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Strategic management approaches in the evolution of cinema chains

ABSTRACT

This article delves into the critical role of strategic management in the context of cinema chains, aiming to identify the key strategic elements that influence their development and operation. It addresses two primary research questions: “What are the main strategic elements that impact the development of cinema chains?” and “How do strategic management components such as market positioning, innovation, strategic planning, analysis, formulation, and implementation assist cinema chains in navigating market challenges, including the shift to digital content distribution?” This study contributes meaningfully to the discourse on strategic management within the entertainment sector, offering practical insights for decision-makers in cinema chains.

The research involved a comprehensive literature review, utilizing renowned academic sources such as Scopus, EBSCO, and JSTOR, covering publications from 1990 to 2022. This approach aimed to dissect the complex layers of strategic management in the cinema industry, shedding light on the unique challenges and opportunities within this segment of the entertainment market.

Our research highlights a notable gap in the existing literature concerning strategic management practices specifically within the realm of cinema chains. This deficiency points to a need for more focused research in this area.

Based on our findings, it is recommended that cinema chains prioritize the adoption of technological innovations and diversify their revenue streams to remain competitive. Strategic adaptability,

informed by continuous monitoring of internal and external factors, is essential for sustainable growth in the rapidly evolving film industry.

The findings of this study could significantly enrich the academic dialogue and offer pragmatic advice for industry practitioners. The identified gap in the literature underscores the urgency of initiating primary research, such as surveys, interviews, or case studies, in the field of cinema chain management. Such research promises to deepen the empirical understanding of strategic management practices and provide actionable guidance for industry stakeholders.

Keywords: strategic management, systematic literature review, critical literature review, movie theatre chains, cinema chains

JEL Classification: L1, L82, M1, M10

Introduction

In the global entertainment sector, cinema chains stand out by offering unique visual and auditory experience. Navigating this rapidly evolving environment, marked by technological advancements and changing consumer behaviors, requires effective strategic management. The significance of strategic management in various industrial contexts has been extensively explored by recent scholars, highlighting its multifaceted impact.

The film industry, a lively and ever-changing sector within the realm of entertainment, is significantly impacted by strategic processes of decision-making. The critical nature of these decisions is accentuated by the industry's susceptibility to external changes. These changes require robust strategic frameworks and models, as proposed by Lobato [2019], Hitt et al. [2016], Wang et al. [2016] and Smith and Telang [2016], to guide cinema chains in their operational and strategic endeavors.

There is a noticeable gap in research on strategic management in cinema chains, despite the growing literature on digital transformation. The digital revolution has profoundly reshaped the movie industry, introducing a spectrum of challenges and opportunities. The traditional cinema experience is being challenged by the rise of internet streaming platforms and the desire for on-demand material, which has shifted consumer preferences toward home-based entertainment. This shift underscores the need for strategic agility and adaptation within cinema chains, compelling them to innovate and reevaluate their value propositions.

While the empirical research in related sectors highlights how digital technologies can increase customer engagement and operational efficiency [Rawal et al., 2017; Tryon, 2013], there is a lack of focused research on the specific impact of these technologies on strategic management in cinema chains. The incorporation of digital technology has brought about a significant transformation in film distribution methods, as the trend of releasing films simultaneously on streaming services and in cinemas has become prevalent. These evolving

trends necessitate a deeper understanding of strategic management concepts to enable cinema chains to maintain their competitive edge and relevance in this changing landscape.

Strategic agility, defined as the ability to adapt quickly to market changes, is crucial for cinema chains. This concept, which has been deepened in recent research [Cervone, 2014; Hitt et al., 2016], is essential for maintaining competitiveness in an era dominated by digital disturbances. Furthermore, resilience, defined as the organization's ability to promptly adjust and react to evolving market conditions, is emerging as a pivotal component of strategic management for cinema chains. [Linnenluecke, 2015]. The implementation of resilience-based strategies requires cinemas to analyze their internal potential and environment to identify threats and opportunities and to plan strategically.

Despite thorough investigation in associated industries, there exists a noticeable void in the scholarly works concerning strategic management within the realm of cinema chains. To fill this void, the forthcoming study will scrutinize the existing literature and pinpoint the distinct hurdles and prospects encountered by cinema chains in the context of strategic management. It is expected that forthcoming research endeavors will build upon this foundational study, offering a more comprehensive understanding and empirical support within this field.

In this complex and nuanced context, this article seeks to explore the core strategic paradigms shaping the trajectory of cinema chains. It aims to address the following crucial questions: What strategic principles significantly influence cinema chains' paths? How can different aspects of strategic management equip cinema chains to effectively confront market challenges, particularly those regarding the distribution of digital content?

This article aims to present an overview of strategic management principles relevant to cinema chains, using both the theoretical framework and selected empirical research results in related fields. The article starts with examining the effects of digital transformation on the cinema sector, then it focuses on scrutinizing strategic frameworks and their utilization, and finally it deals with deliberating on the pragmatic consequences and forthcoming avenues for scholarly inquiry. The main objective is to present a theoretical perspective on the subject, seeking to fill recognizable knowledge gaps and provide valuable insight to both the academic realm and industry stakeholders.

The evolution of cinema chains and strategic management

Introduction to cinema chains

The cinema industry forms a complex network of stakeholders, including film studios, theaters, and audiences. Cinema chains, as a collection of theaters connected by ownership, administration, or other relationships, facilitate the implementation of a common strategy. These networks reflect the specificity and dynamics of the cinema industry, encompassing relationships between different theaters within a chain, connections between theaters and

film distributors, as well as network interactions with technology providers, advertisers, and consumers. In this context, cinema chains serve not only as channels for film content distribution, but also as platforms for exchanging knowledge, technological innovations, and marketing strategies that are crucial for survival and growth in an increasingly competitive environment [Hallinan, Reynolds, 2019; Powell, 1990; Uzzi, 1997].

Recent studies highlight the evolving dynamics within cinema chains, particularly in how network structures and strategic collaborations impact performance and innovation [Sheremeta, Chukhrai, 2020; Shtanova, 2022]. The integration of advanced technologies and innovative business models has further enhanced the ability of cinema chains to adapt to market changes and consumer preferences. By leveraging their network connections, cinema chains can effectively manage resources, share best practices, and implement advanced technologies to meet evolving consumer demands. This collaborative approach not only strengthens individual cinemas within the chain, but also contributes to the overall resilience and adaptability of the chain.

Historical context

The concept of cinema chains emerged in the early 20th century with entrepreneurs such as Marcus Loew and Adolph Zukor in the United States, who were instrumental in forming the first cinema chains and later founding Paramount Pictures [Gomery, 1992]. Their efforts streamlined the distribution and screening processes, significantly contributing to the growth of the American film industry. The development of cinema chains formed the foundation of the industry's structure, facilitating the integration of production, distribution and exhibition processes [Hallinan, Reynolds, 2019].

In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a notable emergence of the Hollywood studio system, distinguished by the domination of cinema production, distribution, and exhibition by prominent studios. This vertical integration was strategic, as studios owned and operated cinema chains to ensure the screening of their films [Schatz, 1997]. The era witnessed the rise of the "Big Five" studios and their cinema networks, such as Loew's, RKO, and Fox, which dominated the market and set industry standards [Balio, 1990].

The 1960s and 1970s marked the emergence of multiplexes – large complexes with multiple screens – revolutionizing resource and space utilization and diversifying film offerings to attract broader audiences [Gibson, Zukin, 1993]. Multiplexes have facilitated the efficient use of space and resources, enabling film chains to simultaneously offer a wider variety of films, thereby attracting diverse segments of viewers, and increasing revenues. This innovation propelled the domestic and global expansion of cinema chains [Mezias, Mezias, 2000].

Nowadays, cinemas are progressively employing extensive data analytics to gain a deeper insight into the preferences and actions of their audience [Smith, Telang, 2016]. This allows them to personalize their offers, create targeted marketing campaigns, and optimize their film repertoire to better meet audience expectations. Moreover, cinemas have to meet regulatory

challenges, including copyright, film licensing and compliance with local standards and norms, which is crucial to avoid legal and financial risks [Zhang et al., 2019].

Global cinema chains and strategic alliances: a comparative analysis

The landscape of global cinema is marked by a diverse array of chains and networks, each deploying unique strategic management practices to navigate the competitive entertainment industry. To illustrate the diverse nature of these strategies, Table 1 provides an overview of several prominent cinema chains and strategic alliances, highlighting their geographic reach and strategic focus.

Table 1 Overview of global cinema chains and strategic alliances

Type	Name	Short description
Chain	AMC Theatres	An American network of cinemas, one of the largest in the world.
Chain	Regal Cinemas	The second largest network of cinemas in the United States, managed by the Cineworld Group.
Chain	Vue Cinemas	An international network of cinemas based in London, with cinemas in many countries around the world.
Chain	Odeon Cinemas Group	Cinema operator operating in Europe; belongs to the American cinema giant AMC Theatres.
Chain	Cineplex Inc.	Canadian network of cinemas operating in Canada.
Chain	Cinemark Theatres	American network of cinemas operating in the USA and Latin America.
Chain	Pathé	A French network of cinemas, with cinemas in France, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands.
Chain	Cinepolis	The Mexican cinema network, the largest in Latin America and the second largest in the world.
Network	The Independent Cinema Office (ICO)	An organization from the UK that acts as a network for independent cinemas.
Network	Art House Convergence (AHC)	Network of independent cinemas in the United States.
Network	Europa Cinemas	A network of cinemas in Europe that work together to promote European films.
Network	Screen Australia's Independent Cinemas Australia (ICA)	An Australian network of independent cinemas that work together to promote independent Australian films.
Network	National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO)	An American organization that acts as a network for cinema owners in the USA.
Strategic Alliance	IMAX with Cineworld and AMC Theatres	IMAX Corporation, known for its large-format technology, has entered into strategic alliances with cinema networks such as Cineworld and AMC to increase the number of IMAX halls worldwide.
Strategic Alliance	Universal Pictures and AMC Theatres	In 2020, the two companies formed an alliance to shorten the traditional 90-day window between the movie's cinema premiere and its home availability.
Strategic Alliance	Cinema Buying Group (CBG)	This purchasing group for independent cinemas in the United States is an example of a strategic alliance that helps small cinemas negotiate the prices of equipment and services.
Strategic Alliance	Dolby and Odeon Cinemas Group	Dolby and Odeon have entered into a strategic alliance to build Dolby Cinema in the UK and Europe.
Strategic Alliance	Fathom Events, AMC, Cinemark, and Regal	Fathom Events, in partnership with AMC, Cinemark and Regal, specializes in event shows and special film shows in cinemas around the world.

Source: own research.

This comparative analysis offers insights into the strategic maneuvers within the industry, shedding light on how different organizations leverage their market position, technological innovation, and strategic partnerships.

1. Cinema chains:

- a. AMC Theatres and Regal Cinemas, for example, demonstrate the impact of large-scale operations and market presence in implementing expansive strategies that often include acquiring other cinema chains or entering into significant partnerships.
- b. European chains such as Odeon Cinemas Group and Pathé demonstrate strategies adapted to regional market dynamics, focusing on localized content and customer experience to maintain a competitive edge.

2. Strategic networks:

The Independent Cinema Office (ICO) and Art House Convergence (AHC) reflect the power of networking in the independent cinema market, where collaboration can lead to shared resources and a stronger collective bargaining position.

3. Strategic alliances:

Alliances such as those between IMAX with Cineworld and AMC Theatres or Universal Pictures and AMC Theatres highlight the trend of cinema chains aligning with technology providers and studios to enhance the movie-going experience and address the shrinking window between theatrical and home release.

This underscores the strategic diversity among different cinema organizations and illustrates the importance of adaptive strategies in the current global cinema market. Strategic alliances point to the importance of partnerships in scaling operations, accessing new technologies, and expanding market reach.

Impact on the film industry

The journey from the studio system to the era of multiplexes and global expansion highlights the significant role of cinema chains in shaping the film industry. Understanding the historical evolution of cinema chains provides necessary insights into the dynamics of film distribution, exhibition, and viewership, setting the stage for exploring the strategic management within this context. The transformation of cinema chains has influenced multiple facets of the film industry, such as production, distribution, and viewer interaction.

One of the paramount characteristics in the development of the film industry relates to changes in the paradigms of film distribution. The way movies are released and made available to audiences has drastically changed in recent decades, having a significant effect on the entire cinema business. The integration of digital technologies and online platforms has transformed the landscape of film distribution, enhancing its accessibility and efficiency. This democratization of film production and distribution has enabled the emergence of low-budget films and the service of niche markets [Ebelebe, 2019].

In addition, the growth of streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ has shortened the distribution window, creating an alternative to traditional movie versions. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated these changes, as many new videos have been released directly on streaming platforms or through digital rental services, bypassing traditional cinema distribution channels [Zhang, 2024]. These changes have led to a debate about the future of cinemas and the need to restructure business models to remain competitive in a rapidly changing market.

Changes in film distribution models pose both challenges and opportunities for the cinema industry. On the one hand, competition from digital media is forcing cinemas to look for new ways to attract viewers. On the other hand, the expansion of available distribution channels can extend the reach of films and enable creators to reach new segments of audiences. The emergence of approved digital delivery channels not only provided additional sources of revenue for studios, but also preserved traditional distribution models in the digital age [Mandrachia et al., 2019].

Strategic management in cinema chains: adapting to industry dynamics

Defining strategic management in cinema

Strategic management involves a holistic approach to goal setting, decision making and resource allocation to drive growth, innovation, and resilience [Czakon, 2012]. Strategic management in cinema chains involves not only planning and decision making, but also adapting to the rapidly evolving film industry. This discipline is crucial for guiding cinema chains in navigating the complexities of technological advancements, changing viewer preferences, and competitive pressures.

Effective operational management in cinemas involves optimizing all processes, from ticket management and customer service to maintenance and facility management. The advancement in digital technology, including ticket management systems and customer relationship management (CRM), enables cinemas to better manage customer relationships and handle sales and marketing more effectively. In addition, the use of the latest audio and video technologies is essential to provide a high-quality viewer experience. Modern CRM systems and data analysis tools enable cinemas to personalize offers and increase customer loyalty, which is crucial for maintaining competitiveness in the digital age [Łochnicka, 2016; Matwiejczuk, 2018].

Mintzberg [1994] describes strategy as a combination of deliberate and emergent elements. In cinema chains, deliberate strategies might include expansion plans or the adoption of cutting-edge technology, while emergent strategies might involve the adaptation to unexpected shifts in consumer trends or the emergence of new digital platforms. The dual approach to the

strategy allows the film chains to remain flexible and respond to market dynamics while striving for long-term goals [Sajdak, 2019].

Pierścionek [2023] highlights the organizations' need to harmonize their internal capabilities with external environmental changes. For cinema chains, this alignment is critical given the rapid technological advancements and evolving viewer preferences. Strategic planning, as discussed by Stoner, Freeman, Gilbert, and Griffin, is about defining clear visions, goals, and objectives. It involves decisions about service offerings, market targeting, and the extent of organizational activities. By adjusting strategic goals to organizational capabilities, cinemas can effectively respond to market dynamics and achieve the long-term success.

Understanding the significance of chains and networks

The evolution of cinema has brought the dynamics of chains and networks into sharper focus. Chains, linked to value or supply chains, are about adding value at every stage of the process. Networks, symbolizing interconnected relationships, highlight the importance of collaboration and partnerships in a globalized business environment. Czakon [2012] and Oblój [2023] stress the strategic significance of these networks, particularly in today's interconnected world, where isolation is not viable. In the context of cinema, relations capital, based on trust and shared values, plays a key role, enabling the building of long-term cooperative relationships necessary for stability and growth [Czakon, 2012].

Network models in the cinema industry play a critical role in shaping strategies and operations. Analyzing various network models, their structure, and dynamics can provide valuable insights into how cinemas can effectively manage relationships and resources to maximize their operational and strategic outcomes. Network theorists such as Granovetter, Burt and Lin emphasize the value of "weak links" in networks, which in the film industry can be a source of new information and opportunities not available in stronger, more established relationships [Ryan, 2023].

The rise of online streaming platforms poses a significant challenge to cinema chains, demanding continuous adaptation and innovation. Understanding strategic management through the insights of scholars such as Mintzberg and Pierścionek provides a comprehensive view of its effectiveness and impact on the success of cinema organizations. Incorporating social network analysis (SNA) techniques to monitor promotional activities and identify key social media contributors can increase the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and strategic planning in the film industry [Valente, Fujimoto, 2010].

Cinemas must be flexible and ready to adapt to changing consumer trends, especially in the face of growing competition from streaming platforms. An important strategy for attracting and keeping audiences is to introduce new types of entertainment, such as interactive screenings, unique thematic shows, or community gatherings. The use of digital platforms and social media has become an integral part of marketing and audience engagement, which

can significantly increase the popularity of the film and interest the audience even before its cinema premiere [Bocullo, 2016].

Research method

Introduction to the research method

This study employed a systematic and critical literature review, a structured research approach aimed at comprehensively examining the existing literature on strategic management within cinema chains [Czakoń, 2012; Grant, 2003]. This approach guarantees a comprehensive and objective evaluation of the subject, increasing the credibility and reliability of the findings.

The research question was formulated to guide the review: “How does strategic management influence the development and success of cinema chains?” This question is clear, concise, and directly linked to the research objectives.

A review protocol was developed outlining the research questions, search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and data extraction and synthesis procedures. This method aims to reduce bias and improve the clarity and repeatability of assessments.

Search strategy and sources

The literature search included several online databases, including Scopus, EBSCO, and JSTOR, covering publications from 1990 to 2022. The search was supplemented with additional sources such as conference proceedings and expert consultations. Carefully chosen keywords and search phrases were used to align with the area of study.

Study selection is a two-step process: an initial screening of titles and abstracts, followed by a full-text review of relevant studies. It was selected by two independent reviewers to ensure fairness and consistency.

A standardized form for data extraction was used to capture study characteristics, methodologies, results, and other relevant information. The quality of each study was assessed using appropriate evaluation tools to identify potential bias.

The data synthesis involved summarizing, comparing, and interpreting the findings. To guarantee that the results reached were supported by the examined literature, the synthesis approach was selected, taking the nature of the research question and the data availability into account.

The results of the literature review were reported following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines [Page et al., 2021]. The report provides a thorough description of methods, results, limitations, and implications for further study, instruction, or policy.

This systematic and critical literature review method provided a structured framework for identifying, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant literature on strategic management in cinema

chains, contributing to informed decision-making and knowledge advancement in this field [Lisiński, Szarucki, 2020].

Criteria for selecting publications

The literature selection for this study involved a meticulous three-part process, commencing with a comprehensive search of three esteemed academic databases: SCOPUS, JSTOR, and EBSCO. This initial stage aimed to collate pertinent scientific literature on strategic management, laying the groundwork for an in-depth scholarly exploration.

The selection criteria were carefully chosen to ensure the relevance and quality of articles. These criteria included:

- English language publications
- articles indexed in the Scopus database are related to accounting, management and business topics
- publications dating from 1990 to 2022
- studies supported by thorough reviews or empirical research
- open access articles, ensuring broader accessibility and dissemination
- bibliometric and content analysis

Bibliometric and content analysis

After applying these criteria, the selected papers underwent a rigorous bibliometric and content analysis. This analysis was primarily structured around the concept of strategic management and the research methodologies employed in the studies, aiming to derive cohesive and insightful narratives about the field.

The literature was scrutinized through a series of stages:

- initial verification based on titles, abstracts, and keywords, followed by a comprehensive full-text review
- extraction of data detailing strategic management definitions, research methodologies, geographical locations, study periods, and participant numbers
- reevaluation of the selected articles by a pair of researchers to confirm their relevance and appropriateness for in-depth study
- descriptive analysis of the articles retrieved from indexed databases as of April 22, 2023

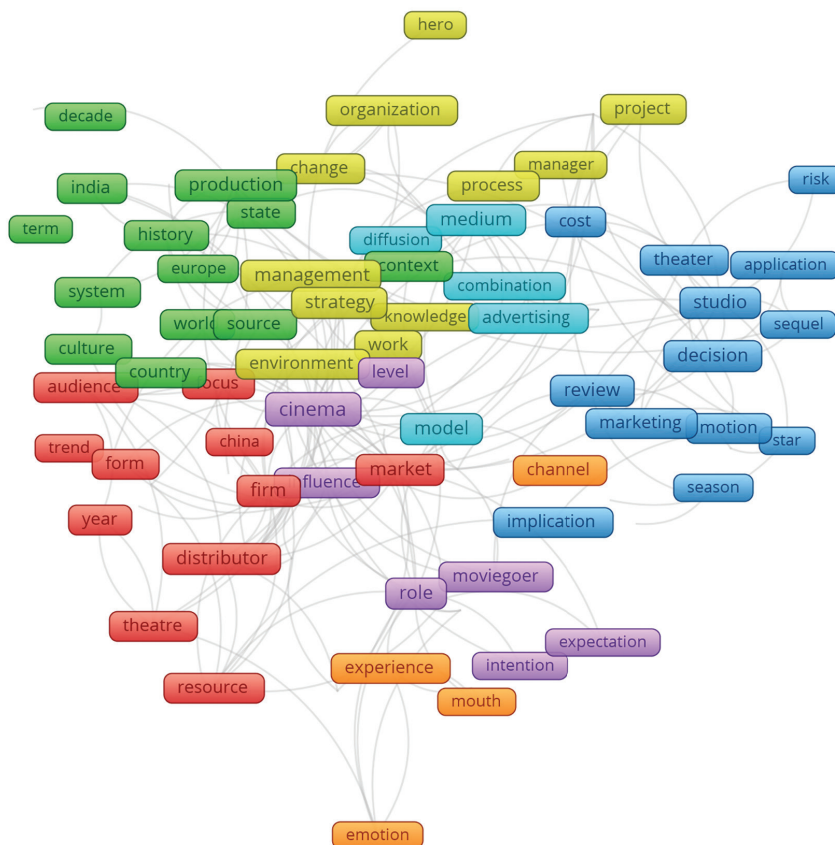
An analysis of data from the SCOPUS database shows a significant increase in publications on “strategic management” over the past decade. From 34 publications in 2012, there was a notable increase to 127 in 2022, a growth of approximately 270%. This increase after 2015, when publications almost tripled from 54 to 101 by 2018, highlights a growing interest in strategic management. Before 2012, the volume was relatively modest, fluctuating between 1 and 40 per year, with no publications in 2000.

The data show interesting trends in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The years 2020 and 2021 saw a decline in strategic management publications, likely a consequence of pandemic's disruptive effects on academic research activities. This period was marked by a shift in academic focus towards pandemic-related issues and crisis management, temporarily stalling strategy-related research. Nonetheless, a publication boom was observed in 2022, suggesting a revival of strategic management research in the aftermath of the epidemic.

Initial literature search and filtering

The study began with an exhaustive search of SCOPUS, JSTOR, and EBSCO databases for publications on “strategic management”. The initial pool of 32,663 papers indicated extensive academic engagement with the topic. To refine this vast collection to strategic management specific to cinema chains, search terms were narrowed by adding “movie theaters” and “cinema” terms. This refinement resulted in a substantial reduction, narrowing the field to 90 papers, highlighting the scarcity of literature at the intersection of strategic management and cinema chains.

Figure 1 Bibliometric analysis of abstracts in selected articles on strategic management in cinema chains



Source: own research (VOSviewer).

Figure 1 presents a bibliometric map generated by VOSViewer, demonstrating the inter-connectedness of keywords and their relationships based on the study of 90 abstracts of scientific articles concerning strategic management in cinema chains. Each node in the diagram corresponds to a keyword with the size of the node indicating the frequency of the keyword's presence in the literature. The connections between the nodes signify the co-occurrence connections between keywords.

The outcomes of the bibliometric examination unveiled three primary clusters of themes revolving around management, strategy, and cinema, along with three additional clusters pertaining to the market, market analysis, marketing, and emotions, as well as the origin of production with a distinction between the Indian and American markets. Despite the specific research conducted, the findings do not conclusively demonstrate associations with strategic management; they are rather more aligned with the market, market analysis, marketing, and emotions, as well as the genesis of production within a local framework.

The findings of this investigation carry significant implications for scholarly inquiry. A bibliometric evaluation was executed to assess the extent to which the research is connected to strategic management within cinema networks. It was observed that this subject matter is not directly tackled, but rather indirectly, through other subject matters. This highlights a gap in the existing literature and emphasizes the necessity for additional, more targeted empirical investigations in this domain.

Out of these 90 papers, 16 were initially identified as relevant based on abstract and keyword analysis. This step was pivotal in focusing on literature that specifically addressed strategic management within the context of cinema chains, leading to the exclusion of 74 papers due to their tangential relevance or insufficient focus.

Research results

Criteria for article inclusion

In the subsequent phase, the study focused on identifying influential publications, using citation count as a key indicator. This process narrowed the list to 10 key articles, as shown in Table 2, representing a diverse range of perspectives on strategic management in the broader context of the film and entertainment industries.

The in-depth review of these articles provided insights into various facets of the film and entertainment industries. Topics ranged from global film production strategies, industry restructuring, the creative economy, and the socio-cultural impact of cinema. However, none directly addressed the central theme of strategic management within cinema chains.

Table 2 Articles analyzed at the third selection stage

#	Database	Year	Title	Potential relevance for the study
1	EBSCO	2009	<i>Resolving the global efficiency versus local adaptability dilemma: US film multinationals in their largest foreign market in the 1930 s and 1940 s</i>	The article may give insights into the strategic techniques that contributed to the success of several US film companies in international markets, therefore providing lessons for strategic management in cinema chains.
2	EBSCO	2008	<i>Defining the creative economy: Industry and occupational approaches</i>	The article provides a conceptualization of the creative sector and its economic ramifications, which may aid in the strategic management comprehension of the movie industry's dynamics.
3	EBSCO	1993	<i>Organization as strategy: Restructuring production in the film industry</i>	This study evaluates the effect of structural rearrangement on the economic performance of the film industry and contributes to our understanding of strategic transformation processes that may be applied to cinema chains.
4	EBSCO	2008	<i>Hou Hsiao-Hsien reviewed</i>	This article may provide insights into European film promotion strategies, with implications for cinema chains' strategic marketing management.
5	SCOPUS	2005	<i>The business of culture: Strategic perspectives on entertainment and media</i>	This article provides strategic viewpoints on the entertainment and media industry, so enhancing the comprehension of cinema management tactics.
6	SCOPUS	2009	<i>"Going to the movies": Accounting and twentieth century cinema</i>	This article provides a historical context for the impact of accounting on the film industry, which may aid comprehension of how accounting procedures impact strategic management in cinema chains.
7	JSTOR	2011	<i>Evolution of Arts and Cultural Management Research Over the First Ten AIMAC Conferences (1991-2009)</i>	This study offers insights into the development of arts and culture management research, which may assist in the interpretation of evolving cinematic trends and techniques.
8	JSTOR	2013	<i>The Digital Revolution and Convergence in the Videogame and Animation Industries: Effects on the Strategic Organization of the Innovation Process</i>	This article examines the impact of the digital revolution on the structure of innovation processes, and the results may be useful for understanding the role of digital innovation in strategic management within cinema chains.
9	JSTOR	2015	<i>External Impact of Arts Management Research: An Extended Analysis</i>	This study provides information on the influence of arts management research on management and marketing disciplines, which may contribute to a better understanding of the strategic management role within cinema chains.
10	JSTOR	2006	<i>Review: Hollywood Economics: How Extreme Uncertainty Shapes the Film Industry</i>	This article provides insights into the consequences of great uncertainty in the film business, which may be applicable to understanding strategic management techniques in uncertain settings inside cinema chains.

Source: own research.

Strategic management application in cinema chains

Considering the concept of competitive advantage [Prahalad, Hamel, 1990], cinema chains could benefit from applying strategies based on their unique capabilities. Focusing on strengths such as innovative technology, customer experience, or unique content can offer a competitive advantage in the market. Cinema chains should use their distinctive competencies to create value proposals that are difficult to replicate by competitors. By integrating advanced technologies such as AI-based analytics and personalized marketing, cinemas can improve customer experience and operational efficiency [Smith, Telang, 2016].

Adopting innovative technologies such as state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment and engaging viewing experience such as IMAX or 4DX can attract technology-savvy audiences looking for excellent movie experience. Furthermore, improving the customer experience through loyalty programs, personalized content recommendations and premium services can differentiate cinema networks in a crowded market [Matwiejczuk, 2018].

Despite providing valuable contextual understanding, the direct applicability of these findings to strategic management in cinema chains remained limited. The need to extrapolate broader strategic management principles to the specific context of cinema chains became apparent. Conducting a comprehensive SWOT analysis can help cinema chains identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, providing a strategic roadmap to navigate competitive pressures and market changes [Czakon, 2013].

The key factors for the success of a cinema chain are maintaining a high level of service quality, constantly updating the technical infrastructure, and establishing strong relationships with film distributors and other stakeholders. Stakeholder management is crucial because the cooperation with technology providers, content creators, and local communities can improve strategic outcomes [Obłój, 2023]. Adaptability and flexibility are also crucial, because cinema chains must be prepared to adjust their strategies in response to rapid technological progress and changing consumer preferences.

Future research avenues

The scarcity of studies fully aligning with our criteria suggests new research directions. Future studies might involve expanded keyword searches, additional databases, varied research periods, and broader geographic scope. Studying the integration of new technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), into the cinema experience may provide new insights into strategic innovation [Sheremeta, Chukhrai, 2020]. Investigating different research methodologies and offering more nuanced definitions of strategic management could further enrich this field.

The current study opens several paths for future research:

- a. **Re-examining excluded publications:** Exploring initially excluded studies based on abstract and keyword analysis could uncover valuable insights into strategic management practices in the cinema industry.
- b. **Primary research methods:** The noticeable gap in the literature meeting our specific criteria suggests the utility of primary research methods such as surveys, interviews, and case studies. These approaches could yield direct, nuanced insights into strategic management practices within cinema chains.
- c. **Multilingual literature exploration:** Future studies should consider including research in languages other than English. This could broaden the understanding of strategic management in the film industry from diverse cultural and linguistic perspectives.

- d. **Cross-disciplinary approaches:** Examining how strategic management interacts with other fields, such as marketing, technology, and human resources, could offer a comprehensive understanding of how movie chains work.
- e. **Longitudinal studies:** Conducting longitudinal studies to observe the evolution of strategic management practices in cinema chains over time could offer insights into how these practices adapt to changing market dynamics and technological advancements.
- f. **Comparative studies:** Comparing strategic management practices across different geographical regions or sizes of cinema chains could uncover unique challenges and strategies employed in various contexts.
- g. **The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:** Given the impact of COVID-19 on the movie industry, future research should examine how movie chains adjusted their strategic approaches to management during the COVID-19 outbreak. This could provide valuable lessons in crisis management and resilience, showing effective strategies for coping with unprecedented disruptions.
- h. **The role of digital innovation:** With rapid technological changes the entertainment landscape, studying the role of digital innovation in strategic management in cinema chains is another promising area. This includes exploring how chains integrate new technologies, such as virtual reality and streaming platforms, into their business models. Research can help evaluate the effectiveness of these innovations in improving customer experience and operational efficiency.

The observed decline in publications during the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the influence of external events on research trends. This demonstrates how strategic management research must change to meet the demands of a globalized world. Future research should focus on how film networks adapted their strategic approaches to management during and after the pandemic, offering lessons on crisis management and resilience [Grainger-Brown, Malekpour, 2019].

In addition, it is important to explore the role of digital innovation in the changing strategic environment of cinema chains. Research could explore how cinema chains integrate streaming services into their business models, balancing theater experience with digital offers [Zhang, 2024]. Comparative studies in different geographical regions or sizes of cinema chains could reveal unique challenges and strategies applied in different contexts.

Primary research methods such as surveys, interviews and case studies should be used to gather direct insights from industry professionals. This can provide a deeper understanding of practical applications of strategic management theory in cinema chains [J.W. Creswell, J.D. Creswell, 2018]. The inclusion of multilingual literature can broaden the perspective by incorporating diverse cultural and regional insights into strategic management practices.

Given the rapid technological changes transforming the entertainment landscape, studying the role of digital innovation in strategic management in cinema chains is another promising area. This includes exploring how chains integrate new technologies, such as virtual reality and streaming platforms, into their business models. Long-term research that monitors the

evolution of strategic management practices over time can offer valuable insights into how these practices adapt to changing market dynamics and technological progress [Sajdak, 2019].

This study emphasizes the importance of comprehensive empirical research to fill the gaps identified. Future research should include extensive data collection and analysis to provide a better understanding of the impact of strategic management practices on cinema chains. This study will provide the basis for the development of a robust strategic framework specific to the film industry, helping policymakers effectively navigate complexities of this dynamic sector.

Discussion

The methodology used in this literature review, while thorough, had certain limitations:

- a. **Database selection:** The reliance on JSTOR, EBSCO, and SCOPUS, although reputable, may have omitted relevant studies available in other databases. Future research should consider incorporating additional databases for a more comprehensive literature review.
- b. **Keyword constraints:** The specificity of keywords such as “cinema,” “movie theatres,” and “motion picture theatres” might have limited the scope of the search. A wider selection of keywords that cover a greater range of relevant topics may prove beneficial for future research.
- c. **Language restriction:** Limiting the search to English-language sources may have overlooked significant contributions in other languages. Acknowledging and including multilingual sources could provide a more diverse and comprehensive perspective.

The limitations of this study not only highlight gaps in the current literature, but also pave the way for more diverse and in-depth future research. These suggestions aim to expand the scope of investigation, incorporating broader methodologies, languages, and interdisciplinary approaches to enrich the understanding of strategic management in the dynamic world of cinema chains.

Summary

The results of this literature review clearly indicate a significant gap in the existing research on strategic management in cinema chains. Despite the exhaustive search of various databases and the discovery of pertinent research, the insufficiency of specific studies underscores the necessity for additional empirical research. The examination sought to ascertain the extent to which strategic management in cinema chains has been explored, and findings indicated that this area is predominantly approached indirectly within alternative contexts. This gap underlines the importance of conducting fundamental research, such as surveys (?), interviews and case studies, to investigate strategic management practices in cinema chains. This study serves as a fundamental effort to highlight this gap and sets the stage for future research. It

is expected that subsequent research will address this gap, providing valuable insights that will be useful for both academic research and practical applications in the cinema industry.

Key strategic principles that impact cinema chains encompass strategic agility, resilience, and the ability to innovate and adjust to technological progressions. These principles enable cinema chains to effectively address market challenges, especially those concerning the dissemination of digital content. Essential elements of strategic management, such as market positioning, innovation, strategic planning, analysis, formulation, and implementation, are vital in preparing cinema chains to meet these challenges.

The outcomes of the literature review offer valuable insights for cinema chain managers to develop strategies to address technological and market changes. Examples encompass the introduction of new audiovisual technologies, the establishment of loyalty programs, customized offerings, and the use of data analytics to understand customer needs. The significance of strategic agility and resilience in response to rapidly evolving market conditions is highlighted as a crucial insight. Moreover, the integration of advanced data analytics can provide deep insights into consumer preferences, enabling cinemas to personalize offerings more accurately. The study was essential for recognizing scholars involved in strategic management research within cinema chains and their methodologies.

This research was necessary to understand who has conducted research in the field of strategic management in cinema chains and how. The shortcomings identified in academic works emphasize the need for further empirical investigations, which will be addressed in forthcoming publications unveiling the results of empirical research in theater chains.

Subsequent research efforts should concentrate on formulating methodologies that span broader periods of study and geographical scope. Research should also address the assimilation of new technologies and conduct studies in diverse regional and cultural settings to grasp different challenges and strategies adopted by cinema chains. Qualitative research, including surveys and case studies, will be carried out in the future to scrutinize the practical application of strategic management theory in cinema chains.

The review pinpointed strategic principles that significantly impact the progress of cinema chains. Key strategic components encompass the adoption of innovative technologies, strategic collaborations, and the ability to quickly adapt to market fluctuations. These components are essential for maintaining a competitive advantage in the rapidly evolving film sector.

Various facets of strategic management, such as market positioning, innovation, and strategic foresight, are critical for cinema chains to effectively address market challenges. Particularly, the transition to digital content distribution necessitates cinema chains to be agile and innovative in order to meet the evolving preferences of consumers who increasingly prefer on-demand content. Comprehending and implementing these strategic management elements empower cinema chains to stay pertinent and competitive in an era dominated by digital metamorphosis.

The study was crucial for identifying scholars engaged in research on strategic management in cinema chains and their methodologies. The research has revealed that while related subjects

are deliberated in other contexts, direct exploration on strategic management in cinema chains is scarce. This accentuates the necessity for focused empirical research to fill this gap and provide insights that can guide both academic research and pragmatic applications in the sector.

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