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The Oscars: Friends and foes for millennials

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Abstract

This study uses a multi-method approach to formulate a theoretical framework of movie experience evaluation based on Millennials' perceived quality of the Academy Awards and the event's relevancy concerning movie characteristics, social media usage, and eWOM-giving. The paper is based on a conceptual framework that theorizes movies as experiences and on the service quality framework. Using national consumer survey data, we present the results of a qualitative conceptual mapping analysis focused on the themes identified by Millennials as recommendations for the Academy Awards to relate and appeal to moviegoers in their age group. The variables that affect Millennial consumers' perceived quality of the Oscars are examined further utilizing a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). The qualitative and quantitative analyses expose the complexity of service, experience, and social factors contributing to Millennials' attitudes towards the Academy Awards and the combination of cues consumers use when evaluating movie experiences: objective features and socially related aspects, reference groups, and indirect traits, such as involvement in social causes.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Since the lights of Hollywood first started to shine, the artists behind the movie industry—writers, producers, directors, actors—and the patrons who watched the films sought a way to determine just which star burned the boldest and brightest. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), also known as the Motion Picture Academy, was formed to fill this need by indicating cinematic greatness (Zhuang et al., 2014). In 1929, they delivered their first rendering with the inaugural Academy Awards ceremony, also known as the Oscars (Kaplan, 2006). For decades, these awards stood unrivalled as the premier event and acknowledgment in the art of filmmaking. Although not always in total accord with spectators' views, award nominations and wins have been held in high enough esteem by consumers to be used as a primary quality evaluation and selling point for movies that have earned them (Zhuang et al., 2014). The movie industry continues to attract the attention of the business world and marketing research and practice, in the pre-launch and diffusion phase, in a feedback loop that includes collaborations, marketing communication, and the depiction of commerce on film—such as the theme of art-versus-commerce (Moon et al., 2016).

However, just as for any market offering, consumer preferences and expectations have evolved, especially in the age of digital marketing and social media. Practitioners and researchers emphasize the acute need to understand customer satisfaction in the film industry to optimize the consumer experience and economic benefits in the short and long term (Douthat, 2022; Lawler, 2022). As the Motion Picture Academy will reach its centenary Academy Awards ceremony within only a few years, it is faced with the need to recover from recent missteps. Criticism mentions a lack of diversity among nominees, overly long shows, the incongruity between nominated movies and their popularity with the public, poor host selections, and performances. Under these circumstances, consumers and professionals have doubts and debates on whether the Oscar statuette is still a relevant symbol of movie quality, considering that ratings for the broadcast have declined every year for four out of the past 5 years, with the 2020–2022 broadcasts being some of the lowest-rated ever (Lawler, 2022). Even more, the “train-wreck” represented by the 2022 edition (Lawler, 2022) has managed to add additional controversy and problems to an already declining event and movie industry (Douthat, 2022). This is bad news, considering that in a dynamic and changing market, general brand

penetration must increase over time to maintain market share, including for stable brands (Graham & Kennedy, 2022).

Of interest are young adult moviegoers' perceptions of the Academy Awards and their use of Oscar awards as signals of movie quality and their experiential needs. Millennials are especially of interest to this industry, considering their propensity to communicate based on visual and creative content and their role as market influencers (Jegham & Bouzaabia, 2022; Viswanathan & Jain, 2013). The Millennial market of adults between 18 and 36 represents a key audience for motion pictures, as this segment counts 38% of frequent moviegoers and contributes 40% of box office sales (Motion Picture Association, 2020). This generational cohort has a significant impact on marketing strategies, considering their large size and buying power (Eastman et al., 2021). While attracting Millennials may be a tall task for marketers, Millennials have the potential to become staunch supporters, co-promoters, and advocates of brands and social causes (Delistavrou et al., 2021). Furthermore, it is even more critical to understand modern consumers' evaluation of movies, given how much money businesses spend on marketing budgets for product placement and advertising in movies (Dens et al., 2012).

Thus, determining the relevancy of the Academy Awards to Millennials and the related cues they use in evaluating movie experiences can represent an asset to the movie industry and consumer behavior research on this topic. This study uses a multi-method approach to formulate a theoretical framework of movie service and experience evaluation based on Millennials' perceived quality of the Academy Awards and their relevancy concerning movie characteristics, social media usage, and eWOM. The paper is based on a conceptual framework that theorizes movies as experiences (Hofmann et al., 2017) and incorporates the service quality framework (Jain & Jain, 2015; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zhuang et al., 2014). We also consider generational cohort theory as a consumer segmentation approach based on similar values and attitudes (Eastman et al., 2021).

Overall, there are four main research and practice contributions brought forward by this study. First, we discuss and analyze the combination of experiential variables that influence Millennial consumers' perceived quality of the Academy Awards. Second, we want to emphasize the most relevant service quality variables that affect the perceived quality of the Oscars. Third, the study clarifies overall the most effective combination of both experiential and service-related factors, adapted to the technological advances and requirements of the Millennials generation. Fourth, this research should also help gain further insights into how Millennials evaluate other experiences, as the identified significant variables could be extrapolated to other contexts and used to appeal to Millennials effectively.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: first, the relevant literature related to movies as experience and the cues consumers use to evaluate their quality is reviewed. Second, we present the results of a qualitative conceptual mapping analysis that examines key concepts and themes identified by Millennials as recommendations for the Academy Awards to relate and appeal to moviegoers in their age group. Third, the variables that affect Millennial consumers' perceived quality of the Academy Awards are examined further by

utilizing a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), answering calls of using asymmetrical approaches as a viable alternative to explain the complexity of consumer decisions and business outcomes (Kumar et al., 2022). Finally, we conclude by discussing the implications for marketing practitioners and scholars and directions for future research.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Consumers ages 18–36 represent approximately 38% of frequent moviegoers and 40% of box office sales (Motion Picture Association, 2020). By holding such a significant portion of the market, these consumers representing the Millennials generation should be a key target market for any company or organization related to the U.S. film industry, with the long-established Motion Picture Academy as no exception. The Academy can begin evaluating its relevancy to Millennials audiences by gauging their perceived service and experience quality levels.

Based on the definition of perceived quality as “the consumer's judgment toward the superiority or excellence of a product,” Zhuang et al. (2011) view “movie award and nomination as the signals of the quality of the movie and make purchase decisions” (p. 4). As one of the three most-watched awards on television, the Oscars have a high potential to be the most influential third-party evaluator for the film industry (Zhuang et al., 2011, 2014). A film earning Oscar nominations and/or awards has been shown to impact box-office revenue and moviegoer evaluation (Zhuang et al., 2014) and can also affect the bottom-line of many brands through celebrity endorsements (Jain & Roy, 2016).

Whether experts' opinions shape consumer perceptions, or consumer voices influence experts' judgment, there is an interdependent relationship between them (Zhuang et al., 2014). Furthermore, young consumers prefer brands endorsed by their favorite T.V. and movie celebrities or watch T.V. shows based on their peers' recommendations (Mishra & Maity, 2021). Therefore, it is essential to establish the critical elements that Millennials consumers use as cues in evaluating and deciding whether a movie represents a high-quality experience and the role played by the Oscars in this framework.

2.1 | Movies as experiences and entertainment services

Consumers look to other sources to validate their judgments, especially when analyzing younger generations and their use of digital platforms (Lim et al., 2021). Organizations and experts (like the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences) become valuable resources to movie attendees. Experts provide benchmarks and guidance on investing consumers' time and money in worthwhile experiences. Examining why consumers choose to see specific movies can place context on the value they perceive and the elements they use to evaluate quality.

Credible signals regarding star performance and movie quality positively influence the perceived calibre of the movie and moviegoer evaluations of this experiential service (Hofmann et al., 2017). Despite personal information searches, moviegoers often still turn to movie reviews and critiques to make decisions. Today, however, they have many more sources of information online than ever before, including eWOM-giving sources as non-commercial communicators (Lim et al., 2022).

In this context, young consumers learn about movies through socialization agents like peers and modern social media (Mishra & Maity, 2021). On the one side of peer interaction, we have the two main forms of peer influence through communication, normative and informational (Bearden et al., 1989). On the other spectrum of information communication, in the context of digital interactions, we identify with the peer group based on the conception of the self, which is essential in virtual community participation and building long-term relationships with the group (Wang et al., 2012). However, the SERVQUAL scale with its five dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988) should be a useful and appropriate tool for assisting in this measurement evaluation. Due to its conciseness, reliability, and validity, the SERVQUAL scale can be used across a broad spectrum of services (Jain & Jain, 2015; Zhuang et al., 2014). Although the importance of the five key service areas may vary as a function of industry characteristics, the SERVQUAL scale can be used to evaluate each primary dimension of service quality (Brady & Cronin, 2001), and therefore provide the highest value to evaluate consumers' positioning of movies and the Academy Awards (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Jain & Jain, 2015; Zhuang et al., 2014).

2.2 | Changing demographics and generational research

Disagreements between expert and consumer opinion as a product of demographics have been a subject of recent concerns, as questions have been raised about the homogenous makeup of the Academy. McCarthy (2015) confronted the alleged race and gender discrimination problem after the 2015 nominations. Considering that 102 Oscar nominees were men and only 25 were women that year, there are clear grounds for accusations of gender inequality. In 2015, the demographics of the Academy's voting members were 94 percent white and 77 percent male. Such an imbalance in representation could create a disconnect for the Academy Awards with diverse audiences. Fischhoff et al. (1998) found that favorite film genres can be an outgrowth of age, race, culture, and gender. Therefore, if demographics are not represented in the Academy, entire film genres can be overlooked or neglected in broader categories (like Best Picture) because of race, age, or gender bias.

Generational cohort theory emphasizes that environmental factors create values that remain stable during the lifetime of a consumer, with less change especially as consumers age (Eastman et al., 2021). Cohorts represent groups of consumers born within the

same period and exhibit similar values, attitudes, and behaviors, based on external events experienced, especially during adolescence and early adulthood (Eastman et al., 2021).

Cone (2008) shows that 61% of Millennials feel it is their responsibility to create a different world and have a civic spirit. While most of them believe that (companies) have the responsibility to join this effort, 83% of Americans will trust a company more if it is socially/environmentally responsible, and 74% are more likely to pay attention to a company's message when they see that the company has a deep commitment to a cause. This aligns with the recent push toward corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is a key antecedent in building trust, loyalty, and brand equity for companies, including those in the entertainment industry (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021). They are native to globalization and the digital revolution and are connected through technologies with their peers, family, and brands (Lim et al., 2021; Petrescu et al., 2018). This generation exhibits a higher propensity to search for information online and use social media sources for information and entertainment (Dobre et al., 2021; Liljander et al., 2015). They are more inclined to use visually creative content and rich visual messages for digital communication and are prone to celebrity influence (Jegham & Bouzaabia, 2022; Viswanathan & Jain, 2013). Millennials propensity towards influencers and celebrity followership is especially interesting, considering the importance of celebrity endorsers and meaning transfer (Jain & Roy, 2016) for and within movie marketing and promotion.

They are oriented toward new technologies in their everyday activities, including work and entertainment (Goldring & Azab, 2021). Furthermore, this generation is also more tolerant and interested in social causes, with a researched need to escape from reality from time to time (Delistavrou et al., 2021).

For the Academy Awards to maintain their richness and encompass the entire film industry, the members should strive for more diverse representation among their voters, especially since Millennials are the most racially/ethnically diverse generation and have different entertainment industry expectations (Johnson & Chattaraman, 2019). Therefore, based on a theoretical framework including service and experiential quality, the following research questions are the focus of our study:

RQ1: Which combination of experiential variables influences Millennials consumers' perceived quality of the Academy Awards?

RQ2: Which combination of service quality variables influences Millennials consumers' perceived quality of the Academy Awards?

RQ3: Which combination of both experiential and service quality variables influence Millennials consumers' perceived quality of the Academy Awards?

Drawing upon our previous discussion, we derive the following conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 1, based on theorizing movies as experiences and the service quality framework to investigate our three research questions in the context of Millennial consumers. The following section presents the methodology for analyzing the conceptual framework based on a qualitative and quantitative survey.

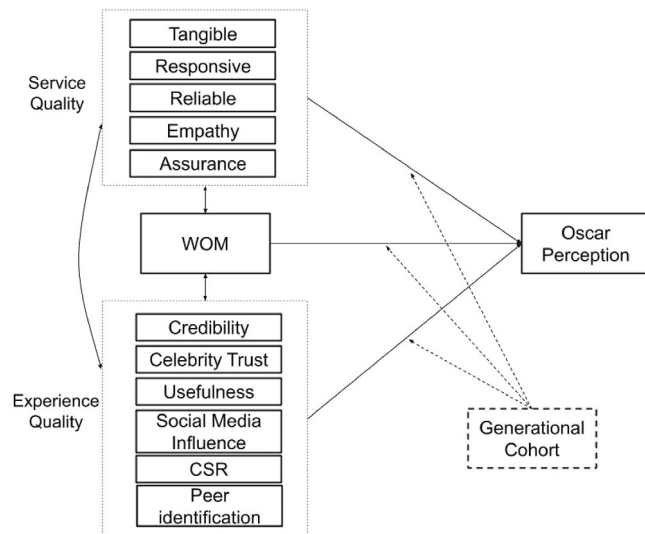


FIGURE 1 Conceptual framework

3 | METHODOLOGY

This section focuses on measuring Millennials' perceived quality of the Academy Awards and which factors impact that perceived quality for this research study. We also want to see if Millennials believe a nod from the Academy adds value or impacts their attitude toward a film. Zhuang et al. (2011) note that “quality is a pivotal part of marketing strategies” and that “industry awards might be effective signals of quality” (p. 11). Frey (2006) proposes that “the higher quality of an award, the more it is held in esteem by an individual's reference group and the population at large” (p. 381). Therefore, determining the perceived quality of the Academy Awards to Millennials will be highly reflective of the awards' relevancy to this generation.

Utilizing the SERVQUAL instrument will most accurately capture Millennials' perceived quality of movies—a service providing an entertainment experience for viewers—and their perceived quality of the Academy Awards—a service evaluating those entertainment experiences (Jain & Jain, 2015; Zhuang et al., 2014). A research survey on the Oscars using SERVQUAL allows participants to think about the awards multi-dimensionally. Consequently, the answers thoroughly assess young adults' perceptions of how well the Academy Awards evaluate movies.

Viewing perceived quality as an attitude provides a conceptual basis to formulate our research design, as we will use the SERVQUAL multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality for participants' views on the Academy Awards. As noted previously, SERVQUAL uses five dimensions to measure the consumer's perception of quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Considering the experiential characteristics of movies, these items lend themselves to our analysis of Millennials' perception of the Academy Awards' quality. Tangibility relates to the nomination or awards given. Reliability reflects the Academy's consistency in selecting exceptional films based on expert opinion. Responsiveness indicates the Academy's sensitivity to the critics' reviews and box

office numbers. Assurance exemplifies that a movie honored by the Academy as a nominee or winner is genuinely excellent. Finally, empathy is the consumer's perception of the Academy's choice regarding popular opinion (Jain & Jain, 2015; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zhuang et al., 2014). The key five dimensions were calculated as the difference between expected and perceived quality, and the measures used are included in Table A1 in the Appendix (Jain & Jain, 2015; Parasuraman et al., 1988).

In addition to the SERVQUAL scale, our survey also includes other measures related to experiential evaluations and outcome quality (Jain & Jain, 2015), measures for the importance of social media, eWOM, and movie characteristics in consumers' selection of movies, as well as personal consumer behavior with movies, and demographics. The questionnaire progresses from general to specific questions—beginning with a section dedicated to the dependent variable, Millennials' perceived quality of the Academy Awards—and then moves to independent variables, which inquire about the respondents' movie consumption behaviors. These include social media usage and eWOM regarding movies and their demographics at the very end. We conceptualize eWOM as eWOM-giving, a post-purchase behavior where consumers share information about their experiences and interpretation of the consumption event, product, or company (Lim et al., 2022). In the Appendix, we incorporated our multi-item measures in Table A1, including the source literature and the factor loadings resulting from an exploratory factor analysis performed, with Varimax rotation.

To test our conceptual model, we distributed an online consumer survey through Qualtrics to a convenience sample of 225 consumers between the ages of 18–34. In time, the Millennial (Generation Y) cohort has received a relative and fluent definition, including consumers born between 1982 and 2000 (Eastman et al., 2021), 1980 and 2000 (Viswanathan & Jain, 2013), and 1978–1992 (Chhateja & Jain, 2014). Therefore, we focused our attention to the core of this generation, aged between 18 and 34, with the caveat that generational cohort labels could be discursively and subjectively produced, often for specific purposes. After eliminating consumers who did not belong to the Millennials age group and missing data, we were left with a final sample of 177 respondents. The correlation and descriptive statistics results for our variables of interest are described in Table 1.

3.1 | Study 1: Qualitative analysis

As we had asked consumers to also respond to an open-ended question related to the Academy Awards, we first performed a qualitative analysis of consumer responses on this topic: “What recommendations would you have for the Academy Awards to relate and appeal to moviegoers in your age group?” We used the Leximancer software to perform a lexical co-occurrence content analysis and create a conceptual map of respondents' key concepts and themes. The analysis is based on a lexical deep learning procedure, using Bayesian learning algorithm, which extracts a three-level network model of concepts, themes,

TABLE 1 Concept prominence scores

Concept	Weight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Movies	194													
2 Entertainment	90	1.12												
3 Time	86	1.38	2.31											
4 Social	66	0.90	0.48	0.81										
5 Media	57	0.90	0.00	0.30	8.97									
6 People	56	0.90	0.22	0.25	2.16	2.40								
7 Actors	54	0.95	0.56	0.32	2.24	1.86	2.03							
8 Relaxation	54	1.39	2.16	1.73	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00						
9 Friends	50	1.79	2.67	3.39	1.19	0.00	0.00	0.70	2.70					
10 Hosts	48	0.90	0.26	0.30	2.64	2.93	0.96	3.10	0.00	0.00				
11 Information	42	1.49	3.96	3.17	0.79	0.00	2.16	0.93	3.60	2.97	0.00			
12 Age	38	1.02	0.68	0.00	0.68	1.51	1.23	4.79	0.00	0.00	3.02	0.00		
13 Younger	33	0.80	0.00	0.60	3.17	3.52	1.92	6.21	0.00	0.00	2.35	0.00	6.03	
14 Viewers	32	0.54	0.95	0.54	3.80	4.22	2.59	1.12	0.00	0.00	2.11	0.00	5.43	4.22

and semantic patterns from natural language (Krishen et al., 2019). The prominence score represents the joint probability divided by the product of the marginal probabilities and is presented in Table 2. A prominence score of >1.0 indicates that the co-occurrence happens more often than chance (Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

The results in Figure 2 include a visual representation of the central concepts discussed by consumers and how they are related based on an unguided content analysis emulator, which replaces manual coding procedures with algorithms, machine learning, and statistical processes (Krishen et al., 2019; Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

The conceptual mapping results emphasize consumer focus on the entertainment and the relaxation side of the Academy Awards show, including the movies and actors nominated. Regarding the awards show, consumers also mention the importance of choosing the right host and—one of the subjects that have been under discussion recently—the length of the ceremony. The social side of this entertainment option is exhibited in mentions of watching the show and discussing it with friends, and checking information about it on social media, confirming previous research findings on word-of-mouth and consumer opinions (Kim et al., 2013; Zhuang et al., 2014).

The qualitative analysis also emphasizes other variables related to the social aspect, such as peer identification, social media influence, and WOM giving, as well as variables related to the actual movies, including themes of social responsibility, credibility, celebrity trust, and usefulness (Hofmann et al., 2017). These are some of the variables further used in the quantitative analysis to refine the main factors that affect the quality evaluation of the Academy Awards, both from the service/experience quality angle and based on social aspects.

3.2 | Study 2: Quantitative model refinement

After an exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis of the items and their scales, a fsQCA analysis was performed, which enables the

analysis of causal complexity and association between variables (2015; Berezan et al., 2018). This asymmetrical technique can better predict and explain real-world phenomena based on an objective, statistically informed configurational approach (Kumar et al., 2022). The method is especially relevant in the context of calls for better consumer behavior prediction and assessment of affective and cognitive evaluations (Lim & Weissmann, 2021).

This analysis is based on Boolean algebra and evaluates specific combinations of causal conditions associated with an outcome rather than a single condition. It helps identify complex combinations of causal conditions, despite a limited diversity and asymmetric relations of real-life data (Pappas & Woodside, 2021). Important assumptions of fsQCA include equifinality—several routes can lead to the same outcome, asymmetry—relationships between independent and dependent variables are treated as nonlinear, and causal complexity—a case might show different causal paths that are all sufficient for the outcome (Kumar et al., 2022; Pappas & Woodside, 2021).

In the first step of the analysis, we calibrated the data in a fuzzy set based on the 90, 50, and 10th percentile, representing the anchors for full membership, crossover point, and non-membership (Pappas & Woodside, 2021). This way we transformed the data into the log-odds metric with all values being between 0 and 1; nevertheless, we did not use exactly 1 and 0 as break-points because the two membership scores would correspond to positive and negative infinity, respectively, for the log of the odds, instead, we used percentiles (Pappas & Woodside, 2021). Then, we performed a necessary conditions analysis to produce consistency and coverage scores for individual conditions and for external versus internal conditions that are of interest to us (Kumar et al., 2022). We checked the consistency values for the necessary and sufficient conditions, with a recommended cutoff point of 0.75 to expect good coverage and a significant solution, as shown in Table 3 (Alonso-Dos-Santos et al., 2018; Skarmeas et al., 2018).

TABLE 2 Correlations and descriptive statistics

Variables	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Tangible	0.89	1.12											
2 Responsive	0.90	1.00	.570**										
3 Reliable	1.11	1.10	.524**										
4 Empathy	−0.25	1.37	.236**	.197**									
5 Assurance	1.01	1.12	.470**	.415**	.613**	.334**							
6 Credibility	3.42	0.73	−.264**	−.268**	−.423**	−.310**	−.384**						
7 Celebrity Trust	3.11	0.70	−0.118	−0.070	−.284**	−.171*	−.262**	.471**					
8 Usefulness	3.33	0.79	−.328**	−.199**	−.314**	−.217**	−.292**	.599**	.484**				
9 Social Media	3.46	0.99	0.007	−0.072	−.179*	−0.075	−0.142	.258**	.272**	.389**			
10 CSR	2.96	0.96	−0.064	−.161*	−.174*	−.194**	−.233**	.319**	.317**	.320**	.242**		
11 Peer Ident	3.60	0.81	0.027	0.094	−0.083	−0.070	−.204**	.153*	0.127	.226**	.387**	.154*	
12 WOM Giving	3.12	0.94	−.217**	−.168*	−.349**	−.281**	−.301**	.479**	.359**	.552**	.285**	.370**	.227**
13 Oscar Perception	3.61	0.67	−.213**	−.210**	−.272**	−.217**	−.283**	.575**	.352**	.552**	.343**	.310**	.263**
													.545**

Abbreviations: CSR, corporate social responsibility; Peer Ident, peer identification.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results presented in Table 3 emphasize the significant role of most variables of interest as necessary and sufficient conditions that influence consumers' attitudes toward the Academy Awards. The variables with consistency values of at least 0.75 and good coverage of at least 0.4 are emphasized as significant influencers of our dependent variable (Alonso-Dos-Santos et al., 2018).

However, what interests us more (and is possible thanks to the fsQCA analysis), is the combination of variables that influences consumers' attitudes toward the Oscars. For this, we performed a truth table analysis, as shown in Table 4. Again, the focus is on finding the significant variables or combination of variables with consistency levels higher than 0.75, coverage, and coverage above 0.4 that affect attitude toward the Oscars. The results emphasize the complex combinations of variables that, as expected, would not have been discovered in classical, correlation-based analyses. Table 4 shows the best models explaining the dependent variable attitude toward the Academy Awards, including a combination of elements related to service quality, social variables, and movie characteristics.

As discussed in our conceptual framework and research questions, the experience and service quality-related variables and how they work together/separately to influence entertainment consumption are of significant interest to us in the context of Millennial consumers. The significant combinations emphasized in Table 4 support our expectations in RQ3 that experience and service complement each other in the evaluation of movie entertainment quality and socially related aspects. Moreover, the results of the fsQCA analysis show that, even in the absence of some critical aspects of service quality, such as assurance, responsiveness, or tangibility, experiential aspects can complement and substitute for providing a positive outcome for consumers.

4 | DISCUSSION

4.1 | Theoretical implications

The qualitative analysis of consumer evaluations of the Oscar ceremonies revealed that viewers use different factors when discussing movie quality and helped explore the research questions we formulated related to the role of experiential and service-related variables in the proposed theoretical framework. These variables include objective attributes related to the Oscar show and movies—such as length, hosts, and celebrities, as well as social attributes, including peer identification, social media influence, and WOM-giving. Moreover, they also mention factors related to service quality, such as empathy and responsiveness to the audience's preferences. As emphasized in Figure 3, the qualitative comments received from respondents reflect the combination of experiential and service quality-related side of entertainment expected from our theoretical framework and the social aspect of consuming this type of entertainment. As discussed in our review on changing demographics and generational research, the quantitative analysis, complemented by the qualitative study, shows the importance of product, experience, and social quality to consumers from the so-called “Starbucks generation” (Lim et al., 2021; Petrescu et al., 2018). This contributes to the

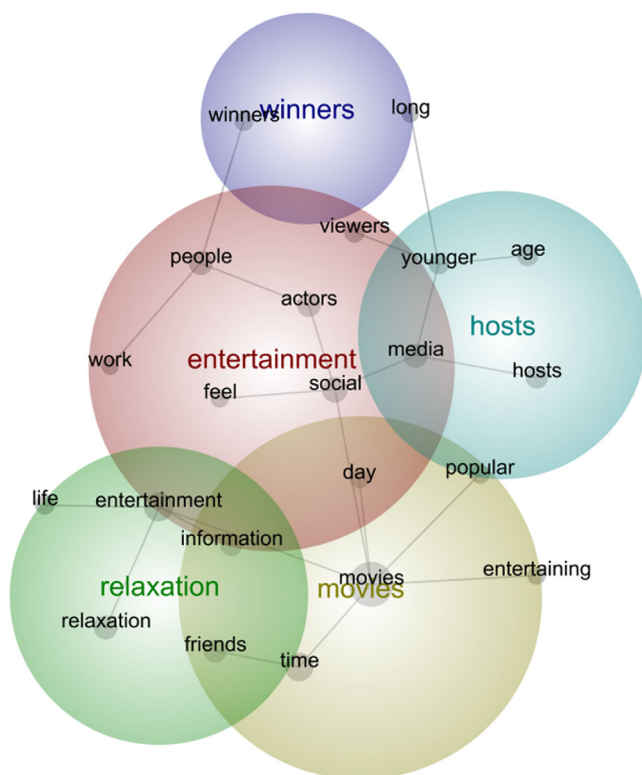


FIGURE 2 Conceptual mapping results [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

TABLE 3 fsQCA necessary conditions analysis

Necessary conditions		
Variable	Consistency	Coverage
Tangible	0.568	0.981
Responsive	0.563	0.983
Reliable	0.534	0.988
Empathy	0.763	0.962
Assurance	0.553	0.989
Credibility	0.902	0.954
Celebrity Trust	0.832	0.969
Usefulness	0.879	0.958
Social Media Influence	0.862	0.926
Social Responsibility	0.764	0.960
Peer Identification	0.901	0.915
WOM Giving	0.825	0.972

Note: The values in bold represent significant consistency values over 0.75 and coverage over 0.9.

clarification of Millennial consumer preferences in the customer experience and service-quality theoretical framework and emphasizes the specific needs of this generational cohort, a mix of high-quality content and form, with essential social media communication, for a generation sandwiched between the more conservative Generation X and the highly visual and tech-oriented Generation Z.

TABLE 4 Truth table analysis complex solution

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Tangible	●	●	○	●	●
Responsive	●	○	○	●	●
Reliable	●	●	●	●	●
Empathy	●	○	●	●	●
Assurance	○	●	●	●	●
Credibility	●	●	●	●	●
Celebrity trust	○	●	●	●	●
Usefulness	●	●	●	●	●
Social media influence	●	●	●	●	○
Social responsibility	●	●	●	○	●
Peer identification	●	●	●	●	●
WOM giving	●	●	●	●	●
Raw coverage	0.414	0.417	0.429	0.409	0.402
Unique coverage	0.002	0.003	0.010	0.003	0.002
Consistency	1	1	1	1	1
Solution coverage	0.725				
Solution consistency	0.982				

Note: ●, Condition present/high levels; ○, Condition absent/low levels.

Note: D.V: Oscar Perceptions; frequency cutoff: 1, consistency cutoff: 0.98.

The findings in the initial qualitative analysis complement and complete the quantitative analysis of survey data, which emphasizes the complex model of factors that young consumers consider when forming their attitudes toward the Academy Awards. First, they focus on the critical service quality variables, confirming their importance in evaluating movies as experiential products based on tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Jain & Jain, 2015; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zhuang et al., 2014). However, in today's interconnected digital world, these characteristics are not enough to influence consumer attitudes, as they work in combination with variables related to social influence—such as WOM-giving and peer influence—as well as related stakeholder characteristics, including social responsibility (Zhuang et al., 2014).

The qualitative and quantitative analysis exposes the interrelationships and complexity of factors contributing to Millennials' attitudes towards the Academy Awards and their experiential characteristics, and the need to reframe the theoretical model for entertainment delivery, form, and content. As the results show, Millennial consumers consider the Motion Picture Academy's objective features and its promoted movies and service and socially related aspects, including reference groups and indirect traits, such as involvement in social causes. As expressed in our three main research questions, these findings come to show the essential experiential and service quality aspects that are essential for Gen Y consumers in the context of entertainment products, and underline for marketing theory and practice essential combinations of service, experience, and social traits.

For researchers, the findings highlight the need to rethink not only the theoretical framework of entertainment content delivery but

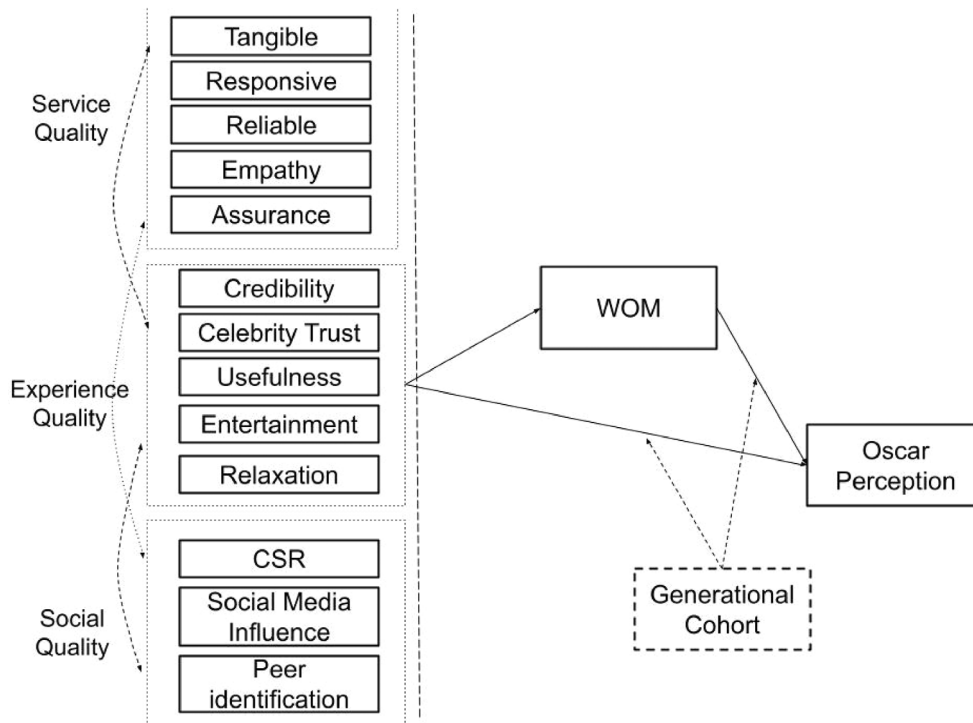


FIGURE 3 Research findings. Figure 3 is based on theoretical information conceptualized in Figure 1, as well as the findings of this study.

also how this model is analyzed in the context of asymmetrical frameworks. The useful application of fsQCA in the analysis of our conceptual framework emphasizes the complex relationships present in consumer behavior and presents a step forward for asymmetrical models, as mentioned by previous studies (Kumar et al., 2022).

4.2 | Managerial implications

These findings have important implications for marketing scholars and practitioners alike. Practitioners can use this new framework of entertainment consumption for Millennials, reflecting a combination of key experiential, service, and social characteristics, in the formulation of their marketing communication strategies, as well as for service innovation purposes. Moreover, the significance of variables related to social aspects—such as peer identification, social media influence, eWOM, social responsibility, credibility, and celebrity trust—demonstrates the importance of establishing a social connection and co-participation with Millennial audiences to increase their perceived quality of the Academy Awards and obtain their viewership.

Additionally, one of the recommendations of Millennials identified in our qualitative study was selecting the right host. This is an exciting aspect given that the Oscars have not had a dedicated host for three out of their last four awards ceremonies, all of which received poor ratings. Therefore, it would be wise for producers to ensure the right host is selected for next year's awards. Moreover, our findings can be expanded to the management of other similar entertainment events with important experiential and service components. As our study also revealed the importance of factors related to service quality, this also represents an important practical implication for Academy Award

producers to treat the broadcast as an experiential service for viewers and ensure that each service dimension is handled accordingly.

5 | CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This research sought to examine Millennials' perceived quality of the Academy Awards. In doing so, several contributions for marketing practitioners and researchers were made. For instance, the study identified several factors that impact the Academy Awards' quality perceptions, representing actionable insights that can be utilized to improve the broadcast and appeal to younger viewers. In addition, by helping to determine the relevancy of the Academy Awards to Millennials, our research could also help to serve as a critical market analysis for the Oscars' future. Moreover, the information should be an asset to movie marketers and distributors and the Academy itself, as it helps to provide insights into young adults' views and behaviors about the movie industry.

Given the Millennial generation's proclivity for frequent movie attendance, it is a consumer group that the film industry needs to keep in touch. Furthermore, if the Motion Picture Academy wishes to preserve its Oscars' legacy and marketers desire to use that brand's recognition as a selling point for future films, it must adequately understand and appeal to this crucial consumer group. We believe our study helps in working towards this understanding.

Moreover, this research paper answers the call for greater research using fsQCA (Kumar et al., 2022), and contributes to this area by extending it to model asymmetrical consumer behavior and market segmentation based on generational cohorts. Finally, this research should also help gain further insights into how Millennials evaluate

other experiences, as the identified factors could be extrapolated to other contexts and used to appeal to Millennials effectively.

Although several insights and implications can be drawn from this research, it is not without limitations. First, the study's sample consisted of US residents only; therefore, its results cannot be generalized beyond the United States. Future research could replicate this study in an international or cross-cultural context to see if the uncovered results are maintained and especially to focus on ethnic and cultural differences in entertainment consumption of American products. At the same time, our findings could be expanded in the generational cohort theoretical framework by considering additional psychographic elements, considering the potentially discursive and subjective labeling of generations, as well as the evolution of their values and preferences over time.

In addition, the study conducted was cross-sectional. It would be interesting to see if a future longitudinal study would reveal similar findings. Moreover, while our study identified several essential constructs that contribute to Millennials' determination of the perceived quality of the Academy Awards, there is still a need for further refinement of a theoretical framework. Therefore, future research could examine other relationships and constructs to determine what other variables also come into play regarding the Academy Awards' perceived quality among younger generations. Finally, considering the importance of social media and peer/influencer communication for modern consumers, we also recommend greater focus on both eWOM-giving, as well as eWOM-receiving in the context of the entertainment industry.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE A1 Measurement scales

	Measure	Loading
	Oscar credibility (adapted from Ohanian, 1990; Reichelt et al., 2014)	
Credibility1	The Academy Awards are trustworthy	0.772
Credibility2	The Academy Awards are credible	0.713
Credibility3	The Academy Awards are honest	0.773
Credibility4	The Academy Awards are professional	0.580
Credibility5	The Academy Awards are ethical	0.653
	Celebrity trustworthiness (adapted from Ohanian, 1990; Liljander et al., 2015)	
CelebTrust1	Celebrities are: - Untrustworthy: Trustworthy	0.744
CelebTrust2	Celebrities are: - Not Credible: Credible	0.692
CelebTrust3	Celebrities are: - Unethical: Ethical	0.763
CelebTrust4	Celebrities are: - Insincere: Sincere	0.807
CelebTrust5	Celebrities are: - Dishonest: Honest	0.796
	Usefulness (adapted from Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Crowley et al., 1992)	
Useful1	The Academy Awards are: - Useless: Useful	0.668
Useful2	The Academy Awards are: - Worthless: Worthwhile	0.731
Useful3	The Academy Awards are: - Unhelpful: Helpful	0.718
Useful4	The Academy Awards are: - Harmful: Beneficial	0.653
	Social media influence (adapted from Moschis & Moore, 1979, 1982; Benmoyal-Bouzaglo & Moschis, 2010)	
SocialInfluence1	How often do: You and your friends/followers on social media talk about things you saw in movies?	0.845
SocialInfluence2	You and your friends/followers on social media talk about movies you saw?	0.846
SocialInfluence3	Friends/Followers on social media post about new movies they saw?	0.778
SocialInfluence4	You tell or send your friends/followers on social media information about new movies you saw?	0.758
	Social Responsibility (adapted from Torelli et al., 2009, 2012)	
CSR1	Rate the extent to which the following values are associated with the Academy Awards: - Social Justice	0.846
CSR2	Rate the extent to which the following values are associated with the Academy Awards: - Equality	0.800
CSR3	Rate the extent to which the following values are associated with the Academy Awards: - Environmental Protection	0.743
	Peer identification (adapted from Algesheimer et al., 2005; Weng et al., 2012)	
PeerIdent1	I am very attached to my peer group on social media	0.798
PeerIdent2	My peers on social media and I share the same interests	0.480
PeerIdent3	The friendships I have with my peers on social media mean a lot to me	0.770
	WOM Giving (adapted from Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002, 2003)	
WOM1	How likely would you be to do any of the following? Say positive things about the Academy Awards to friends, relatives, or other people	0.747
WOM2	Recommend the Academy Awards to friends, relatives, or other people	0.854
WOM3	Mention favorable things about the Academy Awards to friends, relatives, or other people	0.770
	Attitude toward the Oscars (adapted from Dens et al., 2012)	
Attitude1	I enjoy watching Academy Award nominated movies	0.543
Attitude2	I do not regret watching Academy Award nominated movies	0.607
Attitude3	I'm glad I watch Academy Award nominated movies	0.599
Attitude4	The acting in Academy Award nominated movies is good	0.799
Attitude5	The stories in Academy Award nominated movies are good	0.827
Attitude6	Academy Award nominated movies are good movies	0.769
	SERVQUAL (adapted from Parasuraman et al., 1988)	
Tangible1	The Academy Awards should be enjoyable and entertaining to watch	
Responsive1	The Academy Awards should be up-to-date and informative	
Reliable1	The Academy Award nominees and winners should be deserving of their titles	
Empathy1	The Academy Awards should reflect my personal opinion on films	
Assurance1	The Academy Awards should be an accurate evaluation of excellence in the movie industry	
Tangible2	The Academy Awards are enjoyable and entertaining to watch	
Responsive2	The Academy Awards are up-to-date and informative	
Reliable2	The Academy Award nominees and winners are deserving of their titles	
Empathy2	The Academy Awards are reflective of the general public's opinion on films	
Assurance1	The Academy Awards are an accurate evaluation of excellence in the movie industry	