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CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND DECISION TO WATCH INDONESIAN FILMS IN CINEMAS: A RELATIONSHIP MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT:

Customer engagement reflects the intensity of interaction between customers and products in the market. In the film industry, customers who enjoyed watching movies in cinemas tend to have more intensive interactions with upcoming films. This study analysed the mediating role of customer engagement in the influence of the lead actor, film genre, film ratings, and online reviews on the decision to watch Indonesian films in cinemas. The research employed a quantitative approach with a survey of 315 respondents. Data was analysed by using Structural Equation Modelling through Smart PLS software. The lead actor, film genre, movie ratings, and online reviews positively and significantly influenced customer engagement with films. Customer engagement, in turn, positively and significantly influenced the decision to visit a cinema to watch Indonesian films. Customer engagement is proven to be an appropriate mediator between the four independent variables and the decision to watch Indonesian films in cinemas. Incorporating customer engagement as a mediator in the relationship between the lead actor, film genre, film ratings, online reviews is therefore important. These research findings enrich relationship marketing theory by emphasising the importance of customer engagement in strengthening long-term relationships and consumer behaviour theory by enhancing customer loyalty.

KEYWORDS:

cinemas, customer engagement, decision, film audiences, relationship marketing, watching films

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1 Introduction

Movies are produced by film companies, but there is a distinction between a movie itself and the experience of watching a movie in a cinema. Visiting a cinema to watch a movie is an experiential activity for entertainment (Turel, 2008). However, the factors influencing the consumer decision associated with it are not well understood. Furthermore, as society becomes more technologically literate, the number of choices we make regarding movie spectatorship has increased (Gummerus et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the influence of Internet technology and social media on customer engagement in the decision-making process to watch movies in cinemas during their premieres has not been thoroughly understood.

Watching movies in cinemas is an activity often pursued amidst daily routines. It has become an important part of culture and influences attitudes and behaviours of many people. Watching movies is an experiential product, reflecting the characteristics of hedonic consumption (Turel, 2008). It assumes that the more frequently people watch films, the higher their engagement as customers who regularly watch movies in cinemas.

Research on the film industry often focuses on box office performance, especially during the first week of release. The studies include 1) The impact of sharing video trailers on social media on box office revenue (Oh et al., 2017). 2) The effect of film information and reviews on box office performance (Hu et al., 2018). 3) The influence of film features, script, price, promotion, and distribution on purchase intention (Ulker-Demirel et al., 2018). 4) The impact of movie titles on box office success (Jungho & Byung-Do, 2013). 5) The effect of consumer reviews on film sales (Cheng & Huang, 2020). And 6) the impact of online word-of-mouth of film on consumer choice (Chiu et al., 2019).

Other research includes 1) The impact of media coverage (online news and social media) and consumer engagement such as searching and reading information on the sales of original films and sequels in the first week (Feng et al., 2020). 2) The influence of consumer and critic text reviews on film sales (Deng, 2020). 3) The influence of demographics, lifestyle, and customer personality on box office film consumption (Palomba, 2020). 4) The influence of customer engagement through social media on film performance (Castillo et al., 2021). 5) The influence of social media marketing channels and events on box office films (Liao & Huang, 2021).

The previous research focused more on box office performance in the first week, without addressing the importance of customer engagement in the decision to watch movies in cinemas. There is a theoretical gap in the connection between customer engagement and movie-watching decision theory. This paper aims to examine the mediating role of customer engagement in the influence of lead actors, film genre, film ratings, and online reviews on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

2 Development of Hypotheses

The quality of a film is influenced by the characterisation of the lead actors, as assigned by the writer to construct the narrative (Lawrence, 2017). They often enhance consumer pleasure, interest, and communication regarding the film, especially if they are successful with box office and are frequently seen in public spaces or receive Academy Award nominations (Basuroy et al., 2006; Liu, 2006). Lead actors can drive customer engagement to watch movies as they create influence and imagination about their appeal (Frank & Cook, 1995). The greater the fondness for lead actors, the higher the customer engagement to watch movies in cinemas. Therefore, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H1: Lead actors have a positive and significant influence on customer engagement to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

Lead actors influence the appeal of a film's storyline due to their acting skills and performance. They impact the intention to watch a film (Basuroy et al., 2003). Lead actors with popularity and fame can encourage consumers to

choose films they star in (Kim & Sieun, 2019; Li et al., 2023; Saputra & Wiyono, 2021). This decision is based on intention to watch films as an experiential product, and if the intention is high, consumers are more likely to watch the film (Dodds et al., 1991). The greater the preference for the lead actor, the stronger the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas. Thus, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H2: Lead actors have a positive and significant influence on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

Films are generally produced according to their genre so that viewers know more what to expect when they watch them in cinemas (Stokes, 2006). Movie genre classification helps viewers understand the narrative structure of a movie and enhances their engagement with a movie (Sterin & Winston, 2017). Engagement is related to relationship marketing, which includes connection and interaction (Sashi, 2012). Hollebeck (2011) explains that customer engagement involves commitment and satisfaction, strengthening brand image and loyalty (Greve, 2014). Engagement helps viewers become more familiar with film characters, understand and connect with story ideas, and gain an impression of the movie they want to watch (Rizky & Stellarosa, 2017). Therefore, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H3: Film genre has a positive and significant influence on customer engagement to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

Watching movies is one of the most popular recreational activities taking place during leisure time (Zimmermann & Reeves, 2009). Intention to watch a movie involves purchasing a cinematic experience (Dodds et al., 1991). Customers often watch movies to experience emotions such as love, happiness, grief, sadness, and fear (Fowdur et al., 2009). Movie-watching decisions are influenced by the movie genre (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). The genre provides an overview to the audience about the movie they want to watch (Rizky & Stellarosa, 2017). The greater the enjoyment of the genre, the more significant the impact on the decision to watch films in the cinema. Therefore, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H4: Film genre has a positive and significant influence on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

Today information and communication technology drives users to leverage the Internet and social media to generate personal opinion content (Christakis & Fowler, 2010). Social interactions are increasingly developing within online communities (López González et al., 2014), where film ratings shape social relationships and communication among members (Kozinets, 2002). Users share experiences and interact about films and seek inspiration from interaction (Karahanna et al., 2018; Ponnamma Divakaran & Nørskov, 2016). Film ratings are sources of information for the decisions to watch movies, and positive ratings can enhance customer engagement in the decisions (BrightLocal, 2014). Therefore, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H5: Film ratings have a positive and significant influence on customer engagement to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

New forms of virtual social interaction are largely facilitated by advances in information and communication technology (López González et al., 2014). Online communities can form virtual social relationships allowing members to communicate and build personal connections (Kozinets, 2002). Such social media encourage users to participate and share experiences on films and engage in film interactions (Ponnamma Divakaran & Nørskov, 2016). These are considered when people make the decisions to watch movies (BrightLocal, 2014). In online systems, film ratings engage users and influence behaviours when purchasing products (Chen & Xie, 2008). The more positive the film ratings in online media, the higher the likelihood to watch films in cinemas. Therefore, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H6: Film ratings have a positive and significant influence on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

People can exchange their information and opinions about products via the Internet, reflecting the phenomenon of online word-of-mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). The Internet facilitates word-of-mouth through reviews on blogs, forums, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and review sites (De Los Salmones et al., 2021). Customers can engage

through gadgets like smartphones, tablets and mobile apps (Khan & Inbaraj, 2014). This engagement strengthens brand image and loyalty (Greve, 2014). Online customer engagement is a significant experience (Braojos et al., 2019). Third-party online reviews are crucial for evaluating films in experience-based markets (Chen & Xie, 2008). The more positive and extensive the online reviews, the greater the customer engagement when the film is released in cinemas. Therefore, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H7: Online reviews have a positive and significant influence on customer engagement to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

People can exchange information and opinions about products through the Internet such as online reviews on blogs, groups/forums, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and review sites (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006; De Los Salmones et al., 2021). These reviews involve many individuals and are available without time constraints, becoming a channel for customers to seek any information (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). Online reviews alter consumer behaviour including the decisions to watch films (Chen et al., 2015; Rui et al., 2013; Sen & Lerman, 2007). Third-party reviews are greatly important for evaluating the quality of films (Chen & Xie, 2008), and positive reviews can enhance the decision to watch movies in cinemas. Therefore, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H8: Online reviews have a positive and significant influence on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

Customer engagement is a manifestation of behaviour towards a brand, not only a purchase (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Engagement can include word-of-mouth, recommendations, writing blogs, and posting reviews. It is built on satisfaction and commitment, reflecting the relationship marketing by connections, interactions, and satisfaction (Sashi, 2012). Personal and interactive engagement can influence decision-making processes (Oh et al., 2017). In the context of movie-watching, decisions are based on the intention to view the movie as an experiential product. It can be assumed that high purchase intention correlates with a higher likelihood of watching movies (Dodds et al., 1991). Therefore, the hypothesis can be stated as follows:

H9: Customer engagement has a positive and significant influence on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

The quality of a film is influenced by the lead actors, particularly the characterisation by the writer (Lawrence, 2017). The popularity and fame of the lead actors drive consumers to choose films they star in, affecting film choices (Kim & Sieun, 2019; Li et al., 2023; Saputra & Wiyono, 2021). They become significant factors if they are successful at the box office or receive Academy Award nominations (Basuroy et al., 2006; Liu, 2006). Lead actors create influence and build imaginative appeal (Frank & Cook, 1995). Customer engagement with idol actors can increase, affecting the decision to watch movies in cinemas. The greater the enjoyment of the lead actors and the higher the customer engagement, the stronger the decision to watch movies in cinemas. Therefore, the hypothesis can be stated as follows.

H10: Customer engagement mediates the positive and significant influence of the lead actors on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

Films are produced according to genre so that viewers know what to expect (Stokes, 2006). Genre helps audiences recognise content, shape preference, and influence decisions to watch movies in cinemas. Loyal customers always seek information about their favourite movie genres, influencing their engagement with films. The movie genre information is crucial in the decision to watch films in cinemas. The intention to watch a movie as an experiential product is often affected by film genres (Dodds et al., 1991; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). This research focuses on the decision to watch movies in cinemas at the premiere, often influenced by genre and customer engagement (Rizky & Stellarosa, 2017). The more specific the movie genre, the higher the customer engagement and decision to watch movies in cinemas. Therefore, the hypothesis can be stated as follows.

H11: Customer engagement mediates the influence of movie genre on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

Internet and social media reflect advances in information and communication technologies that transform how users can access and generate content based on personal opinions (Christakis & Fowler, 2010). Online communities, such as film enthusiasts, facilitate reviews and discussions about films that influence thinking and behaviour (López González et al., 2014; Ponnamma Divakaran & Nørskov, 2016). Film reviews on blogs, social networks, and forums are important sources in the decision-making (BrightLocal, 2014). Positive reviews on social media can make films more appealing and enhance customer engagement through devices like smartphones and tablets (Dodds et al., 1991). Positive reviews can increase engagement and decisions to watch movies in cinemas (Khan & Inbaraj, 2014). Therefore, the hypothesis can be formulated as follows.

H12: Customer engagement mediates the influence of film reviews on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

People often exchange information about products through the Internet, representing a form of online word-of-mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). Online reviews appear on platforms such as blogs, forums, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as the important channels for seeking information and affecting purchase decisions (Chen et al., 2015; Codes & Mayzlin, 2004; De Los Salmones et al., 2021). Before purchasing, people rely on online reviews to understand products (Hussain et al., 2020). These reviews also influence the decisions to watch movies and the evaluation of film quality in experience-based markets (Chen & Xie, 2008; Rui et al., 2013). The credibility and quality of online reviews are crucial in the decisions to watch movies in cinemas (Yeap et al., 2014). The more interactions with online reviews, the higher the engagement toward the decision to watch movies. Therefore, the hypothesis can be stated as follows.

H13: Customer engagement mediates the influence of online reviews on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas

3 Methodology

This research was conducted by a deductive approach and quantitative method to explain, predict and establish causality (Morgan, 2007). The research was carried out in cinemas across Java Island with the highest number of modern cinemas, particularly in the Special Capital of Jakarta, Banten, West Java, Central Java and the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and East Java. It was conducted from September to November 2023 when the premieres of various movie genres were released in the cinemas.

The study examined the decision to watch movies in cinemas among the cinema-goers in major cities on Java Island as a population. The sample for this study was selected by stratified proportional sampling due to unclear total population of viewers. The sample was drawn based on the rule of thumb in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). By using the Maximum Likelihood estimation, five respondents were selected for each observed variable. From these data, the researcher evaluated six factors with 24 dimensions and a total of 43 indicators, so that the minimum sample size for this study was $43 \times 5 = 215$ respondents. For anticipating questionnaires with incomplete data, the researcher decided to distribute questionnaires to 344 respondents (43×7) across cinemas in various major cities throughout Java.

Due to limitations in funding, time, and manpower, it was not feasible to conduct this research at all 175 cinemas spread across these cities. Therefore, the researcher determined a sample proportion of 25.7 percent for each province, with an average of 7-8 respondents per cinema. Using stratified proportional sampling, a total of 45 out of 175 cinemas (25.7 percent) were visited with a total of 344 respondents distributed across 25 percent of the cinemas in each major city within the population area. The researcher collected primary data by questionnaires from

Indonesian movie viewers in the cinemas in major cities on Java Island. The questionnaires were made using a 5-point Likert scale to understand respondents' perceptions.

The analysis of the data collected consisted of descriptive analysis of respondent characteristics and inferential analysis to test the hypotheses in the study (Sugiyono, 2015). The inferential analysis was performed using Smart Partial Least Squares (Smart PLS) for estimating the path analysis model. Before the hypothesis test, validity and reliability tests were conducted in the outer model, including convergent validity (> 0.5), discriminant validity, composite reliability (> 0.7), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (> 0.5) (Vinzi et al., 2010). Reliability was tested by examining Cronbach Alpha value (> 0.7) for all constructs.

4 Results

4.1 Respondent Descriptive

Table 1: Respondent characteristics

	Category	N	%	Cumulative %
Region	Banten	50	15.9	15.9
	DKI Jakarta	98	31.1	47.0
	West Java	77	24.4	71.4
	Central Java	34	10.8	82.2
	East Java	56	17.8	100
Gender	Male	195	61.9	61.9
	Female	120	38.1	100.0
Age	< 25	36	11.4	11.4
	> 46	35	11.1	22.5
	26 – 30	80	25.4	47.9
	31 – 35	74	23.5	71.4
	36 – 40	50	15.9	87.3
	41 – 45	40	12.7	100
Occupation	Civil Servant	18	5.7	0.057
	Private Employee	196	62.2	67.9
	Student/ University Student	26	8.3	75.2
	Professional	12	3.8	80
	Entrepreneur	39	12.4	92.4
	Other	24	7.6	100
Income	< 1,000,000	8	2.5	2.5
	1,000,000 -	22	7.0	9.5
	2,000,000 -	33	10.5	20
	3,000,000 -	41	13.0	33
	4,000,000 -	66	21.0	54
	$\geq 5,000,000$	145	46.0	100
Education	Elementary/ Junior High/High School	71	22.5	22.5
	Diploma	63	20.0	42.5
	Bachelor's Degree	146	46.3	88.8

	Category	N	%	Cumulative %
	Master's Degree	26	8.3	97.1
	Doctorate	9	2.9	100
Experience watching Indonesian movies in cinemas	Once	30	9.5	9.5
	Twice	37	11.7	21.3
	Three Times	47	14.9	36.2
	Four Times	36	11.4	47.6
	≥ Five Times	165	52.4	100
Movie Genre	Drama Film	31	9.8	9.8
	Horror Film	63	20.0	29.8
	Family Film	44	14.0	43.8
	Comedy Film	54	17.1	61.0
	Action Film	76	24.1	85.1
	Romantic Film	47	14.9	100
Togetherness	With Family	141	44.8	44.8
	With Friends	151	47.9	92.7
	Alone	23	7.3	100
	Total	315	100	

Source: Processed from survey data, own processing, 2024

Table 1 shows that most respondents in this study were from Special Capital of Jakarta with 98 people (31.1%). Respondents were predominantly male with 195 individuals (61.9%), aged 26-30 years old of 80 individuals (25.4%). Most were employed in the private sector with 196 people (62.2%), earned more than or equal to IDR5,000,000 with 145 people (46%), hold a bachelor's degree with 146 people (46.3%), and watched Indonesian movies in cinemas more than five times among 165 people (52.4%). The preferred film genre was predominantly action movies with 76 people (24.1%), and most watched movies with friends of 151 people (47.9%). The data reflects characteristics of respondents as Indonesian moviegoers in the major cities of provincial capital, especially the Special Capital of Jakarta.

4.2 Goodness of Fit

In this research, the goodness of fit of the structural model can be seen from R² and SRMR values.

Table 2: R² value of the inner model

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Decisions to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas	0.978	0.978
Customer engagement	0.970	0.969

Source: Processed from survey data, own processing, 2024

Data in Table 2 shows that the R² value for the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas was 0.978 and the R² value for customer engagement was 0.970 with a strong influence category (>0.7). Therefore, the variables in this research (lead actors, movie genre, film ratings, and online reviews) could simultaneously influence customer engagement by 97% and simultaneously influenced the decision to watch movies in cinemas by 97.8%.

Table 3: Goodness of fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.072	0.072

Source: Processed from survey data, own processing, 2024

Data in Table 3 shows that the goodness of fit of this structural model can be assessed from the Standardised Root Mean Square (SRMR), which is 0.072. This data indicates that the SRMR value is good because, theoretically, it falls between 0.05 and 0.08, and this value is considered acceptable (fit).

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

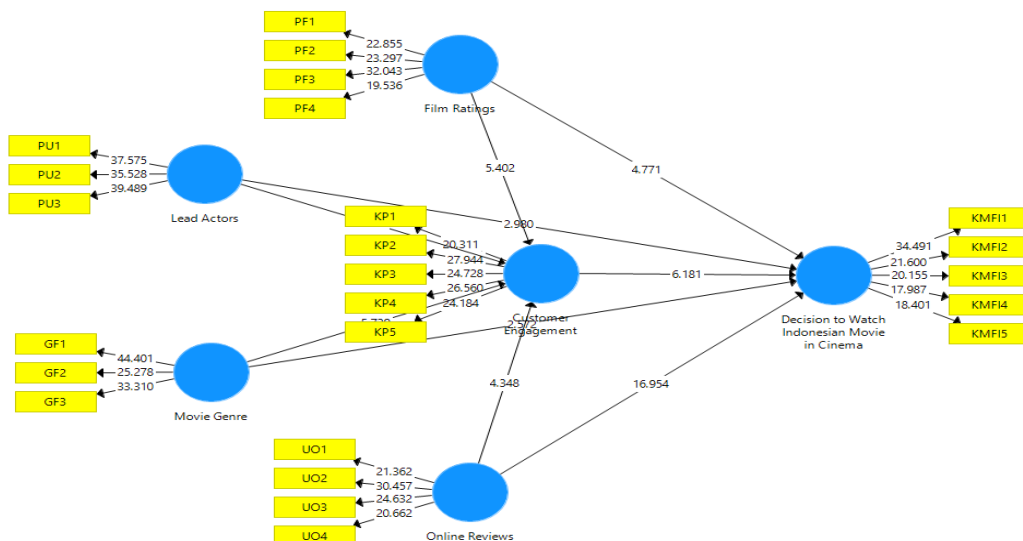


Figure 1: Structural model of the research

Source: Own processing, 2024

Table 4: Value of T statistic for direct (partial) effect

	Original sample	T Statistics	P Values
LA – CE	-0.067	2.361	0.019
LA – DW	-0.100	2.980	0.003
MG – CE	0.679	5.739	0.000
MG – DW	0.236	2.572	0.010
FR – CE	0.568	5.402	0.000
FR – DW	-0.565	4.771	0.000
OR – C	-0.198	4.348	0.000
OR – DW	0.877	16.954	0.000
CE – DW	0.544	6.181	0.000
LA – CE – DW	-0.036	2.381	0.018
MG – CE – DW	0.369	3.809	0.000
FR – CE – DW	0.308	5.158	0.000
OR – CE – DW	-0.108	3.548	0.001

Source: Processed from survey data, own processing, 2024

Data in Table 4 shows that the influence of the lead actor ($t=2.361$), movie genre ($t=5.739$), film ratings ($t=5.402$), and online reviews ($t=4.348$) on customer engagement in the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas were positive and significant ($p<0.05$). Additionally, the influence of the lead actor ($t=2.980$), movie genre ($t=2.572$), film ratings ($t=4.771$), and online reviews ($t=16.954$) on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas were positive and significant ($p<0.05$). Therefore, it can be understood that all the research hypotheses are empirically proven with positive and significant effects, indicating that the research objectives from the first to the ninth have been achieved empirically.

Table 4 indicates that customer engagement positively and significantly mediated the effects of the lead actor ($t=2.381$), movie genre ($t=3.809$), film ratings ($t=5.158$), and online reviews ($t=3.548$) on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinema ($p<0.05$). Therefore, all the mediation hypotheses in this research have been evidenced with positive and significant effects.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Film is a popular experiential product that can generate responses from consumers before a film's premiere in cinema (Chakravarty et al., 2010). Pre-release film information has a profound impact on cinema sales (Lehmann & Weinberg, 2000).

Customer engagement in the decision to watch movies in cinemas has become crucial in the digital age. This engagement reflects the customers' experience through online platforms (Braojos et al., 2019). Social media applications offer features that motivate users to meet their needs online. Gopinath et al. (2013) emphasise the importance of customer engagement because the first week's release period is critical for box office revenue. Moviegoers engage on social media, driven by their psychological needs (Karahanna et al., 2018).

In this study, customer engagement in the decision to watch movies in cinemas were positively and significantly influenced by lead actors ($t=2.361$; $P=0.019$) (H1); movie genre ($t=5.739$; $P=0.003$) (H3); film ratings ($t=5.402$; $P=0.000$) (H5); and online reviews ($t=4.348$; $P=0.000$) (H7) ($p<0.05$). The factors with the greatest influence on customer engagement in the decisions to watch Indonesian movie in cinemas were movie genre and film ratings.

Movie genre has a crucial role in assessing the appeal of a movie and driving the engagement of customers (Sashi, 2012; Sterin & Winston, 2017; Stokes, 2006). Movie genre provides potential viewers with an idea of what the film is about (Rizky & Stellarosa, 2017). Film ratings in online communities facilitate users in sharing and utilising any film information (Christakis & Fowler, 2010; Kozinets, 2002; López González et al., 2014). Users are active in sharing film ratings (Karahanna et al., 2018; Oh et al., 2017; Ponnamma Divakaran & Nørskov, 2016). These findings are consistent with Chiu et al. (2019), who show that film ratings influence film sales, reflecting customer engagement and the decision to watch a movie.

In this study, the decision to watch movies in cinemas was also positively and significantly influenced by the lead actor ($t=2.980$; $P=0.003$) (H2); movie genre ($t=2.572$; $P=0.000$) (H4); film ratings ($t=4.771$; $P=0.000$) (H6); online reviews ($t=16.954$; $P=0.000$) (H8); and customer engagement ($t=6.181$; $P=0.000$) (H9) ($p<0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that the variables with the greatest influence on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas were online reviews and customer engagement.

In the film industry, online reviews before a film's release are crucial for building the intention and engagement of viewers as film customers (Chen & Xie, 2008). Since it is difficult to assess a film compared to physical products, viewers seek reviews to reduce risk (Harrison-Walker, 2001). The positive online reviews attract viewers, while both positive and negative reviews influence the decision to watch movies in the cinema. The more positive and widespread the reviews on social media, the higher the customer engagement. These findings are consistent with Hu et al. (2018) who indicate that online reviews can predict early film sales, as well as (Cheng & Huang, 2020), who found that online reviews are used for movie-watching decisions.

Finally, in this study, customer engagement plays a mediating role in the positive and significant influence of the lead actor, movie genre, film ratings, and online reviews on the decision to watch movies in cinemas, namely:

mediation by the lead actors ($t= 2.381$; $P=0.000$) (H10); mediation by movie genre ($t= 3.809$; $P=0.000$) (H11); mediation by film ratings ($t= 5.158$; $P=0.000$) (H12); and mediation by online reviews ($t=3.548$; $P=0.000$) (H13) with $p<0.05$. The strongest mediating role is observed in the influence of film ratings and movie genre on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas.

The findings of this research support (Van Doorn et al., 2010) that customer engagement can reflect behaviours towards the brand, related to relationship marketing that reinforces purchase decisions (Sashi, 2012). In the movie industry, customer engagement can involve socialisation and participation within the community (Oh et al., 2017). Intensive customer engagement plays a crucial role in making decisions to watch movies in cinemas. The result is consistent with Feng et al. (2020) indicating that the consumer engagement influence film sales, and Castillo et al. (2021) indicating that engagement in social media drives first-week film success.

In the digital era, film ratings on social media reflect the advancement of information and communication technologies in online communities (López González et al., 2014). These communities form virtual relationships, where members interact through positive film ratings (Ponnamma Divakaran & Nørskov, 2016). Film ratings have become crucial source of film information for the decisions to watch movies in cinemas with many people now relying on these ratings for their considerations (BrightLocal, 2014). These findings are consistent with (Castillo et al., 2021), who show that consumer engagement on social media influenced the decision to watch movies in cinemas.

The influence of movie genre on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas is consistent with Hennig-Thurau et al.'s (2006) opinion that the experience of watching a movie in a cinema can be affected by genre characteristics. Understanding the movie genre provides viewers with an idea of the film they will watch (Stokes, 2006). Film customers often seek information about their favourite genres, which influences their decision to watch movies in cinemas. Movie genre helps customers know what to expect and can enhance their engagement (Rizky & Stellarosa, 2017). If the movie genre is aligned with the customers' preferences, their engagement is also high, strengthening the decision to watch movies in cinemas. (Jungho & Byung-Do, 2013) show that informative genre impacts box office revenue, indicating that if genre information is available, the movie-watching decision is stronger and boosts box office revenue.

The research findings make a significant contribution to relationship marketing theory (Berry, 1983). First, famous lead actors can build emotional connections and trust with an audience, enhancing the film's appeal. Second, movie genre can influence viewer's preferences and expectations, which help production studios tailor their marketing strategies to improve satisfaction and loyalty, as well as build a film community.

In addition, the research findings make an important contribution to consumer behaviour theory (Kotler & Keller, 2016). First, popular lead actors enhance the film's appeal and influence its perceived quality that motivate consumers who recognise and like to watch the movie.

The findings of this research are consistent with relationship marketing theory and consumer behaviour theory (Berry, 1983; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Actually, the effect of lead actors, movie genre, film ratings, and online reviews, mediated by customer engagement, is in accordance with the principles of both theories. Relationship marketing theory more emphasises building long-term relationships with the existing customers through personal interaction, trust, commitment, and satisfaction. With digital platforms and social media, the film industry can enhance customer engagement and achieve more sustainable business growth. The findings of the research highlight that understanding factors such as lead actors, movie genre, film ratings, and online reviews help the film industry create effective and engaging relationship marketing, thus attracting and retaining audiences. Focusing on the personal interactions and satisfying customer experiences can build a loyal community in watching movies in cinemas.

Finally, consumer behaviour theory involves information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation, providing a comprehensive framework to understand interaction between these factors and consumer behaviour. In this research, understanding the influence of lead actors, movie genre, film ratings and online reviews provide film producers and marketers with strategies that are effective to attract and retain audiences in watching movies in cinemas. Focusing on consumer needs and preferences based on information from social media allows film customers to provide better responses to the dynamics of the movie market. Consumer behaviour theory explains how customer engagement can be enhanced by these factors in making the decisions to watch movies in cinemas and generating a higher level of audience satisfaction and loyalty.

The findings of this research confirm that as a popular cultural product, a movie can generate significant responses from the consumers before its premiere in cinemas. Customer engagement in movie-watching decisions was generally influenced by pre-release film information such as lead actors, movie genre, film ratings, and online reviews. More specifically, the findings show that movie genre and film ratings have the greatest influence on customer engagement, and both online reviews and customer engagement have the most significant influence on the decision to watch Indonesian movies in cinemas. These factors can create a complex and interrelated interaction leading to the final consumer decision to watch a film in the cinema.

The findings of this research strengthens both relationship marketing theory and consumer behaviour theory. In relationship marketing theory, customer engagement through personalised interactions, trust, commitment and satisfaction is key to building long-term relationships with customers. In the context, the film industry can enhance customer engagement and drive sustainable business growth by understanding and managing the factors such as lead actors, movie genre, film ratings, and online reviews. Additionally, consumer behaviour theory explains information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation providing a comprehensive framework to understand interaction between these factors and consumer behaviour. Thus, film producers and marketers can design the strategies to attract and retain audiences by focusing on consumer needs and preferences and utilising information from various social media channels.

Overall, the findings of the research provide significant insights into how customer engagement mediates the influence of the lead actors, film genre, film ratings, and online reviews, on the decisions to watch movies in cinemas. This, in turn, can enhance the satisfaction and loyalty of film customers toward Indonesian movies in cinemas.

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