

Measuring People's Motivation to Go to the Movie Theatre

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Abstract:

Over the years, theatres have existed, constituting art almost exclusively concerned with live performances, bringing people together, and sharing experiences. Walmsley (2011) explores the problem of concerning some of the key motivators of people attending theatres and establishes that the pursuit of emotional experiences and impact was a key motivator for people going into movie theatres, besides escapism and the desire to move away from the demands of life while relieving stress as Manolika and Baltzis (2020) indicate. Di Ferdinando's (2020) exploration of the people's motivating factors to theatre attendance deduced that individual needs of personal interest, socialization, entertainment, education, and escapism were key contributing factors besides the quality, diversity, and accessibility of the theatre offerings.

Keywords: theatre, movie, entertainment, motivating factor

Introduction

Over the years, theatres have existed, constituting art almost exclusively concerned with live performances, bringing people together, and sharing experiences. Walmsley (2011) explores the problem of concerning some of the key motivators of people attending theatres and establishes that the pursuit of emotional experiences and impact was a key motivator for people going into movie theatres, besides escapism and the desire to move away from the demands of life while relieving stress as Manolika and Baltzis (2020) indicate. Di Ferdinando's (2020) exploration of the people's motivating factors to theatre attendance deduced that individual needs of personal interest, socialization, entertainment, education, and escapism were key contributing factors besides the quality, diversity, and accessibility of the theatre offerings. However, although this is a view that is widely shared across a range of studies, scholarly works by DiFerdinando (2020) and Wu (2022) articulate that with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, theatre attendance, in general, has nosedived, attributed to the lack of interest due to the unveiling of new dimensions of enjoying theatrical performances without making physical attendance such as the emergence of streaming services. Volchenkov et al. (2022) note that besides the increased adoption of streaming services, the shifting demand for the community aspect attributed to movie theatres is attributable to the dropping motivation levels among the audience. This study focuses on movie theatres, which, unlike conventional theatres focusing on live performances, focus on displaying films; it aims to measure people's motivation, especially in the context of the many demotivating factors of people's movie theatre

attendance.

Research Aim and Objectives

This research aims to measure people's motivation to go to the movie theatre, especially during the post-pandemic period.

Objectives

- To evaluate people's desire and urge to attend movie theatres.
- To assess the variation of the audience motivation across different demographic groups.
- To identify the various factors affecting audience motivation to go to movie theatres.

Research Question

What are the key motivating factors pushing individuals to choose movie theatres as their preferred mode of cinematic consumption?

Literature Review

Austin (1986) presents a historical perspective concerning the motivations for movie attendance, including people's desire for learning and information, escaping and forgetting life-related stresses, enjoying and having a pleasant activity, socializing, and cultivating communication resources. The author continues that demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and pattern of movie-going correlated with the motivations for movie attendance, with younger, male, and regular movie-goers having different motivations than older, female, and streaky movie-goers (Austin, 1986). Over the years, this view concerning the motivations for movie attendance

has remained largely unchanged until the world saw the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which, with the introduction of various containment measures to combat virus spread, led to a temporal shutdown of movie theatres and other venues hosting public gatherings. Volchenkov et al. (2022) shed light on this issue by highlighting that this temporal shutdown of theatres led to the emergence of other alternatives, such as increased preference for online streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Disney+ during the pandemic, which presented various benefits such as increased convenience, affordability, and variety of services compared to movie theatres. Additionally, with cost being one of the main barriers preventing audience attendance of theatres as DiFerdinando (2020), the relatively cheaper costs of movie streaming services over attending movie theatres is implicated in invoking reduced interest and motivation based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Movie Theatre-Going

Based on this theory, the development of motivation is attributable to three key factors, including a person's attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, whereby the higher the levels of these elements, the higher the impact on one's motivation to do something (Brookes, 2023). For instance, Bosse et al. (2023) denote that people's attitudes to attending cinemas have aggravated with the emergence of the pandemic while they have developed an increased appetite for digital streaming services. The theory of planned behavior implicates such deteriorating attitudes as impactful on one's motivation to attend movie theatres, causing a reduced attendance while streaming services are seeing a tremendous surge in people's improving attitudes towards them. Consequently, Bosse and colleagues (2023) contend that movie theatres have adopted mitigating strategies to provide better, unique, and optimal cinema experiences different from those of in-home viewing to alleviate the attitudes of movie-goers. People's attitudes to attending cinemas remain the most essential analytical element of the TPB, where a study by Statista highlights the gravity of the issue, with 41% of adults indicating that they would attend movie theatres in 6 months or more at the height of the pandemic with movie-going being associated with increased health risk, thus indicating the aggravation of people's attitudes to movie theatre-attendance (Statista, 2023). Furthermore, as Clayton et al. (2022) indicate, the increasing people's investment in home cinema experience during COVID, coupled with increased use of streaming services due to the closure of cinemas and the

lack of new releases, led to less demand for movie-going, thus reducing the people's attitudes and excitement to attending movie theatres. In other words, the plummeting of people's attitudes to movie-going coupled with the increased acceptance of streaming services has reduced motivation for people to go to movie theatres despite its advantages.

Research Gap

The limited exploration of the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control outlined by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) within the context of movie theatre attendance during and after the COVID-19 pandemic presents a research gap requiring further exploration. Additionally, there is a detailed analysis of how these factors influence the motivation to attend movie theatres. However, the literature acknowledges a shift towards online streaming services and the impact of the pandemic on people's attitudes as influential. Thus, understanding the intricate dynamics between changing attitudes, societal norms, and perceived control is crucial for devising effective strategies to rejuvenate interest and motivation for in-person movie experiences post-pandemic, which are essential in measuring people's motivation to go to the movie theatre.

Methodology

This research integrates a cross-sectional research design, which entails gathering data from the research participants at a single point in time, as Thomas (2023) notes, whereby in this study, the aim is to measure People's motivation to go to the movie theatre, hence the collection of data concerning the key motivating factors pushing individuals to choose movie theatres as their preferred mode of cinematic consumption. To facilitate this research design, this research will leverage a quantitative approach to collecting and analyzing numerical data, which is key to measuring people's motivation to go to movie theatres. Although the quantitative research approach is attributed to benefits such as facilitating analysis of large samples with great data generalisability and replicability capable of hypothesis testing, it suffers from limitations such as superficiality and narrow focus, as Bhandari (2023) notes. However, given the scope of this research, these limitations were not limited to the deductions gathered. Consequently, surveys using questionnaires with closed-ended questions were used as a data collection method, with the sample of 100 participants selected using stratified random sampling, with the population divided into strata along demographic variables such as age,

economic status, movie-going patterns, investment in home cinema and digital literacy, health concerns, and social influence. Lastly, the study utilized descriptive statistical analysis to analyze the data along three key independent variables influencing motivation (dependent variable) to go to the movies, including economic status, investment in home cinema, and social influence.

Findings and Analysis

The research gathered that 90% of the participants were over 18 years old, 55% earned between \$ 10,000 and \$30,000, and 67% attended movie theatres regularly (4-10 times annually) (35%) or frequently (more than ten times) (32%) before the pandemic. However, during the post-

pandemic, 56% of the respondents indicated rarely (once a year) or occasionally (1-3 times annually) attending movie theatres, with only 44% indicating regularly (28%) or frequently (16%) attending cinemas. The investigation of the effects of three variables, including economic status, investment in home cinema, and social influence, the research gathered that both economic status and investment in home cinema had a significant impact on people’s motivation to attend, with 42% and 52% either agreeing or strongly agreeing, respectively. However, social influence was not identified as influencing people’s motivation to go to the movies, as indicated in Table 1 below.

Effect of economic status, investment in home cinema, and social influence on motivation to movie-going

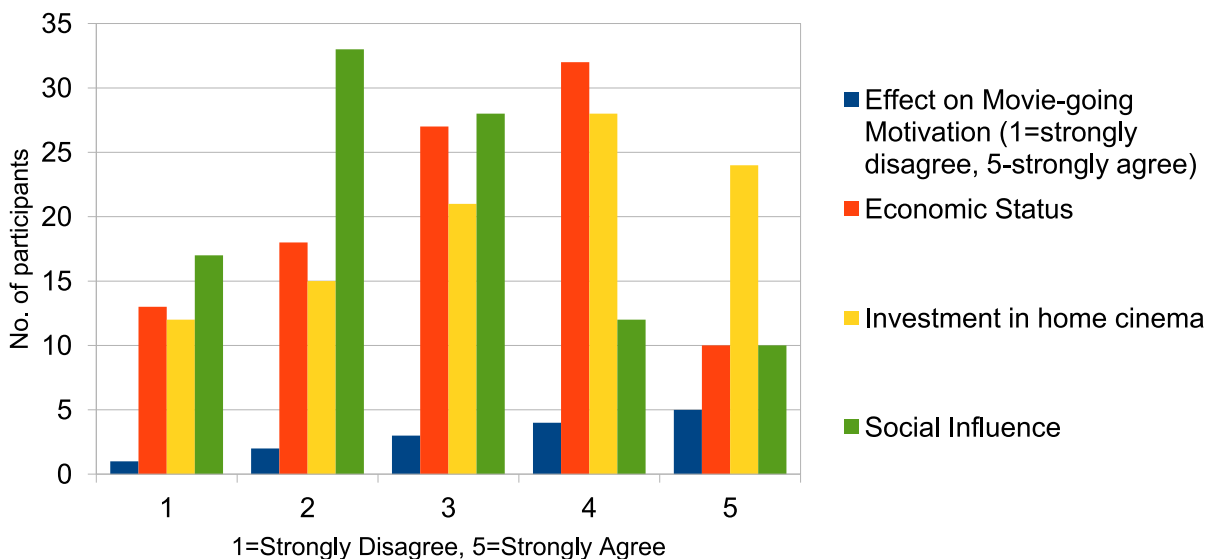


Table 1: Effects of economic status, investment in home cinema, and social influence on motivation to go to the movies.

Based on the findings, economic status, though an independent variable, happened to be a moderating variable affecting the relationship between different demographics and motivation to go to a cinema, whereas, in the younger demographic, economic factors such as ticket pricing were a huge factor affecting their motivation levels to going to movie theatres mainly due to lower disposable income. In the older demographic, economic status determined their level and quality of investment made in home cinema experience whereby the higher the investment, the lower the motivation to attend movie theatres, with 72% of the 46 participants with medium-to-high level home cinema indicating reduced motivation to

attend movie theatres.

Discussion: Different Demographic Groups’ Desire and Urge to Attending Movie Theatres and The Various Factors Affecting Motivation

Based on the study findings, the research gathered that there was a decline in people’s desire and urge to attend cinemas, with the number of people frequently or regularly attending movie cinemas dropping precipitously with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic whereby more than half of the participants (56%) have expressed reduced motivation given their rare or occasional movie theatre attendance. Also, this research observed that the younger demographic was more susceptible to

economic shocks associated with movie-going, whereby increased ticket prices affected their motivation to go to movie theatres due to their lower disposable income and increased affordability and adoption of movie streaming services. Studies by Volchenkov et al. (2022) and Pietrzak-Franger et al. (2023) corroborate this research's findings by contending that the pandemic led to a significant increase in the popularity and use of streaming services and moderating the decrease in the willingness to go to movie theatres. This increased adoption of movie streaming services is associated with increased investment in the home cinema experience, whereby participants with higher investments expressed reduced motivation to go to the movies.

This aligns with existing research whereby Clayton et al. (2022) postulate that streaming services fill the gap left by cinema closures and offer more convenience and choice, thus culminating in reduced motivation to go to the cinema. Specifically, the study points to upgrading screens, speakers, seating, and streaming packages to enhance their home viewing experience and the lowered motivation to go to the cinema, given the comparable experience. However, this research established that social influence was not a key factor affecting the participants' movie theatre attendance, with only 22% noting the influence. This is illustrated by what Clayton et al. (2022) describe as streaming services facilitating the sharing of viewing experiences with their family and friends, both online and offline. However, this implies invoking people's motivation to go to the cinema for social interaction and to enjoy the communal and immersive atmosphere of watching a film, thus creating a gap for future research to explore. Therefore, the study deduces that people's desire for movie-going has plummeted, especially during this post-pandemic period, due to more adoption of movie streaming services and increased investment in home cinema experience attributable to healthy economic status.

Conclusion

This research's investigation of the evolving landscape of movie theatre attendance, examining shifts in motivation exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, reveals a decline in motivation attributable to the younger demographic, economic constraints, and an increased affinity for home cinema investments. Also, economic status emerged as a vital moderating variable as it acted on other variables, such as movie ticket affordability concerns and the affordability of quality home cinematic experiences. Thus, this research establishes that economic factors and investment in home cinema experience are key factors

affecting people's motivation to go to movie theatres. Nonetheless, few areas are identifiable for future research as although streaming services have seen increased adoption, it is significant for future research to appraise the detailed dynamics of social influence on movie theatre attendance, especially exploring how streaming services facilitate social interactions and the potential to invoking the desire for the communal aspect of cinema-going which may motivate people to movie-going.

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