Q2 Applied Project Submission Form

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Dance the masque, service the composer: An analysis of the post COVID-19 consumer behaviour in the Irish film industry.

Rodrigo dos Reis Souza

Supervisor: Mark Banchansky

Applied Project

Independent College

Date: 07/06/2026

"If you want to dance the masque you must service the composer. You gotta sublimate yourself, your ego, and, yes, your identity. You must, in fact, stand in front of the public and God and obliterate yourself"

-Lydia Tár

Abstract

This dissertation examines the post-COVID-19 consumer behaviour of Irish cinema-goers, addressing a gap in the existing literature where Ireland-specific empirical evidence on this subject is entirely absent. The research question guiding the study is: how has the consumer behaviour of Irish cinema-goers changed post COVID-19 pandemic? The investigation is structured around four thematic areas: the behaviour of cinema-goers pre-pandemic; hybrid consumption methods and the media substitution theory; the role of social media influencers in the film selection process; and the adoption of self-service technologies and loyalty programmes in cinema venues.

A quantitative research design was adopted, grounded in a positivist philosophy and a deductive approach. Primary data was collected through an online survey of 83 respondents, distributed across social media platforms and in person at cinema venues in Dublin. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS and interpreted through four theoretical frameworks: consumer behaviour theory, the media substitution theory, the parasocial relationship and electronic word-of-mouth frameworks, and the technology acceptance model.

The findings reveal that the theatrical experience has not been displaced by streaming. A hybrid consumption model has emerged in which cinema attendance and streaming platform use coexist within the same consumer's routine. Word of mouth and social media — particularly Instagram and TikTok — now dominate film discovery among younger Irish audiences, with traditional trailer formats cited by only 2.4% of respondents as a primary discovery mechanism. Trust in influencers is driven primarily by past taste alignment rather than follower count or expertise. In the area of self-service technologies, 80.7% of respondents purchase tickets online, yet 78.3% are not enrolled in any loyalty programme, with the highest uptake belonging to independent venues rather than commercial chains. Five practical recommendations are derived from the evidence, directed at cinema operators, film marketers and industry bodies,

addressing digital user experience, loyalty programme design, influencer marketing strategy, value-led communications and post-screening community building.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, cinema, Ireland, COVID-19, streaming, media substitution, social media influencers, self-service technology, loyalty programmes, word-of-mouth

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And to Ireland, to Dublin and the Irish people. Go raibh maith agat.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

This project is constituted entirely of human writing and human creation. Although the college provided tools to assist in the process, I made the decision to create this project without the assistance of generative text. As for the tools, I used My Bib to generate the reference of online articles and Claude to order them in alphabetical format (and check for inconsistencies). Lastly, for being short of time, I used the Bill Bot to reduce the words of my dissertation, from 14,000 to 10,809.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

The global film industry has become one of the most resilient and culturally significant sectors of the creative economy. In Ireland, cinema represents more than entertainment, contributing to cultural identity, community engagement, tourism, employment and economic activity. Production, distribution, exhibition and supporting digital infrastructure all play important roles within the sector. Against this backdrop, this research focuses on the customer experience and the decision-making journey surrounding film consumption, including what consumers watch, where they watch it and how they engage with cinema.

The emergence of over-the-top (OTT) streaming platforms such as Disney+, Netflix and Amazon Prime has transformed the relationship between audiences and screen-based entertainment (Induparvathy and Thomas, 2023). While cinemas initially remained resilient, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated changes in viewing habits. With theatres closed throughout much of 2020 and 2021, audiences increasingly relied on streaming platforms for content consumption. The Film Distributors' Association (FDA) (2021) reported substantial declines in UK and Ireland cinema admissions during this period. Although audiences have returned to cinemas, attendance levels remain below those recorded before the pandemic.

This study examines behavioural changes among Irish cinema-goers in the post-COVID-19 environment. It is grounded in consumer behaviour theory, which describes the processes through which individuals select, purchase and use products and services to satisfy their needs and wants (Vyas, 2025). Within the cinema context, this includes decisions relating to film choice, venue selection, attendance frequency, concession spending and the use of technologies that support the

customer journey. The study also considers streaming consumption, hybrid viewing practices, self-service technologies (SSTs) and social media influence. While the research focuses on Ireland, relevant international literature and UK industry data are incorporated where appropriate.

The rationale for the study is both practical and theoretical. Irish cinema operators, marketers and industry stakeholders require reliable evidence to inform post-pandemic strategies and consumer engagement initiatives. Existing research on cinema consumption has largely focused on markets such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Taiwan and Hungary, creating a gap in Irish-focused literature (DeFelice, Porter and Kim, 2024; Judit Szűcs and Tibor Guzsvinecz, 2024). From a theoretical perspective, the intersection of media substitution theory, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and influencer-related consumer behaviour remains underexplored in the Irish cinema context. By generating primary data from Irish cinema-goers, this research aims to contribute to both academic understanding and industry practice.

1.2 Research Question

The research question for this study is:

- How has the consumer behaviour of Irish cinema-goers changed post COVID-19 pandemic?

This question focuses on the impact of COVID-19 and the rise of streaming platforms on cinema-going behaviour, including changes in decision-making processes, film selection and venue choice within the Irish context.

1.3. Research Objectives

The following objectives were established to guide the investigation:

- To examine the attendance frequency of Irish cinema-goers post COVID-19 pandemic.
- To analyse how consumers are utilising streaming platforms in order to watch films and the impact on cinema frequency
- To analyse the extent to which self-service technology and loyalty programs impact behaviour of Irish cinema-goers.
- To identify the film genre preferences, the venues preferred and the spending patterns of Irish cinema-goers.
- To analyse the level of influence that social media influencers have on Irish consumers when choosing a film.

1.4 Research Themes

Four overlapping theme's structure both the literature review and primary data analysis. The first examines cinema-goer behaviour, focusing on pre-COVID literature to establish a baseline for assessing post-pandemic changes. The second explores hybrid consumption and media substitution theory, assessing whether OTT platforms displace or complement cinema attendance. The third considers the role of social media influencers in the consumer decision-making process, including their influence on film selection and perceived credibility in an algorithm-driven environment. The fourth examines the adoption of self-service technologies and loyalty programmes in cinemas, focusing on Irish consumer engagement with digital tools.

1.5 Relevance and Importance of the Research

This research is significant for Irish cinema operators and exhibition chains such as Omniplex, Vue, Cineworld, and Lighthouse, as it provides insight into factors influencing attendance, loyalty, and in-venue spending. It can inform decisions on premium formats, concessions, and loyalty programme development. For marketers and distributors, it highlights the relative effectiveness of social media influencers compared to traditional marketing, alongside the role of word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth in driving ticket sales.

For academics and students in marketing and media studies, the study addresses a gap in Ireland-specific literature and applies frameworks such as media substitution theory and the technology acceptance model in an Irish context. For bodies such as Screen Ireland, it offers evidence that may support strategies aimed at increasing cinema attendance, including emerging interest in "Irishness" in film and tourism-related outcomes.

The expected outcome is a categorisation of Irish cinema-goer behaviour, building on the work of Finola Kerrigan, and an assessment of whether streaming substitutes or complements theatrical viewing, alongside practical recommendations for cinema operators and marketers in a post-pandemic environment.

1.6. Thesis Outline

This dissertation is structured across six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research topic, outlines the research question and objectives, and situates the broader context. Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the literature, organised around the four research themes outlined above. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, including philosophical stance, research methods, data collection instruments, and analytical procedures. Chapter 4 presents the primary data findings. Chapter 5

discusses these findings in relation to existing literature, highlighting key insights and implications. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation with a summary, practical recommendations, study limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

This chapter critically examines existing literature relevant to the research problem introduced in Chapter 1. Its purpose is to analyse, compare and synthesise knowledge from multiple sources to identify what is known, what remains contested, and the gap this study addresses. The review is structured around four themes aligned with the research objectives: cinema-goer behaviour pre-COVID-19, hybrid consumption and media substitution theory, the role of influencers in the consumer decision-making process, and the use of self-service technologies and loyalty programmes in the service industry. These themes collectively address the research question: How has the consumer behaviour of Irish cinema-goers changed post COVID-19?

A literature review is essential for situating the study within the wider academic debate and avoiding duplication of existing research. It also ensures the theoretical framework guiding the primary data is grounded in established academic concepts. Finally, it clarifies the research gap addressed in this study, namely the lack of Ireland-specific empirical categorisation of cinema-goer behaviour. The chapter concludes by synthesising the themes and restating the research gap that the primary data seeks to address.

2.2 Conceptual Foundations and Key Definitions

The central concept in this research is consumer behaviour, defined by Solomon (2004) as the study of how individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products and services to satisfy needs and desires. In this study, it refers specifically to the decision-making journey of Irish cinema-goers,

from awareness of a film through to choices regarding platform, venue, timing, and associated expenditure.

A second key concept is media substitution, described by Lin (2004) as the process through which the adoption of new media reduces time and resources allocated to existing media. This theory is relevant for understanding the relationship between streaming platforms and traditional cinemas, not as simple replacement but as a complex process of media preference and contextual choice. Over-the-top (OTT) platforms are identified as the main technological disruptor of traditional cinema consumption.

Self-service technology (SST) is the third concept, included due to its influence on consumer decision-making in service environments during and after COVID-19. Liu and Koh (2025) define SSTs as technological interfaces that allow consumers to complete transactions without direct employee assistance. This includes kiosks, online booking systems, and automated ordering, often described as digital shadow work due to the unpaid labour performed by consumers.

Finally, social media influencers are considered due to their growing role in shaping film recommendations and their perceived credibility relative to traditional advertising.

This section clarifies the key concepts and theoretical foundations guiding the study and ensures consistent interpretation of terms throughout the dissertation.

2.3: Thematic Review of the Literature

2.3.1: Evangelion: 1.0 You Are (Not) Alone - Consumer behaviour in cinema and post-covid changes that affect film consumption.

Kotler and Keller define consumer behaviour as the study of factors determining how people consume to satisfy needs and wants. Psychological, social, economic, technological, personal, and cultural factors shape the link between consumers and purchase decisions (Vyas, 2025). In cinema, consumer behaviour examines willingness to consume a film and how it is consumed. Production elements, cast, quality, reputation, and entertainment value influence perceived value. Demographics, lifestyle, consumption frequency, genre and platform preferences, and psychographics also shape film choice (Kubrak, 2020; Shen and Hao, 2024; Palomba, 2020).

Cinema consumption is strongly influenced by psychological factors. Consumers tend to choose what feels right (Rubin, 2009). Cinema is also a socialised habit and a key social experience (Vijver, 2017; Kubrak, 2020). This social dimension is used in marketing through word-of-mouth (WOM), which relies on consumer experiences to promote products or services (Monika and Jose, 2017). Online reviews function as electronic WOM, while online communities guide discovery and discussion, enhancing engagement (Finola Kerrigan, 2017).

Lee et al. (2023) show that cinema environments within shopping centres encourage hedonic consumption such as dining and retail activity. This pattern extends to cinema concessions, where emotional engagement with films can increase indulgent consumption. “When shopping for grocery items after watching a movie… consumers may spend more on items containing a large amount of fat or sugar…” (Drewnowski et al., 1989; Oliveira et al., 2018). Concessions and merchandise are

therefore complementary to the cinema experience, reinforcing its hedonic value. However, the exact drivers of concession sales remain underexplored.

These factors influence individual film choice. Viewing frequency also shapes consumer behaviour. Kerrigan, drawing on UK Film Council research, highlights segmentation differences in audience targeting. Marketers can generate interest, but audience enjoyment ultimately determines word-of-mouth spread and success.

Infrequent attendee	Regular attendee (mainstream tastes)	Regular attendee (broad tastes)	Regular attendee (specialist taste)	Film snobs	Film industry professionals/ associated professionals

Figure 01. *Film Marketing.* (Finola Kerrigan, 2017, p. 110). Routledge.

Pre-pandemic cinema-going behaviour reflects both rational and affective decision-making. Solomon (2004) argues that cultural consumption decisions emerge from interactions between personal values, social influence, and product quality. In cinema, this creates a collective experience where attendance functions as social identity and ritual beyond the film itself (Vijver, 2017).

Existing literature draws mainly from European, Asian, and North American contexts pre-2020. While it provides a baseline, it does not capture cultural and contextual differences specific to Ireland. No extensive Irish-focused research exists, despite similarities with UK audiences. This limits precise understanding of behavioural change. This study addresses this gap by developing a contemporary analysis of Irish cinema consumer behaviour.

2.3.2: One battle after another: Hybrid consumption methods in cinema and the media substitution theory.

The rise in demand for streaming services (films, music, sports, news, etc.) reflects the accelerated culture of the 21st century and the growth of on-demand consumption (DeFelice, 2025). Before COVID-19, streaming and cinema coexisted without major disruption. However, during lockdowns, audiences increasingly turned to streaming platforms as a primary entertainment source (DeFelice, Porter and Kim, 2024).

This shift reduced cinema attendance, as viewers preferred flexible at-home or mobile viewing over theatrical releases (Altabbal and Korbi, 2025). Vinogradova (2025) argues that audiences are now combining rather than replacing viewing formats, adopting a hybrid model of cinema and streaming. Streaming has therefore reshaped distribution and access, offering on-demand viewing compared to fixed programming in theatres and television.

Streaming demand has grown significantly. Netflix, for example, increased from 203.66 million subscribers in 2020 to 301.6 million in 2025 (Andersson, 2025). This growth is driven by convenience, lower cost compared to cinema, and social discussion opportunities (Oyedele and Simpson, 2018). Tian (2024) highlights that streaming removes temporal and spatial constraints, allowing pause-and-resume viewing. This shift has also contributed to box office declines and increased direct-to-streaming film releases (Kumar et al., 2023).

In response, cinemas have enhanced the in-theatre experience. Research shows audiences are more willing to pay for premium formats such as VIP seating and 4DX, while IMAX and 3D are less effective as they can be partially replicated at home (Arteaga, Coronado and Flores, 2019).

The growth of OTT platforms has been analysed using media substitution theory (Kumar et al., 2023), which explains how new technologies displace or modify older ones (Lin, 2004). Examples include print to radio and radio to television (Takayuki Yamatsu and S. Austin Lee, 2023). However,

substitution is not complete, as new media can also complement older forms. Audiences choose media based on ranked preferences rather than full replacement (Kaye and Johnson, 2003).

This theory helps explain OTT–cinema relationships, where both coexist within consumer choices (Kaye and Johnson, 2003). While streaming reduces traditional consumption, it can also expand audiences who would not have attended cinemas (Danaher and Waldfogel, 2012). Choice depends on context, convenience, and perceived value (Tian, 2024; DeFelice, 2025).

In Ireland, the concentrated urban cinema landscape creates a distinct context for examining this relationship. Whether Irish audiences follow a hybrid consumption model remains unclear. There is limited research in this area, and this study seeks to address that gap.

2.3.3. Lost in translation: The role of influencers in the consumer decision journey.

Beyond the structural and technological alterations observed, the mix of inbound and outbound marketing affects decision-making. Customers seek information rather than waiting for it to be delivered by companies. Although both techniques bring different results, they are nonetheless complementary (Dakouan, Benabdelouahed and Anabir, 2019). The role of online recommendation is significant. From influencers to recommendation systems, the customer decision journey is highly impacted by external influence. “Consumers often perceive influencers as relatable and trustworthy figures, leading to an increased likelihood of being influenced by their recommendations. The perceived authenticity and credibility of influencers play a crucial role in determining their effectiveness as marketing tools.” (Mishra and Ashfaq, 2023).

Before the widespread adoption of the internet and social media, critics provided the dominant signal for consumers seeking information about new films (McKenzie, 2022). The film critic as an institution – anchored to newspapers, broadcast TV programmes, and the festival circuit – functioned as a filtering mechanism when audiences had limited access to peer opinion. With social media, this

format changed significantly. Qiao (2024) identifies this transition, arguing that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has moved through three research stages: initial, exploratory, and empirical, with recent scholarship focusing on quality, credibility, and volume of online opinion as predictors of box-office performance.

The concept of eWOM is central to this shift. It is defined as the online sharing of consumer opinions about products and services (Chu, 2021). eWOM has become a critical force in the marketing ecosystem. Volume and sentiment of online reviews significantly influence box-office outcomes, with positive eWOM increasing attendance and negative eWOM reducing it (Baek et al., 2021). In the social media context, boundaries between eWOM and influencer marketing are increasingly blurred. When a content creator posts a film recommendation, it can function as both personal opinion and public broadcast, occupying a space between traditional advertising and classic WOM (Sardar, 2025).

Influencer marketing reflects the scale of this shift. In 2024, over 24 billion dollars were spent globally in this sector (Pan et al., 2024). Clutch research found that 55% of Gen Z and 44% of Millennials trust influencers (Peck, 2025). For the film industry, this is significant due to the time-sensitive nature of cinema. Social media creators have the strongest influence on purchase intention in high-involvement experiential products, which aligns closely with cinema consumption (Sardar, 2025).

To analyse this relationship between eWOM and the customer decision journey, the parasocial relationship framework is applied. It describes the one-sided emotional bond audiences form with media personalities, extended to influencers. Regular content consumption creates familiarity, affinity, and trust, resembling real friendship (Liu, 2025; Abdinagoro and Bismo, 2024). Pan et al. (2024) show that strength of the follower–influencer relationship is a key predictor of purchase intention, with trust built through consistent exposure to perceived authentic content.

What remains underexplored is parasocial relationships in the Irish market, particularly among a predominantly young, urban demographic. Whether the trust hierarchy described in literature—where

past taste outweighs expertise and personality as a determinant of credibility—applies equally to Irish cinema-goers remains an open question.

2.3.4: “He's a robot. So, you don't have to ask him to do anything”: The use of self-service technologies (SSTs) in the service industry.

The introduction of e-commerce demanded drastic change in traditional methods used in physical stores. New technologies were developed to simulate the online environment, creating competitive advantage (Soeren Aguirre Reid et al., 2024; Chan and Petrikat, 2022). In the late 1990s, self-service technologies (SSTs) were introduced, but public reception was initially negative. Over time, acceptance improved and firms began adopting SSTs as a long-term investment (Yang J, Klassen KJ, 2008). Liu and Koh (2025) define SSTs as a form of contemporary labour, termed digital shadow work (DSW), where consumers perform tasks usually completed by employees—data entry, problem solving, and transactions—without compensation. During COVID-19, SSTs were adopted in near-full replacement in some services, affecting employment (Audrin and Etemad-Sajadi, 2026; Judit Szűcs and Tibor Guzsvinecz, 2024; Tsai et al., 2023). Thus, SST proficiency has become a fundamental consumer skill in the digital era (Liu and Koh, 2025; Shin and Dai, 2020).

These technologies provide benefits for both retailers and customers. For retailers, SSTs improve efficiency by serving more customers with fewer resources, reducing staffing and operational costs (Soeren Aguirre Reid et al., 2024). Consumers perceive SSTs as more reliable due to reduced human error, value the lack of employee interaction, and are more likely to use and recommend them (Duarte et al., 2022; Belanche, Casaló and Flavián, 2020). Adoption accelerated during the pandemic (Nam, Kim and Jung, 2023), where exclusive reliance on SSTs increased perceived competence and ease of use, improving attitudes towards the technology (Naz et al., 2021).

This relationship is explained through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which argues that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use determine adoption (Davis, 1989). Consumers with a positive orientation navigate SSTs more easily, increasing adoption likelihood (Blut and Wang, 2020). However, perceived risk, trust, and convenience suggest emotional security is also important in shaping behaviour (Gupta et al., 2025).

Acceptance varies depending on context. Concerns around data disclosure, security risks, and product uncertainty can reduce reliance on SSTs (Soeren Aguirre Reid et al., 2024; Pantano and Di Pietro, 2012). Psychological factors also matter; introverted individuals are more likely to use SSTs, while extroverts prefer human interaction (Kim and Park, 2022). “Self-service ticket machines, online booking systems, automated kiosks for food and drinks, and digital loyalty programs have revolutionised how cinemagoers interact with cinema services” (Judit Szűcs and Tibor Guzsvinecz, 2024).

SSTs also include loyalty programmes, which function through points, discounts, and exclusivity. Users typically show repeat-purchase behaviour and habit formation (Xanthakis, Magoon and Hong, 2025). In cinema, loyalty schemes offer rewards such as discounts, free tickets, priority access, and special screenings (Cineworld; Omniplex; Oden; Lighthouse Cinema; Irish Film Institute). However, they depend on customer initiative, which can create barriers due to complexity. While they offer financial value, reliance on SST-linked systems may hinder adoption. The DSW framework highlights increased consumer reliance on technology post-COVID due to forced adaptation (Liu and Koh, 2025).

In cinemas, SSTs provide financial and experiential benefits. Customers seek comfort, efficiency, information, and enjoyment. “The platform of self-service kiosks supports fast, easy ordering with fewer wait times and higher satisfaction” (Atirah Sufian, Yong and Zamri, 2025).

Research shows mixed adoption patterns. Judit and Tibor (2024) report up to 80% preference for machine-based purchasing in Hungary, while Tsai, Chen and Zheng (2023) find stronger preference for staff-assisted purchasing in Taiwan. These studies highlight demographic influences such as age, gender, and location, suggesting cultural and social variation in SST adoption.

Existing literature is largely country-specific. While Hungary shows high acceptance and Taiwan lower adoption, no study has examined Irish consumers. Despite Ireland ranking 18th in the Global Innovation Index (Brand Nova, 2025), SST adoption remains under-researched. This study addresses this gap by examining Irish consumer acceptance of self-service technologies.

2.4 Synthesis of the Literature

Taken together, the four themes reveal a set of interconnected dynamics that have reshaped consumption in the post-pandemic era. The behaviour of cinema-goers was shaped by convergence of hedonic, social and psychological factors, but the pandemic functioned as a behaviour rupture, changing their media habits. This alternation accelerated the adoption of streaming as an alternative method of cinema consumption, explaining the decline of attendance in cinema venues.

The link between streaming and influencers is glued through the growth of internet. As audiences entered digital environments, online recommendation – specially of films- expanded beyond the role of the critics. Social media influencers now operate within the same digital ecosystem as streaming platforms, creating a feedback loop in which discovery, recommendation and instant consumption happens in the matter of seconds.

The SST usage connects through the same necessity of technological fluency that allows consumers to navigate streaming interfaces. Cinema operators rely on the client to comprehend how to use the platform and booking the ticket by itself. The pandemic distancing accelerated the adoption of this

technology across many industries. However, the evidence from researchers is that cultural factors mediate this acceptance.

2.5 Identification of the Research Gap

The literature reviewed in this chapter demonstrated that, while these themes has been researched across borders and in a variety of industries, an Irish-specific empirical research on post-pandemic behaviour of cinema-goers is notably absent from the literature. This constitutes a contextual and timely gap.

Moreover, the intersection of all four themes are not intercalated in most of the existing literature. Usually, one or two themes overlap, but studying each capacity in its isolation can be limiting. This present research address this gap by collecting primary data directly from Irish cinema-goers and analysing it across four thematic areas simultaneously. By doing so, the evidence is not only academically original, but it is practical and relevant for operators, marketers and cinema operators responsible for shaping the Irish film industry,

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter critically reviewed the literature relevant to the four research themes chosen for this dissertation. The pre-pandemic behaviour of cinema-goers was shown to be shaped by a convergence of hedonic, social and psychological factor, with WOM functioning as a powerful driver of film selection. The media substitution theory was applied to the streaming growth phenomenon, demonstrating that the OTT platforms have not replaced the cinema experience, but rather complemented it by generating a hybrid consumption method. The growing influence of social media creators in the film decision journey was established as a significant structural shift, analysed through

the parasocial relationship framework. The literature on SSTs illuminated both the potential and the limitations of these interfaces in the service industry, with evidence pointing to substantial cultural variation in consumer acceptance. A clear research gap was found due to the absence of an Ireland-specific research. Chapter 03 will detail the methodology employed in the process of data collection – the design, the methodology, the approach and the ethics.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

According to Kothari (2004), research is the development of existing knowledge to establish truth through observation, experiment, study, and comparison. He also states that research methodology is essential for understanding problems systematically, highlighting the need for researchers to be fully knowledgeable about the methods and techniques used in research.

The research question examines post-COVID behaviour of Irish cinema-goers. The objective is to outline Irish consumer behaviour and the strategies used to promote films in Ireland. A quantitative approach was applied to identify patterns and trends in cinema attendance, streaming consumption, spending behaviour, use of self-service technologies, and responsiveness to social media influence. An online survey of 83 respondents explored how audiences consume cinema, where they watch films, how they select them, and the role of digital tools and content creators in decision-making.

This chapter discusses the research philosophy, approach, design, methodological strategy, data collection, sampling, data analysis methods, ethical considerations, reliability, and limitations.

3.2 Research Philosophy

This research adopts a positivist philosophy. Positivism assumes that reality can be measured objectively and that research should identify patterns and relationships through systematic data collection and analysis (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). This approach is suitable for survey-based research, as it enables the quantification of consumer attitudes and behaviours and supports generalisable conclusions about the population.

3.3 Research Approach

A deductive approach was used in this study. Deduction begins with established theoretical frameworks from existing literature and applies them to primary data (McLeod, 2024). This research is guided by four themes identified in Chapter 2: cinema consumer behaviour, media substitution theory, influencer marketing, and the Technology Acceptance Model. These frameworks structure the analysis of survey data.

The survey was designed to test patterns identified in international literature within an Irish context. This ensures the analysis is grounded in established theory while remaining context-specific.

3.4 Research Design and Methodological Strategy

A quantitative research design was used, based on a structured survey. Quantitative research involves numerical data collection and statistical analysis to identify patterns and trends in a defined sample (Creswell et al., 2006). This design is appropriate given the nature of the research question.

A survey approach allows comparison with international studies on cinema behaviour that use similar instruments. Applying these methods to an Irish sample ensures the findings are both contextually original and methodologically comparable.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using an online survey (Appendix A). The survey contained 23 questions using multiple-choice, Likert scale and ranking formats across five themes. One theme was later removed, making three questions redundant. The remaining themes focused on cinema consumption and spending patterns, hybrid consumption of cinema and streaming, influencer influence, and self-service technologies and loyalty programmes.

The survey was distributed via Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and in-person QR codes in Dublin cinemas. This multi-channel approach aimed to reach a diverse demographic sample. The survey remained open for three weeks and collected 83 responses.

3.6 Sampling Strategy

The target population includes Irish consumers who attend cinemas, use streaming platforms, or both. A convenience sampling method was used, with participants self-selecting through online distribution. This approach is widely used in consumer behaviour research (Creswell et al., 2006).

The final sample of 83 respondents was predominantly younger, female-identifying, and Dublin-based, reflecting the platforms used for distribution. This demographic concentration is acknowledged as a limitation and is addressed in Section 3.10.

3.7 Data Analysis Methods

The quantitative data collected through the survey was analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and percentage breakdowns for each item. SPSS was used to process the data and generate tables (Appendix B). Descriptive statistics were appropriate as the research focuses on identifying and describing patterns in consumer behaviour and attitudes within the sample.

Findings were organised according to the four themes outlined in Chapter 2, enabling a structured progression from data analysis to thematic discussion in Chapter 5.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations relate to anonymous survey participants. The survey included an introductory statement outlining the purpose of the research and confirming voluntary participation. No personally identifiable data was collected. Ethical approval was granted by the school and supervisor (Appendix C).

3.9 Reliability and Validity / Trustworthiness

Reliability refers to the consistency of the research instrument. It was supported through clear question wording and standardised response options across all survey items. SPSS was used for analysis, reducing the risk of error in data handling.

Validity refers to whether the instrument measures what it intends to measure. It was ensured by aligning all survey questions with the four theoretical themes identified in the literature review. The study is designed to produce descriptive, Ireland-specific insights, and is considered valid for this purpose.

3.10 Limitations of the Methodology

This methodology has several limitations. The exclusive use of a quantitative approach provides descriptive insights but lacks the depth that qualitative or mixed methods could offer. While the data shows what respondents do, it does not explain why and does not capture deeper motivations or industry perspectives.

A further limitation is the sampling strategy, which combined social media distribution and QR codes in cinemas. This may limit generalisability, as it excludes individuals outside these channels, particularly older demographics.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodological approach used in this study. A positivist philosophy underpinned a quantitative survey design guided by a deductive approach and four theoretical frameworks from Chapter 2. The survey collected 83 responses through online platforms and in-person distribution in cinemas.

Data was analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS. Ethical considerations ensured anonymity and informed participation. Limitations of the methodology were acknowledged, and the next chapter will present the data analysis and findings generated from the survey.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the primary research. Data was collected over three weeks via an online survey examining the consumer journey towards deciding what film to watch, where, and how. Key influences include online content creators, self-service kiosks, and the growth of OTT platforms. Findings are presented in line with the research objectives from Chapter 1 using descriptive statistics. Tables were generated using SPSS.

4.1.1. Research question

This study examines changes in Irish cinema-goers' consumption patterns, with particular focus on post-COVID-19 behaviour shifts supported by literature and recent reports.

RQ:

• How has the consumer behaviour of Irish cinema-goers changed post COVID-19 pandemic?

4.1.2. Research objectives

The objectives focus on factors influencing cinema-goers' behaviour and consumer journey in Ireland:

• To examine cinema attendance frequency post COVID-19.

• To analyse use of streaming platforms and their impact on cinema attendance.

• To assess the influence of self-service technology and loyalty programmes.

• To identify genre preferences, venue choice, and spending patterns.

• To evaluate the influence of social media influencers on film selection.

4.2 Participant or Respondent Profile

The survey received 83 valid responses over three weeks. Most respondents were female (68.7%), followed by male (27.7%), with a small proportion identifying as other genders or preferring not to say.

The majority were aged 18–25 (50.6%) and 26–35 (36.1%), with 36–45 representing 8.4% and under 5% aged over 45.

Cinema attendance varied: 31.3% attended once every three months, 26.5% monthly, and 20.5% approximately every six months, with remaining respondents attending rarely.

Table for demographics:

Age group

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18 - 25 years old.	42	50.6
	26 - 35 years old.	30	36.1
	36 - 45 years old.	7	8.4
	56 - 65 years old.	3	3.6

	66 years old or above.	1	1.2
	Total	83	100.0

Gender

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Female	57	68.7
	Male	23	27.7
	Non-binary	1	1.2
	Prefer not to disclosure	1	1.2
	Trans man	1	1.2
	Total	83	100.0

Table for frequency of times attending a cinema theatre:

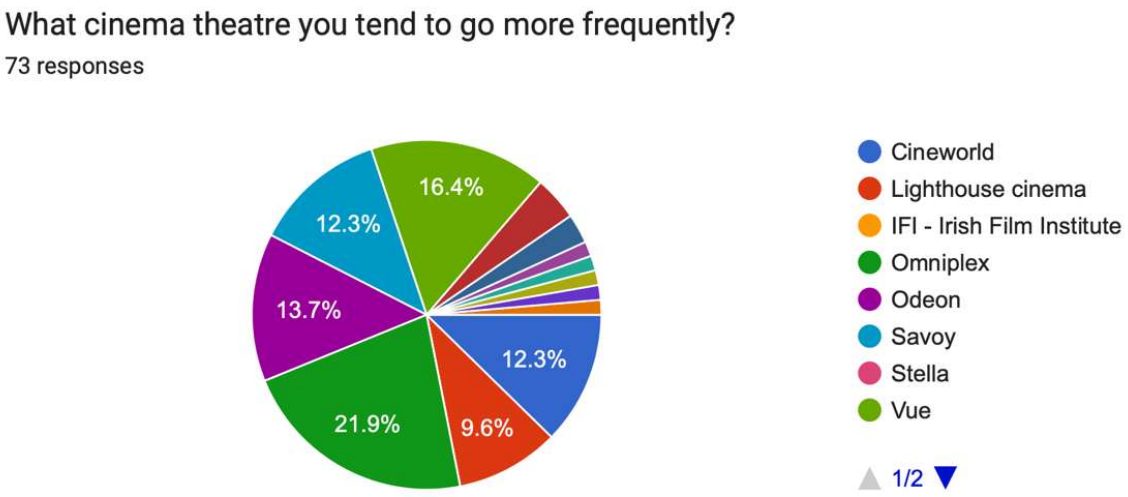
	Frequency	Percent

Valid	Do not frequent the cinema at all.	2	2.4
	Not so often (once every three months).	26	31.3
	Often (four to six times a month).	11	13.3
	Rarely (once every six months).	17	20.5
	Regularly (once a month).	22	26.5
	Very often (once or twice a week).	5	6.0
	Total	83	100.0

Most visited cinema-theatres in Ireland.

Answers varied from commercial cinema theatres and independent houses in Dublin, Ireland. The four more frequented locations are Omniplex (several locations) with 21.9%, Vue (Ashborn and Liffey Valley) with 16.4%, Odeon Cinemas (several locations in Ireland) with 13.7% and 12.3% for Savoy and Cineworld.

Graphic:



4.3 Findings Organised by Research Theme

4.3.1 Consumer behaviour and spending-patterns in cinema attendees.

This section will analyse factors that influence how consumers choose which movie to go and which movie they select.

Table:

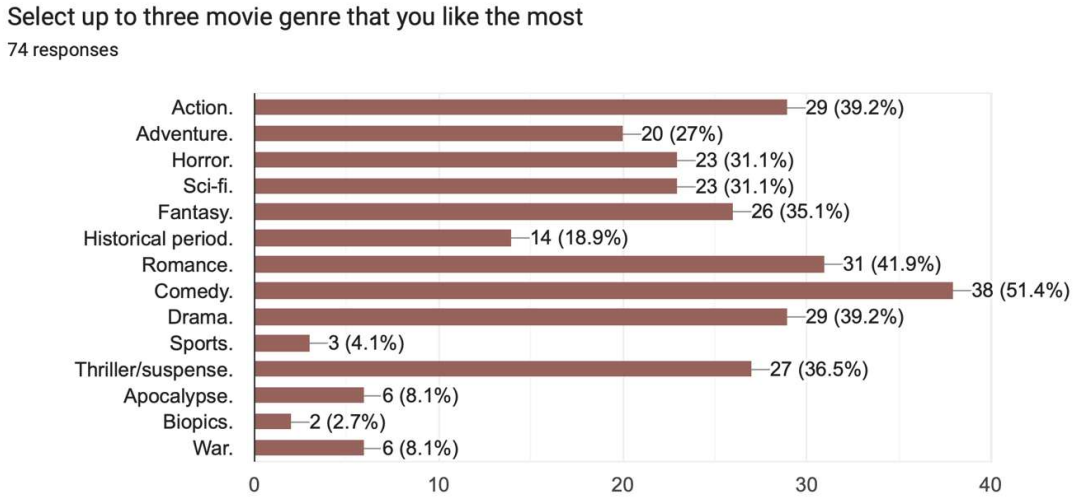
Which factors mostly drawn you to choose a film?

	Frequency	Percent

Valid	Adaptation: From books or video-games into movie.	5	6.0
	Advertising: The marketing strategies drawn me to it.	8	9.6
	Cast: Actors and actresses that star the movie.	12	14.5
	Crew: Who directed the movie.	6	7.2
	Critics: Why is the movie so highly praised - or so dismissed by critics.	2	2.4
	It's kind of a mix of the options above	1	1.2
	Script: The themes discussed in the film.	27	32.5
	The trailer	1	1.2
	Word of mouth: Curiosity to comprehend why is the movie trendy.	21	25.3
	Total	83	100.0

These findings support the current literature that word of mouth (25.3%) is one of the strongest forms of marketing still. However, the scrip and the themes discussed in the movie still remains as the most important factor when it comes to the decision process (32.5%).

The responses collected relating to preferred movie genre aligns with literature in other parts of the world. Comedy and romance are the preferred genre, although not the most profitable. As the majority of answers are from Gen Z, genres such as horror and Sci-fi are part of the selection, as the taste for these genres are growing for younger generations.



Concession items and merchandising purchase are part of the cinema experience and shape how people interact with cinema venues and the overall cinema experience.

Table for concession consumption patterns:

Do you consume any snacks/beverages/condiments when going to the cinema?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No, but I would if the prices dropped.	1	1.2
	No, I bring my own snacks to the cinema.	12	14.5
	Rarely, I tend to think they are too expensive.	7	8.4
	Yes, but not every time I go to the cinema.	15	18.1
	Yes, especially if they are themed related with the movie I am going to watch.	1	1.2
	Yes, I often purchase the options available (popcorn, fizzy drinks, hot dogs, nachos, etc.)	46	55.4
	Yes, especially if they are themed related with the movie I am going to watch.	1	1.2
	Total	83	100.0

Table for merchandise consumption patterns:

Do you buy merch (t-shirts, posters, tote bags, jumpers, collection items, etc.) from films you enjoyed?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No, but I might if it's from a film that I really enjoy.	29	34.9
	No, they are too expensive but would consider if prices dropped.	14	16.9
	No, with no intention to in the future.	29	34.9
	Yes, I have purchased in the past but not often.	3	3.6
	Yes, I have purchased in the past but not often.	6	7.2
	Yes, I often buy movie merch.	2	2.4

	Total	83	100.0

These findings suggest that consumers are willing to enhance their cinema experience by consuming complimentary items such as concession items -popcorn, fizzy drinks, hotdogs, etc.- and to acquire items related to films or IPs (intellectual property) that they feel connected to.

4.3.2 Hybrid consumption methods, the merge of cinema and streaming.

This section will analyse a crucial factor for cinema consumption patterns in recent years. The increase adoption of OTT platforms is often accused as one of the factors that reduced cinema attendance. The answer for this survey can sustain this argument.

Have your cinema habits changed after the COVID-19 pandemic?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No, my frequency remains averagely the same.	39	47.0
	Yes, I tend to go more to the cinema now.	23	27.7

	Yes, I watch more films at home now.	21	25.3
	Total	83	100.0

The answers for this section reveal three important data to understand the relationship between streaming platforms and cinema attendance and the hybrid consumption method. Although the majority of the answers establish that their cinema frequency remains the same (47%), 27.7% indicated that, post COVID-19, they attend cinema theatre with more frequency. Additionally, 25.3% of respondents indicated that they consume more films at home. These answers establish that, apart from those who attend cinema theatre the same average times, a balance happens amongst those who consume movies at home and those who prefer the ambience of a cinema screen.

If a new movie is launched in cinemas but it's announced that it will be released in streaming platforms in a month, do you:

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Go to the cinema because I prefer the ambience of a cinema theatre room.	27	32.5
	Go to the cinema primarily because I like to watch movies as fast as I can.	3	3.6

	I wait for the movie to be release in VOD (streaming) because its practical and I can watch when I have the time.	19	22.9
	I wait for the VOD released because I don't mind watching the movie as soon as possible.	3	3.6
	Intent to go watch it on the cinema house but would rather spend the money in something else.	9	10.8
	Plans to go watch the film on cinemas if it fits on your weekly/monthly budget.	22	26.5
	Total	83	100.0

The answers from this question complement and its consistent the findings with of the previous table. 32.5% of respondents indicate that, on the event of a new film being released, their preference is to attend the theatre first. 26.5% demonstrate their intention to attend a cinema screen, however it is important to notice that price – and budgeting – is a determining factor. In contrast, 22.9% of respondents affirm the preference for waiting the new movie to reach OTT platforms.

How often do you watch a movie on a streaming platform?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not so often (once every three months).	11	13.3
	Often (four to six times a month).	20	24.1
	Rarely (once every six months).	3	3.6
	Regularly (once a month).	20	24.1
	Very often (twice or more weekly).	29	34.9
	Total	83	100.0

This question analyses the level of frequency to which the respondents consume films on streaming platforms. The answers indicate a high level of consumption, with 34.9% consuming it very often (twice or more weekly), 24.1% consuming it often (four to six times a month) and regularly (once a month). Not so often and rarely encapsulate a minority of the answers – respectively 13.3% and 3.6%, indicating how incremented the streaming format is in people's routine.

Have your streaming habits changed after the COVID-19 pandemic?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No, I averagely watch the same number of films on streaming.	27	32.5
	Yes, I tend to wait a movie reach streaming platforms so I can watch it	10	12.0
	Yes, I tend to watch less movies on streaming nowadays.	13	15.7
	Yes, I tend to watch more movies at home now.	33	39.8
	Total	83	100.0

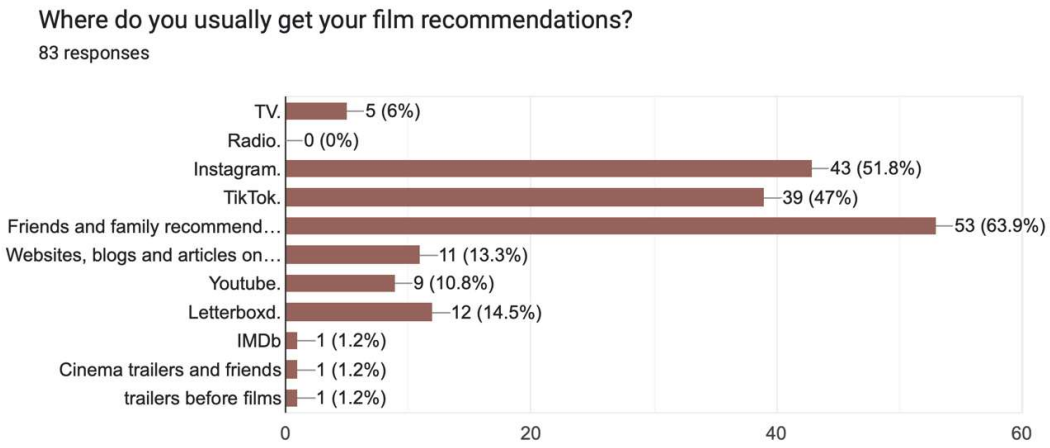
Continuing with the changes post-COVID, 39.8% of the survey responders indicates the shift after the pandemic, confirming that they tend to watch more movies at home. However, 32.5% informed that the frequency of watch did not have a significant change. This data suggest that although people are watching films at home with more regularity, the changes post pandemic did not affect all respondents.

Has the cost of living affected your cinema attendance frequency?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No, I maintained the same average attendance frequency.	36	43.4
	Yes, due to the price increase of other events in town, now I tend to go more often to the movies.	12	14.5
	Yes, I tend to go less often to the movies now.	35	42.2
	Total	83	100.0

The cost of living affected 42.2% of answerers, that tend to go less often to the movies due to cost increase in other areas. The rising of living costs leads 14.5% to frequent more the cinema instead of alternative events in town, which insinuate cinemas as a cheaper option to seek leisure and entertainment. However, the majority of answers (43.4%) was not impacted by the rising of the living costs, maintaining the same cinema frequency.

4.3.3 The role of influencers in the consumer decision journey and the reliance on the online environment.



The answers for this section demonstrate that 63.9% rely on family and friends' recommendation, format known as word-of-mouth (WOM) in Marketing. Considering social media, TikTok (47 %) and Instagram (51.8%) together indicates where most of the respondents get their movie indication. Trailers, usually screened before every film, had only 2.4% of answers. This factor can indicate that the traditional format in which these trailers are created -and transmitted- might be obsolete to this demographic.

In your opinion, are influencers more credible than traditional advertisements?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Maybe.	42	50.6	50.6	50.6
	No.	18	21.7	21.7	72.3
	Yes.	23	27.7	27.7	100.0

	Total	83	100.0	100.0	

Relying on influencers and content creators for film indications express a level of trust on them. When comparing their credibility with traditional advertisement, 50.6% pointed a possibility to trust more on influencers than companies. 27.7% stated that they trust more in influencers and 21.7% declared that traditional advertising is still the most reliable source of information.

When consuming influencer content, what makes you trust their recommendation to watch a film?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Engaging personality.	11	13.3
	Expertise in the field (film critics, film students, journalist, etc.).	14	16.9
	My positive past experience with their recommendation (our taste is rather similar).	30	36.1
	Their aesthetics (how they talk, how they write, if their content looks well thought and pretty).	15	18.1

	Their authenticity and credibility.	13	15.7
	Total	83	100.0

Out of the factors that determine why a person trust on one (or more) content creators with film recommendations, their past experience with them is the most important factor (with 36.1% of answers). Aesthetics (18.1%) and expertise (16.9%) also determine the level of trust and engagement of respondents, followed by authenticity and credibility (15.7%) and engaging personality (13.3%).

4.3.1 The use of self-service technologies (SSTs) and loyalty program in cinema-venues.

It is crucial to comprehend the independence of people when it comes to the use of SSTs. This section will identify the venues that has more adherence to their loyalty programs, where does customers purchase their film tickets and analyse why they choose SSTs or to order with a staff member.

Are you part of any loyalty program?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Cineworld.	4	4.8
	IFI - Irish Film Institute.	6	7.2

	Movies@.	1	1.2
	No, I am not part of any loyalty program.	65	78.3
	Lighthouse Cinema.	7	8.4
	Odeon.	4	4.8
	Omniplex.	4	4.8
	Vue	1	1.2
	Total	83	100.0

Although some of the loyalty programs are free to subscribe and offer discounts and other advantages, 78.3% of the respondents are not part of any. The loyalty programs that has more adherences belong independent venues, Lighthouse cinema with 8.4% and IFI with 7.2%.

Where do you usually purchase your tickets?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	At the self-attending kiosk.	6	7.2
	In location, with one of the staff.	10	12.0

	Online, in the cinema's website.	67	80.7
	Total	83	100.0

SSTs can be understood as any technology that assist the customer in its purchase journey. 80.7% of respondents obtain their film-tickets from the venue's website, demonstrating the reliability on this technology and the importance to invest on user experience (UX). 12% of respondents prefer to collect their tickets with a staff, in location. And the remaining 7.2% purchase their tickets at an SST.

If self-attending kiosk/online purchase is the preference, what is the main reason to why?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid		20	24.1
	- I prefer buying at the counter with a staff.	7	8.4
	I deem the self-attending kiosk faster.	6	7.2

	I deem the self-attending machine more reliable not to make mistakes - such as a staff booking me for the wrong film or time.	1	1.2
	I feel judged or pressured by the staff, so I choose the self-attending machine.	1	1.2
	I like the facility and comfort of purchasing the tickets myself (at my own pace).	47	56.6
	I prefer not to have contact with a staff for such an easy task.	1	1.2
	Total	83	100.0

This question analysed why the respondents would preferer to purchase their tickets at SSKs, instead of with one of the location's staff. 56.6% affirmed that they prefer the facility and comfort the ticket at their own pace, sustaining the argument that self-service technologies must have their UX smooth and accessible.

If purchasing with a staff is the preference, what's the main reason why?

		Frequency	Percent
Valid		44	53.0
	- I prefer buying at a self-attending machine.	25	30.1
	I am not always sure what movie to watch so I can ask for recommendations from one of the staff members.	1	1.2
	I don't trust the machine to deliver the ticket and causing me nuisance.	1	1.2
	I don't understand the self-attending machine's system and prefer an employee to do it for me.	1	1.2
	I like the human interaction aspect of buying my tickets with one of the staff.	11	13.3
	Total	83	100.0

As for the reasons why, those who prefer to purchase their items with a member of the staff, the majority (13.3%) answered that the human interaction is a key factor for their cinema-experience. Not understanding the machine and not trusting it appears in the research but are not the main driver to why people would purchase items with a person.

4.5 Summary of Key Findings

This primary research highlights several important aspects of the consumer journey in cinema attendees. Firstly, consumers tend to choose their movie based on the script -the themes discussed in the movie. However, WOM still remains as one of the most important drivers of clients to choose a certain movie. Second, the genres most watched are aligned with the international literature and reflect the taste and the preferences of Irish consumers. Moreover, through this research it is possible to analyse the patterns of consume movies through cinema venues and streaming platforms and compare them. To assist in this journey to pick a movie, the influence of content creators was analysed and what aspect of them makes people trust in their film recommendations. Lastly, the use of self-service technologies and the categorisation of loyalty programs helps to understand the level of influence of these technologies in a contemporary environment.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter interprets the findings from Chapter 3 in relation to the research question on post-COVID-19 consumer behaviour among Irish cinema-goers. The results are discussed against themes identified in the literature review, enabling comparison with existing research. The analysis is structured around four key themes: consumer behaviour and spending patterns; hybrid consumption and media substitution theory; the influence of social media influencers on decision-making; and the

role of self-service technologies and loyalty programmes in the film industry. The chapter concludes by integrating the findings, outlining their implications, and linking them to the research gap identified in Chapter 2.

5.2 Discussion of Findings by Research Objective or Theme

5.2.1 Consumer behaviour and spending patterns in cinema attendees

The findings indicate that the primary driver of film selection among the sample is the thematic content of the script (32.5%), followed by WOM (25.3%) and cast (14.5%). This result is consistent with the literature reviewed on chapter 02. Kerrigan (2017) identifies the capacity of marketing to generate a 'want to see' impulse, but notes that audience's enjoyment and other's recommendations ultimately determine the longevity of a commercial success. The prominence of WOM in the findings confirms this position and its further supported by Mckenzie (2022), a researcher focused on box-office performance identified reviews and recommendations as the dominant consumer signal for film selection.

The relatively low frequency of cinema attendance observed in the sample – with the largest group attending only once every three months – is noticeable. Pre-pandemic, the UK Film Council's segmentation analysis, Kerrigan (2017) identified habitual cinema-goers as a distinct and commercially significant group. The data collected here suggest that habitual attendance, defined as once a month or more, is not the dominant pattern for this sample, which is composed primarily of younger consumers who may display greater flexibility in their viewing choices across platforms.

As for concession consumption, the return was notably high with 55.4% of respondents purchasing available items regularly. This aligns with Lee et al.'s (2023) research on hedonic consumption in the cinema context, which argues that concession purchasing enhances the cinema experience. However,

the resistance to merchandise purchasing – with 69.8% indicating no current intention to buy- suggest that the hedonic extension beyond the immediate cinema experience is constrained, specially by price sensitivity. This connects with the broader cost-of-living findings, where 42.2% of respondents indicated that financial pressure restraint their cinema frequency.

5.2.2 Hybrid consumption methods: the merge of cinema and streaming

The data on hybrid consumption methods provides nuances in the Irish cinema-experience. While 47% of respondents report no change in their cinema frequency since the pandemic, 25.3% report watching more films at home and 27.7% report attending cinemas more frequently. This apparent contradiction is in fact consistent with the hybrid consumption model proposed by Vinogradova (2025), which suggests that audiences have not only migrated from one platform to another but rather they have integrated multiple viewing modalities into their routine. The data on streaming frequency reinforces this reading: 59% of respondents stream films either very often or often, yet a significant proportion of the same sample also expresses a clear preference for the cinema theatre ambience when a new film is released.

The findings that 32.5% of respondents would prioritise cinema over waiting for a VOD release (compare to 22/9% who would wait) is significant and suggests that some Irish cinema-goers, the theatrical experience is indispensable. This is consistent with Arteaga, Coronado and Flores (2019) research, which identifies the unique sensory and social dimensions of the theatrical experience as a basis for continued attendance. It also supports the broader argument of media substitution theory, where new media do not fully displace established media, but rather integrate a complementary position in a hierarchy of consumer needs.

The cost-of-living dimension adds an important layer to this analysis. Respondents indicated equally that financial pressure have and have not affected their cinema frequency, corroborating with literature suggesting that cost sensitivity is significant but not universal. The finding that 14.5% are now attending cinema more often as a consequence of rising costs is counterintuitive but can be used as a strategy to promote loyalty programmes in local cinema venues.

5.2.3 The role of influencers in the consumer decision journey

The influencer findings presents a picture consistent with the theoretical framework framed on chapter 02 while also surfacing nuances to the Irish context. The dominance of WOM (63.9%) and social media platforms (Instagram with 51.8% and TikTok with 47%) as the primary source of film recommendation confirms the shift from broadcast marketing to a network-based method that Mishra and Ashfaq (2023) and Sardar (2025) analysed. The very low figure of traditional trailers (2.4%) indicated that conventional trailer distribution strategy may be losing its resonance with Irish -and younger- audiences.

The credibility attributed to influencers (50.6% maybe and ‘yes’ 27.7%) reflects the nuanced relationship that consumers have developed with online recommendations and social media creators. However, this trust comes with accumulated personal experience with the creator (36.1% indicate as primary factor), aesthetic presentation (18.1%) and field expertise (16.9% - these possibly being interpreted as film critics). Both data are consistent with the parasocial relationship applied by Pan et al. (2024) and Liu (2025) in the cinema industry and can be extended to film-specific context. The implication for film marketers is significant. A generic, with more follower’s influencer might be less effective than a niche film critic or cinephile content creator with a smaller but more engaged audience.

5.2.4 The use of self-service technologies and loyalty programmes

There is an overwhelming preference for online ticket purchase in the group sampled (80.7%) rather than in person kiosk use (7.2%). This discover challenges assumptions about the direction of SST adoption in cinema. While Judit Szűcs and Tibor Guzsvinecz (2024) report high physical kiosk preferences in Hungary, the suggestion is that in Ireland, there is a strong migration towards digital-online purchase, rather than in-venue automated kiosk or with a member of the staff. This may reflect pre-planning among Irish consumers, consistent with the comfort and control motivations cited by 56.6% of the respondents. This finding indicate that the TAM framework -perceived ease of use and usefulness- works in online booking for the respondents.

The loyalty programme data informs that 78.3% of respondents are not enrolled in any loyalty programme, despite the fact that many major chains offer free enrolment. Paradoxically, the highest adoption belongs to independent venues, the Lighthouse cinema (8.4%) and the IFI (7.2%), rather than commercial chains. This inverse relationship between attendance share and loyalty programme suggest that loyalty is driven by other factors, rather than transactional incentives – such as cultural affinity, community identify, etc. It also reflects the limitations identified in the DSW framework (Liu and Koh, 2025). That loyalty programmes rely on consumers to independently navigate a digital interface and that may create barriers to adoption, particularly among audiences who are not frequent cinema-goers.

5.3 Integration of Findings

When considered collectively, the findings of this research paint a portrait of Irish cinema-goers who are not passive watchers but rather active navigators of a complex, multi-channel media environment. The theatrical experience retains genuine and emotional value for a consider amount of the sample

group, even as streaming consumption has become so deeply rooted in the daily routine. The decision-making process is increasingly mediated and interfered by peer recommendation and content creators rather than traditional marketing campaigns and the technical infrastructure of the cinema-going experience (ticket purchase, website experience, loyalty engagement) has migrated to an online environment, rather than a physical self-attending kiosk.

These findings collectively demonstrate that the post-pandemic Irish cinema audience cannot be characterised by a single dominant pattern. Ireland – specially Dublin – is a multicultural country with a broad range of audiences. Their behaviour, when it comes to select a film to watch, is a combination of financial circumstances, platform preference, social influence and engagement with digital tools. This complexity in itself is a meaningful finding, suggesting that cinema marketing and operational strategists must be audience-segmented, rather than one to fit it all.

5.4 Implications of the Findings

The academic implications of this research are primarily contextual: the study contributes to Ireland-specific empirical evidence to a literature dominated by American, British and East Asian case studies. The findings both confirm and extend exiting theories by applying them to a new national context in the specific film industry.

The managerial implications are more actionable. For cinema operators, the research identifies online UX as a critical touchpoint: if 80.7% of audiences purchase tickets via the website, it is imperative that the quality and functionality of the interface is as important as the quality of the in-venue experience (if not better). Loyalty programmes require redesign to reduce the comprehension barriers or better marketing strategies to enhance loyalty and engagement in the venue.

For film marketers, the findings on influencers trust suggest a new orientation towards the adoption of micro-influencer partnership. The low effectiveness of traditional trailers for younger audiences suggests that short-form social media content distributed through social media – engaging and interactable- could bring more engagement and audiences to a particular film.

5.5 Link to Research Gap

The literature review identified a clear context gap: the absence of an Ireland-specific empirical research on post-pandemic cinema consumer behaviour. The primary data collected and analysed in this dissertation directly addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive, multi-thematic portrait of Irish cinema-goer in a post-COVID-19 environment. The findings of the literature review partially transfer to the Irish context, while revealing important divergences – most importantly in the area of SST adoption and loyalty programme engagement – validate the importance of context-specific research.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter interpreted the primary research findings in relation to the existing literature on cinema consumer behaviour, hybrid media consumption, influencer marketing and self-service technology adoption. The results suggest that while Irish cinema attendance has not declined catastrophically, it operates within a profoundly altered landscape in which streaming takes a majority of the daily companion. Peer recommendation and content creator influence are now dominant mechanisms in the decision journey and, the digital interface through which tickets are purchased has migrated to online platforms. Chapter 06 will draw together the key findings to provide a conclusion to the research and recommendations for future researchers and industry leaders.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the dissertation by synthesising the key findings and evaluating how the research addressed the main RQ: How has the consumer behaviour of Irish cinema-goers changed post COVID-19 pandemic? It summarises the research process and key findings across each objective, highlighting the study's relevance to both academic literature and industry practice, and provides recommendations based on the evidence. It also acknowledges limitations and outlines directions for future research.

6.2 Summary of the Research

This study examined post-COVID-19 consumer behaviour among Irish cinema-goers, structured around four themes derived from international literature: attendance and spending patterns; hybrid cinema-streaming consumption; the influence of social media influencers in decision-making; and adoption of self-service technologies and loyalty programmes. The research responds to the gap in Irish-specific post-pandemic media consumption literature.

A quantitative, positivist, deductive approach was adopted. A 20-question survey using multiple-choice, Likert scale, and ranking questions was distributed over three weeks, yielding 83 valid responses. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS. The sample was mainly female (68.7%) and aged 18–35 (86.7%), reflecting the distribution channels used and the urban concentration of cinemas.

The analysis was guided by four theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 2: consumer behaviour theory (Solomon and Kerrigan), media substitution theory (Lin, Kaye, Johnson, DeFelice), parasocial relationships and eWOM (Pan et al., Liu and Sardar), and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis). These frameworks informed the survey design, interpretation, and discussion of findings, ensuring alignment with both academic and industry relevance.

6.3 Summary of Key Findings

The first objective, examining attendance frequency post-COVID-19, showed that most Irish cinema-goers attend once every three months (31.3%) or once a month (26.5%), with weekly attendance remaining a minority. The data suggests that while COVID-19 did not lead to cinema abandonment, it did reduce overall attendance frequency.

The second objective, analysing streaming platform usage and its impact on cinema attendance, found that streaming is embedded in daily routines, with 59% using platforms often or very often. Despite this, 47% reported no change in cinema attendance post-pandemic, and 27.7% reported increased attendance, indicating a clear hybrid consumption model between streaming and cinema.

The third objective, assessing social media influence on decision-making, showed strong effects from word-of-mouth (63.9%) and social media platforms, particularly Instagram (51.8%) and TikTok (47%). Traditional trailers had minimal influence (2.4%). Trust in influencers is selective, with 36.1% relying on past recommendations and personal experience.

The fourth objective, examining self-service technologies and loyalty programmes, produced the most notable finding. While online ticket purchasing is almost universal (80.7%), in-venue kiosk use remains very low (7.2%), indicating a shift towards digital transactions. Additionally, 78.3% are not part of loyalty programmes, with engagement more common in independent cinemas, suggesting a cultural rather than commercial loyalty relationship.

6.4 Contribution of the Study

The academic contribution of this research lies in its contextual novelty. By analysing Ireland-specific data through four academic frameworks, the study addresses a recognised gap in the literature and provides a foundation for future scholarship in the area. The research confirms the applicability of the media substitution theory, the technology acceptance model and the parasocial relationship framework to the Irish cinema context, while identifying local divergences to enrich broader theoretical conversation.

The practical contribution is directed at cinema operators, film marketers and industry bodies (Such as Screen Ireland and the IFTN, the Irish Film and Television Network). The findings provide a comprehensive, data-driven initial portrait of Irish cinema-goers behaviour in the post-pandemic period, and the recommendations derived from this portrait offer actionable guidance.

6.5 Practical Recommendations

Recommendation 01: Prioritise investment in the online ticket-purchasing experience

80.7% of respondents purchase tickets via the cinema's website, compared to only 7.2% who use a physical kiosk. Irish cinema-goers have already migrated to digital self-service, but through online channels. The TAM establishes that perceived ease of use is the primary determinant of adoption, which 56.6% of respondents confirmed this by citing comfort of purchasing at their own pace. Reliability and ease of navigation is the core driver of sustained SST use. Cinema operators should therefore treat the online environment as their primary operational touchpoint, investing in UX design and hyper-personalisation.

Recommendation 02: Redesign loyalty programmes and promote them for younger audiences

78.3% of respondents are not enrolled in any loyalty programme, despite many being free to use. Cinema-theatres could redesign the purpose and the benefits of loyalty programmes, creating differentiation to drawn loyalty and customers. Liu and Koh's (2025) DSW framework identifies that the comprehension barrier of digital loyalty interfaces is a significant problem to enrolment and engagement. Therefore, altering the communication style to promote easiness might draw customers to join the programme. Promoting them to younger generations can lead to adherence, once they are the sample respondent that is not enrolled in no programmes.

Recommendation 03: Leverage word-of-mouth by building post-screening audience communities

The 63.9% WOM figure is not only a finding about influencers, but it speaks to the social architecture of film consumption itself. Kerrigan (2017) establish that WOM is the most powerful and cost-effective marketing tool available to the industry, and that online communities enhance its power. That the scrip and the themes of a film are the primary selection driver (32.5%) further suggest that Irish cinema-goers are oriented toward meaning and conversation. Operators, industry leaders and distributors can harness this through post-screening discussion events, themed screenings, social media community space and loyalty tiers that reward engagement rather than just consistence.

Recommendation 04: Market cinema as a value-for-money leisure option

42.2% of respondents have reduced their cinema frequency due to the cost of living, yet 14.5% have increased it for precisely the same reason – as the other events are too expensive and the overall cost

is too high, the value-for-money of cinema screening elevates. Lee et al. (2023) establish the hedonic value of the cinema experience as a self-contained social occasion. 55.4% of respondents of this research affirm that they regularly purchase concession items when in the cinema, indicating that the visit already functions as a social event, rather than purely a film-viewing activity. Moreover, the selling of merchandising can be adhered by venues, since 34.9% indicated intention of buying and 13.2% already concluding a purchase of customised items in the past.

6.6 Limitations of the Research

One key limitation of this research is the sample's demographic profile. Distribution via social media resulted in a concentration of respondents aged 18–35 (86.7%), with older age groups largely absent. Only one respondent was aged 66 or over, and three were aged 56–65, limiting insights into older Irish cinema audiences whose behaviours may differ significantly from younger cohorts.

The sample size of 83 respondents is another limitation. For a study seeking to generalise consumer behaviour at national level, a larger sample would increase statistical reliability. The geographic concentration of respondents in Dublin also limits generalisability, as regional audiences across Ireland may have different cinema consumption patterns.

The reliance on self-reported data is also a constraint, as responses reflect perceived rather than actual behaviour. This introduces potential bias, including over-reporting attendance, under-reporting price sensitivity, or socially desirable responses regarding technology use. In addition, uneven weighting of themes in the questionnaire limited depth of analysis across all areas.

Finally, the study does not consider the emerging impact of artificial intelligence on cinema consumption and operations, which is likely to become increasingly relevant in future research.

6.7 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should seek to address the demographics limitations of this study by targeting older consumer groups and regional residents, outside urban areas. A larger sample would also provide a greater statistical power and allow for cross-tabulation analyses examining, for example, the relationship between age group and SST preference, or between streaming frequency and cinema attendance.

Finally, the role of artificial intelligence in cinema- both in the creation of content and in the personalisation of recommendation systems – is an emerging area that his research did not step in, but it is of upmost importance for future research. As streaming platforms deploy algorithm-tailored recommendations, the question of how these systems interact and how the Irish cinema-goers adopt them will become increasingly urgent for researchers and industry professionals alike.

6.8 Final Conclusion

In conclusion, this research provides a meaningful and timely contribution to the understanding of how Irish cinema-goers have adapted their behaviour to the aftermaths of COVID-19 and the pandemic. These findings demonstrate that the theatrical experience retain genuine value for a significant portion of the Irish audiences. Streaming platforms has thus become an everyday companion rather than a substitute to the cinema-venue experience. The decision now to attend a movie is embedded in a network of social, digital and economical influences, that trespasses the individual psychological factors. Cinema operators and marketers cannot ignore the influence of social media creators and eWOM. Understanding their value can assist them to engage customers with greater sophistication.

The art of cinema continues to demand that the audience dance the masque. To surrender to the immersion and the experience of the screen in the dark. This research is proof that this art form is not dying, but rather mutating. The dance has moved to a more complexed rhythm.

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