To what extent are documentary films superior to fictional motion pictures?

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Abstract

Study: Bachelor Thesis in Media Technology
Title: To what extent are documentary films superior to fictional motion pictures?
Pages: 31
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Date: June

Keywords: documentary, fictional motion pictures, docudrama, feature film, movies, inspired by actual/true events, based on a true story, survey, comparison, genres, film, analysis

Summary:
The aim of this study was to examine if documentaries have become more superior to fictional motion pictures. By focusing on defining the categories and pointing out what their differences are, viewers get a deeper understanding of what the project wants to tell. Even viewing some popular movies that are in its field, will help the conclusion become more accurate. My main source of method will lay in literature but my main focus will be on a survey that will be provided by the answers, to the topic in hand.
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1. Introduction

This project is aiming to discuss the difference between documentary films and fictional motion pictures. The category of fictional motion pictures has always been resilient within the film industry. However, the project is going to demonstrate the development of documentaries, and eventually bring up some questions regarding the superior category of the two.

1.1 Background

The subject of documentaries taking over feature film is the subject being explored throughout this project. Though it means that we are more aware that acknowledgment is better than fiction or are we still looking to escape to another world, which is not so horrified.

Do we want to watch films were real life is displayed, often showing unflattering aspects of our world, or do we like to escape this world, escaping to fiction. Why we are so afraid to live in the real world and not doing anything about it, dealing with facts that are in front of us.

Through my work and experience at the company Bautafilm, as a production assistant, I gained sufficient knowledge to determine the majority differences between documentaries and fictional motion pictures. Using literature and other sources relating to the subject will further enhance my comprehension. The main job assignment at Bautafilm is assisting the executive producer in working extensively with an upcoming movie, which the company has in progress.

1.2 Purposes

The purpose of this project is to closely look at each category and determine if documentary has become superior in the film industry. To fully coming to a conclusion, one has to understand the terms of these genres that are being questioned. By doing so it has to break down each category but also understand through reviewing some feature films as well as documentaries for more understanding on how the problem is issued with. But also question the difference that may occur.
1.3 Definition
The main domain that is focused on is documentary and fictional feature picture and the differences between these two genres. And also some movie and documentary reviews are going to be considered more helpful to understand fully the meaning of this project.

1.4 Question formulation

To what extent are documentary films superior to fictional motion pictures?
What is the difference between documentary and motion pictures?
Is based on a true story really a documentary or still a fictional feature film?
What is the difference between based on a true story and inspired by actual/true events?
What makes fictional motion pictures so intriguing?
2. Method

2.1 Choice of method
Two methods that are going to be used in this project are survey and comparing reviews of documentaries and motion pictures. Through these two resources I will determine my conclusion to the main topic that is questioned. The reviews include both released movies and current cinema movies.

2.2 Survey
It is a method to collect data, which is used to gather information about individuals. It is usually used in psychology research to collect self-report data. This is performed individually, by making the survey in form of a questionnaire. The survey may focus on either factual information or collection of opinions. Correction is important so that the result can be generalized to the larger population and to ensure consistency and rationality.

Through my survey (see appendix 1) it will help me distinguish how my target audiences comprehend the topic. The reason behind choosing to use of a survey was that I wanted a wide result, even though my target audience is between 18-30 years old. The choice of this wide target is mainly because their engagement towards viewing of documentary and fictional feature films. Their understanding for films is highly qualified.

By carrying the survey out through the Internet, I widen my audience, but still have a main audience that is between 18-30 years old.

2.3 The use of literature
Literature is books that are in use to reinforce ones statements or argument, to make their point. It is an art that engages the reader emotionally and intellectually etc. But its use is normally a means of communication, a way to tell a story or explain how a specific historical event played out in past tense. It can also be used in a teaching manner where it is open up new ways of thinking and can change a thinking path. It can either lead us towards more wisdom or make us disbelieve our own reflections. With help of the chosen books, that I have picked out, will strengthen my conclusion and guide me through this project by giving me helpful answers to my questions.
2.4 Review of film

To review a film, you first have to understand how it works. What technique or components are being highlighted in the film? What reflections are being persuaded? These are some of the questions that you may ask when reviewing a film. By fully understanding how a film works you appreciate the film even more through all work that has been put in to it.

Without giving away too much of the plot a good film review should entertain, argue and inform, providing an original opinion.

I have chosen to review some films related to the topic to establish a conclusion. Also helping to establish the topic, by understanding what is being persuaded in this project. It means that you also have to look at the background, direction, writing and editing etc. to fully understand the reflection of the film. Films that have been chosen for this topic are: Fahrenheit 9/11, Black Hawk Down, A Beautiful Mind and Da Vinci Code.
3. Overview of genres

3.1 Documentary films

Definition of documentaries is often ambiguous, because the definition of it has not yet been well established. It has been discussed in many ways throughout the years, but one of them is more likely to be accurate. That is: documentaries deal with truth. It presents reality, populated by real people, real places and real events. Webster’s Unabridged dictionary describes it as motion pictures or television production based on or re-creating an actual event, era, and life stories etc. that intends to be factually accurate and to contain no fictional elements.

Documentaries address the world in which we live in, as divergent to a world imagined by the filmmaker.¹

There are currently debates about interrogation of documentary’s evidential base, which is the heart of it. This means that apart from the skepticism, there are other possible views on it. Authenticity of the photography image is what most of us tend to believe. Therefore we are tempted to commonly acknowledge that photographs may mislead as well as inform and support arguments and false claims. Any still or motion pictures that provides data that supports a claim, argument or assumption, is the definition of photography evidence.²

Documentary film is often considered as serious, regularly telling stories about horrific events, like Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004). It is a documentary about what happened September 11th 2001, where it was a terrorist attack on the twin towers in New York City. Providing evidence and information about the subject in question is significant to making documentaries. Most documentary filmmakers consider themselves storytellers, designed with goals of entertainment, through expresses emotions. Many of documentary filmmakers aim toward that. Therefore the consideration as a journalist does not apply.³

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¹ A journey through documentary film, p.12 [2]
³ Documentary film – A Very Short Intro, p.2 [5]
Documentaries aim for truthfulness by telling a story about real life. But it is a never-ending discussion how to do that genuinely, because of the many answers. Over the course of time documentary has been defined and redefined, both by makers and by viewers. Therefore it is important for viewers that documentaries are truthful, accurate and trustworthy, because of the valuation towards these qualities. If documentaries are deceiving, they are not only deceiving the viewers but also members of the public who might act upon knowledge gleaned from the film. Viewers are shaped as public actors because documentaries are part of the media, which aids in understanding not only the world, but also the viewer’s part in it.\textsuperscript{4}

3.1.1 What makes Michael Moore a good documentary filmmaker?
Michael Moore is a documentary filmmaker, where his films debate documentary truth and its associated ethics. His polemical films have a way of sparking debates. Some praise him for dealing with issues while others accuse him for manipulation of the facts, altering timelines and mislead filmmaking techniques to make his points. Moore´s film Roger & Me is often considered to be what kick-started the documentary era. Rather to take on a postmodernist approach to non-fiction filmmaking, Moore is more established in the tradition of wartime propaganda documentaries. Moore believes that it is not about the quantity of new information, rather about the manner of their storytelling. It informs the audience how they should feel about certain facts rather then presenting it. Because documentaries exist as a well-tuned collage of image, editing and sound. An emotive response trigged by constructed feeling and not by rational thought.\textsuperscript{5}

3.1.1.1 Fahrenheit 9/11
Fahrenheit 9/11 is documentary film (2004) that takes a critical look at the presidency of George Bush and the war on terror, America´s decision to wage war on Iraq. It also addresses what happened on September 11, 2001 when the World Trade Center towers got hit by airplanes. It shows us how then-president Bush dealt with the situation. Bush takes this opportunity to execute a war with Iraq.

\textsuperscript{4} Documentary film – A Very Short Intro, p.3-4 [5]
\textsuperscript{5} A journey through documentary film, p.21-23 [2]
By skillfully combining many different elements; such as hand-held camera and interviews, of film language Fahrenheit 9/11 is an entertaining and lively documentary. Moore extends and expands the resources to create a filmic perception of reality that is both memorable and unique.⁶

But he also makes us view people and events from his perspective by skillfully manipulating our emotions and make it very difficult to remain detached from what we as an audience see and hear. An example of that it is not shown in a typical documentary style when viewing the sequence layout. Therefore it is more likely like a re-enactment within a feature film.⁶ Even by looking at posters the viewer can question his credibility, by asking how important is it that we see Michael in each instance?

3.1.1.1 Docudrama

Docudrama is a version of documentary that are based on reenactment or dramatization of actual people, places and events. Using fact-based information it becomes a blend of melodrama and documentary. Through rigorous research these known “stories” are shaped into a nonfiction drama. A docudrama has to hold the fact together but still be an interesting compelling story.

Key for researching for docudrama is in-depth to gain an authentic nonfiction story. Due to the amount of information, that needs to be sorted and prioritized, the author will likely only use twenty percent of the research, but the other eighty percent will heighten an understanding to illuminate the characters and their world. To pull viewers into believing there are truly reliving the experience.

Rather to confine in a narration of the primary source that objectify, docudramas are generally constructed with reenactments or re-creations of reality. Docudramas are most dramatized version of reality but can combine historical footage or images. Even though the elements of film are fictionalized, the story has to be based on facts.⁷

⁶ Fahrenheit 9/11, p.1-5 [12]
⁷ DigiTales – the art of telling stories [14]
3.2 Based on a true story

“What you are about to see is true”
-Thomas Leitch

In the beginning of 1990s the label “based on a true story” became more common to us. Based on detailed historical prologues a film may establish its credentials as a true story, as shown in the movies Schindler’s list (1993) and 12 Years a Slave (2013). But there is no guarantee that the film has any basis in a true story. Such example can be found in the movie Fargo (1996) where Tobe Hooper introducing his fictional film by telling the audience it's a true story, but in fact was untrue. He claimed it was based on a true story with a few identifying details changed as a gesture respect for the dead. The label only appears when it is to the film’s advantage, not for the filmmakers’ pleasure. It is a strategic or generic rather then historical or existential when given that claim to be based on a true story.

Feature film is not a truthful record of historical events. No matter how carefully researched, commentators on documentaries and docudramas have long decreed that historical reenactments in films are not historical records but fictionalized reenactments of historical events. By staging, costuming, performance and set decoration, movies can become more like historical records. Therefore movies presenting them as based on a true story not necessary claiming to tell the truth or a specifically educational function. The claim is made only in films that has historical rather than a pedagogical basis, which is the difference between making true statements and presenting a true story.

3.2.1 A Beautiful Mind

It is a film based on a true story about the mathematician John Nash Jr. In his adult life they discovered that he was suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. Even though it is a movie based on a true story, it can also be categorized as melodrama. The audience gets to follow his journey through the film technique, point-of-view, which means that the viewer gets to follow the character through his or her eyes. By using this technique the audience creates empathy and understanding towards his character. By using syntactic moments it

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8 *Film Adaptation & its discontents*, p.280 [6]
enhance the present themes throughout the entire film. Not only does the director, Ron Howard, capture the drama but also gives viewers a sort of information about it is to live with schizophrenia. Through the label based on a true story the viewer can establish that the movie has some reality to it.¹⁰

### 3.2.2 Inspired by actual/true events

The label “inspired by actual/true events” is fictional. The idea is from something that took place in reality. It can be a news story or historical event. It is an inspiration from those events and not claiming that may have actually happened. The characters often resemble the real-life individuals. A serial killer by the name of Ed Gein was the inspiration to multiple well-known films. A real-life figure who performed lots of murders in 1950s Wisconsin, who was essentially inspiration to the characters in these feature films: The Silence of the Lambs (1991), The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974) and Psycho (1960). The balance between fact and fiction is shifted in the other direction when a film is based on actual/true events.¹¹

### 3.2.3 Black Hawk Down

This feature film is inspired by actual or true events, which means that some of the scenes or characters are true. The film is based on Mark Bowden series of articles in The Philadelphia Inquirer, which narrated the events of the battle of Mogadishu, in Somali. It is United States effort to capture the warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. Knowing that some of the information is inspired by actual or true events establish truthfulness to the movie. The audience sense that the actors have gone through a great amount of ordeal to shape his or her character as truthful as possible, such as spending weeks on a military base to learn how to become a soldier and how to fight a war. Even though the audience known that some parts of the film is fictional, is still believable because of the knowledge that this war happened and what soldiers go through to reach their goals. If the film had any fictional sequence the viewer might have seen more of Hollywood’s brand of heroism.¹²

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¹⁰ Kemablog.wordpress [13]
¹¹ True Heroes Studio [11]
¹² Black Hawk Down Wikipedia [16]
3.3 Fictional motion pictures

Fictional motion picture is a film that has to be 40 minutes or longer to be considered a movie, according to American Film Institute. But the Screen Actors Guild states it has to be 80 minutes or longer.\(^\text{13}\)

*What is film?*

Every movie is a motion picture, no matter the format, no matter the approach. It's a series of still images. It is seen as a fluid movement, by the human eye and brain, when the images are viewed in rapid succession. It is usually twenty-four images per second. Films are constructed from individual shots, unlike photography or painting, that allow visual elements to rearrange themselves and the viewer’s perspective itself to shift within any composition. When multiple individual shots join to one another in an extended sequence the movie movement extends beyond. Ability for the viewer to move through time and space is when one shot to another transition. By editing, movies have the power to choose what the viewer sees and how that viewer sees it at any given moment.\(^\text{14}\)

Cinema originates from the Lumiere brothers invention *film*. The images, that derives from the celluloid strip, make up motion pictures were originally captured, cut and projected. Movies are simply short for motion pictures. Other then film stock, films are increasingly shot on formats and motion is the essence of the movie medium. Movie is a popular entertainment, mostly to us, a product produced and marketed by a large commercial studio.

Narrative is another basic characteristic in feature-length movies. It means the movies tell fictional stories. Those movies devoted to telling fictional movies came to be dominated when a medium so compatible with narrative is introduced to a culture with an already well-established storytelling tradition. But commercial, feature-length narrative films are only a fraction of the expressive potential of this versatile medium.\(^\text{15}\)

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\(^{13}\) Fictional motion picture Wikipedia [8]

\(^{14}\) *Looking at movies*, p.5 [4]

\(^{15}\) *Looking at movies*, p.3 [4]
Fictional motion pictures are films that tell a fictional or fictionalized story, even or narrative. Convincing the audience that the fiction is real is through help of believable narratives and characters. But also the actors have to persuade the audiences by deliver dialogue and action in a believable way. Cinematic elements such as lighting and camera movement have become increasingly important in these films. Even to maintain a sense of realism, great detail goes into the screenplays of narratives. 16

3.3.1 Da Vinci Code

This movie is a fictional motion picture that struggle with issues around the religion Christianity. It is based on Dan Brown´s book The Da Vinci Code, one of the most successful and controversial novels of our time. The film takes on such subjects like The Holy Grail and The Knights Templar. The audience gets to follow professor Langdon on his journey to solve the murder of his friend, who he is being accused of killing and discovers the truth about Christianity, by explaining historical events that have occurred throughout the years. Ron Howard, who is the director, employs a technique called extrapolation, Dan Brown also uses this technique that simply asks “what if” – What if on Christ’s right side of The Last Supper was in fact a female?

It makes the audience question their own religion and beliefs, and what they thought they knew before watching the movie. Some are determined to believe that what they knew before watching the movie is still accurate and some convert their thoughts and accept what is being said in the film. Because of its adjacent to historical events that are being used in the film, it creates an illusion of what if there is something there the audience hasn't explored. 17

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17 The Hollywood blacklist [15]
3.4 Difference between documentary films and fictional motion pictures

The main difference between these two terms are that fictional feature film is to entertain the audience, to give people an escape but can also be very informative meanwhile documentaries are meant to inform, to confront people with reality the audience. But a key difference between the documentary and fictional feature film is in the filmmaker’s motivation.\textsuperscript{18}

Documentaries are nonfictional films that are using real life as their raw material. They are portraits of reality. Artists and technicians construct uncountable decisions about what story to tell to whom, and for what purpose.\textsuperscript{19}

Social, political and economic issues, or profile a person or place, is some of the subjects documentaries take on.\textsuperscript{18}

“Anyone who believes that every individual film must represent a ‘balanced’ picture knows nothing about either balance or pictures.”

- Edward R. Murrow\textsuperscript{19}

Documentaries are most likely to represent real life and not manipulate storylines. However, often documentaries have to manipulate the information in order to make a film. Some of them are selection of topic, editing and mixing sounds. A problem that can occur often is the decision of how much manipulation is needed for it to be a success. Such example can be seen in the documentary \textit{Nanook of the North}, where the subjects, the Inuit, assumed roles at Robert Flaherty’s, the filmmaker, directions. Which is much like actors in a fiction film. Such as hunt for walrus with a spear was asked of them, which they no longer did, and even portrayed them as ignorant about things they understood. The viewers have shaped the meaning of documentary, by combining their interest and knowledge of the world with how the filmmaker shows it to us.\textsuperscript{19}

Feature film or narrative film is mostly based on fiction or fantasy, such as \textit{Star Wars} (1977), \textit{Day After Tomorrow} (2004) and \textit{Inception} (2010).\textsuperscript{18} Basically all qualities are

\textsuperscript{18} Video University – difference [7]
\textsuperscript{19} Documentary film – \textit{A Very Short Intro}, p.2 [5]
entirely imaginary, fictional or hypothetical. What defines a narrative or fiction film is the inclusion of a series of events in some effect order. Two factors that distinguish narrative films from other categories are: the story presented and the process of its telling, and narration which is often referred to as narrative discourse. The audience constructs a fictional time, place and case through story; which is a series of represented events, characters and action. By adding information based on real events or people creates that drama or impact, which makes the illusion more real. It can also be called docufiction, when fiction film and documentary emerged into one, which fall under the category of narrative film. It’s based on real occurrences, however there are hired actors portraying an adjusted, retelling of the occurrence. By using some kind of artistic expression the fictional situations strengthen the representation of reality. Basically it means that it is a form of a documentary shot in real time, with fictional elements. It is filmed when the events occur and the character plays their own role in real life.

Action is what leads the way in documentaries. It’s neither scripted or reenactment. To follow a story, handheld cameras might be the only way. What happens next may also be unknown, even for the director. Discovery and surprise is a big part of a documentary makers job. Carefully timed and structured mini-climax highlights adds ebb and flow effects to the action. All essential elements are directed in the same direction, which leads the viewer through events with a sense of beginning, middle, dramatic climax and end.

Different to feature film, documentaries are usually less expensive to make. They usually have small crews, single camera set-ups and few if any paid talent, which can cost only a few thousand dollars. The results are effective but often raw and unpolished. In feature film the essential elements can cost millions, such as directors, top stars with top salaries etc. and it can takes years before the product becomes finished. Sometimes even big-star actors participate in documentary making, which is often a huge success. With serious academy award weight, documentaries in fact have become a big box office. Nowadays they can be as controversial as the subjects they cover and often very entertaining. And today some feature films are taking on very serious topics.

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20 Film Reference - Narrative [10]
21 Documentary Wikipedia [9]
### Difference between documentary, fictional motion pictures and docudrama

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documentary</th>
<th>Docudrama</th>
<th>Fictional motion picture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-fiction</td>
<td>Fiction film based on facts</td>
<td>Fictional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retells historical events</td>
<td>Reenactments</td>
<td>Books, novel, events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly reality</td>
<td>Based on or inspired by reality</td>
<td>Fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheap</td>
<td></td>
<td>Expensive</td>
</tr>
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</table>

This table shows a simpler version of the difference between the two categories. To get a deeper insight to the differences, docudrama was added because its big part within the genre: documentary.
4. Result

A combination of many separate, interrelated elements that form a coherent whole is what makes every movie a complex synthesis. Every movie has a meaning, but it is not always easy to recognize the meaning because there are different ways of hiding it. Even for the most diligent viewers movies move too fast. The audience can’t simply pause like when they are reading a book or study a painting to absorb the meaning. To help the audience to recognize and interpret visual information filmmaking pioneers created a film grammar, cinematic language. Immediacy of cinematic language made feature films more a visceral experiences that art had to offer. But it also makes too easy to take movie meaning for granted, which is a problem.

Searching for the meaning can also be clouded by the relatively seamless presentation of visual and narrative information that can be found in most of the movies. Through continuity of lighting, performance, costume, makeup and movement to smooth transitions between shots makes the audience distracted from that presentation. Also minimize the realization that they are watching a highly manipulative artificial reality.

Film is made to entertain its audience. Many filmmakers use the phrase “give them what they want” to help the audience to tap into and reinforce their most fundamental desires and beliefs. Controversial or provocative movies can even be popular, if they manage to trigger emotional reactions.

A majority of the movies have trailers and preview, which can make us create preconceptions about the movie. By a movie’s promotion the influence of expectation extends beyond the kind of anticipation that is generated. It means if their expectations are high or low will determine if the performance will likely be a success or a failure. By a relatively standardized cinematic language and a narrative organized film virtually gives the audience what they expect. Viewer’s interpretation is how feature film affects them. Some expectations can be deceptive, which is also essential to a movie’s success or failure. Such example could be explained if the viewer is a fan of Steven Spielberg and have high expectations when seeing one of his fictional feature films, this viewer is likely to have high expectations and may be disappointed the film didn't live up to its standards. It means that the viewer’s interpretation determined his or her future decision of whether or not to watch any of his films again.
The storytelling of fictional films are strategically designed. French film theorist Christian Metz has argued that all films are fiction films, that they are based by definition of illusion. The illusion is created by two interactions optical and perceptual phenomena, even known as persistence of vision and the phi phenomenon. Basically twenty-four individual still photographs per second are portraying in a fluid, uninterrupted movement. Peter Mark Roget, 1824, explained what the process entailed (the principle of persistence of vision was know as far back as ancient Egypt). He believed that it was caused by the eyes’ ability to remember an image for a fraction of a second after it has been removed from the screen. The brains inability to separate the rapidly changing individual images from each other that caused the phenomenon was demonstrated later through research. Roget’s conclusion showed that instead of discrete images merges into the illusion of motion, persistence of vision works because the brain is receiving too much information too rapidly to process accurately.

This means that illusion of succession is the result of the persistence of vision but viewers also experience the illusion of movement, when figures or objects change their position without actually moving, which is the phi phenomenon. An example can be seen in the movie The Matrix (1999), where Neo is dodging a barrage of bullets.

In documentary filmmaking some degree of accuracy is expected in a story based on reality. Revealing the truth to questions such as what and why is what makes documentary fall into different categories. A certain set of conventions and with its own rights, makes documentary a film genre. It presents us with factual information about reality but still acknowledges that what we are being shown is not necessarily reality itself. It is the filmmaker’s presentation of reality. By taking images from such as news or old footage makes documentaries more serious and honest, which fictional motion pictures cannot do. To successfully impact the audience gets them more engaged in what they are seeing.

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22 A Short History of Film p.1-3 [3]
4.1.1 Result of method

The result of the survey (see appendix 2) shows that majority of my target audience still watch fictional motion pictures and financially contributes to those films. Some even chose the option of watching a fictional motion picture on a Saturday night or at the movies instead of watching a documentary. Meanwhile the outcomes of deciding between nonfiction and fiction documentary are similar to each other, even though one person did not want to answer that question.

The result to the main question audience feel that documentary has not taken over the feature film but some are convinced that we are there, that it has taken over, even though most people think that fiction documentary is not more intriguing then nonfiction.

<table>
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<th>Documentary</th>
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An illustration of the summary that shows more detailed how they answered. See Appendix 1 for more detailed questions.
5. Discussion

Documentations tell stories that are based on reality. Fictional motion pictures are based on stories. I think that these two categories have more in common than we think. It is actually about the filmmaker’s perspective and how he or she wants to portray it. How it affects the audience and how it reflects on their opinions. A film, either one of them, succeeds if it falls into the viewers’ preferences. Financially speaking a film’s income comes from viewers seeing it in cinemas or buying the DVDs. Fictional motion pictures are more expensive and take several years of making it, so the income is essential.

What I meant, when I said that they have more in common, was that these genres are influenced by each other. Nowadays motion picture has become “fiction documentary”. By labeling the films with based on a true story or inspired by actual or true events, this puts the audience in a world where the two categories blend with each other. The audience is invited by elements of intrigue to relate the film to reality and speculate about where the truth ends and storytelling begins.

Looking at the survey most people still watch fictional motion pictures because of the world that they put us in. We can disappear from our fears, emotions and insecurity. We feel love through characters, we feel sad when they die. Some of it may be because of our own experiences we have had throughout our lives.

We have lost people, we have been in love and we have lived through adventures. In my opinion, motion pictures enable us to think that we are experiencing events that we perhaps can’t in real life. What I mean is, for example, we may not have the courage to tell someone that we love him or her, but in the movies we imagine we can. We get to live it through the characters, which may even be more like us than we think.

Documentaries are made to dispense information, to increase people’s knowledge about various subjects; documentaries always make us question what we know. Because it is about truth we have to either believe it or not. If an argument is appealing and maybe even make sense, we tend to believe it. From what I have learnt documentaries do not always tell the entire truth. Even though it is a nonfiction film, they tend to include drama to spice it up.
Docudramas, which are reenacted movies based on reality (true facts), seem more real than documentaries themselves.

So what is true? Has documentaries really taken over? According to the survey the answer is no but in my opinion you have to see it from a holistic perspective. What I mean is because of the blending between these two categories there is really no way of saying that it has taken over. My personal experience is that neither of these categories is dominate to the other. Instead motion picture with the label based on a true story or inspired by actual or true events has become more dominated. These are the ones that sell. They are more believable because of its synopsis, how the story is told throughout the movie. Because of what we go through ourselves we feel more connected to theses movies such as Black Hawk Down and Pearl Harbor. War movies are often movies that are inspired by actual events, which also feel believable by knowing that what they are going through in the movie is real. But they can offend as well, by portraying information falsely. We live in a time where we want to feel connected in some way with what we see on our screens, some even want to see what people went through back in the days. But if we see it from a documentary’s perspective, then yes it has taken over because nowadays more fictional motion pictures use real events as a base. Even if the films only use parts of the real-life events.

What Michael Moore is good at is to show the world where the issue lays and what needs to be done, like in Fahrenheit 9/11, he shows us how president Bush just sits and talks with the children while there is a terrorist attack on the twin towers or when he asks a congressman if he would send his own son to war. Even though he portraits his film in his perspective, that does not mean that it is not true. It is more or less what we think of and wish to ask, at least for some of us. Another Moore documentary, that has not been mentioned, is Bowling to Columbine (2002) takes on the issue of owning guns. He uses raw footage from a security camera that shows us how two boys start shooting and killing several people in their school. The point is that even though he has been portrayed as an angry activist, he asks the essential questions, such as why do we need guns and makes us realize what can happens when you are depressed and able to own a gun because of legislation.
The *Da Vinci Code*, as mentioned before, is a fictional motion picture. It is a movie based on old theories and unrevealed secrets, whether you want to believe it or not, the movie plays with your mind. It is so close to facts yet it is not. Lots of fictional motion picture makes want to live in their world or rather escape our own, and come back when we no longer do not want to be there.

My time at Bautafilm has given me information on how to think when planning a movie. My time there also contributed insight on how to differ between documentaries and fictional films, which was much appreciated when writing this essay.

My only regret was that I did not have much input on what they were working on. It would have been fun to be apart of a project and learning first hand how it works. They did not really have something for me to work with. This lead to a great deal of waiting around, but meanwhile I took the initiative to work with my own project, by leaning towards literature and the Internet for help, and also using what I learnt at Bautafilm.
6. Conclusion

Based on the results (see 4.1.1), my conclusion is that documentary film is not superior to fictional motion pictures. Viewers prefer fictional motion pictures to documentaries based on how films are being portrayed. Even financially, viewers feel that they would spend more money on fictional motion pictures because of the surreal world they create. Worlds that make viewers feel happy, angry or even loved, worlds that take them to other dimensions. Fictional motion pictures are illusions, where the filmmakers can imbed their message. By showing different characters’ perspectives, the storyline might provoke the viewer, and evoke emotions.

The fact that many of the people in my main group chose to watch a movie rather than documentary strengthen my conclusion that documentary is not superior. Documentary has not come to that stage yet, being consider superior to movies. What I think is that they still wants that fictional story. Maybe to know that a documentary is based on fact is hard for people to handle. Truth can be hard, to emotional for people to handle so they chose not to go into the subject. What they do not know would not hurt them. This consider both women and men, in all ages.

Documentary films tell stories, even though they strive for objective, observed veracity. They use real events for inspiration and may even use dramatizing to complete their films. To claim a documentary it has to be nonfiction, by establishing the use of real events. If documentaries take on too much of dramatization it becomes docudrama and loses its credibility of naming it a documentary. It becomes more of a reenacted film, which is what docudrama is about.

Every fictional motion picture can have morale, which documentaries may fail to deliver. Fictional motion pictures can combine fiction and nonfiction, to get through to the audience. They strive to give viewers what they want to see, what they desire to watch. Documentaries can’t to that because of its ethics to be nonfiction, films reflecting reality. Which is the reason why documentaries have not become superior in the industry but however stepped up and becoming more watchable. They have succeeded to form it in a way to either get approval or disapproval from the audience.
However feature film with the labels such as *based on a true story* and *inspired by actual or true events* are more successful than documentaries and have become superior. This raises questions like: are these films documentary or fictional motion pictures? So how can we see the difference between these two categories and decide the superior one. In the end, it is about the filmmaker’s perspective and how he or she wants to show it to us. How he or she portraits the information they have gathered. By investigating these films my conclusion becomes more accurate.
7. Reference

Books


Internet


2014-05-22


Appendix 1
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1q78S6hVCKas8EnMAMeOR4_Ja0LNYBEsQnNU01U0iA-w/viewform

Appendix 2
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AjkdRh7Jdst1dGNxdmRBT19IZ0VTb2RBQ2d5Q3B2NHc&usp=drive_web#gid=0
Appendix

Appendix 1

**Documentary vs movies**

It would be appreciated if you could take your time to answer these questions for my bachelor thesis. Thank you!

**Gender**
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male

**Age**

**Would you rather watch documentary or a movie on a Saturday night?**
- [ ] Documentary
- [ ] Movie

**Would you rather watch a non-fiction documentary or fiction documentary?**
- [ ] Non-fiction
- [ ] Fiction (reenactment film)

**Which one would you rather pay to watch; documentary or movie?**
- [ ] documentary
- [ ] movie

**Do you think that documentary (both fiction/non-fiction) has more or less taken over the movies?**
- [ ] yes
- [ ] no

**Are fiction documentaries more intriguing than non-fiction?**
- [ ] yes
- [ ] no
Appendix 2

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