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The impact of focus group opinions on market competitiveness and economic success in film production: Analysis of sociological and marketing aspects in the context of efficient resource utilisation and budget optimisation

Abstract. The purpose of this study was to examine sociological and marketing aspects to identify effective strategies for resource utilisation and budget optimisation in the context of the film industry. For this, the various success factors of a film product were examined in detail, leading to practical recommendations for optimising budget and resources. The study covered the influence of sociocultural factors on audience preferences, which helped to explain the popularity of films of certain genres after events that took place in the real world. The study determined the significance of personal experience, preferences, and cultural context for the audience's perception of films, leading to the conclusion that focus group participants should be matched to the characteristics of the film's target audience to maximise film distribution profits. The films examined in this study, namely The Shawshank Redemption, Blade Runner, and E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial, showed that, generally, focus group opinions reliably indicated the prospect of a successful or unsuccessful film distribution, which, however, does not indicate the quality of the film. The advertising campaign of the film "Barbie" was also examined, covering its main aspects (social media, the colour pink, attracting public attention) that led the film to box office success. Recommendations were developed for ethical promotion of film productions, including extensive use of social media to communicate with audiences, effective use of resources, working with focus groups. The findings suggested the essential role of focus groups in shaping the competitiveness of films on the market, as well as the need to consider them when developing marketing strategies and optimising film production budgets

Keywords: advertising campaigns; audience; promotion strategies; pre-show; cultural trends; social media

INTRODUCTION

Film production is one of the key sectors of the entertainment industry, attracting the attention not only of the general audience but also of researchers from various fields such as sociology and marketing. In modern world, the quality of films and their successful marketing play a key role in achieving competitiveness and economic success for studios and film producers. In today's information society, access to a variety of content is easy and fast, making the creation of a successful film even more challenging, requiring not only creativity but also a profound understanding of audience preferences.

One of the methods of analysing the market situation and consumer preferences in film production is the use of focus groups. Focus groups provide valuable insights from audiences, revealing their opinions, preferences, and expectations about films. However, it is vital to acknowledge that the impact of focus group opinions on market competitiveness and economic success in film production requires an in-depth analysis and understanding, especially in the context of sociological and marketing aspects. There are many challenges in this context. Modern film industry is facing an increasing level of competition, which leads to the

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need to not only create quality content, but also an effective marketing strategy to attract viewers' attention. That said, with the rise of digital technology and streaming content, there have been considerable changes in consumer behaviour, affecting the usual distribution and monetisation patterns of films. Another considerable issue is the uncertainty about the extent to which the opinions of focus groups can truly reflect the preferences and expectations of the general audience; it is essential to understand how representative these opinions are and whether they can be used to inform key decisions in the film making and promotion process. If these problems are not addressed, there is a risk of losing competitiveness in the film production market. Failure to adapt to changing audience demands and unnecessary use of resources on non-core strategies can lead to financial and reputation losses for studios and producers. In addition, a lack of confidence in the results of focus group research can lead to poor strategic decisions, which can adversely affect the commercial success of a film.

Sociological and marketing aspects in film production encompass many areas that play a major role in the development and successful promotion of films. Sociocultural trends are a key factor in understanding which topics and genres will be most relevant to audiences in a particular time. For instance, analysing social movements, fashion trends, or changes in public opinion can help identify the topics that will be most appealing to viewers. Budget and resource optimisation in film production involves cost analysis of the various stages of film production, as well as assessing the effectiveness of advertising campaigns and distribution channels. Optimisation of production processes and rational use of resources help to reduce costs and increase the film's competitiveness in the market. The problem of the influence of promotional strategies and various factors on audience preferences in cinema is considerable for modern film production. P.S.H.M. Shaiful *et al.* (2019) and D. Rubin *et al.* (2022) covered this topic in their research, identifying the significance of marketing techniques in shaping audience preferences and their effectiveness in the film industry, and the fact that a variety of film promotion strategies do influence consumers' choices. The researchers described a range of key aspects such as social and cultural factors, technological innovations, and the development of digital platforms that substantially influence the audience's perception of films. However, despite the significance of the findings of the reviewed studies, access to information on public preferences is limited, which may reduce the quality of the analyses conducted.

Another issue is the association of films with brands, whether it is the film itself as a brand, or other brands included in the film. G.S. Kohli *et al.* (2020) covered the role of cinema as a brand in the modern media space, while H.H. Park (2022) demonstrated that under certain conditions films can have a considerable impact on consumers' attitudes towards a brand. These conditions include the audience's level of engagement and their tendency to fantasise. However, the cited studies have a range of limitations.

Specifically, the influence of factors such as socio-cultural context or individual consumer preferences was not considered. I. Einberg & A. Hanifi (2023) covered the problem of revenue forecasting and profit maximisation and found that the use of random forest method based on pre-production data shows high accuracy in predicting film revenue, while P.P. Dewani (2020) stated that a thorough analysis of consumer preferences and behaviour is needed to determine the best pricing strategies and revenue enhancement activities in cinemas. X. Zhang *et al.* (2021) found that profit-maximising recommender systems run the risk of negative consumer outcomes such as limiting choice, loss of transparency and deterioration in the quality of offerings. J. Funk (2023) argued that the use of algorithms is effective in predicting revenue for different categories of films. Factors not considered in these studies, such as seasonal fluctuations in demand and the impact of external events on the film distribution market, require further investigation.

The studies reviewed demonstrated the multifactorial nature of the modern film business and the complexity of this process, but they did not fully cover the socio-cultural and marketing aspects of the success of films. The purpose of the present study was to identify the key factors that influence the success of film projects. To fulfil the purpose, the following tasks were set: to analyse the sociological factors affecting the market competitiveness and success of film projects; to assess the impact of cultural trends on the selection and budgeting of film projects; to analyse the effectiveness of various strategies for resource and budget management in film production.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern film production is influenced by a range of factors, including sociological and marketing aspects, which play a key role in shaping and successfully promoting films. Often film marketing studies focus on many current trends and concepts that determine the success or failure of film projects. One substantial trend is the growing significance of digital technology and the internet in the distribution and marketing of films, as with the development of streaming services and social media platforms, film studios and film companies are faced with the need to adapt their distribution and advertising strategies to new platforms and consumer habits. This fact sparks debate about the effectiveness of conventional film promotions and the need for innovation in digital marketing. For instance, M. Suvattanadilok & P. Foroudi (2021) found that social media helps to create positive attitudes towards a film by introducing information about it into a potential viewer's "personal space" – their mobile phone. C. Lam & J. Raphael (2018) uncovered a marketing ploy such as celebrity (often the starring actors in a film) interactions off set, including simulated romances to maximise audience attention and create excitement before the premiere of a film.

One of the key aspects in understanding film production is to make sense of the central terms and concepts used in the research. J. do Nascimento (2019) considers the

concept of socio-cultural factors as a set of social and cultural influences that determine audience preferences and behaviours in the context of filmmaking. S. Weingartner (2021) pointed out the role of social norms and values in shaping cultural products and their influence on viewers' perceptions. Among contemporary theories and concepts applied to film marketing, researchers have devoted particular attention to the investigation of target audience preferences. E. Arrigo *et al.* (2021) argue that the success of a project depends on how closely it matches the expectations and interests of the audience, while according to A. Lewnes & K. Lane Keller (2019), adapting to audience preferences is becoming a priority for marketers in all fields. Contemporary film production addresses essential aspects of economics and sociology that affect the commercial success and socio-cultural significance of films. Studies in film marketing and the sociology of culture cover current trends and challenges facing film studios and marketers. Y. Hong (2021) and D. Arditi (2021) confirmed the role of sociocultural factors in shaping audience preferences and film promotion strategies. Researchers point to the significance of adapting content to a variety of cultural contexts and viewer expectations.

A major aspect identified by researchers is the role of new technologies in the distribution and marketing of films. J.R. Saura (2021) and C. Corrado *et al.* (2022) covered the impact of digital platforms and social media on content distribution strategies and audience interaction. Researchers agreed on the significance of using digital tools effectively to maximise viewer reach and engagement. From an arts sociology standpoint, H. Chen *et al.* (2021) and S. Kim & S. Kim (2021) provided insights into how cultural products, including films, interact with state and social structures as well as individual preferences. These studies have uncovered the role of films in shaping cultural norms, values, and preferences, as well as their influence on social discourses and identities. C.M. McCormack *et al.* (2021) covered perspectives on the positive impact of cinema on the environmental thinking of viewers. Understanding such a phenomenon as digital technologies in film marketing can be interpreted in different ways. According to E. Sifaki & M. Papadopoulou (2022), it includes a wide range of digital tools and platforms used to promote and distribute films, while R. Hasan & J. Ferdous (2024) analysed the data and artificial intelligence technologies used in personalising marketing strategies. A key concept in the sociology of cinema is "cultural products". G.D. Rawnsley (2021) considered this concept as material and symbolic artefacts created by the cultural industry and influencing the development of cultural practices and identities in society. However, N. Archer (2020) uses the example of Brexit to argue that cultural products are also affected by commercial and political interests, which influences their content and dissemination. C. Iseli *et al.* (2020) stated the need to consider cinema not only in terms of marketing, economic efficiency, and technology, but also as an essential element of artistic heritage and a form of cultural development.

In the context of the subject under study, it is also important to consider researchers' views on the role of predicting the success of a film based on preliminary data in the context of contemporary marketing and advertising strategies. P.C. Murschetz *et al.* (2020) concluded that, despite the lack of precise algorithms that would guarantee the provision of reliable information about the potential strengths and weaknesses of a film, the use of all available information about the film (including data from pre-screenings, statistics from social networks, data on the success of comparable projects) will allow producers and marketers to develop the most effective strategy for the implementation and promotion of the project than if all this data were not considered. P. Merrington *et al.* (2019) hold a similar opinion. Researchers have stated the need to use an interdisciplinary approach in film audience research to obtain the most reliable and adequate information.

Modern film production is increasingly influenced by digital technology and internet platforms, which require film studios to innovate their distribution and marketing strategies to align with new consumer habits and the growing significance of streaming services and social media. Additionally, researchers emphasise the importance of understanding socio-cultural factors and audience preferences, as these elements are crucial for shaping successful film marketing strategies that resonate with target audiences. Interdisciplinary approaches and the use of preliminary data, including social media statistics and pre-screening feedback, are essential for predicting a film's potential success and developing effective marketing strategies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study examined and explored various aspects of film production and marketing in great detail to identify the key factors that influence the success of film projects. Initially, a literature review was conducted covering various aspects of film marketing such as film promotion strategies, the influence of socio-cultural factors on audience preferences, the use of digital technology and social media in marketing campaigns, the effectiveness of advertising and content distribution, and the significance of focus groups in the success of film projects.

The study explored changes in film production since 2000s in the context of current technological and cultural trends, covering a trend in the impact of LGBTQ+ and non-white actors on the diversity of stories and images in cinema. It was found that the involvement of a more diverse group of characters reflects the growing diversity of audience tastes and preferences, as well as a desire for a more open and inclusive cinematic experience; the representation of different cultural and gender perspectives on screen was identified not only as an essential element of socio-cultural reality, but also as a factor in attracting new audiences and strengthening the film's position in the global marketplace.

The impact of focus groups on film pre-testing, their role in marketing strategies, and audience reactions to previews and feedback were also explored. Consideration of

this aspect of the study has identified potential areas for optimising budget and resources in film production, aimed at improving the efficiency and competitiveness of films. The factors, aspects, and techniques associated with the involvement of focus groups in pre-testing of films were discussed in detail. Specifically, the influence of the participation of representatives of different audience groups on the development of the film's concept and its further perception by the general public was analysed. Furthermore, methods for analysing audience feedback and reactions to previewing versions of a film were revealed, considering current trends in filmmaking and changes in consumer behaviour, to identify potential ways to optimise the process of creating and promoting film productions.

A detailed investigation of film production processes has highlighted several areas of cost optimisation: the study conducted a detailed examination of opportunities to reduce the costs of marketing campaigns, which included an analysis of the effectiveness of various advertising strategies and the use of modern digital tools for precise audience targeting. Methods considered for streamlining production processes included studying surveying techniques, using more economical equipment and optimising labour resources. The coverage of financial flow management and budget control throughout the production and marketing stages of the film demonstrated that cost optimisation requires constant monitoring and analysis of financial transactions, allowing possible improvements and economically sound solutions to be implemented.

The systematic approach used in the study helped to develop strategies to improve marketing campaigns, adapted to changing trends and audience expectations, and to provide recommendations for optimising budgets and resources in film production, considering the identified factors influencing the success of film projects in the international market. This approach offered a better insight into the issues at hand and helped to achieve the set purpose and objectives of the study.

RESULTS

Influence of socio-cultural factors on audience preferences. Sociocultural factors, including values, technological innovation, and internet media, play a key role in film production, influencing the themes, styles, and success of films. Globalisation and global cultural trends dictate audience preferences, while cultural differences can cause misunderstanding or even conflict. Social problems reflected in films become the object of public dialogue and can shape public opinion, while cultural stereotypes and values influence the content and format of films and their perception by audiences, determining the success of film production. Events in society can have a considerable impact on cinema. Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States, there have been many films reflecting the public anxiety and reaction to these events. For instance, the film Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close addressed the themes of terrorism, fear, and patriotism, attempting to interpret

and make sense of the tragedy and its aftermath through the lens of cinematic art. With a budget of USD 40 million, the film grossed USD 55.2 million at the box office, which can hardly be called a success, but the film reflected the current public sentiment and reaction to the events of 9/11; it served as a source of public dialogue and reflection and has stayed a landmark product in contemporary film culture.

Audience reactions to different genres and themes of films can be extremely varied and individual. For example, horror films may cause some viewers to feel adrenaline and thrill with suspense, while others may feel fear and anxiety. Comedies bring laughter and joy to most viewers, but some may find them boring or offensive. Dramas and films with a profound plot can make one think about life values and the fate of characters, while action and adventure films can generate excitement and delight from dynamic scenes. Audience reactions are strongly influenced by their individual preferences, experiences, and cultural contexts, as well as age constraints and life experiences, suggesting that it is important to consider the film's target audience when selecting focus group participants to better understand their reactions and interests.

Changes in cultural preferences and perceptions of cinema. Since the beginning of the new millennium, cultural preferences and perceptions of cinema have undergone considerable changes due to factors such as the rapid development of technology and the spread of the internet, globalisation, and a growing interest in niche films and cultural sensibilities. All this has influenced the emergence of new forms of content consumption, such as video streaming and online cinemas, which has created opportunities for greater access to diverse cinematic content and the proliferation of Hollywood standards and formats, the increasing popularity of Hollywood blockbusters (e.g., Marvel Studio films) and the trend towards standardisation of stories and images in cinema. Another major aspect of the change in cultural preferences is the growing interest in diverse stories, characters, and themes. Cinema has become more open to various socio-cultural and political issues, reflecting a wide range of voices and experiences from different communities. Through this openness, one can see the active integration of LGBTQ+ and non-white characters into the film industry.

Despite progress and diversity, contemporary changes in cultural preferences and perceptions of cinema can have negative consequences. Increased access to content via the internet and streaming services can lead to a simplification of the perception of cultural products and the loss of their value as art, turning cinema into a commercial commodity for mass consumption. The globalisation of the film industry can lead to the standardisation of content and the suppression of local cinematic traditions, limiting film production, while an overemphasis on socio-cultural and political issues can lead to the politicisation of the film process and the use of films to manipulate and incite conflict. Positive and negative changes in cultural film preferences have a substantial impact on focus group opinions.

Variety of stories and openness to different socio-cultural issues can increase audience interest, while commercialisation and politicisation of content can cause frustration and dissatisfaction. Considering these factors is important for creating attractive and relevant films.

Previews and feedback. This factor plays a significant role in the success of a film. Audience reactions can be varied but are crucial to film companies as they provide valuable insight into audience reactions to different aspects of the film. Previews allow film companies to gauge the audience's overall impression of the film, including emotional response to plot twists, quality of acting, special effects, and other essential aspects. Positive reviews may confirm the success of the film, while negative opinions may indicate that changes or improvements need to be made. Furthermore, audience feedback after previews can help film companies and directors identify concrete points that need to be improved or reworked, including the need to adjust the script, characters, or technical aspects of the film. Notably, audience response to previews can be subjective and depends on individual viewer preferences and expectations. However, given that the success of a film largely depends on the response of the target audience, previews and audience feedback play a key role in shaping the final product and its successful journey in the film industry market.

During test screenings of the film E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial (1982), focus groups emotionally connected with the story of a boy who befriends an alien. They found the E.T. character lovable and the film touching (Salmon, 2022). Director Steven Spielberg accommodated the feedback and introduced minor changes to keep the emotional impact intact. The film had a budget of approximately USD 10.5 million and was a massive success, grossing over USD 792 million worldwide. The 1994 film The Shawshank Redemption originally received conflicting reactions during test screenings. Some viewers appreciated its themes of hope, friendship, and redemption while others found it slow, but director Frank Darabont believed in the film's potential and kept the plot and characters intact. The Shawshank Redemption had a budget of about USD 25 million and box office receipts of USD 28 million, meaning the film really failed at the box office and did not pay off for the studio. Despite its failure at the box office, the film has nonetheless become a cult classic and is ranked number two on IMDb.

In relation to Ridley Scott's neo-noir science fiction film Blade Runner (1982), the opinions of the focus group were divided. Some found it confusing because of the complex storyline and ambiguous ending. In response, the director released a theatrical version with changes based on focus group feedback, but the later released director's cut version reflected his original vision. The film grossed USD 41 million on a budget of USD 28 million, and although the film initially flopped at the box office, over time, like The Shawshank Redemption, it gained a cult following. The opinions of focus groups play a major role in creating films, products, and marketing strategies. They provide valuable feedback, helping developers understand how potential users perceive their product or idea. Focus groups can help identify strengths and weaknesses, suggest improvements, and even inspire new ideas, but it is important to remember that focus group opinions are just one tool, and decisions should always be made with other factors in mind.

Film companies use the results of focus groups to understand the preferences and expectations of their target audiences, allowing them to create more effective film promotion and advertising strategies. Analysing feedback from focus group participants allows identifying the key points that attract or, conversely, repel viewers, and use this information to create marketing campaigns that are as relevant as possible to the audience. Furthermore, focus groups can help film companies determine the best channels for distributing content and select suitable advertising platforms to attract attention to the film. For instance, if a focus group reveals that a certain segment of the audience prefers to receive information about films through social media, a film company may adjust its strategy and use advertising campaigns on such networks more actively. Focus groups can also identify topics popular with the target audience, which helps film companies tailor their advertising to these preferences. In this way, focus groups allow marketing and advertising strategies to be optimised, increasing the probability of successfully attracting audiences to a film project.

Effectiveness of advertising campaigns and content distribution. The evaluation of these indicators in cinematography is not only a technical analysis of quantitative data, but also a complex analysis of psychological and socio-cultural aspects. One of the non-obvious factors affecting the success of an advert is the contextual perception of the audience of the information presented. Viewers are increasingly critical of the conventional form of advertising and respond to content that is emotionally engaging and of real interest to them. In this way, effective advertising campaigns become not just a way to provide notice of upcoming premieres, but also an opportunity for audiences to engage with a brand or film on a deeper level. Another major aspect is the use of innovative technologies to personalise advertising content: modern artificial intelligence algorithms allow advertising messages to be tailored to the concrete interests and preferences of each viewer, which considerably increases the probability of their engagement and reaction to the proposed content. One of the most successful in the context of the 2023 advertising campaigns was the film Barbie. The advertising campaign for the Barbie film used a variety of advertising strategies, which consequently allowed the Warner Bros. film studio to generate impressive box office receipts. The studio team responsible for Barbie has forged partnerships with various brands, including a pink Xbox and a Balmain hoodie. These partnerships helped build anticipation for the film and strengthened its brand. Furthermore, a real Barbie dream house in Malibu was created, available for booking on Airbnb, as well as a themed cruise in Boston, which increased interest in the film (Rubin, 2023).

The colour pink, synonymous with Barbie, played a central role in the advertising campaign: the theme of girl power in the film was combined with this colour palette, allowing the marketing team to reinforce the brand identity and attract even more attention, as was the release of a phone application that allowed ordinary photos to be turned into images resembling a Barbie doll or Ken using artificial intelligence technology. The marketing team also carefully timed the releases of teasers and memes (Dias, 2023). As a result, Barbie exceeded box office expectations, and the film's debut at the same time as another film, Oppenheimer, resulted in the biggest cumulative box office gross of the pandemic period and the fourth highest in history. By the time the worldwide box office ended, Barbie was the highest-grossing film of 2023, surpassing the USD 1.44 billion mark worldwide and USD 636.2 million in the United States (Box Office Mojo, n.d.).

With the advent of big data and advances in analytics techniques, the film industry has a unique opportunity to more accurately predict audience needs and preferences. The use of machine learning and artificial intelligence algorithms can identify hidden patterns in viewers' behaviour and predict their reactions to advertising campaigns. For instance, analysing data on previous film views, search queries, and social media activity can help film companies customise targeted advertising and achieve higher audi-ence engagement. Furthermore, it is worth noting the significance of monitoring and analysing audience response in real time. With rapid access to data from a variety of sources, film studios can react promptly to changes in viewer preferences and adjust their advertising strategies accordingly.

The use of digital technology in film marketing expands the opportunities for audience engagement and content distribution. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube play a key role in promoting films through official pages, publishing trailers, video interviews with actors, and running competitions. Moreover, streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ provide direct access to audiences, allowing film companies to present their films at any time and place. The use of virtual reality and augmented reality is also creating new opportunities for interactive content, including virtual tours of film sets and augmented reality applications. Thus, the use of digital technology in film marketing is becoming a necessity in modern entertainment industry, providing a wider audience reach, increased engagement, and the creation of unique content that can capture the attention and interest of viewers. Even in the case of mixed opinions from focus group participants at pre-screenings of a film, an effective publicity campaign can have a decisive impact on the success of a project. The impact of social media on film projects is covered in Table 1.

Table 1. The role of social media in film promotion

Aspect	Description
Promotion and marketing	Social media provides a platform for film companies to promote their films. Official film accounts post trailers, posters, set photos, and exclusive content to reach potential audiences to create a wide reach and keep viewers engaged in discussions about upcoming premieres.
Audience interaction	Social media provides an opportunity for direct interaction with the audience. Film companies can answer questions, conduct surveys, organise competitions, and give away prizes, which helps to strengthen the connection with fans and increase brand loyalty.
Analytics and performance measurement	Social media provides tools to analyse and measure the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. Film companies can track the number of views, likes, comments, and reposts, and analyse audiences and their engagement to optimise their promotional strategies.
Creation of viral content	Social media provides an opportunity to create viral content that spreads quickly among users and catches the attention of film lovers. Viral trailers, memes, challenges, and other content formats can be a powerful tool for attracting attention to films.

Source: compiled by the author

Focus groups play a significant role in pre-testing films, providing film companies with valuable reviews and feedback from potential audiences. Focus group participants can provide valuable insights about various aspects of the film, from plot and characters to soundtrack and visual effects. While watching the film, participants can express their impressions, analyse their emotional reactions to plot twists and turns, and assess the authenticity of dialogue and characters. These reviews can be a valuable tool for film companies in understanding what content generates the most interest and emotional impact on audiences. Furthermore, focus groups allow film companies to test audience reactions to different versions of a film, experiment with different concepts and alternative endings, and determine the best marketing approach to attract attention to the film.

Methods of optimising production processes, resources, and cost reduction. Optimising production processes and reducing costs in film production play a key role in ensuring efficient use of resources and increasing competitiveness. Efficient use of resources at various stages of film production and marketing is key to ensuring the successful launch and marketing of a film. At the production stage, resources such as budget, time, and talent must be optimally allocated to maximise the quality and appeal of the film to the target audience. For instance, the use of modern technology and innovative filming techniques can substantially

reduce the time and cost of creating certain scenes, as well as increase their visual appeal.

As the film moves into the marketplace, effective use of resources in marketing becomes critical, which includes developing a marketing strategy that makes the best use of budget and resources to capture audience attention and create a positive image for the film. For example, choosing the suitable advertising platforms, target audience, and content distribution channels can have a substantial impact on the effectiveness of marketing efforts and the ultimate success of a film. Furthermore, effective use of resources also includes analysing data and feedback from the audience. Understanding audience response to advertising campaigns, promotional materials, and film previews helps to adjust marketing strategies in real time and optimise the use of available resources for maximum impact. Thus, the efficient use of resources at various stages of film production and marketing is an essential factor for success and competitiveness in modern film industry (Table 2).

Table 2. Practical recommendations on how to optimise budget and resources

Recommendation	Details
Detailed budget planning	Developing a detailed budget for each stage of production, including script, filming, post-production, marketing, and distribution. This will help to avoid unexpected costs and manage costs more efficiently.
Utilisation of modern technologies	The introduction of modern technology into production processes can significantly reduce costs. For instance, the use of computer graphics and virtual film sets can reduce set and location costs.
Optimisation of production processes	Analysis of each stage of production to identify opportunities for optimisation. This may include finding more efficient filming techniques, using fewer filming days, and making effective use of props.
Partnership and cooperation	Establishing long-term partnerships with service and equipment providers. This will help to get better supply terms and reduce production costs.
Data analysis and feedback	Detailed analysis of cost and performance data for production and marketing processes. It is recommended to use feedback from the audience to adjust strategies and optimise the use of resources.
Staff training	Investing in staff training and development to improve their skills and performance. Trained employees contribute to reducing production time and costs.
Use of flexible strategies	Development of flexible budget management strategies to respond to changes in the external environment and market conditions. This will help to minimise risks and maximise resource efficiency.
Risk management	Assessment of potential risks and development of mitigation strategies. This may include insuring against losses, setting aside additional funds for contingencies, and careful planning for risk management activities.

Source: compiled by the author

Factors influencing the success of film projects. The success of film projects depends on many factors that are interrelated and influence the final outcome. One of the key factors is the quality of the content. Films with an interesting plot, engaging characters, and high-quality performance often attract audiences and achieve success outside the national market. Marketing strategy plays a major role. Effective advertising and promotion help draw attention to a film and create interest in watching it. However, successful marketing requires not only a financial investment, but also an understanding of the cultural characteristics and preferences of audiences in different countries. The cast also makes a significant difference. The involvement of famous actors can attract more viewers and increase the chances of successfully reaching the international market. However, regional audience preferences and expectations can also influence the perception of a film. Often the success of a film project is determined by the time of release. Starting a film in a particular season or coinciding with other film premieres can have a substantial positive or negative impact on its success.

Critical reviews and audience reactions can greatly affect the success of a film project. Positive reviews and high ratings help increase interest in a film and its long-term success, while negative reviews can have a negative impact on its reception. Criticism is often the first source of evaluation of a film for potential viewers. Critics' reviews can influence the decision to go to the cinema or watch a film on streaming platforms. Positive reviews can draw attention to a film and convince viewers of its value, while negative reviews can put audiences off. Public opinion has a substantial impact on the perception of a film. Social media, online forums, and real-life discussions become a platform for sharing opinions about the film project. Audience impressions expressed in comments and reviews can influence other people's decision on whether to watch a film. Furthermore, public opinion can be shaped by a variety of cultural, social, and political factors. Films that touch on current topics or generate discussion in society often attract more attention and elicit more vivid reactions. Proceeding from the findings of this study, film studios and marketers can consider the following practical recommendations:

1. Adaptation of cultural and social trends: changes in cultural preferences and values in society should be closely monitored to create content that resonates with audiences, including the presentation of diverse cultural and social perspectives, and the active inclusion of representatives of different groups in the film-making process.

2. Use of digital technologies in marketing: film studios can use modern digital technologies to improve marketing

campaigns, which includes the use of social media, video advertising, interactive advertising platforms, and other innovative methods of attracting viewers' attention.

3. Analysis of feedback from viewers: it is essential to actively collect feedback from viewers through various channels, including social media, surveys, focus groups. This will offer a better insight into the audience's preferences and expectations, as well as help to adjust the promotion and content creation strategies.

4. Strengthening ties with critics and public opinion: it is vital to pay attention to critics' reviews and public opinion about films. Quality perception by critics and positive feedback from audiences can substantially influence a film's success, a therefore it is essential to strengthen ties with reviewers and actively work to build positive public opinion of film projects.

5. Efficient use of resources: film studios should strive to optimise production processes and budget management, which includes finding efficient ways to use resources, reducing production costs, and maximising cost effectiveness.

6. Attention to the international market: considering the global nature of cinema, film studios must pay special attention to the international market, adapt content for different cultures and languages, and use marketing strategies that are tailored to different regions and audiences.

In-depth audience analysis is paramount to improving marketing campaigns and adapting them to changing trends and audience expectations. Based on data on audience behaviour and preferences, film studios can conduct detailed target audience analysis, which will provide a better understanding of what attracts audiences to films and what aspects may be more appealing to them in the future. Regular exchanges with audiences allow film studios to get feedback and also build long-term relationships with the public. Furthermore, film studios can use innovative approaches to marketing. In modern world, change happens rapidly, and therefore film studios must constantly seek new, innovative methods of attracting the audience's attention, use new media platforms, create interactive content, take part in various events and festivals, and experiment with advertising formats. Each project should have its own identity and target audience. Film studios can develop bespoke marketing strategies that are tailored to the specifics and needs of each film. Effective marketing management requires constant monitoring of changes in the industry and active use of innovative approaches to attract the attention of the audience.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined key aspects of the economic success of film production, including budget optimisation, efficient use of resources and analysis of marketing strategies. The findings of the study helped to identify the significance of focus groups in shaping the audience's perception of a film, and to offer practical recommendations for film studios and marketers to optimise budgets and improve marketing campaigns.

The study confirmed the significance of understanding audience preferences and expectations for success in the film industry. Having examined sociological and marketing aspects, it was found that attention to audience preferences is a key factor in shaping successful film production and marketing strategies. The findings of this study were compared with those obtained by R. Stafford (2019), who covered the role and influence of the audience in shaping the film product. The considered study confirmed the idea that understanding the needs of the audience is a prerequisite for successful film production and distribution. However, since the present study focused mainly on analysing sociological and marketing aspects, a more in-depth analysis of other factors such as technological changes, political aspects, or global economic trends could have complemented the findings and added value to them.

The factors that influence the success of film projects encompass not only the quality aspects of the film but also its publicity campaign. In this context, S. Gundle (2020) covered the significance of marketing strategy for the successful promotion of film products in a historical perspective. The researcher revealed the importance of adapting marketing techniques to the needs of the audience, considering product placement and consumer culture, which corresponds to the approach presented in this study, aimed at covering the role of focus groups and their impact on the competitiveness of film products. The described influence of marketing strategies on the long-term market success of a film in the context of this study provides a broader understanding of the relationship between audience opinions, marketing strategies and the economic success of film production.

The study of aspects such as understanding audiences and their involvement in the film process has shown that the effective use of resources and optimising a film's budget often depend on the success of a film project among audiences. A. Blagrove (2021) explored the topic of audience interaction with specialised film projects. Turning to the issues of audience engagement and its influence on film choices, the researcher has found a range of aspects of audience interaction with cinema, including audience preferences, expectations, and needs. Comparing these results with the findings of the conducted study, there is a similarity of position regarding the significance of understanding audiences and their engagement to effectively develop marketing strategies and optimise film budgets.

One of the objectives of the conducted study was to analyse the effective use of resources and optimise the budget of film projects, which made it possible to develop a range of practical recommendations, including cultural, social, technological, professional, economic, and marketing aspects. R. Behrens *et al.* (2021) expanded the definition of efficient use of resources and budget optimisation for film projects and explored the use of analytics to create compelling and profitable film content. The researchers of the reviewed study addressed the use of analytical tools to analyse data on audience preferences, trends in film production, and predict the success of films, proposing a big

data approach to develop content that is not only attractive to audiences but also profitable for film companies. Thus, the technological aspect should be considered not only as the need to use already existing new technologies (e.g., advertising cabinets in social networks) to promote films, but also as an opportunity to implement innovative projects. Creating unique algorithms for audience analysis, forecasting, and revenue optimisation is a promising area of work to provide informed decisions in film production.

C. Benson-Allott (2021) covered the issues related to material aspects of the viewer's cinematic experience such as film posters, souvenirs, costumes, and props and their impact on perception and engagement with the film. The reviewed study identified how these elements shape audiences' perceptions of film and its cultural significance, and how they can influence film companies' marketing and promotional decisions, providing a better understanding of the role of material culture in shaping audiences' cinematic experience. In the context of the conducted study, these observations represent a vital factor as the material aspects of the cinematic experience can substantially affect the perception and evaluation of film productions, and the marketing strategies covered in the study in relation to focus group involvement and audience reactions to previews and feedback provided a better understanding of the significance of focus group involvement in film production marketing strategies and their impact on the ultimate success of a film.

In the context of the conducted study, it is vital to consider the different business models in film production and their interrelationship. I. Vitkauskaitė (2020) analysed various business models in film production, including conventional studio models, independent productions, crowdfunding, and distribution platforms, covering the interrelationships between these models and their impact on the competitiveness and success of films. The findings of the reviewed study revealed that conventional studio models continue to dominate, but independent productions and crowdfunding are becoming increasingly important to contemporary culture and specific audiences. The present study also focused on film audiences and their response to various marketing strategies, including involvement of focus groups. Audience engagement in previews and audience feedback has been found to help better tailor marketing strategies and create content that better meets viewers' needs. For instance, the findings of the present study showed that one part of the audience prefers horror films because of their atmosphere of suspense and adrenaline, while another part prefers comedies because of their ability to evoke laughter and positive emotions. Thus, analysing audience preferences allows filmmakers to more effectively allocate resources to produce films that will be most appealing and in demand among the target audience. This is a major addition to the research on business models in film production, as it provides a better understanding of what types of films are likely to be most successful in different segments of the film market.

D. Liu & P. Courty (2022) highlighted the economic aspects of film exhibition, including patterns of revenue growth. Having analysed the factors that contribute to increasing film exhibition revenues, researchers have identified key strategies and approaches to managing film business enterprises to maximise profits and ensure their competitiveness in the market. The economic aspects and factors affecting the profitability of the film business uncovered in the study confirmed the significance of using effective economic and resource management strategies to ensure successful entry of films into the market. The proposed practical recommendations for budget and resource optimisation included various aspects of film budgeting and aimed at efficient use of resources, and their comparison with the findings of the researcher showed similarities in the use of modern technology, flexible strategies, and risk management.

All the studies reviewed above confirmed the significance of sociological and marketing aspects in film production and their impact on the economic success of films, indicating a trend towards in-depth audience analysis, effective use of resources and marketing strategies to ensure competitiveness in the film industry market. Thus, a combined understanding of these aspects opens prospects for the development of new approaches and strategies in film production that can lead to more successful films and meet the demands of modern audiences.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted study examined various sociological and marketing aspects of efficient use of resources and budget optimisation in the film industry, providing a better understanding of the dynamics and impact of various factors on film production and marketing. It was found that socio-cultural and technological changes play a key role in contemporary cinema. The diversity of stories, images, and genres reflects the dynamic nature of culture and audience preferences, while the introduction of digital technologies into production and marketing processes substantially expands the possibilities of cinema and contributes to its development. In addition, the study found that focus groups have a considerable impact on pre-testing of films. They offer film companies the opportunity to gain valuable feedback and reactions from members of the target audience at the development and production stages of a film, allowing them to identify potential problems or weaknesses in plot, characters, editing, and other aspects of the film, as well as determine what audiences like or dislike. The study considered examples where focus group opinions indicated the prospect of failure of films such as The Shawshank Redemption and Blade Runner at the box office, which, however, did not hinder the continued success and cult status of the films in question. The study concluded that such reviews can be a valuable tool to improve the quality and success of a film in the market, as they allow it to be tailored to the expectations and preferences of the target audience. However, focus group responses can be subjective and may not always reflect the views of the general audience.

The aspects of social media use explored in this study have demonstrated that it is an integral part of contemporary marketing strategies in film production and provides a unique opportunity to engage with audiences directly and in real time. It was found that one of the key benefits of using social media is its global reach: millions of users from around the world are active on social media every day, meaning that films can quickly become the subject of discussion and disseminated in the online environment. Moreover, social media allows film studios and directors to actively engage with audiences, receive feedback, and respond to their needs and expectations. This two-way flow of communication helps to form stronger bonds with viewers and reinforce their interest in the project. Notably, social media plays a key role in creating the image of a film: reviews, testimonials, trailers, photos from the set, and other content that is shared through social networks form the first impression of the film in potential viewers, and positive public opinion in social media can be a powerful tool to attract attention to the film and its successful launch in the market. A benchmark example of the effective use of

marketing strategies, the film Barbie, was presented, showing that the effective use of these platforms helps film studios not only to attract attention to their projects, but also to establish more profound and longer-term connections with audiences, which substantially contributes to their commercial success.

The limitations of the present study were related to the lack of free access to the results of film previews by focus groups, which did not allow for full coverage of the impact of this factor on the commercial success of films. Further research is recommended to focus on the impact of technology on content marketing and distribution, enabling the film industry to effectively adapt to changing trends and audience expectations, as well as improve production and marketing techniques to succeed in modern entertainment industry.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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Вплив думок фокус-груп на ринкову конкурентоспроможність та економічний успіх у кіновиробництві: аналіз соціологічних та маркетингових аспектів у контексті ефективного використання ресурсів та оптимізації бюджету

Анотація. Метою цього дослідження було вивчення соціологічних та маркетингових аспектів для визначення ефективних стратегій використання ресурсів та оптимізації бюджету в контексті кіноіндустрії. Для цього було детально проаналізовано різні фактори успіху кінопродукту, що дозволило сформулювати практичні рекомендації щодо оптимізації бюджету та ресурсів. Дослідження охопило вплив соціокультурних чинників на глядацькі вподобання, що допомогло пояснити популярність фільмів певних жанрів після подій, які відбувалися в реальному світі. Дослідження визначило значення особистого досвіду, вподобань та культурного контексту для сприйняття фільмів аудиторією, що дозволило зробити висновок про необхідність підбору учасників фокус-груп відповідно до характеристик цільової аудиторії фільму для отримання максимального прибутку від кінопрокату. Розглянуті в цьому дослідженні фільми «Втеча з Шоушенка», «Той, що біжить по лезу» та «Інопланетянин» показали, що загалом думки фокус-груп достовірно вказують на перспективу успішного чи неуспішного кінопрокату, що, однак, не свідчить про якість фільму. Також було проаналізовано рекламну кампанію фільму «Барбі», висвітлено її основні аспекти (соціальні мережі, рожевий колір, привернення уваги громадськості), які привели фільм до касового успіху. Розроблено рекомендації щодо етичного просування кінопродукції, зокрема щодо широкого використання соціальних мереж для комунікації з аудиторією, ефективного використання ресурсів, роботи з фокус-групами. Результати дослідження свідчать про важливу роль фокус-груп у формуванні конкурентоспроможності фільмів на ринку, а також про необхідність враховувати їх при розробці маркетингових стратегій та оптимізації бюджетів кіновиробництва

Ключові слова: рекламні кампанії; аудиторія; стратегії просування; допрем'єрний показ; культурні тренди; соціальні медіа