

MARKETING COMMUNICATION TO PROMOTE THE FILM “LA LA LAND” (2016)

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the marketing communication strategies used to promote the movie La La Land (2016) through Film Viewing Club events in Guangzhou, a first-tier city in southern China. The study targeted 1,548 members of the “Hao De Yi” Film Viewing Club, with a sample size of 406 respondents using Taro Yamane's formula. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture demographic information, audience satisfaction and motivations for attendance. Descriptive statistical methods, including percentages, means and standard deviations, were used to analyze the data.

The results highlight the application of the AIDA model — Attention, Interest, Desire and Action — in influencing audience behavior. In the “attention” category, scored highly for quality theater experiences (mean = 3.911) and interactive activities such as singing (mean = 3.906) were rated, while “interest” was triggered by visually appealing event posters (mean = 3.906) and giveaways (mean = 3.862). In the “Desire” category, identified exclusive merchandise (mean = 3.744) and the quality of the theater (mean = 3.729) were cited as the main motivators. In the “action” category, participants tended to share their experience on social media (mean = 3.658) to increase the reach of the event through electronic word of mouth (eWOM). This study highlights the importance of integrating artistic and thematic elements into marketing strategies, utilizing social media platforms and creating hybrid online-offline engagement models. The findings contribute practical insights for film marketing and provide a framework for improving audience engagement in the digital age.

Keywords: Marketing Communication, Promoting, La La Land, Film Viewing Club

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Introduction

In recent years, global streaming platforms have experienced rapid growth and reached a competitive maturity characterized by the strategic involvement of traditional Hollywood studios. This entry of established players has not only enriched the streaming industry by increasing the production of original content that attracts widespread interest, but has also intensified competition with traditional cinema (Yang, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this change by disrupting the movie market and weakening the previously dominant position of movie theaters in theatrical releases. Streaming platforms seized this opportunity and met the demands of modern viewers with flexible, affordable and personalized access to films. Unlike the fixed schedules of movie theaters, streaming allows viewers to freely choose content and watch it from home. This is fundamentally changing the industry's norms around the promotion and distribution of films, which had previously been stable for over a century (Qi & Lei, 2022).

In response, cinemas have introduced innovative methods to reinvigorate the moviegoing experience. One notable approach is the establishment of “movie viewing clubs”, which create a unique cultural environment that appeals to movie lovers and semi-professional viewers. These clubs have emerged from online communities on platforms such as Sina Entertainment, Weibo and WeChat and have evolved from informal gatherings organized by fans to structured events often organized by external enthusiasts or official distributors. The “MAO YAN Film Viewing Club” is an example of how these clubs can be effectively managed either by the distributors themselves or by local cineastes. They offer exclusive memorabilia and engage audiences through immersive, interactive experiences that boost word-of-mouth - a powerful asset in the digital age where audience engagement is crucial to a movie's success (Lv, 2021).

Film clubs have become indispensable not only as a social space, but also as an active component of film marketing. They attract participants through free movie screenings and promote a sense of community. In turn, members advertise online through discussions, reviews and sharing films on social media. This model provides a break from the daily grind and creates a ritualistic form of moviegoing that offers communal value and a sense of camaraderie, catering to the growing desire for shared experiences in entertainment (Jiang, 2022). These gatherings also create new social structures where active members or organizers often gain influence and build social capital that strengthens the community and supports

niche and independent films. By providing a platform for smaller productions, these clubs reduce the dominance of mainstream films and enable a diverse cinematic landscape. However, film clubs are facing increasing competition from mobile streaming platforms, which offer a similar sense of community and interactivity at a lower cost. This reflects a shift in the way audiences engage with cinema and demonstrates a wider cultural shift within youth subcultures (He, 2024).

The importance of studying film clubs lies in their role as a crucial innovation for the film industry in the face of rapid digitalization and changing audience behavior. By focusing on these clubs, this study fills a critical gap in understanding how hybrid marketing models that combine online and offline engagement affect film promotion and audience engagement. The transition from traditional marketing strategies to community-oriented promotion through film viewing clubs is an adaptive response to the challenges posed by streaming platforms. Exploring this phenomenon provides valuable insights into how cinemas can maintain relevance, foster audience loyalty and create immersive experiences that complement digital trends.

Today's movie marketing landscape relies on a combined online and offline strategy, with film viewing clubs serving as an advanced advertising model. These clubs, which originated in online forums such as Douban.com, reach younger audiences through digital recruitment and advertising, followed by offline screenings that create brand loyalty and engagement. This marketing method not only lowers costs, but also fosters a deeper emotional connection between the audience and the movie, supporting a long-term brand identity. Modern marketing techniques used by film viewing clubs include interactive screenings, the presence of professional critics and customized merchandise to strengthen audience engagement. An excellent example is the re-release of *La La Land* in 2023, where film viewing clubs used offline events to build anticipation and engagement. This case illustrates the effectiveness of film viewing clubs as a marketing tool that creates a solid community around movies and increases their reach via social media, which has a significant impact on box office success (Ogah & Abutu, 2021).

By examining the activities of movie viewing clubs, particularly in the context of recent screenings of *La La Land*, this study explores the motivations for audience participation, the benefits to viewers, and how these clubs enhance movie marketing strategies. The findings of this study will contribute to a broader theoretical and practical discussion about audience

engagement, hybrid marketing approaches, and the evolving role of movie theaters in an increasingly digital entertainment landscape. Film viewing clubs are not only adapting to digital trends, but also providing a multidimensional, immersive experience that preserves cinema as an integral part of the cultural fabric of society and highlights an important way for cinemas to navigate and thrive in the competitive media ecosystem.

Research Question

How to use marketing communication to promote the movie “La La Land” (2016).

Research Objective

To study marketing communication strategies to promote the film “LA LA LAND” (2016)

Conceptual framework

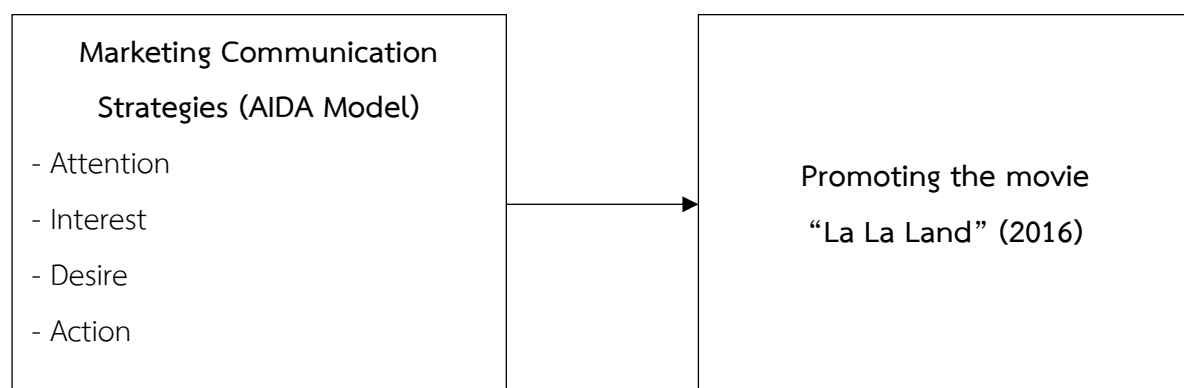


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Literature Review

Marketing Communication

The AIDA model, developed by St. Elmo Lewis in 1951, describes a four-stage process in the consumer's engagement with advertising that includes attention, interest, desire and action (Ogah & Abutu, 2021). This model, which is one of the hierarchy of effects models, assumes that the consumer goes through a series of cognitive and behavioral stages, from initial awareness to purchase. The AIDA process includes capturing the consumer's attention, arousing interest through relevant benefits, fostering a positive desire towards the brand and motivating purchase actions. In today's digital age, social networks such as Weibo, Renren and WeChat have revolutionized marketing by integrating AIDA principles into platforms where

images, videos and interactive content promote trust and drive purchase decisions (Ma & Ma, 2014). Social media enhances traditional advertising by enabling more interactive engagement and allowing customers to share and discuss brands, which builds consumer interest and trust and leads to more effective conversions. The AIDA model continues to be an important tool for marketers who want to strategically guide consumers from awareness to purchase using both traditional and digital media (Hafizhah & Dewanti, 2024).

Consumer Behavior

In consumer behavior theory, “interest” is highlighted as the first emotional stage that captures the consumer's attention and prompts them to seek further information about a product's features, price and benefits (Abdelkader et al., 2019). Interest plays a crucial role in advertising. Marketers need to put themselves in the consumer's shoes and design content that is aligned with the consumer's interests to encourage purchase intent (Arzanagh & Danaei, 2014). The AIDA model, which guides promotional efforts, emphasizes that well-designed materials can arouse consumer curiosity, encourage engagement and generate specific interest in the product (Pramita & Manafe, 2022). Interest leads consumers to recognize the product's potential to satisfy their needs, driving their desire and ultimate purchase decision (Zhao, 2019). Modern digital marketing uses different types of content, —including blogs, videos, podcasts and webinars, to target different audiences, cater to different preferences and maximize user engagement and retention (Hafizhah & Dewanti, 2024). With the advent of social media and mobile internet, interest-driven marketing has evolved significantly, especially in the field of film marketing, where interactive consumer engagement via social platforms increases brand visibility and encourages consumers to share and discuss. This interactive approach shapes brand perceptions and influences the purchasing decisions of others, with interest and positive word of mouth now more influential than mere attention (Liu & Wang, 2021).

Background of the movie “La La Land” (2016)

“La La Land” (2016), directed by Damien Chazelle, is an acclaimed American musical film that tells the story of Sebastian, a jazz pianist, and Mia, an aspiring actress, who support each other's dreams in Los Angeles, only to part ways after achieving their goals. Combining themes of love, dreams and jazz music, the movie effectively blends storytelling with music and dance to create a rich, emotional experience for viewers (He, 2024). Musical films have a long history, dating back to *The Jazz Singer* (1927) and gaining popularity in the 1930s and 60s with classics such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Sound of Music*. In contrast to these earlier musicals, *La La Land* contains postmodern elements by drawing on classic scenes and themes

from earlier films and engaging in a dialog with film history (Jin, 2023). The film's innovative storytelling techniques — such as the parallel montage, the expansion of visual dimensions and the dream-like city stage— - emphasize its modern appeal by incorporating traditional jazz and blues styles to resonate with contemporary audiences. Chazelle's narrative weaves together the twin themes of love and aspiration, showing Mia and Sebastian encouraging each other to succeed and providing a balanced, non-tragic view of love, even as they break up. The film's visual artistry, including color symbolism and lighting, reflects its Hollywood heritage while depicting a relatable journey of personal growth and ambition (Cheng, 2023; Li, 2019).

Research Methodology

1. Population and Sample: The target population for this study consists of members of the “Hao De Yi” Film Viewing Club in Guangzhou, a well-known first-tier city in southern China. These individuals have actively participated in the events of La La Land (2016) Film Viewing Club. The club currently has a total of 1,548 fans on social platforms. These viewers are central to this study as their viewing experiences and participation factors serve as the basis for analyzing the impact of marketing communication strategies. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Based on the total population of 1,548 fans, the formula resulted in a sample size of approximately 316 respondents. To improve data accuracy and account for possible non-responses, a further 90 samples were added, resulting in a total sample size of 406 participants.

2. Research Instrument: The primary research instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire specifically designed to capture respondents' demographic data, their satisfaction with movie attendance, and their motivations for participation. The questionnaire contained both closed-ended questions and Likert scale questions to capture audience attitudes and behaviors. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was tested with 30 respondents to ensure clarity and reliability.

3. Data Analysis: The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize demographic data and overall trends in audience satisfaction and motivation to participate.

Research Results

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of respondents

Personal Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
- Male	121	29.80
- Female	285	70.20
Age		
- Below 18	29	7.14
- 18-24	215	52.96
- 25-31	53	13.05
- 32-38	45	11.08
- 39-45	38	9.36
- 46-52	26	6.40
Job		
- Student	225	55.42
- Government/Government Officials/Civil Servants	44	10.84
- General Staff	68	16.75
- Professionals (Doctors/Lawyers/Writers/Journalists/Teachers, etc.)	31	7.64
- Freelancer	21	5.17
- Others	17	4.19
Income		
- Less than ¥3,001	247	60.84
- ¥3,001-5,000	42	10.34
- ¥5,001-7,000	65	16.01
- ¥7,001-9,000	29	7.14
- ¥9001 or more	23	5.67
Total	406	100.00

The table shows the personal factors of the 406 respondents according to gender, age, occupation and income. Of the participants, 70.20% were female, while 29.80% were male. The majority of respondents were between 18 and 24 years old (52.96%), with smaller proportions in other age groups, including 25-31 (13.05%), 32-38 (11.08%) and under 18

(7.14%). In terms of occupation, most respondents were students (55.42%), followed by general employees (16.75%), government officials or civil servants (10.84%) and professionals such as doctors, lawyers and teachers (7.64%). Income levels showed that 60.84% of respondents earned less than ¥3,001, with smaller groups earning between ¥3,001-5,000 (10.34%) and ¥5,001-7,000 (16.01%), and higher income brackets were a minority.

Table 2. the mean and opinion level in Likert scale each question

Attention	Mean	Opinion Level
1. The art design promotion poster for the “La La Land” (2016) Film Viewing Club event is noticed on Xiaohongshu.	3.892	Agree
2. Elaborate movie merchandise is noticed as giveaways from the Film Viewing Club.	3.842	Agree
3. The viewing is noticed to take place in a very good theater.	3.911	Agree
4. Interactive activities such as singing and playing egg videos are noticed in the promotion.	3.906	Agree
Interest	Mean	Opinion Level
5. Interest in the Film Viewing Club activities for “La La Land” (2016) is sparked after seeing the poster, prompting a desire to know more.	3.906	Agree
6. The price of a Film Viewing Club event is noticed to include a nice movie tie-in giveaway, which is intriguing.	3.862	Agree
7. The choice of cinema location is noticed to be excellent and rare, causing excitement.	3.808	Agree
8. Interest in live choral singing and egg videos is gained.	3.791	Agree
Desire	Mean	Opinion Level
9. The nice movie merchandise is a reason for wanting to attend the event.	3.744	Agree
10. The location, being one of the best theaters, is a reason for your willingness to attend the event.	3.729	Agree
11. The abundance of activities and unique social experiences on site are expected to be reasons for attending events.	3.712	Agree
12. The price is noticed to be reasonable, making participation desirable.	3.759	Agree

Table 2. the mean and opinion level in Likert scale each question (Cont.)

Action	Mean	Opinion Level
13. After successfully signing up for the event, the experience is felt to be very good.	3.589	Agree
14. The Film Viewing Club's merchandise is noticed to be satisfactory, with a desire to purchase more.	3.695	Agree
15. The Film Viewing Club is considered a very good way to watch movies.	3.584	Agree
16. Experience and feelings are shared on social media after the event, along with a recommendation for others to participate in similar events.	3.658	Agree

The table shows the mean scores and opinion levels on a Likert scale for each question related to the movie viewing club event for *La La Land* (2016). Under “Attention”, agreement with the statement about the quality of the movie theater is the highest (mean = 3.911), closely followed by interactive activities such as singing (mean = 3.906). In the “interest” category, paying attention to the event poster and the inclusion of promotional gifts for the film both received high scores (mean = 3.906 and 3.862 respectively). In the “Desire” category, the movie merchandise and the quality of the cinema motivated people to visit (mean = 3.744 and 3.729). Finally, in the “Action” category, participants expressed satisfaction with the merchandise and were inclined to share their experiences on social media. The scores of 3.695 and 3.658 indicate an overall positive level of engagement and a tendency to recommend the event to others.

Discussions

The results of this study underline the importance of combining artistic and thematic elements with the principles of the AIDA model — Attention, Interest, Desire and Action — in order to develop effective marketing strategies for film-related events. The high average scores for interactive activities, such as singing, and visually appealing posters reflect a strong ability to attract attention, the first step in the AIDA model. This aligns with Yang and Yang's (2021) observation that visually and emotionally appealing promotional materials increase audience engagement. By using romantically designed posters and themed merchandise reflecting the

aesthetics of *La La Land* (2016), the Film Viewing Club created a strong initial attraction, laying the foundation for the subsequent phases of the AIDA process.

The interest phase is reflected in the audience's positive reactions to the event posters and promotional giveaways for the film, which were rated highly in the study. These elements maintained the audience's curiosity and motivated them to stay engaged, highlighting the importance of tailoring promotional activities to audience preferences. According to Gong's (2019) research, such themed merchandise deepens emotional engagement, a crucial factor in maintaining audience interest. The Film Viewing Club's ability to generate enthusiasm for *La La Land* (2016) illustrates the effectiveness of interest-driven strategies that leverage the film's unique artistic identity.

In the Desire phase, the study highlights the motivating role of exclusive merchandising items and high-quality theater experiences, which were highly valued by respondents. These results confirm the AIDA model's focus on converting interest into desire through emotionally appealing and value-oriented offers. The audience's willingness to attend the event for high-value experiences and exclusive items is consistent with consumer behavior theories that emphasize the role of perceived value in decision-making (Zheng et al., 2014). By catering to these desires, the movie viewing club successfully bridged the gap between interest and action.

Finally, the action phase is reflected in participants' satisfaction with the merchandise and their propensity to share their experiences on social media platforms. These behaviors, which were positively evaluated in the study, are in line with the AIDA model's goal of encouraging the audience to take concrete actions, such as recommending the event to others or reporting about it online. Social media platforms such as Weibo and WeChat provided opportunities for electronic word of mouth (eWOM), which extended the reach of the event and created a cycle of ongoing engagement. This finding supports previous research by Sadiq et al. (2023) highlighting the transformative role of social media in improving audience engagement and brand loyalty.

Incorporating the AIDA model into the analysis illustrates the strategic flow of marketing communication, from capturing the audience's attention to encouraging actionable behavior. The Film Viewing Club's use of interactive activities, visually appealing merchandise and social media advertising exemplifies how aligning marketing strategies with the AIDA model increases audience engagement and drives event success. This integration of artistic direction,

strategic pricing and the AIDA model provides a comprehensive understanding of audience behavior and offers valuable insights for future film marketing strategies.

The new body of Knowledge found in this study

This study contributes to the field of film marketing by demonstrating the practical application of the AIDA model in modern film event promotion strategies. The study shows that integrating artistic elements into audience-focused marketing techniques significantly increases engagement. In particular, it is shown that visually appealing posters and thematic merchandise that align with the film's esthetics play a crucial role in attracting attention and maintaining interest. These results confirm that the emotional resonance and thematic focus of marketing campaigns create a deeper connection with audiences and make them actively engage in film-related activities. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of using film merchandise as a bridge between interest and desire. It shows how exclusive items can motivate audiences to attend events while building brand loyalty. This provides valuable insights into how film marketers can design campaigns that balance artistic integrity with the principles of consumer behavior.

In addition, this study sheds light on the evolving role of social media and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in amplifying audience engagement. The results show how platforms such as Weibo and WeChat enable a community-driven promotional cycle that allows audiences to share experiences and foster sustained interest. Integrating interactive offline activities, such as film clubs, with digital engagement strategies demonstrates a hybrid model that bridges the gap between traditional and modern marketing approaches. This dual strategy not only increases the visibility of the event but also creates a multidimensional experience that meets the expectations of today's audience. By combining the AIDA model with innovative digital marketing practices, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and designing effective film marketing strategies in a highly competitive and digitized entertainment landscape.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, this study offers several practical recommendations for film marketers and event organizers. First, marketing campaigns should emphasize the thematic and esthetic alignment between promotional materials and the film's artistic identity. For example, visually appealing posters, interactive activities and exclusive merchandising items

can be integrated into promotional strategies to capture the attention of target audiences, generate interest and create desire. Secondly, the use of social media platforms such as Weibo, WeChat and Douyin is important to increase the visibility of events and engage audiences through electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Film marketers should design campaigns that encourage audiences to participate in online discussions, reviews and social media sharing to increase their reach. Finally, it is recommended to develop hybrid marketing models that combine online and offline activities, such as movie clubs, to create a sense of community and deepen the audience's emotional connection. Organizers should focus on offering affordable experiences that include exclusive content or memorabilia to appeal to a cost-conscious but artistically engaged audience.

Future Research

Future research should further investigate the long-term effects of hybrid marketing models, such as Film Viewing Clubs, on audience loyalty and brand engagement. Studies could examine how these models influence repeat movie attendance and continued interest in other film genres or less commercially prominent films, such as independent productions. In addition, comparative research in different cultural contexts could shed light on how regional preferences influence the effectiveness of marketing strategies. Another possible avenue is to investigate the role of advanced digital tools, such as AI-driven recommendation systems or virtual reality experiences, in increasing audience engagement during advertising campaigns. Finally, longitudinal studies could examine the evolving interplay between social media-driven marketing and traditional film promotion to better understand how digital transformation continues to shape audience behavior and expectations in the cinema landscape.

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