




# Modeling Marketing Components and Subcomponents for Increasing Cinema Customers in the Iranian Cinema Market

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The primary objective of this study is to explore the marketing strategies employed within the Iranian cinema industry, focusing on the components and subcomponents that influence audience engagement and increase customer base. It aims to identify effective marketing practices and the challenges faced by professionals in the context of the Iranian cinema market.

**Methodology:** Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines qualitative interviews with 10 marketing managers from film production and distribution companies and a quantitative survey of 250 industry professionals. The qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify key marketing components and subcomponents. The quantitative data underwent exploratory factor analysis (EFA), calculating the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and applying the Fornell-Larker criterion for assessing the constructs' discriminant validity.

**Findings:** The study identified four main marketing components as pivotal to the Iranian cinema industry: Audience Focus, Competition Focus, Market Orientation, and Brand Orientation. These components encompassed various subcomponents such as customer preferences, social responsibility, market segmentation, and brand awareness, each contributing to the holistic marketing strategy. The quantitative analysis validated these components and indicated a significant relationship between the identified marketing strategies and their effectiveness in increasing the cinema audience.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that a comprehensive understanding and implementation of audience-focused, competition-driven, market-oriented, and brand-centered marketing strategies are crucial for the success and growth of the Iranian cinema industry.

**Keywords:** Iranian Cinema, Marketing Components, Customer Increase.

## 1 Introduction

In recent decades, the entry of marketing knowledge into realms beyond the domain of industrial products has been accompanied by an increasing pace. Among these, the film and cinema sector possesses a high appeal for utilizing marketing techniques and tools. Film marketing, aligned with the existing processes in the marketing management of other industries, begins with the development of a new product, continues with the formation of project ideas, and moves through production to the distribution and exhibition phase (Batra & Keller, 2016; Cheung et al., 2019; Witek, 2017). At key stages of the production lifecycle, various actors are involved in numerous marketing-related activities; from marketing an idea or a screenplay to marketing for a film production company and the final marketing for the film presented in cinemas, DVDs, and other forms of product distribution. Film marketing researchers define it as "any activity that assists a film in reaching its target audience at any moment of its existence" (Jockel & Dobler, 2006; Salavatian et al., 2018).

Iran is one of the few countries that has had a complete cycle of cinematic activities including production, distribution, and exhibition for many years; however, despite the very high number of Iranian cinema films, the number of cinema halls, the audience size, and the sales volume of films are very low. In recent years, statements like "the economic situation of Iranian cinema is bad," "people have boycotted cinema," "our cinema is not yet an industry," and similar ones are often heard and extensively discussed in articles and interviews. Unfortunately, only a few authors and speakers have examined the problem from the perspective of marketing management (Abdolvand & Hoseinzadeh Emam, 2014; Dadgaran & Abri, 2010; Salavatian et al., 2018).

Artistically, without doubt, Iranian cinema has significant facilities, talents, and potentials, and the gap between intellectual (festival) cinema and popular cinema has largely been bridged. Furthermore, the number of works that simultaneously attract critics and viewers has increased in recent years. Therefore, the missing link should be sought in the marketing of cinematic works. The goal of marketing in the cinema or film industry, like the original goal of marketing, is to introduce a product and its features to a customer with the aim of satisfying a specific need. In cinema, the product is the film itself, and the customer is an

audience who may potentially spend part of their time at the cinema. With this approach, marketing in cinema can be examined in two parts: "introducing the film" and "introducing the exhibiting hall."

## 2 Methods and Materials

### 2.1 Study Design and Participants

This mixed-methods study combines qualitative and quantitative research approaches to offer a comprehensive analysis of marketing practices within the Iranian cinema industry. The qualitative component consisted of semi-structured interviews with 10 marketing managers from film production and distribution companies, selected through purposive, non-random sampling to ensure rich, informative insights.

For the quantitative part, the study expanded its reach to include a broader array of cinema industry professionals, encompassing marketing personnel, producers, and distributors, with a sample size of 250 respondents. This component aimed to statistically evaluate the application and effectiveness of various marketing strategies and identify prevalent challenges across the industry.

### 2.2 Data Collection

Qualitative data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, enabling detailed discussions on marketing strategies, customer engagement efforts, and industry-specific challenges. Interviews were carried out either in person or via video conferencing platforms, based on participant convenience, and were recorded with prior consent for transcription and analysis.

The quantitative data were collected via an online survey disseminated through email and professional networking platforms. The survey comprised both closed and open-ended questions, designed based on insights gained from the qualitative interviews and validated by industry experts. The survey aimed to capture a wide array of data on marketing practices, strategy effectiveness, and perceived industry challenges.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

The qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, which involved detailed coding of interview transcripts to identify

recurring themes and patterns related to marketing strategies and industry challenges. This iterative process ensured a deep understanding of the qualitative insights provided by the marketing managers.

Quantitative data analysis employed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify underlying variables or factors that explain the pattern of correlations within the set of observed variables. This method was instrumental in determining the dimensions of marketing practices and customer engagement strategies within the cinema industry. Additionally, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was calculated to assess the explanatory power of the identified factors on the effectiveness of marketing strategies. The Fornell-Larker criterion was applied to evaluate the discriminant validity of the constructs, ensuring that each construct was distinct and contributed uniquely to the understanding of marketing practices in the cinema industry.

### 3 Findings and Results

To determine the dimensions of the initial model, the content analysis approach was used, which identified subcategories in 4 categories of audience focus, competition focus, market focus, and brand focus through interviews with experts (10 statistical sample individuals in the qualitative section) as described in Table 1. It can be stated that based on the table, each concept was initially developed and finally, based on the main concept, a core code was identified, which are the subcategories of each category and are placed in their respective categories that can affect the film and cinema marketing model as explained in the categories and subcategories.

**Table 1**

*The Results of Thematic Analysis*

Categories	Subcomponents
Audience Focus	Customer preferences and interests Focusing on the customer Receiving feedback Creating value for the customer Customer surveys Communication with the customer Interaction with the customer Customer relationship management Appropriate pricing Addressing customer complaints Engaging the customer Customer satisfaction rate Loyalty programs Customer segmentation Film attractiveness Having an appropriate message for customers Using actors popular with customers Producing suitable content Customer participation Changing customer attitudes Retaining customers Customer satisfaction Reducing distance with the customer Film critique Film impact
Competition Focus	Social responsibility

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	Creativity and innovation
	Differentiation
	Employing new technologies
	Film positioning
	Competitive advantage
	Service diversity
	Facilities and processes
	New services
	Appropriate investment
	Increasing competitive capability
	Knowledge orientation
	Employee training
	Employee learning
	Managing customer experiences
	Integration and partnership
	Attention to criticisms
	Customer support
	Enhancing technical capabilities
	Optimizing internal operations
Market Focus	Gaining market share
	Market segmentation
	Advertising
	Distribution
	Film promotion
	Market forecasting
	Strategic orientation
	Internal coordination
	Creating market intelligence
	Responding to market intelligence
	Market studies
	Marketing capabilities
	Attention to market opportunities
	Strategic thinking in the market
	Analyzing market trends
	Market integration
	Recognizing future commercial paths
	Market performance evaluation
Brand Focus	Brand awareness
	Brand recall
	Brand equity
	Brand attractiveness
	Market share of the brand
	Brand differentiation
	Brand performance
	Brand strategy
	Brand loyalty
	Brand reputation
	Brand satisfaction

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In this section, the descriptive findings of the model's subcomponents are examined, and it can be stated that since the subcomponents were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, [Table 2](#) shows that all the subcomponent averages are above the cut-off point (spectrum break) of the 5-point Likert scale (2.5), and considering that this average is also above the

spectrum cut-off, it does not pose a specific problem. The above results indicate that the respondents have answered the research questions in alignment with the research objectives, and the data have a standard deviation spread around the mean, with the results of the mean and standard deviation analysis visible in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2**

*The Results of Descriptive Statistics*

Audience Focus	Mean	Standard Deviation
Competition Focus	3.45	0.435
Market Focus	3.21	0.654
Brand Focus	3.65	0.324
For the factor loading table:	3.32	0.657
Total Initial Eigenvalues	3.25	0.611
Percentage of Variance	3.04	0.543
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	2.97	0.577
Audience Focus	2.78	0.765
Competition Focus	2.94	0.432
Market Focus	3.11	0.654
Brand Focus	3.67	0.610
For the factor loading table:	3.44	0.656
Total Initial Eigenvalues	3.56	0.732
Percentage of Variance	3.41	0.546
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	4.01	0.756
Audience Focus	4.53	0.875
Competition Focus	3.67	0.633
Market Focus	3.23	0.382
Brand Focus	3.17	0.365
For the factor loading table:	3.77	0.435
Total Initial Eigenvalues	3.54	0.461
Percentage of Variance	3.09	0.547
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	3.44	0.632
Audience Focus	3.87	0.616
Competition Focus	3.52	0.734
Market Focus	3.67	0.453
Brand Focus	3.54	0.422
For the factor loading table:	3.98	0.432
Total Initial Eigenvalues	3.43	0.265
Percentage of Variance	3.12	0.546
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	3.65	0.435
Audience Focus	3.25	0.465
Competition Focus	3.90	0.534
Market Focus	3.45	0.656
Brand Focus	3.67	0.544
For the factor loading table:	3.65	0.656
Total Initial Eigenvalues	3.46	0.632
Percentage of Variance	4.35	0.657
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	3.23	0.675
Audience Focus	4.51	0.545
Competition Focus	3.43	0.654
Market Focus	4.12	0.633
Brand Focus	3.57	0.455
For the factor loading table:	3.76	0.634
Total Initial Eigenvalues	3.23	0.564
Percentage of Variance	3.67	0.561
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	3.52	0.366

Audience Focus	3.11	0.411
Competition Focus	3.65	0.456
Market Focus	3.43	0.325
Brand Focus	3.43	0.675
For the factor loading table:	3.56	0.764
Total Initial Eigenvalues	3.21	0.675
Percentage of Variance	3.65	0.834
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	3.24	0.546
Audience Focus	3.23	0.657
Competition Focus	2.54	0.744
Market Focus	2.65	0.540
Brand Focus	2.90	0.565
For the factor loading table:	2.87	0.564
Total Initial Eigenvalues	2.54	0.433
Percentage of Variance	3.45	0.761
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	4.11	0.543
Audience Focus	3.67	0.577
Competition Focus	3.21	0.675
Market Focus	3.56	0.494
Brand Focus	3.80	0.657
For the factor loading table:	3.45	0.564
Total Initial Eigenvalues	3.21	0.622
Percentage of Variance	3.56	0.644
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	3.98	0.541
Audience Focus	3.42	0.566
Competition Focus	3.82	0.434
Market Focus	4.21	0.567

For the exploratory factor analysis, the principal component analysis method and varimax rotation were used, extracting 4 dimensions as the model's dimensions along with the subcomponents. These 4 dimensions explain 78.28% of the total variance. The criterion for selecting subcomponents as an index for factors was having an

eigenvalue greater than one and also a factor loading of 0.70 or higher, provided it appears less in other factors, and finally, 74 subcomponents were selected. Each of these indicators, the related factors, and their factor loadings are shown in [Table 3](#).

**Table 3**

*Factor Loadings*

Factors	Audience Focus	Competition Focus	Market Focus	Brand Focus
<b>Subcomponents</b>				
Customer preferences and interests	0.764			
Focusing on the customer	0.735			
Receiving feedback	0.793			
Creating value for the customer	0.744			
Customer surveys	0.784			
Communication with the customer	0.755			
Interaction with the customer	0.876			
Customer relationship management	0.765			
Appropriate pricing	0.711			
Addressing customer complaints	0.744			
Engaging the customer	0.790			
Customer satisfaction rate	0.773			
Loyalty programs	0.865			
Customer segmentation	0.843			
Film attractiveness	0.712			
Having an appropriate message for customers	0.764			
Using actors popular with customers	0.777			

Producing suitable content	0.705			
Customer participation	0.815			
Changing customer attitudes	0.790			
Retaining customers	0.792			
Customer satisfaction	0.798			
Reducing distance with the customer	0.730			
Film critique	0.766			
Film impact	0.743			
Social responsibility		0.766		
Creativity and innovation		0.743		
Differentiation		0.744		
Employing new technologies		0.833		
Film positioning		0.732		
Competitive advantage		0.762		
Service diversity		0.769		
Facilities and processes		0.755		
New services		0.743		
Appropriate investment		0.811		
Increasing competitive capability		0.865		
Knowledge orientation		0.762		
Employee training		0.833		
Employee learning		0.787		
Managing customer experiences		0.711		
Integration and partnership		0.803		
Attention to criticisms		0.765		
Customer support		0.743		
Enhancing technical capabilities		0.781		
Optimizing internal operations		0.764		
Gaining market share			0.850	
Market segmentation			0.865	
Advertising			0.847	
Distribution			0.843	
Film promotion			0.867	
Market forecasting			0.846	
Strategic orientation			0.755	
Internal coordination			0.789	
Creating market intelligence			0.734	
Responding to market intelligence			0.731	
Market studies			0.769	
Marketing capabilities			0.754	
Attention to market opportunities			0.738	
Strategic thinking in the market			0.761	
Analyzing market trends				
Market integration				0.845
Recognizing future commercial paths				0.890
Market performance evaluation				0.844
Brand awareness				0.846
Brand recall				0.836
Brand equity				0.866
Brand attractiveness				0.847
Market share of the brand				0.832
Brand differentiation				0.785
Brand performance				0.766
Brand strategy				0.790
Brand loyalty				0.754
Brand reputation				0.794
Brand satisfaction				0.766
Total Initial Eigenvalues	5.34	4.67	3.76	4.55
Percentage of Variance	25.84	15.49	14.65	10.66
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	25.84	41.33	55.98	66.64



To examine the model's quality, redundancy check indices and the coefficient of determination are used. Positive numbers indicate the model's suitable quality. The main criterion for evaluating the structural model is the coefficient of determination. This index shows what percentage of the variations in the dependent variable are accounted for by the independent variables. The  $R^2$  value

indicates that 87.7% of the variations in film and cinema marketing are predicted by the identified subcomponents (model dimensions). If the redundancy index is more than zero, the observed values are well-reconstructed, and the model has predictive capability. In this research, this index for the film and cinema marketing variable is above zero.

**Table 4**

*The Results of Thematic Analysis*

Row	Categories	1	2	3	4
1	Audience Focus	1			
2	Competition Focus	0.831	1		
3	Market Focus	0.764	0.886	1	
4	Brand Focus	0.774	0.868	0.879	1

One of the methods to test this validity is the Fornell-Larcker test. Table 4 shows the results obtained for the research model dimensions. The table below shows that the constructs are completely distinct, meaning the main diagonal values for each latent variable are greater than that dimension's correlation with other reflective dimensions present in the model.

#### 4 Discussion and Conclusion

Cinema, the newest branch of art known as the seventh art, nowadays offers one of the most popular artistic productions. Despite this, an important issue that remains marginalized is the industrial position of cinema, which has been less addressed. What guarantees the success of this profitable industry are its marketing activities. Given that our country is among the few that possess a cinema industry but has a negligible economic position and share globally, it indicates a lack of proper understanding of its marketing process and very little academic attention has been paid to this field.

Moreover, because governmental support significantly reduces investment risk in the most crucial part of film production, namely financing, many producers and filmmakers not only do not make efforts to align with audience demands but have also come to believe that there is no need to cater to the general audience's preferences (Salavatian et al., 2018). This approach has led to a

considerable gap between film demand and its supply sector. Under these circumstances, without regard for the economic state of the film market, annually, backed by governmental support, more than sixty films are produced. From this perspective, Iran occupies a significant position among countries with a cinema industry.

On the other hand, Iranian filmmakers, producers, and distributors still lack a precise and clear understanding of marketing as a specialty; they superficially know film markets and their importance and functions, are not properly aware of global legal issues regarding film sales, and do not advance their work based on collective wisdom in film sales. Therefore, it is necessary for the specialization related to film marketing to be systematically and fundamentally formed in the private sector, with significant governmental entities (such as the Foreign Trade Department, Farabi Cinema Foundation, and Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance) acting as supporters of academic courses, and to compile and make available the gained experiences in oral and written form to the private sector (Abdolvand & Hoseinzadeh Emam, 2014; Dadgaran & Abri, 2010). Conducting such a process requires applied research to provide necessary guidance to Iranian cinema stakeholders in the field of film marketing. In this direction, the current research aimed to answer two important questions in this field:



What are the components and subcomponents of marketing and customer increase for cinematic films in the Iranian cinema market?

The results showed that 4 main components for marketing cinematic films along with 74 subcomponents were identified, including: Audience Focus (customer preferences and interests, focusing on the customer, receiving feedback, creating value for the customer, customer surveys, communication with the customer, interaction with the customer, customer relationship management, appropriate pricing, addressing customer complaints, engaging the customer, customer satisfaction rate, loyalty programs, customer segmentation, film attractiveness, having an appropriate message for customers, using actors popular with customers, producing appropriate content, customer participation, changing customer attitudes, retaining customers, customer satisfaction, reducing distance with customers, film critique, and film impact), Competition Focus (social responsibility, creativity and innovation, differentiation, employing new technologies, film positioning, competitive advantage, service diversity, facilities and process, new services, appropriate investment, increasing competitive capability, knowledge orientation, employee training, learning employees, managing customer experience, integration and partnership, attention to criticisms, customer support, enhancing technical capabilities and optimizing internal operations), Market Orientation (gaining market share, market segmentation, advertising, distribution, film promotion, market forecasting, strategic orientation, internal coordination, creating market intelligence, responding to market intelligence, market studies, marketing capabilities, attention to market opportunities, strategic thinking in the market, market trend analysis, market integration, recognizing future business paths, and market performance evaluation), and Brand Orientation (brand awareness, brand recall, brand equity, brand attractiveness, market share of the brand, brand differentiation, brand performance, brand strategy, brand loyalty, brand reputation, and brand satisfaction).

How is the modeling of components and subcomponents of marketing and customer increase for cinematic films in the Iranian cinema market?

The results of exploratory factor analysis using the principal component analysis method and varimax rotation showed that 4 dimensions were extracted as the model dimensions along with subcomponents. These 4 dimensions explain 78.28% of the total variance. The criterion for selecting subcomponents as an indicator for factors was having an eigenvalue greater than one and a factor loading of 0.70 or higher, provided it appears less in other factors, and finally, 74 subcomponents were selected. The model was then quantified using the partial least squares and bootstrapping technique, showing that the model is in a standard and significant state and that the presented model has a high quality for predicting marketing and increasing customers for cinematic films in the Iranian cinema market.

## 5 Limitations and Suggestion

This study, while providing valuable insights into the marketing strategies of the Iranian cinema industry, is subject to several limitations. Firstly, the qualitative component involved interviews with a limited number of marketing managers, which may not fully capture the diverse perspectives and experiences of all industry stakeholders. Secondly, the quantitative survey, although reaching a broader audience, might still not be entirely representative of the entire cinema industry in Iran, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the rapidly evolving nature of the cinema industry and marketing practices could mean that the data and insights may become less relevant over time. Furthermore, cultural, economic, and regulatory factors specific to Iran were central to the study's context, which might limit the applicability of its conclusions to other countries or cinema industries with different conditions.

Given the obtained results, the following recommendations are proposed:

1- Given the dispersion of marketing activities in the film sector and the absence of a capable and specialized individual to support marketing activities in the film sector, especially through social media, the researcher suggests the creation of a specialized department for marketing media products and specifically film marketing in media organizations and institutions, which, with mastery over influential factors, would handle marketing and selling films on social media.

2- Recognizing the audience and analyzing their behavioral patterns is one of the influential factors that has been considered today and was addressed in this research. One of the activities that can be done for film marketing is to examine different audience groups and understand their preferences. Based on this, audiences can be categorized into different groups and marketed to according to the interests of those groups.

3- One of the important capabilities of social media is the possibility of interaction and communication with users. Media organization managers can form an experienced work group knowledgeable about content flow and film production to respond to user inquiries as quickly as possible. Additionally, experience has shown that not taking a stance against their opinions is effective in attracting audience attention.

### Authors' Contributions

Morteza Talebi played a pivotal role in conceptualizing the study's framework, focusing on the development of the primary objective to explore marketing strategies within the Iranian cinema industry. Talebi was instrumental in designing the methodology, particularly the qualitative interviews, and contributed significantly to the thematic analysis of the qualitative data. Talebi also drafted the initial version of the manuscript and integrated the findings into the broader context of marketing within the Iranian cinema market.

Bahram Alishiri was primarily responsible for the quantitative aspect of the study. Alishiri designed and executed the survey distributed among 250 industry professionals, conducted the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and assessed the constructs' discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larker criterion. Furthermore, Alishiri took the lead in interpreting the quantitative data, demonstrating the significant relationship between the marketing strategies identified and their effectiveness in audience expansion. Alishiri also played a crucial role in revising the manuscript, ensuring the integration of both qualitative and quantitative findings, and contributed to refining the study's objectives and conclusions.

Jamshid Salehi Sadaghiani focused on literature review, data collection, and analysis. Sadaghiani was responsible for gathering and analyzing previous research to support the

study's foundation, conducting the interviews with marketing managers, and assisting in the survey distribution. He contributed to both the qualitative and quantitative data analysis processes, aiding in the identification of key marketing components and subcomponents. Sadaghiani also contributed to writing and editing the manuscript, particularly in the sections related to the study's findings and the discussion on the implications of these findings for the Iranian cinema market.

Together, the authors have ensured that the study offers a comprehensive examination of marketing strategies in the Iranian cinema industry, contributing valuable insights into the components and subcomponents that can drive audience engagement and growth. Their collaborative effort has resulted in a study that not only identifies effective marketing practices but also addresses the challenges faced in the context of the Iranian cinema market, providing a solid foundation for future research and practical applications in the field.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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### Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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