

Product Categories' Saliency and Hierarchy: The Dynamics of Spanning Genres or Countries in the Movie Industry

Ürün Kategorilerinin Belirginliği ve Hiyerarşisi: Film Endüstrisinde Genişleyen Türlerin veya Ülkelerin Dinamikleri

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Abstract

Categories play essential roles in shaping people's perceptions. However, not all categories are equally impactful or salient. Detecting salient categories would help understand industry structures and foresee changes for potential or existing category members and policymakers. Spanning multiple categories provide a larger audience, but it decreases their appeal. If actors explicitly know categories' saliency levels, they may decide which categories to span to maximize their benefits. However, estimating category saliency is not a straightforward question. This study utilizes the hierarchical position in a categorization scheme to estimate the saliency of a category. To test the validity of our argument, the categories and outcomes of 1,159 movies released in 2014-2017 were examined. Genre and country categories supported the argument and showed that spanning categories from a higher hierarchical level result in larger audience sizes and, therefore, higher saliency for film categories. The results provide insights into which scope conditions hierarchy might be valuable to estimating saliency.

Keywords: Categories, categorization, saliency, hierarchy

Özet

Kategoriler, insanların algılarını şekillendirmede önemli rol oynamaktadır. Ancak, tüm kategoriler eşit derecede etkili veya belirgin değildir. Belirgin kategorileri tespit etmek, sektör yapılarını anlamaya, potansiyel veya mevcut kategori üyeleri ve politika yapıcılar için değişiklikleri ön görmeye yardımcı olacaktır. Birden fazla

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kategoriyi kapsamak, daha geniş bir kitleye hitap etmeyi sağlar, ancak hedef kitlenin beğenisini azaltır. Eğer ilgili taraflar kategorilerin belirginlik seviyelerini açıkça bilirlerse, hangi kategorileri kapsayarak maksimum fayda sağlayabileceklerine karar verebilirler. Bununla birlikte, kategori belirginliğini tahmin etmek basit bir sorun değildir. Bu çalışma, bir kategorinin belirginliğini tahmin etmek için kategorinin kategorizasyon şemasındaki hiyerarşik konumundan faydalanır. Argümanın geçerliliğini test etmek için 2014-2017'de vizyona giren 1.159 filmin kategorileri ve beğeni sonuçları incelendi. Film türü ve ülke kategorileri, argümanı desteklemiş ve daha yüksek hiyerarşik düzeydeki kategorileri kapsamanın, daha büyük kitlelere ulaşmayı sağlayacağını ve dolayısıyla film kategorileri için daha yüksek belirginliğe yol açtığını göstermiştir. Bulgular, belirginliğin tahmin edilmesinde hiyerarşinin hangi kapsam koşullarında değerli olabileceği konusunda içgörüler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kategoriler, kategorilendirme, belirginlik, hiyerarşi

Introduction

Categories significantly impact their audience's perceptions (Hsu & Hannan, 2010, 2005). However, members who span multiple categories might face negative consequences. People mostly ignore them due to their high niche widths (Zuckerman, 1999). While spanning multiple categories may provide a wider audience, it usually decreases appeal, creating confusion in respective groups (Hsu, 2006). Moviemakers target broad or narrow niches from salient categories for better outcomes. Researchers have frequently used the movie industry data to study categories and category-spanning (Hsu, 2006; Hsu, Negro, & Perretti, 2012; Keuschnigg & Wimmer, 2017; Zhao, Ishihara, & Lounsbury, 2013).

However, this category imperative mechanism does not work similarly for every categorization scheme. Category features sometimes affect category spanners differently (Kovács & Hannan, 2010; Negro, Hannan, & Rao, 2010; Ruef & Patterson, 2009). However, we know little about how the saliency of spanned categories matters (Chen, 2012; Vergne, 2012).

This study estimates the saliency of a category with its hierarchical position in the respective categorization scheme (Porac and Thomas, 1994; Vergne, 2012). It used the movie industry data to assess the validity of this argument. In order to estimate saliency, it selected the genre and country categories as they have different hierarchy levels in the movie industry. As more salient categories have superior outcomes, the study used the film audience's size and level of appeal as the outcome variables for measuring consequences.

The results showed that the hierarchical position of movie categories is one of the indicators of categories' saliency, comparing the effects of spanning the genre and country categories on outcome variables. This observation indicates that the hierarchical position of a category may estimate its saliency, influencing specific outcome variables like audience size. The study indicated that if a category acquires a high position hierarchically, it represents more salient to address a wider general audience. However, the hierarchical position might not be adequate for salience in different contexts. Spanning categories at different hierarchical levels may also contribute to audience appeal unexpectedly. The study also contributes to the categorization literature by strengthening saliency and the detection of salient categories.

The article describes the extant literature on categories, their saliency, and hierarchy in the next section. Then, it describes the research design and the results. The article discusses the results and contributions of this study before its conclusion in the final section.

Theory and Hypotheses

Categories are compelling actors that “provide a cognitive infrastructure that enables evaluations of organizations and their products, drives expectations, and lead to material and symbolic exchanges” (Durand & Paoletta, 2013: 1102). They shape audiences' cognitions by allowing them to simultaneously reach massive amounts of information (Zerubavel, 1996). They provide meaning systems that make classifying potential members easier based on their specific attributes, implying a consensus among members and stakeholders (Durand & Thornton, 2018; Negro, Koçak, & Hsu, 2010).

Categories have fuzziness, contrast, leniency, similarity, stigmatization, and saliency (Kovács & Hannan, 2010; Negro, Hannan, & Rao, 2010; Ruef & Patterson, 2009; Vergne & Wry, 2014). They affect performance (Paoletta & Durand, 2016), reputation (Hsu, Hannan, & Koçak, 2009), audiences' appeal (Hsu, 2006; Kovács & Hannan, 2010), products' legitimacy (Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2005), competitors' recognition (Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, 1989; Rosa, Porac, Runser-Spanjol, & Saxon, 1999), stakeholders' expectations (Porac, Thomas, Wilson, Paton, & Kanfer, 1995), and organizations' survival (Olzak, 2016). Institutionalization can be accomplished when categories provide a cognitive understanding (Durand & Thornton, 2018). They are also critical media-

tors for establishing institutional logic (Ocasio, Loewenstein, and Nigam, 2015). Category systems and structures moderate challenges like hybrid organizations, uncertain boundaries, and category-spanning (Vergne & Wry, 2014).

The categorical imperative view has developed in response to self-categorization. It argues that external factors shape categories (Porac *et al.*, 1989). Self-categorization bases categories' formation and legitimacy on the category members. The categorical imperative perspective argues that these factors originate from external audiences. An audience is "a group of individuals or organizations that enters into a relationship of mutual dependence with an organizational category" (Vergne & Wry, 2014: 68). How an audience perceives a category determines outcomes or consequences of different niche-width levels.

The reciprocal relationship between categories and their audiences depends on their context. A category audience may be able to manipulate and play with the relevant effects of category-related issues, as categories represent an interface of the agreement between producers and receivers. An audience may react to membership to one category or span multiple categories differently.

Category Spanning: Benefits and Penalties

Narrow-niche organizations usually get the most benefit out of their environments (Hannah & Freeman, 1977). In contrast, broad-niche organizations accept lower-level returns to avoid potential environmental risks. Category spanning may also enable building new categories while avoiding the danger of disapproval for the new category leveraging previous categories (Lo & Kennedy, 2014).

On the one hand, category-spanning broadens the niche width of its members, making them more generalist than single-category members. Generalists survive longer than specialists in unpredictable environments since they spread risks (Dobrev, Kim, & Hannan, 2001). They also accept "a lower level of exploitation in return for greater security" (Hannan and Freeman, 1977: 948). Their greater niche width increases the number of people attracted, expanding their audience (Hsu, 2006).

On the other hand, category-spanning lowers audiences' appeal due to socio-cognitive (demand-side) and quality (supply-side) reasons (Hsu *et al.*, 2009; Kovács & Johnson, 2014). Firstly, spanning multiple categories decreases the ability to perform within specific limits of those categories, decreasing the spanners'

appeal (Levins, 1968). According to the demand-side view, audiences expect category spanners to be less qualified due to their expected lack of sufficient expertise in one category (Dobrev *et al.*, 2001; Freeman & Hannan, 1983). While spanners have cost advantages, they need to divide their resources across the spanned categories leading to lower (perceived) quality according to the standards and expectations of one category. For example, Negro and Leung (2013) compared critics evaluating wines in blind and non-blind tastings. They found that the wine critics gave lower ratings to the wines spanning multiple categories in their non-blind tastings than blind ones. In other words, they penalize category-spanning even when there is no quality difference (Leung and Sharkey, 2014: 180). Secondly, audiences typically consider multiple-category entities relatively illegitimate (Zuckerman, 1999). Since generalists are “less than full members of the category” (Hsu *et al.*, 2009: 166), audiences perceive them as not adequately meeting the categories' requirements. Overall, category spanners have disadvantages in terms of their audience appeal. When an environment has highly concentrated resources, a category-spanning member (generalist) may overcome these penalties by increasing its appeal using more resources (Carroll, 1985). Some category features, such as category saliency (Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2005; Wry & Lounsbury, 2013), may also help diminish penalties of category-spanning (Vergne, 2012).

Category Saliency

Category saliency is “how much attention audiences devote to a category within the broader classification hierarchy” (Vergne & Wry, 2014: 73). Categories' emergence and disappearance depend on their saliency level (Vergne, 2012). Institutionalization is one of the sources that provide saliency to categories. For example, greenhouse gases (GHGs) were not a salient problem for its audience. This perception changed when 154 countries signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Garud, Gehman, and Karnøe, 2010).

Similarly, people's perceptions also affect the saliency of a category. The accessibility of a category and the fitness between category input and the perceiver's expectation shape the saliency (Bruner, 1957). Saliency decreases when there is a “growing misalignment between the use of the category label and members' fit with the category's schema” (Kuילman and van Driel, 2013: 530). When more misaligned members start using a category label, the meaning of that category dilutes, providing less to its audience.

The saliency difference between categories also matters because category saliency can moderate how an audience perceives its members. For example, a member's attempt to decrease the disapproval against its stigmatized categories only works under categories straddling salient categories. As there is no 'sexual offender employees' category, a decrease in its members' frequency is not likely to decrease disapproval of a company (Vergne, 2012). A stigmatized category only benefits from the stigma dilution if it is a salient category, as little attention is devoted to low-saliency categories.

Category saliency may also change over time (Kuilman & van Driel, 2013; Rao, Monin & Durand, 2003). Although sudden changes are rare, significant environmental events might adjust categories' saliency levels (Vergne, 2012). For example, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, regulated the saliency of various categories in the arms industry. The civilian and weapon categories lost their saliency, while customer categories became more salient after the attacks. Similarly, after the protests in May 1968, the Nouvelle Cuisine category rose, while the traditional cuisine category declined (Rao, Monin & Durand, 2003).

Thus, detecting salient categories would help understand industry structures and foresee changes for potential or existing category members and policymakers. For example, categorizing Uber, a San Francisco-based car-hailing company, as a technology company or a taxi company significantly affects its regulatory compliance requirements (Chen, 2012). Suppose actors explicitly know categories' saliency levels. In that case, they choose which category-spanning option provides a more significant audience size but less loss in the audience appeal. The practical implications of saliency information at the firm level would be especially useful for marketing managers in terms of product positioning and promotion strategies. Managers would have a clearer guideline on how to position their products in the market by understanding category saliency and hierarchy. They could design more effective marketing campaigns that are more coherent for their target audience by emphasizing salient categories and highlighting their product's unique value proposition.

However, measuring or estimating category saliency is not a straightforward question. The frequency of mentioning a category label (James & Greenberg, 1989; Kuilman & van Driel, 2013) and the hierarchical position of a category in its categorization scheme indicate the saliency level (Porac & Thomas, 1994). Different industries may have different categories as salient. For example, wheth-

er an arms producer is from China is more significant in evaluating a company in this industry than being a civilian or a military arms producer (Vergne, 2012). In this case, the country category is more salient than product-type categories in the arms industry.

The movie industry uses genre and country as primary categories to classify movies, where the former is more salient than the latter (Hsu, 2006; Hsu *et al.*, 2012; Keuschnigg & Wimmer, 2017). The position of these categories on movie databases reflects the saliency levels of these categories, signaling the attention priorities (Vergne, 2012) of the audiences, for example, filmgoers (consumers) and professional critics (Hsu, 2006). Online movie databases mention the genre of a movie mainly before its origin country (Vergne & Wry, 2014). For example, the Internet Movie Database (IMDB) shows the genre information right after the movie title but the country of origin under the details. Similarly, the Rotten Tomatoes site and the Movie Database (TMDB) do not display the country category on a movie's main page. Therefore, spanning the genre category will result in a broader increase in the audience size and a more general decrease in the appeal to the audience than that of the country categories. However, if spanned categories are highly incompatible, the audience size's positive impact might no longer be expected (Hsu, 2006). The audience appeal may not decrease in spanning complementary or similar categories (Dobrev, Kim, & Carroll, 2002).

Thus, genre and country are salient categories of the movie industry, with genre having a higher salience level. Simultaneously, the critical audience is the professional critics and the general audience, in other words, filmgoers. Spanning genre and country categories broaden the audience size by enlarging the targeted area because category-spanning may help address the great diversity of the audience's taste. Simultaneously, spanning categories decrease the audience appeal according to the allocation principle. This study aims to assess the relative saliency of the genre category to that of the country category by comparing their results based on category-spanning outcomes. The genre and country categories are independent, and audience size and audience appeal are the dependent variables. Therefore, our hypotheses are as the following.

H1: Spanning multiple genres increases the audience size more than spanning multiple countries.

H2: Spanning multiple genres decreases the audience's appeal more than in multiple countries.

Data and Analysis

In this empirical work, we used the movie industry data for 2014-2017 about the audience's reactions to categories spanning genre and country. To operationalize variables, we must first define who constitutes the audience. Following Hsu (2006), we take filmgoers (consumers) and professional critics as the film audience. Critics' reviews affect general consumers' opinions as their advice diffuses through the market. As a specific audience group, critics usually decide to see a movie before its release (Hsu, 2006). They evaluate various information provided earlier by the producers via different channels. They also distinguish between watching a movie and evaluating it; thus, critics separate the attraction process to a movie and their movie assessment. They have a different and more detailed decision mechanism for watching and evaluating a movie. Therefore, the saliency impact of the genre category is higher.

The data consists of 1,159 Oscar-eligible movies from April 16, 2014, until December 31, 2017. It includes comprehensive coverage of three online data sources: the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), The Movie DataBase (TMDB), and Rotten Tomatoes. We combined the data from all three databases: the movie genre, the number of votes, the critics or the general audience, and audience ratings, either the critics or general audiences. Anyone registering via a free account can vote for movies in these databases. Movies' country of origin information was only available in IMDB; therefore, we calculated the country's niche width spanning only from that source. We gathered specific information from IMDB's paid version, including the movie's budget, the list of distributors, the number of opening sites, and the box office gross. We coded "sequel movies" and "released in a holiday season" as binary variables.

Dependent Variables

Audience size and audience appeal are the two main dependent variables. The study used the number of votes used in TMDB and IMDB to operationalize the audience size of filmgoers. We have used the number of reviews written by critics to measure the audience size of critics. We gathered the regular consumers' appeal from TMDB and IMDB ratings. At the same time, we have used the numerical ratings given in their Rotten Tomatoes review as critics' appeal. The other data we collected to address filmgoers' audience size is the worldwide box office gross values. Box office gross is especially important since it shows audiences' attraction

before watching a movie. We expect the audience to vote for movies in an online database, most likely, after watching a movie. However, the box office gross captures audiences' attraction to a movie before watching it.

Independent Variables

The primary outcome variable is the saliency level. Genre niche width and country niche width are the independent variables of this study. In earlier research, the number of spanned genres in a movie measures the niche width (Hsu, 2006; Hsu *et al.*, 2009; Hsu *et al.*, 2012; Keuschnigg & Wimmer, 2017; Zhao, Li, & Ishihara, 2008). This study measures the genre niche width with the number of genre labels assigned to a film in three data sources. It measures a country's niche width with the number of countries producing a specific movie.

Nineteen genres are common through three sources. Common genres are action, adventure, animation, biography, comedy, crime, drama, family, fantasy, history, horror, musical, mystery, romance, science fiction, thriller, war, and western. We edited some genre information available in the sources to achieve a unified coding. For example, the Rotten Tomatoes website displays action and adventure genres together as one genre. Thus, we separated the "action & adventure" genre into "action" and "adventure." We also included subgenres under main genres, e.g., the "music" genre under the "musical" genre.

Three sources do not agree on the number of genres or the genre types for all cases. For example, IMDB assigns "Wild Tales" to comedy, drama, and thriller genres, Rotten Tomatoes to comedy, drama, mystery, and TMDB to drama, comedy, and thriller genres. In this case, all three films' the study coded the niche widths of these films as three for all three databases. However, overall, we coded the final niche width as four, with comedy, drama, thriller, and mystery. The audience of Rotten Tomatoes tends to assign a smaller number of genres to a movie. We have a fixed country category's niche width because we only collected the country information from IMDB. The country niche width's average value is 1.74; the standard deviation is 1.23. The maximum number of countries spanned is 13, while the minimum is one. Table 1 shows the average width of genre niches, the maximum number of genres, and the standard deviation value for each source.

Table 1. Niche Width by Sources

N.W.	Mean	Max	S.D.
IMDB	2,82	9	1,34
RT	1,39	7	1,26
TMDB	2,17	6	1,14

Control Variables

The study controlled (1) the number of opening sites on the first weekend of release, (2) whether a film is part of a sequel, (3) the distributor information, (4) the seasonality of the movie, (5) the budget and the existence of the budget information, (6) the number of archival sources the data comes from, as they impact the hypothesized relationships.

First, we gathered information about the opening capacity of a movie from IMDB. We statistically controlled the broadness of the opening of each movie during the first weekend.

Second, a sequel movie provides more revenue while gaining lower ratings than the originals (Moon, Bergey, & Iacobucci, 2010). Therefore, we coded the sequel variable as a binary variable.

Third, distributor information refers to whether the distributor is a major distributor. High-status film distributors receive more permissive classifications for parental guidance for movies than independent producers do. However, they control movies' content more than independents (Waguespack & Sorenson, 2011). Therefore, a major distributor's backing affects the audience size attracted by a movie and its rating. We have gathered movie distributor information from IMDB and coded the six major distributors stated by the Motion Picture Association of America (Motion Picture Association of America, n.d.). We added Lionsgate and 20th Century Fox as major distributors due to their substantial market share in film distribution from 2014 to 2017 (BoxOfficeMojo.com, accessed 19/08/11). We manually coded them in a dummy variable named major distributor.

Fourth, seasonality refers to whether the release time was a holiday, affecting the audience. There are fluctuations in the audience's demand for movies at some specific times during the year. For instance, we have considered January a "dump

month” among movie producers since the relative revenue received is less than in other months. This phenomenon is because of the audience’s decreased budget after the winter holiday and movie awards season (Guerrasio, 2017). Thus, we controlled the holiday seasonality effect based on a movie’s release dates in the winter and summer seasons, with holiday release as a dummy variable.

Fifth, the budget was the least available information among all variables. We received the budget information from the paid subscription to IMDB.

Sixth, we controlled the number of archival sources since we gathered the genre information from several sources. The study observed no substantial relationship when checking for Pearson’s correlation coefficients.

Analysis

The study used the Tobit regression model to measure the effect of category spanning on audience size (Hsu, 2006) and constructed the models in Stata 14. Tobit regression enabled the analysis of continuous, censored variables. Censoring means variables’ values fall below or above a certain threshold or have thresholds from both sides. Audience size is a censored variable. It cannot be negatively valued since it represents the number of movie votes. Thus, audience size has a lower limit of zero; and is left-censored. The ratings assigned to movies by a general audience and professional critics represent the audience’s appeal. Thus, audience appeal is limited to upper and lower levels due to the limited rating range of online databases. Genre niche width and country niche width are right-hand skewed. Due to the value skewness, we have taken both niche widths’ natural logarithm (ln) in the analysis. The natural log treatment to consider their skewness also applies to the budget variable, box-office gross, and the number of opening sites during the opening weekend.

Results

The study involves data from 1,159 movies (See Table 2 for a description of the dataset). The number of votes used by critics is less than the other two sources. However, critics still reviewed 93 percent of the sample with 1,075 movies. This research has compared the standard deviations of the general audience with the critics’ mean rating values. In this case, the general audiences’ ratings tend to be close to the mean values.

Unfortunately, the budget information is available for almost half of the sample. Following Hsu (2006), we created a binary variable, “budget info,” to involve more data in the analysis. It takes (1) when the budget information is available or (0) missing. Then, we see the missing budget values as zero. After this arrangement, the analyzable sample size increased for all constructed models. IMDB analyses had a sample size of 978, TMDB had a sample size of 970, and Rotten Tomatoes had a sample size of 946.

Table 2. Descriptive Data

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Budget (ln)	675	16,626	1,88	4,60	19,57
Box office gross (ln)	1010	15,839	3,04	5,69	21,23
No. of opening sites (ln)	978	4,626	3,17	0	8,41
Sequel	1159	0,092	0,29	0	1
Major distributor	1159	0,390	0,49	0	1
Holiday release	1159	0,148		0	1
No. of genres	1159	3,342	1,61	1	9
No. of countries	1159	1,741	1,23	1	13
No. of IMDB votes	1156	68056	125376,3	5	1315200
Average IMDB rating	1156	6,64	0,88	3,20	9,10
No. of TMDB votes	1158	1453	2658,02	0	20614
Average TMDB rating	1120	6,56	0,87	1,00	9,30
No. of critics' votes	1075	133	99,37	1	449
Average critics rating	1075	6,30	1,37	1,40	9,27

To test hypotheses 1 and 2, we conducted several Tobit regressions following Hsu (2006). Comparison of two types spanning required separate models for genre and country spanning. For example, one comparison was between a model with the genre-spanning effect and control variables versus a model with the country-spanning effect and control variables. Comparing the results of different models using genre-spanning or country-spanning for the same independent variables, audience size, or audience appeal allows one to interpret the saliency difference between genre and country categories.

Table 3. Audience Size among General audience, IMDB*

Variable	Model 1: Genre spanning (N=978)		Model 2: Country spanning (N=978)	
	Genre niche width (ln)	0,555	(6,10)	
Country niche width (ln)			0,238	(2,83)
Budget info	-3,388	(-5,58)	-3,767	(-6,15)
Budget (ln)	0,306	(8,02)	0,333	(8,65)
No. of opening sites (ln)	0,083	(3,86)	0,106	(4,82)
Major distributor	0,420	(3,59)	0,440	(3,71)
Sequel	0,279	(1,79)	0,262	(1,65)
Holiday release	-0,200	(-1,55)	-0,183	(-1,40)
Constant	7,607	(67,27)	7,966	(85,96)

* T values are in parenthesis.

Niche Width and Audience Size

We displayed the models that belong to the same source. However, we used different spanning types in the same table to compare better. Tables 3 and 4 report the independent variables' effect: audience size as the number of votes used in IMDB and TMDB, respectively.

Genre spanning has a positive coefficient, significant at the $p < .001$ level in Model 1. The dependent and independent variables in focus (genre-spanning) are log-transformed. Thus, a 1 percent change in genre-spanning results in a 0.555% change in audience size. It means that when the number of spanned genres increases from two to three – a 50% increase – audience size increases by 27.27%, and all other variables are constant. Similarly, when the number of spanned countries increases from two to three, the audience size increase by 11.9%. Thus, comparing models 1 and 2, the genre niche width is more consequential than the country niche width regarding the general audience size. The same results hold for the TMDB audience. Genre spanning has a more massive influence on TMDB voters than country spanning, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Audience Size among General audience, TMDb*

Variable	Model 3: Genre spanning (N= 970)		Model 4: Country spanning (N970)	
	Genre niche width (ln)	0,565	(6,10)	
Country niche width (ln)			0,256	(3,01)
Budget info	-3,157	(-5,13)	-3,520	(-5,68)
Budget (ln)	0,295	(7,63)	0,320	(8,23)
No. of opening sites (ln)	0,110	(5,04)	0,132	(5,96)
Major distributor	0,363	(3,08)	0,386	(3,22)
Sequel	0,409	(2,60)	0,160	(2,45)
Holiday release	-0,044	(-0,34)	-0,133	(-0,16)
Constant	3,497	(30,35)	3,860	(41,12)

* T values are in parenthesis.

Table 3 and Table 4 support hypothesis 1, which states that spanning multiple genres increases the audience size more than in various countries. A broader niche width genre leads to a significantly larger audience than a more general country niche width. The results also show that audience size increases with an increasing budget, the number of sites in the opening, and major distributors' existence in both models.

Keeping a perspective on the general audience size, Table 5 concludes the impact of genre and country niche width on worldwide box office gross. Both genre and country niche width positively affect the box office gross. Although the coefficients are very close, genre-spanning is slightly more consequential than the country-spanning box office gross among filmgoers.

Table 5. Box-office Gross*

Variable	Model 5: Genre spanning (N=978)		Model 6: Country spanning (N=978)	
	Genre niche width (ln)	0,394	(3,30)	
Country niche width (ln)			0,388	(3,58)
Budget info	-5,991	(-7,53)	-6,092	(-7,71)
Budget (ln)	0,492	(9,83)	0,497	(10,02)
No. of opening sites (ln)	0,301	(10,66)	0,324	(11,47)
Major distributor	0,628	(4,10)	0,649	(4,24)
Sequel	0,475	(2,32)	0,447	(2,18)
Holiday release	0,241	(1,43)	0,249	(1,47)
Constant	12,258	(82,76)	12,422	(103,94)

* T values are in parenthesis.

This result implies that genre category-spanning is more decisive for attracting the general audience to theatres than country category-spanning. The fact that the genre category-spanning affects the film revenue results confirms the first hypothesis, showing that the audience is paying more attention to the genre category. We measured the effect of the category spanning on audience size for the other audience, professional critics. Table 6 reports the dependent variables on professional critics' audience size with a sample of 946 observations.

Table 6. Audience Size among Critics*

Variable	Model 7: Genre spanning (N=946)		Model 8: Country spanning (N=946)	
	Genre niche width (ln)	0,122	(2,27)	
Country niche width (ln)			0,149	(3,09)
Budget info	-1,775	(-5,04)	-1,785	(-5,12)
Budget (ln)	0,154	(6,99)	0,154	(7,06)
No. of opening sites (ln)	-0,005	(-0,40)	0,002	(0,20)
Major distributor	0,236	(3,45)	0,246	(3,61)
Sequel	0,029	(0,32)	0,020	(0,23)
Holiday release	-0,152	(-2,02)	-0,149	(-1,99)
Constant	3,930	(58,93)	3,968	(73,96)

* T values are in parenthesis.

The results show that the number of different countries and genres spanned significantly increases the number of critics attracted. This result complies with the expectation that a greater niche width expands the targeted audience's area. However, the broadness of country niche width significantly affects audience size among critics than general audience results. This result does not directly fit the expectation stated in hypothesis 1; however, it may imply that different audience types may have various saliency measures.

The budget and existence of a major distributor significantly positively impact the number of critics who review a movie. However, the number of opening sites does not significantly affect general audience results. This result is understandable given that critics do not have to visit theatres to watch a movie, thereby not paying attention to the number of theatres available.

Niche Width and Audience Appeal

We repeated the comparison sets constructed for audience size for the audience appeal variable. While all the tables show the audience appeal's analysis, they represent different audiences from different sources.

Table-7 and Table-8 show the influence of genre and country on general audience appeal with different models. The broadness of country niche width has a significant positive effect with $p < .001$. The significance level of the genre niche width is $p < .337$. Therefore, the genre niche width is not a significant measure while evaluating the general audience's appeal.

Table 7. Audience Appeal among the General audience, IMDB*

Variable	Model 9: Genre spanning (N=978)		Model 10: Country spanning (N=978)	
	Genre niche width (ln)	0,052	(0,96)	
Country niche width (ln)			0,169	(3,48)
Budget info	-1,562	(-4,35)	-1,484	(-4,18)
Budget (ln)	0,105	(4,64)	0,098	(4,42)
No. of opening sites (ln)	-0,082	(-6,47)	-0,076	(-5,95)
Major distributor	-0,020	(-0,29)	-0,014	(-0,21)
Sequel	-0,163	(-1,77)	-0,176	(-1,91)
Holiday release	-0,132	(-1,74)	-0,134	(-1,77)
Constant	6,872	(102,72)	6,844	(127,39)

* T values are in parenthesis.

TMDB audience's reaction to category-spanning in terms of appeal is similar to the IMDB audience's response, as reported in Table 8. The broadness of country niche width has a significant positive effect with $p < .020$. The significance level of the genre niche width is $p < .276$. Therefore, comparing spans of the genre and country categories is also the same.

Table 8. Audience Appeal among the General audience, TMDB*

Variable	<i>Model 11:</i> <i>Genre spanning</i> (<i>N=970</i>)		<i>Model 12:</i> <i>Country spanning</i> (<i>N=970</i>)	
	Genre niche width (ln)	0,058	(1,09)	
Country niche width (ln)			0,112	(2,32)
Budget info	-1,526	(-4,31)	-1,502	(-4,28)
Budget (ln)	0,098	(4,39)	0,095	(4,33)
No. of opening sites (ln)	-0,056	(-4,51)	-0,052	(-4,10)
Major distributor	-0,036	(-0,53)	-0,031	(-0,45)
Sequel	-0,169	(-1,86)	-0,177	(-1,95)
Holiday release	-0,088	(-1,17)	-0,088	(-1,17)
Constant	6,743	(101,79)	6,745	(126,96)

* T values are in parenthesis.

Country-spanning is significant for the general audience appeal, while genre-spanning has not complied with the expectations. The expectation was that spanning multiple genres decreased audience appeal more than various countries, as indicated in hypothesis 2. We conducted the same analyses for professional critics. Table 9 shows the relation between category-spanning types and the critics' audience appeal.

Table 9. Audience Appeal among Critics*

Variable	<i>Model 13:</i> <i>Genre spanning</i> (<i>N=946</i>)		<i>Model 14:</i> <i>Country spanning</i> (<i>N=946</i>)	
	Genre niche width (ln)	0,081	(0,96)	
Country niche width (ln)			0,327	(4,33)
Budget info	-1,497	(-2,70)	-1,335	(-2,44)
Budget (ln)	0,096	(7,76)	0,083	(2,42)
No. of opening sites (ln)	-0,196	(-9,78)	-0,184	(-9,23)
Major distributor	0,022	(0,21)	0,039	(0,36)
Sequel	-0,148	(-1,04)	-0,168	(-1,19)
Holiday release	-0,286	(-2,41)	-0,291	(-2,46)
Constant	7,078	(67,28)	7,007	(83,39)

* T values are in parenthesis.

A country's span positively affects critics' appeal, like the general audience results. At the same time, the genre-spanning impact is insignificant. Since genre-spanning does not adversely affect the critics' appeal, critics did not pass through their negative impression of multiple genre movies to the general audience. Critics did not transmit any negative evaluations to the general audience. Therefore, the category-spanning effect on audience size does not weaken, and genre-spanning increases the general audience's size, as shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Supplementary Analysis and Further Considerations

As the study's hypotheses have specific conditions, it is essential to check whether the research design meets the requirements. Further investigation of the country category may help interpret the saliency difference between genre and country categories and support the generalization.

Researchers have not widely studied the country category in category research focusing on the movie industry. Results indicate that country niche width is an increasing function of audience appeal. The first concern is whether the audience appeal grows with the growing number of spanned countries due to a feeling of a privileged minority since country-spanning movies are rare. Six hundred ninety movies, which make up 60 percent of the movies, belong only to

one country, and 258 movies, which make up 22 percent of the movies, span two countries. In total, 80 percent of the movies released in the sample have two or fewer countries. Thus, there is a lack of country-spanning movies.

Simultaneously, the number of reviews and votes also increases the number of country categories. Therefore, the audience of country-spanning movies is not a minority. To sum up, since the country's niche width increases the audience size and appeal, the belief of belonging to an exclusive group did not influence critics' appeal.

Secondly, the number of countries in the country category also represents the number of countries contributing to the production and movie budgets. Therefore, the country niche width might positively correlate with financial resource variables. We observed no strong positive relationship because of the correlation check of country niche width with the budget, opening sites, and a major distributor's existence.

The other concern is about the resource partitioning condition of the allocation principle. Organizations in high-resource areas can enhance their customers' appeal with scale-based advantages (Carroll, 1985). The U.S. produced 931 movies within the sample of 1159 movies. This situation raises whether the U.S. movies enjoy resource-abundance and economies of scale, eliminating category detrimental effects of spanning.

A broader selection supports the observation of the United States in addition to information coming from the study's sample. The U.S. has the highest feature films made from 1990 to 2018. The following five biggest producer countries combined cannot reach the number of movies produced in the U.S. (Follows, 2019). The U.S. has the highest average production budget and the highest number of movies made (the-numbers.com, n.d.), implying resource abundance. Besides, Hollywood is the richest and most recognized of all cinema. Thus, the focal point of the investigation here is whether being a U.S.-originated movie provides some advantages to the organization.

To control being a U.S. movie, we created a dummy variable. We coded one for all movies that the U.S. contributed. We re-conducted the Tobit analysis for the general audience and critics' appeal while controlling for originating from the U.S. effect. In both studies from the U.S., results were not significant at a 95 percent confidence level. These analyses eliminate the concerns about resource partitioning conditions for the country category.

Lastly, we collected genre niche width from three sources. The number of archival sources may have influenced the genre's niche width, affecting the study. We re-conducted all the analyses by including genre niche width and controlled for the number of archival resources. There was no substantial difference in the results. Although the mechanism between niche width and audience appeal or size is not the focus of this study, comparing the mechanism's results underlies this paper's primary argument. We also re-conducted all analyses and models with various sub-samples, e.g., considering the genre niche width of only one source and measuring only one source's appeal/size. The Insignificance or significance of variables did not change.

Discussion

Categories arise due to expectations formed between producers and audiences (Vergne& Wry, 2014). Category saliency shapes an audience's perception, representing the first or most important category. Therefore, the saliency among categories is substantial to address within the categorization literature. Vergne (2012) used stigma to represent saliency in his paper. Similarly, this study aimed to benefit from the hierarchical position of a category to describe saliency.

Although all categories at all hierarchical levels are relevant and meaningful, some are more or less influential than others (Vergne& Wry, 2014). As saliency moderates the effect of stigma dilution (Vergne, 2012), we offered a new approach to measure saliency based on Porac and Thomas (1994) via connecting saliency and hierarchical positioning of the categories. In summary, the hypothesis has been that the hierarchical difference between genre and country categories would represent the saliency difference between them, thereby affecting the consequences arising from the spanning of those categories.

Hsu (2006) explains the consequences arising from category-spanning. She argued that category straddling helps organizations address a broader audience set, thereby having a more substantial audience size. She also stated that category straddling hurts audience appeal. Vergne (2012) highlighted the saliency perspective. He noted that saliency moderated the stigma dilution through disapproval. Lastly, Porac and Thomas (1994) utilized the hierarchy to measure the saliency of categories. As the saliency moderates organizational outcomes in category straddling, we suggest that spanning a category positioned hierarchically higher should increase audience size and decrease audience appeal.

This paper's most important contribution is that the hierarchy may indicate saliency under certain conditions. The results show that hierarchy successfully detects the salient category to attract a larger general audience through category-spanning in the movie industry. In other words, if a category acquires a high position hierarchically, it is more salient to address a wider general audience.

Results show that country spanning affects professional critics' size more than the general audience. However, the country category is at a lower hierarchy level. Thus, a country spanning was more consequential in influencing the number of professional critic reviews. Since critics' and the general audience's motivation to watch and review a movie differs, the salient category for those two audiences may differ. Hierarchy is not an exact representation of saliency in this case, implying that the hierarchical position might not be adequate in all contexts.

The hierarchical representation of saliency regarding appeal outcome is more complicated than audience size outcome. Although categories with different hierarchical levels responded differently to the appeal outcome, the response was not as expected in the literature. According to the research, category-spanning neutralizes social evaluations. This effect is detrimental when the category is more salient (Vergne, 2012). In light of this view, genre-spanning should have decreased the appeal more than country-spanning. However, according to results, having a country spanning increased the audience appeal while genre-spanning is insignificant.

It might be possible to investigate why country-spanning increased the audience appeal instead of decreasing it; however, this investigation is out of our scope. If the saliency aspect interprets these results, the category's saliency would be questionable. Because the country category moves the appeal away from neutralization by increasing the appeal instead of decreasing it, on the other hand, the genre category is not significant at all. The categories at different hierarchy levels respond differently to the same independent variable, so the appeal might be too complex to measure with only one saliency measurement. However, the hierarchy has the potential to represent saliency.

Still, hierarchy is at least a measure to determine the categories' saliency. Therefore, we argue that the hierarchical order of categories might be a way to state the categories' saliency. However, it is limited, as we need to decide which outcome we want to measure and whose perspective. A hierarchically higher-positioned category has a more potent force to attract a larger general audience.

This result indicates that the higher-positioned category is more salient than the lower-positioned category.

Another contribution is to the categorization literature, especially the category imperative topic, by strengthening saliency in the big picture. As we already know from the literature, some categories' features and combination structures control the categorical imperative's effect (Negro, Hannan, *et al.*, 2010; Ruef & Patterson, 2009; Wry & Lounsbury, 2013). However, more cultural stimuli shape audience perception. Category saliency is a category feature arising from an inter-category comparison in a category structure. Therefore, one original contribution is to show an inter-category measure shaping the audience's attention.

Saliency detection is a substantial part of the categorization literature. Vergne (2012) has stated that the more salient category obtains more consequential evaluations than the less salient categories. This study finds that a more salient category increases the general audience size and signals the saliency potential to moderate category-spanning consequences. This result provided a more concrete ground to argue that the category imperative view may not hold the same for each category's saliency level. The importance of categories is not equal.

This study also contributes to strategic categorization literature. Recent research on forming new categories shows that producers can strategically act rather than accepting whatever the environment dictates category structure (Kennedy, 2008; Khaire & Wadhvani, 2010; Navis & Glynn, 2010). Stigma dilution is another example of how a strategic act shapes perception (Vergne, 2012). Suppose one does not consider the saliency notion when deciding the strategic categorization of the organization. In that case, the size of the influence aimed at strategic action might not result as expected. However, recognizing the boosted influence of salient categories and detecting them may significantly benefit.

Deephouse stated that organizations' ordinary strategic acts regarding categorization generally choose between sameness and difference in pursuing membership in one category. Organizations must be "as different as legitimately possible" (Deephouse, 1999: 147). First, organizations may strategically balance between being a generalist or a specialist. Second, they may try to define a more salient category by taking a hierarchical position. This strategy also provides a basis for determining which category the organization should focus on to understand the audience better.

Showing the existence of other attention-drawing stimuli, hierarchy, on the inter-category level, may expand stigmatized organizations' strategic options. For example, stigmatized industries like abortion services, gambling, or the porno industry (Jensen, 2010) can use a new saliency measure to decide which category to apply stigma dilution. The stigma dilution mechanism only works for the salient categories; therefore, the saliency measure would be a valuable strategic tool for those industries. In addition, the sectors where organizations need to increase targeted audience size may apply to straddle the more salient category rather than focusing on lower-positioned categories. For example, suppose the game genre category has a higher hierarchical level than the platform availability. A game producer may focus more on extending the genre types instead of making a game available on different platforms.

Conclusion

Overall, this paper's method to measure saliency might shed light on future studies. Researchers can use the saliency effect to explain different categorization-related mechanisms, like the consequences of niche width. Besides, the saliency level of categories may change over time or by exogenous shocks (Vergne, 2012), which means that neither categories nor their saliency levels might be taken for granted. The method to measure saliency is as crucial as the saliency notion itself.

This study did not provide a significant clue to detect saliency through hierarchy while measuring audience appeal. There are some limitations on why the hierarchy measure does not work for the saliency determination. Firstly, the appeal might be too complex to detect saliency through a hierarchy with the variables available in this study. We need more variables controlling the audience perception to capture the complicated cognitive appeal process. Other factors also affect the audience's appeal, like star actress/actor power, high director power, and niche overlap (Hsu, 2006). However, we could not include them in our analysis. Therefore, without other crucial variables, the appeal models may fail to predict the appeal process. Further studies may extend the models constructed in this research to measure the movie industry's appeal better.

Secondly, spanning the country category did not decrease the audience appeal, thereby seeming more consequential than the genre category due to a country category's nature. Multiple categorizations create confusion for the audience, leading to a decrease in audience appeal. For the movie's co-production of various

countries, country-specific content does not always appear in a movie. For example, teams from India, Australia, and the USA have co-produced the “Hotel Mumbai” (2018) movie, focusing on a true story from India. The audience may not be confused with other countries’ existence as co-producers since they do not directly see signs from those other countries during the movie. As another example, the movie “Danish girl” is a co-production of the U.K., USA, Germany, Denmark, Belgium, and Japan. Likewise, not all the countries dominated the movie, thereby not confusing the appeal process. According to Keuschnigg and Wimmer (2017), the confusion mechanism is more robust in return for category spanning than the niche-fitness mechanism. In conclusion, future research may study the appeal outcome test in different settings with different categories while statistically controlling these effects.

Lastly, this study measures the audience appeal in a grouped approach by taking filmgoers’ and critics’ mean value of evaluations. Bowers (2014: 2) argues that this approach concentrates on the item’s attributes regarding whether its performance meets its audience’s beliefs. A score of 5 on Rotten Tomatoes for a movie might indicate that the audience has an indecisive opinion about the movie or that two types of audience love or hate it. Therefore, shifting the focus of measuring audience appeal from an object-analysis level and an accumulative perspective to individual evaluations would be critical, as Bowers (2014) did in her study.

This study opens new avenues for further research on how stable and large organizations respond to the hierarchical level of categories in evaluating saliency requires more attention. The saliency level may change in time or through exogenous shocks (Vergne, 2012), and the hierarchical structure’s response may also vary. Researchers need to study such dynamics empirically to uncover how categories emerge and affect the organized lives of people.

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