

Consumer behavior and marketing research in the film market

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Abstract

In general, creative industries refer to all economic activities that use individuals' creativity, skills, and talents to potentially create economic value through the exploitation of intellectual property. The specific creative industry that this article focuses on is the film industry. The film industry is considered an important creative industry because it is an industry whose products and services are primarily based on creativity and intellectual capital. The article examines the marketing and online communication of Hungarian films, with a particular focus on the impact of social media and word-of-mouth on viewers' film selection decisions and their attitudes towards films. Its aim is to explore the links between consumer behavior and marketing strategies, as well as to provide practical guidance on the integrated use of digital and traditional channels for successful Hungarian film marketing.

1 Introduction

Today, cultural and creative industries are among the most dynamic segments of the European economy, playing a key role in increasing competitiveness and creating jobs. The film industry is one of the most significant representatives of these industries, as it is based on creativity, intellectual capital, and creative innovation. [1]

Consumption in film culture is determined by rapidly changing trends and countertrends, so the task of marketing is to calculate consumer demand to maximize profits, which involves analyzing the product policies of competitors and detecting audience expectations and consumption habits. Film consumption and marketing are closely intertwined: marketing is not merely a business tool but also shapes the identity and value of cultural products. [2]

2 Marketing in film industry

2.1 Marketing strategies during filmmaking

Although a potential project has not even been given a title yet, brand building begins by generating interest. In fact, word-of-mouth marketing is beginning, which becomes truly effective when the constant hunger for content on video blogs, film portals, and cultural magazines, which are also channeled into social media, further deepens interest in the subject. This early product positioning has become increasingly prominent over the past 10 years as part of a strategy that builds the film's presentation as a media event through news, multiple waves of trailers, TV spots, and interviews.

Its two indicators, volume and sentiment, influence movie fans through different cognitive-behavioral pathways. Quantity generally plays an informative role in increasing consumer awareness. Not surprisingly, greater awareness usually generates higher sales. The role of

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sentiment, on the other hand, is more persuasive in nature due to its positive/negative nature and influences consumer attitudes. [3]

Films have very few tangible characteristics. One tangible quality indicator is the cast and the presence of big stars, which are indicators of quality on many levels, and their role as "draw cards" is decisive in the commercial success of films. There are two types of fame that can generally be the source of a star's power: economic fame, which is based on their income, and artistic fame, which is based on the recognition of critics or peers. A star's artistic reputation, which in the film industry is primarily manifested through awards or nominations, is a mark of quality for audiences, executives, the media, and other stakeholders. [4]

The most important form of communication in the post-production phase is undoubtedly the trailer. In the marketing process, consumers have adopted new behaviors with the advent of Web 2.0. Suddenly, viewers became more than just a simple target group. Marketers began to view them as agents of advertising communication, whose participation in the dissemination of advertising content became at least as important as the use of traditional channels. The trailer thus becomes perfect content for social media, which, according to forecasts, will further strengthen the role of video marketing. [5]

2.2 Social media in film marketing

Social media has revolutionized film marketing by offering huge audience reach, direct interaction, real-time updates, and the ability to spread content. It has become an indispensable tool for filmmakers and studios to generate excitement, build anticipation, and engage audiences, thus becoming an integral part of the overall marketing strategy for films. [6]

Social media has become an effective marketing tool, especially in the film industry. It has made it easier to target the right audience and allows marketers to target people based on demographics, location, or interests. Audiences can be targeted based on the hashtags they use or the groups and categories they follow or like on social media. When people see something that catches their attention, whether it is scary or funny, or whatever the reason may be, they are happy to share it with their friends and followers, which is likely to spread quickly. In the case of films, it is essential to reach and engage audiences and potential viewers in the online space. [7]

2.3 The influence of group effects on consumer behavior

Consumer behavior is greatly influenced by the immediate environment, especially by the groups to which they belong or would like to belong. The desire to identify with a group can influence the choice of a movie to watch, just as it does the choice of a product or brand. Depending on whether they watch a movie alone or with friends, completely different factors may influence consumers' decisions. [8]

2.4 Hungarian film market

According to estimates by film distributors, with more than 10 million visitors, 2023 proved to be a good year compared to the previous year. Today in Hungary, more than four million people sit in front of their TV screens between 8 and 10 p.m. on Saturday evenings. Domestic cinemas cannot compete with these numbers, especially since the monthly subscription fees for streaming services already cover the cost of a single movie ticket for a family of three.

According to a survey, respondents watched 13 percent of the Hungarian films they saw during the year in the cinema, and nearly five times as many (60 percent) on television. Today, streaming is also a significant media platform for Hungarian films (16 percent). Thanks to television broadcasts, the audience for movies has grown 14-fold on average compared to the number of viewers in movie theaters. Movie channels have been the most successful in this area, increasing the audience for feature-length films 25-fold on average. [9]

3 Methods

The aim of the research was to explore how Hungarian film marketing activities and online communication channels – especially social media – influence viewers' film selection decisions and their attitudes towards Hungarian films. The study focused on the relationship between consumer

behavior and marketing strategies, with particular emphasis on how new media platforms and forms of online content consumption influence film consumption habits.

The research was conducted using quantitative methodology and an online questionnaire between September 10 and September 25, 2023. During the survey, I analyzed the responses of 274 people who had watched at least one Hungarian film in the previous year. This sampling ensured that the respondents had a minimum affinity for films, thus providing them with relevant experience in film consumption.

Data collection was conducted online, as this allowed for quick and efficient access to different demographic groups. The questionnaire consisted exclusively of closed questions, which were divided into three main sections:

1. questions examining respondents' movie-watching frequency and preferences,
2. questions about how they obtain information and factors influencing their decisions,
3. and a set of questions designed to explore demographic characteristics.

The composition of the sample ensured the representation of basic social groups. Fifty-nine percent of respondents were women and 41% were men. The age distribution ranged from 18 to over 60 years of age, divided into five categories (18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60+). In terms of economic activity, respondents can be divided into four groups: students, active workers, retirees, and those with other statuses.

I used descriptive statistical methods in my data analysis. The aim was to show the correlations between film viewing frequency, consumer preferences, information about films, and viewer attitudes. The theories presented in the literature served as reference points for the interpretation of the quantitative data.

The study also provided a qualitative interpretation of the relationships between the individual variables, paying particular attention to the impact of social media, the influential role of actors and trailers, and the importance of word-of-mouth communication (WOM) in the film selection process.

4 Results

Based on the results of the research, Hungarian film consumption can be interpreted in several dimensions: on the one hand, in terms of preferences for film viewing platforms, and on the other hand, in terms of factors influencing decisions and attitudes. The interpretation of the data shows that traditional and online media forms shape viewer behavior in parallel.

An analysis of movie viewing habits showed that television remains the most dominant platform for watching movies. More than half of respondents (60% of cases) indicated television as the most frequently used medium. This was followed by streaming services (Netflix, HBO Max, Disney+), which are particularly popular among younger age groups. Cinemas have taken a back seat as a place to watch films, which is in line with the finding that Hungarian films are watched on average fifteen times more often on television than in cinemas. Detailed data are shown in the Figure 1.

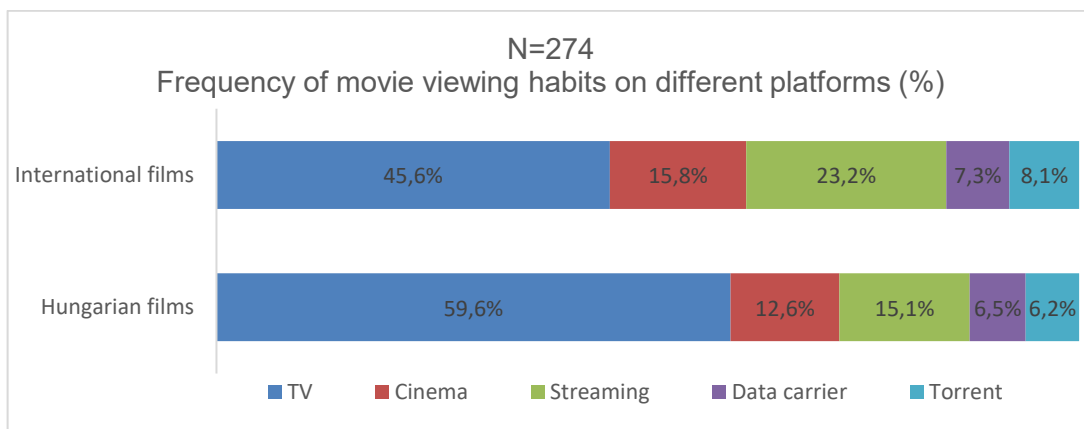


Figure 1. Frequency of movie viewing habits on different platforms (%)

Respondents' film selection decisions were most influenced by trailers and cast members among the elements of marketing communication. According to the results of the questionnaire, these two factors received the highest average scores on a scale of 1 to 5. This supports the findings of the literature that star power and the trailer, as an advertising tool that provides a preliminary consumer experience, play a decisive role in the market success of films. According to the respondents, the trailer provides an early indication of the quality and mood of the film, which has a decisive influence on their intention to see it.

Online channels clearly dominated as sources of information. 42.6% of respondents indicated social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) as their primary source of information, followed by recommendations from family and friends (33.9%), and then IMDB and other movie sites (19.2%). In the online space, users are not only recipients but also mediators of marketing messages, which is one of the most important phenomena in modern film marketing.

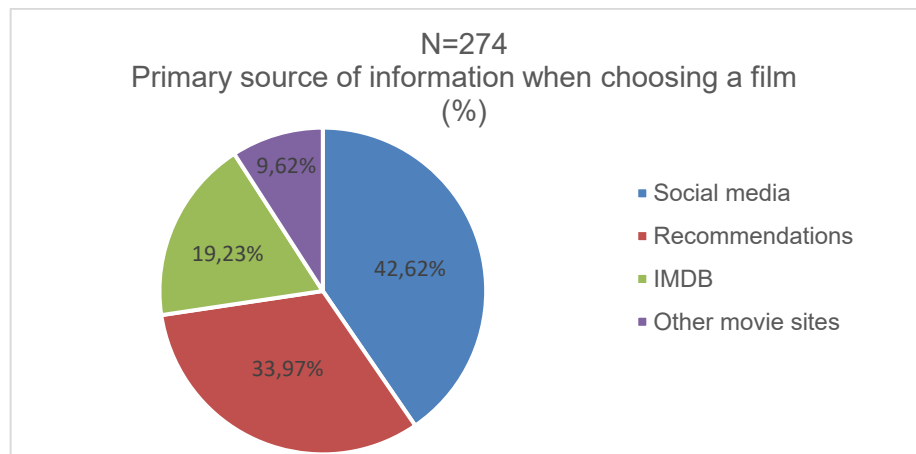


Figure 2. Primary source of information when choosing a film (%)

When asked about how they share their opinions, 60% of respondents said they discuss their movie experiences with friends in person, while 21% share their opinions in closed online communities or themed Facebook groups. This confirms the assertion that word-of-mouth information, whether offline or online, is the most credible form of communication in the eyes of consumers.

With regard to attitudes towards Hungarian films, the research showed that interest in Hungarian films is highest among the over-60s, while younger generations (18–29-year-olds) tend to prefer international films. Economic activity also correlated with film viewing habits: 62.4% of retirees and 60.3% of active workers watched a Hungarian film in the past year. Among students, this figure was 49.1%.

Quantitative data therefore confirms that consumer behavior toward Hungarian films is strongly age-dependent and closely related to the media channels used by a given age group. While younger generations are motivated by online content and social experiences, older generations are more influenced by television accessibility and their familiar media environment.

The above results also show that digital presence and traditional channels cannot be separated in film marketing. In the case of Hungarian films, the key to success is for the marketing strategy to integrate WOM, online advertising, and television promotion tools in an integrated manner, tailored to the media usage habits of different target groups.

5 Discussion

The results of the research confirm several trends that have also been identified in the literature. On the one hand, the intertwining of film consumption habits and media use indicates that the digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the way films are received. With the advent of social media, film communication and marketing have become interactive processes: viewers are no longer passive recipients, but active content distributors who influence the social reception of

films through their personal opinions, shares, and online presence. Modern film marketing is based not on selling the product, but on creating experiences and community engagement.

The role of WOM (word of mouth) proved to be particularly strong in the research. Most respondents consider personal or online recommendations to be the most reliable source of information. This means that the success of film marketing depends not only on the volume of campaigns, but also on their credibility and emotional resonance. Authentic, community-based communication helps build audience trust, which can be the basis for long-term loyalty.

When examining the reach and effectiveness of social media, it is clear that different age groups respond differently to online content. For younger generations (Y and Z), social media is not just a source of information, but a form of cultural participation. They are the ones who express their own social identity through movie-related memes, trailers, and interactive posts. Older generations, on the other hand, continue to prefer traditional channels—mainly television, which they consider more reliable and comfortable.

The Hungarian film industry is in a unique position compared to international trends. The rise of streaming services (Netflix, HBO Max, Disney+) has created significant competition for domestic cinemas. Data shows that a significant portion of film consumption is organized around convenience: accessibility and price are more important to viewers than the communal experience. At the same time, the cinema as a communal space has retained its symbolic value, which cannot be completely replaced by digital platforms. This duality shows that future film marketing can only be effective in a hybrid form, building on both digital access and the traditional communal experience.

The results of the research thus show that the future of Hungarian film marketing lies in an integrated communication approach. The key to the success of the film industry is its ability to coordinate different media platforms and offer a complex experience that appeals to viewers in both online and offline spaces. To achieve this, film distributors and communication professionals must treat the audience not merely as consumers, but as community partners.

6 Conclusions

The results of the research clearly show that, given the current situation of the Hungarian film industry, the integration of digital and social marketing tools has become a key factor. The promotion of films can no longer be limited to traditional advertising and movie trailers: the key to success is communication that can create an interactive relationship with viewers. The coordinated use of social media, streaming platforms, and digital advertising is essential for films to reach and retain the attention of their target audience.

One of the most important conclusions of the study is that word of mouth (WOM) and community-based communication are among the most decisive sources of trust and interest in films. Viewers consider personal recommendations to be the most credible, which shows that film marketing should focus on emotional engagement, community experience, and encouraging content sharing.

The differences between age groups clearly illustrate the need for segmented use of communication channels. Younger generations are attracted by online content, visual dynamics, and interactivity, while television remains the primary medium for older viewers. The combined use of offline and online communication can ensure that films effectively reach a wider range of audiences.

From a practical point of view, the research also confirms the need for film distribution and marketing professionals to interpret market and cultural factors in a coordinated manner. For this reason, marketing strategy cannot be reduced to purely commercial objectives, it must also serve to create cultural value.

Overall, it can be said that the key to the success of Hungarian films lies in the coordination of traditional and digital marketing tools, the active involvement of the audience, and the reinterpretation of cultural values in modern communication. The film marketing of the future aims not simply to address viewers, but to establish a two-way relationship with them, which could be the key to the long-term survival and development of the Hungarian film industry.

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