

Colorado Theater Massacre:
Cinemark, Century 16 Theater Shooting
Reputation Paper
Masc. 675

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Introduction

An incident heard all around the world; the movie theater massacre of July 20th, 2012 will always be remembered as one of the most significant events in the history America. During the premiere of the much anticipated feature film, “The Dark Knight Rises,” shooter James Holmes fired gun shots into an unsuspecting crowd of moviegoers. The tragedy left families grieving over the loss of loved ones and many more struggling to survive. This random shooting incident is pulling people across the world together to console the Aurora, Colorado community, because it could have been anyone.



Problem Statement

Cinemark's Century 16 Theater has taken a serious reputation blow, since the early morning premiere of "The Dark Knight Rises" on July 20th, 2012. During the premiere a random mass shooting occurred in which twelve moviegoers were killed and fifty-eight others were injured. The theater quickly went from being viewed as a center point of a community engagement to the site of massacre. The comfort which Century 16 once provided to its customers is now shattered and must be regained after (investigation is over and) the theater re-opens.



Research Analysis

Since the early 1900's the movies have been a common ground for those of all different walks of life to come together and watch highly awaited films (*History of Film*). A wide range of people are attracted to what a typical movie theater setting has to offer: those going on dates, those going on family outings, and those who just enjoy movies. It's designed to be comfortable for the film viewer with concessions readily available and a massive screen fit for everyone in the theater to see.

Theater company Cinemark Holdings owns 298 theaters country-wide, one of which being Century 16 Movie Theater in Aurora, Colorado (*Cinemark Theaters*). Just as in many cities throughout America, Century 16 was a landmark in the community; residents of all types joined together to watch feature films.

On the early morning of July 20th, 2012 the reputation of the Century 16 Movie Theater would forever be changed. During the much anticipated premiere of "The Dark Knight Rises" shooter James Holmes entered into the theaters emergency exit clad in protective tactical gear (*Pearson*). He threw a smoke bomb amongst the crowd. Most attending the Cinemark Theater thought it was an extra stunt to enhance the movie (*Questions*). Holmes fired off a round of bullets into the air and then proceeded to shoot into the crowd.

As the situation became seriously violent, moviegoers tried to run for their lives. Friends tried to rally up and run out while boyfriends shielded their girlfriends from the open fire. Some hovered by their wounded party while trying to dial 911 (*The Whitehouse Blog*). Others reported that as people tried to flee the theater Holmes followed them and shot at them from close range (*Questions*). One bullet, which fired through the wall to an adjacent theater, hit an out of town student in the arm (*Interview*).

Research Analysis

When authorities arrived they arrested Holmes in the parking lot of Century 16. This innocent movie experience had turned into a disaster, leaving twelve dead and fifty-eight injured. Many are left mourning over their loved ones, the youngest being six and the oldest being fifty-one. Some of the dead being mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, sisters, brothers, daughters, sons, boyfriends, and girlfriends; the memory of their lives lost in this tragic event will never be forgotten.

Lee and Palmeri note that the massacre attracted international attention as theaters all over the world heightened their security level. Various red carpet premieres (Paris, France) and press conferences were cancelled. Individuals & organizations from all over poured out their condolences on the incident.

Many different organizations and representatives involved expressed their shock and sympathy to the situation, including Cinemark President & CEO Tim Warner (*Freeman*). Warner spoke of crying in the wake of the devastating event but reinforced that James Holmes was an “isolated, deranged gunman who had access to really high power.” From Barack Obama to the Director and Cast of “The Dark Night Rises,” many influential leaders and celebrities also reached out to show support during this time of mourning.

The nation witnessed a sudden rise of theater security due to various state officials trying to prevent the instance of a “copy-cat” incident. According to reports by CNN, states and cities such as Los Angeles, Dallas, New York, Tampa Florida, New Orleans, and the District of Columbia all released statements on their action to increase theater security (*Staff*).

Research Analysis

As for the public watching in on the Aurora, Colorado theater shooting, opinions vary as to whether or not they feel comfortable returning to the movies again. Online business source BusinessTimes.com reported “The Dark Knight Rises would hit gross ticket sales in the neighborhood of \$185 million to \$195 million over the three-day weekend (*Shooting*)”. The site later reported that “the film grossed an estimated US \$162 million in showings through Sunday,” after the uproar of the shooting.

In an interview with CNN, Thais Mills of New Orleans said “I just feel like now the movie theater is, it’s just not a place of peace.” Mills had previously bought her tickets for her and her seven year-old niece but changed her mind after the shooting occurred. She further said “think about how vulnerable you are. You’re in a dark room sitting next to people you don’t know. Until something is concocted that can ensure my safety, I just feel more comfortable at the house (*Goldberg and Gast*)”.

In an independent interview with local Richmond, Virginia videographer and film enthusiast William Arenas, he stated “the shooting in Colorado is very tragic, however, its one incident. Those further away from the situation shouldn’t live in fear further missing out on a great production (*The Dark Knight Rises.*)”

In the aftermath of the Colorado massacre deciding ‘whether or not to go to the movies’ is definitely hot table talk discussion. Movie theaters which were once seen as a place of safety and comfort are not as highly revered as before.



Research Analysis

If millions of residents from other states and cities feel this un-ease then surely the Aurora, Colorado community is feeling uncomfortable with visitation of movie theaters. As stated by Aurora resident Calee Grabinski when interviewed by Alisa Becerra of FOX40, “it’s ever more important to reach out, it’s automatic in a tragedy like this to be afraid.”

Considering an independent survey conducted I on Facebook via Survey Monkey, 61% (eight of thirteen) of those who took the survey agreed that the theater should not close its doors yet, heighten its security. Of the 13 anonymous people who took the survey, four people said “yes” (30%) and seven (53%) said “maybe” to attending the Century 16 Theater after it’s re-opening. Further indicating that Century 16 should not close its doors but strive to regain its positive place in the community.

The reputation of the comfort Cinemark’s Century 16 Movie Theater once offered its residents has now been jeopardized and will need to undergo a cautious strategy coupled with genuine tactics in order to reach it’s over-arching goal of regaining its moviegoers and the reputation of comfort it offered its surrounding community both as a theater and now a massacre landmark.



Strategy

While the investigation and mourning ceremonies are still going on the theater should remain closed to the public. The estimated time of closure suggested would be six months from July 20th (January, 20th 2013) in order to give the families, friends, and community of those lost time to grieve. During this time immense planning & construction will undergo to re-establish a sense of comfort for Century 16 through campaigns, memorials, and outreach. By the one year anniversary of this tragic event (July 20th, 2013) Century 16 will have regained (if not exceeded) its previous amount of theater attendees as by re-establishing the comfort it once established within the Aurora, Colorado community. As well as established the theater as an active community involved historic landmark. This will be measured by the progress of tactics to be implemented.



Tactics

The first tactic in revitalizing the feeling of comfort to past and future Century 16 moviegoers would be to create and execute a campaign to show the public and surrounding community how the theater will be renewed. The campaign will include a Century 16 Memorial Fund, in which proceeds will go towards the re-construction of the theater to be turned into a museum. Also, plans for new security measures and procedures and the Century 16 memorial fund will be included in the campaign, released via press releases and news conferences. Inside privileges such as giving the public an inside view on certain aspects of the new museum before its opening to the holding a private ceremony at the museum (before its opening) for the friends and family of those lost, will be granted to the Aurora community so they begin to feel connected to its new addition.

The second tactic implemented would be actually opening the theater and memorial to the public, on January 20th, 2013 on behalf of those killed in the tragic shooting a year prior. Being that there is nothing Cinemark Holdings can do to change the association Century 16 will have with this occurrence, the best route for the company and theater to take would be to embrace the situation by remembering those lost. By doing so, this will bring a sense of comfort to the families, friends, and community of Aurora that are already going through tough times dealing with their loss.

The exact theater of Century 16 in which the shootings occurred should become a historical museum for the memory of those who died. It should be designed in a way in which it's still a stadium style theater setting where museum visitors can walk the aisle and view picture and biographies on those died during the viewing.



Tactics

The rest of the theaters of Century 16 should remain open for public viewing of feature films. At first this will seem awkward but over time the theater and historical museum will regain its following through its nobility in embracing its past.

The third tactic would be for the Cinemark to engage its newly opened Century 16 Theater with the public of Aurora, Colorado by having at least one charity event on the site grounds per month. In order to relieve tension or fear of returning to the theater after the incident, positive community events should be held on the grounds of the theater. Linking up with various charities in the community to hold fun fundraising events will bring about good memories for the community to remember the theater is involved in, in spite of the tragedy, further regaining the movie theaters comfort from its stakeholders



Measurements

The progress of Century 16 will be measured a number of ways, including: surveys, museum & movie ticket sales, and community engagement. Upon the opening of the Theater/Museum moviegoers and museum attendees will be given a link to a survey on the bottom of their receipts and movie stubs. Employees working cash registers will be trained beforehand to specifically insist that guest complete the survey. The survey will offer a weekly randomized drawing for free movie passes as incentive for attendees to complete the survey. Surveys will include questions about comfort, safety, and interest in the museum. The data collected will be analyzed on a monthly basis to ensure that community satisfaction is high.

Museum and movie ticket movie sales will also serve as an indicator of the comfort level the surrounding community of Aurora has with the newly reopened site. If museum and ticket sales are high it is an indicator that Century 16 guest are not as much uncomfortable with the tragic event that occurred, but more so pleased with the measures Cinemark has taken to re-open the theater. Museum and ticket sales will be closely monitored and analyzed on a bi-weekly basis.

Community engagement feedback will also serve as measurements for the progress of Century 16 regaining the comfort approval of its publics. By holding at least one charity event on the grounds of the movie theater a month, Century 16 will stay current amongst the philanthropic scene in Aurora, Colorado, thus creating great charity and community feedback.



Conclusion

By the one year anniversary of the tragedy, Cinemark's Century 16 Movie Theater will have re-gained the number of monthly movie attendees (if not exceeded the goal) through tactics and measurement that help re-gain and assess the level of comfort of attendees from January, 20th, 2013 to July 20th, 2013.

The tragic massacre that killed twelve and injured fifty-eight will never be forgotten. Yet, remembered through the efforts of Cinemark Holding's Century 16 Movie Theater embracing the event and moving forward with positive engagement to restore its presence of comfort in the Aurora, Colorado community.



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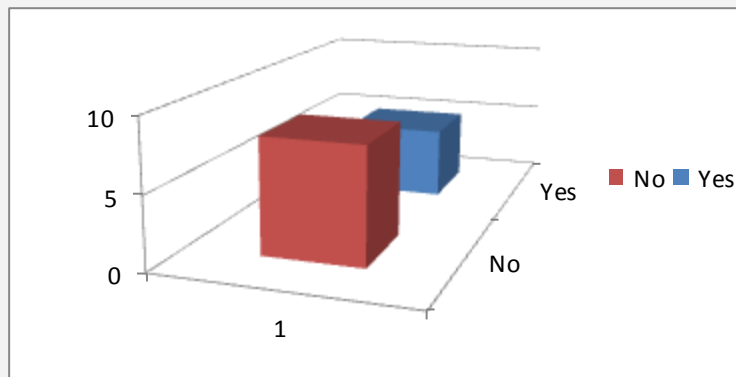
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Appendix

Independent Survey conducted on Facebook via Survey Monkey

Question 7. Do you think Cinemark's Century 16 Theater (place of the shooting) should be shut down indefinitely? Yes or No?



Question 8. If you were part of the Aurora, Colorado community, would you attend the Century 16 Theater after it's re-opening? Yes, No, or Maybe?

