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A STUDY ON PREFERENCE OF WATCHING MOVIES IN CINEMA THEATRES

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Abstract

Cinema is a very popular entertainment platform globally. India is known for producing and consuming of cinema. The country produces close to 2000 movies every year in different languages. Movies are watched in Cinema theatres, Television, and digital platforms today. Traditionally movies are screened in cinema theatres. Indian audiences show great interest to watches movies in theatres. Over the years cinemas have been offering entertainment value to the audience. Cinema going is considered a way of socializing in India. With the advent of new technologies, consumers' consumption of movies at theatres is affected. The OTT (over-the-top) Streaming platforms and social media have emerged as alternate platforms for the consumption of movies. Online streaming enabled by the internet is making a shift in theatre goers. This study is to understand peoples' preference to watch movies released in cinema theatres. It will examine the influence of movie promotions, purchase patterns, and the expectations of theatre goers. This is a descriptive study focused on the population who consume movies. The outcome of the study will help in marketing a movie and cinema theatre release in an efficient manner.

Keywords: Movies, Cinema theatres, Consumer Preference, OTT.

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INTRODUCTION

The media and entertainment industry of India is one of the important growing sectors in the country. According to reports by PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) by 2026, the media industry of India is expected to be worth Rs. 4.3 trillion. By the year 2024 Cinema would nearly account for almost 9% of the total media market according to the IBEF (Indian Brand Equity Foundation) reports 2022. India has a very rich background in cinema. Over the years these theatres have been a place of celebration and enjoyment. It has produced big stars across different languages across the different states of India. Star films are celebrated grandly and the heroes have been part of popular culture. 'The heroes, as sources of inspiration, build their images and affect an individual's life such that the society and its culture is influenced as a whole' (Panbu Selvan & Brindha, 2020)^[1]. Movies have been traditionally released to the public via cinema theatres. Most of the film revenue for a movie comes from the box office collection through cinema theatres.

India has over 11,000 Cinema screens across the country, which produces around ₹19000 crores gross box office. Indian industry alone produces around 2000 films per year across the different regional language industries. In 2022 *K.G.F. Chapter 2* grossed around ₹1008 crores at the Indian Box office, followed by *RRR* which grossed ₹944 crores. India is also a key international market for foreign-produced films. The 2022 Disney release *Avatar: The Way of Water* has grossed ₹480 crores at the Indian Box office, beating Disney's record set by *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) which grossed ₹430 crores.

According to the Tamil Film Active Producers Council (TFAPC), the state of Tamilnadu & UT Puducherry has the second largest number of theatres in the country with 1104 screens. Chennai city and surrounding districts falling under the distribution area have over 200 screens.

The Tamil Film Industry alone produces 200-plus films every year. In 2022 Tamil Productions *Ponniyin Selvan – 1*, *Vikram*, grossed over ₹200 crores in the Tamilnadu and Puducherry Box office alone, beating the previous best of *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion* (2017) in the state. This shows that Film Entertainment through Cinema theatres remains a sustainable business even after the global Covid-19 Pandemic. The demand for movie theatres before the Covid-19 outbreak and afterward is nearly the same (Mohan et al., 2021)^[2].

Although Box office records are set every year, it is noted that it is done by very few films with high production and marketing value. Very few low and medium-budget productions create breakthrough run at the box office. Kannada Industry production *Kantara* (2022) is one such exceptional case of a breakthrough run at the box office. The film earned close to ₹360 crores at the Indian box office at a production cost of ₹16 crores. Tamil film *Love Today* (2022) is another low-budget film that grossed close to ₹60 crores at the Tamilnadu Box office alone becoming one of the most profitable ventures this past year.

While Cinema has been surviving due to big films, it is facing challenges due to OTT platforms. The pandemic has pushed certain films to release directly in OTT streaming instead of theatres. Tamil films like *Soorarai Pottru* (2020), *Sarpatta Parambarai* (2021), and *Jai Bhim* (2021), were big success ventures in Direct OTT release. Post-Theatrical streaming rights are also a very good revenue source for movies. These rights are significant for small-budget movies as producers can recover a major part of production costs. The developments have raised the question of the future of cinema as consumers have encouraged OTT releases. It is therefore important to understand the audience's decision-making process and choices in selecting a movie to watch in the cinema theatres in the present scenario, where there are growing options of alternate

consumption choices like OTT streaming platforms in the market, to market films better.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

India is a large film-producing country, unlike other foreign film-producing countries, India's film production and market are diverse. Hence the producers of films need to be very conscious of the money they invest in this industry. **(Dhananjayan & Srivastava, n.d.)** ^[3]. Movies are a main part of the entertainment ecosystem in this country. The film industry is a cultural industry. Going to watch a film at the cinema theatre is a public activity which is very important in bringing a feeling of togetherness to this diverse society. For generations, Indians have incorporated cinema-going as part of their leisure activity, thereby contributing to its success. People from different backgrounds come together to watch a movie at the theatre for the experience. As part of the movie experience, being part of an anonymous audience sharing shared cultural practices are positively emphasized **(Van de Vijver, 2017)** ^[4]. This study tries to understand if Cinema going is part of people's social activities. Being a large film-producing industry, a lot of movies are released in theatres every month of the year. The audience has so many choices to choose from. Selecting the film to watch in the theatres itself is a big task for them. Eventually, choosing which films to see at the theatre required more consideration than the theatre itself. **(Van de Vijver & Biltereyst, 2013)** ^[5]. This study deals with this problem, whereby there is a need to understand how the audience selects movies that are being released.

The choice becomes more difficult as cinema theatres are not the only source to watch the film. Today movies are not restricted to just cinema theatres, but also to other platforms, like television and OTT streaming platforms **(Dey & Chanda, 2022)** ^[6]. The audience now has to decide where to watch the film along with which

film to watch. For movie theatres, technological disruption is a problem. They are finding ways to co-exist with the new platforms. The impact of OTT platforms and streaming services on cinemas is clear, but that doesn't limit the growth options for either side. **(Mohan et al., 2021)** ^[2]. The Theatres are trying to make the experience to watch films stand out compared to the other platforms. The survival and success of Cinemas depend on how it responds and adapts to the current technology and new competitors **(Weinberg et al., 2021)** ^[7]. For movie producers, theatre distribution remains the first choice as it brings a larger chunk of revenue for them compared to other platforms. Without a doubt, movie theatres benefit enormously from adequately protected release windows, so that impatient consumers are drawn to movie theatres as their primary channel to enjoy filmed entertainment **(Weinberg et al., 2021)** ^[7]. This study deals with what brings people to theatres despite so many choices at hand. It also emphasizes why they would not come to the theatres.

The industry invests a lot in creating awareness of the movies to be released using different promotion strategies **(Rawal & Saavedra, 2017)** ^[8]. It includes trailers that capture the significant attention of the audience **(Lepore, n.d.)** ^[9]. The audience also follows up on movie reviews available today on multiple platforms to decide on watching the movie **(Moon et al., 2010)** ^[10]. There also exist word-of-mouth promotion which is created organically by the people themselves to make other watch the movie. This is key to any film that is released, especially because it impacts the box office collections of the releases **(Rawal & Saavedra, 2017)** ^[8]. Overall, this study will take into these factors and gain an understanding of the audience's intention to watch a film at the theatres, and what they expect from them.

Objectives of the Study and Hypothesis Development

This paper will study the audience selection of watching movies released in cinema theatres. The criteria of preference of the movie selection will be studied based on the following

- To understand the consumer behaviour of moviegoers.
- To understand the influence of movie promotions on consumers
- To understand if Cinema going is a socializing activity

Movie Promotions

- H_0 : There is no Relationship between Promotions of Movie and Consumers' reason to watch a film at theatre
- H_1 : There is a Relationship between Promotions of Movie and Consumers' reason to watch a film at theatre

Movie as a Socializing Activity

- H_0 : There is no Relationship between Cinema going as socializing activity and Consumers' reason to watch a film at theatre
- H_1 : There is a Relationship between Cinema going as socializing activity

Demographics of Respondents

Table 1

Variable	Category	N= 185	%
Age	18 - 30 years	112	60.5
	30 - 40 Years	27	14.6
	40 - 50 Years	31	16.8
	Above 50 Years	15	8.1
Gender	Male	121	65.4
	Female	64	34.6
Education	12 th	2	1.1
	UG	90	48.6
	PG	85	46
	Other	8	4.3
Profession	Student	67	36.2
	Employee	87	47
	Business	13	7
	Homemaker	18	9.8

and Consumers' reason to watch a film at theatre

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out using a survey method. Primary data was collected via a questionnaire created using Google Forms. The questionnaire was in multiple response format containing 40 questions including the demographics. The population was sampled using snowball sampling technique. The sample's geographical limit was Chennai. A total of 185 responses were collected, out of which 169 responses were selected for further research.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data were analysed using SPSS statistics software. Descriptive – Frequency, Percentage analysis and Karl Pearson's correlation analysis were the tests performed.

Karl Pearson's correlation analysis: Correlation is a statistical measure that indicates how strongly two variables are related to each other. It shows the degree to which changes in one variable are associated with changes in the other variable.

From Table 1, we can understand that this study was performed on a sample population with ages above 18 years, out of which the highest response was from the window 18 – 30 years (60.5%). Nearly 65% of the respondents were male. A combined 94.6% of the respondents were at least graduates thereby inferring this research was studied with rational data. The respondents were majorly Employed (47%) or a student (36.2%).

Respondents' Intention to Go to Theatres

The Total number of respondents was 185, out of which only 169 respondents watch movies at the theatres. Only these 169 respondents will be considered valid and used in further steps of this study. Questions were asked with different variables, here is the descriptive data from the valid respondents (Table 2).

Table 2

Question	Category	N= 185	%
Do respondents watch movies at cinema theatres?	Yes	169	91.4
	No	16	8.6

Purchase Habits

Table 3

Question	Category	N= 169	%
How often do people go to theatres?	Weekly	17	10
	Monthly	74	43.8
	Rarely	78	46.2
When do people watch a movie at the theatres?	First Day	28	16.6
	First Week	79	46.7
	Later	62	36.7
What type of theatre do they prefer?	Single Screen	18	10.7
	Multiplex	36	21.3
	Both	115	68
How do they book tickets?	Offline Booking	38	22.5
	Online Booking	131	77.5

Table 4

Question	Category	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Language preference of the audience	Watch only in their mother tongue	33.5	16.2	13.5	22.2	5.9
	Watch in other languages also	30.3	28.6	16.8	11.9	3.8

From Table 3, we understand that the majority of consumers tend to go to theatres Monthly or rarely. Most consumers watch movies during the first week or later; very few people watch on the first day. As for theatre type, consumers tend to prefer both multiplex and single screen. The majority of consumers book tickets online. From Table 4 most people watch movies in languages other than their mother tongue also.

Influencing Factors in selecting movies.

Table 5

Question	Category	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
What are the reasons they watch movies at theatres?	The person is a fan/ Enthusiast	32	30.2	27.2	7.7	3
	Favourite Actor(s)	30.2	30.2	30.8	6.5	2.4
	Movie Promotions	6.5	32.5	35.5	17.2	8.3
	Reviews	24.3	43.8	19.5	9.5	3
	Theatre experience	49.7	28.4	16	3.6	2.4
How do movie promotions influence them?	Posters	8.9	40.2	33.1	11.8	5.9
	Teaser / Trailers	47.9	37.9	11.2	0.6	2.4
	Songs	34.9	45.6	15.4	1.8	2.4
	Interviews	8.9	38.5	36.1	10.1	6.5
	Other Release Events	8.3	20.2	48.8	15.5	7.1

Analysing H1: Movie-going decision influenced by the promotions of the movie.

Correlation test

This study tries to test the relationship between (A) Influence of Movie Promotions and variables (B) Reasons to watch a film at theatres, (C) Time of watching a new release. The hypotheses are as follows: Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between

(A) and (B), (C). Alternate Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant relationship between (A) and (B), (C). The following result was obtained:

Table 6

Correlations			
		Respondents reasons to watch a film at theatres (B)	Time of watching a new release (C)
Influence of Movie Promotions (A)	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	0.594**	0.198**
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0.000	0.010
	<i>N</i>	169	169

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

In both cases r value is positive and a significant 2-tailed value is less than 0.01, hence we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H_1). There is a positive relationship between (A) and (B), (C).

From the above test we can infer that the movie's promotion positively influences the consumers' reason to watch a film and the time they watch a release. It is very vital in bringing the audience to the cinema theatres.

Cinema-going and socializing

Table 7

Question	Category	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
How do people watch movies?	<i>Individually</i>	11.8	14.8	29	32	12.4
	<i>With company</i>	55.6	34.3		9.5	0.6
Is Cinema going a way to socialize	<i>It is a good way to socialize</i>	30.8	45.6	17.2	4.7	1.8
	<i>A choice for family outings</i>	34.9	45.6	12.4	4.7	2.4
	<i>Combined with other social activities</i>	24.3	49.1	21.3	5.3	

Analysing H2: Consumers go to watch movies at theatres as socializing activity.

Correlation Test

This study tries to test the relationship between (A) Cinema going as a Socialization activity and variables (B) Reasons to watch a film at theatres, (C) Watching movies at theatres satisfies respondents, (D) Movies at cinemas play major role in entertainment. The hypotheses are as follows: Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant relationship between (A) and (B), (C), (D). Alternate Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant relationship between (A) and (B), (C), (D). The following result was obtained:

Table 8

Correlations				
		Respondents reasons to watch a film at theatres (B)	Watching movie at theatre satisfies them (C)	Cinema theatres play a Major role in entertainment (D)
Cinema going a Socialization activity (A)	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	0.376**	0.284**	0.293**
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	0.000	0.000	0.000
	<i>N</i>	169	169	169

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

In all three cases, *r value* is positive and a significant 2-tailed value is less than 0.01, hence we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H_1). There is a positive relationship between (A) and (B), (C), (D).

From the above test, we can infer that socialization is a reason for Consumers going to cinema theatres. It has a positive influence on consumers' reasons to watch a film. The consumers' satisfaction after watching a movie at a cinema theatre is also related with socialization. From Table 7, we understand that the majority of consumers prefer to watch movies in the company of others.

Consumer Choices

Table 9

Question	Category	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
How do People select movie theatres?	<i>Based on the Facility / Technology available</i>	47.9	42.6	8.9		0.6
	<i>Ticket Pricing</i>	32.5	50.9	10.1	5.3	1.2
	<i>Based on Location</i>	51.2	41.7	7.1		
Why do people avoid movie theatres	<i>Expenses (ticket, food beverage, parking)</i>	32	37.3	19.5	7.7	3.6
	<i>Time / Convenience</i>	31.4	43.2	15.4	8.9	1.2
	<i>Lack of facilities at the theatre</i>	23.1	35.5	27.8	10.7	3
	<i>Poor Reviews</i>	36.7	35.5	15.4	10.1	2.4
	<i>Not aware of the movie</i>	23.1	36.1	27.2	8.3	5.3

From Table 9, we understand Consumers are conscious about the Technology / Facility available at the theatre, Ticket Pricing, and Location of the theatre before choosing the cinema theatre to watch a movie. It is also understood that people tend to avoid theatre because of the expenses, Time/ Convenience of them, Lack of facilities at the theatre, Poor reviews of the movie or because they're not aware of the movie.

Consumer Intention to Watch at cinema theatres

Table 10

Question	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
<i>Have they skipped a movie playing at the theatre?</i>	20.1	39.1	21.9	13	5.9
<i>Do they watch movies on other platforms?</i>	45.6	41.4	10.7	2.4	
<i>Is OTT replacing cinema according to them?</i>	13	40.8	24.9	18.3	3
<i>Do they feel Cinema theatres play a major role in entertainment?</i>	47.9	44.4	6.5	0.6	0.6
<i>Is watching movies at the theatre satisfying them?</i>	46.7	42.6	8.3	2.4	

From Table 10, we infer the following, most of the respondents have skipped a movie playing at the theatre, and they also watch movies on other platforms. A significant number of consumers feel Cinemas play a major role in entertainment, and it satisfies them. Consumers to some extent think that OTT is replacing Cinemas.

LIMITATIONS

- This study was carried out on moviegoers in the city of Chennai alone.
- The study could differ in a different geographical area and film market.

DISCUSSIONS

This study emphasises the need to understand the consumer behaviour of moviegoers. Filmmakers must make every effort in developing strong promotional campaigns as it impacts the selection

process of the consumers. Consumers are not only aware of the various alternate platforms available in the market, but they also perceive cinema theatres as a place for social gatherings where they can participate in a shared activity. Theatres should also be aware of the audience requirements to facilities, and technologies they offer as it impacts the ecosystem. Adopting a consumer-centric approach while providing an enjoyable experience can significantly enhance cinema theatre operations.

CONCLUSION

The study conducted on the consumer behaviour of moviegoers was successful in shedding light on several key aspects related to this topic. One of the most notable findings was that movie promotions have a significant impact on consumer choices, highlighting the importance of effective marketing strategies in this industry.

Additionally, cinema-going was found to be a socializing activity, with many moviegoers citing the desire to spend time with friends or family as one of their primary motivations for attending screenings. Finally, there was a clear indication that understanding consumer behaviour can help to better market movies and generate more successful outcomes. By gaining insights into what motivates consumers to choose certain films, Movie Producers and marketing professionals can develop targeted campaigns that are more likely to resonate with their target audience and drive ticket sales. Overall, these insights provide valuable guidance for those involved in the movie industry and underscore the importance of staying attuned to evolving consumer trends and preferences.

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