages as intended – with brand value creation crucially deriving from the marketer as a corporation (Heding et al., 2008). The economic approach has been criticised for its

short-term tactics and repeated emphasis on the 'next transaction', in addition to its misconstrued view of consumption and assumption that consumers are rational and do not face any difficulties/barriers during the decision-making process.

The '**identity**' **approach** then emerged (early-1990s), with a continued emphasis on a company's ownership of a brand and the integration of branding within all organisational levels and how this is conveyed in a linear manner when communicating with consumers.

Between 1993 – 1999, there was a shift in focus towards the receiver of communication that is the consumer - with a consideration of how human psychology can be utilised to advance brand management theory further. This era saw the rise of what is perhaps the most dominant and long-lasting approach of the seven - the '**consumer-based**' **approach**, where a consumer's associations are linked with a brand, an approach derived from the cognitive psychology discipline. In its simplest form, Keller describes the consumer as a 'computer' which can be 'programmed' by the marketer, in order to be manipulated to subsequently behave in a particular manner, achieved by understanding the consumer's mind-set (Keller, 2008). However, whether this truly represented a consumer-centric view of managing brands, or utilising consumers as 'puppets', has been a topic of continuous discussion over the years. Nonetheless, the consumer-based approach has also been criticised for neglecting the emotional and cultural factors which also influence human behaviour, solely focusing on cognition instead (Heding et al., 2008).

This void has been partially filled by the introduction of the '**personality**' and '**relational**' **approaches**, with the former credited for equipping a brand with human attributes and characteristics and matching these with a consumers' self-congruity and

the latter suggesting that brands can be managed as relationship partners/companions for their consumers. Both of these approaches function on the basis of an equal, dyadic consumer-brand dialogue exchange and the relational approach is therefore considered to offer 'true ownership' of the brand over the consumer-based approach, since consumers are not perceived as 'objects' which can be easily manipulated (Heding et al., 2008).

Post the millennium, with the growth of the internet phenomenon and continued integration of a more globalised market, this has had a deeper and more profound impact on the manner humans consume brands – thus, calling for the adaptation/development of theoretical frameworks to explain the functions/implications of the new phenomena in question. The '**community**' approach, in which social interaction is centred around the brand, explores brand management in the context of social consumption and introduces the concept of a 'triadic' relationship between the brand, consumer as well as other dedicated brand consumers.

The '**cultural**' approach is very different to the previous approaches, since it seeks to explore the brand's broader integration within the cultural fabric and the notion of brand co-creation wherein the brand is not in central focus anymore (Kates, 2004). In this approach, the brand can be considered a "*...cultural artefact moving through history*" (Holt, 2004, p. 215), with a Hollywood movie being cited as one of the examples (Heding et al., 2008). Defining 'culture' from a social perspective, culture is said to exist when there is a common ground understanding of specific meanings and values shared as collective representations, be it on a sub-cultural, national or global level (du Gay et al., 1997). In this context, a brand is regarded as a cultural resource and could therefore be seen as a vessel of meaning and myth, which is likely to be only

successful if it resonates with consumers' collective identity formation (Askegaard, 2006) as part of the 'brand-consumer exchange' at a 'macro'-level (Heding et al., 2008).

A key characteristic of the socio-cultural approach is the notion of what brands and branding do to culture, an example of which is dualism (Thompson and Arsel, 2004), whereby a brand is synonymous with both the success it has gained as well as the controversies/concerns it has been responsible for and/or stirred within society by attracting counter-cultural forces. This is in line with Heding et al.'s (2008) definition of iconic brands, which strong brands aspire to be with the help of marketers' active manoeuvring of cultural forces within mainstream culture: "*...iconic brands are those who have managed to integrate themselves into culture more skilfully than others...*" (Heding et al., 2008, p. 212). As outlined by Holt's seminal work, iconic brands have the tendency to go against the norm, are thought provoking, lead the way and offer something entirely new and original – relative to that era in time (Holt, 2003; 2004). Holt further states that one of the greatest difficulties iconic brands face is staying relevant as they transcend through time and an evolving culture (Holt, 2004), in addition to being at the centre of globalisation and cultural imperialism debates in regards to how cultural brands command economic and political power in the commercial ideoscape (Askegaard, 2006).

However, with the rise of iconic brands, there has also been a parallel paradigm shift in the form of a societal response that has initiated the no logo movement (Klein, 1999). Klein's (1999) book criticises the concept of branding and how corporations have shifted from outsourcing their production and allocating resources towards the production of images in consumers' minds instead, raising the crucial question of whether iconic brands are actually providing something of *real* value to their consumers



and whether it is ethical to manipulate human desire through advertising. This movement was also supported by Lasn (1999) who highlighted that culture was no longer being created by its citizens but large American corporations, who have adopted brands, products/services, and celebrities as cultural constituents instead – thus raising questions as to whether living an ‘authentic’ life is possible in today’s day and age (Lasn, 1999). The no logo movement (Klein, 1999; Lasn, 1999) is considered to be one of the key factors that has given rise to the concepts of Corporate Social Responsibility (Heding et al., 2008) and the post post-modern branding paradigm known as the ‘citizen-artist’ brand (Holt, 2002). After the anti-brand movement had gained a momentum, large corporations were being monitored closely and pressurised by activists from different pressure groups to be frank about their profit motives and duty to act as responsible citizens (Heding et al., 2008).

In the socio-cultural approach to managing a brand, consumers are often labelled as homo mercans – which refers to a ‘market man’ who is entangled in the intricate meanings found in cultural consumer objects, especially identity brands that are rich in self-expressive benefits (Holt, 2002). However, it must be noted that cultural consumption isn’t just about consuming hedonic cultural objects such as movies, music, novels etc. but all consumer goods, regardless of their utilitarian character, that carry circulators of meaning (McCracken, 1988). As such, cultural meaning is communicated using signs and symbols as part of a semiotic means of communication and is considered to be ad-hoc, continuously flowing amongst society and always in a transition phase to stay relevant as time and society evolve (Heding et al., 2008). In this context, the marketer disperses a string of signs and symbols, which could also be interpreted by consumers intertextually (depending on how enculturated or culturally

'literate' they may be), thus suggesting that: "...the production and circulation of meaning has no beginning and no end." (Heding et al., 2008, p. 216). On the contrary, since consumers realistically cannot extract meaning that is of significance to them from every object they use on a daily basis, the meanings of signs could be perceived as arbitrary and the cultural context attempts to frame the interpretation of such signs when meaning is localised by consumers during consumption (Hackley, 2003).

Whilst the identity approach to managing a brand focuses on culture at a micro-level i.e. organisational culture, the cultural approach distinguishes itself by acknowledging the cultural forces a brand can be subject to at the macro-level and how marketers can facilitate the nurturing of an 'iconic' brand. For the community and cultural approaches, the focus of analysis is on consumer culture, whilst the consumer-based, relational and personality approaches have dedicated themselves to the individual consumer.

What is clear here is the notion that all these approaches have been subject to evolution, emerging and evolving from the limitations of their predecessors, often with the help of unconventional data collection methods of that particular era. However, it should also be noted that one approach is not necessarily 'better' than the other and that they have all emerged for different reasons and under a different set of conditions/circumstances. Table 1 (*see next page*) compares all 7 approaches.

In order to meet the set research objectives, this study will adopt a combination of the consumer-based and relational approaches to exploring consumers' engagement with films as brands, which could be labelled as a 'consumer-centric' combination. This is crucial since it will allow the researcher to obtain a micro-level focus on the consumer on their own in the context of a dyadic, one-to one, consumer-brand relationship –

whilst also considering both cognition and affect dimensions at the same time (Heding et al., 2008). Existing literature has primarily taken on an identity based approach (Grainge, 2007; Keller, 2008; Kapferer, 2008), which is marketer-led, or a cultural approach (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013) where the brand is out of focus and which neglects cognitive and affective factors influencing consumers' engagement with films as brands.

This study's consumer-centric approach is fundamental to commence the necessary groundwork required to establish and conceptualise the consumer – film brand engagement construct, a key gap in the literature which is yet to be addressed, as will be discussed in detail in the next sections to follow.

**Table 1 - Key approaches to managing a brand**

Branding approach	Description	Relationship type	Focus	Brand value origin
Economical approach	Manages the brand via the marketing mix and seeks to influence consumers' brand choice. A short-term tactic, focus is transaction-specific and assumes consumers are rational beings who can easily decode marketing messages	Marketer-dominated	Transaction	Marketer
Identity approach	Continued emphasis of company's ownership of brand and integration of branding within all organisational levels. Communication with consumer is still linear	Marketer-dominated	Company	Marketer
Consumer-based approach	Shift towards the receiver of brand communication – consumer, with a consideration of human psychology to better understand the consumer's mind-set and how to go about influencing it. Considered to be all encompassing, since it is built on consumers' brand knowledge	Dyadic (Consumer + Brand)	Consumer	From consumers, through 'manipulation' of marketer via cognitive insights. However, is limited since it disregards emotional and cultural factors which also influence human behaviour
Personality approach	Credited for equipping a brand with human attributes and characteristics	Marketer-dominated	Consumer	From consumers, by matching a brand's 'human' attributes and characteristics with consumers' self-congruity
Relational approach	Introduces the notion that brands can be managed as relationship partners/companions for their consumers	Dyadic (Consumer + Brand)	Consumer	From consumers, it is considered to offer true ownership of the brand over the consumer-based approach, since consumers are not perceived as easily manipulated 'objects' by marketers anymore and partake in an equal consumer-brand dialogue exchange
Community approach	Emerged as a result of Globalisation and growth of the internet, to signify a deeper and more profound manner by which humans consume brands, adding another dimension to the traditional dyadic consumer-brand relationship	Triadic (Consumer + Brand + other brand consumers)	Consumer and social circle	Social interaction centred around the brand
Cultural approach	In this approach, the brand is not in central focus anymore, it distinguishes itself by acknowledging the cultural forces a brand can be subject to at a macro-level and how marketers can facilitate the nurturing of an 'iconic' brand	Broader brand integration with culture	Consumer culture	Co-created with consumers

### 2.2.3 Infancy of film branding literature

The motion picture industry consists of key major film studios, which are vertically integrated and owned by conglomerates who produce an array of entertainment forms and media e.g. radio, cable and network television stations, print media, amusement parks etc. The resulting magnitude of vertical integration has constructed very steep entry barriers, since newcomers often struggle to acquire access to the major distribution channels (Young et al., 2008; Ferguson, 2009).

Often such film studios have now become corporate brands themselves, developing strategic film brand portfolios through tactical mergers and acquisitions (Grainge, 2007). For such corporate brands, individual film brands thus become very valuable due to their brand equity achieved through consumer-brand engagement. This is exemplified by Disney's acquisitions of Pixar, Marvel and Lucasfilm to gain licensing rights of their intellectual properties, characters, story plots/universes, etc. By paying Pixar studios \$7.4 billion in 2006, Disney gained the rights to Toy Story, Cars, Monsters Inc. etc. Similarly, Disney acquired Marvel for \$4.2 billion in 2009 to gain access to an abundance of superheroes, including the Avengers blockbuster mammoth and Lucasfilm for \$4.5 billion in 2012 in order to leverage the legendary Star Wars franchise) (BBC, 2012). Owing to Disney's success, Dickey (2012) states:

*"They (Disney) are so good at branding and brands. They're so good at working with existing intellectual property and making it resonate with fans and marketing it well"* (Josh Dickey, film editor at Variety magazine, BBC, 2012).

Evidenced by several moves of major acquisitions, film brands now become part of an elaborative, strategic brand portfolio e.g. Marvel tactically plans and positions its

growing film franchises for the long-term, having scheduled future film releases for until 2028 already, to carefully laying out a tactical map, by interweaving authentic storylines with a universe of circa 8,000 characters that it controls entirely (Businessweek, April 2014).

Whilst branding serves as a key differentiation strategy for films, television shows, books and music, many film studios are now trying to create and produce not only films but brands in the entertainment industry, since *“a strong brand is valuable because of the fervent feelings that names generate as a result of pleasurable past experiences”* (Keller, 2008, p. 25).

Extant literature on film branding is scarce (O’Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013), predominantly conceptually focuses on the filmmaker’s/marketer’s perspective (Grainge, 2007; Keller, 2008; Kapferer, 2008) and branded entities within a film project and how these integrate with cultural fabric (O’Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013).

Grainge (2007) mentions that films as intellectual properties, have a cultural facet and highlight the potential of branding films as an accumulation of cultural instances, consisting of texts, symbols and images, utilised by social agents, constructed by audiences and adopted by enthusiastic groups in often unforeseen manners. Film branding enables marketers to address different audience types at once, whilst also crafting reproducible iconography in order to diversify and prolong the experience (Grainge, 2007). Brand synergy is woven together through cross promotions, co-branding and brand associations, further integrated and disseminated via various media platforms and consumer channels. Films’ expansion of ancillary markets, i.e. TV shows, VHS/DVD/Blu-Ray, pay-per-view, rentals, video games, merchandising, apparel, etc.

emphasise their versatility as multi-dimensional business propositions that seamlessly transcend between various platform types (Arvidsson, 2006; Grainge, 2007).

Marshall (2002) has labelled such marketing strategy as 'intertextual commodities', arguing that when a particular media product or 'content' can be promoted across multiple media channels and sold in differing formats, what is essentially marketed is not a film or a book. Instead, they are 'content brands' that travel between media platforms and offer fundamental consumption contexts for selected goods and media products (Arvidsson, 2006), hence leveraging their brand elasticity and degree of transferability (Laforet, 2010). Harry Potter provides a good example wherein films were produced from its novels, whilst Star Wars has been one of the pioneers to leverage its distinctive image and popularity through the sale of merchandise, toys, video games and apparel. Nevertheless, not all good stories have the calibre and depth of repertoire to be transformed into brands, instead, they are simply products enjoyed as good movies by many.

However, when illustrating films' branding process as journeys through complex corporate structures and commercialisation of blockbuster franchises, Grainge (2007) only focuses on Hollywood's industry culture, roles of production house logos, product placements and industry politics in developing branded texts, properties and spaces to better promote films, failing to consider consumers' contribution towards films' success and their role in shaping brand meaning (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013) since he adopts the identity and cultural approaches to managing a brand.

Similarly, although Keller (2008) suggests that films can establish themselves as strong brands by combining various elements such as name, logo and symbol, brand characters, slogan and jingles, packaging and signage into a formula that consumers find

appealing by citing Batman, Austin Powers and Harry Potter as examples for strong film brands, Keller (2008) did not specify the exact measures and process that lead towards such success.

Kapferer's identity approach to managing a brand (2008, p. 133) suggests that selling merchandise and franchising initiatives help films position themselves as brands, because brands cannot exist without a supporting product/service that embodies the brand. Referring to Disney's business model, which capitalises on films' profits to further generate huge revenue streams through licensed products, Kapferer (2008, p.133) illustrates how films can transform into brands via merchandise availability. Nevertheless, not all films that sell merchandise and/or adopt franchising models can engage consumers with films as brands, because some inevitably fail to excel and also since brands increasingly focus on offering intangible values to consumers that are difficult to replicate by its competitors (Keller, 2008).

To challenge existing views which discuss film brands from predominately filmmakers' perspective, O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2013) conceptually acknowledge audiences' contribution and involvement by defining film brands as "*...signs constructed in social interaction, meanings which are produced, communicated and consumed by filmmakers and their audiences*" (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013, p. 777). They emphasise the discursive role that the audience play in consuming film brands, hence further suggesting that the meaning of a film brand may vary amongst audiences and over time. However, O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2013) study's focus is at a macro-level and therefore deviates from the brand as a central focus by exploring abstract entities that exist outside the immediate realm of consumers on the ground-level and neglecting the emotional and cognitive factors which drive consumers' engagement with films as



brands (Heding et al., 2008). Instead, their cultural branding approach identifies various branded entities, e.g. people, character, studio brands etc. within a film project and how they brand a film and shape its' film brand identity through the brandscape lens. They did not discuss how films are consumed by consumers at the consumer-brand level as holistic, collective entities and how, when and why consumers engage with certain films as brands, whilst others as simply movies.

Furthermore, their study focuses on analysing a film brand's identity, hence demonstrating a lack of market sensing ignorance/underestimation of existing customer knowledge and its value of retrospectively shaping brand identity (Heding et al., 2008). Conversely, although brand image also has its limitations e.g. the notion that it is backward-looking because consumers relate to previous marketing initiatives, it is still a vital aspect to consider when put into the film classification, consumption and engagement context: *"Brand management is enacted as a tactical process of cyclical adaptation to consumers' representations of the focal brand whereby brand image gradually supplants brand identity"* (Louro and Cunha, 2003, p. 863).

### **2.3 Consumption and enjoyment of films as experiential goods**

Research on the consumption of films has spanned across a number of different literature domains over the years, developed using differing perspectives and contexts, including: marketing (explored in the preceding section); cultural studies and communications (media studies) as well as experiential goods, which are explored below.

Within the cultural and media studies domains, existing literature has focused on different facets, including but not limited to: the power of media texts to influence subsequent meanings developed and how film genres inform social patterns of taste

(Moore, 1993); the contexts in which film blockbusters are produced, marketed and ultimately consumed (Stringer, 1993); how media texts are interpreted by audiences and the impact they have in their lives in a socio-cultural context (Gillespie, 2005) as well as how, when and why films obtain a cult status (Hayward, 2018).

Audience reception theory (Hall, 1980), which explores the intricacies around how messages are encoded/decoded within media texts, is perhaps one of the most significant theoretical concepts in the context of media consumption, ploughing the way for a wave of audience research within the cultural studies and communication literature domains.

A critical response to 'Screen theory' (Moore, 1993), which was coined as one of the first to analyse a film as a discourse, the Encoding/Decoding model shed light towards viewers as active decoders who may not necessarily accept meanings encoded and positions offered by filmmakers and refuse these all together or negotiate them whilst interacting with media texts as social subjects (Birmingham Popular Memory Group CCCS, 1982). Audiences' reception and subsequent interpretations during the decoding stage are found to be culturally and socially located, thus a viewer's daily experiences and knowledge gained inform interpretative process of viewing and a potential divergence from the intended meaning encoded (Gillespie, 2005).

As a result, it has been recommended that in order to study audience reception of media texts effectively, media analysis ought to combine studies about production, the text and audience, as opposed to studying these independently (Evans and Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Doing so enables the researcher to address: "*...when the text is guiding the reader and when the reader/viewer is being creative/resistant...*" (Gillespie,

2005, p. 43), since spectators (viewers) are found to have agency over media texts such as films (Hayward, 2018).

Spectatorship refers how going to see films, film consumption and their associated myths are considered to be activities of symbolic nature, and thus events of cultural significance (Mayne, 1993). In the context of audience reception, this also means verging beyond production and the cinematic text and considering a range of extra-cinematic materials that set the conditions for receiving and reading the film e.g. social history, audience composition, reviews, commentary, fan discourse, star images and texts, commodity tie-ins, scandals, as well as other discourses and events (Cook, 2008).

More recently, audience reception research has focused on how spectators identify themselves with a film and their role in actively producing meaning as a subject of the film (Hayward, 2018).

In the context of the experiential goods literature, films are fundamentally 'experience goods', personal entities that integrate viewers' emotional and intellectual spheres (Bassi, 2010). The crucial distinction between non-experiential goods and experiential goods is the latter's emphasis on consumption, as opposed to purchase, specifically the resulting psychological reaction evoked (Bassi, 2010). Whilst experiential goods are often judged by consumers subjectively through heuristics, hence reducing cognitive load during decision-making (Bassi, 2010), consumers cannot judge films' quality by inspection and thus must use cues such as the actors, directors, script writers involved in the concept or rationale of the project, word of mouth and critical reviews (Keller, 2008) or what O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2013) label as marketability/playability factors. A key outcome for experiential goods consumption is

the arousal of emotions for something that's predominantly intangible (Mano and Oliver, 1993, Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), resulting in impressions that last longer than other goods (Holbrook and Grayson, 1986, Lacher and Mizerski, 1994).

As experiential goods, films are consumed holistically, offering social integration, sensorial and emotional satisfaction (Schmitt, 1999). Furthermore, experiential goods are not simply considered as the sum of their attributes, e.g. a film's actors, directors, storyline etc., it's the potential value arising from their combination of attributes that consumers cherish (Bassi, 2010). Characterised by reasons that guide their choice, conventional utilitarian criteria are substituted by subjective criteria to accommodate one's search for pleasure, fun and personal expression (Mano and Oliver, 1993).

Films are hedonistic (Bassi, 2010), consumers' evaluation of films are linked to their end goals and values (Blythe, 1997). For consumers, films' values consist of personal and social/community driven dimensions: films allow escapism from worldly affairs, aid identity building, offer assistance during rites of passage, inspire, educate, spread enjoyment, bring people together and widen network clusters (UK Film Council, 2007, British Film Institute, 2011).

Films clearly have a lot to offer to consumers as experiential goods, however, limited studies have discussed how viewers actually consume and enjoy films. Hart et al. (2016) found film characteristics; viewing and situational environment to be interrelated classification dimensions which collectively impact one's nonlinear film consumption behaviour, in relation to sense, feel, think, act and relate (Schmitt, 1999). Responding to O'Reilly and Kerrigan's (2013) proposal that viewers initially consider a film's marketability and playability, Hart et al. (2016) offer an interesting perspective

when it comes to consumers' subjective classification of films, going beyond simplistic genres and sub-genres.

In terms of sense-making, film types give consumers the ability to form pre-expectations and connotations about particular films (Hart et al., 2016). This aids consumers in navigating through the vast number of films available, associated marketing materials and helps screen out irrelevant 'noise'.

Film classification types further transcend into assumptions about how such films are intended to make us feel as consumers and their associated sought-after end goal (Hart et al., 2016), which is crucial since trust in one's own feelings often leads consumers' onto the 'right' pathway when it comes to making judgements and decisions (Avnet, Pham and Stephen, 2012) and consideration of moods is therefore seen to have a noticeable effect on resulting film choices (Cressey, 1938; Caruso and Shafir, 2006) and subsequent shaping of personal values (Beckwith, 2009). Batat and Wohlfeil (2009) have shown that a consumer's personal engagement with a film's narrative, in conjunction with its characters, film merchandise, DVD, music and underlying philosophy enhance immersion (cognitive, emotional as well as imaginary involvement) into a film's imaginary world and is a crucial requisite for one's repeated enjoyment of a film, further echoed by the works of Oatley (1999) Cohen (2001) on immersive personal engagement with literary characters and their stories in novels.

Zhao, Ishihara and Lounsbury (2013) suggest that consumers may find it difficult to appropriately classify a film (sense-making) and anticipate the intended feeling of the proposed film viewing experience (feel). Such category confusion may be as a result of an incoherent film identity, at this stage the consumer will consequently engage in rational, problem-solving experiences to attempt to comprehend a film's marketing

materials. Playability factors offer crucial clarification during such times of uncertainty e.g. seeking friend's opinions, critical reviews, film marketing materials etc. (Hart et al., 2016). During this 'Thinking' stage, consumers may also consider which films eagerly warrant an urgent trip to the cinema and motivate them to make their viewing experience more pleasurable, cited examples include: sequels, prequels and remakes of big film franchises (Hart et al., 2016), which are synonymous with the tentpole format (Obst, 2013).

During the 'Act' stage, Hart et al. (2016), emphasise that film consumption is a holistic and cumulative experience, during which cultural capital is 'earned' by consumers and subsequently informs their future film selection. This contradicts with O'Reilly and Kerrigan's stance (2013), since film classification in this case is not dependent on individual branded entities within a film but the holistic effect a film/film franchise has on the consumer over time (their stance is explored in-depth in the next section). Furthermore, during the 'relate' stage, Hart et al. (2016) suggest consumers amalgamate previous experiences and reflect upon important factors/drivers considered in the context of consumption, which again indicates that a film's affective, cognitive and relative time-bound impact is instrumental to the subjective classification of films, including that of a film as a brand.

Hart et al.'s (2016) contribution highlights how personal, subjective film classification schemes influence the initial perception, selection and evaluation of a film and that film selection is not about the genre but the anticipated film experience, which is shaped by an array of elements that consumers build upon via resources supplied by film producers and their marketers (Hart et al., 2016). However, although their study emphasises the benefits for consumers to classify films, as they embark on the film

consumption journey, their study does not consider at what point in the film consumption journey consumers are likely to engage with a film as a brand and which factors may influence consumer-film brand engagement in the first place.

From a methodological perspective, since their study is solely based on the author's account it is therefore questionable to which extent interviewer bias was accounted for, there is also very limited scope for generalisability.

#### **2.4 Consumer - brand engagement**

According to Gambetti et al. (2012), Consumer-brand engagement (CBE) may be defined as: *"...a dynamic and process-based concept evolving over time in intensity on the basis of the brand's capability of increasingly intercepting consumers' desires and expectations using all possible physical and virtual touchpoints between brands and consumers"* (Gambetti et al., 2012, p. 680)

Originating from the relationship marketing (Vivek et al., 2012) service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) and Critical Culture Theory (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) literature domains, CBE is considered a priority by marketers in their branding strategies (Hollebeek, 2011) because it is a fundamental driver of the consumer decision-making process (Bowden, 2009; Spratt et al., 2009) and precursor to the creation of brand equity (Schultz and Block, 2011). CBE is not a new construct, it is a meta-organiser and umbrella concept which: *"...represents the comprehensive brand effort of 'getting closer' to its consumers, and establishing with them an increasingly strong relationship from the moment they develop a preference for a brand to the follow-up period of their brand purchase"* (Gambetti et al., 2012, p. 681). As a result, CBE seeks to collect and intensify various dimensions over time, in order to characterise

advancements of the consumer-brand relationship i.e. sharing of meaning and value co-creation, emotional bonding and consumer-brand acquaintance (Gambetti et al., 2012).

Contemporary brand management does not necessarily focus on 'sending' messages about products to consumers anymore; instead, it aims to define the contours of what brands can mean to them, providing freedom to produce meaning and social relations relative to how brands have helped to create within their lives (Arvidsson, 2005), a process which occurs organically with the help of the hedonic nature of films as experiential goods. This is also in line with Aceland's work (2003), whereby the process of film marketing is not confined to the initial motion picture anymore, instead, film marketing campaigns are conducted 'permanently' as part of the 'total entertainment' gestalt (Aceland, 2003). According to Wells and Prensky (1996) consumer-centric brand positioning informs consumers about the role brands may play in their life, based on the kind of value brands promise to deliver, consistently reinforcing why a particular brand is superior to its contextual competitors (Laforet, 2010), something films are equipped to facilitate due to the cultural capital earned as a result of cumulative film consumption (Hart et al., 2016).

Past CBE studies have focused on its cognitive dimensions e.g. consumer-brand mental activation, inclusion of brands in consumers' self-concept (ARF, 2006; Sprout et al., 2009; Goldsmith et al., 2010), affective advertising components which elicit consumer engagement through feelings (Heath, 2007, 2009) and conative dimensions, which allude consumers' behavioural manifestations beyond the initial purchase (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010). However, existing CBE literature predominantly explores the practitioner's standpoint, disregarding the consumers' perspective of CBE and how this retrospectively influences CBE strategies.



When exploring the consumer-centric approach through CBE, it is apparent that consumers subconsciously contribute towards brand equity and successful brand strategy, since brands are important to them (Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2012). Taking on the consumer-centric branding perspective, a brand's reality lies in the experience of its consumers (Topalian, 2003, p. 1119) and although organizations have legal ownership of brands, a brand's real value is derived from consumers and other stakeholders who take emotional ownership of the brand/corporate brand, attributed to highly emotional brand engagement (Balmer, 2013, p. 735). Marketers must concede that brands' powers predominantly reside in consumers' minds (Gardner and Levy, 1955; De Chernatony and McDonald, 1998; Keller, 2001; Keller, 2008; Heding et al., 2008; Laforet, 2010, p. 14) and that it is what they can do and be with the brand (Schmitt, 1999) that strengthens brands' positioning within consumers' lives (Arvidsson, 2005). The branding consultant 'The Cult Branding Company' urges practitioners to recognise that brands do not belong to marketers anymore (Laforet, 2010, p. 22) therefore consumers do not have a relationship with a product or service but the brand (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000) marketers need to subsequently view brand relationships not only through companies' eyes but also through consumers' (Varey, 2002; Pressey and Tzokas, 2006; Leahy, 2011) to better meet consumers' needs through suitable products and marketing messages (Schiffman, Kanuk and Wiesenblit, 2010) and to gain a competitive advantage through consumer insights (Kapferer, 2012).

## 2.5 Critique and research directions

At the beginning of this chapter (2.1), the process of how a film is made from the producer's perspective was summarised; exploring films as intellectual properties and how difficult it can be to obtain funding/greenlight to produce films (Young et al., 2008). The competitive nature of the film industry was discussed, highlighting a major shift whereby production houses and filmmakers are put under more and more pressure to produce tentpole films i.e. big budget, blockbuster films (Epstein, 2012; Obst, 2013). The importance of marketing leading to a higher cumulative box office result (Young et al., 2008) and the fact that production houses are from the very beginning implementing a growth option in their original films (Gong et al., 2011) suggests that production houses do not just want to produce mere films anymore but films which have the potential to engage with consumers as brands. This is very important, since 4/5<sup>th</sup> of a film's lifetime revenue is accounted for by downstream contracts, something not every film may be in a position to negotiate since this is contingent upon a film's first box office weekend performance (Young et al., 2008).

The second section of the chapter (2.2) firstly examined the literature on film marketing, emphasising the notion that film marketing campaigns are increasingly becoming 'permanent' and not confined to the exclusive promotion of the motion picture anymore (Aceland, 2003). Furthermore, although numerous mediators between a film's marketability and box office performance have been identified over the years, no empirical research has been conducted on the role film branding plays in relation to box office performance and a film's success in general. Film studios are found to have become corporate brands themselves (Grainge, 2007) and the brand equity derived from consumer-brand engagement has enabled them to develop strategic film brand portfolios, which can be leveraged in a lucrative manner. Extant literature on film

branding was found to be rather scarce (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013), predominantly conceptually exploring the filmmaker's/marketer's perspectives, points of parity films have as brands (Grainge, 2007; Keller, 2008; Kapferer, 2008) as well as branded entities within a film project and how these integrate with cultural fabric (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013). O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2013) also did not explore film brands as collective entities, even though films are consumed and cherished holistically (Schmitt, 1999; Bassi, 2010). Furthermore, the cultural approach adopted by O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2013) did not take into account the emotional and cognitive factors which influence consumers' engagement with films as brands (Heding et al., 2008). Hence, this study adopts an all-encompassing consumer-centric approach – that is, a combination of the consumer-based approach (focusing on cognition) and the relational approach (focusing on affect) to effectively study perceptions, beliefs and values regarding consumers' engagement with films as brands at a consumer-brand level.

The third section of this chapter then shifted attention to how audiences consume and enjoy films as experiential goods (Mano and Oliver, 1993; Schmitt, 1999; Bassi, 2010), focusing on consumers' subjective classification of films and the film consumption journey (Hart et al., 2016). However, Hart et al. (2016) have not considered at what point in the film consumption journey consumers are likely to engage with a film as a brand and which factors may influence consumer-film brand engagement in the first place.

The fourth section of the literature review (2.4) examined the importance of consumer-brand engagement (CBE) as a fundamental driver of the consumer-decision-making process (Bowden, 2009; Sprott et al., 2009) and precursor to brand equity

creation (Schultz and Block, 2011). However, existing studies have not considered the consumers' perspective and how this retrospectively influences CBE strategies.

To conclude, since there is a lack of understanding regarding how consumers engage with films as brands through the conceptual, filmmaker/marketer dominated film branding literature, this study aims to explore how, when and why do so from the consumer-centric perspective, as a means to achieve points of differentiation in this competitive market. By directly collecting data from consumers, this research study seeks to develop a new film brand engagement framework which explicitly illustrates how consumers engage with films as brands, in a sequential order, thus shedding new light to film branding literature.

Table 2 (*see next page*) highlights the key research gaps associated with the film branding literature domain and how this study plans to contribute towards addressing the shortcomings of their conceptual stances.

**Table 2 - Overview of key research gaps**

Author, Year & literature type	Perspective	Branding approach	Conceptual stance	Limitation	Our proposed contribution
Grainge (2007) Textbook, Conceptual	Marketer	Identity approach	Grainge, details the film branding process through complex corporate structures, the commercialisation of blockbuster franchises from the studio's and marketer's perspectives. He explores Hollywood's industry culture, role of production house logos, product placements and industry politics in developing branded texts.	Conceptual, fails to consider consumers' contribution towards films' success and their role in shaping brand meaning.	Take on a consumer-centric approach to determine how, when and why consumers are likely to engage with a film as a brand and how practitioners can utilise such insights for points of differentiation
Keller (2008) Textbook, Conceptual	Marketer	Identity approach	Keller implies that all films are brands and that strong brands combine various branding elements into a formula that consumers find appealing.	Conceptual, he does not specify the exact measures and sequential process that leads towards such success.	Operationalise consumer-film brand engagement construct by identifying antecedents, consequences and other key facilitators
Kapferer (2008) Textbook, Conceptual	Marketer	Identity approach	Kapferer suggests that film brands cannot exist without a supporting product/service that embodies the brand.	Conceptual, not every film that sells merchandise or is a franchise may engage with consumers as a brand, since they may fail to excel and because consumers are also engaged by intangible values.	Explore and validate the role merchandising plays in consumers' engagement with films as brands
O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2013) Journal article, Conceptual	Marketer	Cultural approach	O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2013) explore branded entities within a film project and how these are embedded within the broader cultural fabric using the brandscape lens.	Conceptual, does not explore film brands as collective entities, as suggested by experiential goods literature. Also neglects emotional and cognitive factors which drive consumers' engagement with films as brands. Study arguably focuses on a film's brand identity, rather than what drives consumers' engagement with films as brands	Explore film brands as collective entities, take on a consumer-centric approach to investigate which cognitive and emotional factors dictate consumers' engagement with films as brands and how they do so
Hart et al. (2016) Journal article, Empirical	Consumer	N/A	Hart et al., explore how and why audiences consume films, focusing on the film consumption journey and consumers' subjective classification of films.	Data is solely based on author's own account, does not consider at what point in the film consumption journey consumers are likely to engage with a film as a brand and which factors may influence consumer-film brand engagement in the first place.	Develop a sequential consumer-film brand engagement framework in line with consumers' film consumption journey

## Chapter 3 – Research methodology

The following chapter firstly explores the mixed-method research design approach to addressing the research aims and objectives, as well as the research philosophy and approaches employed.

### 3.1 Mixed-methods research design - integrating qualitative and quantitative research

The development and perceived legitimacy in mixed-methods research has gained popularity, with the combination of qualitative/quantitative research providing a more elaborate understanding of research problems (Creswell, 2009): “...a researcher may employ multi-strategy research with a purpose like ‘diversity of views’ in mind, but find that the qualitative evidence helps to explain some of the relationships uncovered through an analysis of survey data...” (Bryman, 2006, p. 110-111). As a result, one method’s result may help identify questions to ask for another method (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998) or using both sets of findings collectively in order to reinforce each other (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

Crucially, mixed-method research is not just about validating findings against each other, instead, it is about negotiating an account of the findings which draws together both studies’ components into a debate; whereby the quantitative and qualitative findings are mutually informative and thus assist in constructing a negotiated account of what they *mean* together (Bryman, 2007, p. 21).

Greene et al. (1989) have explored five key justifications for the integration of qualitative and quantitative research, in the context of evaluation research:

- **Triangulation:** Converging the results of different methods for means of corroboration
- **Complementarity:** Clarifying the results of one method using findings from another
- **Development:** Using the results of one method to develop or inform another method e.g. sampling, implementation and measurement decisions
- **Initiation:** Seeking paradoxes and contradictions using a new perspective. This may also involve the recasting of questions/findings with those of another method
- **Enquiry:** Extending the breadth and range of enquiry by using different methods for various inquiry components

Although mixed-methods research incorporates traits that help neutralise biases of other methods (Creswell, 2009) there are several barriers to successful integration of qualitative and quantitative research (Bryman, 2007). Mixed method researchers often find that they are writing up to different audiences, highlighting or using a set of data more or less exclusively. This process is dictated by a particular topic's nature and attractiveness to stakeholders, as well as impressions of an audience's expectations. Some researchers may have methodological preferences, as a result, have the tendency to emphasise findings of data sets that they are more confident about and skilful with. Similarly, the nature of the data collected may also hinder integration i.e. one set may have more interesting findings that need to be emphasised over others. Another barrier that restricts the integration of quantitative and qualitative data is found to be linked with the structure of research projects i.e. if a project is structured in a manner that

facilitates the use of a survey, this will also influence and direct the way qualitative data is to be collected and analysed (Bryman, 2007).

### **3.2 Research aims and objectives**

To reiterate, the intent of this two-phase, sequential mixed-method study is to firstly unfold the film brand engagement phenomenon from the ground up, exploring how, when and why consumers engage with films as brands using semi-structured interviews. Secondly, findings of this qualitative phase will then be used to statistically test the proposed theoretical framework that seeks to conceptualise the film brand engagement phenomenon and its respective dimensions. Thirdly, the purpose of this research study is to evaluate which film brand engagement dimensions should be exploited by filmmakers and marketers in order to facilitate the lucrative film brand engagement process.

The reason for initially collecting exploratory qualitative data was guided by a lack of theory that acknowledges films as brands or how they may be conceptualised as such (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013) in addition to the lack of empirical data found in existing film branding literature (Grainge, 2007; Keller, 2008; Kapferer, 2008; O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013). Thus, in response, chapter 2 of this thesis critically discussed the ambiguity of past conceptualisation of films as brands, with the already scarce extant literature primarily focusing on sequel generating franchises that monetize their intellectual properties (Grainge, 2007; Keller, 2008; Kapferer, 2008) and the existence of branded entities within a film project and how film brands integrate with culture at a macro-level (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013). Past film branding literature has predominantly positioned itself from the filmmaker's/marketer's perspective, assumes all films are brands and did not explore the conditions under which consumers actually



engage with films as brands. This thesis argues for filmmakers and marketers to be more consumer-centric in branding their experiential goods at a micro-level, since it is the consumer who ultimately envisages a product/service i.e. a film, as a brand (Gardner and Levy, 1955; Keller, 2001; Laforet, 2010).

### **3.3 Research philosophy and approaches**

As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, this research project adopts an exploratory sequential research design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011) using a mixed-methods procedure (Creswell, 2009), with interpretivist/constructionist stances and an abductive research approach (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Firstly, via 38 qualitative semi-structured consumer-based interviews for preliminary purposes to explore consumer's engagement via attitude, emotion, perception and behaviour (Brace, 2013) with films as brands during Phase 1.

When exploring the relationship between theory and data, this research study adopts an abductive mode of reasoning to: “...make logical inferences and build theories about the world” (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 26), therefore avoiding the limitations commonly associated with inductive/deductive approaches. The most common issue associated with deduction is the notion that the process strictly relies on the logic of theory and hypothesis testing, with difficulties arising as to which theory to select for testing (Wilson, 2006; Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Bryman and Bell, 2015). On the contrary, inductive reasoning is notorious for its inability to enable the development of theory, regardless of the size and depth of empirical data (Creswell, 2011). Abduction, proposed as the ‘third’ approach, can essentially be considered as a ‘pragmatic’ approach to induction – whereby it starts with something unusual, surprising or of puzzling nature (existing theory does not account for phenomenon) and seeks to

explain it (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This type of reasoning involves identifying conditions that would make a phenomenon less puzzling and therefore 'easier' or more logical to comprehend, pin-pointing the 'best' explanation plausible to interpret the phenomenon (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013). In order to achieve this, the researcher may partake in a process known as 'dialectical shuttling', which involves engaging forward-backward with the social world, the researcher's pre-understandings and the empirical data – in order to nurture theoretical ideas (Atkinson et al., 2003; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012), whilst still remaining open to the idea of being 'surprised' by the data and not conducting research to merely be confined to the notion of confirming previous understandings of the phenomenon (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

In order to accommodate the process of abduction, which can be related to the philosophical idea of the 'hermeneutic circle' (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007), this research study takes on an interpretivist orthodoxy. Originating from the epistemological clash between positivism and the study of hermeneutics (Wright, 1971) as well as intellectual traditions such as phenomenology (Schutz, 1962) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1962), Interpretivism is particularly concerned with understanding the actions of humans, rather than the forces that probably influence them or to merely explain what the human behaviour is (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Its focus is on the social scientist's duty to tap into the 'common-sense thinking' of people and to *interpret* their thinking in their own social world from their perspective. This epistemological orientation was deemed appropriate since the current literature on film branding is predominantly conceptual and that the focus of this study is to therefore first and foremost to *generate* theory (Bryman and Bell, 2015) to encapsulate the consumer-film brand engagement process.

From an ontological perspective, a constructionist position was deemed suitable for the purpose of this research study, since this stance implies that: *"...social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but are also in constant state of revision..."* (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 33). This approach is further endorsed by O'Reilly and Kerrigan's (2013) conceptual paper on film brands, in which a 'brandscape lens' is adopted to illustrate how consumers interact with brands in a film project in the context of signs and texts, in addition to their definition of film brands: *"...signs constructed in social interaction, meanings which are produced, communicated and consumed by film-makers and their audiences"* (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013, p. 777). Relating to the concept of postmodernism, constructionism infers that meanings constructed during social interaction are ephemeral (Bryman and Bell, 2015), since they are dependent on both time and place, as is also evident in discourse analysis (Potter, 1996). Since films have now been releasing for more than a century and across the world, and the perception of a film as a brand can essentially be considered subjective in nature, the purpose of this study is not to determine which film is a film and which film is a film brand, but to better understand how consumers engage with films as brands and which factors are fundamental to comprehend how the consumer-film brand engagement process functions effectively.

Existing film branding literature is 'outcome' orientated and explores the 'status' films acquire as brands (Keller, 2008; Kapferer, 2008; O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013), hence failing to explain how the film brand phenomenon has come into existence in the first place and identifying the missing links involved in the process of engaging consumers with films as brands. Hence, in order to conceptualise and operationalise the film brand engagement construct, this study embraced Churchill's (1979) framework

for reliable and valid construct development, in which Phase 1 has the vital role of exploring and capturing the hermeneutical intricacies of the engagement process involved and developing a sequential film brand consumer engagement model with relevant antecedents, facilitators and consequences based on consumer experiences (Walsh et al., 2009). This approach is founded on the perceptions consumers have of films as brands, similarly to how Grover et al. (2016) have explored employees' perceptions of organisational culture change, in particular using the emic perspective.

For Phase 2, a consumer survey questionnaire was then deemed appropriate as a deductive, conclusive and confirmatory means to measure how widespread these quantifiable attitudes, motivations and behaviours identified in the preliminary study are (Wilson, 2006; Brace, 2013). This study has gained approval from Brunel University London's Research Ethics Committee (*See Appendix 1 for letter of approval*).

## Chapter 4 – Phase 1 – qualitative study

The chapter commences with Phase 1's research method and setting, followed by an overview of the participants' demographics; the sampling strategy employed and how the data was analysed. The chapter then concludes with the key qualitative findings that have emerged from the Phase 1 research study.

### 4.1 Research method and setting

Phase 1 adopted 38 semi-structured exploratory consumer interviews in the UK. The UK was chosen as the research setting because it's one of the largest film markets globally, with film revenues reaching £4.1 billion in 2015 (up from £3.8 billion in 2014) and circa 5 billion film viewings annually across various platforms (British Film Institute Statistical Yearbook, 2016). As established earlier, films are experiential goods and a qualitative research approach is a suitable means of acquiring insights into consumers' consumption of films and the manner by which they engage with them (Hart et al., 2016).

Semi-structured interviews were deemed appropriate to encourage participants to discuss topics of interest, their flexibility enables new questions to be introduced during the process of addressing set research objectives, where necessary, whilst further probing answers and skipping questions already addressed previously (Wilson, 2006; Collis and Hussey, 2014). 38 consumers participated in individual face-to-face interviews after being recruited on the university campus and around the local area (18 Males, 20 Females) with a broad age range (20–63), to accommodate potential variations of interest (*See table 3 on next page*).

Interviews are ideal to explore “*data on understandings, opinions, what people remember doing, attitudes, feelings and the like, that people have in common*” (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.2). Individual face-to-face interviews also eliminate group pressure, respondents are more likely to attain a heightened state of awareness from constant interaction, the one-to-one scenario gives participants a feeling of importance and that their opinions are truly valued (McDaniel and Gates, 2009). Such interviews also allow modification of one’s line of enquiry, hence following up on interesting responses and underlying motives is encouraged (Robinson, 2002).

**Table 3 - Participants' demographics**

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Viewing frequency	Film brand examples cited by participants
1	35	Female	Saudi Arabia	Once every two months	Titanic
2	29	Female	Iran	Almost everyday	Gone with the Wind
3	23	Male	White-British	Every other weekend	Senna, Ted
4	29	Male	British-Indian	At least once a month	X-Men, Mr. India, Back to the Future, James Bond, The Watchmen, Star Wars, Die Hard, Police Academy, Captain America, Spiderman
5	23	Female	British-Indian	Twice a week	Hitch, Friends with Benefits, the Notebook, Bride's maids, Inception, Fast and Furious series,
6	24	Female	Black-British	Every other day	Die Hard, Les Miserables, the Hangover series, Big Mamma's House
7	27	Male	Libya	3-5 times a week	James Bond, Mamma Mia! The Godfather, Dark Knight series, Man on Fire
8	32	Female	British-Pakistani	Almost everyday	The Mummy series, The Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, Batman, James Bond, Mission Impossible,
9	27	Female	Saudi-Arabia	Twice a week	Twilight series, the Amazing Spiderman
10	33	Female	Saudi-Arabia	3-5 times a week	Harry Potter, Beauty and the Beast, Cinderella, Twilight, James Bond, Anna Karina
11	25	Male	Turkey	Twice a month	Star Wars, Man of Steel, Harry Potter
12	27	Male	Turkey	3 times a week	Titanic
13	43	Female	Malaysian	Every week	James Bond, Superman series, Men in Black, Harry Potter, Star Trek, Star Wars
14	20	Female	Black-British	Once a week	The Hunger Games, Beauty and the Beast, Tangled, Cinderella, the Incredibles as well as all Disney films
15	26	Male	White-British	Once or twice a week	Aladdin, Harry Potter, Lion King, Cloudy with a chance of meatballs, Pirates of the Caribbean, The Hunger Games
16	23	Male	British-Indian	At least once a week	Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, Toy Story, Shrek, James Bond

17	24	Male	British-Pakistani	Twice a week	N/A
18	24	Male	British-Indian	4-6 times a month	N/A
19	23	Female	British-Pakistani	2-4 times a week	Harry Potter
20	22	Male	British-Indian	1-3 films per week	Harry Potter, Batman Nolan trilogy, Fast and Furious series, Marvel films
21	27	Male	British-Indian	Twice a week	Fast and Furious, Hulk, Superman, James Bond,
22	53	Female	British-Indian	2-3 times a week	Sholay, Veer Zaara, Jab We Met, Dhoom series, Krrish
23	46	Female	Swedish	1-2 times per week	Finding Nemo, James Bond, Titanic
24	35	Female	Black-British	Thrice a week	Hannah Montana, Harry Potter, Saw, Scary Movie, Superman, Star Wars, Disney films, Lord of the Rings, Bourne films, James Bond, Pirates of the Caribbean, Paranormal Activity, X-Men, Ironman, Die Hard
25	25	Female	Mixed-White British	6-8 times a year	Frozen, Tomb Raider,
26	50	Male	White-British	4-5 times a year	Robocop, the Last Samurai, Star Wars, Sabrina, Indiana Jones
27	58	Male	White-British	More than once a week	Pulp Fiction, Kill Bill, Disney films
28	50	Male	White-Italian	6-7 times a week	Police Academy, Speed, the Matrix, Avatar, Toy Story, Lord of the Rings, Citizen Kane, Star Wars, the Hobbit,
29	58	Male	White-British	2-3 times in cinema per year, on TV once a fortnight	Ealing Comedies, Closely Observed Trains, the Tree of Wooden Clogs, the Good the Bad and the Ugly,



30	43	Male	White-British	Twice a week	Planet of the Apes, James Bond, Alien, Predator, Wall Street, Star Wars, Elysium, Donny Brasco
31	64	Female	White-British	More than once a week	Lady and the Tramp, Harry Potter, Disney films, Local Hero
32	60+	Female	White-British	4-5 times a year	The Hunger Games, Gone with the Wind, Star Wars, James Bond, Harry Potter
33	Not given	Male	Jordan	Not disclosed	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Mission Impossible
34	28	Female	Saudi Arabia	2-3 times a month	The Amazing Spiderman, Twilight
35	28	Male	Turkey	2-3 times a month	Leon, the Godfather, Star Wars
36	23	Female	UK	Once a week	Frozen, Shrek, Toy Story
37	33	Female	Saudi Arabia	Twice a week	Cinderella, Lion King, Tom & Jerry, Frozen, Shrek, James Bond, Toy Story
38	37	Female	UK	Once a week	Star Wars, Cars

## **4.2 Sampling strategy**

Snowball sampling was selected because participants were required to have some recent experience of the phenomenon i.e. viewing films (Wilson, 2006; Collis and Hussey, 2014). However, since this is an exploratory study, wide ranges in viewing frequency (from 'almost every day' to 4-5 times a year) were welcomed and of interest, thus further enriching data contextualization (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Snowball sampling is considered an effective way to find more participants, based on their social relationships and networks, especially when the researcher has some unusual criteria for selection and it is difficult to identify prospective participants easily. However, on the contrary, making use of the snowball sampling approach can also lead to obtaining a sample which may not actually be reflective of the population e.g. if a consumer who is part of a film fan club is interviewed and they refer the researcher to other members of the club, the researcher has to take into account that their club membership inevitably contributes towards the underlying motives of their perceptions, opinions and attitudes (McDaniel and Gates, 2009). Furthermore, although not applicable in this research study, the snowball sampling approach may also be prone to ethical issues i.e. when the research is of a sensitive nature, since participants partake in the recruitment process and can therefore not be kept anonymous from each other (Wilson, 2006).

### 4.3 Data analysis

Interviews were conducted over four months, ranging between 25 and 91 minutes, concluding when the data was found to have saturated (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), which was judged when participants discussed known themes, thus indicating that key dimensions, sub-dimensions and relationships identified amongst them were representative of the phenomenon's totality. Prior to interviewing, participants were given an information sheet, outlining the study's purpose, procedure involved (permission to record audio for transcribing), researcher's contact details, reassurance of feedback anonymity, data confidentiality, their rights and voluntary participation (Collis and Hussey, 2014). A list of guideline questions (see *table 4 on next page*) to encourage discussion was sequenced in stages to encourage participants to open up (Schiffman, Kanuk and Wiesenblit, 2010, p. 47). We started by asking participants how often they view films, their preferred medium and motivation behind watching films. They were then asked to think about films and characters they love and their favourite ones, what they mean to them, what it is they associate with them etc. Participants were also asked about how they typically make up their mind when choosing which movie to watch next and what it is they may do after watching a film. Participants were then asked whether they think a film could become a brand and to justify their response. If they agreed with this statement, they were further asked to think about how, when and why a film could become a brand or whether they perceive every film to be a brand. Other points of discussion included whether a film would require a sequel to become a brand to them, what features they found synonymous with a film brand and examples of films they definitely perceive as brands and why.

**Table 4 - Interviewer's guideline questions**

Section	List of questions
<b>Intro questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “How often do you watch movies?”</li> <li>▪ “What medium do you use?”</li> <li>▪ “Why do you watch movies?”</li> </ul>
<b>Transition questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Which movies do you love? What is your favourite one?”</li> <li>▪ “How do you typically make up your mind about what movie to watch next? What persuades you to watch a film?”</li> <li>▪ “What do you do after watching a film?”</li> <li>▪ “Are there any particular individuals/characters from the film world that you love?”</li> </ul>
<b>Core questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “What comes to your mind when you hear the words film brand?”</li> <li>▪ “Do you think a film can become a brand?”</li> <li>▪ “Can you describe what a film brand is?”</li> <li>▪ “Can every film be a brand? What is fundamental for a film to be a brand?”</li> <li>▪ “Does a film require a sequel to be a brand?”</li> </ul>
<b>Closing comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Are there any film brands that you really love?”</li> <li>▪ “What sets your choice apart from others?”</li> <li>▪ “Are your friends/family aware that you love these?”</li> <li>▪ “Let me summarise our major discussion today, do you agree with these points?”</li> </ul>

Guided by data interpretation (Goulding, 2005), the main steps during the analysis of data included: iteration, purposive and theoretical sampling, axial coding, theorizing and theoretical density (Hutchinson, Johnston and Breckon, 2010).

Firstly, the interviewees’ audio recordings were transcribed, initial themes within the findings were then gathered using thematic analysis (Spiggle, 1994). In the context of a qualitative study, a theme could be defined as a code or a code that: *“...transcends any one code and is built up out of groups of codes...”* (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 599). Furthermore, a theme is essentially a means for the researcher to categorise the data in a manner that is relevant to the research focus, thus providing the researcher with a better theoretical understanding of the data collected, therefore offering theoretical contribution to the existing literature (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Secondly, core themes (or more abstract themes which have emerged) such as ‘emotional bonding’, ‘perception of success’ and sub-themes e.g. ‘self-congruity’, ‘iconic

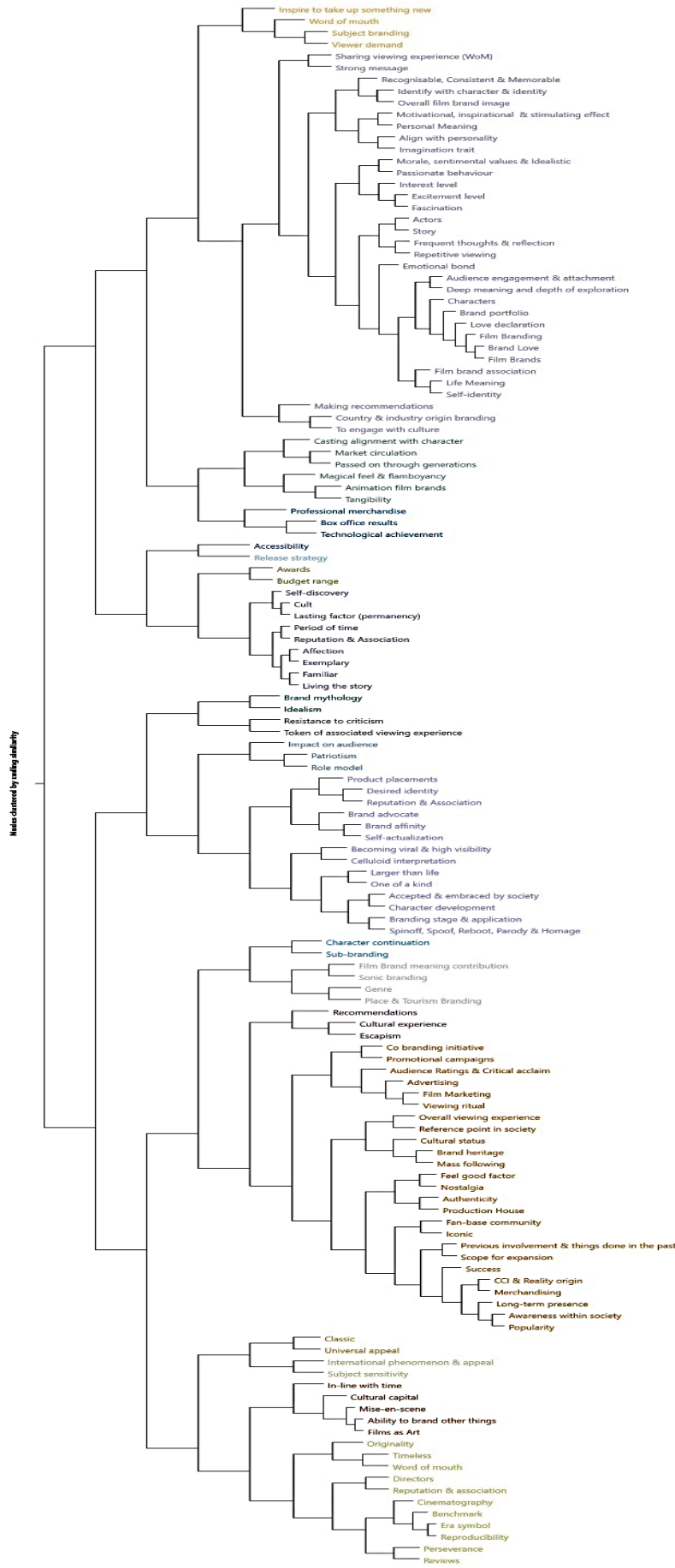
status', (which contribute towards encapsulating the core themes) were highlighted for coding purposes in NVivo, initially establishing relatively loose boundaries to avoid over-categorising and data fragmentation. Ryan and Bernard (2003), have recommended that when searching for themes within a qualitative data set, the researcher should look out for: repetition of topics discussed, indigenous typologies or categories that are used in an unfamiliar manner by locals, metaphors and analogies, examples of transitions between topics, similarities and differences in cases as well as linguistic connectors such as 'since' and 'because', to identify potential causal relationships (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

Some nodes were given 'parent' status whilst others 'child' status, therefore reflecting on which terms have an umbrella effect on others using the data and guided by existing literature e.g. 'emotional bonding' (parent node), encapsulated by child nodes such as: 'self-congruity, nostalgia, emotional attachment, moral values etc. The Dendrogram displayed (*Figure 1*), illustrates all nodes clustered by coding similarity, providing an overview of all the different nodes established during the course of the qualitative data analysis (134 nodes in total).

Since this was a very thorough and long list of nodes the researcher has come across whilst interviewing the participants, axial coding was then utilised to reassemble the data in new ways (Collis and Hussey, 2014), achieved by reflecting on the initial set of nodes and sequentially connecting the nodes to contexts, consequences, interaction patterns and causal relationships e.g. marketing efforts were found to moderate the intensity of a film's perceived success, which in turn contributed towards consumers' engagement of films as brands.

Furthermore, the sequence of film brand engagement was also consciously explored during data collection, by questioning respondents about the logical order of their film consumption journey and also through the sequencing of the interviewer's guideline questions, to reflect on the film consumption journey from start (when viewers have first heard about the film) to end (when viewers have watched the film and potentially engaged in post-viewing activities such as discussions, purchasing merchandise, watching sequels/prequels/spinoffs etc.).

This was a key aspect of the proposed theoretical contribution, since the conceptual framework to be developed by the end of the research project should be sequential and consolidated to adequately represent the consumer-film brand engagement process and its intricacies.



**Figure 1 - Nodes clustered by coding similarity**

#### 4.4 Findings

The study's findings are organised as follows: firstly, film identity's role in positioning films within consumers' minds is discussed; secondly, how perceived success and emotional bonding facilitate consumers' engagement with films as brands; thirdly, how marketing efforts, franchising, merchandise availability and long-term presence moderate consumers' engagement of films as brands; lastly, how film brands may benefit from passionate behaviour and purchase intention.

##### 4.4.1 A coherent film identity is the first step towards consumer film brand engagement

Participants recognised and acknowledged various film 'ingredients' during the interviews, which appear to help participants make sense of what a film is or could be about and enable viewers to form meaning that may have significance, whilst also crafting a film's picture in their minds. In the following excerpts, Participants 4 and 38 suggest how films' original stories and uniqueness stand out to them and form distinct associations:

*"...Back to the Future's story is soo original and a one off and how they tell a story like two storylines into one. When I think of the film, the story comes to mind straight away..."* [Participant 4]

*"I really like Harry Potter's original story. I've never seen any films like that before – I love the bit when they are riding on the brooms, playing Quidditch ..."*  
[Participant 38]



Actors and non-actors (e.g. directors, musicians, cinematographers, etc.) too become type casted and are remembered and associated with certain types of roles and films, as evidenced by the following:

*"...When you talk about pirates, Johnny Depp in Pirates of the Caribbean comes to mind, I really like him, whatever he does he justifies well, you know we've seen so many pirate movies but do we remember them? No, but we remember Johnny Depp as a pirate"* [Participant 8]

*"...everybody watches David Lynch and David Lean movies, you know it's going to be this sort of film if they have directed it, or a Ridley Scott movie..."* [Participant 28]

However, sometimes an actor's performance may be overshadowed by the magnitude of the character they are playing, as a result of their popularity and/or impact on culture:

*"...I love James Bond's character, I think the character is so strong that even if Bond's actors change, you still want to watch the movies because it's James Bond!"* [Participant 8]

*"Captain Jack Sparrow in Pirates of the Caribbean is clever, unpredictable, funny and loyal, a character anyone would love"* [Participant 19]

The production house of a film has also been a strong influence on some participants' view of films, based on their previous slate of films and approach to filmmaking, as highlighted by Participants 26 and 4:

*"Disney is such a famous production house, many people I know would just come along to watch the film if it's made by Disney, it stands for family entertainment"*

*and quality, it speaks for the quality, the heritage” [Participant 26]*

*“Marvel’s films are very nice because there’s more development of the characters, they developed supporting characters and they crossover and tell these fantastic stories...” [Participant 4]*

Part of production, according to the participants, for some films the use of mise-en-scène has also been memorable and meaningful, developing a distinct identity which resides in their minds and stands out:

*“...Costumes, sceneries, settings, and cinematography can all contribute via mise en scène, Star Wars for example, its’ costumes, lightsabers and music together create an identity that stands out...” [Participant 31]*

*“...if it is a great movie to enjoy like a musical movie, for example Les Miserables, it leaves me with a strong impression. At the same time, you really also enjoy it, like the sets, music, dresses, sounds, lighting, characters, it’s really very good...” [Participant 10]*

In addition, participants were also aware of whether a film’s premise/story is based on reality and/or originates from another Creative Cultural industry (CCI), often judging on the authenticity and creativity of their interpretation onscreen:

*“...if it’s a film based on a book then I tend to think about whether it’s a good adaptation, I like to think about what was good, compare it to how I imagined it in my head” [Participant 14]*

*“Titanic is a film based on a historical event, which has been transformed into a tragic love story film and forces the audience to explore their views about social*

*classes, so when I think of Titanic, it is not just a story, I also think of its origin”*

[Participant 23]

The elements discussed above by participants are reminiscent to a film’s identity (Kerrigan, 2010) and film brand’s identity (O’Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013). However, contrary to O’Reilly and Kerrigan’s (2013) theoretical stance, the present study’s findings suggest that these elements don’t actually dictate a film’s status as a brand from the consumer’s perspective. Instead, they are employed by consumers to develop an impression of films, since consumers value experiential goods by the potential arising from their combination, not simply as the sum of their attributes (Bassi, 2010), resulting in a holistic experience that offers emotional satisfaction (Schmitt, 1999). Moreover, the elements perceived as salient differ from one consumer to another because films are experiential goods and are therefore judged subjectively (Schmitt, 1999; Bassi, 2010).

The findings suggest a film stands out more clearly to consumers if its identity is coherent, hence some of the above elements would go one step further and complement each other in harmony, thus jointly painting the same picture in consumers’ imaginations. Coherence leads to a clear and meaningful identity to consumers, which may appeal to viewers and therefore warrant deeper exploration. Nevertheless, although all films have a unique identity, consumers do not necessarily engage with all films as brands - participants only considered some films as brands when asked if a film could become a brand:

*“Not every film is a brand, you could even say most films are not brands, they are only movies! There are perhaps only some films that are brands”* [Participant 11]

The findings reveal that consumers engage with films as brands when they are perceived as successful and/or bond emotionally with consumers. The following discussion unfolds key dimensions that not only make a film, but also a brand from consumers' perspective, in an attempt to develop a new theoretical grounding in explaining how consumers may go on to engage with films as brands.

#### **4.4.2 Consumers may engage with films as brands when perceived as successful**

For those participants who stated that a film could become a brand, the majority expressed the fundamental requirement for the film to be successful. Success' definition in films' context is subjective, depending on how consumers evaluate a film's accomplishments. Subjectivity is common with experiential goods (Bassi, 2010) and in this case, participants' interpretation of success encapsulates a number of indicators.

Participants 10 and 20 refer to a strong fan-base as a measure of films' Success, suggesting that it is their passionate affiliation and continued support that promotes films to the status of film brands for them:

*"A film needs to have a huge fanbase in order to become a brand, brands cannot exist without fans who follow them or buy their stuff - otherwise it won't be a brand. We call this a brand and that a brand, if no one's attracted to it, it will disappear soon. I think lots of people liked The Hunger Games; they have a fanbase, now they have a second part. Twilight, they have a lot of really passionate fans, they are a film brands, that's why they have part two, part three" [Participant 10]*

*"...Harry Potter, Batman trilogy, Marvel's films, Fast and Furious are all brands now. They have built a strong fan base over the years and have very loyal fans..."*

[Participant 20]

Fan-bases are responsible for the extent to which a film is widely accepted, embraced and considered popular in society, which also influences participants' perception of a film's Success. Subsequently, due to those films' prominence in daily life, mass following, recommendations from immediate network circles and fans' projection of passion for films, such films are considered worthwhile to watch and have a seal of approval to be of the stature of a film brand:

*"A film needs to be popular to become a brand; it should be accepted by society. Star Wars is a film brand. Even in the news, when it released, there were so many discussions on it, people gathered across the globe to watch the series' latest film, I think it's a strong brand, the fans dress like Star Wars characters"* [Participant 35]

*"...there are thousands maybe even millions of films within the market and we know from common sense that some of them are rubbish and far away from being a film brand because they are not popular, for example, not recommended by friends not advertised on the internet not on the rating list...it suggests low quality..."* [Participant 12]

When participants were asked whether a film would require a sequel to be classified as a film brand to them, the majority disagreed. Interestingly, on the contrary, films with sequels were considered to be successful and also popular due to demand, hence justifying the development of future parts:

*"I don't think all film brands need sequels, Frozen is a brand to my child, but it does not have a sequel. Saying that, sequels certainly suggest success. For example, Shrek was very successful, I enjoyed the film. Then they made Shrek II and III..."*  
(Participant 38)

*“A lot of the mainstream movies have geared up so that a sequel can be made anyway. They know where the money is, and they made loads. People obviously like the movie or the reviews are good – what stops them making another movie?! It would have to be popular; otherwise it will not get a sequel!”* [Participant 28]

Sequels are synonymous with traits of film brands, Participant 28 has also acknowledged that filmmakers plan sequels whilst working on original titles, but that these only come into realisation if received well. Notable here is also how consumers have become more conscious about the way films are set up as franchises, which will be explored later.

When referring to the features of a film brand, participants also repeatedly touched upon the notion of films acquiring an iconic status to elevate themselves as film brands. When further questioned, participants suggested this may be achieved by being renowned for technological achievement and pioneering use of innovative methods of film production, representing a particular era in history and the notion of being considered a cult:

*“A film has to become iconic to be a brand really, I mean Avatar is something that everybody was talking about, everybody was trying to see it, everybody knew it was a film made for 3D and 3D actually works in that, that’s a movie you would have to see in a cinema”* [Participant 28]

*“Batman, Superman, Marvel movies, Harry Potter, Star Wars, these film brand franchises have become big icons and represent not just movies they represent iconic history as some movies are many years old and still have a strong fan following”* [Participant 22]

This is in line with Heding et al.'s (2008), definition of iconic brands as: *"...iconic brands are those who have managed to integrate themselves into culture more skilfully than others..."* (Heding et al., 2008, p. 212). As outlined by Holt's seminal work, iconic brands have the tendency to go against the norm, are thought provoking, lead the way and offer something entirely new and original – relative to that era in time (Holt, 2003; 2004). Holt further states that one of the greatest difficulties iconic brands face is staying relevant as they transcend through time and an evolving culture (Holt, 2004).

Contrary to popular belief, a film's box office results, critical acclaim and audience ratings were not indicative of success to participants, which aligns with the British Film Institute's study (2011), wherein films' long-term popularity and appeal were not dependent on initial box office performances. For the films that were perceived as successful by our participants, the vast majority also went on to subsequently consider those films as brands. Participant 27 explains:

*"Successful films might not always be brands. However, film brands need to be successful; otherwise, if no one has heard about it, how can it be a brand? Every film is definitely not a brand, certain films are more successful than others, they would become brands because of their exposure, success and impact with the audience"* [Participant 27]

Other participants have also echoed similar points, in a way, their argument reflects the very notion that as consumers, they do not just see any product with a name, term, sign, symbol or design as a brand (Watkins, 1986; Farquhar, 1989; Aaker, 1991; Dibb et al., 1994; Kotler, 1996). Some films are just movies that consumers enjoy as experiential goods, whilst those that appear more successful to them give consumers the impression that those films are brands on a cognitive level.

#### 4.4.3 Consumers engage with films as brands when an emotional bond is nurtured

During the interviews, participants conveyed strong emotions for some films that they engaged with as brands, showcasing their affection and passion for selected characters and stories that they relate to and admire. This notion of moral values is also accounted for in CBE, since the brand can be symbolised as a container filled with thoughts, perceptions, meanings and that these should be consistent with those of the consumer (Gambetti et al., 2012). This emotional bonding starts to cultivate when participants engage in profound thoughts about films, thus unravelling deeper, more abstract meaning and association which may hold significance to them. As conveyed by Participant 10, mutual moral values seem to play an important role in initiating and sustaining an emotional connection with films:

*“I really like movies which have strong moral values, reflect life’s difficulties and show you how you can face them, their stories touch people, so that they don’t forget the story or the movie!” [Participant 10]*

Participant 14 highlights the implications of matching moral values on her engagement with Disney films as brands and subsequent meanings and associations:

*“For me, Disney films are definitely brands, I’m an absolute Disney fan! I love Disney (laughing), they have strong moral values and I suppose are very idealistic, they make you feel good and remind you what it is like to be a kid again, some of them have a strong storyline, people like to talk about how they are miscegenistic, I think they have strong moral values, they teach kids good lessons, which is good to be reminded of every now and then” [Participant 14]*



Moral values are usually firmly instilled during childhood, hence when participants discussed about their favourite film brands, instances of past involvement and the idea of a nostalgic experience guided their description:

*“Harry Potter is a brand to me, it was like my generation, I grew up buying and reading the books when released, going and watching the films as soon as they came out, it was quite magical, I’ve read all books and seen all movies [Participant 15]*

*“I used to watch Cinderella when I was young, now that Disney has re-introduced it, I want to watch it, to see how the same story is portrayed, that to me is a brand, it’s a known story, traditional, everybody knows Cinderella and I still love and enjoy the film” [Participant 37]*

Participant 15 has engaged with the Harry Potter film brand on many levels, he emphasises how it represents his generation and the impact past involvement has had on his eagerness to continuously delve deeper into the nuances on offer through the many books and films. Participant 37 further provides an insight of how she is still fond of the Cinderella film brand and curious how new reboots portray and interpret her childhood memories.

For those participants who identified emotional bonding to be a key requisite for engagement of films as brands, self-congruence with a film’s characters was seen to help incentivise viewers to form their own identity. This is in line with Oatley’s (1999) and Cohen’s (2001) works on literary characters and also echoes Sprott et al.’s (2009) and Goldsmith et al.’s (2010) findings on self-concept in the context of CBE, in addition to Gambetti et al.’s (2012) call for brands to assist the protagonism and self-achievement desires of their customers, in order to successfully engage consumers towards their

brands. Participant 36 reflects on the impact Frozen has had on the newer generation and how she is able to relate to this:

*“Frozen has become a brand because all the characters are engrained in children’s heads, everyone’s trying to be Anna and Elsa...I can see the deeper meaning of it, it’s about a young girl lost and not understanding herself and I think everyone can identify with that because everyone struggles with identity at some point in their life, especially young girls and throughout adulthood as well you will still struggle with identity”* [Participant 36]

Participant 22 further discusses how he has become accustomed to the moral values portrayed within the Fast and Furious film brand and iconic cars shown, as well as to what extent they have influenced his aspirations in life:

*“The Fast and the Furious film franchise is definitely a brand to me. Although the films are all about action and high octane rides, they also seem to have this family theme, friendship and revenge that I like and have now grown up with over the years. I find Dominic Toretto’s character very cool and inspiring, he is strong, stands up for his family and is most certainly someone I have been looking up to and would aspire to be like...I love the cars in Fast and the Furious, they are so unique and iconic because of their custom designs, I often try to recreate them in video games and would be over the moon to own a Nissan Skyline like Brian O’Connor’s from the films”* [Participant 22].

All these factors nurture emotional bonding between audiences and films, which is expected since films are hedonistic, high-involvement products (Bassi, 2010) and very personal entities that can integrate viewers’ intellectual and emotional

spheres (Bassi, 2010). In line with the British Film Institute's findings (2011) we found that participants favoured films that offered them good reflective, personal and social values, demonstrated by their engagement in deep thoughts with some films.

According to Gambetti et al. (2012), establishing a deep, emotional, authentic and mutually valuable relationship is also a crucial requisite to successfully engage consumers towards their brands. Furthermore, as found in the British Film Institute's study (2011), most participants still considered the films they came across during childhood as influential and powerful.

In line with Blythe's thoughts (1997), another interesting observation suggests emotional bonding appeared to be 'stronger' in influencing participants' engagement with films as brands, in comparison to the more cognitively orientated perception of success. Participant 38 explains:

*"Titanic is definitely a brand. I cried so much when I watched it. There is such a strong emotion between me and the film. I could imagine myself being Rose (film's female lead). The emotion was so strong, and I can really relate myself to the film... I watched it over and over..."* [Participant 38]

#### **4.4.4 Long-term presence helps films endure, sustain and evolve as film brands**

Time was identified as a factor that makes participants engage with certain films differently to others because of their continued presence in life. Long-term presence, relative to consumers, plays an incremental role in assisting films to evolve as film brands for consumers. There are many ways participants have alluded to a film's long-term presence, for instance when a film circulates within society and therefore stays

'alive'. In the following excerpt, Participant 16 emphasises the 'immortality' the Star Wars franchise has gained through its slate of films:

*"The original Star Wars trilogy's storyline is wide and rich enough to allow prequels, sequels and origin stories to be made, it has varied characters that appeal to a wide variety of people, making it almost immortal"* [Participant 16]

Participant 24 describes the impact the Titanic film brand has had over the years, highlighting how frequent references to it have helped it circulate within society and build and maintain awareness about the film:

*"Titanic is a film brand, despite lacking a sequel. It's probably a brand because people talk about it, if it's a big discussion in society, if it's been referred to in the news, in society in general, if people keep referring to the film and comparing it, they are keeping it alive, to keep it circulated within society, it almost becomes like common knowledge, you expect people to know about the film"* [Participant 24]

When discussing the features of a film brand, many participants felt that such films are often 'timeless', Participant 8 explains how the James Bond film brand is able to stay relevant and yet true to its values:

*"...A film brand should be timeless, James Bond is timeless, and they can produce James Bond in any era and come up with a new movie and have a good, lasting impact..."* [Participant 8]

Participant 14 offers an interesting account of how the Harry Potter film brand is synonymous with peoples' childhoods, the legacy associated with it and how the brand is still able to impact and engage with the newer generations, even though the target

market during its initial release has grown up:

*“Harry Potter is something that quite literally is never gonna die, it’s gonna be considered a classic in 100 years and kids will study it in school or something, it is something that definitely lasts. People say it was their entire childhood, you get people that were 11 when it came out, they read the books and watched the films as they grew up, and it’s one of those things, it didn’t stop when those people grew up, you get kids now that pick up the books, watch the films and fall in love with them...”* [Participant 14]

For those film brands which have been around for a long time for participants, it was often the case that they were introduced to it by previous generations. Participant 16 brings across how well and widespread the Star Wars film brand has appealed to the older and younger generations over the years and how the former has been sharing its passion and joy for it with the latter:

*“Star Wars has become a strong brand over time, its appeal has endured for over 30 years to widespread audiences, the young and the old, that means the passion and enthusiasm for these movies can be passed between generations, many people, including myself, were introduced to the Star Wars universe by members of the previous generation...”* [Participant 16]

Participant 35 adds how the Godfather film brand is still appreciated by the new generation:

*“The Godfather is a very strong brand, because the times prove it. There are many generations that like it, although it’s an old movie, the new generation still watch it and love it”* [Participant 35]

For those participants who suggested that long-term presence is a feature of film brands, they also went on to describe that such films may develop a classic status which distinguishes them from those films which circulate momentarily within society and eventually fade away:

*“...Gone with the Wind is a brand, not all films need sequels to become brands. One film, amazing, considered one of the best, everybody recognises it and there are probably more classics which have come down audiences’ memory through generations...”* [Participant 27]

*“Many films have merchandise and promotions nowadays; you can buy T-shirts, cups, cars, etc. However, they are just going to be momentary and finish after the promotional period. Batman is different; it’s a brand, a classic that stays on...”*  
[Participant 8]

Nevertheless, the findings do not suggest that long-term presence for consumers to engage with films as brands, since the recently released film Frozen (2013) has been strongly perceived and named as a film brand by many participants due to its perceived success and influence on children. However, when films have been circulating around for a long time, their timelessness and classic status often favourably intensify consumers’ perceptions of their success and impact, whilst films that are passed on through generations via recommendations could potentially strengthen consumers’ emotional bonding with such films e.g. through past involvement and Nostalgia.

Films’ long-term presence is also documented in existing research, further supporting our findings. For instance, respondents of the BFI survey demonstrated high levels of awareness for films that date back 50 years - subsequently, many films are recognised by far more people than those who have actually viewed them and their

continuous availability is seen to impact individuals over time (British Film Institute, 2011). Furthermore, Gambetti et al. (2012) have highlighted in their practitioner-based CBE study that CBE requires a long-term strategy, which emphasises on building trust and focuses on commitment-based consumer-brand relationships.

#### **4.4.5 Pre-launch marketing efforts can distinctively position films in consumers' minds**

From the marketers' perspective, brands are to a large extent established through investments in media culture, advertising/promotional campaigns, product placements, sponsorship and co-branding initiatives (Kellner, 1995; Janson, 2002). Interestingly, such efforts were also recognised by participants (pre/post launch) in the form of, e.g. trailers, posters, promotional events, advertising campaigns, etc. If consistent and memorable through their prominence, they may persuade consumers to consider such films as successful, further strengthening their cognitive engagement of films as brands.

*"...I think films need to advertise strongly in order to become brands, sometimes you are so busy in your life, you don't know what's happening around you but when you walk and you see it everywhere, it attracts your eyes and okay, when I'm free I'm gonna go and see this movie. For Diana and Anna Karenina, there were posters everywhere in the streets, on the bus. It's very important for films to become brands, because it's a very competitive market, they need to attract people in various ways..."* [Participant 10]

*"Star Wars 7 is coming soon, there are so many trailers to watch on YouTube, it's giving people the impression as if something big, exciting, and grand is coming over this winter! I can't wait!"* [Participant 38]

In line with CBE's affective component, Participant 38 provides an example of how their feelings activated from the marketing efforts of the upcoming Star Wars film have contributed towards eliciting consumer engagement (Heath 2007, 2009).

However, findings reveal that in order for films' marketing efforts to become more noticeable and meaningful to consumers, a coherent film identity is crucial because it simplifies consumers' comprehension of a film's essence amongst abundant film choices.

#### **4.4.6 Merchandising and franchising moderate consumers' engagement of films as brands**

For films which consumers are less attached to or haven't seen, merchandise availability is a suggestive cue for participants to consider such films as brands, since their tangibility acts a token of the film, an embodiment that they can physically touch, feel and interact with:

*"...when the movie jumps out of the screen and you can see it in your house, items in the house related to a movie make me think that's a brand..."* [Participant 8]

This decisive factor was seen to intensify and strengthen consumers' engagement of films as brands, especially amongst younger participants, as it reminded them of their viewing experience and enabled them to resonate with the film at their own leisure. The findings to some extent align with Kapferer's (2008) thoughts, whereby a brand cannot exist to consumers without a supporting product/service that embodies the brand, hence placing the brand into reality and acting as a brand evaluation source.

*"...Toy Story is a brand, you can buy the merchandise, Lord of the Rings as well, if there is merchandising involved, you know proper merchandise, not just, you get*



*this with your Happy Meal (Laughing), which also gets done constantly, they are trying to be brands, but Star Wars' and The Lord of the Rings' merchandise is immense, they make loads of money through that, it's high quality..."* [Participant 28]

*"...Frozen is 100% a brand, because when you go shopping, all you see is Frozen, Frozen kitchen towels, lunchboxes, chocolates, Frozen everything! All the merchandise makes me see it as a brand"* [Participant 36]

Another factor that participants associated film brands with is when films' themes branch out to other platforms, hence engaging audiences on a multidimensional level that is not confined to the initial motion picture anymore. For instance, when a film's story and characters are presented in the form of TV shows and video games, this could be interpreted as franchising or content branding (Marshall, 2002; Arvidsson, 2006; Grainge, 2007) and builds brand synergy (Grainge, 2007).

*"It's gotta be something that people want to buy into, Harry Potter has a theme park, Wizarding world of Harry Potter and there's soo many books and people buy merchandise, they do magic lessons too, it's like you come to University and they have a Harry Potter society!"* [Participant 14]

*"...a lot of Disney films, Aladdin is a brand, it was in theatres and pantomimes, you can buy lots of memorabilia, lamps, apparel, clothing items, it's obviously a brand, and Lion King, which is more of a brand, because it's become a musical in the West End..."* [Participant 15]

According to the participants, the availability of merchandise and idea of entertaining consumers beyond celluloid are clearly very influential in facilitating

consumers' engagement of films as brands, which also aligns with Gambetti et al.'s (2012) work on CBE, which calls for brands to have functional, aesthetic and symbolic features to be a firm reference point embedded in their consumers' daily lives.

#### 4.4.7 Behavioural film brand engagement outcomes

During the interviews, it became apparent that participants were more passionate about films that they engaged with as brands than those that are merely films to them, demonstrated by their emotive language, which brought across how attached they are with certain film brands and to signify what they mean to them. This conative aspect of CBE (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010), is signified by participants' passionate behaviour towards film brands, demonstrated in many ways, including through ritualised viewing, i.e. repeatedly watching the same films:

*"...every time I come home, my parents ask what film should we watch, my Dad goes 'not the Incredibles!' (Laughing) because that's what I suggest every time, yeah they all know I'm like a huge Disney fan" [Participant 14]*

As emphasised by Participant 16, this ritualised viewing enriches the viewing experience and facilitates viewers' urge to resonate and explore the intricacies of their favourite film brands:

*"Favourite film brands include James Bond movies with Sean Connery, Pierce Brosnan and Daniel Craig, Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, and superhero movies like Batman, Iron Man, etc. I wouldn't mind watching these over and over again, and indeed have watched them many times before because they don't lose their charm or sense of adventure even if you know what's going to happen. If anything, sometimes the more I watch them the better they get!" [Participant 16]*

Participants were also inclined to follow the brand through any prequels/sequels/spinoffs, which seem to reinforce film brand saliency and loyalty, as showcased by Participant 37:

*“Lion King is a brand, if they remake it, even if it’s a musical, we will all go and see it because it’s something that we have we kept in our minds since we first saw it when we were young”* [Participant 37]

Participant 27 explains how converging multi-platform experiences of The Hunger Games film brand in a non-linear way e.g. diving deeper into her favourite characters’ facets, nuances and discovering interwoven storylines through their respective novels (or vice versa e.g. viewing) has persuaded her to jump onto the brand wagon:

*“...if a film becomes a brand, a strong brand, then it will engage audiences through more than just seeing it again, viewers would want to learn more about the characters, the story, reading the book is one of them. Hunger Games for example, I watched the first series, I read the book, I now want to go and watch the second series...”* [Participant 27]

Some consumers may also go on to cultivate advocacy for a brand over time, through positive word of mouth, where the viewer effectively becomes an independent brand ‘ambassador’ - hence boasting credibility and reliability within their recommendations/statements amongst their social circles and wider communicational networks, as demonstrated by the following excerpts:

*“I like Yoda from Star Wars because of his useful words of wisdom. I like James Bond’s character because he’s a one-man army who gets to play with cool gadgets*

*and drive awesome cars...I think my family and friends are well aware of the characters I like because I watch those movies again and again, I wait for their sequels, and in some cases exhibit encyclopaedic knowledge about them"*

[Participant 16]

*"I'm always surrounded by posters, if you look at my desk, I've got all the Lego Lord of the Rings lying around, it's pretty obvious what I like, I'm really passionate about Lord of the Rings, I even do talks at my kids' school about it"* [Participant 28]

Another way participants exhibited passion for their favourite film brands was through the intention to purchase brand-related items, despite premium pricing:

*"...I love Disney characters, there's a doll collection for £100 with all Disney characters, I would really like to buy them and display them somewhere where nobody touches them, even though I'm 33 I really love these dolls"* [Participant 10]

*"...When you can take a £1 lunchbox and slap Luke Skywalker's image battling Darth Vader and can charge £10 for it, you know you have a brand. Parents will not only buy it because of their kids' demands, but because many of them are fans of the original trilogy and in some ways are reliving their childhood through their kids..."* [Participant 16]

Participant 16's excerpt provides an interesting personal insight into possible motives of purchasing merchandise, drawing upon their emotional significance and means of bonding.

### 4.5 Phase 1 film brand engagement conceptual framework

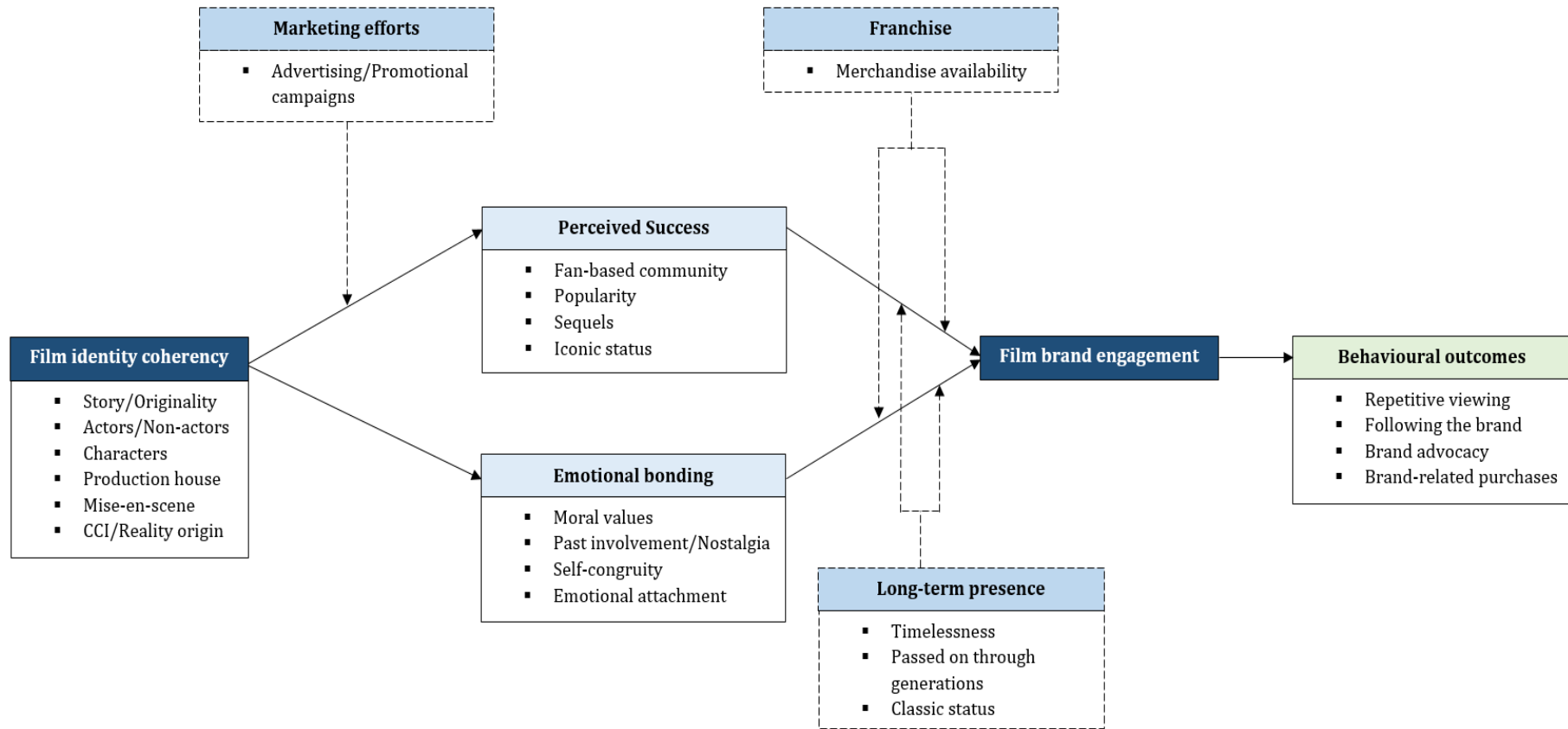


Figure 2 - Phase 1 film brand engagement conceptual framework

The film brand engagement model (*Figure 2*) summarises the key preliminary findings of the qualitative study, achieved through axial coding (Collis and Hussey, 2014) and rearranging the constructs in a sequential and consolidated manner. Drawing from the detailed analysis in the preceding sections, it specifically highlights the focal concepts of perceived success (cognition) and emotional bonding (affect) that facilitate consumers' engagement with films as brands.

The antecedent, a coherent film identity, is clear and carefully considered, each of its elements interconnect, complement each other, are aesthetically consistent and most importantly are meaningful to consumers. Film identity coherency appears to help consumers experience films as collective entities, which seems to increase their chance of being perceived as successful and bonding with consumers affectively due to more simplified comprehension. This is in line with existing literature, which suggests that 'stronger' brands are more conscious about the coherency of their activities, in order to stand out from their competitors – which could be a major prerequisite to initiate the consumer-film brand engagement process in the first place.

Furthermore, the findings also find support in extant literature for the role of perceived success, which is dependent on the common subjectivity of experiential goods such as films (Bassi, 2010) and representative of the cognitive aspect of film consumption (Hart et al., 2016). There is also support for the proposed mediating role of emotional bonding, specifically due to its hedonic, high-involvement attributes (Bassi, 2010), ability to integrate viewers' intellectual and emotional spheres (Bassi, 2010) as well as echoing the British Film Institute's (2011) findings, in which participants favoured films that offered good reflective, personal and social values.

After examining the data for marketing efforts, relative long-term presence and merchandise availability, the findings suggest that these serve as moderators which may intensify consumers' engagement with films as brands. In the CBE literature domain, affective behaviour activated by marketing efforts can potentially assist in eliciting consumer engagement (Heath, 2007; 2009), whilst the strong influence of merchandise availability reflects on Kapferer's earlier stance (2008) whereby a brand can only really 'exist' if there is something tangible a consumer can purchase that embodies the brand. Furthermore, a film's initiative to become a franchise is also seen to have a strong impact on consumer-film brand engagement, as found synonymous with Marshall's (2002) work on content branding and Grainge's (2007) comments on brand synergy elaborated upon within the literature review. The role of long-term presence in engaging consumers is also well documented in research e.g. respondents of the BFI survey (British Film Institute, 2011) suggested that films were found to be recognised by far more people than those who have actually viewed them, whilst Gambetti et al. (2012) have also emphasised that effective CBE requires a long-term strategy to build trust and commitment in consumer-brand relationships.

Repetitive viewing, loyalty and advocacy for the brand, as well as purchase intention for brand-related merchandise are identified as the key behavioural outcomes of film brand engagement. All these factors are not mandatory for the facilitation of consumer-brand engagement, however, the more a film can incorporate, arguably the higher the chances that consumers will go on to engage with such films as brands.

## Chapter 5 – Phase 2 – quantitative study

The following chapter commences with how to go about operationalising a new construct. The chapter then shifts focus towards the methodology for Phase 2, discussing about the research method; pilot study, questionnaire design and structure; how the data was collected and the sampling strategy. The chapter concludes with how the data was analysed using SPSS and the key findings which have emerged from the Phase 2 study.

### 5.1 Operationalizing a new construct

Miller et al. (2009) define construct operationalization as: *“...the process of linking a construct definition to one or more specific, concrete indicators that can be measured...this can be challenging when there are no existing instruments to measure the construct”* (Miller et al., 2009, p. 25).

Phase 1 of this thesis (previous chapter) offers key first hand consumer insights into their emotions, attitudes, perceptions and behaviour which drive subsequent engagement with films as brands, thus providing major groundwork further studies could potentially derive from. In the context of construct operationalization, specifically when determining attributes to measure, Brace (2004) suggests: *“...if there is no existing set of attitude or attribute dimensions that have been proven to represent the issues in the market under consideration, then they will need to be developed...ideally the dimensions should be developed through a preliminary stage of qualitative research, designed specifically to determine the range of emotions, attitudes and perceptions that exist and that are relevant to the study and its objectives. The principal purpose of the preliminary study is to provide the attitude dimensions that are to be measured for strength of agreement in the quantitative survey”* (Brace, 2004, p. 99).



Hence, since interviews are one of many sources of items (DeVellis, 1991) the findings of Phase 1 form the core basis of operationalizing the film brand engagement construct for this survey study. For the items where existing measurement scales were available e.g. Schneider (2012), some amendments were made to modify these for suitability in the present study's context of films. For those items where existing measurement scales were not deemed appropriate or representative, new scales were developed for increased relevancy, reliability and validity.

## **5.2 Phase 2 research method - analytical survey questionnaire**

This research study adopts use of an analytical survey, since its purpose lies within determining: *"...whether there are causal relationships between certain kinds of behaviour and various social and demographic characteristics of people"* (Berger, 2000, p. 188-189).

According to Wilson (2006) if exploratory primary research has been undertaken prior to a quantitative research study, the findings may be used to clarify what needs to be asked, how to approach particular topics, most relevant wording for questions and appropriate statements to be used for rating scales i.e. such as in a survey questionnaire (Wilson, 2006):*"...a questionnaire standardizes the wording and sequencing of questions and imposes uniformity on the data-gathering process..."* (McDaniel and Gates, 2009, p. 287).

Standardization achieved through this method is crucial since it gives researchers a valid basis to directly compare respondents' answers, since all respondents come across identical questions (Wilson, 2006).

The characteristics of respondents may influence the development of question topics, since the researcher will have to determine what subjects the respondents will

likely have sufficient knowledge or memory of, whether respondents would be reluctant to respond due to sensitivity or to maintain privacy, as well as the perceived degree of relevancy and level of interest respondents may have in a subject (Wilson, 2006).

### **5.3 Pilot study**

A pilot study was conducted with 200 questionnaires (physical copies and via Google Forms), minor amendments were made after receiving feedback from respondents e.g. definition of 'iconic' was added, layout tweaked to improve reader-friendliness etc. and advice from several marketing academics. Participants of the pilot study provided positive verbal feedback, praising the relevance of the questions and structure of the questionnaire, in addition to the detailed instructions and layman choice of wording throughout, where possible. A total of 103 items were used to measure 11 constructs, the 7-point Likert scales (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) also featured a 'Don't know' option in the final sample, to capture any lack of awareness, as was suggested by academics to ensure face validity.

### **5.4 Questionnaire structure and design**

The questionnaire requires respondents to choose any film (new or old, providing it has already been released) and answer a series of questions (based on the different constructs) with that particular film/film series in mind and finally select whether they perceive/engage with the film as a brand. This approach to designing the questionnaire has allowed film choices to be randomised, instead of providing a list of films to choose from, hence further minimising interviewer bias. The first part of the questionnaire assesses the demographics of participants e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, where in the UK they live, education, as well as their frequency of viewing films. The main part of the questionnaire contains all the construct measurement scales proposed

as part of the overall theoretical model (*See Appendix 2 for measurement scales used, Appendix 3 for final version of questionnaire*).

### **5.5 Data collection**

Due to the length of the questionnaire and limited reach to collect a sample across the UK, a well-known market research company which prominently collaborates with academics at various prestigious institutions and global brands was appointed to assist with collecting the data nationwide, leading to a total of 1136 completed responses, of which 1030 were used for the final analysis. The market research company has more than 9 million consumers associated with its platform worldwide, with 409,000 based in the UK. Although the company provides rewards as a token of appreciation in exchange for consumers' responses, respondents are warned and penalised if they misuse the platform for their own gain and are usually flagged up so that they cannot participate in surveys in the future, in order to make samples more reliable and therefore valid. In addition, reverse-scored questions were also added to ensure that respondents were actually paying attention, carefully considering the questions and providing responses that were reflective, consistent and true to their thinking. 106 responses were omitted from the sample, either because not a valid film name was provided, more than one film name was given or because the responses were not deemed genuine due to inconsistency e.g. contradicting results for reverse-scored questions.

The data was collected within approximately 4 days, the researchers had access to the data as it was being collected through the Bristol Online Survey platform, the process was therefore transparent and monitored by the researchers, thus providing reassurance that the data coming in is genuine, was collected in a realistic timeframe

and in the right format e.g. respondents were requested to not just list the film name but also actor/crew names, approximate year of release etc. to avoid confusion and cases of mistaken identity due to films with the same/similar names or reboots.

### 5.6 Quota sampling

In 2011, the average person in the UK viewed circa 87 movies (BFI Statistical Yearbook, 2012). Furthermore, the UK Film Council's survey (2011) has demonstrated that consumers of both genders and across a wide age spectrum view films frequently i.e. over half the nation watch six or more films per quarter and over one in ten watch more than 25 films per quarter.

Ages (years)	Population	% of total	% of total (Survey)
18-24	4,297,000	8.9	11.8
25-29	4,307,000	9.0	6.7
30-34	4,126,000	8.6	9.7
35-39	4,194,000	8.7	7.6
40-44	4,626,000	9.6	8.7
45-49	4,643,000	9.7	8.3
50-54	4,095,000	8.5	10.1
55-59	3,614,000	7.5	7.9
60-64	3,807,000	7.9	7
65-69	3,017,000	6.3	12.4
70-74	2,463,000	5.1	6.2
75-79	2,006,000	4.2	2.4
80-84	1,496,000	3.1	0.4
85-89	918,000	1.9	0.3
90+	476,000	1.0	0.5
Total population 18 and over = 48,084,000			
Table 5: Sample and UK Census (2011) age comparison			

However, this research study will not set any minimum eligibility criteria for participation when it comes to film viewing frequency, since it would be of interest to see if viewing frequency has any influence on subsequent film brand engagement. The minimum age for participating in the survey has been set to 18, in order to comply with the University's Research Ethics Committee, whilst the ratio of age groups to be approached for the survey is guided by the UK's latest census (2011) figures (*see Table 5*). The last column in the table identifies the percentage of each age group in the survey sample, with a relatively close fit between the sample and census data – hence satisfying the representativeness of the population.

Since this is undoubtedly an enormous population size to examine, the key to generating accurate predictions about a large population's characteristics and behaviour from a comparatively small sample is the manner in which these individuals are selected and represented (McDaniel and Gates, 2009). The present study aims to collect a total of 1000 questionnaires, given out approximately equally to both genders, using quota sampling. Frequently used in media audience research (McDaniel and Gates, 2009), quota sampling offers greater sampling precision since additional information is utilised about the population being studied to gain representative samples (Berger, 2000).

Quota sampling is deemed suitable for this research study because it allows the population to be divided into mutually exclusive and exhaustive subsets, its sampling error is also likely to be smaller and more statistically efficient in comparison to simple and systematic random sample (Wilson, 2006) because one source of variation has been eliminated (McDaniel and Gates, 2009):

*"...with Quota sampling, the researcher, to some degree, forces the sample to be representative by making sure that important dimensions of the population are represented in the sample in their true population proportions"* (McDaniel and Gates, 2009, p. 340)

There are 2 fundamental steps for the implementation of a quota sample: 1) identify salient demographic/classification factors, 2) evaluate what proportions of the population will be segmented under each quota (McDaniel and Gates, 2009). Using the Bristol Online Survey tool, routing was added in order to screen out participants once relevant quotas were filled, hence ensuring that the sample is representative when it comes to e.g. Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Region etc.

Table 6 (below) summarises the UK population by Region (UK Census 2011). The last column in the table identifies the percentage of each region as per in the survey

sample, with a relatively close fit between the sample and census data – hence satisfying the representativeness of the population.

UK Region	Population	% of total	% of total (Survey)
East Midlands	4,677,038	7.2	7.1
West Midlands	5,751,000	8.8	8.6
Wales	3,099,086	4.8	4.9
North East	2,624,621	4	4
North West	7,173,835	11	11.4
Northern Ireland	1,851,621	2.8	2.9
Yorkshire and the Humber	5,390,576	8.3	9
Scotland	5,373,000	8.3	7.8
Greater London	8,435,014	9.2	9.3
Central London	4,367,041	4.1	2.6
South East	8,947,913	13.7	16.7
South West	5,471,800	8.4	7.7
East of England	6,076,451	9.3	8.1
Not from UK	N/A	N/A	0

**Table 6 – Sample and UK Census (2011) Population by Region comparison**

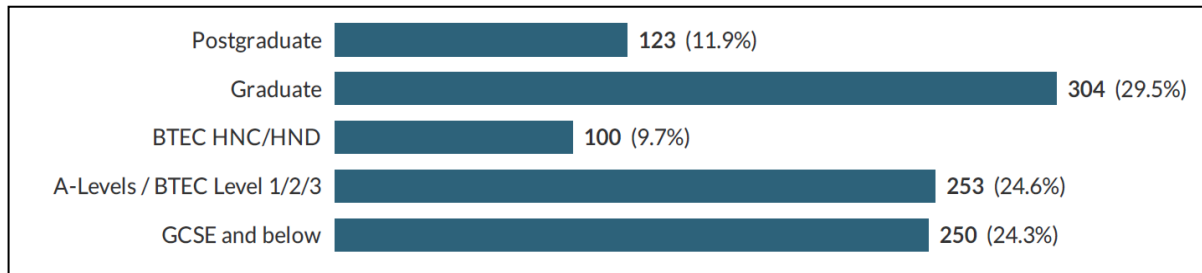
After descriptively overviewing the data collected, it is apparent that the sample sufficiently reflects on the UK population, with 48.7% being Male, 51.3% Female and the sample consisting of predominantly ‘White’ participants (88.7%), as can be seen in Table 7 below.

UK Ethnicity	Population	% of total	% of total (Survey)
White	55,010,359	87.1	88.7
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups	1,250,229	2	2.2
Asian/Asian British	4,373,339	6.9	5.1
Black or Black British	1,904,684	3	2.5
Other Ethnic Group	580,374	0.9	0.4
Prefer not to say	N/A	N/A	1

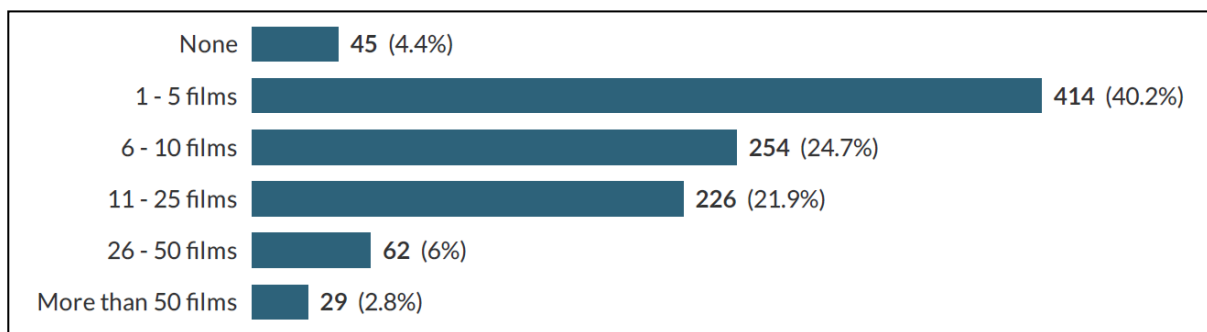
**Table 7 - Sample and UK Census (2011) Ethnicity comparison**

As can be seen in the graph below (*Figure 3*), there is also a good mix of Educational qualifications in the sample collected, hence making the sample more, valid and representative of the population.

**Figure 3 - Overview of sample's educational qualifications**



**Figure 4 - Overview of sample's viewing frequency**

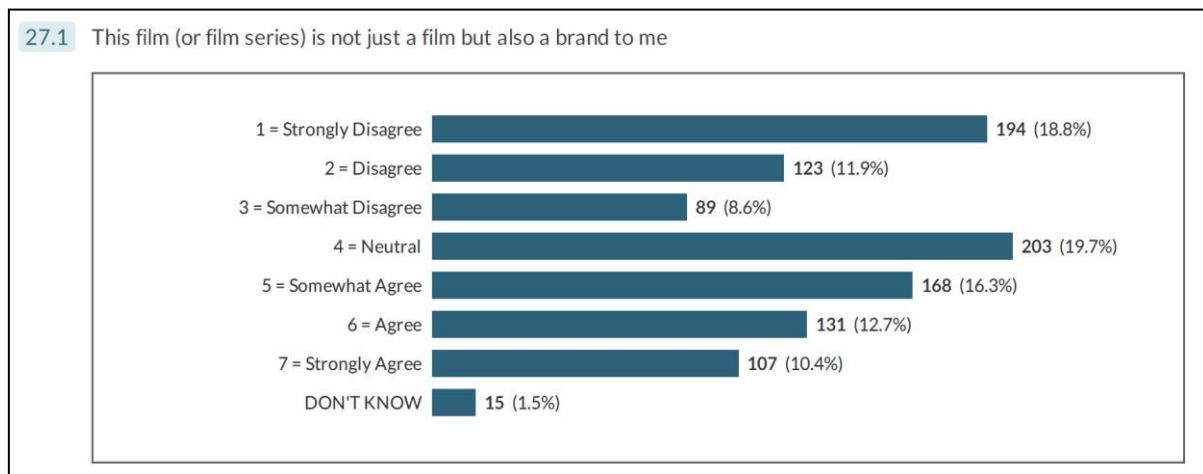


The graph above (*Figure 4*) summarises the film viewing frequencies of the sample, with 40.2% of participants having viewed between 1 and 5 films in the past 3 months, which coincides with the 'Light' category of film consumption established by the UK Film Council's (2011) study on diverse/mainstream UK film audiences (11-25 films is classified as 'Medium' consumption, whilst more than 26 films is considered 'Heavy' consumption). The majority of participants viewed 6 or more films in the last 3 months, furthermore, the sample reduces bias by incorporating a wide range of viewing habits.

## Phase 2 findings

### 5.7 Data analysis and findings

**Figure 5 - Overview of sample's consumer-film brand engagement**



After initially examining the final descriptive results (*Figure 5*), it was apparent from the above graph that consumers do not engage with all films as brands, since circa 60% of respondents did not perceive the film they had selected at the beginning of the questionnaire to be a brand to them.

After data collection concluded, the data was exported in Excel format from the Bristol Online Survey platform to SPSS. The variables were then inputted and data cleaned (since the survey consisted of routing, there were missing values, which were replaced by a unique value). The following section includes the Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses findings, structural equation modelling, followed by the key Mediation and Moderation outcomes.



### 5.7.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis

An EFA was conducted using Principal Component Analysis to determine whether the observed variables load together as anticipated, are adequately correlated and are reliable and valid. The EFA yielded an 11-factor model solution after 8 iterations, explaining circa 76.2% of the total variance (*see Table 8 below*).

**Table 8 - Total variance explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings <sup>a</sup>
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1- Marketing	18.817	38.402	38.402	18.817	38.402	38.402	11.061
2- Emotion	4.905	10.011	48.413	4.905	10.011	48.413	11.532
3- Long-term	3.133	6.394	54.807	3.133	6.394	54.807	12.831
4- Popularity	2.029	4.140	58.947	2.029	4.140	58.947	8.122
5- FICoherency	1.538	3.139	62.086	1.538	3.139	62.086	9.033
6- Franchise	1.399	2.856	64.942	1.399	2.856	64.942	8.382
7- Iconic status	1.338	2.731	67.673	1.338	2.731	67.673	13.592
8- WoM	1.253	2.558	70.231	1.253	2.558	70.231	10.122
9- Filmbrand	1.040	2.122	72.352	1.040	2.122	72.352	12.403
10- Purchase	.986	2.012	74.365	.986	2.012	74.365	6.456
11- Sequels	.882	1.800	76.164	.882	1.800	76.164	3.568

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Principal Component Analysis was selected since we wanted to consider all of the variance available (common and unique), Promax rotation was then applied because the sample size is quite large (n= 1030) and since this rotation option also accounts for correlated factors (which is often to be expected in Social Sciences). In addition, coefficients with an absolute value of at least .4 were suppressed.

Since an EFA is only appropriate for non-nominal items that are theoretically reflective latent factors, the items for Film Identity were excluded (except Film Identity Coherency).

***Adequacy***

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was significant at .957, which is 'Marvellous' according to Hutcheson and Sofroniou (1999), whilst Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also significant at .000. All communalities were at least above .500 (Field, 2013), most over .700, hence suggesting that the chosen variables are appropriately correlated for the purpose of a factor analysis. Additionally, the reproduced communalities matrix had 5% of non-redundant residuals greater than 0.05, which further confirms the adequacy of the variables and resulting 11-factor model.

***Reliability***

The Cronbach Alpha figures for the extracted factors were all above .86, which is beyond the recommended guideline of 0.70. (Hair et al., 2006), except 'Sequels' (CR=.689) which was still retained because it was very close to the recommended guideline. In addition, all of the factors extracted are reflective because of the high correlation between them and ability to interchange them.

***Validity***

The factors extracted demonstrate good convergent validity since they are all above the minimum of .5 and the vast majority exceeds the preferred threshold of .7 (Hair et al., 2006). The factors also meet the criteria for discriminant validity, since there are no correlations above 0.700 within the correlation matrix and/or cross loadings evident within the pattern matrix after forcing SPSS to come up with a 11-factor model (*see Table 9, next page*).

**Table 9 - Exploratory Factor Analysis Pattern Matrix**

	Component										
	Marketi ng efforts CR= .911	Emotion al bonding CR= .913	Long- term presen ce CR= .898	Popular ity CR= .901	Film Identity Cohere ncy CR= .869	Franchi se CR= .909	Iconic status CR= .916	Word of mouth CR= .917	Film brand CR= .961	Purcha se intentio n CR= .936	Sequel s CR= .689
MarkE1	.950										
MarkE3	.872										
MarkE7	.847										
MarkE5	.776										
MarkE2	.698										
MarkE4	.654										
Selfcon1		.936									
Selfcon2		.898									
Selfcon3		.867									
Emoatt8		.780									
Emoatt7		.731									
Emoatt6		.678									
Long1			.975								
Long2			.880								
Classic1			.750								
Timeless2			.662								
Timeless3			.645								
Timeless4			.639								
Timeless1			.554								
Popu1				.908							
Popu3				.888							
Popu2				.838							
Popu4				.824							
FICoher2					.892						
FICoher3					.874						
FICoher1					.861						
FICoher4					.813						
Franch1						.856					
Franch2						.848					
Franch3						.797					
Franch4						.648					
Icon5							.860				
Icon6							.851				
Icon8							.845				
Icon7							.696				
Icon9							.685				
Icon4							.620				

WoM1								.929			
WoM3								.896			
WoM4								.859			
WoM2								.763			
Filmbrand3									.945		
Filmbrand4									.936		
Filmbrand2									.900		
Filmbrand1									.893		
Purchase2_1										.972	
Purchase3_1										.950	
Sequel2_1											.895
Sequel4_1											.870

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

## 5.7.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

### *Convergent, Discriminant Validity and Reliability*

In order to test for convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was calculated and all factors were above the .5 threshold (Hair et al., 2010). There were initially some validity concerns because the square root of the AVE for Iconic status and Long-term presence were less than the absolute values of the inter-factor correlations with another factor. In addition, the AVE for these two factors were also less than their respective Maximum Shared Variance (MSV). In order to overcome these discriminant validity concerns, the standardised residual covariances were examined and those above 2.58 in absolute value removed (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1984). Regarding reliability, Composite Reliability (CR) was computed for each factor and all exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2010), hence indicating that the factors are reliable and all measure what they intend to measure (*see Table 10 next page*).

**Table 10 - Model validity measures**

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Marketing	Emotion	Popularity	Iconic	FranchiseM	FICoherency	Long_term	Filmbrand	WoM	Purchase	Sequels
<b>Marketing</b>	0.903	0.700	0.485	0.911	<b>0.837</b>										
<b>Emotion</b>	0.902	0.699	0.321	0.922	0.344***	<b>0.836</b>									
<b>Popularity</b>	0.902	0.699	0.438	0.913	0.368***	0.271***	<b>0.836</b>								
<b>Iconic</b>	0.914	0.728	0.597	0.915	0.484***	0.552***	0.662***	<b>0.853</b>							
<b>FranchiseM</b>	0.913	0.725	0.497	0.925	0.696***	0.442***	0.241***	0.403***	<b>0.851</b>						
<b>FICoherency</b>	0.870	0.626	0.440	0.872	0.281***	0.456***	0.584***	0.663***	0.143***	<b>0.791</b>					
<b>Long_term</b>	0.864	0.679	0.597	0.874	0.513***	0.546***	0.540***	0.773***	0.455***	0.588***	<b>0.824</b>				
<b>Filmbrand</b>	0.961	0.861	0.497	0.963	0.575***	0.567***	0.292***	0.548***	0.705***	0.296***	0.595***	<b>0.928</b>			
<b>WoM</b>	0.918	0.737	0.383	0.935	0.408***	0.563***	0.515***	0.619***	0.296***	0.574***	0.555***	0.441***	<b>0.858</b>		
<b>Purchase</b>	0.941	0.888	0.422	0.948	0.398***	0.552***	0.162***	0.365***	0.581***	0.224***	0.389***	0.650***	0.389***	<b>0.942</b>	
<b>Sequels</b>	0.750	0.611	0.393	0.879	0.495***	0.355***	0.517***	0.627***	0.410***	0.438***	0.607***	0.476***	0.480***	0.317***	<b>0.782</b>

Table 10 includes readings for the composite reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) and Maximal Reliability (H). The square root of the AVE is represented on the diagonal in bold, whilst the correlations of the constructs are represented off diagonal.

Significance of Correlations:

† p < 0.100

\* p < 0.050

\*\* p < 0.010

\*\*\* p < 0.001

Calculated via Gaskin, J. & Lim, J. (2016), "Master Validity Tool", AMOS Plugin. [Gaskination's StatWiki](#).

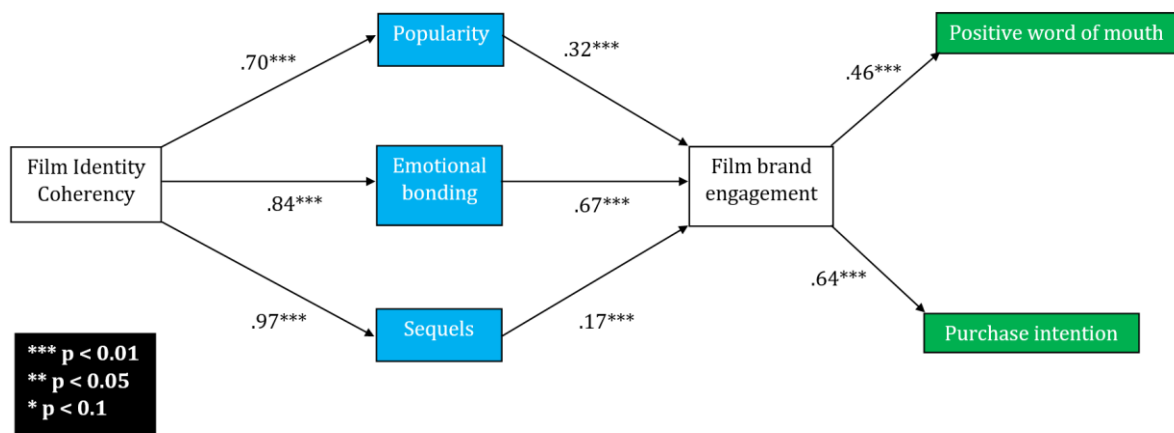
### 5.7.3 Model Fit

**Table 11 - Model fit**

Metric	Results	Threshold
Chi Square	2507.514 (minimum was achieved)	-
Degrees of freedom	647	-
Probability level	.000	>.05 (however, this depends on sample size) taken from Hu and Bentler (1999)
CMIN/DF	3.876	<3 good; <5 sometimes permissible (Hu and Bentler, 1999)
CFI	.945	> .95 great; > .90 traditional; > .80 sometimes permissible (Hu and Bentler, 1999)
GFI	Not given	> .90 (Hair et al., 2006)
AGFI	Not given	>.80 (Hu and Bentler, 1999) AGFI is typically lower than GFI (Hair et al., 2006)
SRMR	Not given	.08 or less (with CFI above .92) (Hair et al., 2006)
RMSEA	.053	Used in larger samples i.e. more than 500 respondents, typical values are below 0.10 (Hair et al., 2006). Hu and Bentler (1999) provide the following guidelines: < .06 good; .06-0.08 moderate; >.08 bad
PCLOSE	.015	>0.05 (Hu and Bentler, 1999)

Table 11 above summarises the model fit achieved in AMOS, along with the recommended guidelines. The degrees of freedom are large, thus indicating that the prediction strongly represents the sample of the respondents (Hair et al., 2010). The final measurement model is illustrated in *Appendix 4*.

### 5.7.4 Mediation



**Figure 6 - Overview of mediation results**

A mediation analysis was conducted in SPSS (*Figure 6*), with the help of the Process Macro (Hayes, 2013), in order to more accurately explain the causal effect, the predictor variable film identity coherency has on the outcome variable film brand engagement, by focusing on the mediating variables which have contributed towards making this causal chain possible.

Film Identity Coherency was found to be a significant predictor of all three proposed mediators (p-value: .0000). All mediators, were also found to be significant predictors of film brand engagement. In all three cases, the introduction of the mediators has led to a reduction in the effect sizes of the original direct effect, whilst all three confidence intervals are also not equal to 0 – this suggests that mediation is taking place (Preacher and Hayes, 2008).

A film's Popularity and Sequels were found to partially mediate, since the IV -> DV total effect is significant and so is the direct effect (IV -> M -> DV) after the

introduction of these two mediators. Interestingly, after the introduction of the emotional bonding mediator, the direct effect has become insignificant, indicating full mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hair et al., 2010; Preacher & Kelley, 2011; Zhao, Lynch & Chen, 2010). Since path 'a' and 'b' were significant for all mediators, mediation analysis was further conducted using the bootstrapping method with bias-corrected confidence estimates, obtaining a 95% confidence interval of indirect effects with 5000 bootstrap resamples (Preacher and Hayes, 2008).

There was a significant indirect effect of film identity coherency on film brand engagement through popularity, with the mediator accounting for approximately 1/3rd of the total effect,  $P_M = .36$

There was also a large, significant indirect effect of film identity coherency on film brand engagement through emotional bonding, with the mediator representing almost the entire total effect,  $P_M = .90$

Finally, there was a small significant indirect effect of film identity coherency on film brand engagement through sequels, with the mediator making up circa 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the total effect,  $P_M = .24$ . Table 12 and the diagrams on the next two pages summarise the key mediation results.



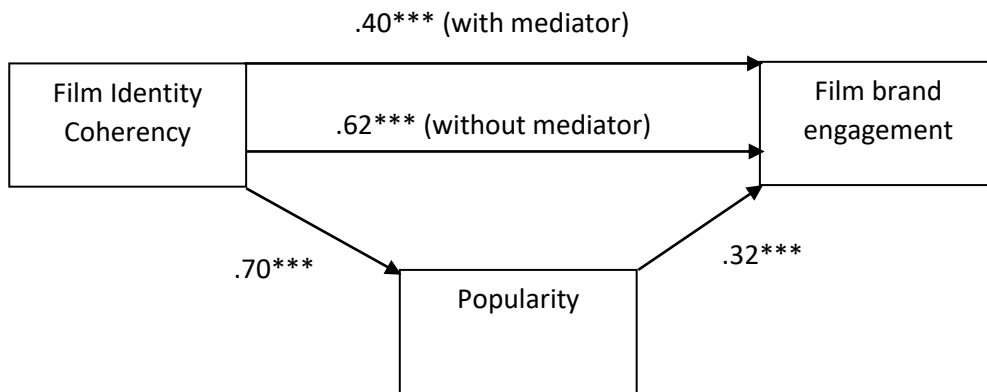
**Table 12 - Hypothesis results and summary for mediation effects**

Hypotheses	$\beta$				Indirect effect		Bootstrapping indirect effects BCa 95% CI		Effect sizes		Hypotheses test result
	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>c'</i>	B	Boot SE	LL	UL	PM	$\beta$ ; abcs (95% CI LL, UL)	
Film Identity Coherency -> <b>Popularity</b> -> Film brand engagement	.70***	.32***	.62***	.40***	.22	.05	0.13	0.31	$\frac{.70 \times .32}{(.70) (.32)} + .40$ = .36	abcs = .11 (.07, .16)	Support for partial mediation
Film Identity Coherency -> <b>Emotional bonding</b> -> Film brand engagement	.84***	.67***	.62***	.06	.56	.04	0.44	0.65	$\frac{.84 \times .67}{(.84) (.67)} + .06$ = .90	abcs = .29 (.25, .33)	Support for full/stronger mediation
Film Identity Coherency -> <b>Sequels</b> -> Film brand engagement	.97***	.17***	.69***	.53***	.16	.03	0.10	0.24	$\frac{.97 \times .17}{(.97) (.17)} + .53$ = 0.24	abcs = .09 (.06, .13)	Support for partial mediation

*Note:*  $\beta$  = standardised regression weights for *a*, *b*, *c* and *c'*, path *a* refers to IV (X) to mediator (M), path *b* refers to M to DV (Y); path *c* is the total effect; path *c'* is the direct effect of X to Y after controlling for M; SE = standard error; BCa = bias corrected and accelerated; 5000 bootstrap samples, CI = confidence interval, LL = lower limit, UL = upper limit (PROCESS macro, Preacher and Hayes, 2008). Mediation was further examined through effect sizes:  $P_M$  = percent mediation, abcs = completely standardised indirect effect on X to Y (Preacher and Kelley, 2011, p. 97-99), \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

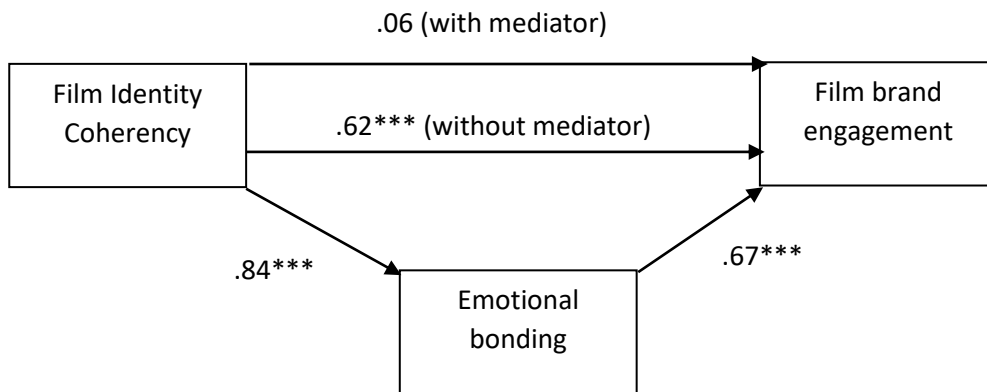
**Mediation: Film Identity Coherency -> Popularity -> Film brand engagement**

Indirect effect of X on Y is .2212 CI (0.1325, 0.3101)



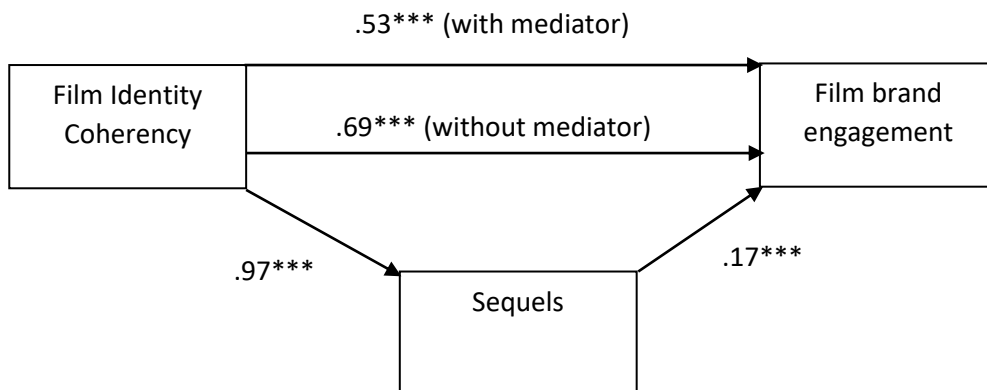
**Mediation: Film Identity Coherency -> Emotional bonding -> Film brand engagement**

Indirect effect of X on Y is .5632 CI (0.4380, 0.6468)



**Mediation: Film Identity Coherency -> Sequels -> Film brand engagement**

Indirect effect of X on Y is .1604 CI (0.1026, 0.2354)



### 5.7.5 Moderation

The path diagram below (Figure 7) illustrates the interaction effects between the various independent variables and the moderators, obtained using SPSS. In principle, a moderator may either have an enhancing, buffering or antagonistic influence on the predictor’s effect on the selected dependant variable (Hair et al., 2008). A total of 4 moderators were predicted to moderate the model, including: a film’s marketing efforts, franchise initiative, timelessness and iconic status.

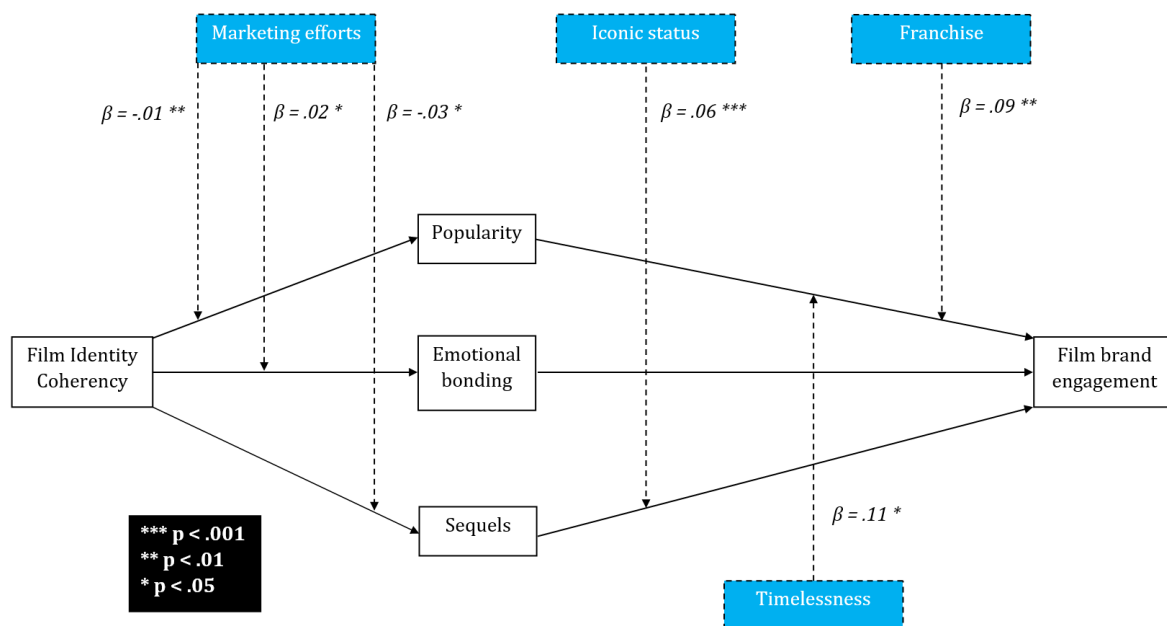


Figure 7 - Overview of moderation results

#### Marketing efforts

To test the hypothesis marketing efforts moderates the relationship between film identity coherency and popularity, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed in SPSS. In the first step, two variables were included, film identity coherency ( $\beta = .62$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and marketing efforts ( $\beta = .15$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), which accounted for a significant amount of variance in a film’s popularity ( $R^2 = .52$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ). An interaction

term was then computed (Aiken & West, 1991) using SPSS Macro (Hayes, 2013) and added to the regression model, accounting for a significant proportion in the variance of population ( $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ). The interaction term resulted in a significant negative effect ( $\beta = -.01$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ), which indicates that as a film's marketing efforts are increased; the effect a coherent film identity has on a film's popularity is lessened, highlighting the substitutional effect of marketing effort. However, this negative effect is rather marginal, thus suggesting that when a film's identity is perceived to be coherent by consumers, increasing a film's marketing budget and campaigns may actually have a negligible negative impact on a film's subsequent popularity. This effect could perhaps be explained as a consequence of consumers' excessive exposure to advertising, which may therefore result in an adverse impact.

Film identity coherency ( $\beta = .72$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and marketing efforts ( $\beta = .25$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) also accounted for a significant amount of variance in emotional bonding ( $R^2 = .28$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ). The interaction term between marketing efforts and film identity coherency was also found to significantly moderate the effect between film identity coherency and emotional bonding ( $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ;  $\beta = .02$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ), the effect of a film identity's coherency on a consumer's emotional bond with a film is further enhanced when there is more marketing effort. However, the effect size of this moderating relationship is also rather small; hence suggesting that when a consumer perceives a film's identity to be coherent, increasing spending on a film's marketing budget and campaigns will not necessarily translate into a substantial increase in emotional bonding between the consumer and the film.

Film identity coherency and a film's marketing effort also accounted for a significant amount of variance in sequels ( $R^2 = .20$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ). The interaction term

between marketing efforts and film identity coherency was also found to significantly moderate the effect between a film identity's coherency and its' sequels ( $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ;  $\beta = -.03$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ), which suggests that as a film's marketing efforts are increased, the effect a film identity's coherency has on a film's sequels diminishes.

### ***Iconic Status, Franchise and Timelessness***

To test the hypothesised moderating effects of iconic status, franchise and timelessness on film brand engagement, a second hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed in SPSS. The initial step shows that popularity ( $\beta = -.29$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), emotional bond ( $\beta = .16$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), sequels ( $\beta = .04$ ;  $p \leq .1$ ), iconic status ( $\beta = .24$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ), franchise ( $\beta = .38$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), and timelessness ( $\beta = .46$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), together account for a significant amount of variance in consumer film brand engagement ( $R^2 = .64$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ).

Then the interaction terms were computed and added to the regression model (Hayes, 2013), to further examine the moderation effect of iconic status, franchise and timelessness. The result shows that iconic status significantly and positively moderates the relationship between sequel and film brand engagement ( $\beta = .06$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ;  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), suggesting that sequel's effect on film brand engagement could be further strengthened by a film's iconic status. Furthermore, the result also indicate that franchise ( $\beta = .09$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ;  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ;  $p \leq .01$ ), and timelessness ( $\beta = .11$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ;  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ), significantly and positively affect the relationship between popularity and film brand engagement revealing that the effect of a film's popularity on consumers' film brand engagement could be further supported by franchise activities and the film's timelessness status.

## **Chapter 6 – Discussion and conclusion**

The following chapter commences with a discussion of the key theoretical contributions proposed by the research study. This is followed by an overview of the managerial implications of the research study; detailed recommendations on how to make use of the research for practitioners; possible limitations of the research study and future research directions.

### **6.1 Discussion**

To address the mystery of how, when and why consumers engage with films as brands, this study takes on a mixed-method approach using 38 semi-structured consumer interviews and 1030 consumer survey responses. In doing so, it provides an alternative approach to the existing filmmaker/marketer-led film branding literature (Brown et al., 2003; Grainge, 2007; Keller, 2008; Kapferer, 2008; O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013; Kohli et al., 2014) which has primarily focused on points of parity films may have as brands. By taking on the all-encompassing consumer-centric approach, this has enabled us to decipher consumers' engagement with films as brands on a micro-level, since this approach focuses on how and why consumers build relationships with brands, as well as how brands take on meaning from their consumers (Heding et al., 2008). Our sequential and consolidated framework therefore guides film producers, makers and marketers on how to tactically facilitate engagement between consumers and their films as brands, proposing various points of differentiation along the way through which consumers are more likely to engage with films as brands in this risky, competitive market. There are four key ways this study has contributed towards existing theory and knowledge:

## 6.2 Theoretical contributions

Firstly, by conceptually explaining and empirically validating a comprehensive consumer-centric model that sequentially explains the relationships between key film branding concepts, this study provides a consolidated viewpoint explaining how consumers holistically interpret and engage with films as brands (Heding et al., 2008). By identifying, discussing and untangling the relations between various constructs into a meaningful conceptual consumer brand engagement framework, which explains how and why some films are successfully regarded by consumers as brands, thus benefiting from their branded status, this study shifts our existing understanding of film branding. This is a key conceptual and empirical contribution, since film branding literature is still in its infancy and extant literature is primarily conceptual, by responding to Keller's (2008) call for further research on developing a film branding formula that consumers find appealing, our film brand engagement framework ploughs the way for building the foundation of future film branding research.

Secondly, the study also contributes to the film branding literature domain by operationalising the novel film brand engagement construct from the ground up, which can be defined as a 'condition' in which consumers have the impression of a film to not just be a film but also a brand, actively thinking of and perceiving some films more as brands than others. The film brand engagement construct is encapsulated by 4 items, which focus on consumers' impressions of films as brands; their active thoughts of films as brands; the perception that they do not just see a film as a film but also as a brand as well as the notion that some films are more of a brand to them than other films. These items were developed as a result of the preliminary qualitative study that was fundamental to operationalise a new construct, since no existing measurements were available in the literature to capture the film brand engagement construct. The items

were carefully phrased, to reflect on the wording of the interview participants, whenever they referred to a film as a brand or implicitly described the condition of engaging with a film as a brand. In order to make sure that the items generated were both valid and reliable, a number of steps were taken to assess its rigour prior to data collection e.g. the items were face validated marketing scholars and industry practitioners; a pilot study was also undertaken to ensure that prospective respondents were able to easily understand the items etc. After the data was collected, the construct items exceeded the recommended guidelines for reliability and convergent validity significantly during the EFA, no cross-loadings were also found to satisfy the requirements for discriminant validity during CFA.

Thirdly, our consumer-film brand engagement framework highlights the importance of a film's popularity, sequels and emotional bond with consumers as mediators. With the former two mediating partially, emotional bonding has emerged as the most powerful and significant mediator. This suggests that feeling emotionally connected is the most effective way for consumers to regard a film as not only a film, but also a brand – be it of moral value in regards to e.g. the storyline, characters they can resonate with or feel nostalgic about, the emotional attachment they may have developed as a film has been passed through generations, whether a film has tapped into their own self-congruity and subsequently helped form their own identity as an individual etc. The findings suggest that in order for the film brand engagement process to be nurtured effectively, it is fundamental for a film to bond with a consumer emotionally, after the consumer perceives the film's identity to be coherent.

Fourthly, this study also identifies and discusses four moderators that need to be discussed. Whilst the findings highlight the marketing effort as a significant moderator,



its moderating effect on film identity coherence and popularity, emotional bonding and sequels is relatively weak. This means that a coherent film identity is the most important indicator that leads to film brand engagement through the mediating effect of popularity, emotional bonding and sequels regardless the marketing effort. Therefore, rather than spending lots of marketing budget on promoting a film, it is critical that film identity coherency is adhered to in the first place. Furthermore, a film's iconic status is found to significantly strengthen sequels' impact on film brand engagement, while the sense of timelessness and franchise initiative further enhance the effect of film popularity on film brand engagement. The findings together reveal additional ways that could be employed to further promote consumers' engagement with a film as a brand through the popularity and sequel routes. Our findings offer empirical support to the argument of Kapferer (2008) whereby a brand cannot exist to consumers without a supporting product or service that embodies the brand. The tangibility of merchandise and franchise e.g. theme parks, TV shows, novels, video games etc. adds another dimension for the consumer to interact and resonate with a film as a brand, since it allows them to showcase their passionate behaviour and admiration amongst their immediate social circles and wider community of fans.

Taking on the micro-level consumer-centric branding perspective (Quester et al.'s, 2006; Heding et al., 2008; Laforet, 2010) to verge beyond point of parity associations (Keller et al., 2002; Kapferer, 2012), the proposed, comprehensive film brand engagement model details the route to successful film brand engagement from consumers' perspective and provides a clear solution to filmmakers to facilitate consumers' engagement with films as brands, which existing works from the marketers'/producers' perspective (e.g. Grainge, 2007; Keller, 2008; Kapferer, 2008)

and macro-level (O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013) have failed to deliver.

### **6.3 Managerial implications**

Our film brand engagement framework sets out to explain the conditions under which consumer-film brand engagement is likely to occur and flourish, whilst also developing an operational scale through which practitioners can measure film brand engagement. Derived from consumer insights, the film brand engagement model that is proposed provides a brand differentiation strategy that verges beyond point of parity associations (Keller et al., 2002; Kapferer, 2012) and therefore yields significant managerial implications to various stakeholders, including: production houses, filmmakers and film marketers, to better compete in this lucrative yet saturated market.

For production houses, our film brand engagement is a complementary means (along with the conventional scenario analysis) of assessing whether an original film they have released should be given a growth option, since it will help them evaluate to what extent their target audience, engages and resonates with the film as a brand, in addition to which key factors of our framework have contributed more towards consumers' engagement than others. Having access to such consumer insights will then support studios with adapting their marketing strategies accordingly and at a strategic level build more lucrative film brand portfolios, which can be leveraged in various ways and therefore allow them to gain a competitive advantage which cannot be easily replicated (Kapferer, 2012). The framework could also support filmmakers and studios to be in a better position to secure funds to greenlight their projects, this is achieved through providing further reassurance to prospective investors that there may be a growth option for a film to potentially engage with consumers as brands. Furthermore, utilising the consumer-film brand engagement framework could also potentially assist

with attracting additional capital through negotiating slate financing deals and downstream contracts (Young et al., 2008), since investors would want to take advantage of any growing engagement consumers may have with a film as a brand.

Specifically, in order to facilitate consumers' engagement with films as brands and encourage supportive brand behaviour, filmmakers need to work on building a strong and coherent film identity to target audience to crucially bond emotionally. This could be achieved through including identifiable characters with depth of exploration, a strong message that viewers will resonate with and remember from the storyline, consistent creative themes, references to past involvement and nostalgia if a film is an adaptation of an existing media text, e.g. Harry Potter. Coherency is vital, as it avoids category confusion during the sense-making stage of film consumption (Zhao, Ishihara and Lounsbury, 2013) and increases the chance of being perceived as successful/popular and helps consumers to establish an emotional bond, adding to Kapferer's argument (2008, p.133) that 'stronger' brands are more conscious about the coherency of their activities, in order to stand out from competitors.

Higher marketing investment is likely to lead to greater box office returns (Young et al., 2008), however, film-marketers need a clear agenda as to what production houses actually want to achieve through the huge budgets allocated for marketing activities. Cognitively, to create a successful/popular image, film marketers could reinforce their film's identity through highlighting unique selling points via marketing efforts (Wyatt, 1995; Bosko, 2003). Perceptions of Success may be evoked by acknowledging, nurturing and even institutionalising emerging fan-based communities associated to their film(s), since their passionate behaviour may transform into brand advocacy. Although the findings have shown that sequels are not essential for films to

be engaged with as brands by consumers, they indicate success and also retrospectively reinforce a film's stature as a brand, by encouraging deeper character exploration through character development, adding both coherency and versatility to a film's identity, facilitating long-term presence and continued emotional bonding, strengthening closely-knit fan-based communities through co-creation of the brand, whilst also cultivating brand commitment and loyalty.

However, filmmakers must refrain from over-leveraging their brand, since this will dilute their brand identity's core essence and also, if inconsistent, extinguish any attempts to develop a coherent film identity and sense of timelessness. Acquiring an iconic status through i.e. meaningful associations and representations in pop culture, enables marketers to potentially engage in co-branding initiatives with product/service brands, e.g. Lego has implemented a Star Wars theme. Advertising plays a very important role when it comes to rising to an iconic status, further facilitated by cultural industries and populist worlds (Heding et al., 2008). Film-marketers must embrace cultural forces and the notion that consumers have become co-creators of the brand; iconic brands are subsequently those who: *"...integrate themselves in culture more skilfully than others..."* (Heding et al., 2008, p. 212).

When attempting to nurture an iconic status, stakeholders associated with the film will be challenged with the task of creating a cult which inevitably moves through time and cultural changes and is still expected to stay relevant to the current generation. However, at the same time, it is crucial that it also maintains its sense of timelessness to retain its credibility of being an authentic populist epicentre i.e. that is the brand demonstrates a deep understanding of what it seeks to represent and idealise, regardless of the influences of e.g. social, political forces. In practical terms, this means

not always managing the brand with vested commercial interests, empowering its consumers to lead the way and partake in co-creation of the brand, going against the norm in a thought provoking manner and consistently offering something new and original for consumers to engage and resonate with over time.

Developing innovative merchandising and franchising concepts, e.g. theme parks, theatre productions, activities unique to a film's premise, and transferring a film's core identity coherently across platforms, help paint a larger-than-life picture for audiences and also engage viewers with films as brands in many ways. This is crucial since a film's box office revenue accounts for only 1/5<sup>th</sup> of its lifetime revenue, emphasising the importance of downstream contracts to maximise brand leverage (Young et al., 2008). Also, the tangibility of material things immerses viewers to interact and resonate with films, showcase their passionate behaviour, admiration and affection within their wider network of social circles.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

To summarise and conclude, filmmakers, production houses and marketers may jointly develop and market films with the vision of becoming a brand (Grainge, 2007; Keller, 2008; Kapferer, 2008; O'Reilly and Kerrigan, 2013), however, this does not necessarily guarantee that consumers will subsequently go on to engage with such films as brands. There is a sizeable chunk of films within the market that are embryonic or even minimalist in nature, hence may not be fully realised, exploited and leveraged as a brand per se from the marketer's perspective. Conversely, many films have arguably become part of a wider vision by production houses and filmmakers, thus such films have been crafted in a manner to engage more effectively with consumers as brands, in comparison to the competition. Our film brand engagement model provides filmmakers,

producers and marketers with a comprehensive and consolidated film brand engagement strategy, by offering an organic consumers' account of what constitutes film brand engagement through key notions such as emotional bonding, popularity, iconic status etc. leading to favourable behavioural outcomes.

Completing this study has been a very fruitful journey and enriching experience for me as an emerging researcher, since I have gained many skills, including: searching for relevant information and critically reflecting upon this in the context of a research problem/question; conducting, analysing and writing up qualitative research, gaining the necessary technical skills to conduct complex statistical analyses to assess reliability, validity and causal relationships using IBM SPSS and AMOS; in addition to pinpointing and framing the theoretical contributions that have emerged as a result of this study. Acquiring some of these skills has been a very steep learning curve, however, I understand that practice makes perfect and that over the years as an academic in HE, I will be in a position to hone my skills as a researcher and build on my repertoire. I genuinely feel that this study is going to have a real and ongoing impact in the context of the film branding literature and also for a variety of stakeholders, as outlined in the preceding section. Undertaking this research study has also helped me realise that conducting research of a publishable standard is an immensely sophisticated process with very high expectations, demands a lot of patience and perseverance to do well but is ultimately very rewarding and worth every effort.

If I were to conduct this research study again, I would have additionally tried to obtain external funding and collaborate with institutions such as the UK Film Council and British Film Institute from the very beginning, in order to take advantage of their vast network of stakeholders from within and outside the UK film industry and range of

resources available to researchers based on their previous studies. Doing so would have perhaps enabled me to come up with an even more specific model/framework and set of recommendations, since interacting with industry representatives across different spans of control and line of command would have put me in an even better position to capture findings that production houses, filmmakers and marketers could easily operationalise and implement within their practices.

### **6.5 Limitations and future research directions**

For the qualitative part of this research study (Phase 1), more than half of the sample of interviewees consisted of highly educated participants i.e. undergraduate/postgraduate students and academics. However, this limitation was later offset by Phase 2, in which the wider spectrum of Education is more reflective of the UK population.

Furthermore, due to time constraints, the researchers were not able to compile and analyse the secondary data associated with the films selected by the consumers as part of the questionnaire e.g. film production/marketing budget, release date, box office revenue, genre etc. Doing so would be of interest but time consuming, however, not having done so was considered to not deter from the final contribution of the research study. Another limitation of the Phase 2 refers to endogeneity and how all of the survey data was collected at the same time, thus making it difficult to determine what the cause and effect is, since there was no 'before/after' aspect or condition embedded in the survey design. Forthcoming research may explore potential film brand sub-categories, whilst longitudinal studies on how engagement of films as brands by consumers may change over time would also be of interest.

## Appendix 1 - Brunel University London Research Ethics Committee approval

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College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Brunel University London  
Kingston Lane  
Uxbridge  
UB8 3PH  
United Kingdom  
www.brunel.ac.uk

14 April 2016

### LETTER OF APPROVAL

Applicant: Mr Gurdeep Singh Kohli

Project Title: Film branding

Reference: 2819-LR-Apr/2016- 2862-3

Dear Mr Gurdeep Singh Kohli

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.
- On the Participant Information Sheet, for question "Do I have to take part?", please remove "if you are a student" because anybody who takes part has the right to withdraw.

#### Please note that:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- **[delete for staff applications]** You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.

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Professor James Knowles

Chair

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Brunel University London



**Appendix 2 - Measurement scales**

<p><b>Film Identity Coherency</b> - A film's identity consists of cues that give consumers an indication of what a film is or could be about, when they evaluate films that they have or have not seen already. A coherent film identity is clear and carefully considered, each of its elements interconnect, complement each other, are aesthetically consistent and most importantly are meaningful to consumers.</p>						
Sub-construct	Measurement	Source	SPSS code	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach alpha
<p><b>Story/Originality</b> Refers to a film's story and the extent the consumer perceives it as original</p>	This film's story is unusual	Schneider, 2012	Story1	5.44	1.448	0.80
	This film's story is exceptional	Schneider, 2012	Story2	5.33	1.509	
	This film is original	Schneider, 2012	Story3	5.42	1.514	
	This film is based on a famous source e.g. historical event, real person/animal/object, novel, comic or TV show etc.	Schneider, 2012	Story4	5.37	1.631	
<p><b>Actors/Non-actors</b> A film's cast and creative personnel behind the camera</p>	This film has outstanding acting performances by its actors/actresses	Schneider, 2012	Actor1	5.65	1.381	0.74
	This film has a lead actor/actress who is popular	Schneider, 2012	Actor2	5.68	1.647	
	This film has a lead actor/actress who is attractive	Schneider, 2012	Actor3	5.34	1.653	
	This film has been directed by a Director who is famous	Schneider, 2012	Actor4	4.12	2.493	
<p><b>Characters</b> Fictional and Non-fictional</p>	This film has characters that are characterised well e.g. have unique get ups and personalities	Schneider, 2012	Chara1	5.79	1.457	0.86
	This film has characters casted with suitable actors and actresses	Schneider, 2012	Chara2	5.93	1.349	
	This film has characters that are well written	Schneider, 2012	Chara3	5.88	1.378	
<p><b>Production house</b></p>	I am familiar with the production house of this film	Qualitative study	Studio1	Yes/No question		

The studio that has produced a particular film	This film has been produced by a production house that is well known and reputable	Qualitative study	Studio2	5.85	1.38	0.89
	This film is produced by a production house that has made famous films in the past	Qualitative study	Studio3	5.84	1.472	
	This film is produced by a production house that has made good films in the past	Qualitative study	Studio4	5.96	1.325	
	The production house that has produced this film has a long and rich history of producing outstanding films	Qualitative study	Studio5	5.67	1.553	
<b>Mise-en-scene</b> The arrangement of everything within a film's frame e.g. costumes/make-up, props, set design, background score/soundtrack	This film has been made with professional camera work and shots	Schneider, 2012	Mise1	6.07	1.328	0.80
	This film is cut and edited together well	Schneider, 2012	Mise2	6.05	1.274	
	This film is aesthetically pleasing to me (e.g. this refers to its visual themes, set designs, use of lighting, acting styles, scenery composition, props, makeup, costumes etc.)	Qualitative study	Mise3	6.02	1.178	
<b>Film identity coherency</b> A coherent film identity is clear and carefully considered, each of its elements interconnect, complement each other, are aesthetically consistent and most importantly are meaningful to consumers	I feel that this film exceeds in all areas and is a complete package to me	Qualitative study	FICoher1	5.73	1.339	0.87
	This film is clearly very different, compared to other films and therefore stands out to me	Qualitative study	FICoher2	5.69	1.343	
	This film's individual features (e.g. story, cast, director, characters, setting, cinematography, music etc.) complement each other well	Qualitative study	FICoher3	5.81	1.321	
	This film means more to me than the simple sum of its individual features (e.g. story, cast, director, characters, setting, cinematography, music etc.)	Qualitative study	FICoher4	5.48	1.499	

**Marketing efforts** - Marketing efforts incorporate activities that assist a film in reaching its target audience at any time throughout its life, to maximise a film's audience and, by extension, its earning potential

Sub-construct	Measurement	Source	SPSS code	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach alpha
<p><b>Advertising/promotional campaigns</b> Activities that gain the audience's attention, generating exposure, awareness and saliency amongst existing and prospective consumers.</p> <p><b>Examples include:</b> digital advertising, TV adverts, social networking, themed promotional campaigns, places that can be visited (theme parks, shooting locations), cast interviews at famous tv shows, institutionalising fan-base communities, recognising their effort and passion, involving them in promotions</p> <p><b>Objective measures of a film's marketing efforts using secondary data:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Production/Marketing budget ratio</li> <li>▪ Number of screens film has been released on</li> <li>▪ Number of countries it has been released in</li> </ul> <p>Number of licensing agreements a film has signed e.g. brand tie-ins</p>	This film has been widely discussed within the media (e.g. in the press, on radio, on movie websites online, on TV etc.)	Schneider, 2012	MarkE1	4.92	2.148	0.91
	I have the impression that the production of this film was extravagant (e.g. not restricted by money and resources)	Schneider, 2012	MarkE2	4.98	1.924	
	This film has frequently been advertised through campaigns (e.g. trailers, billboards, newspapers, magazine advertisements, on TV, online etc.)	Schneider, 2012	MarkE3	4.68	2.208	
	I am aware, think or have the impression that this film has been promoted by various companies e.g. through special/limited edition products, featuring characters and soundtrack in their adverts etc.	Qualitative study	MarkE4	4.2	2.345	
	I am aware that this film has been running at least one promotional campaign leading up to the film's release date	Qualitative study	MarkE5	4.31	2.397	
	I am aware of places such as theme parks, museums, tourist attractions etc. branded by this film and its characters, which I can visit and experience	Qualitative study	MarkE6	3.45	2.35	
	Leading up to, during and after its release, I can sense that there has been a lot of buzz about this film	Qualitative study	MarkE7	4.63	2.232	

<b>Perceived Success</b> - This refers to consumers' perceptions of how successful a particular film is, on a cognitive level						
Sub-construct	Measurement	Source	SPSS code	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach alpha
<b>Fan-based community</b> Avid fans of a particular well-known person, group, team, film etc. that are part of a distinct and often institutionalised social grouping	This film has a strong/passionate fan-base	Qualitative study	Fanbase1	4.84	2.006	0.88
	This film is followed by the masses	Qualitative study	Fanbase2	4.5	1.995	
	The fans of this film share a bond like a close community (e.g. are passionate about the film's story/characters, have formed dedicated fan clubs to discuss and share their interest about the film and its characters/storyline)	Qualitative study	Fanbase3	4.15	2.203	
<b>Popularity</b> The state or condition of being liked, admired or supported by many people. Refers to awareness within society (people around the participant).  <b>Objective measure:</b> Box office performance	I can easily picture this film in my mind	Yoo et al., 2000	Popu1	5.83	1.312	0.79
	I can easily recognise this film among other films	Yoo et al., 2000	Popu2	5.78	1.411	
	When I think of this film, some characteristics of this film come to my mind quickly	Yoo et al., 2000	Popu3	5.81	1.346	
	I can effortlessly recall what this film is about	Yoo et al., 2000	Popu4	5.96	1.317	
	I have difficulty in imagining about this film in my mind (Reverse scored)	Yoo et al., 2000	Popu5	2.87	1.95	
	I know that people around me are aware of this film	Yoo et al., 2000	Popu6	5.07	1.902	
<b>Sequels</b> A film's story that either precedes (prequel), succeeds (sequel) and/or is a by-product (spinoff)	This film has more than one part e.g. the characters and storyline have been part of more than one film	Qualitative study	Sequel1	Yes/No question		
	I am aware that there are a series of films that this film is a part of e.g. this film has sequels, part 1, 2 etc.	Qualitative study	Sequel2	5.71	1.807	0.79

of an existing work.	I think this film is successful, because it has more than one part	Qualitative study	Sequel3	5.24	1.711	
	When I think of this film and its other parts, I can see that there is a continuous development in the characters/storyline	Qualitative study	Sequel4	5.58	1.592	
<p><b>Iconic status</b> A symbol representative of or synonymous with something e.g. an era in time, ideology, person etc. Iconic brands are those who integrate with culture more skilfully (Heding et al., 2008)</p>	This film is a benchmark/milestone in its genre	Qualitative study	Icon1	4.95	1.787	0.92
	I feel that this film has evolved into a cult (e.g. a trend, part of culture now, people are obsessed with it)	Qualitative study	Icon2	4.18	2.11	
	I can sense that this film has become part of pop culture (e.g. fashion, music, iconography, symbol for something etc.)	Qualitative study	Icon3	3.74	2.098	
	This film is definitely iconic to me	Qualitative study	Icon4	4.91	1.833	
	This film has an iconic story	Qualitative study	Icon5	5.05	1.781	
	This film has iconic characters	Qualitative study	Icon6	5.26	1.753	
	This film has an iconic soundtrack	Qualitative study	Icon7	4.38	2.049	
	This film has some scenes that are iconic	Qualitative study	Icon8	5.01	1.889	
	This film features iconic costumes and props (e.g. gadgets, objects, things used in the film)	Qualitative study	Icon9	4.57	2.073	

<b>Emotional bonding - The feelings consumers have towards a particular film, on an affective level</b>						
Sub-construct	Measurement	Source	SPSS code	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach alpha
<b>Emotional attachment</b>	Viewing this film makes me feel good	Vlachos et al., 2010	Emoatt1	5.59	1.408	
	Viewing this film makes me very happy	Vlachos et	Emoatt2	5.37	1.458	

The emotional attachment a consumer may experience with a film		al., 2010				.92
	I love viewing this film	Vlachos et al., 2010	Emoatt3	5.55	1.4	
	Watching this film is a pure delight	Vlachos et al., 2010	Emoatt4	5.4	1.492	
	I am passionate about this film	Vlachos et al., 2010	Emoatt5	5.01	1.686	
	This film reminds me of people that I love and beautiful experiences	Vlachos et al., 2010	Emoatt6	4.04	1.987	
	If someone ridiculed this film, I would feel irritated	Vlachos et al., 2010	Emoatt7	4.33	1.915	
	If someone praised this film, I would feel somewhat praised myself	Vlachos et al., 2010	Emoatt8	4.44	1.822	
	I would feel sorry if I could never access this film again	Vlachos et al., 2010	Emoatt9	4.84	1.859	
<b>Self-congruity</b> Self-congruity describes the process in which consumers match their own self-concept with the images of a certain brand. The 'self-concept' refers to the "totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an 'object'" (Rosenberg, 2000, p. 7)	Watching this film says something 'true' and 'deep' about who I am as a person	Bagozzi et al., 2014	Selfcon1	4.05	1.979	0.91
	When other people come to know that I have watched this film, they get a sense of the kind of person I am	Bagozzi et al., 2014	Selfcon2	4.04	1.955	
	This film is an important part of how I see myself	Bagozzi et al., 2014	Selfcon3	3.76	1.957	

<b>Franchise</b> - This refers to a film concept's degree of elasticity and ability to branch out to other media platforms and product/service categories through licensing, hence engaging audiences on a multidimensional level that is not confined to the initial motion picture anymore (Marshall, 2002).						
Sub-construct	Measurement	Source	SPSS code	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach alpha
<b>Merchandise</b> When a film offers tangibility through an array of	I am aware that this film's name, characters, story, soundtrack etc. have been used to sell products and services	Qualitative study	Franch1	3.73	2.398	

<p>products/services.</p> <p>Examples of movie licensing categories for consumer merchandising include (Marich, 1995):</p> <p>Apparel and accessories, Beverage and food, Gifts and collectibles, Health and Beauty, Home and housewares, Interactive, Publishing, Stationary, Toys and Games, Wireless</p> <p><b>Franchise</b></p> <p>When a franchiser grants a franchisee the right to use its trademark or trade-name as well as certain business systems and processes to produce and market a good or service according to certain specifications (Business Dictionary)</p>	<p>I have come across products and services branded with this film’s characters, name/logo, soundtrack etc. in the market</p>	<p>Qualitative study</p>	<p>Franch2</p>	<p>3.66</p>	<p>2.385</p>	<p>.92</p>
	<p>I have seen items in my daily life, branded with this film</p>	<p>Qualitative study</p>	<p>Franch3</p>	<p>3.35</p>	<p>2.194</p>	
	<p>I have noticed that this film’s characters are represented on at least one more entertainment platform medium (e.g. video games, TV shows, theatre plays, comics, novels etc.)</p>	<p>Qualitative study</p>	<p>Franch4</p>	<p>3.64</p>	<p>2.447</p>	

<b>Long-term presence - refers to the presence of a film within consumers’ lives</b>						
<b>Sub-construct</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>SPSS code</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>Cronbach alpha</b>
<p><b>Timeless</b></p> <p>Not affected by the passage of time or changes in fashion/trends</p>	<p>I have the feeling that this film is going to stay fashionable for a long time and will not be affected by changing trends</p>	<p>Qualitative study</p>	<p>Timeless1</p>	<p>4.79</p>	<p>1.888</p>	<p>0.86</p>
	<p>I have the impression that this film is timeless, hence I think it will not be affected by the passage of time</p>	<p>Qualitative study</p>	<p>Timeless2</p>	<p>5.08</p>	<p>1.736</p>	

	I get the sense that this film is not restricted to a particular time or date and still appeal/will appeal to the newer generation(s)	Qualitative study	Timeless3	5.19	1.671	
	I believe I can watch this film anytime	Qualitative study	Timeless4	5.45	1.563	
<b>Passed on through generations</b> Sharing of interest and knowledge between old and new generation (cross generation)	This film has been recommended to me by older members of my household and social circle	Bagozzi et al., 2014	Generation1	3.71	2.143	0.85
	This film has been around for a long time	Bagozzi et al., 2014	Generation2	4.57	2.013	
	I have enjoyed this film for a long time	Bagozzi et al., 2014	Generation3	4.7	1.96	
<b>Classic status</b> Judged over a period of time to be of the highest quality and outstanding of its kind	I think this film has become a classic now (e.g. work of art of recognised and established value, when judged over a period of time)	Qualitative study	Classic1	4.67	2.005	0.86
	I consider this film an all-time favourite	Qualitative study	Classic2	4.81	1.922	
	I think this film is recognised for its contribution to cinema	Qualitative study	Classic3	4.53	2.048	
<b>Objective measures of long-term presence using secondary data:</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Film's release date</li> <li>▪ Identify whether this film is part of a series of films e.g. sequels/prequels/spinoffs</li> </ul>						
<b>Favourable outcomes</b>						
Sub-construct	Measurement	Source	SPSS code	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach alpha
<b>Repetitive viewing</b> Like a ritual, viewing the same film again and again	I would enjoy watching this film again	Lacher and Mizerski, 1994	Repeatview1	5.78	1.467	0.88
	I would like to show this film to my friends	Lacher and Mizerski, 1994	Repeatview2	5.18	1.679	
	I want to be able to watch this film whenever I feel like it	Lacher and Mizerski, 1994	Repeatview3	5.28	1.67	



<p><b>Following the brand</b> Keeping up with the releases and activities of a brand, not just confined to motion pictures</p>	I am committed to following up potential future releases of this film	Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001	Loyal1	4.84	1.9	0.89
	I would be willing to pay more to watch this film over others	Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001	Loyal2	3.96	2.061	
	If this film's story and characters appear on other platforms e.g. video games, television, novel/comics etc. I would be interested in exploring these	Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001	Loyal3	3.89	2.114	
	I consider myself to be a 'real' fan of this film	Lee et al., 2013	Loyal4	4.95	1.737	
	I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of this film	Lee et al., 2013	Loyal5	4.1	1.943	
	Being a fan of this film is very important to me	Lee et al., 2013	Loyal6	3.96	1.924	
<p><b>Brand advocacy</b> Recommending and supporting a brand on an impartial basis, through positive word of mouth behaviour</p>	I have mentioned to others that I have seen this film	Brown et al., 2005	WoM1	5.08	1.794	0.92
	I have made sure others know that I have seen this film	Brown et al., 2005	WoM2	4.47	1.942	
	I have spoken positively about this film to others	Brown et al., 2005	WoM3	5.24	1.723	
	I have recommended this film to family members, friends and acquaintances	Brown et al., 2005	WoM4	5.07	1.858	
<p><b>Brand-related purchases</b> Buying into the product/services offered by a brand</p>	I have purchased merchandise e.g. toys, video games, objects etc. and/or clothing featuring e.g. characters, logos, quotes etc. of this film (or film series)	Hagger et al., 2001	Purchase1	Yes/No question		

	I would consider buying merchandise/clothing representing this film (or film series) and its characters if I happened to see them in a store	Hagger et al., 2001	Purchase2	2.45	1.706	.808 (half of items, since some are nominal or have too few responses due to routing)
	In the future, purchasing merchandise/clothing representing this film (or film series) and its characters is something I plan to do	Hagger et al., 2001	Purchase3	2.33	1.618	
	In the future, I am likely to purchase more merchandise/clothing representing this film (or film series)	Hagger et al., 2001	Purchase4	N/A	N/A	
	I have purchased the DVD/Blu-ray of this film (or film series)	Hagger et al., 2001	Purchase5	Yes/No question		
	I am likely to purchase the DVD/Blu-Ray of this film in the future	Hagger et al., 2001	Purchase6	3.06	1.933	
<b>Film brand engagement</b> Consumers engagement with films as brands	This film is not just a film but also a brand to me	Qualitative study	Filmbrand1	3.78	2.014	0.96
	This film is more of a brand to me than other films are	Qualitative study	Filmbrand2	3.63	1.997	
	I have the impression that this film has become a brand	Qualitative study	Filmbrand3	3.75	2.099	
	When I think of this film, I also think of it as a brand	Qualitative study	Filmbrand4	3.64	2.08	

## Appendix 3 - Final version of questionnaire

### Consumers' engagement with films as brands



Hi! 😊

Thank you for participating in this survey and lending me some of your valuable time (circa 10 -15 mins).

My name is Gurdeep Singh Kohli and I am a PhD student at Brunel University London, currently undertaking a research study on the branding of films. Responses gathered from this survey questionnaire will help me understand how, when and why consumers, like you and me, may engage with a film as a brand.

Please note, you must be at least 18 years old and permanently live in the UK to be eligible to participate in this survey. Participation for this questionnaire is voluntary, you may skip any questions if you wish to do so.

This study has been approved by Brunel University's Ethics Committee and I would like to reassure you that your feedback will remain anonymous, confidential, will be stored securely and shall not be used other than for the purpose of this study.

**NOTE:** In order to complete this questionnaire, I would first like you to spend a minute or two to think of your most recent, typical viewing experience of a film. Some suggestions to help you choose a film include:

- A film that you have watched on any platform e.g. Cinema, TV, Netflix, VHS/DVD/BluRay, Online etc.
- A film that was released recently or in the past, a film that you may have watched again etc.

*If the film you have selected is part of a series of films e.g. has more than one part, please answer all questions based on the series of films it is a part of e.g. 1,2,3 etc. If it doesn't have multiple parts, please fill in as normal.*

**Film Name + brief details** \_\_\_\_\_  
 e.g. actors, when did the film roughly come out? \_\_\_\_\_

Before we get started with the main questionnaire, please tell me a little about yourself and your background:

1) What is your Gender? (Please tick):       Male                       Female                       Other

2) What is your Age? (Please write down the number): \_\_\_\_\_

3) Do you permanently live in the UK?     Yes                       No

4) What is your highest educational qualification? (If studying, select qualification you are working towards achieving):

Postgraduate       Graduate       BTEC HNC/HND       A-Level/ BTEC Level 1/2/3       GCSE and below

5) What is your Ethnicity?

White       Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups       Asian/Asian British

Black African/Caribbean/Black British       Other ethnic group

6) How many films have you seen in the past 3 months? (Regardless of medium e.g. cinema, TV, Netflix, DVD etc.):

None       1-5 films       6-10 films       11-25 films       26-50 films       +50 films

Keeping in mind the film (or film series) you have chosen at the start of this Questionnaire, please circle the number closest to your opinion for each of the following statements (or place a cross in the box provided, if you don't know).

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Don't know (place a cross in the box)</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>X</b>

Film identity – I think, feel or have the impression that this film (or film series) ...		Strongly Disagree ← → Strongly Agree						Don't know	
1)	...tells a story that is unusual	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...tells a story that is exceptional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...tells a story that is original	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...is based on a famous source e.g. historical event, real person/animal/object, novel, comic or tv show etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2)	...has outstanding acting performances by its actors/actresses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has a lead actor/actress who is popular	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has a lead actor/actress who is attractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has been directed by a Director who is famous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3)	...has Characters that are characterised well e.g. have unique get ups and personalities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has Characters casted with suitable actors and actresses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has Characters that are well written	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>I am familiar with the production house of this film</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Yes (Continue with PART 4)</b>						<input type="checkbox"/> <b>No (Skip to PART 5)</b>	
4)	...has been produced by a production house that is well known and reputable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has been produced by a production house that has made famous films in the past	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has been produced by a production house that has made good films in the past	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has been produced by a production house that has a long and rich history of producing outstanding films	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5)	...has been made with professional camera work and shots	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has been cut and edited together well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...is aesthetically pleasing to me (e.g. this refers to its visual themes, set designs, use of lighting, acting styles, scenery composition, props, makeup, costumes etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6)	...exceeds in all areas and is a complete package to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...is clearly very different, compared to other films, and therefore stands out to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has individual features (e.g. story/cast/director/characters/setting, cinematography, music etc.) which complement each other well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...means more to me than the simple sum of its individual features (e.g. story, actors, director, characters, music, setting etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Marketing efforts – I am aware, think or have the impression that this film (or film series) ...		Strongly Disagree ← → Strongly Agree							Don't know
	...has been widely discussed within the media (e.g. in the press, on radio, online, on TV etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has been produced extravagantly e.g. I get the sense that the making of this film (or film series) is not restricted by money and other resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has frequently been advertised through campaigns e.g. TV ads, billboards, print and online ads etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7)	...has been promoted by various companies e.g. through special/limited edition products, featuring characters and soundtrack in their adverts etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has been running at least one promotional campaign leading up to its release date(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has places such as theme parks, museums, tourist attractions etc. featuring characters of this film (or film series), which I can visit and experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has had a lot of buzz, leading up to, during and after its release(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Franchise – I am aware, have come across or noticed that for this film (or film series) ...									
	...its name/logo, characters, story, soundtrack etc. have been used to sell products and services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...there are products/services branded with this film's (or film series') e.g. characters, name/logo, soundtrack etc. in the market	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8)	...I have seen items in my daily life, branded with this film (or film series)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...its characters are represented on at least one more entertainment medium e.g. they have a video game, have a TV show, there is a theatre play, or they appear in comics/novels etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Perceived Success – I think, feel or have the impression that this film (or film series) ...									
	...has a strong/passionate fan-base	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9)	...is followed by the masses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has fans who share a close bond like a community (e.g. are passionate about this film's (or film series') characters/storyline, have formed dedicated fan clubs to discuss and share their interest about this film and its characters/storyline etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I can easily picture this film (or film series) in my mind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I can easily recognise this film (or film series) among other films	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10)	When I think of this film (or film series), some characteristics of this film (or film series) come to my mind quickly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I can effortlessly recall what this film (or film series) is about	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I have difficulty in imagining about this film (or film series) in my mind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I know that people around me are aware of this film (or film series)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
This film has more than one part e.g. the characters and storyline have been part of more than one film		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Continue with PART 11					<input type="checkbox"/> No (Skip to PART 12)		
	I am aware that there are a series of films this film is a part of e.g. this film has sequels, part 1, 2 etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11)	I think this film is successful, because it has more than one part	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	When I think of this film and its other parts, I can see that there is a continuous development in the characters/storyline	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	



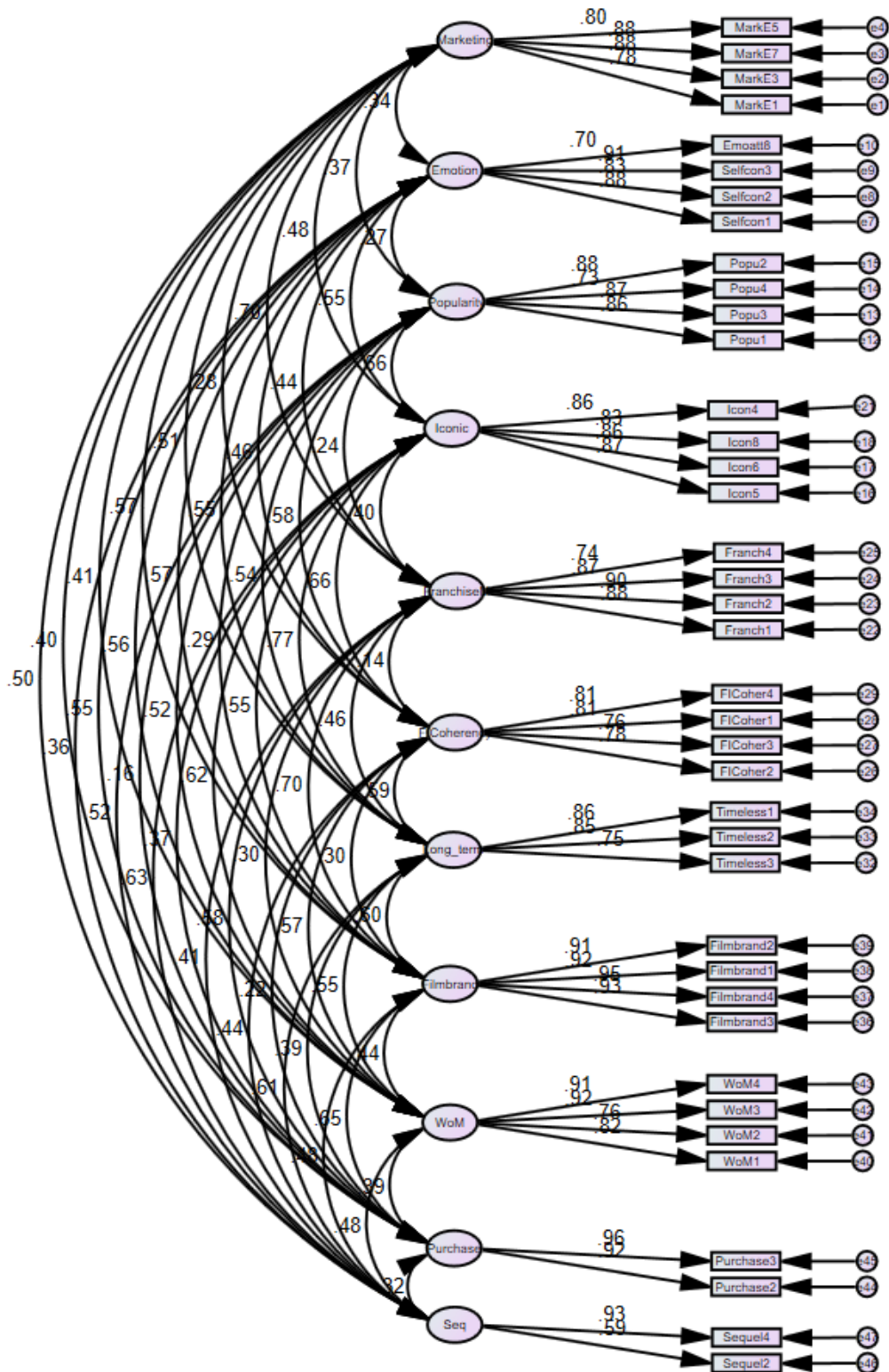
Perceived Success – I think, feel or have the impression that this film (or film series) ...		Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	Don't know
	...is a benchmark/milestone in its genre (e.g. Action, Comedy, Drama, Horror, Romance, Adventure etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12)	...has evolved into a cult (e.g. a trend, part of culture now, people are obsessed with it)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	...has become a part of pop culture (e.g. fashion, music, iconography, symbol for something etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>To help you with part 13, according to various Dictionaries, the word ICONIC may mean one or more of the following: famous, popular, widely known &amp; established, believed to represent something, someone, a time period or an idea</b>									
	This film (or film series) is definitely iconic to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	This film (or film series) has an iconic story	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13)	This film (or film series) has iconic characters	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	This film (or film series) has an iconic soundtrack	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	This film (or film series) has some scenes that are iconic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	This film (or film series) features iconic costumes and props (e.g. gadgets, objects, things used in the film)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>Emotional bonding</b>									
	Viewing this film (or film series) makes me feel good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	Viewing this film (or film series) makes me very happy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I love viewing this film (or film series)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14)	Watching this film (or film series) is a pure delight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I am passionate about this film (or film series)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	This film reminds me of people I love and beautiful experiences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	If someone ridiculed this film, I would feel irritated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	If someone praised this film, I would feel somewhat praised myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I would feel sorry if I could never access this film again	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	Watching this film says something 'true' and 'deep' about who I am as a person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15)	When other people come to know that I have watched this film, they get a sense of the kind of person I am	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	This film is an important part of how I see myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>Long-term presence</b>									
	I have the feeling that this film (or film series) is going to stay fashionable for a long time and will not be affected by changing trends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I have the impression that this film (or film series) is timeless, hence I think it will not be affected by the passage of time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16)	I get the sense that this film (or film series) is not restricted to a particular time or date and still appeals/will appeal to the newer generation(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I believe I can watch this film (or film series) anytime	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	This film (or film series) has been recommended to me by older members of my household and social circle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I feel that this film (or film series) has been around for a long time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Long-term presence contd.		Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	Don't know
	I feel I have enjoyed this film (or film series) for a long time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16)	I think this film (or film series) has become a classic now (e.g. work of art of recognised and established value, when judged over a period of time)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I consider this film (or film series) an all-time favourite	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I think this film (or film series) is recognised for its contribution to cinema	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>Favourable outcomes</b>									
17)	I would enjoy watching this film (or film series) again	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I would like to show this film (or film series) to my friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I want to be able to watch this film (or film series) whenever I feel like it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
18)	I'm committed to follow up any future releases of this film (or film series)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I am willing to pay more to watch this film (or film series) over others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	If this film's story/characters appear on other platforms e.g. video games, television, novel/comics etc. I would like to explore these	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
19)	I consider myself to be a 'real' fan of this film (or film series)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of this film (or film series)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	Being a fan of this film (or film series) is very important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
20)	I have mentioned to others that I have seen this film (or film series)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I have made sure others know that I have seen this film (or film series)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I have spoken positively about this film (or film series) to others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I have recommended this film (or film series) to my family/friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>I have purchased merchandise e.g. toys, video games, objects etc. and/or clothing featuring e.g. characters, logos, quotes etc. of this film (or film series)</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Please skip to PART 22)		<input type="checkbox"/> No (Please continue with PART 21)					
21)	I would consider buying merchandise/clothing representing this film (or film series) and its characters if I happened to see them in a store	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	In the future, purchasing merchandise/clothing representing this film (or film series) and its characters is something I plan to do (Skip to 23 afterwards)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
22)	In the future, I am likely to purchase more merchandise/clothing representing this film (or film series)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>23) I have purchased the DVD/BluRay of this film (or film series)</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Please skip to PART 25)		<input type="checkbox"/> No (Please continue with PART 24)					
24)	I would like to purchase the DVD/BluRay of this film in the future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>Film brand</b>									
25)	This film (or film series) is not just a film but also a brand to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	This film (or film series) is more of a brand to me than other films are	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I have the impression that this film (or film series) has become a brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	When I think of this film (or film series), I also think of it as a brand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Thank you very much for your time, consideration and patience in completing this Questionnaire! 😊

### Appendix 4 - Final measurement model

Illustrated below is the final measurement model created in AMOS, with no high correlations of concern and all the factor loadings averaging out at above .70.





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