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Finding COCO – Remembering the Meaning of Death and Life, in a Song

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ABSTRACT

Day after day we are consumed by technologies, media and information, invading our reality and influencing our social life. Though we may be conscious of this invasion, we allow it to prevail in our day life. We do not just consent this situation but even balance our expectations to justify such abusive incursion. So, how do we justify this permission? What do we expect to see or get? We aim to contribute to the understanding of what young adults think and expect from animation films. In the present study, we used the film 'Coco' (2017), produced by Pixar Animation Studios, as a stimulus to the participants - young adults (N=66), men and women (with an average age of 32 years). Thus, we analyzed the participants' answers to an online survey, focused in what they consider to be the most important concepts, thoughts, emotions and feelings highlighted by the film 'Coco'. The obtained data was categorized, classified and interpreted. Results suggest that animation films may have a major importance in the people's lives, creating virtual worlds close to their social world, and conveying representations of death and life, in the shape of almost real messages, with the help of technology.

Keywords

Animation; Technology; Young Adults; Emotions; Virtual reality; Social reality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Animation is an extraordinary and attractive form of audiovisual expression, extremely effective in combination of images and sounds for telling stories and ideas. Animation enables and encourage the creation of visual tricks and turn non-real events to look real, moving the audience to new places beyond what is expected[1].

Though it has a recent history, animation is a dynamic form of expression that is available for creative people. Studying its depth it is amazing the influence that animation has in our everyday life [1]. Animation can be found on several contexts and has gained its roll, supporting and conducting technical and conceptual existences of the world[2].

Nowadays, animation is presented to us through innumerable forms, bringing with it many possibilities to revolutionize the world as we know it. Making movies is a mean of influencing how we observe the world, breaking down the barriers of space and time, creating the possibility of having a new vision about it[3]. Films give us a view of a free world[4].

The animation role has been changing on the past decades gaining a great presence on the adults audience[5].The growth of the age of digital technology has revolutionized the way the audience accesses and sees it. Digitization made the animation production and delivery streamlined and expanded the audience's ability to become familiar with it. In this way, animation has been described as a communication model of the future[1].

For all of us communication is important, therefore, we can find different forms and types of communication, which leads us to the evolution of technologies and concepts, such as social media. Social media is described not only as a conversation facilitator[6] but also as a form of mass self-communication[7].

We must refer that communication has to consider our behaviors, because it depends and modifies the relations between persons[8]. So, in part communication is unique to each person and depends on each one's experience, culture, feelings and reality view. We come to the point where we confront diversity, not only with the question of communication and behavior, but also with reality. Which, in fact, is exposed to the evolution and constant influence of technologies through virtual reality[9].

But, what does virtual reality mean? Is this reality real[8]? We already understand that this type of communication has the particularity of using a computer simulation, allowing us to delve into the cyberspace information, and build virtual environments, using imagination and fantasy [9].

Combining social media, technologies and animation we enabled the interaction between people, through animated characters, animated body movements and animated profiles. So, animation enables new experiences through exploration and observation[10].

2. OBJECTIVES

The main goal of this study is contribute to understand why young adults like animation films in general and, in particular, we will focus in the film Coco (2017), from Pixar Animation Studios. We have the following objectives, according to this animated film: verify what is perceived as being transmitted or promoted; determine the ideas and thoughts perceived as most prominent; determine the emotions or feelings most conveyed; find out which are considered the most important key concepts highlighted.

3. METHOD

We had a sample of 66 participants, young adults with an average of 32 years, from Portugal. We focus our attention on the analysis of their answers to four questions, obtained through an online survey, in Jotform platform: a) "What does Coco animation film transmit or promote?"; b) "What does this film make you feel?"; c) "What does this film make you think?"; d) "Why is this film important?". Some of the participants had already watched the film on the cinema (40) and some had not (26), but before they answered to the survey, all participants watched a three minutes trailer of the film - so all had basic knowledge about it.

The data gathered was analyzed through descriptive statistic (X = average, SD = Standard Deviation) and questions b), c) and d)

were also explored with frequencies and concept grouped analyzing the content of the textual responses of participants.

4. RESULTS

4.1 What does Coco animation film transmit or promote?

For the analysis of this question we opted for a descriptive analysis, according to the most frequent answers (see Table 1). We observed that the Coco animation film promote or transmit more significantly "The connection between people" (X = 4.11, DP = 1.208), "A message" (X = 4.08, DP = 1.132), "Imagination" (X = 3.83, DP = 1.053), "Emotions" (X = 3.82, DP =1.242) and "Fantasy" (X = 3.82, DP = 1.086).

Table 1. All participants

To what extent does this animation film transmit or promote ...	X	DP
The connection between people	4.11	1.208
A message	4.08	1.132
Imagination	3.83	1.053
Emotions	3.82	1.242
Fantasy	3.82	1.086
Fun	3.77	1.027
Link to the personality of the people	3.77	1.228
Creativity	3.68	1.144
Memories	3.68	1.293
Joy	3.67	1.049
The child image	3.67	1.223
Thinking of Life	3.65	1.225
Childhood memories	3.45	1.328
Laughter	3.41	1.059
Comic	3.33	1.02
Just kidding	3.33	1.159
Thinking of death	3.3	1.279
Illusion	3.24	1.088
Think about what can be beyond death	3.14	1.324
Ice breaking between people	3.02	1.174

We also wanted to understand the difference between participants that had seen the Coco film and the participants who had not. Using the same analysis method, we found that for those who previously watched the film the most important promotion or transmission are "The connection between people" (X = 4.43, DP = 0.891), "A message" (X = 4.33, DP = 0.959), "Emotions" (X = 4.23, DP = 1.037), "Fun" (X = 4.05, DP = 0.893), "Memories" (X = 4.00, DP = 1.072) and "Imagination" (X = 4.00, DP = 0.866) (Table 2).

Table 2. Participants that previously Watched the film on the cinema

To what extent does this animation film transmit or promote ...	X	DP
The connection between people	4.43	0.891
A message	4.33	0.959
Emotions	4.23	1.037
Fun	4.05	0.893
Memories	4.00	1.072
Imagination	4.00	0.866
Link to the personality of the people	3.98	1.193
Creativity	3.98	0.987
Joy	3.95	0.865
Fantasy	3.95	0.865
The child image	3.90	1.02
Thinking of Life	3.80	3.423
Childhood memories	3.70	1.187
Laughter	3.60	1.02
Thinking of death	3.50	1.285
Comic	3.45	0.947
Think about what can be beyond death	3.35	1.276
Just kidding	3.35	1.13
Illusion	3.18	1.022
Ice breaking between people	3.15	1.108

For the participants that had not previously watched the film the most significant transmission or promotion are "Fun" (X = 4.00, DP = 0.866), "A message" (X = 3.69, DP = 1.264), "Fantasy" (X = 3.62, DP = 1.332), "The connection between people" (X = 3.62, DP = 1.443) and "Imagination" (X = 3.58, DP = 1.246) (Table 3).

Table 3. Participants that did not previously Watched the film on the cinema

To what extent does this animation film transmit or promote ...	X	DP
Fun	4.00	0.866
A message	3.69	1.264
Fantasy	3.62	1.332
The connection between people	3.62	1.443
Imagination	3.58	1.246
Link to the personality of the people	3.46	1.216
Thinking of Life	3.42	1.306
Illusion	3.35	1.175
Just kidding	3.31	1.202
The child image	3.31	1.408

Joy	3.23	1.154
Creativity	3.23	1.219
Memories	3.19	1.442
Emotions	3.17	1.272
Comic	3.15	1.099
Laughter	3.12	1.050
Childhood memories	3.08	1.439
Thinking of death	3.00	1.209
Ice breaking between people	2.81	1.241
Think about what can be beyond death	2.81	1.331

Comparing the results between these two groups, those that previously and those who didn't, it is clear that the participants that watched the film give a higher importance on all categories, with only one exception, which is the "Illusion" (Table 4) (Figure 1). These results suggest that participants that previously knew the Coco film have a more positive engage with it, giving a more significant meaning to all topics considered, and considering it not just as a fantasy film but as a film that deals with issues which are not just illusions, and have much to do with reality.

Table 4. Compare Watched (Yes), Not Watched (No) and All participants

To what extent animation films transmit or promote ...	Yes	No	All
	X	X	X
The connection between people	4.43	3.62	4.11
A message	4.33	3.69	4.08
Emotions	4.23	3.17	3.82
Fun	4.05	4.00	3.77
Memories	4.00	3.19	3.68
Imagination	4.00	3.58	3.83
Link to the personality of the people	3.98	3.46	3.77
Creativity	3.98	3.23	3.68
Joy	3.95	3.23	3.67
Fantasy	3.95	3.62	3.82
The child image	3.90	3.31	3.67
Thinking of Life	3.80	3.42	3.65
Childhood memories	3.70	3.08	3.45
Laughter	3.60	3.12	3.41
Thinking of death	3.50	3.00	3.33
Comic	3.45	3.15	3.33
Think about what can be beyond death	3.35	2.81	3.14
Just kidding	3.35	3.31	3.33
Illusion	3.18	3.35	3.24
Ice breaking between people	3.15	2.81	3.02

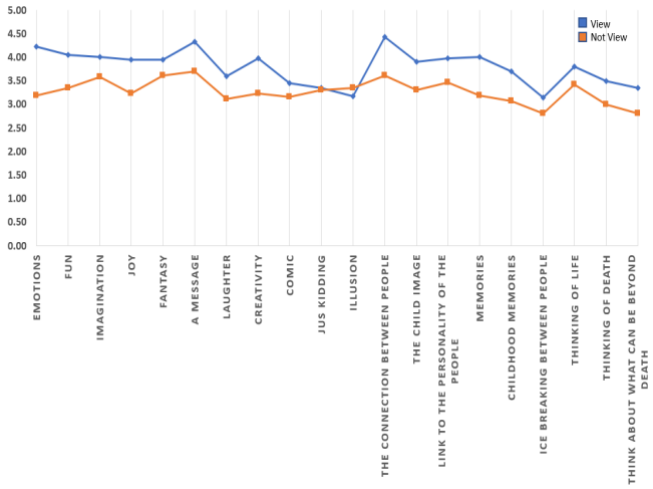

Figure 1. Compare Watched & Not Watched

4.2 How does this film make you feel?

For this question we also used descriptive analysis. We made analysis of the text from all the participants and observed the most frequent mentioned words, merging the similar words and concepts (or those who had the same syntactic root), so we could understand what did this film make participants feel.

Some concepts were highlighted, such as "Emotions" (27.3%), "Joy" (19.7%), "Love" (19.7%) and "Film" (19.7%) (Figure 2) (Table 5). Participants, above all, felt this film as very emotional, highlighting positive sentiments of joy, love, empathy, family, happiness or hope, but also sorrow, sadness, missing person or fear - they feel more according to life then to death.

Figure 2 - All participants

Table 5 – All participants

Word	%
Emotions	27.3
Joy	19.7
Love	19.7
Film	19.7
Happy	16.7
Sad	12.1
Life	12.1
Fun	9.1
Empathy	9.1
Hope	9.1

Comparing the answers of the two groups of participants, those who watched the film previously, clearly enhance, more than the others, strong and mixed emotions stimulated by the film: "Emotions" (37.5%), "Sadness" (30.0%), "Love" (27.5%), "Joy" (25.0%), suggesting that although there is something sad in death - the central topic of the film -, there is, above all, hope associated to the fact that death may not be the end of it all, and the connection and love between relatives may not be broken, instead, maybe it possibly endure (Figure 3) (Table 6).

Figure 3 – Participants that previously Watched the film

Table 6 – Participants that previously Watched the film

Word	%
Emotions	37.5
Sadness	30.0
Love	27.5
Joy	25.0
Make	22.5
Film	22.5
Happy	20.0
Self	15.0
Curiosity	10.0
Fun	10.0
Affection	10.0
Hope	10.0

On the other hand, the participants that had not previously watched the film did not felt so emotionally involved, and felt more curiosity, enhancing not the just the obvious emotions suggested in the presentation of the story but also the possible knowledge covered in the film (as they saw in the trailer): "Film" (26.6%), "Knowledge" (19.2) and "Emotions" are the most highlighted concepts (Figure 4) (Table 7).

Figure 4 - Participants that not previously Watched the film

Table 7 - Participants that not previously Watched the film

Word	%
Film	26.6
Knowledge	19.2
Emotion	19.2
Self	15.4
Curious	15.4
Boy	15.4
Trailer	11.5
Joy	11.5
Happy	11.5
Empathy	11.5
Friendship	11.5
People	11.5

The participants who previously watched the film on cinema, not only recognize the emotions highlighted by the film, but also seem to feel more personally involved with it and with the topics that are explored by the film, concerning the connection between people - and specially between relatives and within family -, the emotions, friendship and love that we may share between each other, and live together, in life and even after death, sharing memories, messages, feelings, fond affections and thoughts. For the others, the questions of life, death and after death do not seem so close, so, they do not seem so emotionally linked to the film, seeing it in a more rational way, with curiosity and for the knowledge that may be involved, but thinking that they can look at those topics with a relative distance - as if they just are outer observers of a distant reality, or fantasy.

4.3 What does this film make you think?

Analyzing the responses given by all participants we observe five major concepts: "Family" (40.9%), "Dreams" (28.8%), "Death" (24.2%), "Self" (21.1%) and "Life" (18.2%) (Figure 5) (Table 8). The most important concept is "Family", which is undoubtedly central in the film.

Figure 5 - All participants

Table 8 - All participants

Word	%
Family	40.9
Dreams	28.8
Death	24.2
Self	21.1
Life	18.2
Creates	15.2
Think	13.6
Film	13.6
Importance	12.1
Give	9.1
Love	9.1

Studying the responses of the participants that saw the film we can see "Family" (60.0%), "Life" (27.5%), "Death" (27.5%), "Dreams" (25.0%) and "Self" (25.0%) as the more important concepts (Figure 6) (Table 9). For the participants who saw the film, their attention to what they thought is focused on the main concepts of this film - family, life and death - there is a clear understanding and acceptance on these themes through the Coco film, also reinforcing what for this participants is more important.

Figure 6 – Participants that previously Watched the film

Table 9 – Participants that previously Watched the film

Word	%
Family	60.0
Life	27.5
Death	27.5
Dreams	25.0
Self	25.0
Love	17.5
Film	15.0
Important	15.0
Remember	12.5
Happy	10.0
Give	10.0
Never	10.0

Observing the responses from participants that didn't see the film, we can find the concepts "Dreams" (42.3%), "Self" (38.5%), "Knowledge" (26.9%) and "Film" (26.9%) as the most frequent (Figure 7) (Table 10). Seeing these responses we can conclude that participants who did not saw the film failed to focus their attention, or unconsciously avoided, the main concepts of this film. These participants emphasized the question of dreams and reflection on self and knowledge, leading us to understand the need to maintain the themes of this film through the fantasy or illusion of dreams (which is not real) or to try to understand them with rationality of what they think is real, through their own reflections and existing knowledge on these themes.

Figure 7 - Participants that not previously Watched the film

Table 10 - Participants that not previously Watched the film

Word	%
Dreams	42.3
Self	38.5
Knowledge	26.9
Film	26.9
Think	23.1
Search	23.1
Creates	15.4
Family	15.4
Music	15.4
Culture	11.5
Ancestors	11.5
Boy	11.5

Comparing the two groups of participants we can see a difference between reflections. One of the reflections, participants who saw the film, focuses on the central concepts - family, life and death - being interconnected through the cycle of life, from those born in a family to those who die and which are linked through life through family relationships. This group of participants accepts the reality presented by the film and makes it a personal reality. The other reflection focuses more on what is real and not real in the film, and there is a greater need on the part of these participants to make a separation between the reality presented by

the film and their own, basing their thoughts in a more rational way.

4.4 Why is this film important?

For this question we also used descriptive analysis.

Observing the answers given by all the participants we can see the importance of the concepts "Message" (22.7%), "Family" (21.1%), "Life" (21.1%) and "Film" (18.2%) (Figure 8) (Table 11), being "Message" the most important. What makes this film special and unique in its approach is undoubtedly its message on the topic it addresses, using family ties and family life to reach its main purpose which was the message to convey to the participants.

Figure 8 - All participants

Table 11 - All participants

Word	%
Message	22.7
Family	21.1
Life	19.7
Film	18.2
Death	16.7
Important	16.7
People	15.2
Because	13.6
Dreams	12.1
Fun	12.1

For the participants that saw the film, we observe a more frequent concept such as "Life" (27.5%), "Message" (25%), "Family" (25%), "Death" (22.5%) and "Important" (22.5%) showing the contrast between life and death, the importance of the message transmitted as well as the family concept, finalizing with the reflection on overall importance of this film (Figure 9) (Table 12). These results suggest that participants who saw the film understood the importance of life, whether it is in the present or in the past (after death), of family and family members with whom they live and those which are remembered and of message that this film sends in their lives and realities.

Figure 9 – Participants that previously Watched the film

Table 12 – Participants that previously Watched the film

Word	%
Life	27.5
Message	25.0
Family	25.0
Death	22.5
Important	22.5
Film	15.0
Because	15.0
History	10.0
People	10.0
Good	10.0
Dreams	10.0

Exploring the answers for the people that did not see the film, we can observe that the more frequent concepts mentioned are "Important" (30.8%), "People" (23.1%), "Film" (23.1%), "Message" (19.2%), "Family" (19.2%) and "Emotions" (19.2%). For participants who did not see the film, we could see that they understood the importance through its message about family relationships and with others, relationships linked through the emotions, thus mentioning one of the main concepts of the film.

Figure 10 - Participants that not previously watched the film

Table 13 - Participants that not previously Watched the film

Word	%
Important	30.8
People	23.1
Film	23.1
Message	19.2
Family	19.2
Emotions	19.2
Dreams	15.4
Between	15.4
Day	15.4
Animation	11.5
Children	11.5
Death	11.5

In the comparison between groups of participants in general, it was mentioned the importance of this film in their only approach on the connection between people, whether they are relative or not. For the participants who saw the film, this one managed to get its message across, as they focused their answers on the most important concepts of this film - family, life and death - which tells us how important it was in understanding this whole cycle of life, through the unique reality transmitted. We cannot fail to focus that, once again, we can see how involved in this reality, presented by the film Coco, are these participants being for them easier to accept these complex facts about human existence and their relationships. For the participants who did not see the film, once again we see their distancing on the reality that this film wanted to transmit, however we can understand their perspective of acceptance of the concepts of this film and reality through a rationalization of these, through differentiation between what is real and what is not real.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

Animation has become one of the most influential form of using technology in our lives. Its ability to use new available technology makes animation a big resource of communication through our lives, feelings, thoughts and through all our important affairs.

Timothy Mouse once said: “The very things that held you down are going to carry you up up up! (Dumbo film, 1941).

Animation takes us through a journey with ups and downs showing us different realities, transporting its message to our live world and creating a foundation so that we can fly high.

Regarding our first objective, what is perceived as being transmitted/promoted in Coco animated film, the overall participants, and especially those who previously watched the film, referred “The connection between people” as the most important concept transmitted. For the participants that did not previously watched the film, “Fun” is the most relevant concept, although, “The connection between people” is among the concepts referred as more important.

These results fit into the concepts of Well-being and Proximity studied by Cruz (2017), revealing that the participants consider that this film promotes Proximity between people, implicit emotional delivery in these same relationships and that promotes Well-being , through fun, joy, imagination and fantasy. Showing how an animated film can be transversal in what it provokes in the participants, using Well-being and Proximity as essential factors to be successful in creating the reality they transmit/promote.[11].

The notion of “Illusion” is stronger for participants that did not watched the film - and this is the only concept that is higher among these participants than for those who previously watched the film on cinema. Clearly, seeing the film turns the concepts of life, death and after death more present, as possible realities - that may happen to relatives, friends or even to ourselves -, and not only as mere illusion.

These results are curious and somehow reveal the power of animation. People who have seen the film have a level of illusion, about some of the concepts that the film conveys (life, death, life beyond death), lower which underscores that the people who will come to the film accepted this view on life, death and the life beyond death, demystifying life beyond death (Table 4) (Figure 1). Unlike those who have not seen the film, to whom the sense of illusion prevails. Again, we observe the power of animation in its communication and to demystify certain themes.

As something that has being transformed over the years, the animation role is becoming more present as an increasingly influence on our daily lives.

In order to understand another objective of this study, to determine the emotions/feelings most conveyed in this animated film, we observe as the most important concept for all participants is the “Emotions” (Table 5) (Figure 2). For the participants that saw the film we also see “Emotions” as the most important concept (Table 6) (Figure 3) and for the participants that didn’t see the film we also observe “Emotion” as important however the “Knowledge” and the “Self” reflection of the film itself are considered more important (Table 7) (Figure 4).

The results obtained in these two groups reveal that the participants who saw the film managed to connect emotionally to it in a positive and meaningful way about the transmitted concepts, focusing on the sadness that exists in death associated with the love that exists in relation to the relatives that although there is no longer a link through life this can continue in life beyond death. Thus a transmitted fact that reveals to us that death may not be the end of everything but just a different way of living. For participants who have not seen the film it is clear their distancing from such a possibility because they remain faithful in their "rational" reality, through what is knowledge. Interpreted in the light of the concepts of Well-being and Proximity from Cruz (2017) we can see one would not be possible without the other although this film conveys a message related to an emotional reality that also supports us with the base of a proximity reality.

As our third objective we aim to determine the ideas and thoughts most prominent in this animated film. The overall participants mention “Family” (Table 8) (Figure 5). The participants that saw the film also refer “Family” has the main concept (Table 9) (Figure 6) and similar as our objective the participants that did not see the film refer “Knowledge”, “Self” reflections and “Dreams” as the most important (Table 10) (Figure 7). The concept of Family is undoubtedly the most central in this film, and for the participants who saw the film only the objective of this film would have been reached, because this group managed to relive the most important concepts - family, life and death - transforming the reality of these concepts in a unique way that can be accepted in the participants' reality. The participants who did not see the film, we can again perceive their need to refer to their differentiation from what is real (their reality) through rational knowledge and what is not real (concepts that this film conveys).

As I already mentioned participants which saw the film referred to the concepts “Life” and “Death” equally, which brings us the reflection that all cycles have a start and an end, being life and death two concepts difficult to separate or thinking, as one is the consequence of the other. However, with this film, as we already mention, the idea of life beyond death is something that the participants who saw the film accepted as truth reality and for that these results prove that these concepts cannot be seen in different measures but in an equal way.

For the last objective we try to find out the key most important concepts transmitted in the Coco animated film. In general, all the participants referred the concept “Message” (Table 11) (Figure 8) as the most important and for the participants that saw the film considered “Life” is the most significant (Table 12) (Figure 9). For the participants that didn’t see the film the overall importance goes for the significance of the film followed by the importance that it has on people (Table 13) (Figure 10). This film has as its main peculiarity and its strong point its message, the focus on life and the connection between people is fundamental to the creation of this reality or possible reality that it wants to achieve. For the participants who saw the film, the meaning of the film was more profound, which we can observe in the other objectives, since they accepted the reality presented as their own and in this way it was possible to develop their vision on these themes that transmit us mixed of positive and negative emotions in a more peaceful and quiet way, demystifying them to the point where we give up a thought based on illusion and accept this reality that life and death have more connection and continuity when they are thought of in life beyond death. For those who have not seen the film this reality is not possible but there is a clear recognition of the importance of the connection between people in our social reality.

Animation links us between virtual and social worlds, offering new perspectives about our (social) reality and way of thinking, through a virtual reality[9]. It also creates a virtual world, sharing its vision with others creating a unique environment and experiences for those who permit this influence on their lives.

Animation films are essential in the lives of young adults[11], even if lived unconscious. Their power of communication is enormous, being increasingly empowered with the evolution of technology that makes possible the creation of virtual worlds that will influence our real world.

Coco's film shows us how the influence of reality is possible through an animated film in the daily reality of a young adult, and with this influence comes the potentiality to change the world view through the creation of new realities, because sometimes "All it takes is faith and trust" (Peter Pan, 1953).

The connection between people brings the emotions within a family, which transmits singular values through all messages that are passed by generations. This film carries us with its gracious and beautiful way of celebration life through the celebration of death, not forgetting the melody of our personal song that we build with the evolution of our life.

6. REFERENCES

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