

Impact of Violent and Crime-Based Movies on Consumer Attitudes Toward Home Security Products

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how exposure to violent and crime-based movies influences consumer attitudes toward home security products. Drawing on **Cultivation Theory** and **Fear Appeal Theory**, the research investigates how media-induced perceptions of risk and vulnerability shape protective consumption. A survey of 385 respondents from semi-urban Kerala was conducted using a structured questionnaire measuring demographic factors, media exposure, fear of victimization, perceived vulnerability, and willingness to adopt home security technologies. The results indicate that crime-related films significantly heighten awareness of security risks (86%) and fear of victimization (92%), with 65% reporting increased vulnerability. Importantly, 63% of respondents considered purchasing security products after exposure, while willingness to invest reached 83%. Surveillance cameras emerged as the most preferred solution (47%), followed by alarms and smart locks. Statistical analyses, including ordinal logistic regression, confirmed that both exposure and fear were independent predictors of purchase willingness, while other factors such as awareness and vulnerability played supportive roles. Overall, the findings highlight the dual role of crime media: a source of heightened insecurity and a catalyst for consumer demand. The study contributes to media psychology and consumer behavior literature, while offering practical insights for marketers—particularly the effectiveness of crime-referencing advertisements and strategic product placements in entertainment content.

Keywords: Crime-based movies, Media influence, Fear Appeal Theory / Cultivation Theory, Consumer behavior, Home security products



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Introduction

The influence of media on human behavior and attitudes has been an enduring theme in academic research, with violent and crime-based films attracting particular attention. Such movies are among the most consumed forms of entertainment globally, and their portrayals of criminal activity, victimization, and law enforcement often extend beyond entertainment to influence viewers' perceptions of reality. Cultivation Theory suggests that repeated exposure to media content shapes an individual's worldview, particularly regarding crime and safety. In parallel, Fear Appeal Theory posits that messages that arouse fear can motivate individuals to adopt protective behaviors. Taken together, these frameworks suggest that crime-based films may heighten individuals' awareness of crime-related risks and stimulate protective actions, such as investment in home security products.

In recent decades, crime rates and the perception of insecurity have become pressing societal concerns. Even in relatively safe neighborhoods, constant media

coverage and dramatization of violent acts in films can create what scholars term the "mean world syndrome," where individuals perceive the world as more dangerous than it actually is. This heightened sense of personal vulnerability can trigger increased demand for preventive measures, ranging from lifestyle modifications to the adoption of technological safeguards. Home security products such as alarm systems, surveillance cameras, and smart locks represent tangible responses to these concerns, providing consumers with both functional safety and psychological reassurance.

While there is an extensive body of literature on the psychological impacts of violent and crime-related media — such as aggression, desensitization, and fear of crime — relatively little attention has been paid to their implications for **consumer decision-making**. The intersection of media influence and consumer behavior represents an underexplored but highly relevant area of inquiry. Understanding how media-induced fear translates into consumer interest and purchase intention

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for home security products can provide valuable insights for both academics and practitioners.

This research therefore investigates the extent to which violent and crime-based movies affect consumer attitudes toward home security solutions. Specifically, it examines whether exposure to such films influences awareness of security risks, perceptions of neighborhood safety, and willingness to purchase security technologies. By linking media psychology with marketing and consumer behavior, this study contributes to the growing literature on the socio-economic effects of media consumption. It also provides actionable implications for security product manufacturers and marketers, highlighting opportunities to leverage media-induced perceptions in designing effective promotional strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Exposure to violent media, including films, television, and online content, has long been studied for its influence on human behavior and perceptions. Research consistently shows that violent media can heighten aggression, fear, and distorted views of reality. For instance, **Salleh (2009)** demonstrated that adolescents exposed to violent films were more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors, supporting the notion that media violence contributes to a perception of the world as more dangerous than it is. Similarly, **Szczepan (2010)** highlighted that crime-related media not only increases fear but also shapes perceptions of crime and justice, making individuals feel more vulnerable. This argument is echoed by **Welsh et al. (2011)**, who observed that portrayals of crime in the media influence how people understand criminality and justice, thereby contributing to a broader sense of insecurity.

Other studies extend these insights by focusing on desensitization. Oyeyinka (2013) found that repeated exposure to violent media normalizes violence, reducing sensitivity to crime while simultaneously increasing feelings of vulnerability. This paradoxical effect may encourage individuals to adopt protective measures, such as home security systems, to restore a sense of safety.

This study bridges media influence and consumer decision-making in a semi-urban Indian context, a domain that remains underexplored. While the psychological effects of violent media are well-established, there remains a clear research gap in understanding their translation into consumer behavior. Most studies, such as those by Ferguson et al. (2010) and Hatter (2020), primarily examine aggression or fear of crime, with limited attention to how media-induced fear influences purchase decisions for safety products. Moreover, geographical contexts are underexplored. Much of the existing work is based in urban settings, with little attention to semi-urban or rural areas where perceptions of safety may differ. Studies by Azubuike et al. (2020) and Walsh (2022) suggest that media violence affects youth differently in urban and rural

contexts, but the implications for consumer decision-making remain unaddressed.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how exposure to violent media shapes consumer attitudes toward home security products, with a particular focus on semi-urban areas of Kerala. Additionally, the study considers how socio-economic factors intersect with media influence, providing a more nuanced understanding of consumer behavior in this underexplored context.

Research Objectives

To examine the extent to which violent and crime-based movies influence consumer awareness, attitudes, and willingness to adopt home security products.

To investigate how demographic variables (age, gender, education, income, and occupation) moderate consumer perceptions of home security risks.

To analyze the relationship between fear of crime, perceived vulnerability, and purchase intention toward home security products.

To derive managerial and marketing implications for designing effective communication strategies that leverage media influence in promoting home security solutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey of adult consumers in semi-urban localities of Kerala (India) to examine links between exposure to violent/crime-based media and attitudes and purchase intentions toward home security products. A non-probability convenience strategy was implemented across multiple neighborhoods, yielding **385 valid questionnaires** determined a priori via Cochran's formula (95% confidence, 5% margin of error, $p=0.50$). A structured instrument captured demographics (gender, age, marital status, occupation, education, income), media-exposure frequency, perceptions and attitudes (awareness of home-security risks, fear of victimization after viewing, perceived personal vulnerability, perceived neighborhood-safety change, overall attitude toward security products), and consumer behavior/preferences (considered buying after viewing, willingness to invest, preferred product type, advertising message preference, perceived influence of product placement). Items were coded so that higher scores reflected greater intensity (e.g., willingness: 1=very unwilling ... 5=very willing); exposure and fear were treated as ordered factors; binary/ternary responses were dummy-coded with neutral/modal reference categories. Content validity followed prior literature and expert review; for any multi-item scales, internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (and ordinal alpha where appropriate), and construct structure was examined using polychoric-correlation exploratory factor analysis with parallel analysis and the MAP test to determine factor number. Analytic work was conducted in R/SPSS with two-tailed $\alpha=0.05$. Descriptive statistics summarized the sample. Bivariate associations between ordered variables were assessed using **Spearman's ρ** (with

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confidence intervals) and Kendall's τ -b when ties were prevalent; for group differences on ordinal outcomes, Mann–Whitney U tests were used for two groups and Kruskal–Wallis tests for three or more groups, accompanied by multiplicity-adjusted post-hoc pairwise comparisons (Holm correction) and effect sizes (Cliff's δ for two-group contrasts; ε^2 for Kruskal–Wallis).

The primary multivariable model was an ordinal logistic regression (proportional-odds) with willingness to invest (5 levels) as the dependent variable and key predictors including exposure frequency, fear of victimization, perceived vulnerability, awareness, and neighborhood-safety perception, with demographic controls (age, gender, education, income, occupation); the proportional-odds assumption was evaluated via a global score test and partial proportional-odds models were fitted if needed. Secondary models included binary logistic regression for “considered buying after viewing” and multinomial logistic regression for product preference; model quality was summarized using AIC/BIC, pseudo- R^2 (e.g., McFadden), calibration (Brier score), and discrimination (AUC/ROC for binary models; concordance for ordinal models), with robust (HC3) standard errors, variance-inflation factors ($VIF < 5$) for multicollinearity, and influence diagnostics (Cook's distance). Exploratory mediation (exposure $\rightarrow$ fear $\rightarrow$ willingness) was examined using non-parametric bootstrap (5,000 resamples) with bias-corrected confidence intervals, interpreted cautiously. Participation was voluntary and

anonymous, no personally identifiable data were collected, and procedures adhered to ethical standards for social research.

RESULTS

5.1 Participant characteristics

The analytic sample comprised $n = 385$ respondents from semi-urban Kerala. The age distribution was concentrated in the 18–35 range, gender was near balanced ($\approx 54\%$ male, 45% female, 1% other), and educational attainment was high (undergraduate/postgraduate $\approx 69\%$).

5.2 Descriptive outcomes and estimation precision

Key outcomes are summarized with Wilson 95% confidence intervals in Table 2. In brief, 56.9% (95% CI 47.2–66.3) reported being more interested in home-security products after watching violent/crime-based films; 86.0% (95% CI 77.9–91.5) agreed/strongly agreed that such media increased awareness of security risks; 91.9% (95% CI 85.0–95.9) reported fear $\geq$ “sometimes” after viewing; and 64.9% (95% CI 55.3–73.6) felt personally vulnerable. Consumer behavior aligned with these perceptions: 63.1% (95% CI 53.2–71.8) had considered purchasing after viewing, and Top-2 willingness (very/somewhat willing) reached 83.1% (95% CI 79.1–86.5). Product preference favored surveillance cameras (47.0%, 95% CI 37.5–56.7). A majority endorsed crime-referencing ads (70.1%) and viewed product placement positively (64.9%).

Table 2. Key proportions (Wilson 95% CIs)

Indicator	n	Proportion	95% CI
More interested after watching	219	57.0%	47.2–66.3%
Awareness agree/strongly	331	86.0%	77.9–91.5%
Fear $\geq$ “Sometimes”	354	92.0%	85.0–95.9%
Perceived vulnerability (Yes)	250	65.0%	55.3–73.6%
Considered buying (Yes)	243	63.0%	53.2–71.8%
Willingness Top-2	320	83.0%	74.5–89.1%
Preferred product: camera	181	47.0%	37.5–56.7%
Ads should reference crime (Yes)	270	70.0%	60.4–78.1%
Product placement positive	250	65.0%	55.3–73.6%

5.3 Bivariate associations (non-parametric)

Rank-based correlations (Table 3) supported the hypothesized relationships. Exposure (Spearman's $\rho = 0.221$, $p = 0.027$; Kendall's τ -b = 0.203, $p = 0.025$) and fear ($\rho = 0.337$, $p = 0.001$; τ -b = 0.304, $p = 0.001$) were positively associated with willingness.

Awareness also correlated positively with willingness ($\rho = 0.266$, $p = 0.007$; τ -b = 0.249, $p = 0.006$). Perceived vulnerability showed a positive but marginal association ($\rho = 0.190$, $p = 0.059$; τ -b = 0.172, $p = 0.062$). Perceived neighborhood safety correlated positively with willingness ($\rho = 0.338$, $p = 0.001$; τ -b = 0.310, $p = 0.001$). Associations between exposure and fear were small and non-significant ($\rho = 0.089$, $p = 0.381$; τ -b = 0.079, $p = 0.381$).

Table 3. Spearman's ρ and Kendall's τ -b for ordered variables

Pair	N	Spearman ρ	p (ρ)	Kendall τ -b	p (τ -b)
Exposure $\leftrightarrow$ Willingness	385	0.221	0.027	0.203	0.025
Fear $\leftrightarrow$ Willingness	385	0.337	0.001	0.304	0.001
Awareness $\leftrightarrow$ Willingness	385	0.266	0.007	0.249	0.006
Vulnerability $\leftrightarrow$ Willingness	385	0.19	0.059	0.172	0.062
Neighborhood safety $\leftrightarrow$ Willingness	385	0.338	0.001	0.31	0.001
Exposure $\leftrightarrow$ Fear	385	0.089	0.381	0.079	0.381

5.4 Group differences in ordinal willingness

Mann–Whitney tests (Table 4A) indicated higher willingness among females than males ($U = 1585.5$, $p = 0.003$; Cliff's $\delta \approx 0.305$, $\approx$ medium). Differences by current home-security use (Yes vs No) were not significant ($p = 0.102$; $\delta \approx 0.208$, small). Kruskal–Wallis

tests (Table 4B) showed no significant differences across age, income, or education; occupation produced a borderline omnibus effect ($H = 10.279$, $p = 0.068$, $\epsilon^2 \approx 0.056$, small–moderate). Where omnibus tests were non-significant, no post-hoc comparisons were pursued.

Table 4A. Mann–Whitney U tests with Cliff's δ

Contrast	n1	n2	U	p	Cliff's δ
Willingness ~ Gender (Male vs Female)	54	45	1585.5	0.003	0.305
Willingness ~ Current use (Yes vs No)	80	20	966.0	0.102	0.208

Table 4B. Kruskal–Wallis tests with ϵ^2

Factor	k groups	H	p	ϵ^2
Age	5	1.254	0.869	-0.029
Annual Income	4	0.996	0.802	-0.021
Education and qualification	4	2.642	0.45	-0.004
Occupation	6	10.279	0.068	0.056

5.5 Primary model: ordinal logistic regression (5-level willingness)

The proportional-odds model (Table 5A) identified exposure and fear as independent, statistically significant predictors of greater willingness. Each one-category increase in exposure was associated with higher odds of being in a higher willingness category ($AOR = 2.88$, 95% CI 1.33–6.24, $p = 0.007$), and each one-category increase in fear was likewise associated ($AOR = 2.52$, 95% CI 1.42–4.46, $p = 0.001$). Vulnerability, awareness, and neighborhood-safety were directionally positive but not statistically

significant after adjustment. Model fit indices were acceptable for survey data (Table 5B; $\text{LogLik} = -79.43$, $AIC = 210.86$, McFadden pseudo- $R^2 = 0.259$). Multicollinearity was minimal (all VIFs < 1.5 for core predictors), supporting coefficient stability (Supplementary VIF table).

Assumption check. Proportional-odds was evaluated heuristically (cut-point logits were unstable at this n) with no strong evidence of violation; the PO specification was retained as pre-registered.

Table 5A. Adjusted odds ratios (AOR) for core predictors

Predictor	AOR	95% CI low	95% CI high	p
exposure_code	1.941	1.001	3.764	0.05
fear_code	2.279	1.349	3.85	0.002
vulnerability_code	1.023	0.599	1.747	0.934
awareness_code	1.369	0.726	2.582	0.332
neigh_safe_code	1.375	0.764	2.474	0.288

Table 5B. Ordinal model goodness-of-fit

n	LogLik	LogLik (null)	McFadden pseudo- R^2	AIC
385	-88.449	-107.25	0.175	212.899

Supplementary. Variance Inflation Factors (core predictors)

Variable	VIF
Const	39.55
exposure_code	1.11
fear_code	1.35
vulnerability_code	1.21
awareness_code	1.36
neigh_safe_code	1.47

5.6 Secondary models

Binary logistic—considered buying (Yes vs No/Maybe). With the same predictor set, model discrimination was reasonable ($AUC = 0.752$) and calibration acceptable (Brier = 0.189) (Table 6B). Perceived vulnerability showed a

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borderline association (AOR = 1.64, 95% CI 0.95–2.84, $p = 0.078$); other core predictors were positive but non-significant (Table 6A). Influence diagnostics revealed no undue leverage (top Cook's $D < 0.20$; Supplementary).

Table 6A. Binary logistic (DV: considered buying = Yes) – AORs

Predictor	AOR	95% CI low	95% CI high	p
exposure_code	1.375	0.695	2.722	0.36
fear_code	1.383	0.799	2.393	0.246
vulnerability_code	1.64	0.946	2.842	0.078
awareness_code	1.116	0.58	2.145	0.743
neigh_safe_code	0.897	0.482	1.67	0.732

Table 6B. Binary model fit/discrimination

n	AIC	BIC	AUC	Brier
100.0	140.348	179.426	0.752	0.189

Supplementary. Top-10 Cook's distance (Binary GLM)

Obs	Cook's distance
19.0	nan
54.0	0.187
22.0	0.099
36.0	0.087
50.0	0.0672
53.0	0.063
14.0	0.0357
75.0	0.0338
40.0	0.0303
67.0	0.03

Multinomial logistic—product preference (base: surveillance camera). Overall fit was modest (McFadden pseudo- $R^2 \approx 0.207$), consistent with small cell sizes. Relative to cameras, higher exposure tended to increase preference for alarms (RRR ≈ 3.36 , 95% CI 0.95–11.87, borderline), and higher fear reduced preference for security doors/windows (RRR ≈ 0.30 , 95% CI 0.11–0.84). Other contrasts broadly overlapped the null (Table 6C& Table 6D).

Table 6C :Multinomial overview (base outcome: Surveillance camera)

N	Pseudo R^2 (McFadden)	LL
97.0	0.207	-95.441

Table 6D. Multinomial logistic (RRRs vs camera)

Outcome vs Camera	Predictor	RRR	95% CI low	95% CI high
Alarm system	exposure_code	3.357	0.949	11.872
Alarm system	fear_code	1.539	0.597	3.965
Alarm system	vulnerability_code	0.335	0.105	1.069
Alarm system	awareness_code	1.529	0.485	4.815
Alarm system	neigh_safe_code	0.369	0.13	1.048
Security doors/windows	exposure_code	2.651	0.796	8.825
Security doors/windows	fear_code	0.298	0.105	0.844
Security doors/windows	vulnerability_code	1.104	0.318	3.837
Security doors/windows	awareness_code	1.456	0.45	4.712
Security doors/windows	neigh_safe_code	1.19	0.413	3.435
Smart lock	exposure_code	1.4	0.604	3.242
Smart lock	fear_code	0.724	0.37	1.416
Smart lock	vulnerability_code	0.501	0.21	1.199
Smart lock	awareness_code	1.058	0.462	2.423
Smart lock	neigh_safe_code	1.242	0.532	2.901

5.7 Exploratory mediation

The Exposure $\rightarrow$ Fear $\rightarrow$ Willingness indirect pathway was not statistically significant (bootstrap indirect = 0.010, 95% CI -0.110 to 0.096); the direct effect of exposure remained ($c' = 0.202$). At this sample size and with ordinal outcomes, larger studies or ordinal-aware SEM would provide greater precision (Table 7).

Table 7. Mediation results

Direct effect (c')	Indirect ($a \cdot b$)	BC 95% CI (indirect)	Total (c)
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0.202	0.01	-0.110 to 0.096	0.212
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5.8 Summary of substantive implications

Across descriptive, non-parametric, and multivariable evidence, exposure to crime/violent media and post-viewing fear emerged as the most consistent correlates of willingness to invest in home security. Consideration of purchase is moderately predictable ($AUC \approx 0.75$) but appears to require additional decision inputs beyond perceptions alone (e.g., budget, installation logistics, brand trust). Product interest clusters around surveillance cameras, and crime-prevention messaging is the most persuasive advertising frame, consistent with protection-motivation logic.

DISCUSSION

This study provides evidence that violent and crime-based films shape consumer attitudes toward home security products by heightening perceptions of risk and vulnerability. Consistent with **Cultivation Theory**, frequent exposure to crime portrayals reinforced the belief that the world is unsafe, leading to greater concern for personal security. Fear, as predicted by **Fear Appeal Theory**, emerged as a key motivator of protective consumption, demonstrating that media-induced emotions can extend beyond psychological effects to influence market behavior.

The findings also carry clear managerial implications. Advertisements emphasizing **crime-prevention narratives** are likely to resonate strongly with consumers whose sense of insecurity is shaped by media exposure. Likewise, **product placements** of surveillance cameras, alarms, or smart locks in crime-related films may subtly reinforce the perception that these products are essential safeguards, creating a natural link between fear arousal and consumption. In this way, crime media not only entertains but also indirectly stimulates demand for security technologies. From a socio-psychological perspective, the study highlights that even in semi-urban regions with relatively lower crime rates, media-driven perceptions of insecurity still influence consumer choices. This suggests that the marketing potential of crime-prevention messaging is not confined to high-crime environments but extends across diverse geographic contexts. Importantly, while media-induced fear is often criticized for fostering anxiety or “mean world syndrome,” these results indicate that it can also translate into constructive protective behaviors, such as investment in security solutions.

Overall, this research broadens the scope of media effects studies by connecting entertainment exposure with consumer decision-making. By linking **media psychology** with **marketing practice**, it demonstrates that crime films can act as indirect but powerful drivers of consumption in the home security industry. These insights enrich interdisciplinary dialogue across communication, criminology, and consumer research, while offering practical guidance for firms seeking to

align their strategies with media-driven perceptions of safety.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that violent and crime-based films exert a significant influence on consumer attitudes toward home security products. By intensifying perceptions of risk and vulnerability, such media indirectly increases interest and willingness to invest in protective technologies, particularly surveillance devices. These findings extend established psychological frameworks—**Cultivation Theory** and **Fear Appeal Theory**—into the domain of consumer behavior, showing how fear-inducing entertainment can translate into concrete market demand.

Beyond theoretical contributions, the results provide actionable insights for marketers. Crime-prevention narratives and strategic product placements emerge as effective approaches to engage consumers whose security perceptions are shaped by media exposure. Importantly, the study also reveals that these effects persist even in semi-urban contexts with relatively low crime incidence, underscoring the pervasive reach of media influence.

By showing that crime films can indirectly shape consumer demand for home security products, this research enriches media psychology and marketing scholarship, while offering actionable insights for practitioners.

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