

Consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance: A bibliometric analysis using Web of Science and VOSviewer

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Abstract

Purpose: To analyse and determine the influence of consumer behaviour on cinema box office performance within the film industry using bibliometric analysis and data visualization techniques.

Design/methodology/approach: The study employed a bibliometric analysis of 95 English language articles on consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance within the film industry sourced from the Web of Science database. Data visualization was facilitated using VOSviewer, which aided in the co-citation analysis of references and co-occurrence analysis of keywords.

Findings: Prominent research clusters were identified, focusing on factors such as film-critics, online reviews, and word of mouth. Overlay visualization further highlighted the significant influence of online reviews, social media, and emerging technologies on film selection.

Research limitations/implications: The study is limited to English language articles from the Web of Science database, potentially excluding relevant research from other languages or databases. Future studies could benefit from incorporating multiple data sources and document types for a more holistic perspective on the topic.

Practical implications: The insights derived from this study can guide film marketing and distribution strategies, emphasizing the importance of film-critics, online reviews, and the impact of emerging technologies and word-of-mouth from social media on consumer choices.

Originality/value: This research offers a unique bibliometric analysis combined with data visualization to shed light on the intricate relationship between consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance within the film industry. It provides a structured overview of current research trends and knowledge structures in the domain, filling a gap in the literature.

Keywords: Cinema, Box Office, Movie Theatre, Film/Movie Tickets, VOSviewer, Consumer Behaviour

Introduction

Cinema, as a form of cultural consumption, has long been a central pillar of entertainment and artistic expression across the globe. The allure of the silver screen transcends borders, languages, and cultures, drawing millions to theatres and streaming platforms alike. According to Horváth and Balázs (2021), movie consumption reflects a myriad of trends and countertrends that shape consumer behaviour, from the influence of technological advancements to the

changing pace of life. Such trends not only dictate the genres and types of films that gain popularity but also influence the very habits of movie consumption, from theatre visits to streaming preferences. The significance of these patterns extends beyond mere viewership numbers; they offer a window into the evolving cultural, social, and technological landscapes of societies worldwide.

The global pandemic further underscored the resilience and adaptability of the film industry. As Melnychenko et al. (2021) observed, cinema chains, despite facing unprecedented challenges, pivoted their strategies, leveraging social media and online platforms to engage with audiences. This shift not only underscores the importance of understanding consumer behaviour but also highlights the industry's ability to innovate and adapt in the face of adversity. Moreover, cinema's potential extends beyond entertainment. As Silk et al. (2018) posited, films offer a unique platform to share messages with a vast audience, potentially raising awareness about conservation issues and species of concern and fostering greater audience engagement due to their emotional resonance.

In addition, the study of consumer behaviour in the context of cinema offers a unique lens to understand broader societal trends. Dharani and Praveen (2023) emphasize the importance of understanding consumer buying behaviour, noting that insights into consumer preferences, needs, and expectations can significantly influence business strategies. In the context of the film industry, such insights can guide filmmakers, distributors, and marketers in tailoring their offerings to meet consumer demands, thereby improving customer satisfaction and profitability.

Given the profound impact of consumer behaviour on the film industry, delving into its intricacies becomes imperative. By studying movie consumer behaviour, industry stakeholders can gain invaluable insights into audience preferences, viewing habits, and decision-making processes. Such knowledge is essential for navigating the ever-evolving global film market, ensuring that films resonate with audiences and achieve both critical acclaim and commercial success.

The interplay of online reviews, word-of-mouth, and social media trends forms a complex web influencing consumer behaviour within the film industry (Yu et al., 2019). This study delves into how these interconnected factors collectively sway film consumers' choices, ultimately impacting box office performance. The evolving digital landscape, marked by the rise of social media and online platforms, plays a pivotal role in this dynamic, reshaping traditional film marketing and distribution strategies.

Objectives of the Study

Since it is important and necessary to research consumer behaviour within the film industry, this study will accomplish the following four main objectives:

1. To investigate the research publication trends in consumer behaviour and its influence on cinema box office performance within the film industry;
2. To identify the most dominant journals, researchers, countries/regions, and research organizations focusing on consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance within the film industry;
3. To determine the highly cited research publications in the field of consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance within the film industry;
4. To craft a comprehensive research map using bibliometric and visualization techniques, highlighting the pivotal terms and themes that define the nexus between consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance within the film industry.

Methods

The bibliometric analysis was conducted using the Web of Science database, with a focus on English language articles pertinent to consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance within the film industry. A total of 95 articles were meticulously selected based on specific keywords and their variations. The data visualization process, facilitated by VOSviewer, involved co-citation and keyword co-occurrence analyses. This approach was instrumental in unravelling the intricate relationships and prevailing themes within the domain, ensuring a robust and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

1. VOSviewer in Bibliometrics

The study aims to explore the intricate dynamics between consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance within the film industry. The choice of tools for bibliometric analysis is crucial to the depth and breadth of insights that can be derived. Within this framework, the decision to employ VOSviewer is both strategic and well-grounded in existing academic literature.

VOSviewer, as elucidated by van Eck and Waltman (2009), is a software tool meticulously crafted for the construction and visualization of bibliometric networks. These networks, encompassing entities from journals to individual publications, offer a panoramic view of the academic landscape. Such a comprehensive perspective is pivotal for a study that seeks to traverse the multifaceted relationship between consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance within the film industry.

The versatility of VOSviewer is further highlighted by Shah and Nisar (2019), who emphasized its capability to conduct a diverse array of bibliometric analyses. Their study on presumption showcased VOSviewer's proficiency in co-citation and cartography analysis, demonstrating its adaptability to cater to the nuanced requirements of different research themes.

Additionally, the efficacy of VOSviewer in handling intricate datasets is evident in research on COVID-19. This study emphasized VOSviewer's advantage in mapping and visualizing complex datasets, especially in areas of rapidly evolving research (Yu et al., 2020).

Furthermore, in the context of sustainability and tourism marketing, VOSviewer has been recognized for its ability to provide a holistic overview of academic discourse over extended periods. This capability ensures that research insights capture both the depth and breadth of the subject matter, enhancing the overall rigor and impact of the findings (Cavalcante et al., 2021). In summary, the employment of VOSviewer in this study is not only strategic but also well founded in the academic literature. Its combination of visualization capabilities, versatility, and depth ensures that the bibliometric analysis of consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance is both comprehensive and academically robust.

2. Source of Data - Web of Science (WoS)

The study aims to delve deeply into the intricate dynamics between consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance within the film industry. The choice of the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection as the primary data source is both strategic and well-grounded in academic literature.

The WoS Core Collection is renowned for its comprehensive coverage of high-quality research publications. Given the study's focus on consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance, it is imperative to rely on a database that ensures access to a robust and reliable dataset. The meticulous selection criteria of the WoS Core Collection ensure the inclusion of only top-tier research, making it an indispensable resource for this bibliometric endeavour (Birkle et al., 2020).

The adaptability of the WoS Core Collection with various bibliometric tools is particularly relevant to the research objectives, which include investigating research publication trends and identifying dominant journals and researchers in the domain. Researchers have highlighted the ease with which data from the WoS Core Collection can be integrated with other databases, such as Scopus, facilitating a richer bibliometric analysis (Caputo & Kargina, 2021).

Furthermore, given the study's objective to prepare a thematic research cluster and determine dominant research terms, the breadth of research topics covered by the WoS Core Collection becomes pivotal. Its utility in capturing diverse research themes has been demonstrated in various studies, including those focused on entrepreneurship and innovation (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2020).

Additionally, the advanced techniques embedded in the WoS Core Collection facilitate a rigorous statistical analysis of scientific publications. This aligns with the study's aim to provide valuable insights into current research foci and knowledge structures around consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance (Pasko et al., 2021).

Considering the aforementioned literature and the specific objectives of this study, it is evident that the WoS Core Collection is an invaluable resource for this bibliometric research, ensuring a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the academic landscape.

3. Search Strategy

To explore the most relevant literature related to the study, two main keywords are confirmed: "consumer behaviour" and "cinema box office". As behaviour is written differently in English and American, behaviour needs to be followed by "*" to expand the scope of the search. To search for as many eligible studies as possible, not only does behaviour need to be followed by "*", but consumer also need to be followed by "*". Moreover, because cinema has a plural variant, even cinema needs to be followed by "*". Furthermore, given that "box office" denotes a specific meaning, "box office" needs to be enclosed in double quotes to become a unit of search. "Box-office" is another commonly used synonym form of "box office", so "box-office" should also be the unit of search. In addition, this study focuses on the purchasing behaviour of film consumers within the film industry, so to ensure the accuracy of the search, "movie theatre" and "film/movie ticket" also need to be added, as well as adding "*" behind them in case there are plural or other variants of the nouns. Additionally, "cinema", "movie theatre", "box office/box-office", and "film/movie ticket" are already very representative of the consumer behaviour of film consumers (Bellégo & Nijs, 2015), so there is no need to add the "film industry" to the search term. Overall, the search comprised truncated key words in the following combination: consumer* behaviour* AND (cinema* OR "box office" OR box-office OR movie* theatre* OR film* ticket* OR movie* ticket*).

4. Result

The data for the study were collected on 17th September 2023, and 149 studies were retrieved. To increase the validity of the final analysed literature, 146 documents were obtained by limiting the document type to Article, Proceeding Paper, Review Article and 134 documents were obtained by limiting the document language to English. After removing 39 studies with irrelevant content, 95 valid studies were finally obtained for analysis. Since the selected valid literature is concentrated in the last 10 years (Figure 1), the time span of the literature is not limited.

Findings

1. Research Publication Trends

The trajectory of academic research often mirrors broader societal and industry shifts, providing a lens to understand evolving priorities. A detailed temporal analysis of publication trends in the domain of consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance, sourced from the Web of Science database, offers compelling insights into the field's progression and its potential future directions.

Based on *Figure 1*, over the years, scholarly engagement with this topic has experienced a predominantly upwards trajectory. This underscores the growing recognition of the centrality of consumer behaviour in shaping cinema box office outcomes. A year wise breakdown paints an intriguing picture: after a consistent rise, the publications peaked in 2017. This peak year can be attributed to various factors, potentially including industry dynamics, technological innovations in cinema, and heightened global interest in film consumption patterns.

However, after 2017, a slight decline in the number of publications was observed. While the dip was not drastic, it signalled a momentary ebb in research intensity. The years 2020 to 2022, characterized by global upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic, saw a slight reduction in the number of articles compared to the preceding peak years. The pandemic, with its profound impact on cinema operations and consumer behaviour, might have influenced this trend. However, it is noteworthy that the decline was not steep, indicating the resilience of the academic community and the enduring importance of this research area.

In summary, despite periodic fluctuations, the study of consumer behaviour's influence on cinema box office performance within the film industry remains robust and shows a promising trend. The twisty data, punctuated by peaks and troughs, speaks to the dynamism of the field and portends a future replete with deeper explorations and richer insights.

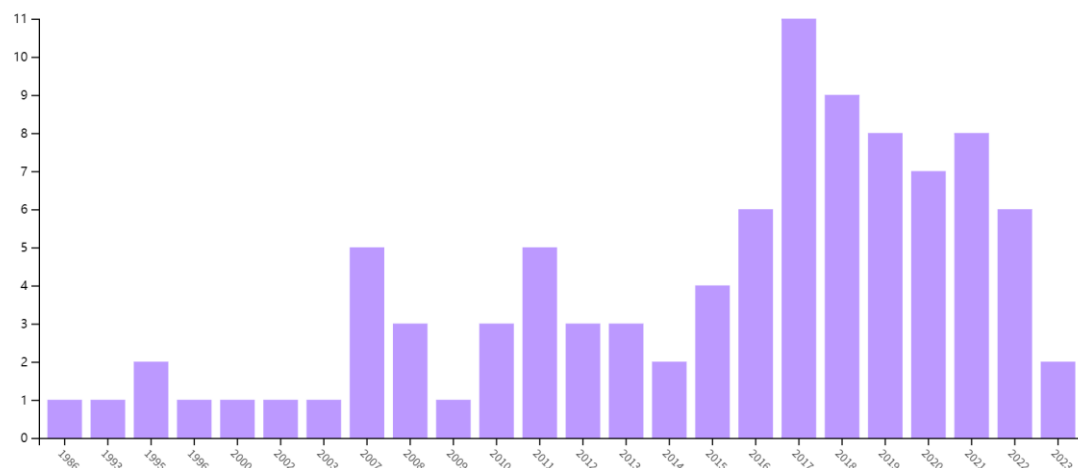


Figure 1: Research Publication Trends

2. Dominant Journals, Researchers, Countries/Regions, and Research Organizations

From *Figure 2*, the journals that publish the most articles regarding consumer behaviour in the cinema box office within the film industry are mostly marketing, business, and management journals: 6 articles from *Marketing Science* and 4 articles from *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* and *Management Science* respectively. It is true that the study of consumer behaviour is of course dominated by journals regarding marketing, business, or management, but in regard to the cinema, box-office and film industries, there are

few journals that study cinema or media, except for *Communication Society Spain*, which has 2 articles related to media studies. More journals on cinema or media studies are expected to publish articles regarding the behaviour of film consumers in the future.



Figure 2: Dominant Journals

Figure 3 shows that Jehoshua Eliashberg (Eliashberg J) is the most published researcher in the field. According to Google Scholar (Jehoshua Eliashberg, n.d.), Jehoshua Eliashberg is an expert in film marketing with several highly cited academic articles such as *Demand and supply dynamics for sequentially released products in international markets: the case of motion pictures* has close to 1000 citations. This article is one of the 95 English articles in this study, which also happens to be published in *Marketing Science*, the most widely published journal in this field, as mentioned above.

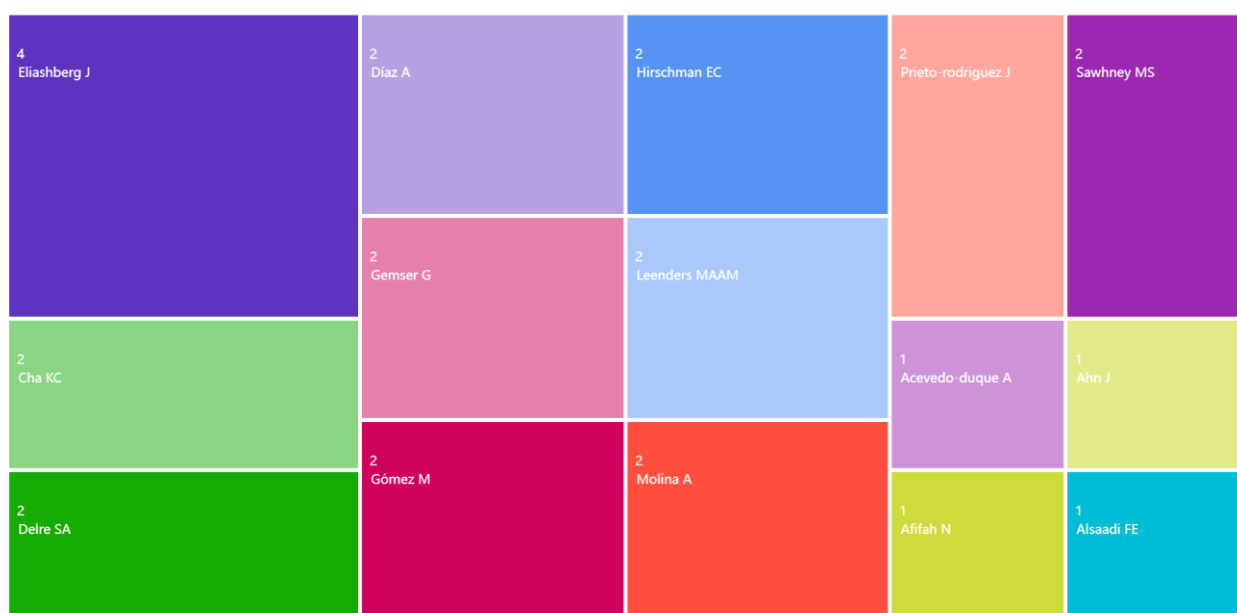


Figure 3: Dominant Researchers

Figure 4 illustrates that the USA is the country with the most publications in this field, followed by China, where 30 articles were published from the USA and 14 articles from China. The USA and China are the two largest film markets in the world (Frater, 2022). Moreover, referring to Google Scholar (Jehoshua Eliashberg, n.d.), the most dominant researcher in this field mentioned above, Jehoshua Eliashberg is coincidentally from the USA.

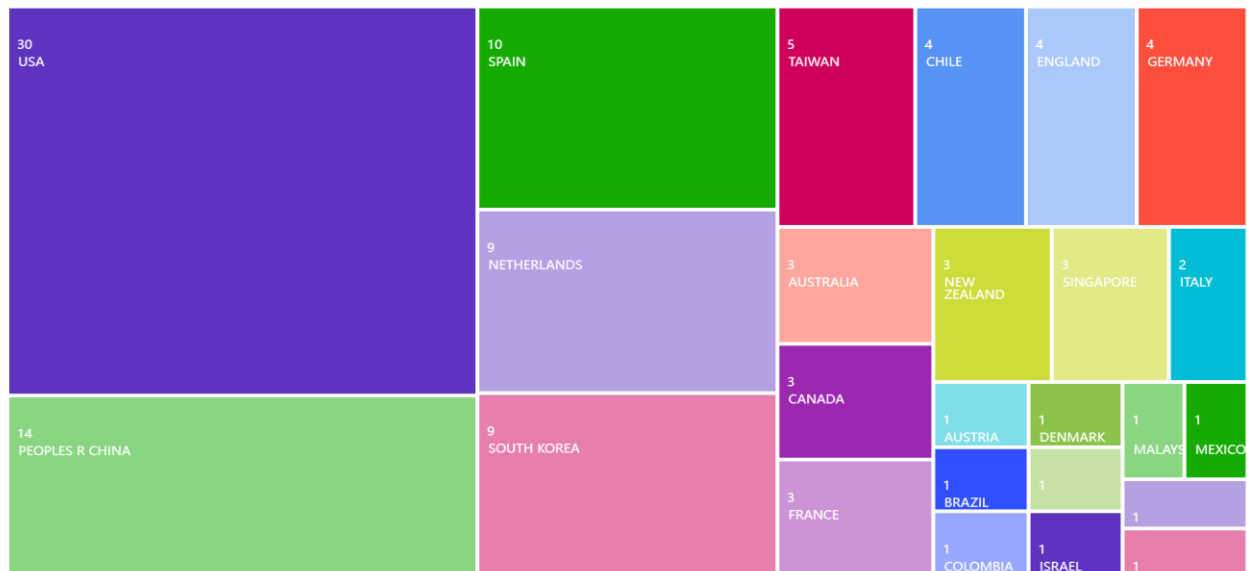


Figure 4: Dominant Countries/Regions

Figure 5 indicates that the University of Amsterdam and the University of Pennsylvania are the dominant organizations in this field, and both publish 4 articles each. Based on Google Scholar (Jehoshua Eliashberg, n.d.), the prolific writer mentioned above, Jehoshua Eliashberg, happens to be a professor at the University of Pennsylvania in the USA.

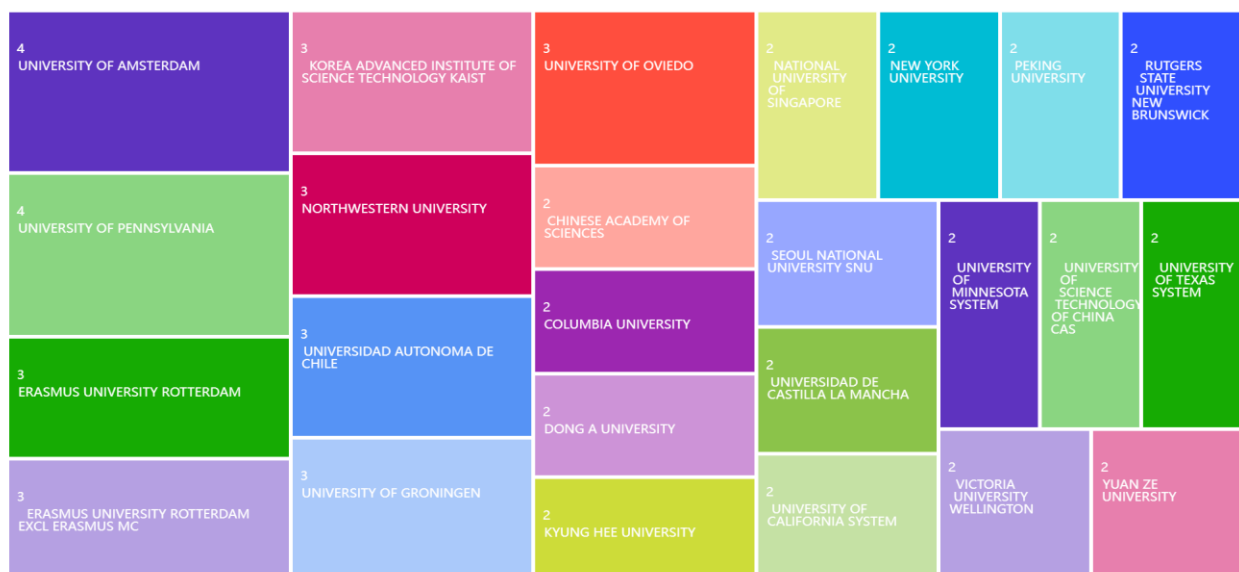


Figure 5: Dominant Organizations

3. Top-cited Publications

Based on Web of Science, *Table 1* exhibits detailed information on the top 5 most highly cited publications. One of the authors with the most cited article is coincidentally the most prolific author mentioned above: Jehoshua Eliashberg (Eliashberg J). Furthermore, according to Google Scholar (Jehoshua Eliashberg, n.d.), the most cited article *Demand and supply dynamics for sequentially released products in international markets: the case of motion pictures* has close to 1000 citations in Google Scholar, while it has 404 citations in Web of Science.

Using VOSviewer, *Figure 6* shows the co-citation cited references in the field, and only three nodes demonstrate the need for increasingly in-depth research in this field. In addition, the fact that both the top-cited publications and the co-citation cited references were published a long time ago suggests that the field is in urgent need of more up-to-date research.

Table 1: Top 5 Most Highly Cited Publications

Rank	Title	Author/s	Year	Citations
1	<i>Demand and supply dynamics for sequentially released products in international markets: The case of motion pictures</i>	Elberse, A and Eliashberg, J	2003	404
2	<i>Predicting consumer behavior with Web search</i>	Goel, S; Hofman, JM; (...); Watts, DJ	2010	337
3	<i>A parsimonious model for forecasting gross box-office revenues of motion pictures</i>	Sawhney, MS and Eliashberg, J	1996	260
4	<i>Consumer file sharing of motion pictures</i>	Hennig-Thurau, T; Henning, V and Sattler, H	2007	184
5	<i>Are Consumers More Likely to Contribute Online Reviews for Hit or Niche Products?</i>	Dellarocas, C; Gao, GD and Narayan, R	2010	165

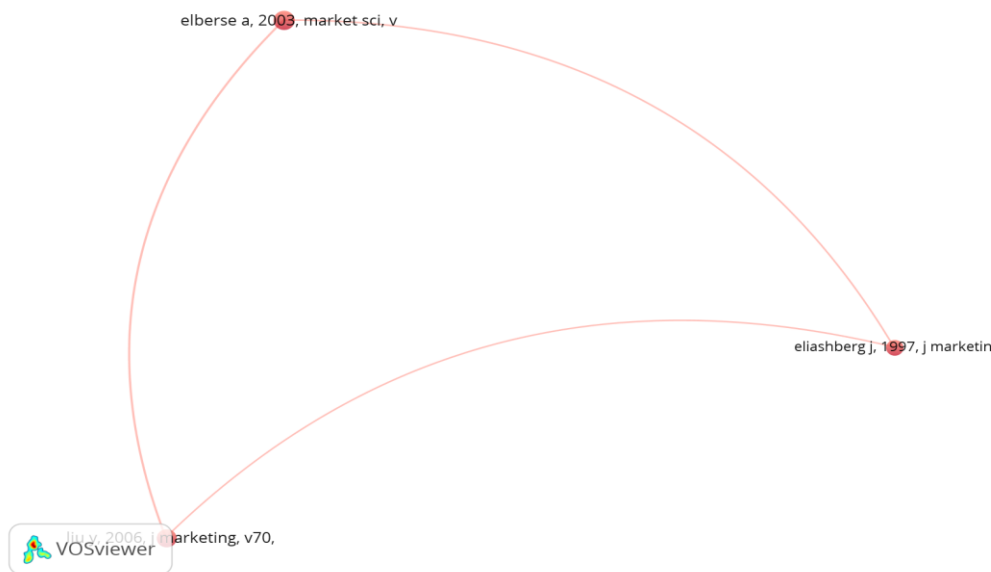


Figure 6: Co-citation cited references

4. Pivotal Themes and Key Terms

In the Web of Science database, "Author Keywords" and "Keywords Plus" serve different purposes and are generated through different methods: "Author Keywords" provide insight into how scientists perceive and talk about their fields, while "Keywords Plus" can expand the search horizon by including terms from cited works, potentially uncovering broader or adjacent topics related to the research. Both "Author Keywords" and "Keywords Plus" can be useful in different scenarios, especially in bibliometric analysis. Both types of keywords demonstrate commensurate efficacy in visualizing the structure of scientific fields, although there is limited research evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of Keywords Plus (Zhang et al., 2015).

For Author Keywords, according to *Table 2*, in addition to the keywords searched for and the scenarios derived from them, "social media", "online reviews" and "word-of-mouth" were three surprising presences.

Table 2: Word Frequency Count of Author Keywords (>1)

Keyword	Frequency
consumer* behaviour*	16
cinema	6
online reviews	5
motion picture*	5
film industry	4
social media	4
movies	4
marketing	4
ewom*	3
word of mouth*	3
motion picture industry	3
entertainment marketing	3
film	3
new products	3
forecasting	3
box office*	3
movie box office	2
purchase intention	2
social media marketing	2
natural experiments	2
machine learning	2
online word of mouth	2
consumer engagement	2
media psychology	2
hollywood	2
shopping centre	2
salience	2
critic reviews	2
movie industry	2
movie demand	2
entertainment	2
culture	2

From *Figure 7*, "social media", "online reviews" and "word-of-mouth" are prominent in the word cloud map, representing their importance in Author Keywords.



Figure 7: Word Cloud Map of Author Keywords

Regarding Keywords Plus, based on *Table 3*, except for search terms and neutral terms, "word-of-mouth", "reviews" and "film-critics" appear most frequently, which is not too different from the result of Author Keywords.

Table 3: Word Frequency Count of Keywords Plus (>2)

Keyword	Frequency
word-of-mouth*	22
behaviour*	17
impact	15
dynamics	15
model	14
information	12
sales	11
reviews	10
film-critics	9
box-office performance	8
consumption	8
products	8
demand	7
box-office	7
product	7
performance	7
market	5
consumers	5
moderating role	5
critics	4

ratings	4
social media	4
goods	4
experience goods	4
success	4
determinants	3
perceptions	3
consumer reviews	3
intention	3
movies	3
consumer choice	3
salience	3
industry	3

From *Figure 8*, "word-of-mouth", "reviews" and "film-critics" occupy an important place in the word cloud map, showing their significance in Keywords Plus.



Figure 8: Word Cloud Map of Keywords Plus

Figure 9 shows that consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance research can be divided into four clusters (four colours), of which the largest three clusters are "Channel Word-of-Mouth Impact on Film Consumer Behaviour" (Cluster 1 Blue), "Film-Critics & Reviews Shaping Consumer Interactions" (Cluster 2 Red) and "Online Reviews' Impact on Film Demand & Sales" (Cluster 3 Green). Such results are exactly in line with the Word Frequency Count and Word Cloud Map analysis above.

According to *Table 4*, most of the current research themes on consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance focus on studying the influence of cinema word-of-mouth, film reviews and film-critics on film consumer behaviour.

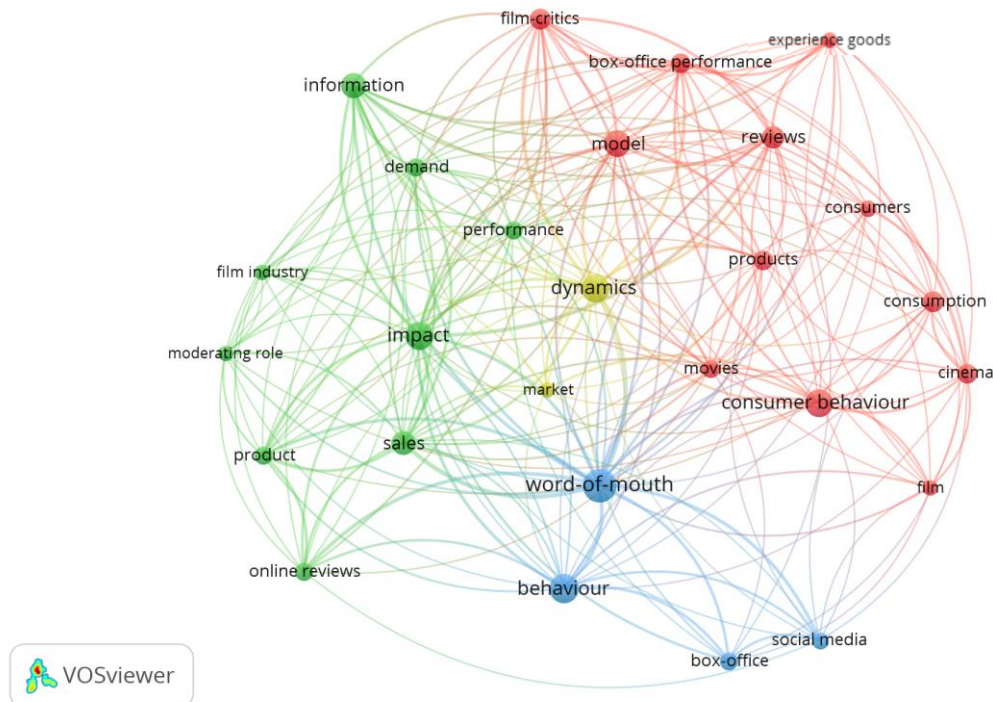


Figure 9: All keywords Co-occurrence

Table 4: Thematic Clusters

Cluster 1 Blue	Cluster 2 Red	Cluster 3 Green	Cluster 4 Yellow
<i>Channel Word-of-Mouth Impact on Film Consumer Behaviour</i>	<i>Film-Critics & Reviews Shaping Consumer Interactions</i>	<i>Online Reviews' Impact on Film Demand & Sales</i>	<i>Market Dynamics in Film</i>
Word-of-Mouth	Consumer Behaviour	Impact	Dynamics
Behaviour	Reviews	Information	Market
Social Media	Film-Critics	Online Reviews	
Box-Office	Model	Demand	
	Products	Performance	
	Consumption	Sales	
	Consumers	Product	
	Box-Office Performance	Moderating Role	
	Experience Goods	Film Industry	
	Cinema		
	Movies		
	Film		
4 Items	12 Items	9 Items	2 Items

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted interplay between consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance within the film industry. The significant influence of online

reviews, social media, and word-of-mouth on cinema choice underscores the need for filmmakers and marketers to adapt to the digitized landscape. Theoretically, this research contributes to the existing literature by providing a nuanced understanding of how external digital factors converge with traditional film attributes to shape consumer preferences. Practically, these insights can guide more effective and targeted marketing strategies, leveraging digital platforms to maximize film reach and success.

The present study offers a unique perspective on understanding the intricate relationship between consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance. Utilizing bibliometric analysis and advanced data visualization techniques, this study has shed light on key factors influencing film consumers. Notably, online reviews, film-critics, and word-of-mouth emerged as significant determinants of cinema choice and, consequently, cinema box office performance. The overlay visualization further emphasized the profound influence of online platforms, suggesting a paradigm shift in traditional film marketing and distribution strategies. An important observation from the research, which echoes broader literature trends, is the focus on external influences on film consumers' behaviour, such as cinema word-of-mouth, film reviews, and film-critics. However, there is an apparent gap in understanding the intrinsic factors related to the film itself that might influence consumer choices. Factors such as the presence of film stars, the genres to which they belong, the directors helming these films, accolades and film awards, and other intrinsic attributes potentially play pivotal roles in shaping audience preferences and decisions. Out of the 95 English language articles in the data, only two articles have keywords that referred to film stars, which are "star/stars" and "star power".

For instance, certain film stars have a massive fan following that can drive ticket sales regardless of reviews or word-of-mouth. Similarly, specific genres might appeal to niche audiences, and the allure of acclaimed directors or the prestige of film awards can significantly sway audience decisions. These intrinsic film-related factors, often deeply rooted in the cultural, aesthetic, and social fabric of cinema, might operate alongside, or even override, the more discussed external influences in determining a film's box-office success.

In conclusion, while external factors such as reviews and word-of-mouth undeniably impact cinema box office performance, it is imperative to also delve deeply into the intrinsic attributes of films. Recognizing and understanding this multifaceted interplay will provide a holistic picture of consumer behaviour in the film industry, paving the way for more nuanced and effective strategies for filmmakers and marketers alike.

Theoretical Implications

The findings provide a structured framework for understanding the consumer decision-making process within the film industry. It underscores the importance of integrating both traditional (e.g., film-critics) and modern (e.g., online reviews, social media) factors in theoretical models addressing cinema choice. Furthermore, the emerging prominence of technology in influencing consumer choices suggests a need to revisit and revise existing consumer behaviour theories, incorporating the dynamic digital landscape.

Practical and Social Implications

From a practical standpoint, film producers, marketers, and distributors can leverage these insights to design more effective marketing campaigns. Engaging with online platforms, harnessing the power of social media, and acknowledging the role of online reviews can significantly enhance a film's reach and box office performance. Socially, the findings emphasize the collective power of the digital populace. The democratization of opinions via

online platforms has magnified the role of the average viewer in determining a film's success, underscoring the changing landscape of cinema in the digital age.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While the study offers a comprehensive overview of the relationship between consumer behaviour and cinema box office performance, it is not without limitations. The research is limited to English language articles from the Web of Science database, which might have inadvertently excluded pivotal research from other languages or databases. Moreover, the sole reliance on bibliometric analysis, albeit rigorous, may have missed nuanced qualitative insights. Future studies might consider a more inclusive approach, incorporating diverse data sources, languages, and mixed-method research designs. Additionally, as the digital landscape continually evolves, periodic revisits to the topic would be beneficial to capture the ever-changing dynamics of consumer behaviour within the film industry.

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