Analysing the commercial effects of animation’s aesthetic pictures: a case study on Coco

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Abstract. The advancement of technology in the field of visual imaging has led to a proliferation of animated films, which in turn has led to advancements in the field of visual communication. Additionally, audiences are more inclined to watch animated films that are attractive to the eye. However, there is a lack of study that applies the aesthetics of pictures to examine the effects that animation has on the marketplace. The purpose of the paper was to examine Coco’s economic accomplishments in terms of three visual aesthetic dimensions: the use of colour, the use of camera language, and the design of the characters. Therefore, developing an in-depth understanding of the superiorities that form the foundation of aesthetic theories provides helpful ideas. According to the findings of the thesis, Coco’s commercial success may be attributed, at least in part, to the film’s use of colours with strong contrast and saturation, interchangeable footage and exquisite compositions, and compatible and nationalized character designs. All of these factors contributed to the film’s popularity. After that, the research offers some related suggestions to upcoming animation producers, covering all aspects of the industry.

1 Introduction

In 2017, an era of digitalization, many animation works were closely combined with reality to construct a sensory and ethereal scene. And most of these animation movies tended to use 3D technology to fully pursue the Visualization of the invisible world. Audiences were also curious about a combination of fantasy and reality through the use of visual pictures. That meant that, at that time, an excellent visual presentation played an important role in the success of an animation movie. The movie Coco, published by Disney and Pixar, has attracted huge attention worldwide. A narrative that was connected to the Mexican holiday known as Day of the Dead was depicted in the film. The main character of the film Coco, Miguel, ultimately came to terms with the reality of his grandfather's passing and won his family's support for his aspiration to pursue a career in music as a result of his experience in the Dead Wonderland. Miguel wanted to be a fantastic guitarist, which is what led to Miguel's journey through the Dead Wonderland. In 2018, the Oscar Golden Statues honoured the animated film Coco with the award for Best Animated Feature. During this time, a great number of derivative activities and products were made available after Coco's introduction. There is no denying that Coco has already established a fantastic level of success. As can be seen in Figure 1, this is the comment page of Rotten Tomatoes in 2023. On this page, the website is able to track all comments as well as the percentage of reviews that are favourable. The work will be declared new if the percentage of favourable comments received is greater than sixty percent. A piece of writing will be considered rotten if it has a favourable rating that is lower than sixty percent. The findings indicated that there is a significant degree of freshness in the coco [1].

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Coco was a touching and compelling movie in terms of its plot. That’s the reason why numerous analysts and critics generally attribute its commercial success to its story. For instance, on Douban, the largest movie review website in China, thousands of professional reviewers express their opinions. Compared with other movie websites in China, the comments on Douban are more conspicuous. Coco left a deep impression on audiences here, mainly because of its story [2]. The Douban’s audiences tended to attach words like "Interest" or "moving" to Coco and exploited these positive comments to appeal to more customers to make contributions to Coco’s box office [2]. Furthermore, some critics dug into Coco’s deeper theme about life and death. Cao once focused on cultural differences and life philosophy [3]. There were other kinds of research that concerned the dimensions of the animation business. Nissim Otmazgin discussed a globalization tendency in the American animation business [4]. And as it was well known, Coco was, to some extent, typical American animation. Undoubtedly, Coco was a successful example of global animation commercialization. Besides, Yuanbo Chen made deep analyses of aspects of Coco’s content production, technical support, and full-age thinking [5].

According to the above points of view, the research on Coco was not restricted to the contents of the screenplay, which had already accomplished impressive research findings on the levels of cultural distribution and modern technology. On the other hand, not as many people paid attention to Coco's use of visual communication. To say nothing of crediting it with the company's commercial success. It is true that remarks relating to Coco's visual communication may be discovered someplace and that these comments would, in the main, be good. Also, it is important to keep in mind that one needs to have some level of training or experience in the arts in order to fully appreciate Coco's aesthetic usages. As a direct consequence of this, an examination of Coco's visual and artistic qualities may be challenging. It is imperative that the significance of Coco's excellent visual aesthetic usages be deduced and communicated to the public. What are some ways that we can make up for the lack of research? Through the use of case studies, the purpose of this research is to investigate the connections that may be drawn between Coco's financial achievements and the aesthetic choices that were made for the film's visuals. It was very clear that the success of Coco would not be achieved without exceptional scene architecture, unusual character designs, dazzling colour contrast, and other elements like these.

2 Case description

Coco was a movie about the Mexican Day of the Dead. Coco, released by Disney and Pixar in 2017, caused quite a stir in North America and elsewhere. Coco has already grossed a staggering $813 million at the box office worldwide by 2022 [6]. It should be noted that in Coco's own nation, Mexico, he was highly dominant. It sparked a movie-watching frenzy among 127 million Mexicans in 2017 [6]. Coco's Mexican box office topped 827 million
Mexican pesos ($48 million), surpassing the "Avengers Alliance" and becoming Mexico's champion [6]. Furthermore, despite diverse cultural origins, Coco was lucrative in nations such as China, with a box office of $166 million.

Moreover, Coco has absolutely had a lasting influence since its introduction in the movie theater. The derived commodities, for example, the white guitar held by Miguel in the movie, were outrageously appealing and in short supply. As well, Disney introduced the Coco blind boxes with Coco’s characters inside. These blind boxes had been sold to consumers in many countries. They enabled Coco’s fans to have intimate interactions with their beloved characters.

At the same time, additional Coco theme zones were developed at Disney parks, including Shanghai Disneyland and California Disneyland. These Coco's zones, infused with a Halloween vibe, were packed with tourists, resulting in massive earnings. People who appreciate pilgrimages learned they could find the same location in reality after watching the film, which enhanced Guanajuato State's (a state in Mexico) local tourism income.

Coco is a milestone in Disney animation, too. Coco’s winning Oscar award has enhanced Disney's status in the animation industry since its first Oscar (The Snow White) 80 years ago. As Disney increasingly depends on non-original IPs, Coco’s vivid characters inject new energy into Disney’s role library. New original IP helps pave the way for the development of Disney animation in the long term. Then, how did Coco’s visual picture aesthetic usages impact Coco’s commercial success? Are there any detailed relationships between them? The thesis would be divided into three parts. From color usages, the camera language applications, and the character design, analyzing and giving suggestions, respectively.

3 Analysis on the problems

3.1 Colour usages

There are several reasons for the popularity of the film Coco, including the excellent use of attractive hues. Coco is generally adept at producing color contrast and tone homogeneity, as well as using color to elicit emotions. Color is an indispensable part of design. In the animation picture, a suitable color arrangement can highlight the character’s temperament, create a specific atmosphere, and stimulate the audience’s emotion. Qing once mentioned that using colored narrative language is necessary to fully consider the development of the plot and reveal the theme [7]. From this point of view, it can be demonstrated that suitable animation picture color usage may be helpful to bring better enjoyment to audiences and thus increase its reputation and profit.

Coco’s animation drawings have a high level of contradiction and saturation in general. Coco’s photographs are dominant and stunning because of these traits. Particularly with the plot of entering the dead world. For instance, in the plots (Figures 2 and 3), orange with high saturation and ultramarine with low saturation are the primary hues.

![Fig.2](https://example.com/miguel_trip_to_dead_land.jpg) Miguel’s trip to dead land [8].

Furthermore, a glint of sparkling yellow adds shine to the scene. Ultramarine contradicts orange on a color wheel [9]. Two opposing colors can help produce a spectacular visual impact to keep spectators from becoming visually bored. A warm hue applied to a gloomy setting has instead reinforced a sense of mystery, bustle, and spectacle in terms of emotion and atmosphere development.

As a matter of fact, the other scenes in the movie share the same characteristics as these two screenshots. It is easy to find some interesting color arrangements, such as green and red. In the majority of Coco, the main character, Miguel, wears a crimson hoodie. This means that even in the middle of the movie, where in the slums the color tone is dark, a noticeable crimson can still be found to neutralize the gloom. It is vital because a huge group of young audiences has been taken into account. For example, the screenshot below (Figure 4) shows how Coco manages the relationship between the gloomy environment and the crimson hoodie.

These captivating images constantly catch the audience's attention and bring them breathtaking experiences. If the colors are not as attractive as these, an intensive complex may lose its glamour and become mediocre. Without these sensible color arrangements, the story may not be as compelling as origin. As a result, losing its public praise and commercial performance. Because of the successful application of Coco's screen color, the quality of Coco's screen can be improved to a higher level. Through the trailers of Coco, which with excellent visuals immensely attracted the audience's
attention and contributed to the attendance of the movie in the future.

3.2 Camera language applications

Coco’s camera language applications, which are specifically reflected in Coco’s remarkable transformations in footage and composition proportions, absolutely fueled Coco’s popularity. Superior's producers are skilled at employing camera language applications to direct viewers' attention to certain objects or moments in time. They can amuse audiences while also better conveying vital information through their thoughts by using continually shifting compositions.

As a prevailing animation, Coco features various camera language applications. A series of shot switches is a way of narrating; it can also add some aesthetic value to the work. Overall, Coco has absolutely done a great job on this part. These are three continuous screenshots that show how Miguel is taken into the dead world (Figures 5-7). Obviously, the audience is intended to put themselves in Miguel’s shoes, seeing what Miguel has seen and experiencing what Miguel has experienced.

![Fig.5 Miguel’s going through the bridge—distant [8].](image1)

![Fig.6 Miguel’s going through the bridge—close-range [8].](image2)
Above all, in the first picture (Figure 5), which is a distant shot, this shot tells the audience what is happening and who is in the scene. Then comes the next close-range. As the footage gets closer, Miguel's surprising expression creates suspense for the next shot. That is tantalizing. Sooner or later, this series of footage will end in a panoramic with a tremendous marigold bridge in front. At that time, the audience finally realized why Miguel was so amazed.

There are plenty of these ingenious shot switches in Coco. Under different circumstances, the changeable footage works in different ways. But without question, the excellent camera language applications really make a scene by expressing dynamism and creating context for Coco [9].

Except for changeable footage, a composition with appropriate proportions is an essential method to beautify a picture. In comparison, a flawless composition requires balance. For example, in the following panorama screenshot, the ground and bridge are around 2:5 in relation to the frigid, empty sky. This ratio provides people with a sense of security and equilibrium. To some extent, Coco employs various creative methods, such as diagonal composition, spiral composition, and triangle composition, which can enrich the screen and so contribute to viewers' long-term interest. Coco’s exceptional camera language applications in footage and compositing proportions thoroughly immerse people in the plot after savoring the entire film, which boosts word-of-mouth and the audience's desire for a second viewing.

As a result, it can be observed that the camera language apps have a beneficial role in Coco's performance, particularly in terms of box office.

### 3.3 Character design

In a word, it is the Coco characters’ commitment to the story and its good Mexican culture usages. Coco’s character designs’ main characteristics are cute and nationalized. Based on 3D technologies, which can bring a more vivid watching experience, Coco is able to manufacture more complex roles at lower costs compared with 2D technology [10]. But the most critical thing in Character design is not its intricacy or whether it is pleasing to audiences. It is how the character fits its status and the plot [10].

Here are three-character screenshots: The first is Miguel, a typical Mexican youngster with a passion for music. Who has a plump boy face and Mexican skin. A red hoodie emphasizes his low social position, yet his outgoing personality shines through. The second is De La Cruz, a well-known and wealthy musician who died in meaningless glory. His proper clothing and round body reflect his high rank. In the tale, De La Cruz murders Hector for the sake of fame, despite the fact that Hector is his best companion, which cannot be determined only by his appearance. Hector's dirty history is separate from his surface, emphasizing his charade. Hector, the final character, is a skilled and castaway musician with a compassionate heart. His sincerity is obvious from his honest and adorable expression. His ragged clothing indicated his sad circumstances. According to the analysis above, Coco's characters have clear connections to the tale's backdrop, which does not appear to be incompatible with the storyline.

However, compatibility is just a fundamental requirement for a successful animation. Coco also has unparalleled character designs. Since rarely a sensational Mexican-style animation had been introduced before 2017, Coco was born with differences. Coco successfully creates some characters featuring Mexican nationality, like the patterns in the clothes. Besides, Coco’s skeleton characters are especially not horrible. Instead, by shaping and differentiating skulls, Coco’s skeleton characters are generally adorable.

After Coco’s screening in the movie theaters, Disney introduced some retrieved commodities that originated from Miguel, Hector, and so on. Disneyland’s’ Coco zones also had activities that enabled interactions between tourists and Coco’s characters. These activities can demonstrate Coco’s characters’ popularity. In summary,
Coco's deeply ingrained character design has brought long-term profits to Disney from 2018 until now.

4 Suggestions

4.1 Colour usages

As formerly mentioned, good color usage is beneficial to animation’s picture generation and enhances the appreciating experiences of audiences. Thus, commercial performance will finally improve.

On the one hand, creating some contrasts in the saturation and warmth of the colors. Keeping in mind the effects of varied contexts on colors. In a sunny and joyful environment, for example, the boundary between black and white should be accentuated, while warm colors such as crimson and orange should be introduced to the picture. To prevent boring spectators, the color should be varied according to the narrative throughout the animation.

On the other hand, create a color arrangement that just belongs to the animation itself. Coco's theme colors are a light orange and ultramarine. These two colors appear often throughout the film and are easily remembered. Later animations should likewise adhere to the guidelines. These theme colors may be derived from traditional cultural backgrounds, such as Chinese Minnan culture (red and ginger) [11]. It may be gathered from the keynote at the same time. How can we better capitalize on the color utilization of animations and apply it in the business sector? Color may be used as a brand recognition point in animation films to attract customers.

Color is a very straightforward part of visual communication; except for movie pictures, color can infiltrate into posters, bands, advertisements, etc. Under the condition that an animation has already had its splendid colors shown in the movie, the producer is required to let the color arrangements appear multiple times. When analyzing Coco’s poster, the light orange and ultramarine showed again as the way to the dead world in the animation (the orange-marigold bridge and ultramarine constructions). That enhanced the audience’s memory, which led them to be more easily attracted by the scene. Naturally, a brand recognition point generates According to the former research, most customers tend to consume something they are familiar with. As a result, animation movies can use color for brand recognition.

4.2 Camera language applications

To improve the camera language applications of an animation and let it play a part in its commercial success. There are advices given below depending on the former analysis.

First and foremost, the composition of the poster should be given great importance. Before attending the movie theater, the poster will be the thing that dominates audience recognition of the animation. In the bulletin of a cinema or booking website, the poster always becomes the first thing to decide if the audience will be interested in the movie.

In the aspect of character design, a poster that has each element in great proportion is crucial. Coco's poster is fabulous (Figure 8). Symmetrical composition features disproportionately many characters and scenes. Except for listing the story information, the composition has also drawn audiences’ curiosity. Therefore, a poster with good compositing needs to depict not only intricate information but also some aesthetic contrasts.

Fig.8 Coco’s Poster [12].
Furthermore, for some animation firms, like Disney, whose storylines are frequently character-driven, having more close-ups will be preferable. Little scene lenses draw attention to dramatic elements and immerse the spectator in a chaotic and tearjerking dramatic setting. At the conclusion of Coco, for example, there is a sequence set in Grandma Coco's bedroom. Miguel is strumming the guitar in order to jog Grandma's memory and save Hector. The scenario is intriguing and poignant, and the little scene lens works nicely. This is not to say that animations do not require panoramic or distant imagery; rather, small scene lenses are more cost-effective, particularly when it comes to increasing character emotions.

4.3 Character design

Coco creates impressive characters. To perpetuate its influence and provide references for animation companies' later character designs, here are some suggestions:

To begin, create characters with distinctive features. These characteristics can be presented in a variety of ways. A creature's species or a cultural or fantasy aspect can both be designing elements for a character. Disney, for example, plans to create a new mascot based on the fox. And, of course, Disney already has several fox-themed characters, such as Linabell and Nick. New features are required if the new Fox Character is to stand out from its predecessors. The new character's birthplaces, connected stories, and unique cultural background should be highlighted.

Secondly, injecting new energy into old characters. The potential of a character should be utilized to the maximum. Some animation companies are too dependent on new characters now. Using Disney as an example, several animation companies have been brought in by it over the years to amplify Disney's Character quality. The iteration cycle of popular characters is very fast. Even sometimes, people do not truly realize that a famous character belongs to Disney, such as Spider-Man. In that situation, it is irresponsible to neglect some simple old Disney characters like Mikey Mouse. To increase their popularity, Disney and other similar animation companies can use new visual technologies to recreate these characters, like making somatic games.

Finally, profit channels for role-related products are being expanded. More character-branded products can be launched by animation companies. Or let its character become a meta-universe guide. As artificial intelligence advances, technologically derivative items will have greater development potential. It is not difficult to conclude that artificially intelligent role-related items will be appealing to customers in the near future.

5 Conclusion

Under the circumstance that there is a deficiency of animation research that combines visual aesthetics and commercial effects together, the thesis explores the relationships between animation's visual communication and its commerce. Three visual communication evaluations focus on color usage, camera language application, and the character design of Coco, a highly awarded cartoon. Then, tying both Coco's financial success and its visual appeal together, make appropriate recommendations.

The analysis process provides a horizon for strategies for making use of animation's visual communication to benefit its commerce. After reading the article, the animation movie producer can better utilize animation from the aspects of its color usage, the camera language application, and the character design and, therefore, realize better commercial achievements. For example, creating more kinds of derived commodities that originate from some fabulous character designs to sustain the movie’s popularity. Yet the paper still has some limitations. There are not many accurate and contemporary statistics resources because of the abstract definition of aesthetic. It is difficult to make operational definitions of some analyses, which will result in the subjectivity of the paper. To improve this issue, the later research would do well if they could enlarge their statistical resources and take advice from more viewpoints. In this way, later research may take more accidental situations into account to improve accuracy.

References