

X versus Reality: X posts were 1200% more negative about “The Odyssey” than real audience reactions

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ABSTRACT: This follow-up study from Montclair State University researchers in the Joetta Di Bella and Fred C. Sautter III Center for Strategic Communication in the College of Communication and Media shows that sentiment on X about the film “The Odyssey” was 1200% more negative than the views of verified audience members. This reflects an even greater gap than the Center’s previous studies of recent political elections where high levels of negativity about specific candidates were inconsistent with voter behavior. Similarly, contributing factors to the gap seen in sentiment about “The Odyssey” may include the volume of specific ideological accounts, bot-based activity, and overall platform

infrastructure/algorithms. Results were based on analysis of 34,914 posts on X made from 7/9/2026 to 7/14/2026; the period immediately prior to “Odyssey” film screenings. Posts where sentiment could be identified were 39% negative, while verified audience reviews on the aggregation site Rotten Tomatoes were only 3% negative. This is especially noteworthy considering the film’s massive global audience and \$264.1 million opening weekend box office numbers. Results are consistent with previous studies from the Joetta Di Bella and Fred C. Sautter III Center for Strategic Communication that show a wide gap between X content and real-world beliefs, opinions, and behaviors.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Historically, Twitter was a significant social media space for the discussion of cultural topics and themes. In 2022, Twitter was purchased by Elon Musk and renamed X with a host of controversial alterations to the platform’s previous iteration (Benton et al., 2022; Bond, 2022; Dang, 2022; Lorenz, 2022). More recently, the authenticity of many ideologically focused accounts has been called into question (CBS News, 2025; Sardarizadeh et al., 2025; Yerushalmy, 2025). This is in addition to ongoing concerns about the proliferation of bot-based and AI-based accounts on X (Rothke, 2025; Taylor, 2023). Cumulatively, these items raise

questions about the extent to which activity on X reflects authentic, real-world sentiment.

X VERSUS REALITY: RESEARCH METHOD

As this study is a continuation of research previously conducted about the schism between X sentiment and real-world behavior, it is important to contextualize the approach utilized. Substantial scholarship suggests that visibility of a topic or theme in social media can affect consumer behavior (Oumayma, 2019). Social media content has also been shown to affect and reflect popular opinion and actions (Ahmad et al., 2024; Digrazia et al., 2013). That said, the items previously noted about X may indicate a growing cleavage between authentic public sentiment and platform activity. A topic of current cultural discussion is Christopher Nolan's film "The Odyssey" with discourse on X frequently framing the film in a negative fashion related to casting choices and perceived historical authenticity (Barber, 2026). With that in mind, the following exploratory questions emerge:

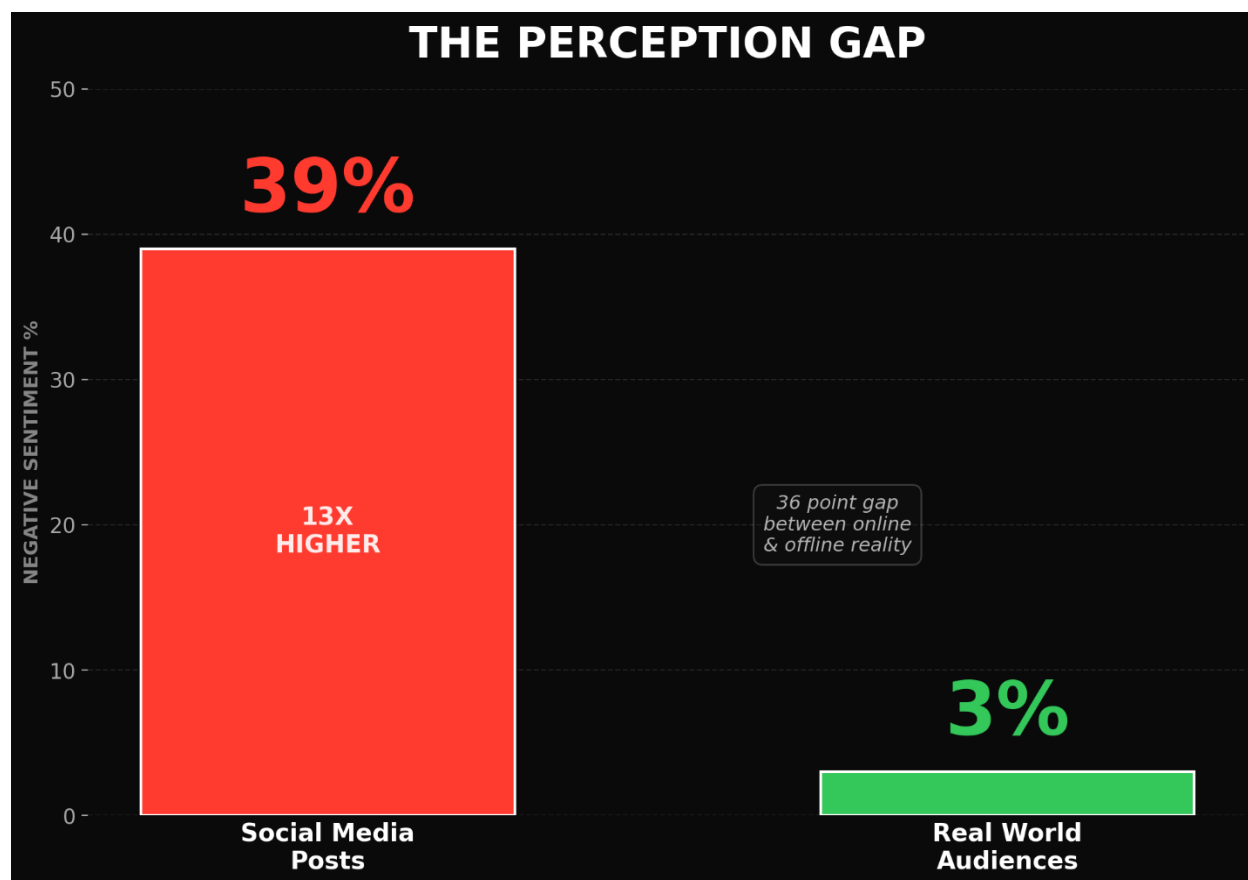
- **What was sentiment on X towards the 2026 film “The Odyssey?”**
- **Did sentiment towards “The Odyssey” on X reliably correlate to public opinion?**

To answer these questions, this study utilizes the Tweet Binder analytics program. Tweet Binder represents a robust data collection and analysis service focused exclusively on activity on the X platform. Collected data using Tweet Binder can include both the frequency with which a specific term appears along with sentiment analysis of posts including that term (*Tweet Binder*, 2019; *Tweet Binder*, 2020). 34,914 posts on X made from 7/9/2026 to 7/14/2026 were evaluated using Tweet Binder’s AI analytics tool for sentiment assessment. In posts where sentiment was identified, the ratio of positive to negative sentiment was noted along with the most viewed and shared posts expressing that sentiment. This was then compared to verified audience reviews on the Rotten Tomato website which exclusively shows evaluation from actual viewers of the film.

By analyzing sentiment on X regarding the film in contrast to the experience of the film’s millions of viewers, insight can be discovered about the relationship between platform activity and real-world reaction to “The Odyssey.”

RESULTS

Data from the 34,914 posts on X made from 7/9/2026 to 7/14/2026 show a sizable percentage of posts coded as “negative” according to the Tweet Binder analytics program. Posts expressing defined sentiment about the film comprised 44% of those analyzed. Of that group, 39.3% of the posts analyzed expressed negative sentiment towards “The Odyssey.” In contrast, verified audience reviews on the Rotten Tomatoes website showed only a 3% negative evaluation of the film (Nolan, 2026), suggesting a 1200% gap between content on X and real-world audience reaction to the film.



Difference in X sentiment versus real audience reaction to “the Odyssey.”

It is plausible that the negative content on X was frequent, but isolated with limited reach. Evaluation of the most viewed posts related to “The Odyssey,” however, indicates that the negative sentiment on the platform was highly visible on X.



romanhelmetguy | 11 days ago | 4969 Reposts

It might seem hypocritical that Variety praises Moana for respecting Polynesian culture while attacking you for wanting Nolan's Odyssey to respect Greek culture. But there's actually a consistent moral through-line: They just hate White people.
<https://t.co/lrMfEXOVDA>



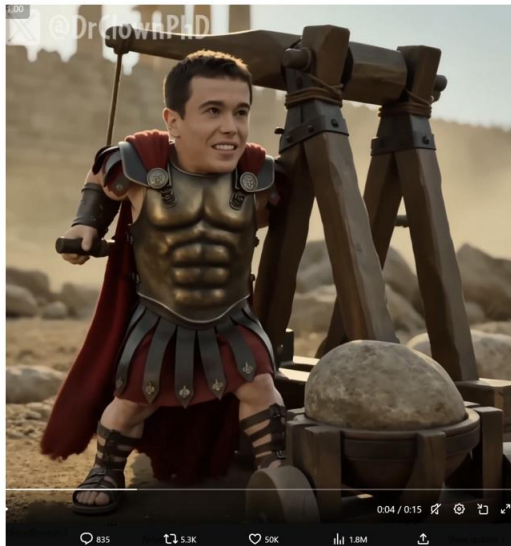
Dr. C... @DrClown...

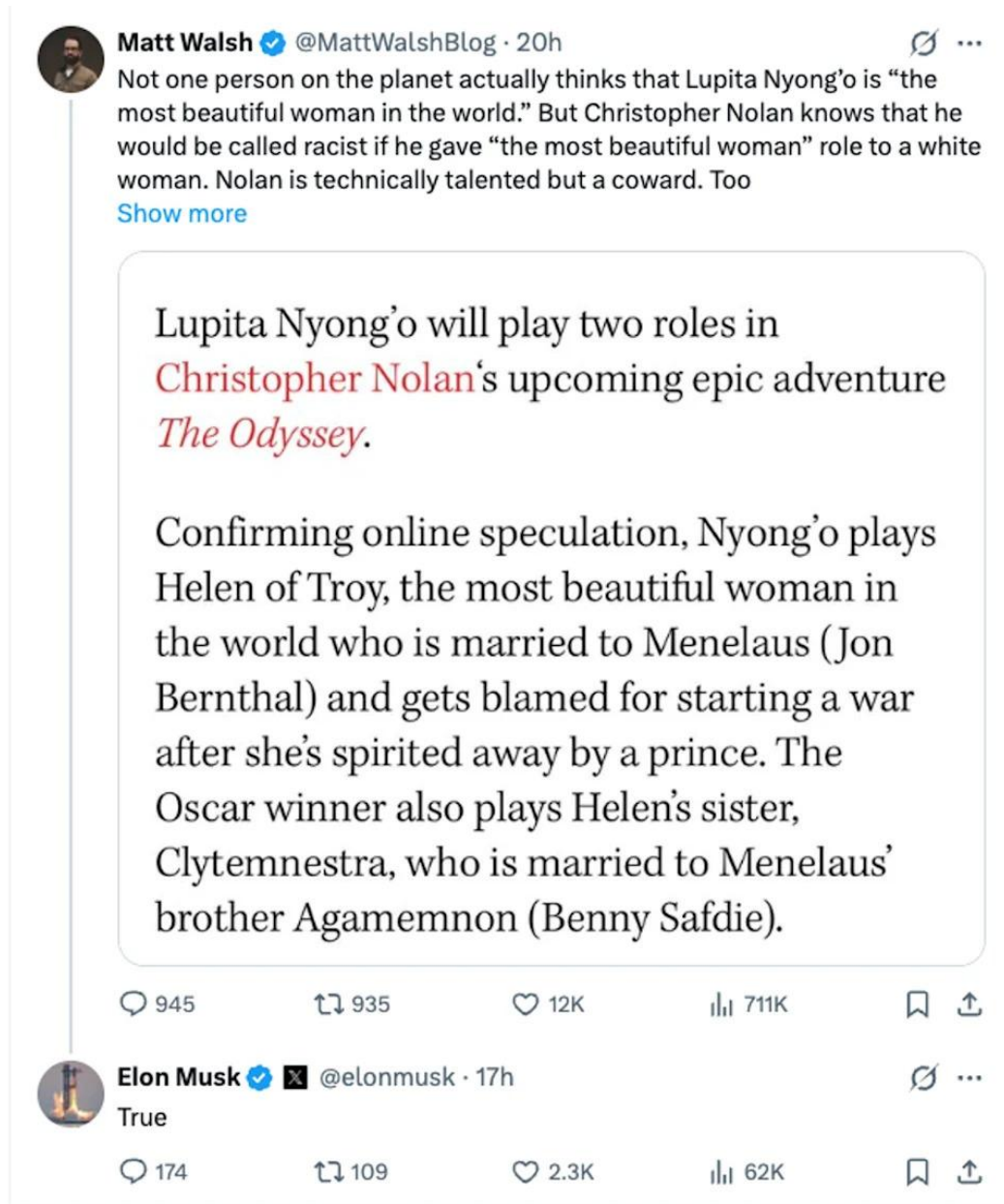
More leaked footage of Elliot Page in
The Odyssey 🙄

✦ Made with AI

11:33 AM · Jul 9, 2026 · **1.8M** Views

835 5.3K 50K 2.7K





Sample of posts expressing negative sentiment towards "The Odyssey."

Similarly, it is plausible that the verified audience for the film may be inconsistent with broader public sentiment. That possibility, however, would seem to be mitigated by the film's substantial box office numbers in its opening weekend

which generated \$264.1 million putting it in the top three for domestic releases in 2026 with the highest global numbers seen for any Christopher Nolan film to date. Thus, authentic audience reaction appears to be both positive and widespread in contrast to sentiment expressed on X.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

As was the case in previous investigations of real-world sentiment/behavior compared to what is expressed on X, fully ascertaining the cause of this disparity is beyond the scope of this study. It is possible that the number of ideologically focused accounts on X (real users or bot-based) creates an impression that does not match the perceptions and actions of actual audiences. It is, additionally, also possible that online advocates for specific viewpoints about a topic or theme may post more frequently to facilitate the impression that they represent a majority view (despite potentially being in the minority). Likewise, it is similarly plausible that platform structures offer outsized visibility to specific viewpoints (Booth, 2025).

While a definitive answer on the causes of this discrepancy is not immediately clear, future research should endeavor to assess the reason for this discrepancy with ongoing assessment in future topics inviting online interaction. Minimally, this study (and previous related ones) suggests that social media users should take caution when content on a platform would seem to indicate a widely held perception. There may be a significant gap between what is happening online and what is happening in reality.

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