

SWITCHING PARADIGMS: TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGES IN FILM CONSUMPTION PATTERNS IN THE STREAMING ERA

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Abstract

As of 2024, the impact of COVID-19 on cinema is still being felt, but the industry has largely adapted to the changes ushered in by the pandemic. This post - pandemic significantly altered global entertainment consumption, particularly the movie industry. This study examines how young adults' movie consumption patterns shifted from traditional cinemas to Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms as it continues from the post-pandemic trend. The research explores the influence of factors such as cost, convenience and preferences for OTT services over cinemas. Survey findings indicate that cinema ticket prices, which are perceived as higher compared to the affordable subscription models of OTT platforms, play a key role in shaping consumption choices. Additionally, the convenience of watching movies on personal devices and the ability to binge-watch content were prominent reasons for the popularity of OTT services. Despite cinemas reopening, the cinema industry has struggled to regain pre-pandemic audience levels. This research suggests that cinema operators may need to adjust their pricing strategies and explore hybrid release models in collaboration with OTT platforms to remain competitive. The study highlights the continued dominance of OTT platforms and calls for industry adaptation to meet the evolving demands of young audiences, offering valuable insights for both cinema and streaming services in a post-pandemic landscape.

Keywords: *Transformative Changes, Film Consumption Patterns, Post-Pandemic Entertainment, Streaming Era, Over-the-Top (OTT) Platform*

Perubahan Transformasi dalam Corak Penggunaan Filem dalam Era Penstriman

Abstrak

Kesan pandemic masih lagi memberi kesan kepada industry perfileman hari ini. Pasca-pandemik ini telah mengubah secara struktur terhadap industri hiburan global, khususnya dalam industri filem dan penstriman. Kajian ini mengkaji bagaimana kepenggunaan filem dalam penonton muda telah beralih dari pawagam ke platform Over-the-Top (OTT) berikutan trend pasca-pandemik yang berterusan. Kajian ini meneroka pengaruh faktor seperti kos, kemudahan dan keutamaan terhadap perkhidmatan OTT berbanding pawagam. Dapatan tinjauan menunjukkan bahawa harga tiket pawagam, yang dianggap lebih tinggi berbanding model langganan OTT yang lebih berpatutan, memainkan peranan penting dalam membentuk pilihan penggunaan. Selain itu, kemudahan menonton filem di peranti peribadi dan kebolehan untuk menonton berturut-turut kandungan menjadi sebab utama populariti perkhidmatan OTT. Walaupun pawagam telah dibuka semula, industri filem masih berjuang untuk mengembalikan tahap penonton pra-pandemik. Kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa pengusaha pawagam mungkin perlu menyesuaikan strategi harga mereka dan meneroka model pelepasan hibrid dengan bekerjasama dengan platform OTT untuk kekal berdaya saing. Kajian ini menyoroti dominasi berterusan platform OTT dan menyeru penyesuaian industri untuk memenuhi permintaan golongan muda yang semakin berkembang, serta menawarkan pandangan berharga bagi kedua-dua pawagam dan perkhidmatan penstriman dalam landskap pasca-pandemik.

Kata Kunci: *Perubahan transformasi pasca-pandemik, Kepenggunaan filem, Hiburan pasca-pandemik, era penstriman, platform OTT*

Introduction

The advent of the streaming era has revolutionized the way audiences consume films, redefining traditional paradigms of distribution, accessibility, and viewing habits. These changes have influenced audience behavior, prompting shifts in how films are discovered, valued, and discussed (Dhiman, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a global upheaval in 2019, resulting in a large loss of life owing to the ferocious virus. Amid the extensive loss of life and the imposition of stringent lockdown measures to curb the spread of the virus, the film industry faced one of its most challenging periods in modern history (Ellul, 2023; Herdanto, 2023; Griffiths, 2024). The closure of cinemas

and production studios, resulting in profound financial and operational setbacks. This led to substantial financial setbacks, resulting in a prolonged struggle for the industry to regain stability and recuperate its losses. According to Ryu and Cho (2022), The closure of theatres during the pandemic has had a profound effect on the relationships between film studios and theatre operators. Simply viewing films will help to improve every individual's mood and reduce stress levels. Films serve as an ideal means of escaping the monotony of daily life, providing relaxation and moments of happiness.

Shah et al. (2020) stated that, in the periods before, during, and after the pandemic, contemporary arts, including cinema, have gained significance as a crucial aspect of enjoyment for individuals from diverse backgrounds. This led many movie studios to reassess their release strategies, resulting in delays or postponements. However, certain production companies opted to release their films exclusively on streaming platforms or adopt a hybrid approach, combining theatrical releases with streaming availability. Alexander (2020) mentioned that Warner Bros have announced their plans to simultaneously stream 17 highly anticipated blockbuster films of 2021 on their new online platform, HBO Max, alongside their theatrical releases. *The Matrix 4*, *Godzilla vs. King Kong*, and *Dune* are among the films on the schedule. In addition, during the lockdown period, individuals started seeking alternative platforms to watch movies due to the closure of theatres. Entertainment holds great importance for every individual, impacting them in various ways. It has a profound effect on human emotional well-being, serving as a catalyst for joy, thrill, and emotional catharsis.

According to Gupta and Singharia (2021), the increased levels of social isolation and distancing among individuals have led to a significant rise in the consumption of digital content at home, resulting in a higher demand for subscription-based streaming services. People have transitioned from traditional cinema theatres to Over-the-top (OTT) platforms, allowing them to consume movies in a more diverse and flexible manner, without being limited to a single medium. According to Shalparni et al. (2022), Over -the-top commonly known as OTT defined as a type of streaming media service that allows viewers to directly access content through both traditional broadcasting methods and the Internet. The OTT service was provided to people in the early 2000s, and today people may use it by paying directly for the material from the legal owners. HBO, Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, and Hulu are a few examples. There's a huge difference in the way how the content from

OTT platforms is being delivered to the audiences compared to cinema, and TV.

The pandemic forced movie theatres and studio production to cease temporarily in 2020. However, the contemporary technological revolution has created several opportunities for individuals to enjoy themselves such as OTT (Over-the-top) platforms. As a result, during the post-pandemic period, people began to utilize OTT services more regularly to watch films. The problem with this issue is that, according to Okumus (2022a), subscriptions to OTT services have surged throughout the epidemic because they are the only way for moviegoers to see movies. The number of OTT platform subscribers increased globally, rather than only in one nation. This shift is visible even in countries with the largest number of films produced, such as India. Basuroy (2022), stated that OTT subscribers increased from 21 million to 29 million in India. Furthermore, following the epidemic, the government decided to loosen the limitations that had previously been imposed in all areas, particularly the entertainment industry. With just a few limitations, the government reopened cinemas for the public to see the movies. However, the cinema did not receive as positive response from the audience as the owners anticipated. A challenging problem that arises in this domain, according to Okumus (2022b), is that although the theatres were back in operation the anticipated level of pleasure and profitability could not be attained. Despite all efforts, the movie theatre owners were unable to boost the number of moviegoers returning to the theatre. As a consequence of it, the cinema's revenue dropped. Kulasagaran (2022), stated that the Finas numbers reflect a dramatic fall in movie income. According to OTTVerse (n.a), streaming services utilize video delivery technologies like HTTP Live Streaming or Dynamic Adaptive streaming over HTTP (MPEG-DASH) to transmit digital content over an internet connection. According to Saggi and Mohan (2023), changing individual media consumption patterns have led to significant revenue expansion for global over-the-top (OTT) service providers like Netflix, YouTube, and Amazon Prime over the past few years (Bazi, Filieri, & Gorton, 2023). The research aims to compare movie consumption among young adults during the post-pandemic period between cinema and OTT platforms. This research also aim to s whether moviegoers still prefer going to the theatre or using the OTT platform after pandemic and the reason behind young adults' preference for how they consume movies.

The Pandemic and the Advent of Digital era

The occurrence of the pandemic has left many impacts on various aspects including the entertainment industry. The advent of the digital era has brought convenience and integration into the daily lives of individuals. Furthermore, it has facilitated interpersonal connections among individuals, enabling them to interact and communicate regardless of geographical distance. The digital revolution has significantly enhanced the convenience of human life, particularly during the pandemic. Despite the temporary closure of cinemas, technology has provided alternative means for individuals to stay entertained by accessing movies through various platforms.

Over-The-Top platform

According to Pathak and Kumar (2023), The growth of over-the-top platforms has had a substantial impact on viewers' traditional movie-watching habits. The reason behind this transformation in moviegoers' culture can be attributed to the pandemic that occurred in 2019. In Malaysia, a wide range of over-the-top (OTT) platforms are accessible to movie enthusiasts, allowing them to watch their preferred movies both during and after the pandemic. Examples of these platforms include Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. Additionally, Malaysians have the option to utilize local platforms such as Iflix, Tonton, VIU, Dimsum, and Hypp TV to access a variety of movies.

Cinema vs. OTT Platforms: Financial Impacts and Consumer Preferences

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted the entertainment industry, with cinemas facing severe financial losses due to extended closures, while OTT platforms experienced significant growth. Cinemas, traditionally a major source of movie viewing, saw revenue drops as global lockdowns limited in-person attendance. On the other hand, OTT platforms like Netflix and Disney+ became essential alternatives, thriving during the pandemic due to their accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and diverse content offerings.

The surge in OTT subscriptions during the pandemic is indicative of changing consumer preferences. Viewers, particularly young adults, shifted from traditional cinemas to the convenience of home streaming, enjoying on-demand content without geographical constraints. According to industry reports, streaming platforms capitalized on this shift by enhancing interactive features, real-time engagement, and exclusive

releases, providing more personalized experiences (Gupta & Singharia, 2021).

Despite cinemas attempting to recover with new safety protocols and blockbuster releases, the financial viability of the traditional cinema model remains uncertain. OTT platforms, with their lower operational costs and wide reach, continue to dominate the entertainment landscape, suggesting that the post-pandemic era may see an ongoing shift towards digital consumption, forcing cinemas to rethink their strategies and adapt to evolving consumer behavior.

The shifting movie consumption patterns among movie enthusiasts have led to substantial growth for a selected few OTTS platforms. Lim (2020) stated that during the period of COVID-19 lockdowns, Netflix and Tonton experienced significant increases in user traffic, surpassing other OTT platforms in terms of growth rate. According to Gomes (2022), having made its global debut in 2019, iQiyi, an OTT platform that focuses on Asian entertainment, became one of the most downloaded apps by August 2020. The services that are being provided by the Over-the-top platform are accessible to anyone without any exceptions. Consequently, this empowers individuals to seamlessly incorporate OTT platforms into their everyday lives, free from any interruptions. According to Gaonkar et al. (2022), the widely distributed populace may now access their favored material on a variety of devices and spend around an eighth of their day viewing their favorite dramas, TV series, or films. Apart from that, users don't have to go through the hassle of searching for movies that are like the genre of their liking. Instead, the OTT platforms cater according to the user's preferences and show movies or other content that will satisfy them. Patnaik et al. (2021) stated that by analyzing the content preferences of consumers, OTT platforms can continue offering them similar categories of content that align with their regular viewing habits. As a result, users of OTT platforms can effortlessly access the desired content without the need to spend time searching for it. This does not mean that the OTT service will solely offer the same types of films. In fact, it will also provide recommendations for alternative movie genres or other content to users. Additionally, OTT platforms offer content from genres outside of users' typical preferences, enabling them to explore and experiment with different genres.

Moreover, OTT platforms offer convenience to consumers as they are not required to relocate or physically move to enjoy the services provided by these platforms. An internet connection stands as a fundamental requirement for accessing OTT services. Users can conveniently utilize

OTT services on any device if they have an internet connection. According to Palomba (2022), Over-the-top (OTT) platforms distributes video content over the Internet and enable consumers to access it from a variety of devices. This eliminates the need for physical device restrictions and allows users to easily download and utilize OTT applications. As a result, this minimizes mobility requirements and prevents interruptions while enjoying their preferred movies. Certain OTT platforms like Netflix offer the feature of watching movies together with friends or family, regardless of their physical distance. This allows users to enjoy films together and engage in conversations while streaming. By simply downloading an extension, users can initiate streaming sessions with their loved ones. Furthermore, the videos will automatically synchronize even if users switch between different videos during the streaming session.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research methodology to analyze the preferences of young adults in movie consumption during the post-pandemic period. According to Sheard (2018), differing from qualitative research, quantitative research focuses on data that can be quantified and represented by numbers. In this context, statistics denoted the essential techniques employed to analyse numerical data. According to Mohajan (2020), quantitative research utilizes mathematical techniques, particularly statistics, to examine specific data that remained constant in numerical form. A simple random sampling method was utilized to ensure that every young adult aged 18 to 30 had an equal chance of being selected for participation.

Data collection was carried out through an online survey, which consisted of a structured questionnaire designed to gather quantitative data on participants' movie consumption habits, preferences for viewing platforms, and relevant demographic information. Surajkumar (2017) stated that the process of administering the survey can be done quickly without requiring a significant amount of time to prepare at the organization. Additionally, the results could be swiftly calculated and analyzed within a short time frame. This approach aimed to reduce sampling bias and enhance the representativeness of the sample, allowing for generalizable findings across the target population.

The analysis of the collected data involved using statistical techniques to interpret the numerical responses. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the data, highlighting key trends in movie consumption among participants.

Findings and Discussions

The survey comprised a total of 104 participants, all of whom fell into the category of young adults, and the sample size representative of this age group. The bulk of respondents, 58% of (58) the total, belonged to the age range of 21-23 years old. Of the 104 people who participated in the survey, 27% (27) of them were between the ages of 18 -20 and 15% of the respondents are belong to age group of 24 – 2. As a consequence of this, the biggest proportion of survey respondents fell into the age range of 21- 23. The age group's mean value is (1.8800), while the median is (2.000) and the variance is (0.4097). The age group has a standard deviation of (0.6401).

The findings of the research did demonstrate that all of the respondents who took part in the survey are familiar with OTT platforms and had signed up for OTT platform subscriptions at some point. 52% (52) of respondents claimed that they had subscribed to the OTT platforms before the pandemic began, whereas 45% (45) of the respondents said that they had subscribed to OTT platforms while the pandemic was in progress. Meanwhile, 3% (3) said that subscribed OTT platforms before and during pandemic. The mean value for OTT platforms subscriptions is (1.4639) and (1.000) is the value for median. Meanwhile, the value for variance is (0.2513). The standard deviation for this question is (0.5013).

Pricing on theatres and OTT platform

When the respondents were asked if watching films in theatres was more expensive than watching on OTT platforms, 4% (4) of respondents strongly disagreed, 41% (41) said they somewhat agreed, 33% (33) agreed, and 13% (13) chose to strongly agree. The other 9% (9) said that disagree with the question. This question's mean and median values are (3.4200) and (3.0000), respectively. In the meantime, the variance is (0.9329) and for standard deviation is (0.9659). furthermore, the skewness and kurtosis values are (-0.3178) and (0.1106).

In terms of the participant's opinion on the present subscription pricing of OTT platforms, the survey inquired if they thought they were worth the cost. According to the findings, 3% (3) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 17% (20) disagreed, 47% (47) somewhat agreed, 29% (29) agreed, and 4% (4) highly agreed on it. The value for mean is (3.1400) and median is (3.000). Meanwhile the variance and standard deviation value is (0.7277) and (0.8530) respectively. Moreover, the value for skewness and kurtosis are as follow: (-0.1749) and (0.0563).

Preferred viewing location

When asked about their preferred viewing location for a movie released simultaneously in theatres and on OTT platforms, the survey revealed that most respondents 53% (53) opted for OTT platforms. In contrast, 47% of the respondents expressed a preference for movie theatres as their chosen destination to watch new release movies. Upon testing the mean, median and variance for this data it shows that the values are (1.4700), (1.000), and (0.2516). The data have a standard deviation of (0.5016). Meanwhile, the value for skewness is (0.1221), while the value for kurtosis is (-2.0260) respectively.

In terms of why they favor OTT platforms over theatre, 9% (9) of 104 respondents responded it's due to the variety of content and device convenience. The reason given by 5% (5) respondents was variety of contents. 3% (3) of respondents chose OTT service over theatres for safety reasons. 5% (5) of respondents chose device convenience as their explanation. And 1% (1) chose binge-watching convenience, variety of contents, device convenience, and for safety reasons. Binge-watching convenience, variety of contents and device convenience were chosen as explanations by 34% (34) of respondents.

Where else did 7% (7) respondents choose binge-watching convenience and variety of content. 2% (2) of respondents selected binge-watching for purposes of convenience and safety reasons. And another 2% (2) of respondents cited the convenience of binge-watching, convenience of devices and safety reasons. 13% of respondents chose binge-watching and device convenience. Meanwhile, 19% (19) of respondents indicated binge-watching convenience as their rationale.

The findings of the survey for the research show that the income of the respondents and the cost of the cinema theatre are the factors that influence young adults' movie consumption patterns in cinemas and on

OTT platforms during the post-pandemic period. As most of the respondents are falls under the income category of below Rm 1,000, which lead the majority of them agree that cinema theatres cost more than subscribing to OTT platforms.

Furthermore, binge-watching convenience, content variety, and device convenience are distinguishing elements of OTT platforms that have a significant impact on young adults' movie consumption.

Conclusions

As the OTT platforms allow their subscribers to enjoy a variety of movies for a fee, which is less expensive than going to the cinema, and aside from that, device convenience is another feature that young adults nowadays prefer as it allows them to stream movies with their friends and family, which impacts cinema business profit.

Previous research on “is OTT Industry a Disruption to Movie Theatre Industry?” was undertaken by Varghese et al. (2021) to enhance understanding of the future of the OTT and Cinema Industries in India. The prior research had a much broader reach because it was conducted in depth about both industries, and the research tools utilised to conduct this research were a questionnaire and three interviews with individuals related to OTT business. The survey yielded 326 responses in total.

The following are some recommendations for Cinema industry to sustain in the entertainment industry alongside with its other competitors in the industry. The first step is that cinema theatre owners and operators should consider possibility of reducing the price of movie tickets in order to increase the number of moviegoers coming back to theatre to watch movie. Secondly, Cinema industry has to work more closely with the OTT platforms to coordinate the release of new movies simultaneously in both platforms and negotiate the distribution of revenue equally among both industries. Therefore, cinema industry can continue to thrive for a longer period of time. Since this research, was limited to young adults from the Klang Valley region, it is recommended that the future studies about moviegoer's consumption of movie should be broaden on peoples from different age range. In addition, this study only carried out on people from Klang Valley, it is advisable that the future studies be carried out on people from not only from urban area but also rural places.

The findings of this research paper revealed that, the respondents still do prefer OTT platforms even when new movies are released in cinemas and OTT platforms simultaneously.. As a result, the pandemic is not the only reason why people's movie consumption preferences have changed. This also implies that there are greater possibilities for Cinema and OTT platforms to coexist in the entertainment industry if cinema evolves its features to people's preferences.

In conclusion, this research highlights how the pandemic has shifted movie consumption patterns among young adults, with a notable move from traditional cinemas to Over-The-Top (OTT) services. While cinemas have seen a slight recovery in revenue, OTT subscriptions continue to rise an ongoing change in consumer behavior. To ensure long-term success and competitiveness, the cinema industry must adapt its strategies to meet the evolving preferences of young audiences, who increasingly favor the convenience and affordability of streaming platforms. The findings of this research can help the cinema sector refine its approach, potentially by offering enhanced experiences, competitive pricing, and embracing digital innovations that align with the demands of modern moviegoers. By understanding these shifts, the cinema industry can better cater to young people's preferences, ensuring it remains relevant in an increasingly digital entertainment landscape.

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