



Investigating Factors Influencing Chinese Cinephiles in the Post-Pandemic Era

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped China's film consumption, moving audiences from theaters to over-the-top (OTT) platforms. This study delves into the factors molding the preferences of Chinese cinephiles in this new era, particularly emphasizing the dynamic interplay between OTT platforms and traditional cinema. Leveraging a survey conducted in Tier I cities, encompassing 656 participants, this research scrutinizes demographic variables, technological influences, and consumption patterns. Findings illuminate intriguing trends: while females exhibit a slight inclination towards OTT platforms, males marginally favor traditional cinemas. Notably, young adults aged 21 to 25 emerge as avid users of both platforms. Additionally, smartphone usage prevails, with 70% accessing OTT services via mobile devices. Despite perceived challenges posed by OTT platforms, a majority envision their dominance in the future of the film industry. Genres such as comedy, drama, and action remain the favorites among cinemagoers, reflecting evolving viewing preferences amidst changing consumption landscapes.

Keyword: *Film consumption, China, Post-pandemic era, OTT platforms, Cinema-going*

Introduction

The research paper explores the dynamic landscape of movie consumption in China, particularly examining the behaviour of

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cinephiles and users of over-the-top (OTT) platforms. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a notable shift in viewership patterns, moving from traditional theatres to online streaming platforms (Yaqoub, Jingwu, et al., 2022; Yaqoub, Khan, et al., 2022). This transition has marked a significant evolution in the film and entertainment industries, with OTT platforms emerging as the future of content consumption (Soren and Chakraborty, 2024).

The pandemic-induced restrictions and safety guidelines prompted moviegoers to seek entertainment within the confines of their homes, leading to a surge in the consumption of films, series and shows on various digital platforms (Dikshya Saikia & Gaurav Nirmal, 2022). This shift has not only impacted the traditional box office revenue model but has also transformed the distribution and exhibition landscape of the industry (Sony Varghese & Chinnaiah, 2021). The advent of advanced technologies such as the 5G network, coupled with the widespread availability and affordability of smartphones and mini-screens, has further facilitated this transition in China (G. C. Feng, 2017).

OTT platforms, characterized by their streaming services for films, dramas, and web series, have witnessed exponential growth in recent years (A. Gupta et al., 2021). While global platforms like Netflix enjoy widespread recognition, regional platforms such as iQIYI (pronounced "I-chi-e") have emerged as dominant players within the Chinese market. According to consumer polls, iQIYI stands out as the most popular subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) service among Chinese audiences,

with (70%) of the Chinese respondents claiming to have used it, reflecting the shifting preferences and consumption habits in the post-pandemic era (Thomala, 2021).

In this context, this research work is aimed to explore the underlying factors driving the preferences and behaviors of Chinese cinephiles in the context of this evolving landscape. By understanding the dynamics of OTT platform usage and its implications for the film industry, researchers seek to provide insights into the future of cinema consumption in China. A study published in June 2020 shows that (14%) of people prefer viewing a movie for the first time in a theatre, while (36%) prefer to watch the film at home rather than go to a theatre (Statista.com, 2020). The impact of the coronavirus on consumer confidence heralded a paradigm shift in consumer behaviour and possibly posed a threat to movie theatres nationwide (Navarro, 2021). In early 2020, cinemas remained closed in China for several months due to the first wave of the pandemic.

Nevertheless, they started reopening in June 2020, and in the first week of October 2020, box office revenue made China the world's biggest box office (Shah et al., 2020, 2021). Though at \$3.2 billion (RMB20.4 billion) in 2020, China's total box office revenue fell more than 68% compared to 2013. During the first quarter of 2022, strict policies and lockdowns amid the pandemic significantly affected the Chinese box office revenue (Shah et al., 2020, 2021).

OTT platforms, COVID-19, and lockdown measures have significantly impacted box-office revenue, prompting a need for telecom service providers to understand the driving forces behind

users' preferences for OTT platforms. This study aims to correlate these issues with shifting user needs and intrinsic factors. Specifically, it explores the factors influencing Chinese cinephiles' choices between OTT platforms and traditional cinema-going. The objectives of this research are:

The three key objectives of this research work are:

- To analyze the factors influencing Chinese cinephiles' preferences between using over-the-top (OTT) platforms and traditional cinema-going in the post-pandemic era.
- To assess the impact of demographic variables, technological advancements, and consumption patterns on the movie consumption behaviour of Chinese audiences.
- To identify key predictors that determine individuals' preferences for watching films on cinema screens versus OTT platforms, providing insights into the evolving landscape of film consumption in China.

The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ 1. How do demographic factors such as gender, age, and education level influence Chinese cinephiles' preferences for using over-the-top (OTT) platforms or traditional cinema-going?

RQ2. What role do technological advancements, including the availability of 5G networks and widespread smartphone usage, play in shaping the movie consumption habits of Chinese cinephiles, particularly in terms of their preference for OTT platforms versus cinema screens?

RQ 3. What are the key predictors that determine whether individuals prefer to watch films on cinema screens during and

after the COVID-19 pandemic, considering variables such as demographics, technology adoption, genre preferences, and favourite movies?

Literature Review

The surge in the popularity of over-the-top (OTT) platforms within the film industry has been notably pronounced in recent years (He and Hu, 2021). This trend has been further heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted widespread lockdowns and quarantine measures, leading to a significant increase in OTT platform usage (Sony Varghese and Chinnaiyah, 2021). As individuals spent more time at home, OTT platforms emerged as a primary source of entertainment, offering a diverse range of movies and shows across various genres. The convenience offered by OTT platforms, coupled with their extensive content libraries, has contributed to their growing popularity among audiences (Soren and Chakraborty, 2024). Moreover, advancements in technology, particularly the advent of the 5G network, have facilitated faster loading speeds and improved streaming quality, enhancing the overall viewing experience for users.

The COVID-19 outbreak has posed unprecedented challenges to the traditional movie industry, particularly with the closure of movie theatres (Dikshya Saikia and Gaurav Nirmal 2022). As a result, filmmakers and production houses have increasingly turned to digital platforms as a means of reaching their audience (Dhiman et al., 2022). This shift from cinematic releases to digital streaming has been driven by the necessity to adapt to changing consumer behaviour and consumption

patterns in the wake of the pandemic-induced disruptions (Dhiman et al., 2022; Dikshya Saikia & Gaurav Nirmal, 2022).

OTT Platforms: General Perspectives

In 2021, about 1.17 billion cinema tickets were sold, generating \$7.3 billion in box office revenue in China, accounting for approximately two-thirds of 2019 (Brzeski, 2022; Thomala, 2022b). However, Mainland China continued to be the second-largest market worldwide after the U.S. in 2021, with total over-the-top video (OTT) revenue reaching US\$11.4 billion (PwC China, 2022). According to the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) (2022) annual report, the short-form video industry is increasing in Mainland China, with over 888 million consumers only by the first half of 2021.

In our study, OTT platforms refer to paid and unpaid OTT video services that provide all kinds of video content, i.e., movies, films, shows, documentaries, and web series. With OTT platforms, consumers may now experience a range of media material without being limited by time or location because of the convenience offered by such platforms. Factors such as flexibly choosing movies, lacking the threat of the coronavirus, home comfort, economic benefits, and ease of access to streaming platforms have changed the preferences of consumers and increased the preference for OTT platforms over movie theatres (Jung, Yoo, Ho-Suk, and Han, Jin-Wook 2021). It is important to consider the socio-demographic differences among the users to understand the reasons behind the shift to OTT platforms: gender, age, education, the place where they live, and smartphone usage. The advent of video platforms that provide video content via the

open internet has shifted the paradigm of the conventional film industry. Because of technological advances, the procedure has experienced significant modifications in the contemporary age. Online video content can only be accessed with a steady internet connection (Baboori, 2022).

OTT Platforms: Past Studies

With the introduction of OTT platforms by national and international providers such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime, consumer behaviour toward entertainment subscriptions has changed. Nagaraj, Singh, and Yasa (2021) conducted a study to determine what factors affected the consumers' OTT subscription decisions. The findings revealed 14 drivers for subscribing to the OTT platforms and 11 inhibitors for not subscribing. In that study, five factors emerged after exploratory factor analysis: content, convenience, features, price, and quality. The effect of these five factors and demographics like age, education, and occupation on subscription selections was assessed using logistic regression analysis. All five factors and prices were found to be influencing customers' choices. Age, occupation, and education, as well as family structure, were all important considerations.

In another study, researchers investigated how age, gender, and experience moderated consumer behaviour on OTT streaming services ((Mulla, 2022). The results showed that age was a significant factor because older consumers were more likely to use streaming content more frequently and for longer periods. Gender did not affect frequency or amount of usage; however, experience moderated the time spent viewing content. The results indicate that marketers should pay attention to age and

experience to appeal to their target customers. Performance expectations, price value, habit, and content availability are the primary motivators for subscribing and utilizing OTT video streaming services. The findings have aided managers in better understanding and devising strategies for OTT video streaming platform users (Malewar & Bajaj, 2020). The shift from conventional T.V. to OTT media has resulted in competition among streaming service providers to attract and retain customers, particularly during the COVID-19 blackout period. In light of this shift, the study revealed the impact of two key antecedents, customer engagement and quality of service experience, on users' willingness to continue using and subscribing to streaming services in the future (P. Gupta, 2021).

Factors under Study

A consumer's choice of an OTT service platform or cinemagoing is influenced by several variables, some of which have been identified in the previous studies and are referenced as follows:

Smartphones

China has more smartphone users than any other country on the globe. In 2021, the number of smartphone users in China amounted to almost 950 million, increasing (29.47%) from 670 million in 2020 (Laricchia, 2022; Slotta, 2022a). People watch movies, documentaries, and web series on their smartphone devices, utilizing various diverse technologies (Varghese & Chinnaiah, 2021). In the post-pandemic era, people choose to watch movies on their smartphones, which has become an integral component of the audience's life.

Favorite Movies

OTT platforms have made it easier for viewers to find their favourite movies since it just takes a single click, which modern consumers like and prefer in their home entertainment (Saiprasad & Meenakshi, 2022). The "favourite movies" factor is based on the ability of OTT platforms to allow everyone to watch their favourite movies, T.V./web series, and documentaries anytime and anywhere they want on their preferred device from the convenience of their own homes (Jain et al., 2021; Mishra et al., 2021).

Availability of 5G

According to the most recent data, China has dominated the race for 5G technologies over the last two years, with 757 million 5G users thanks to significant rollouts and the growth of 5G technologies (Tomás, 2022). According to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), Chinese operators have installed about 1.6 million 5G base stations in more than 356 cities nationwide. In November 2021, China Mobile announced 374 million 5G subscribers, while China Telecom reported 169 million 5G users in China (Slotta, 2022b; Statista Research Department, 2022). There is much speculation that 5G technology is a game changer and might affect users of OTT platforms, too. 5G technology might also significantly increase the demand for OTT platforms (ReelnReel, 2022).

Various Genres

OTT services have swiftly transformed from a specialized streaming option to one of the most popular ways to watch movies. Depending on their preferences, different people like certain film genres. OTT platforms allow customers to access and

watch various genres. Films in multiple genres are produced to appeal to a vast audience (Sadana & Sharma, 2021). Comedy is the most viewed genre in 2021, followed by drama and action in China.

Multiple OTT Platforms

One of the most common pastimes worldwide is watching movies and web series on OTT platforms, and the number of OTT users globally has grown significantly. iQIYI, Tencent, and BiliBili remain the leading forces behind this digital change in China. OTT platform continues to be useful to consumers, as different studies show that customers use multiple platforms (Hayes, 2020; Shahzeidi, 2021). Fans of movies and television use a range of OTT services to get their favourite movies since they cannot find their desired content in a single OTT platform.

Web Series

Web series are distant content among the video content that OTT platforms provide, and users like watching and discussing them with their peers. Binge-watching, originality, and novelty are a few of the qualities of web series that draw users to OTT platforms (P. Gupta, 2021; Valecha, 2021). Many OTT platforms have their own production houses where they produce their web series. In digital visual culture, web series are among the youth's popular shows from China's perspective.

Cinema Environment

IMAX laser projection, Dolby Atmos audio, and 4K video are examples of how technology has advanced, but the theatre setting also has a significant influence. With the constant change in cinema, old single-screen cinemas came the swanky new multiplexes till they changed further ahead to many places where

we had 75 seats, recliners providing a great luxurious experience. A comfortable cinema environment has attracted cinephiles to watch movies on-screen instead of at home. Along with the movie's plot, most moviegoers also attributed lovely feelings to the theatre's impressive visuals and fantastic sound effects. This factor shows how the cinema environment is more attractive compared to the home environment for the films.

Cinema Ticket Price

A higher increase than during the pre-pandemic period may be seen in the average price of a movie ticket sold in cinemas in 2021, which was around 40.3 yuan. Before COVID-19, the cinema ticket price was 37 yuan. The ticket cost may vary significantly between large cities and small towns, with big cities costing 48.6 yuan and less developed locations charging 38.5 yuan (Cheng, 2022; Thomala, 2022a). In addition to the other factors, the cost of going to the films greatly impacts the attitude of the movie-going audience.

Peak Season

Peak seasons in China encompass long holidays, especially the spring festival and national holidays, and they are significant to the Chinese film industry's box office. Chinese cinemas generate the most revenue at these times as people like going to the movies and enjoying themselves with their families during the holidays.

Emerging OTT Platforms

OTT platforms have taken over most people's lives since the pandemic outbreak. Box office revenue in China is still 21% lower than in 2019 despite OTT box revenue increasing by 48%. Various local OTT platforms, Tencent Video, iQIYI, Bilibili, and Youku, are significantly fulfilling the needs of Chinese video content

consumers. The emergence of these platforms has impacted and modified the cinema-going culture.

Movie Rating

People like evaluating films and sharing their watching experiences online in the film industry (Cai et al., 2022). Douban (豆瓣) is among the most significant Chinese movie review websites among China's film review websites. In addition to movies, web series, and T.V. shows, anyone may also learn about books, music, theatres, and social network groups created around similar tastes in artistic creations (Wu et al., 2021). Movie ratings play a significant role in the decision-making process of a cinemagoer.

Emerging Pandemic Threats

Pathogens formerly present in other animal hosts are now responsible for many infectious illnesses affecting humans and animals. Along with these well-established pathogens, new contagious diseases also keep emerging. Extreme situations may result in pandemics like COVID-19; other times, they can lead to dead-end infections or minor outbreaks. The re-emergence of previously known diseases is also possible, for instance, when they spread geographically, become more contagious, or become more pathogenic. The emergence of conditions reflects dynamic equilibriums and disequilibrium within the complex, globally dispersed ecosystems of people, animals, pathogens, and the environment (Morens and Fauci, 2020). Emerging pandemic diseases have threatened cinemagoers.

Methodology

Two popular Chinese apps, WeChat and Q.Q., were used to distribute a survey questionnaire. Sampling was done voluntarily, with the only stipulation that responders be interested in movies. All participants were told that participating in the study was exclusively discretionary and that their responses to the survey would be kept confidential. No formal consent form was employed; completing the questionnaire was considered consent. Questionnaires were deemed legitimate if the screening questions and random responses were satisfactorily completed (e.g., completing the questionnaire within an appropriate time and after carefully reading it) (Collier & Sherrell, 2010). Data was collected over three months (April 12 to June 11, 2022). It took roughly five minutes to complete the online survey. After the invalidation of random questions, 656 out of 680 surveys remained valid and deemed fit for further analysis.

Data Analysis

The primary data was collected through the survey of movie lovers from Fuzhou and Xiamen, Fujian province tier-I cities, using a convenience sampling approach. In the survey, overall question items significantly addressed the OTT platforms' usage status and cinemagoing experience. This survey defined the OTT platform as "applications or websites like iQIYI, Youku, Bilibili, and Netflix that provide video content such as web series, dramas, and films through the internet, together with existing telecommunication and broadcasting companies." Response data for analysis, some questions, i.e., items, were converted into dummy variables.

Related to OTT service usage behaviour, the authors examined the audience experience of watching films on OTT, smartphone use, favourite movies, 5G, various genres, multiple OTT platforms, web series, and the cinemagoing experience observed via film in the cinema screen, cinema environment, cinema ticket price, peak season, emerging OTT platforms, movie rating, and emerging pandemic threats (EPT)-related question items. Demographic covariates of the respondents, including gender (male; female), age, education, and consumption, were included and analyzed as control factors.

Development of Survey Instruments and Data Collection

Two multilingual professors and researchers translated the original survey questionnaire from English into Chinese. The survey instrument was pre-tested with 25 Chinese movie lovers who watched the films on OTT platforms or cinema screens in China. The experts evaluated the questionnaire (language, subject, and survey-based research). Their valuable suggestions and experiences helped to improve the instrument's structure, language correctness, wording accuracy, and relevancy. This procedure helped to create a more valid and understandable survey instrument (Mariadoss et al., 2016). Core data was acquired through an online survey of Chinese movie lovers conducted by a top-rated online survey platform in China (www.wjx.com). According to a report, 150 million questionnaires were released on the Questionnaire Star platform, and 11.9 billion questionnaires were recovered (Wenjuanxing, 2022). An online survey has many benefits over traditional survey techniques, including short time and money expenditures,

suitable for responders, computerization, data cleaning, and analysis (Dillman, 2011).

Results

Measurement of Variables and Descriptive Statistics

SPSS 26.0 statistical software was used to analyze our survey data. The detailed analysis for each research question is as follows. For demographic item gender, all respondents were equally distributed among male and female (M = 1.50, S.D. =.50), the majority average age between 21-30 years (M=2.17, SD=.838), with the majority of them having undergraduate or master's degree (M=1.87, SD=1.04). Females use OTT platforms significantly more than males (M = 1.47, SD = 0.371), while males go to the movies slightly more than females (M = 1.20, SD = 0.340). Demographic information is consistent with China's nationwide statistics that young people aged 20 to 29 years have the highest utilization rate of OTT platforms and cinemagoing (China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), 2022; Thomala, 2023) (Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variables	All respondents (N=656)			Watch the film on OTT platforms		Watch the movie on the cinema screen	
	M	SD	Categories	M	SD	M	SD
Gender	1.50	.500	Male	1.44	.497	1.20	.404
			Female	1.47	.500	1.17	.379
Age	2.17	.838	≤20 years	1.42	.496	1.14	.345
			21-25 years	1.50	.501	1.20	.402
			26-30 years	1.38	.490	1.21	.406
			≥31 years	1.33	.473	1.18	.385
			Undergrad	1.47	.500	1.18	.383
Demographics	1.87	1.045	Master	1.49	.501	1.22	.415
			Ph.D.	1.41	.499	1.22	.420
			Other	1.35	.481	1.15	.355
			≤1000 RMB*	1.50	.503	1.13	.339
Consumption	2.54	.980	1100-1500 RMB	1.40	.491	1.16	.363

				1600-2000 RMB	1.46	.500	1.21	.410
				≥ 2100 RMB	1.52	.501	1.26	.442
OTT platform usage scenario	Smartphone usage	1.75	.431	1.48	.500			
	Favourite movies	1.38	.486	1.56	.497			
	5G	1.30	.458	1.54	.500			
	Various genres	1.60	.490	1.60	.490			
	Multiple OTT platforms	1.62	.485	1.49	.501			
	Web series	1.52	.500	1.59	.492			
Movie-going experience	Cinema Environment	1.67	.472			1.25	.434	
	Cinema ticket price	1.4375	.49646			1.10	.306	
	Peak season	1.50	.500			1.29	.455	
	Emerging OTT platforms	1.8460	.36119			1.16	.371	
	Movie rating	1.62	.486			1.24	.426	
	Emerging pandemic threats (EPT)	1.3277	.46975			1.09	.291	

Note: * Is a legal currency; the average exchange rate in 2021 was 1 RMB=0.155 USD.

About (70%) of them accessed OTT platforms through smartphones, while (40%) frequently watched domestic and foreign films on OTT platforms. Approximately (40%) of the respondents consider the OTT platform a great challenge for cinema theatre; other than these, a majority still need to be ready to accept that the film industry's future is only on OTT platforms (65%). Easy access to OTT platforms and lack of time are the two main reasons impacting future cinemagoing habits (75.72% & 62.06%). About 55% of the respondents stated that OTT platforms are opening a new path for the Chinese film industry. More than (50%) of the participants often saw new films, old movies, and web/T.V. series on OTT platforms. More than (65%) of the participants watched at least one paid movie in the past month. Although most of the participants (50%) visited the cinema for films, they were found to be very satisfied with the cinema environment (76%) and facilities (81%). They responded that they

will continue to watch films in the cinema in the next five years (80%) too. About 92% of participants prefer to buy a cinema ticket online, and Cinema Entertainment is the main reason for going to the cinema (81%). The majority do not care about the cinema screen (68.97%). Half of the participants were unsatisfied with the price of popcorn at the cinema theatre. More than (80%) of the respondents stated that they checked and were concerned about the cinema ticket price before watching the film. About (55%) of the participants said they discussed a film with their friends about a movie before watching it in a cinema and even (60%) checked the film's story, directors, leading actors, and actresses before watching it. More than one-third of the participants were somewhat satisfied, and half were very satisfied with the cinematic power of blockbusters in the Chinese film industry. In the off-season, the cheapest ticket to the cinema is found on Mondays (74%), while Saturdays and Sundays offer the most expensive ticket to the cinema (75%). Comedy, drama, and action are the most popular genres among cinemagoers (70%, 64% and 62%). The major issues that the movie business is now experiencing are the cost of tickets, the pandemic, and the low quality of the films.

Analysis of the Determinants of OTT Platform for Watching Movies

OTT content consumption is substantial among millennials and Gen Z, which progressively transfers from conventional T.V. and cinema to OTT platforms as new technological changes have occurred too quickly in the last decade. Logistic regression was used to examine the significance of variables in identifying

whether key variables were associated with the likelihood of increasing the use of OTT platforms for films. A multivariate approach, called multiple regression analysis, was used to analyze the correlation between a dependent variable and numerous independent factors. Meanwhile, in multiple regression, two or more variables were associated. They provided redundant information about the responses, known as multicollinearity. Variance inflation factors (VIF) and tolerance were used to assess multicollinearity. There is an issue with multicollinearity if the VIF value is more than 4.0 and the tolerance is less than 0.2 (DeMaris, 2004; Hair et al., 2019; Mood, 2010). There was no multicollinearity among the predictor variables, according to an initial linear regression [Collinearity Statistics, (Tolerance = .870 ~ .984 > 0.2); (VIF = 1.016 ~ 1.150 < 4)]. The test was statistically cogent [χ^2 (10, N = 656) = 147.147, P = .000], suggesting that it could distinguish between individuals with and without using OTT platforms.

Further, the findings of multiple regression analysis showed that smartphone usage ($\beta = .414$, $p < .05$), favourite movies ($\beta = .563$, $p < .001$), 5G ($\beta = .417$, $p < .05$), various genres ($\beta = 1.510$, $p < .001$), multiple OTT platforms ($\beta = .390$, $P < .05$), and web series ($\beta = .796$, $p < .001$) were found to be significant influencing factors impacting the use of OTT platforms, especially for the films. Additionally, it was found that demographic variables, including gender, education, age, and consumption, were insignificant regarding the use of OTT platforms (Table 2). The additional analysis resulted in digital devices such as smartphones (Chatterjee & Pal, 2020), which are convenient for finding their

favourite movies, 5G fast networks (Dwyer et al. 2018; Xia 2022), and availability of various genres on multiple OTT platforms, were more likely to increase the experience of using OTT platforms (Abdullah & Salleh, 2019). The degree to which the independent variable (predictor variable) predicts the dependent variable (response variable), watching the films on OTT platforms, was measured at 20.1% (Cox & Snell R Square: $R^2=.201$). A similar explanatory power was found to be 26.9% (Nagelkerke: $R^2 = .269$) of variance in the dependent variable and correctly classified (70.3%) cases.

Table 2: *Logistic regression that predicts the likelihood of watching the film on OTT platforms (N=656)*

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)	Collinearity Statistics	
							Tolerance	VIF
Gender	.126	.185	.466	1	.495	1.135	.920	1.087
Age	-.080	.111	.517	1	.472	.923	.935	1.069
Education	-.021	.089	.055	1	.815	.979	.921	1.086
Consumption	-.016	.093	.030	1	.862	.984	.938	1.066
Smartphone usage	.414	.212	3.827	1	.050	1.513	.956	1.046
Favourite movies	.563	.192	8.576	1	.003	1.756	.876	1.141
5G	.417	.193	4.669	1	.031	1.517	.984	1.016
Various genres	1.510	.190	63.435	1	.000	4.528	.941	1.063
Multiple OTT platforms	.390	.192	4.130	1	.042	1.476	.915	1.093
Web series	.796	.183	18.913	1	.000	2.217	.870	1.150
Constant	-6.497	.858	57.390	1	.000	.002		

Note: Classification precision: 70.3%; Negelkerke: $R^2 = .269$ (acceptable range 0-1); Cox & Snell R square: $R^2 = .201$

Model Coefficient: $X^2 = 147.147$, $df=10$, $p=.000$

Comments: β = standardized regression coefficient; S.E. = standard error

Analysis of the Determinants of the Movie-Going Experience

Initially, Austin (2013) coined the term "cinema audience behaviour" from a marketing standpoint in 1981. Many academics have cited Austin's descriptive quantitative study. Later, researchers also started focusing on different components (Neelamegham & Jain, 1999; Suwanto, 2012). Initially, to confirm the occurrence of multicollinearity (Kutner et al., 2004), the tolerance values and variance inflation factors (VIF) were examined. Collinearity statistics show that each variable has a tolerance value between $.955 \sim .845 > 0.2$, and VIF values range from 1.183 to $1.047 < 4$ (Field, 2018), implying that multicollinearity is not problematic. The framework is statistically significant [$X^2(10, N = 656) = 114.192, P = .000$], suggesting it could distinguish between individuals with and without cinemagoing. Additionally, multiple regression analysis is also very useful in examining the impact of independent factors on the dependent variables of movie experience (Kelley & Bolin, 2013). As a result of exploring the significance of the variables, monthly consumption ($\beta = .256, p < .05$), cinema environment ($\beta = .976, p < .005$), cinema ticket price ($\beta = -.645, p < .01$), peak season ($\beta = 1.041, p < .000$), emerging OTT platforms ($\beta = -.933, p < .001$), movie rating ($\beta = .917, p < .001$) (Statista, 2016) and emerging pandemic threats (EPT) ($\beta = -.624, p < .05$) were found to be significant influencing factors. In addition, it was found that gender,

education, and age were not important in the behavioural change in the movie-going experience. The degree to which the independent variable (predictor variable) predicts the dependent variable (response variable), 'movie-going experience,' was measured to be having 83.2% accuracy, and similar explanatory power were found to be about 25.7 % (Nagelkerke: R2 = .257). The factors that affect moviegoers' attitudes towards film screening at the cinema ticket price (coefficient = -.645, p = .010), emerging OTT platforms (coefficient = -.933, p = .001), and emerging pandemic threats (EPT) (coefficient = -.624, p = .026), were negatively associated with cinephiles attitudes towards watching a film on a cinema screen (Table 3).

Table 3: *Logistic regression predicting the likelihood of movie-going experience (N=656)*

Variables	β	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	Collinearity Statistics	
							Tolerance	VIF
Gender	-.161	.233	.478	1	.489	.851	.922	1.085
Age	.189	.142	1.775	1	.183	1.208	.918	1.090
Education	.003	.114	.001	1	.976	1.003	.935	1.070
Consumption	.256	.114	5.025	1	.025	1.291	.955	1.047
Cinema Environment	.976	.318	9.414	1	.002	2.655	.859	1.164
Cinema ticket price	-.645	.252	6.560	1	.010	.525	.879	1.138
Peak season	1.041	.251	17.151	1	.000	2.832	.845	1.183
Emerging OTT platforms	-.933	.287	10.600	1	.001	.393	.930	1.075
Movie rating	.917	.264	12.064	1	.001	2.502	.923	1.084

Emerging pandemic threats (EPT)	-.624	.280	4.961	1	.026	.536	.917	1.091
Constant	-	1.171	11.220	1	.001	.020		3.923

Note: Classification Accuracy: 83.2%, Negelkerke: R² = .257, (acceptable range 0-1), Cox & Snell R Square: R² = .160

Model Coefficient: X² = 114.192, df=10, p=.000

Comments: β = standardized regression coefficient; S.E. = standard error

OTT Platforms

The OTT platforms used by each demographic were also examined. The platforms in question were Youku, iQIYI, Bilibili, and Tencent Video. Based on the data, 68.63% of participants used Bilibili. In comparison to other OTT platforms, this is significantly high. In this data, 55.82% of respondents used Tencent video, and 54.97% used the iQIYI OTT platform to watch films. About 32% of participants used the Youku OTT platform. No one group's results were shown to be substantially different using these four platforms (Table 4).

Table 4: OTT platforms

Demographic		Youku	iQIYI	Bilibili	Tencent Video
Gender	Male	30.3%	50.2%	71.8%	46.3%
	Female	33.8%	59.3%	65.9%	64.9%
Degree	Bachelor	31.8%	56.2%	75.2%	56.9%
	Master	32.3%	50.5%	69.2%	56.1%
	Ph.D.	50.0%	59.4%	56.3%	50.0%
	Any other	26.1%	59.1%	52.3%	54.5%
Age	Less than 20 years	18.4%	51.0%	76.5%	58.2%
	21-25 years	31.3%	56.0%	77.0%	57.7%
	26-30 years	45.2%	49.3%	54.8%	46.6%
	31-35 years	51.2%	61.0%	41.5%	58.5%
	Above than 35 years	28.6%	60.7%	14.3%	46.4%
	600-1000 RMB	35.4%	67.1%	51.2%	57.3%

Personal Monthly Consumption	1100-1500 RMB	27.7%	51.5%	72.8%	57.9%
	1600-2000 RMB	34.0%	49.7%	74.1%	55.8%
	More than 2000 RMB	35.9%	59.4%	66.4%	51.6%
Overall total users		190 (32.04%)	326 (54.97%)	407 (68.63%)	331 (55.82%)

Discussion and Summary of Results

Based on the review results of previous studies (P. Gupta, 2021; Hassan et al., 2016; Nagaraj et al., 2021; Prasad, 2022; Sujata et al., 2015), as a pioneer of its kind, this study was conducted to check what extent variables have a significant effect on predicting OTT platform users and the movie-going audience's experience. Analysis was performed by applying a logistic model; important influencing factors in discriminating separately among the OTT platform users and movie-going experience were analyzed with a binary logistic regression. The striking difference between previous studies and this study is the search for significant predictive variables that can identify the situation of the Chinese film and cinema industry among the users of OTT platforms and moviegoers. Regarding the initial research question, five covariates were found to have a significant effect on the identification of the OTT platform usage for films; smartphone usage, favourite movies, 5G, various genres, multiple OTT platforms, and web series were found to be statistically significant in the predicting response variables to the use of OTT platforms. In contrast, demographic variables were not found to be important. However, our study contradicts prior research findings (Lee & Lee, 2021), which revealed that gender, age, and personal income, as a component of demography, were linked to

OTT platforms' experience behaviour and significantly influenced the use of free or paid services. Demographic outcomes might be explained because gender, age, education, and monthly consumption do not have much diversity.

To summarize the analysis of the results, it can be predicted that the probability of being an OTT platform user increases with smartphone usage (Dwyer et al., 2018; Gao et al., 2010), favourite movies (Mishra et al., 2021), 5G usage (Xia, 2022), various genres (Parikh, 2020), multiple OTT platforms (Ghosh, 2021; Singh, 2019), and web series (Cheng, 2022; Valecha, 2021). Quality domestic and international content consumption has increased. Compared with previous studies (in which demographics and sociological attributes are predictors), age, monthly consumption, and education did not significantly affect OTT film-watching habits, indicating that audience behaviour is more related to personal experience and perceptions.

Dealing with the second research question, seven variables, including monthly consumption, cinema environment, cinema ticket price, peak season, emerging OTT platforms, movie rating, and emerging pandemic threats (EPT), had a substantial impact on the movie-going experience. In particular, three variables – the cinema ticket price, the emerging OTT platforms, and emerging pandemic threats (EPT) – set as predictors of health threats consistently negatively (-) affected the cinema experience. To summarize the results for the cinemagoers, it can be predicted that the number of moviegoers can increase as their monthly consumption increases (A. Austin et al., 2016; Cesar et al., 2010), decrease cinema ticket prices (Cheng, 2022), with the arrival of

peak seasons (holidays) (F. Feng & Sharma, 2018; Goodman & Talmacs, 2017; Yassin et al., 2017) and increase in the safety protocols in cinema theatres (Maoyan Entertainment, 2020a, 2020b, 2021).

The rapid growth of OTT platforms and this new home entertainment in China is gaining ground with the cinema box office. It has been accentuated that a better consideration of substantial differences underpinning Chinese consumers' desires and film-watching behaviours toward OTT platforms is critical (Cesar et al., 2010; Goodman & Talmacs, 2017; Hassan et al., 2016; Maoyan Entertainment, 2020a, 2020b; Srivastava & Dhananjayan, 2017). Researchers believe that COVID-19 is the biggest challenge for the cinema industry. Further, findings also show that the cinema industry is under pressure from digital media outlets, and audiences are significantly using OTT platforms under the new normal (Campbell, 2018; Chatterjee & Pal, 2020; Moochhala, 2018; Patel et al., 2020).

The smartphone is also frequently used to access OTT platforms (Banerjee et al., 2013; Cheng, 2022; Tang et al., 2016). Even though OTT platforms are very popular among film viewers, a majority still need to be ready to accept that the film industry's future is only on OTT platforms. OTT platforms are opening a new path for the Chinese film industry. There are more movie theatres and screens in China than elsewhere. Cinemagoers are very satisfied with the cinema environment and facilities and will continue to watch films in the cinema. Ticket prices and lack of time are major concerns of the cinemagoers. The massive issues

that the film industry is now experiencing are the cost of tickets, the pandemic, and the content quality of the films.

Conclusion

Present research empirically tested and verified Chinese viewers' perceived factors and film-watching habits to report this gap in the modern age of OTT platforms and cinema. The findings show that smartphone usage, favourite movies, 5G networks, various genres, multiple OTT platforms, and web series are the most significant elements in attracting and increasing the usage of OTT platforms for films. Regarding cinema, factors including monthly consumption, cinema environment, peak season, and movie rating are positively influenced while increasing cinema ticket prices, the emergence of OTT platforms, and pandemic threats negatively affected cinephile habits and decreased the box office revenue. Increasing monthly consumption, better cinema environment, highest demand in peak season, and movie rating can enhance box office revenue; conversely, rising cinema ticket prices, emerging OTT platforms, and EPT can diminish the number of moviegoers' admissions. Finally, this study has enhanced our insights into the influencing factors of both movie-going and OTT platform users. Our analysis also pointed out challenges plaguing the cinema theatre ecology in China, namely, increasing cinema ticket prices, EPT, and emerging OTT platforms. The box office for Chinese holiday movies has dropped by over one-fifth as cinema pushes prices to record highs. Cinema theatre may have little power to decrease the number of OTT platforms, but it can manage ticket prices.

Research Implication and Recommendations

This study has yielded some significant theoretical findings. First, although previous studies have focused on the usefulness and increasing use of OTT platforms, the current research investigates the comparative factors on the behaviour of both OTT platform users and cinemagoers to watch films. To meet the audience's demand for films, we recommend that cinema owners take more measures regarding health safety and set reasonable prices for cinema tickets. Especially for students, service providers need to attract them via discount cinema ticket prices. OTT platforms still need to work on accessibility for all users at reasonable subscription rates. Many users of OTT platforms have to access more than one OTT platform for their favourite content, which may affect their watching habits in the future. Still, the number of cinemagoers and OTT platform users for films is about one-fifth and two-fifths simultaneously.

The results illustrate the significance of identifying the drivers of, and hindrances to, both OTT platforms and cinema theatre. The factors included smartphone use, the availability of favourite movies, 5G networks, various genres, multiple OTT platforms, and web series that significantly impact the acceptance and use of OTT platforms for films. Considering the cutthroat competition among the various OTT platforms, in the future, it will be a matter of who is producing quality content following consumer demand. It is the time of web series on OTT platforms. The audience is affected by the components of news media, ratings, various genres, and social media trends and starts using the particular OTT platform.

Limitations and Future Studies

A survey method enables researchers to identify the fundamental problems and clarify influencing factors at the audience level. This research leads to raising new questions. It discusses the challenges to cinema in the post-pandemic period. The findings of this study are based on movie lovers from universities and college students. Most of the young people are 21-30 years old. This research model needs to find the influence of demographic factors on OTT platform users, and only the monthly consumption factor influences cinemagoing. These might be usefully incorporated in the future. Despite the above limitations, our study is among the first to investigate the factors that deem the cinema interesting/uninteresting and increase the OTT platform users among the sample of diverse students of colleges and universities in China. Our study clearly shows that cinema is under pressure while the number of users of the OTT platform is significantly increasing. However, we need subsequent research to confirm and explore the other factors along with these. Future researchers can also study the other elements, i.e., content quality, star presence in a movie, knowing someone in it, a diverse range of perspectives, different subgenres, trailer, remarks by film industry people/writers/journalists' cinematic effects, marketing tactics, big spectacle movie, regions, imported or domestic production, which are influencing the cinephiles and the users of OTT platform. Qualitative research methods, for instance, in-depth talks and focus groups, might be used in future studies to examine fundamental determinants that change audience behaviours and deepen the findings.

This research used a nationwide sample with limited generalizability since it is convenient and purposive. Future studies should use a more demographically diverse and equally distributed model. An experimental technique or longitudinal data might be good for understanding further the causes for decreasing cinemagoers, including more precise causative features. We also anticipate that completing this research in Fuzhou and Xiamen in Mainland China will help advance scholarship on the significant issue of the film industry and attempts to address it by fostering a more inclusive, diversified, and global knowledge of it (The Hollywood Reporter, 2021).

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