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How embracing inclusion and representation can help save the film industry

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The exponential increase in screen consumption worldwide in the last decade has created widespread social shifts. Consumption among younger demographics alone deserves a serious pause for consideration in regards to the content presented to them. The film industry not only has a responsibility to do so but should embrace that responsibility with open arms. Because of their popularity, films have an unparalleled capacity for outreach and unification. They entertain, but they also raise awareness, foster dialogue and give voices to marginalized groups. Image content, from films to social media, have such an undeniable presence and powerful community impact because they translate and carry voices outside of one's immediate community into a borderless world. They create connections and open minds, especially when focus is brought to equal representation.

Equal and realistic representation on screen is essential, on a global scale, to prevent stereotypes that too often lead to misconceptions, exclusion, and prejudices against entire communities. From this perspective, it is the responsibility of our industry. However, it also serves as a great economic opportunity. The McKinsey report "Why Diversity Winds" - released in 2020 and

According to the report, diversity could represent an even larger opportunity, showing a 36% higher probability of outperformance on EBIT margin for top-quartile companies with ethnic and cultural diversity in their executive teams (up from 33% in 2017 and 35% in 2014). Gender and ethnic diversity have demonstrated their positive impacts more than ever by growing employee engagement, which is a critical component of potential candidates' appeal, employee retention, productivity, and financial performance.

Focus on the younger generation

Attracting a new generation of professionals who truly represent our society will therefore not only ensure accurate representation but may very well be the solution to the post-pandemic crisis that the film industry needs. Young global audiences (15 to 35yo) have been the most affected by new pandemic habits and subsequent fallouts. Omnipresent use of screens for academics, social interactions through social media and video games, television, and VOD have all fostered a swelling competition with other forms of leisure and hobbies. The future of the film industry relies on its capacity to bring this young generation back to theaters. How? By hiring young professionals and engaging them in the creation of productions they want to see in theaters today. We need to produce films that depict a society they identify with in order to push barriers and shine a light on issues and the people who are affected by them.

The Marvel Comic Universe (MCU): a VERY successful case study

Even though franchise release strategies have sparked controversy in the last decade, they still tend to set trends and meet audience expectations. The release of MCU's *Shang-Chi* from Disney Studios at the end of 2021, is a good example. With a diverse production crew and a minority-led cast, *Shang-Chi* was widely received and internationally recognized. With an in-theater release amid the pandemic and a new MCU character, *Shang-Chi* reached $432.2M at global box offices. Disney has been one of the first studios to take an engaged stance toward equal representation and inclusion. The studio seems determined to transform its own commitments into new industry standards. The MCU has been a great vessel, with multiple top box office performances. Released in 2018, Black Panther reached $1.237B in ticket sales, ranking as the 3rd highest-grossing title of all time in the superhero genre and 12th highest-grossing feature in film history.

Acknowledging model initiatives

In France, important initiatives are being launched, in front of, and behind the camera, to support emerging professionals and creatives in the film industry. There is a strong belief that, much like promoting gender equity, implementing a

inclusion to audiences while inspiring social change on-screen. Singulariné's agents actively protect the interest of their clients by selecting scripts that put their talents forward, ensuring that their skills are fairly represented, and their expectations met. Talents have the space and safety to turn projects down, as well as to have their voices heard in order to inspire inclusive scripts.

Behind the camera, Divé+, a technical crew collective, identified a lack of diversity in their field. Through professional gatherings, outreach, mentorship, and strong on-set communication, Divé+'s goal is to inspire new professionals of all gender identities, ethnic backgrounds, physical abilities, and sexual orientations to join the industry and thrive within it. Without a shadow of a doubt, proper representation will only be achieved through a fully inclusive production chain.

Key takeaways:

- Ethnic and cultural diversity have a growing impact on business performance in all sectors

- Young audiences have been the most impacted by the pandemic and have the strongest interest in diversity and inclusion.

- Outperforming releases tend to be more inclusive and offer better representation.

- True representation relies on a fully inclusive production chain.

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