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Why do we love The Lion King?

Perception of Animation among young adults

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ABSTRACT

Our lives are easily driven or transformed by technologies, different forms of communication and information available, creating (new) realities or representations of reality. But how can these virtual worlds transform our social world, and our sense of reality? The present study is focused on the way how animation films are perceived by young adults, and the importance they have for them. So, we aim to contribute to the understanding of possible connections between a social or practical reality, and the fantasy of virtual worlds. In this paper, we will analyze the answers of some young adults (N=210), men and women with an average age of 30 years, to three open questions concerning the films that marked them the most, the importance of animation on their life and how is animation present on their everyday life. The data gathered from their answers were classified in categories and analyzed with an automatic content analysis software – Leximancer – that permits advanced text analytics visualization. Results showed that animation films are really important in our participants' lives, as part of the social life and well-being of the individuals, even if an adaptation of reality is not conscious, thus building the virtual worlds that connect us with what we know as reality.

CCS Concepts

• Information systems → Information systems applications → Multimedia information systems → Multimedia content creation • Human-centered computing → Visualization → Visualization techniques → Graph drawings • Applied computing → Law, social and behavioral sciences → Psychology

Keywords

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

1. INTRODUCTION

The word "animation" derives from the Latin verb "animare" (meaning "give life to") and is only used to describe moving images in the 20th century. The issue of movement has been a source of inspiration and dedication on the part of painters since the most remote times of human life [10].

Animation thus becomes an extraordinary and attractive form of audiovisual expression that is extremely effective in the combination of images and sounds to tell stories and ideas. Animation will enable and encourage the creation of visual tricks and turn non-real events to look real and transport the audience to new places beyond what is expected [1].

Animation is a discipline with a recent history, however it is described as one of the most dynamic forms of expression that is available to creative people. When studied in its depth becomes clear its influence in the everyday of us all [1]. The animation can be found in several contexts and in the last decades it has gained presence as a role of support and conduction of technical and conceptual existences of the world [6].

One of the contexts in which animation is present is the cinema, offering the possibility to revolutionize the world as we know it. Films influence the way we observe the world, destroying barriers of space and time, creating new possibilities for sight [7]. A film turns our vision free [2].

However, animation has as a trace identity that is always in crisis of identity [3]. In fact, animation has a difficult and even impossible task, because of the difference of techniques and philosophies prevalent in society, about movement and life [6].

In this way, animation has been acquiring importance as a model of communication in the present and for the future [1].

Communication is part of the human being and we find many types of communication, leading us to refer to the evolution of technologies and concepts such as social media. Social media is considered as a facilitator of conversation [4] and as a form of mass self-communication, being thus considered a social realm where the power of communication is exercised [13].

It is also important to mention the expression of participatory culture that is related to Social Media, or the culture in which fans, consumers and others are invited to participate actively in the creation and sharing of new content [31].

For Paul Watzlawick (1991), communication is all behavior in the presence of another person who has value because it depends and modifies the relationship between these people, since each country, culture or family has a different communication of its own. In this way, we are confronted with diverse realities, being the virtual reality something recent and present due to the technological evolution of our times.

Virtual reality is a type of communication using a computer simulation that allows us to delve into the information of cyberspace or use our imagination and fantasy to construct our own environments as virtual realities.

Combination of Social Media, technologies and animation has enabled constant interaction with people and between people, whether through animated characters, animated body movements or animated profiles. So, animation will allow the exploration and observation of new experiences [25].

Animation can thus be considered as a virtual realization that integrates our daily life and dreams, encouraging our fantasy and creativity.

These days, animation films have built a success that could not have existed in the past, even with the glory that the Disney studios have achieved. Not forgetting that these were limited to the children's audience. However, with the need for evolution, starting with the commercial cartoon, adults are being captivated [26].

In this exploratory study, we intend to understand the importance of animation in the life of young adults, as well as deepen the knowledge through emergent concepts and factors within animated virtual worlds.

2. OBJECTIVES

This study aims to understand the importance of animation for young adults. In this way, we focus on the following objectives: verify the importance of animation in the life of young adults; understand how animation is present in their daily lives; and verify the role of animation as virtual reality, in the social reality, of young adults.

3. METHOD

We had a sample of 210 participants, young adults with an average of 30 years, in Portugal. We centered our attention on the analysis of their answers to three open questions (obtained through an online survey, in Jotform platform): a) Which animation film is personally remarkable for you?; b) Do you consider animation films important in your life?; c) In what extent is animation present in your everyday life?.

Data were gathered from the answers to the questions a) and b) and analyzed it through Leximancer, which is a text mining software used to analyze the content of textual documents.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Which animation film is personally remarkable for you?

For the analysis of this question we opted for a descriptive analysis, according to the most frequent answers (see Table 1). We found that the films represented as more impressive were Lion King (34.55%), Beauty and the Beast (16.82%), Shrek (15%), Finding Nemo (11.36%) and UP (10.91%). It is also possible to observe that most of the films mentioned are from the Disney/Pixar studios.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis / Full list of films

Which film mark you personally?	Freq.	%
Lion King	76	34.6
Beauty and the Beast	37	16.8
Shrek	33	15.0
Finding Nemo	25	11.4
UP	24	10.9
Ice Age	20	9.1
Despicable Me	19	8.6
Toy Story	17	7.7
Little Mermaid	15	6.8

Cinderella	14	6.4
The Jungle Book	13	5.9
Aladdin	11	5.0
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	11	5.0
Inside out	11	5.0
Spirited Away	10	4.6

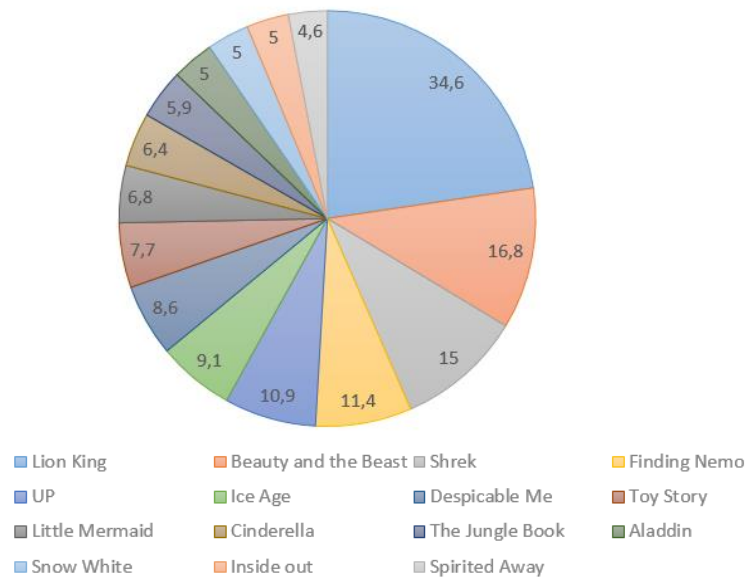


Figure 1. Graph / Analysis descriptive

4.2 Do you consider animation films important in your life?

For the analysis of this question we used the Leximancer software to analyze the content of participants' textual answers. Leximancer processes the text and find all the possible concepts. Then, we analyze and remove the ones that are not significant for this question.

For the final step, Leximancer gives us the graphic that link all the concepts, so we can analyze the answers given by the participants, now categorized. For a better understanding the Leximancer defines concepts as higher level themes and contain the name of the main concepts that occur within the analyzed text.

In this graphic (see Figure 2) we observe animation as something that participants like, convey lessons and is linked to reality. Reality is linked with the world and fantasy. Lessons are linked through feelings, creativity and imagination.

The personal taste for animation is linked to laughter (well-being) and childhood.

We also verify the importance of animation in the life of young adults as something that conveys well-being, which connects with family life, which transmit moral lessons or issues that convey feelings and development of creativity and imagination, and finally animation is important in the reality and world of young adults because it is this that allows the creation of fantasy in their lives.

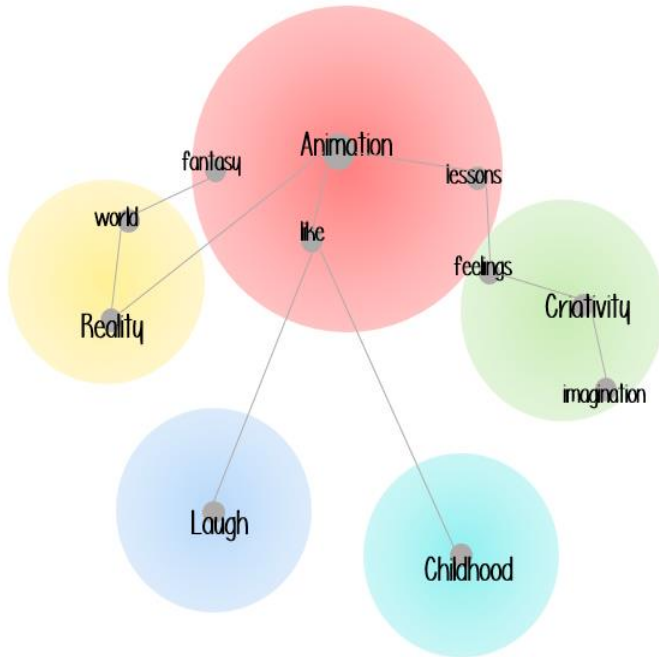


Figure 2. Analysis / Do you consider animation films important in your life?

4.3 In what extent is animation present in your everyday life?

For this question, we also used the Leximancer software.

In this graphic (see Figure 3) we can see that animation is naturally linked to films (or movies), which in turn are connected to life, and is also linked to children that are connected to friends.

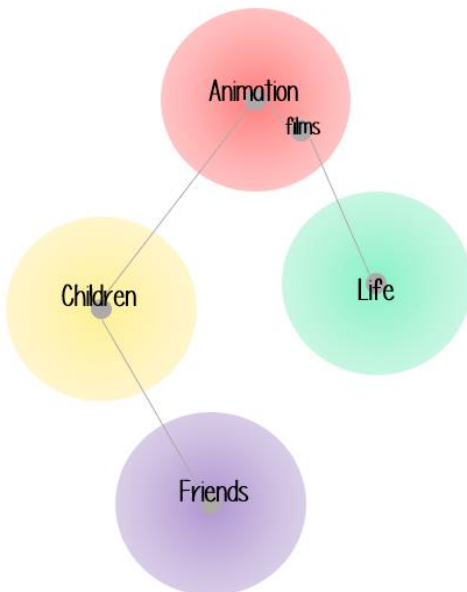


Figure 3. Analysis / In what extent is animation present in your everyday life?

So, we may say that animation is present in the life of young adults through the films, as well as through their social life, which as in fact two main dimensions, namely family life and friends.

4.4 Animation films importance in life and in what extent is animation present on everyday life

For this analysis, we joined, on the Leximancer, all the answers from the two previous questions ('Do you consider animation films important in your life?' and 'In what extent is animation present in your everyday life?').

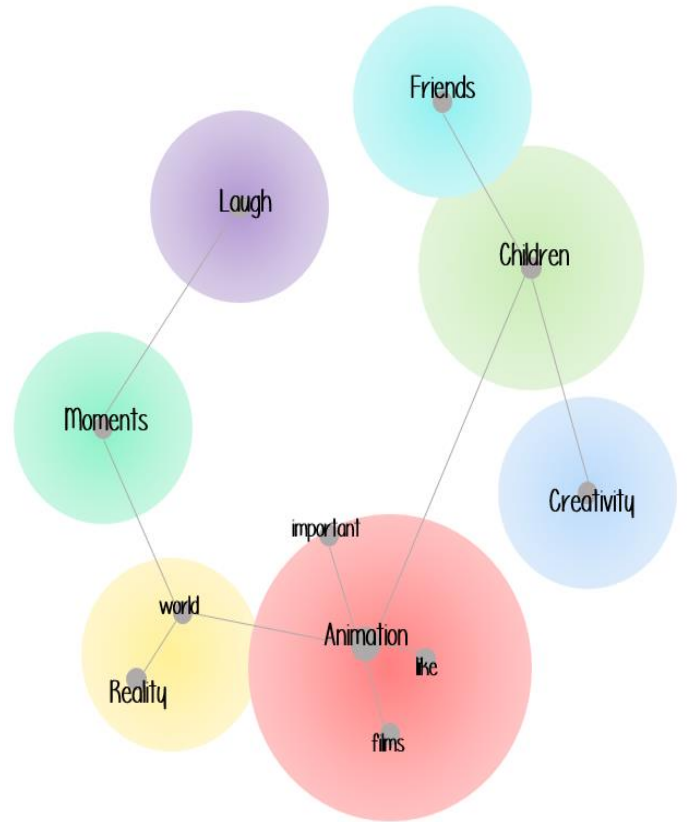


Figure 4. Analysis / Animation films importance in life and in what extent is animation present on everyday life

In this graphic (see Figure 4) we can see the connection between animation and its importance, with the taste for it and for being linked to the movies.

We also observe the connection between animation and family and social life, through children and friends, and we see an influence of family, through children, on creativity.

On the other hand, we see the connection that the animation makes with the world and the reality of it that is connected with the moments and the laughing.

Thus, we highlight the importance of animation in the life and day-to-day of young adults through the films and their personal taste for animation, as well as the importance of animation in social life (family and friends) and the influence it provides to raise creativity.

It is also possible to admit that animation is like an interface between the virtual worlds, the social reality and our imagination, having no boundaries. This may be a reason for the sensation of being connected to the world(s) and to our (observed) reality, via animation, providing, above all, moments of well-being and fun.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

Animation crosses our lives exposing technologies that influence our reality and helping in the construction of virtual worlds.

For Walt Disney: "The world of cartoons is that of our imagination, a world in which the Sun, the Moon, the stars and all living things obey our orders. We collect a character in our imagination, and if she is disobedient, we suppress it with a careless blow of the rubber. Our materials are all that the brain can imagine and the hand can draw, the whole human experience: the real world of peace and war and the dream worlds, color, music, sound and, above all, movement" (Preface to *Lo Luca*, 1948) [6].

Thus, animation allows and encourages the creation of visual tricks, makes non-real events look real, and transports audiences to new, unexpected places.

According to our results, regarding the objective to verify the importance of animation in the life of young adults, now, it is clear this importance (see Figure 1), providing good moments in family and well-being, and raising new worlds through imagination and fantasy. Imagination and creativity associated to the messages conveyed by animation are important factors that help and promote the sharing of feelings and emotions.

The importance of animation for young adults shows how it may promote a transversal communication [6], and how it has to be considered as a model of communication in the future [1].

The role of animation, as already been referred, is something that has been transformed over the years, becoming their presence and influence on adult public increasingly important.

In order to understand another of our objectives, how animation is present in the daily life of young adults, (see Figure 2) we observe the importance of this in their social life, and family environment, of adults. However, to have a deeper perspective about this fact, one has also to understand the influence that technology has on all of us, and in everything we do.

Without technology, the transformation that animation has had over the years would not be possible [22], and animation films would be much different. So, technologies and animation are intrinsically connected, influencing each other, offering us new spaces for our ideas and imagination.

In a study carried out with the Portuguese population by Marktest (2011-2016), it was verified that the technological environment most used in everyday life was the mobile phone, which although there are other means that facilitate communication, this is undoubtedly a very important technological medium for the social relations of an individual, either with a simple call, or for a greater number of people through the applications of social networks and others, that promote easy communication between people.

As a last objective, we intended to verify the role of animation and virtual reality in the social reality of young adults (see Table 1 and Figure 3). We previously addressed the importance of animation in everyday life of young adults. But, in what extent is this presence important? What is the role of animation? The truth is that there could not be animation, at least as we know it today, if there were no such advanced technologies and several multimedia devices.

So, animation is a way to link us between the virtual and social worlds, through communication means. In other words, animation offers new perspectives about our (social) reality and way of thinking, through virtual reality, also providing opportunities for sharing moments in family, or to meet with friends. Therefore, it is natural that animation is frequently associated with well-being.

The definition of virtual world lies in the content of a given environment, which can only exist in the mind of its creator, transmitted in a suitable way to be shared with others, being the animation films a practical example of this environment.

It is important to note that all animation has at least one creator, and that it is influenced by its social representations, and that these establishes links between the psychological and sociological explanations, the individual world and the social world, integrating these domains, and allowing the articulation of beliefs and collective thoughts with the individual imaginary [5].

The perception that young adults have about animation goes through concepts as well-being and closeness between people (see Figure 2, 3 and 4), emphasizing the transmission of important information.

Animation is unique in what concerns managing a transversal way of communication [1].

Now it is time to think about the main question that drive us, since we began this paper. Why do we love the *Lion King*? Looking at the participants' responses to the films that most touched them (see Table 1), we observed that of the five most mentioned, four of them are from Disney / Pixar studios, probably due to the company's antiquity, but also to the themes they address: family, companionship, friendship, love, loyalty, kindness, respect, social acceptance, dignity and humor.

The *Lion King* thus becomes a symbol of what young adults search not only in an animated film but also in their lives, highlighting values they recognize as positive. The *Lion King* may symbolize what, or as, we would like to be, as worthy human beings, linked to all things in life.

This work has deepened the importance of animation in the life of young adults and the need to continue to investigate their role in our daily lives.

For future studies, given the fact that there is not much scientific work in this field, it is important to continue exploring the role of animation among different age groups and other social contexts.

Animation may be, somehow, a way of thinking of serious issues, without the pressure of things, tasks and realities that claim our attention in a day-to-day life. When we imagine a character like the gentle and strong lion king, we imagine that even a humble person may become great, somehow, through relevant actions.

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