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A Study on the Preference of Watching Movies in the Theatre v/s Online Platform

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the evolving dynamics of entertainment consumption, with particular emphasis on the changing preferences between traditional cinema experiences and online streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+. In recent years, rapid technological advancements, increased internet penetration, and the widespread use of smartphones and smart TVs have significantly transformed the way audiences access and engage with entertainment content. As a result, the conventional model of watching films in movie theatres is being increasingly complemented and, in some cases, replaced by on-demand digital streaming. The study seeks to examine the key factors influencing this shift, including convenience, affordability, flexibility, content variety, technological accessibility, and the overall viewing experience. Convenience plays a crucial role, as streaming platforms allow users to watch content anytime and anywhere without geographical or time constraints. Cost considerations are also significant, as subscription-based streaming services often provide access to a vast library of movies and series at a relatively lower price compared to frequent cinema visits. Furthermore, streaming platforms offer diverse content options, including international films, web series, documentaries, and exclusive originals, catering to a wide range of audience preferences. At the same time, the research acknowledges that traditional cinema continues to hold cultural and social importance. The cinematic experience offers large screens, immersive sound systems, and a collective social environment that cannot be fully replicated at home. For many viewers, watching a film in a theatre remains a recreational and social activity shared with friends and family. Therefore, the study will also explore the emotional, social, and experiential dimensions associated with cinema-going, comparing them with the personalised and private nature of streaming consumption.

Keywords: Entertainment consumption, Consumer Behaviour, Media Preferences

Introduction

Watching movies is one of the most popular forms of entertainment around the world. Earlier, people mainly watched movies in cinema theatres, where they could enjoy a big screen, loud sound, and a lively atmosphere with friends and family. Going to the theatre was not just about watching a film, but also about spending quality time together and enjoying a social outing. However, with the growth of technology and the internet, the way people watch movies has changed. Online streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ allow people to watch movies anytime and anywhere. Viewers can now enjoy films on their mobile phones, laptops, or smart TVs from the comfort of their homes.

These platforms also offer a wide variety of content at affordable subscription prices. Because of these changes, people now have two main choices: watching movies in theatres or watching them online. Some people still prefer theatres because of the big screen experience and the fun of watching movies with others. On the other hand, many people prefer online platforms because they are convenient, flexible, and cost-effective.

This study aims to understand which option people prefer and why. It will examine different factors such as convenience, cost, comfort, social experience, and content variety that influence their choice. The research will help to understand how entertainment habits are changing and what this means for the future of the movie industry. One of the main reasons for the shift towards online platforms is convenience. People can pause, rewind, or rewatch content according to their comfort. In addition,

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subscription-based streaming services are often more affordable compared to frequent theatre visits, especially for families.

Online platforms also offer personalized recommendations based on viewing history, which enhances user satisfaction. Despite these advantages, cinema theatres continue to attract audiences, especially for big-budget films, action movies, and highly anticipated releases. The theatre experience offers a larger-than-life feel that cannot be fully recreated at home. The advanced sound systems, 3D and IMAX formats, and the excitement of watching a movie on the first day of release still appeal to many viewers.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the use of online platforms, as theatres were temporarily closed and people stayed at home. This situation changed viewing habits and encouraged many individuals to explore digital entertainment options. Even after theatres reopened, some consumers continued to prefer streaming services due to the comfort and safety they experienced. This study focuses on understanding the preferences of consumers between watching movies in theatres and on online platforms.

It aims to identify the factors influencing their choices, such as cost, convenience, comfort, social interaction, quality of experience, and availability of content. By analysing these factors, the research will provide insights into changing consumer behaviour and help industry stakeholders understand current trends in the entertainment sector.

On the other hand, cinema theatres continue to offer a unique and immersive experience. The large screen, advanced sound systems, comfortable seating, and overall ambience create a cinematic feel that home viewing cannot fully replicate. Watching a highly anticipated movie in a theatre, especially on its release day, generates excitement and a sense of community among viewers. The collective reactions, laughter, applause, or suspense enhance the overall enjoyment of the film.

Another important factor influencing preference is cost. While streaming subscriptions provide unlimited content for a fixed monthly fee, theatre visits may involve additional expenses such as travel, food, and higher ticket prices. For families, online platforms may be more economical. However, for special occasions, celebrations, or blockbuster releases, many consumers still choose theatres for a premium experience.

This study aims to examine and compare consumer preferences for watching movies in theatres versus online platforms. It seeks to identify the key factors

influencing these preferences, including convenience, cost, social interaction, technological accessibility, quality of experience, and personal lifestyle. By understanding these aspects, the research will provide valuable insights into how entertainment consumption patterns are evolving.

In conclusion, the entertainment industry is currently experiencing a transition phase where traditional cinema and digital streaming platforms coexist. Whether one will dominate the future or both will continue to complement each other depends largely on consumer preferences. Therefore, analysing these preferences is essential to understanding the future direction of the movie industry.

Research Methodology

Objective of the Study:

- a. To identify the preferred mode of movie watching among consumers, whether theatre or online platform.
- b. To analyse the factors influencing consumer preference, such as convenience, cost, comfort, content variety, and social experience.
- c. To examine how technological development and the availability of the internet affect the behaviour of watching movies.
- d. To understand the importance of social interaction and group experience in choosing theatre viewing.

Scope of the Study:

This research is restricted to analysing consumer preference when it comes to watching movies in theatres and online streaming websites. The analysis will contrast the case of conventional cinema theatres with the usage of such well-known online entertainment providers like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ to determine which form of entertainment is preferred and the reasons. Some of the factors that are considered in the research as far as consumer choice is concerned, are convenience, cost, comfort, content variety, accessibility, social experience, and overall satisfaction. It also explores the effects of the changes in movie-watching behaviours due to technological development, changes in lifestyle, and post-pandemic behavioural changes.

Significance of the Study:

The study is important in that it assists in the interpretation of the evolving entertainment consumption patterns. As digital technology is swiftly soaring and the use of online streaming services is gaining momentum, with such services as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+, the preferences of people who prefer watching movies have changed significantly. It is worth analysing these changes to determine whether the traditional cinema theatres are

becoming irrelevant or still relevant in the entertainment industry. Theatre operators will be able to enhance their services and attract more viewers by knowing the consumer expectations with respect to the costs of tickets to purchase, comfort, atmosphere, and experience.

Statement Problem:

The last few years were characterised by some major shifts in the entertainment sector because of the new technology and the tremendous expansion of online streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+. These mediums offer easy access, cheaply, and on-demand movies, and this has also affected the habit of viewing movies at cinemas. This leads to an apparent change in consumer viewing behaviour. Digital platforms are thus posing more competition to cinema theatres, which were the main source of movie entertainment. The frequency of visiting the theatre has been influenced by the ticket prices, travelling time, comfort, content availability, and changing lifestyles, among others. Thus, the key issue that the given study will explore is the analysis and comparison of consumer preferences in going to theatres and watching movies online and the establishment of the main factors that impact their decision in the dynamic entertainment environment.

Methods of Data Collection

Primary Data

Survey: A structured questionnaire will be administered to a sample of individuals across various age groups and demographics. The questionnaire will include questions related to:

- Demographic information (age, gender, occupation, income, location)
- Frequency of watching movies/shows online and in theatres
- Preferred platforms for online viewing
- Factors influencing the choice between online platforms and theatres (e.g., convenience, cost, social experience, picture and sound quality)
- Impact of COVID-19 on viewing habits

Data Interpretation & Analysis

a. Age & Gender

Count of 1. Age	Column Labels			Grand Total
Row Labels	18-35	31-42	43-65	
Female	38	3	2	43
Male	28	1	1	30
Grand Total	66	4	3	73

- Future preferences for online platforms or theatres

Secondary Data:

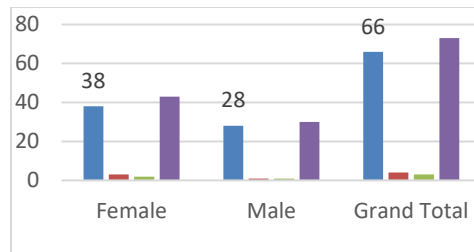
The secondary data for this study is collected from various reliable sources such as research journals, published articles, books on consumer behaviour and media studies, industry reports, newspapers, and official websites of streaming platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+. Information is also gathered from government publications, entertainment industry reports, and online databases that provide statistics on box office collections, subscription growth, and digital media usage.

Hypothesis of the study

- H0: There is no Relationship between Promotions of a movie and Consumers' reasons to watch a film at the theatre
H1: There is a Relationship between Promotions of movies and Consumers' reasons to watch a film at the theatre as a Socializing Activity
- H0: There is no Relationship between cinema-going as a socialising activity and Consumers' reasons to watch a film at the theatre
H1: There is a Relationship between cinema-going as an activist

Literature Review

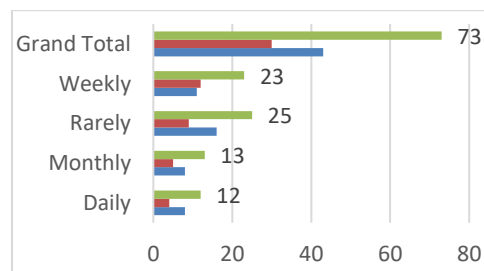
1. **Henry Jenkins (2006)** Introduced the concept of media convergence, explaining how digital platforms have transformed audience engagement and content consumption patterns.
2. **Anita Elberse (2013)** Researched entertainment marketing and the importance of star power and strategic promotion in the film industry.
3. **Eli M. Noam (2016)** Analyzed the economics of media industries and the impact of technological changes on traditional cinema models.
4. **Amanda D. Lotz (2017)** Examined the rise of streaming television and how digital distribution platforms changed traditional viewing habits.
5. **Solomon Michael R. (2018)** Focused on consumer decision-making processes, highlighting psychological and social factors affecting entertainment choices.



Interpretation: The data includes 73 individuals, mostly aged 18–35 (66). Females (43) outnumber males (30), and most of both genders fall in the 18–35 group. Only a few are aged 31–42 (4) and 43–65 (3).

b. How often do you watch movies

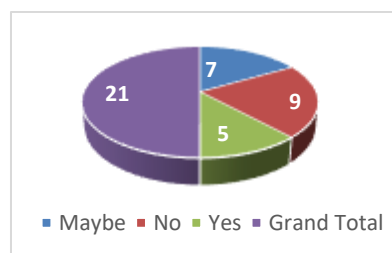
Count of 2. Gender	Column Labels		Grand Total
	Female	Male	
Daily	8	4	12
Monthly	8	5	13
Rarely	16	9	25
Weekly	11	12	23
Grand Total	43	30	73



Interpretation: Out of 73 individuals, 43 are females and 30 are males. Most respondents engage rarely (25), with more females (16) than males (9). Females also lead in daily (12) and monthly (13) engagement, while weekly engagement (23) is almost balanced between males and females.

c. Are you willing to pay a premium for a high-quality viewing experience in a theatre?

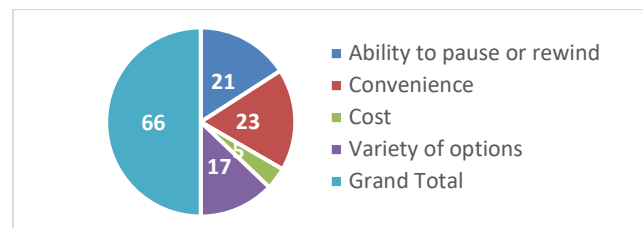
Count of 3. Occupation	Column Labels		Grand Total
	employed	Student	
Maybe	7	14	21
No	9	19	28
Yes	5	18	23
Grand Total	21	51	72



Interpretation: Out of 72 individuals, 51 are students and 21 are employed. The largest group is “No” (28), mostly students (19). “Maybe” has 21 responses (14 students), and “Yes” has 23 (18 students).

d. **What factors influence your decision to watch a movie online?**

Count of 1. Age	Column Labels			Grand Total
Row Labels	18-35	31-42	43-65	
Ability to pause or rewind	21	-	-	21
Convenience	23	3	1	27
Cost	5	-	1	6
Variety of options	17	1	1	19
Grand Total	66	4	3	73



Interpretation: Among 73 individuals, convenience is the top preference (27), mainly in the 18–35 group. Pause/rewind is chosen by 21 (all 18–35), variety by 19, and cost is the least preferred factor.

Hypothesis Testing:

Hypothesis 1:

H0: There is no significant relationship between gender and frequency of engagement.

H1: There is a significant relationship between gender and frequency of engagement.

Row Labels	Female	Male	Grand Total
Daily	8	4	12
Monthly	8	5	13
Rarely	16	9	25
Weekly	11	12	23
Grand Total	43	30	73

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	17.2	12
Variance	218.7	111.5
Observations	5	5
Pearson Correlation	0.970176627	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	4	
t Stat	2.229481607	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.044831259	
t Critical one-tail	2.131846786	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.089662517	
t Critical two-tail	2.776445105	

Interpretation: Since the calculated t value (2.229) is greater than the t critical one-tailed value (2.131) and the one-tailed p-value (0.0448) is less than 0.05, the result is significant at the 5% level (one-tailed test). So, we reject the null hypothesis in the one-tailed case.

Anova Testing:

H0: There is no significant relationship between occupation and response (Yes/No/Maybe)

H1: There is a significant relationship between occupation and response (Yes/No/Maybe)

Count of 3. Occupation	Column Labels		Grand Total
Row Labels	employed	Student	
Maybe	7	14	21
No	9	19	28
Yes	5	18	23
Grand Total	21	51	72

Interpretation: Since the p-value (0.1576) is greater than 0.05 and the F value (2.61) is less than the F critical value (5.99), the result is not statistically significant.

Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Suggestions

1. Improve theatre experience with better sound, comfortable seating, and attractive ambience.
2. Offer student discounts and combo offers to attract young audiences.
3. Reduce ticket prices on weekdays to increase footfall.
4. Online platforms should provide flexible subscription plans at affordable rates.
5. Enhance streaming quality and reduce buffering issues on online platforms.
6. Provide exclusive movie releases on both theatres and OTT to maintain balance.
7. Increase promotional offers and loyalty programs for frequent viewers.
8. Ensure safe and hygienic theatre environments to attract more families.
9. Improve content variety on online platforms to

meet different audience preferences.

10. Conduct regular feedback surveys to understand changing consumer preferences.

Conclusion

The study reveals that viewing preferences are changing, with a majority of respondents, particularly those aged 18–35, showing a stronger inclination toward online platforms. Convenience, flexibility (pause and rewind features), and a greater variety of content are the main reasons for this preference. Cost and accessibility also influence the shift toward online streaming. However, movie theatres continue to hold importance due to their immersive big-screen experience, superior sound quality, and the social enjoyment of watching movies with friends and family.

In conclusion, while online platforms are becoming more popular, theatres still maintain their unique appeal. Both modes of entertainment coexist, serving different needs and preferences of audiences.

Anova: Single
Factor

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Column 1	4	42	10.5	51.66667
Column 2	4	102	25.5	293.6667

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	450	1	450	2.606178	0.157575	5.987378
Within Groups	1036	6	172.6667			
Total	1486	7				

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported and guided me in the successful completion of my project titled “A Study on the Preference of Watching Movies in the Theatre v/s Online Platform.”

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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