

ESCAPING FROM REALITY

CINEMA ADMISSIONS DURING THE RECESSION

by

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ES4-4a

A Dissertation submitted to the Academy of
European Studies & Communication Management
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
BACHELOR EUROPEAN STUDIES

The Hague University of Applied Science

June, 2014

Executive summary

Researchers have long argued about the existence of the universal consumer trend escapism since it is believed that the trend has a positive influence on the entertainment industry, and thus the cinema industry, during the recession. As a result, the cinema industry is believed to be recession-proof, but due to the contrary statements, this study questions the existence of the consumer trend and answers the following research question: what causes the discussion on the existence of escapism with regard to the cinema admissions during the recession?

In order to answer this question and to conclude whether escapism exists or not, the study addresses several theories on escapism and consumer behaviour, such as the consumer buying process, impulse buying and the influence of the direct environment, by which escapism in this study is defined as "the act of outweighing the future benefits of a postponing a purchase, in this case a cinema ticket, too rapidly due to unsatisfying life circumstances by which the consumer can focus on something other than his or her own situation." This means that escapism is a hedonically complex experience as he or she is seeking short-term pleasure, which is based on emotional motives and influences from the external environment, especially peers, family members and, most importantly, the economic situation.

Even though, Dutch cinema admissions have been rising significantly since the recession was officially announced in late 2008, the number of visits in France, the United Kingdom and the United States faced a more undulating movement. This movement has not only been observed since the recession began to show effects, but also in the years before the recession started. It can therefore be concluded that this movement seen in France, the United Kingdom and the United States is quite normal and may be due to, for instance, the number and quality of movies released. Moreover, escapism is seen as an universal trend, which means that it should not solely be observed in one country, but in all countries outlined in this study.

Moreover, to further explore the potential existence, a questionnaire has been spread among young adults and a small focus group has been held by which the connections between escapism and other consumer behaviour trends have been examined. Even though, it seems fair to conclude that buying a cinema ticket can be attributed to impulse buying, it has been concluded that the variables mentioned by other researchers, such as accessibility, income, parental amount of visits and loneliness, do not influence cinema admissions.

In addition, all respondents of both the questionnaire and the focus group have indicated that visiting the cinema is a nice activity outside the house and it is a good activity to do with friends, family or a partner. Besides, the national cinema exhibitor's association have stated in their studies that a cinema visit has been and still is the cheapest leisure activity which could thus positively influence the cinema admissions. It is, however, important to keep the advantages of both the Internet and the growth of Video-on-Demand companies in mind as these can influence cinema admissions in the long term.

So, it has been concluded that the universal consumer trend escapism does not exist, because a significant trend in increased cinema admissions would have been observed in all countries and the outcomes of the questionnaire and the focus group would have suggested otherwise.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A few months ago, someone asked me what my guilty pleasures were when I was facing difficulties. Even though, I have never given much thought on what I do to make myself feel better, I did not have to think about the answer: food, books and an overdose of Bridget Jones. But why is Bridget Jones the one I seek comfort in? The answer seemed rather simple. The story about a single woman in her early thirties who is facing many problems, mainly caused by no one but herself, makes me feel better about my own situation. She decided to change her life drastically by stop smoking and excessive drinking, start losing weight and find a nice guy to be with, which seems like the perfect story to go wrong, but, in the end, everything worked out just fine. Even though, I had seen Bridget Jones over a hundred times, I never got tired of the same story. Through this, I started wondering what the reason behind this behaviour would be by which I came across the consumer trend escapism. Although, the concept seemed to perfectly summarise what I had concluded just about then, I wondered if escapism, which seems to be more an assertion than a fact, could truly influence cinema admissions.

Therefore, the focus of this study is escapism. Could escapism be the potential reason behind the rise of cinema admissions in the Netherlands since the recession was officially announced in late 2008? And if so, does this universal trend occur in other countries as well? In order to explore escapism, the study addresses the exploration of several variables: the number of cinema tickets sold, the number of cinemagoers, prices of movie tickets and certain motives of consumer buying behaviour ascribed to escapism.

This chapter will first give an introduction of the research problem, after which the research questions are presented. Then, the purpose and the aims and objectives are outlined. Finally, this chapter summarizes the structure of the complete report.

1.1 Background information

The world economy has been struggling with the effects of the *credit crisis*, which started in the United States in 2007 and began to have effects worldwide in late 2008 as the economic growth declined and was lower than normal. During these hard economic times, it is likely that consumer confidence is lower as inflation is higher and it, therefore, seems probable that recessions bring upon radical and disruptive changes in consumer behaviour since consumers have to spend more to buy goods. Consequently, it is assumed that consumers are less willing to make (large) purchases as the value of money has changed and it is plausible that a certain purchase is more expensive.

It is thus widely believed that consumer spending changes during recessions as individuals' *disposable income* decreased. *Cash squeezing* and *sellsuming* are two of these commonly accepted consumer trends, which means that consumers might, for instance, try to save on the necessary purchases, also called cash squeezing, or consumers might not only want to save money, but also make money by selling the properties they no longer need or use, also known as sellsuming (Portmann, 2009; Smirnova, 2009).

"However, researchers have long argued that consumer behaviour is often irrational and economised (Holbrook & Hirshman, 1982; Cargill & Wendel, 1996; Elliot, 1997). Researchers argue that rational choice is generally satisfied in transparent situations and often violated in non-transparent ones (Tversky & Kahneman, 1986)" (Ma, Wei & Chen, 2013, p. 11). For example, someone can try to save money on groceries by comparing prices and buying the cheapest available product, while that same person buys a more expensive jumper without comparing prices because of the perceived value and quality of the product. So, consumers seem to not always try to save money on certain purchases, not even when times are tougher as a result of the ongoing effects of the recession.

It goes without saying that the perceived value, quality or experience does not only apply in the field of clothing. According to the British Shoppercentric surveys from 2008 and 2011, the outcomes "surprisingly show that whilst consumer recreational spending is believed to have slowed down, impulse buying is still growing" (Ma, Wei & Chen, 2013, p. 10). Although recreational spending can refer to many different activities, it is remarkable that cinemas in the Netherlands have observed an increase of total tickets sold and box office revenues, which is a form of leisure as well. Moreover, whilst the effects of the recession had already made its entry, Dutch cinema admissions have reached a record number in 2011, which has not been observed in the last thirty years. So why do people still visit the cinema during the current economic woes?

A widespread theory among filmmakers and enthusiastic moviegoers is that people would like to turn to fantasy and fiction to forget their own problems in difficult times. And during the recession, there are simply more people with (financial) concerns. This urge to escape from the reality is the so-called consumer trend *escapism*. According to Hans van de Sande, social psychological researcher and lecturer at the University of Groningen, "escapism is a well-known academic theory, not only within film industry, but also known in the other entertainment industries. In times of crisis, people preferably look at movies or the scenes in which people are notably are better off" (Huijbregts, 2012). On the other hand, William Pool, a lecturer in Media History at the University of Amsterdam, advocates

that this assumption of escapism is historically rebuttable. He highlights that in the crisis of the thirties, the number of visitors dropped from 90 million to 60 million in America and it was not until 1935 that the numbers were going up again (Huijbregts, 2012).

So, these contractions raise questions. Consumer buying behaviour often seems to be irrational and only partially based on rational choices. It does, however, seem to be logical to impute the increased number of visitors and revenues in the Netherlands to escapism. This research therefore focusses on both the consumer the existence of the consumer trend escapism through which the central question of this research is: what causes the discussion on the existence of escapism with regard to cinema admissions during the recession?

1.2 Statement of research problem

For years, the cinemas have observed a decline in the total cinema admissions, while it has been the cheapest form of leisure throughout the years. Since the start of the recession in late 2009, cinema attendance in the Netherlands has however been increasing. This change was striking as Dutch cinema faced a record amount of visits which has not been reached in thirty years. Even though, this is initially a good change, studies from cinema exhibitor's associations have not given an explanation of the rationale behind this development, while cinema admissions may stagnate or, in the worst case scenario, decrease in the (near) future.

Beyond that, the discussion about escapism has resurfaced. As a result, there has been the conjecture that the motive behind the rise of sold cinema tickets might be escapism, which would imply that it is most likely for cinema admissions to stagnate or even drop when the recession and its effects will diminish. Therefore, it could be of interest to go in further detail on the potential consumer trend by which can be concluded whether or not escapism seems to be the cause of the increased cinema attendance in the Netherlands and if escapism seems to be of influence in other countries as well.

1.4 Research questions

As stated before, the main question of this research is: what causes the discussion on the existence of escapism with regard to the cinema admissions during the recession? This study will, however, also answer a number of sub questions, which are classified in three different types of questions: descriptive questions, relational questions and causal questions

1.4.1 Descriptive questions

1. What is escapism?

2. What are the key trends within the movie industry in the Netherlands?
3. How have the trends within the movie industry in the Netherlands changed since the start of the recession?
4. What are the key trends within the movie industries of France, the United Kingdom and the United States?
5. How have the trends within the movie industry in other countries changed since the start of the recession?

1.4.2 Relational questions

1. Is there a connection between escapism and the recession?
2. Is there a link between the evolving trends in the movie industry and the recession?
3. Is escapism influencing the number of cinema visits in the Netherlands?

1.4.3 Causal question

1. What causes the rise/stability of the number of cinema visits in the Netherlands?

1.5 Aim and objective

This study aims to further explore the concept of the escapism by connecting the consumer trend with theories on consumer behaviour. So, this study is based on consumer behaviour and, hence, addresses some widely accepted theories. It is crucial for this study to establish links with corresponding behaviour as the theory written on escapism so far is quite broad. Through the establishment of connections with other behavioural theories, this study seeks to illustrate a more detailed and improved definition of the concept of escapism and draw well-substantiated conclusions.

The main research objective is examining the existence of escapism since there have been many controversial statements on the plausible consumer trend. In addition, this study also aims to identify the potential characteristics associated with escapism.

1.6 Structure of the report

The next chapter of this report will explain the methodological choices made during this study and delimit the theoretical framework after which the third chapter will focus on elucidating the concept of escapism and give a more detailed definition on the consumer trend. Then, an analysis of the Dutch market will be outlined before the trends within the markets of France, the United Kingdom and the United States will be shown. Thereupon, the results of the questionnaire together with the focus group and information mentioned in earlier chapters will be analysed followed by a discussion that will highlight arguments of both sides - those in favour of escapism and counterargument. Lastly, conclusions will be drawn on the basis of the results and discussion.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In order to examine the existence of escapism and to answer the central question of this study, it is not only necessary to investigate the cinema admissions in different cinema industries, but also it is of importance to explore theories on escapism and consumer behaviour. This chapter explains the methodological choices that have been made during this research.

2.1 Research Design

To a great extent, this study was based on secondary data obtained from several studies, such as annual reports and the cinema monitor from the Dutch association of film distributors and the Dutch association of cinema operators. However, since not only the Dutch cinema industry is explored, other studies have been consulted and provided important sources of information as well. The countries, which have been outlined in a later chapter by which cinema attendance trends can be compared, are France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Not only did these three countries have the largest market shares in the Netherlands in 2012, see figure 1 in Appendix 3: additional figures, but these three countries also have national organisations, such as the cinema exhibitors' association, which conduct studies in the field of, for instance, cinema admissions.

Except for studies from national cinema exhibitors, this study was likewise based on several theories and other studies, which will be described in the theoretical framework. First of all, theories on escapism had to be further explored and, since escapism is believed to be a consumer trend, consumer behaviour had to be examined as well.

Lastly, field research in the form of questionnaires and a small focus group ensured that this study was not merely based on facts, theories and other studies, but conclusions could be drawn on the basis of consumer behaviour in the Netherlands and self-made connections between the theories and reality.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Escapism has been a widely discussed theory among researchers by which several studies have been conducted in order to conclude whether or not escapism had influence on consumer behaviour. The following studies have been used during this study:

2.2.1 Escapism

Bernd Henning and Peter Vorderer have written a study on psychological escapism in which they examined the amount of television viewing by need for cognition. In their

study, they define escapism in detail and explain the potential relation between television viewing and escapism. Moreover, they have made several associations between personal preference statements and escapism on which the questionnaire statements have partly been based. The following model, based on the model of Henning and Vorderer, is partly adjusted and used as a structure for both the chapter results and the chapter discussion.

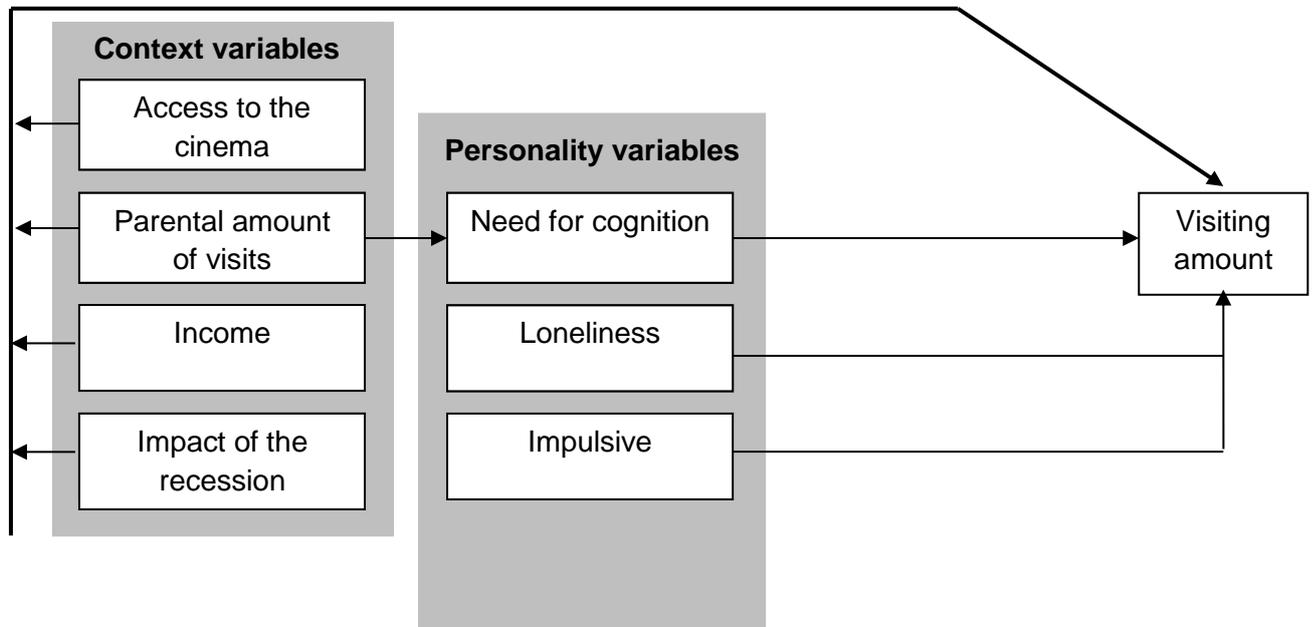


Figure 2.1: Effect of context variables and personality variables on amounts of visits.

2.2.2 Consumer behaviour

In contemplation of escapism, exploring the consumer behaviour shortly seemed significant. Therefore, the hierarchy of consumer needs, a theory of Maslow, is outlined in chapter 3: defining escapism. The pyramid addresses the five stages of different needs of consumers. This hierarchy identifies on which the consumer behaviour is based; the bottom describes the most basic needs and the top refers to self-actualisation.

Furthermore, several books on marketing have been consulted of which “an introduction to marketing” of Armstrong and Kotler provided the most relevant and detailed information. The explanation given on the consumer buying process, which consists of five stages consumers go through while making a purchase, has, for instance, been used and outlined in order to explain how the decision of buying a cinema ticket is made.

Lastly, Ma, Wei and Chen wrote a thesis on impulse buying in which they examined consumer impulse buying choices in various situations. Even though, not the complete thesis has been used during this study, the different definitions on impulse buying and

detailed description of the concept have been of great importance to connect escapism and purchasing a cinema ticket with impulse buying.

2.2.3 Theory of reasoned action

In furtherance of concluding whether the consumer trend escapism exists or not, not only connections between escapism and consumer behaviour theories have been made, but also connections between escapism and the theory of reasoned action are made. The theory of reasoned action, proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein, suggests that behaviour is based on behavioural intentions which are established by someone's attitude and their subjective norms. This, in other words, means that someone's attitudes together with the perception of the expectations of the people belonging to someone's direct environment cause certain behavioural intentions and, thus, certain behaviour. So, this theory was used to examine the importance of family or peer influences.

2.3 Field research

The entire study could, however, not solely be based on secondary data, because the studies from, for instance, the cinema exhibitors' associations summarise merely the facts observed throughout the years. Therefore, a questionnaire was designed.

In order to obtain a large group of respondents on which conclusions could be based, a specific group was selected. As Henning and Vorderer have also advocated in their research, "age and degree of formal education (e.g., Schultz, 1987, 1997; Buss, 1997) are probably the most prominent factors in case of escapism. Because of the large "explanatory distance" between these sociodemographic variables, however, neither age nor formal education provides a theoretically satisfying cause of the viewing differences" (Henning & Vorderer, 2001, p. 105). Even though, age seems to be rather important since the scope of the cinema in the Netherlands has been the highest among young adults throughout the years and, based on degree of formal education, there have also been significant differences in the viewing amount, this study is a sample; that is, the composition of the group of respondents resembles the entire group of cinemagoers on which conclusions will be based. So, if the group of respondents would consist out of respondents from several age categories, the conclusions would not be supported sufficiently as the different age category groups would be too small. Therefore, the group, which has been selected as respondents, consists of young adults. The main reasons for this choice have been the scope of the cinema in the Netherlands, which has been the highest among young adults, and, more importantly, it is argued that this group is quite homogeneous.

As previously mentioned, escapism is part of consumer behaviour and consumer behaviour is mainly based on personal preferences, experiences and emotions. Hence, it seemed crucial to also include questions on personality and personal preferences in the questionnaire by which better conclusions on the existence of escapism could be drawn. Some people may, however, find questions about themselves and their preferences quite hard to answer. Since the other parts were equally important, the fourth and last part of the questionnaire consisted merely out of statements on personal preferences in order to ensure that the respondents would not be discouraged to fill in the entire questionnaire.

After the questionnaires had been conducted, a small focus group was held in order to further deepen the findings from the questionnaire. The focus group was, however, smaller than intended and consisted of only seven people. Three of the participants had a cinema subscription and one had a Netflix subscription. It was of interest to have at least one person with a cinema subscription and at least one with a Netflix subscription to get a discussion going.

2.4 Method of analysing the results

The data, both qualitative and quantitative, will be analysed through the use of Excel by which the information can more easily be analysed and compared. With regard to making the data more transparent and organised, figures and graphs will be made, also through the use of Excel. These figures will be used during the result analysis in chapter 6 after which the discussion is presented and conclusions will be drawn in chapter 7 and 8. In order to draw conclusions, connections between the several statements and variables will be established by the use of the existing theories on escapism and impulse buying behaviour.

2.5 Limitations of the study

Since it is hard to find many young adults at random, the questionnaire was mainly set out at The Hague University of Applied Science. In other words, the respondents of the questionnaire and the participants of the focus group were mostly students at The Hague University of Applied Science and, more importantly, living in or nearby The Hague. This could, however, cause limitations as the attitudes and behaviour of the respondents can differ from attitudes and behaviour of young adults who do not live in or nearby The Hague. Differences between visiting amount of cinemagoers from various regions and locations of the residence, meaning city or village, seem to also be substantiated by studies from the Dutch association of film distributors. So, it is important to keep the location where the questionnaire was spread out in mind, because it appears that cinemas are more accessible in cities or suburbs and, therefore, results can vary.

Chapter 3: Defining Escapism

In the last few years, there have been many positive reports on the rise of the cinema admissions in the Netherlands. People flocked to the cinema since the start of the recession. In 2009, the number of visits rose to more than 27 million, which had not happened in thirty years. Two years later, the number of visits increased to more than 30 million. It was the best year cinemas in the Netherlands faced since 1978. Even though, the attendance nearly stagnated the last two years, a small increase was still observed, but how can this sudden change be declared? Perhaps the most evident approach toward explaining why attendance in the Netherlands has increased in recent years involves the concept of escapism which will be explored in this chapter.

3.1 The Concept of Escapism

The most simplistic explanation of the concept escapism is: a way of escaping from reality and thereby focussing on enjoyable things, in this case fictional characters and stories, rather than the hard or depression situation someone is in. So, “in its core, escapism means that most people have, due to unsatisfying life circumstances, again and again cause to ‘leave’ the reality in which they live in a cognitive and emotional way” (Vorderer, 1996, p. 311). In addition, “one can argue that, from a psychological point of view, also other functions like the possibility of not being alone (“companionship”) or to pass the time away can be subsumed under one and the same motive, because all these cases are attempts or intentions of recipients to apparently leave their current social situation” (Vorderer, 1996, p. 313).

In this sense, consumers would visit the cinema to either search for companionship, pass time, compassion or self-pity. Kubey, however, has drafted three hypotheses, in a research on motivations for watching television. These hypotheses further explain the possible motivations since “literature has made it clear that television is an activity likely to be chosen by people wishing to escape from negative feelings and from the demands of reality” (Kubey, 1986, p. 110). His claims were as follows:

1: [...] that negative experiences at work would lead people to gravitate to television upon returning home. Henning and Vorderer advocated this concept to be sociological escapism;

2: [...] that negative experiences while interacting with other people would be related to heavier viewing, which is described as social-psychological escapism by Henning and Vorderer;

3: [...] that heavier viewers of television would report feeling relatively worse than

light viewers during “non-activities”, such as daydreaming and waiting, also described as individual psychological escapism by Henning and Vorderer (Kubey, 1986, p. 111)” (Henning &Vorderer, 2001. p. 101).

Obviously, Kubey his research focused on television viewing, but from now on it will be considered that television viewing is related and comparable to cinema visits and, therefore, the hypotheses of Kubey relate to escapism in the movie sector as well.

As Kubey already advocated, escapism is defined by the motives behind the behaviour performed. In addition, Henning and Vorderer (2001) added five personality variables – need for cognition, loneliness, life satisfaction, strain and belief of control – to cover the three hypotheses of Kubey (Henning &Vorderer, 2001, p. 107). A few of these personality variables will be used as has been outlined in figure 2.1, see chapter 2: methodology.

3.2 Escapism and Consumer Buying Behaviour

Prior to making a certain purchase, the consumer is going through a decision making process. This process, known as the buyer decision process or consumer buying process, consists of five stages: (1) need recognition or problem; (2) information search; (3) evaluation of alternatives; (4) purchase decision and (5) post purchase behaviour (Armstrong & Kotler, 2011, p. 180; Ebert & Griffin, 2009, p.155). So, consumers are driven by particular needs that are, at that particular time, most pressing and, therefore, most important to satisfy. These needs can be categorised in different levels attributed to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, see figure 2 in Appendix 3: additional figures.

Thus, the buyer decision process is initiated by the recognition of a certain need and influenced by three main motives: rational motives, emotional motives and patronage motives (Karamian, 2012). Since escapism is (mainly) based on negative emotions and/or experiences, such as need for cognition, loneliness, desperation or lack of positive prospects, it will be assumed from now on that neither rational nor patronage motives strongly influence the decision to purchase a cinema ticket, leaving the focus on emotional motives. Emotional motives are “those impulses which persuade a consumer to purchase a product spontaneously and without forethought on the consequences of the action or decision. Evaluation of the pros and cons of the decision or logical reasoning analysis is not found behind such purchase decisions. Here the buyer lets the heart rule over the mind” (Karamian, 2012, p. 5).

In this sense, emotional motives and the decision to buy a product based on emotions strongly resembles impulse buying. “Strotz (1955) suggests that impulse buying is a buying behaviour that appears when consumers discount the future too rapidly; that is, it

means that the reward from buying the desired item at that moment outweighs the future issues of paying the money” (Ma, Wei & Chen, 2013, p. 16). In other words, it could be argued that going to the cinema (partly) belongs to impulse buying behaviour. Consumers choose to see the movie now instead of waiting a few months to buy or hire the movie or see it on the television. Seeing the movie in the cinema can thus be seen as “an immediate reward that appeals to consumers rather than the long-term benefits” (Ma, Wei & Chen, 2013, p. 16), which, for instance, could be buying the movie on DVD or Blue-Ray allowing the consumer to see it several times and, thus, spend less. Moreover, Rook (1987) defined impulse buying as “when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately. The impulse to buy is hedonically complex and may stimulate emotional conflict. Also impulse buying is prone to occur with diminished regard for its consequences” (Rook, 1987, p. 191). He concluded that impulse buying is “extraordinary”, “a fast experience, “more emotional than rational,” and “this interpretation is close in spirit to the ‘pure impulse’ behaviour that Stern (1962) identified” (Rook, 1987, p. 191; Piron, 1991, p. 512). In addition, Stern (1962) argued that a novelty or escape purchase, which breaks a normal buying behaviour pattern, is “truly impulsive buying” (Stern, 1962, p. 59).

As Rook (1987) has already argued, impulse buying behaviour is often seen as a “hedonically complex experience” (Rook, 1987; Piron, 1991) signifying that the consumer is seeking pleasure whilst a purchase is made. Visiting the cinema is a leisure activities in which consumers gain a positive experience and, hence, experience pleasure.

In summary, consumers will go through the buyer decision process before making a purchase in which they select the need, search information on the product or service, evaluate the potential purchase and make the decision to spend money on it in order to satisfy that particular need. This process is influenced by rational, emotional and patronage buying motives. However, because escapism is based on emotions and experiences, the emotional buying motives are the most prominent motives to focus on, because the perceived stimuli persuade the consumer to purchase a product whilst not considering pros and cons or the potential future benefits of postpone a certain purchase. Thus, consumers sometimes show “time-inconsistent preference, as consumers appear to prefer the immediate reward of a purchase over the long-term benefits” (Ma, Wei & Chen, 2013, p. 17), which resembles impulse buying. Yet, it seems highly plausible that escapism only shows characteristics of impulse buying since a visit to the cinema is not necessarily sudden or spontaneous, but can also be planned in advance.

3.3 Escapism and the Theory of Reasoned Action

The consumer behaviour is, as outlined in section 3.2, based on several factors and forces. "Sigmund Freud assumed that people are largely unconscious about the real psychological forces shaping their behaviour. Freud's theory suggests that a person's buying decisions are affected by subconscious motives that even the buyer may not fully understand" (Armstrong & Kotler, 2011, p. 176). It appears to be only logical that consumers are not completely aware of the real reasons behind their choice to visit the cinema; that is, it means that consumers probably are not conscious of the act of escaping reality by going to the cinema. Yet, it seems plausible that not only the context situation of hard economic times can influence consumer behaviour, but also the direct environment of a consumer could provoke certain behaviour.

The theory of reasoned action (Ajzen&Fishbein) suggests that someone's attitude (A) towards certain behaviour and their subjective norms (SN) lead to certain behavioural intentions (BI): $BI = A + SN$. Since attitudes are based on someone's past and present experiences, beliefs and emotions, a positive experience of going to the cinema could lead to repeating the behaviour, meaning paying for a cinema ticket again. Moreover, someone's subjective norm is "the person's perception that most people who are important to him or her think he should or should not perform the behaviour in question" (Fishbein&Ajzen, 1975). In other words, the social environment of someone together with the positive experience of going to the cinema could lead to repeatedly visiting the cinema. On the other hand, it could imply that, when someone's negative attitude towards the economic woes and not being able to spend much on leisure activities together with the thought of 'wanting to do something else than sitting at home' could also lead to visiting the cinema, which, in this sense, can be seen as escapism.

3.4 Summary

In short, connections between escapism and impulse buying behaviour and escapism and theory of reasoned action have been made. From now on, it will be assumed that escapism is: the act of outweighing the future benefits of a postponing a purchase, in this case a cinema ticket, too rapidly due to unsatisfying life circumstances by which the consumer can focus on something other than his or her own situation. Escapism is thus a hedonically complex experience as he or she is seeking short-term pleasure, which is based on emotional motives and influences from the external environment, especially peers, family members and, most importantly, the economic situation.

Chapter 4: Trends in the Dutch Movie Industry

Since the advent of the television, the number of cinema tickets sold has dropped. Before almost each household had a television, it was more common to go to the cinema as it was unique. In 1946, before the television was introduced, cinemas in the Netherlands sold over 85 million tickets. In this year, the total population of the Netherlands consisted of a little less than 10 million inhabitants and since it is most likely that not all the inhabitants of the Netherlands visited the cinema, it seems safe to assume that the average cinema visitor went approximately ten to twelve times to the cinema.

Ten years later, the cinemas sold around 70 million tickets, which was five years after the first television broadcast in 1951. This could indicate that the average cinema visitor went approximately eight times to the cinema in 1956, because the total population of the Netherlands consisted of almost 11 million inhabitants in that year.

Ever since, the cinema tickets sold have been declining, because of the growing success of the television. Nowadays, it is much easier for many to see a movie at home, either on television or on DVD or Blue-ray. Watching a movie at home is more convenient for many as someone is able to pause the movie whenever he or she wants. Moreover, it seems evident that it is cheaper to stay at home, especially since the recession broke down. Yet, the next paragraphs will show remarkable changes in recent years.

4.1 Key figures in the Netherlands between 2003 and 2008

In the beginning of the 21st century, the movie industry in the Netherlands has faced a tough time. Even though, more movies were released and average prices of movie tickets did not increase a lot over the years, the cinema attendance declined. As a result, revenues were notable lower, but eventually the market started to recover. The table below will show the key figures of trends in the movie industry observed in the Netherlands between 2003 and 2008.

	2003	2004	2005	2006*	2007	2008
Gross income (million €)	163,2	154,1	135,2	155,9	159,7	165,1
Visits (million)	24.9	23.0	20.6	23.4	23.1	23.5
Population (million)	16.2	16.3	16.3	16.3	16.3	16.4
Visits per inhabitant	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4
Revenues per visitor (€)	6.56	6.69	6.56	6.66	6.92	7.02
Released movies**	272	307	324	278	292	296
Released 3D movies	-	-	-	-	1	5
Dutch released movies	33	28	39	29	21	30
Cinemas***	143	143	141	133	130	130
Film screens	541	553	558	556	553	564
Seats (x1.000)	102.8	102.7	102.5	101.1	99.9	102.3
Average number of screens per cinema	3.8	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.4

Average number of seats per screen	190	186	184	182	181	181
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* 2006 counted 53 weeks.

** In newly released movies, only the releases of member of the NVF are counted. (Jaarverslag 2012, p. 31, 2013)

Figure 4.1: Key figures in the Netherlands (2003 – 2008)

4.2 Cinema attendance in the Netherlands from 2009 until 2013

For the first time in thirty years, the cinema attendance rose to more than 27 million visits in 2009. Even though, a small increase of 2.2% was already observed in 2008, this was a record year for the cinemas since the attendance grew with over 15% from 23.637.827 million visits in 2008 to 27.229.874 visits in 2009 (Mediaonderzoek, 2010).

A year after this significant increase, the number of visits grew again, but with a small 3.5%, the augmentation was evidently lower than the previous year. In 2010, cinemas in the Netherlands counted nearly 28.2 million visits; 28.178.048 in total (NVB, 2011).

The growth of number of visits continued in 2011. Cinema in the Netherlands counted 30.434.937 million visits, which was an increase of 8.0% (Kijkwijzer, 2012). This was another record year; the cinemas in the Netherlands did not reach such a significant amount of visits since 1978 (Show, 2012).

But then, the number of visits remained quite stable. In 2012, a minor increase of only 0.6% was observed with approximately 30.6 million visits (Filmonderzoek A, 2013) and the next year, again only a small increase was observed as the attendance grew with only 0.8% to 30.8 million visits in 2013 (Filmonderzoek B, 2014).

4.3 Number of cinemagoers in the Netherlands from 2009 until 2013

According to the cinema monitor, a research done by the Dutch association of film distributors (NVF), 55% of the total population above 18 years old visited the cinema at least once in 2009. This, in other words, means that almost half of the Dutch population has not visited the cinema in this year, while the other half visited the cinema three times on average.

The number of cinemagoers stayed roughly the same during the following years with around 7.3 million people, but the percentage of cinemagoers dropped from 55% in 2009 to 53% in 2013. This may be due to the fact that the number of total inhabitants of the Netherlands increased with approximately 1.9% from 16.485.787 inhabitants to 16.779.575 inhabitants (Bevolking; kerncijfers, 2014) and therefore, the number of people above 18 years old increased.

4.4 Revenues and average prices of movie tickets in the Netherlands from 2009 - 2013

Not only did the cinemas in the Netherlands face a record increase in number of visits from 2009 on, the industry also faced a record increase of turnover. Revenues rose to a record level of more than €200 million in 2009, which is an increase of 21% compared to the previous year, because only €165,576,699 was earned in 2008 (W., 2010). The average price per movie ticket rose with approximately 4.8%, from €7.02 in 2008 to an average €7.36 per ticket in 2009 (Jaarverslag 2009, 2010).

The turnover of cinemas in the Netherlands rose considerably faster in 2010. The total box office reached a record level of 219,308,194 euros; an increase of a little over 9% compared to 2009, while the number of visits did not grow as much as the year before. This difference is explained by the sharp price increases for films shown in 3D. The average price of a movie ticket was around €7.78, an increase of nearly 6%. Moreover, it was the highest price increase observed in the last twenty years (Hinke, 2011).

Cinema attendance continued, with a slightly higher average price per ticket, to be the cheapest form of leisure as the average price grew with only 1.3% to €7.88 in 2011. Even though, the price increase was significantly less than the year before (Filmfestival, 2013), the total box office raised a little over €240 million, which means that the turnover of the cinemas in the Netherlands increased with 9.4% since the number of visits soared more than in 2010 (Jaarverslag 2011, 2012).

The average admission price per ticket rose again slightly in 2012 with 1.5%. This resulted in an average price of €8.01. Since the number of visits and the average price increased, the total revenues of the cinemas reached nearly 245 million euros in 2012, which indicated an increase of approximately 2.1% (Jaarverslag 2012, 2013).

Last year, the total box office rose with approximately 2% from 244,599,266 euros in 2012 to 249,374,533 euros in 2013. Moreover, the average price per movie ticket observed a minimal increase of a little over 1%, while number of visits stagnated. Therefore, the total revenues reached around €249,3 million, which is not much more than the year before. Cinema attendance, however, continues with an average price per ticket of €8.10 to be the cheapest form of leisure (Samenvattingkerncijfersjaar 2013, 2014).

4.5 Summary

From the beginning of the recession, cinema admissions have risen significantly within the Dutch cinema market. Not only have cinema admissions reached a record level of cinema attendance, which has not been observed in the last thirty years, but also revenues have grown out of proportion. However, the number of cinemagoers stayed

almost stable throughout the last five years, which indicated that the average Dutch cinemagoer has gone more often since the recession started.

Chapter 5: Trends in the Movie Industry in Other Countries

Not only did the movie industry in the Netherlands face a change since the arrival of the television. Throughout the last six decades, cinema admissions have changed, and, more importantly, dropped significantly as cinema attendance was not one of the main forms of entertainment anymore.

This chapter focusses on the trends in the movie industries of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These countries have been selected, because they had the largest market shares in the Netherlands in 2012, see figure 1 in Appendix 3: additional figures. In addition, these three countries have national organisations, which conduct researches in the field of, for instance, cinema admissions, audience, movies released and active screens.

5.1 Key figures of France, the United Kingdom and the United States (2003 – 2008)

Cinema admissions in France have faced an undulating movement in the number of tickets sold during the last decade. From 2003 on, every once per two years, a decline has been observed not only in cinema admissions, but also in gross receipts, after which both grew again. In 2008, cinemas in France reached a record number of both tickets sold and gross receipts, which has not been hit for the last 10 years. The table below reveals the key figures of the movie industry in France between 2003 and 2008.

Key figures of France

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Gross receipts (million €)	996,1	1,138,9	1,030,9	1,120,8	1,058,3	1,139,3
Visits (million)	173.4	195.5	175.4	188.7	177.8	189.7
Population (million)	54.8	55.4	55.4	56.3	56.6	57.2
Visits per inhabitant*	3.2	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.1	3.3
Revenues per visitor (€)	5.74	5.82	5.87	5.94	5.95	6.01
Released movies	509	559	550	589	573	555
Cinemas	2.136	2.108	2.084	2.070	2.057	2.081
Film screens	5.299	5.293	5.308	5.300	5.332	5.424

* Number of visits per inhabitant may vary due to the lack of whole numbers of gross receipts. (Results 2008 – CNC report, 2009); (Films exhibition, 2011)

Figure 5.1: Key trends in France (2003 – 2008)

In the United Kingdom, the number of visits per inhabitant has declined a little and stayed stable during 2008. Even though, cinema admissions have dropped in 2005, attendance started to recover slowly in 2007. As a result, the number of tickets sold in 2008 was almost equal to the number of tickets sold in 2005. Consequently, gross receipts stagnated in 2005, but increased considerably during the following years since the average ticket price increased. The next table summarizes these key figures.

Key figures of the United Kingdom

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Gross receipts (million £)	742	770	770	762	821	850
Visits (million)	167.3	171.3	164.7	156.6	162.4	164.2
Population (million)	59.5	59.8	60.2	60.5	60.9	61.3
Visits per inhabitant	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.7
Revenues per visitor (£)*	4.44	4.50	4.68	4.87	5.06	5.18
Released movies	423	451	467	505	516	527
Cinemas	678	644	659	697	727	726
Film screens	3.318	3.342	3.357	3.440	3.514	3.610

* Average revenues per visitor may vary due to the lack of whole numbers of gross receipts. (BFI Yearbook 2009, 2010)

Figure 5.2: Key trends in the United Kingdom (2003 – 2008)

The movie industry in the United States faced an increase in number of tickets sold from 1995 on. This upward trend, however, stagnated around 2003, after which a decline was observed. Moreover, in 2008, the number of cinema tickets sold was almost equivalent to the cinema attendance seen in 2000. The table below lists the key figures from the United States between 2003 and 2008.

Key figures in the United States

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Gross receipts (billion \$)	9,35	9,11	8,93	9,25	9,63	9,95
Visits (billion)	1.55	1.47	1.39	1.41	1.40	1.39
Population (million)	290.11	292.81	295.52	298.38	301.23	304.09
Visits per inhabitant*	5.3	5.0	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.5
Revenues per visitor (\$)	6.03	6.21	6.41	6.55	6.88	7.18
Released movies	528	549	507	594	609	633
Cinemas**	6.100	6.031	6.114	5.939	5.928	5.786
Film screens***	35.650	36.435	37.688	38.415	38.794	38.834

* Number of visits per inhabitant may vary due to the lack of whole numbers of population and gross receipts.

** Number of cinemas is the total number of indoor and drive-in sites. The number of drive-in sites has, however, declined from 2005 on with 4.7% and stagnated with 383 drive-in sites in 2008 (Number of U.S. cinema sites, 2013).

*** Number of film screens is the total number of indoor and drive-in screens. The number of drive-in screens has, however, declined a little since 2007 with 2.6% (Number of U.S. movie screens, 2013).

Figure 5.3: Key figures in the United States (2003 – 2008)

5.2 Cinema admissions in France, the United Kingdom and the United States 2009 – 2013

A year after the recession was officially announced, cinema attendance grew in all three countries. Contrary to the Netherlands, cinema admissions in the United Kingdom and the United States have, however, dropped a year later, in 2010. The following year, this decline continued within the United States, while France and the United Kingdom

observed an increase in cinema attendance in 2011. Even though, cinema attendance was considerably high in 2012, all three countries have again faced a decrease in the number of tickets sold in 2013. The table below shows the key numbers of cinema admissions in France, the United Kingdom and the United States.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
France	200.9 (+4.6%)	207.0 (+3.0%)	217.1 (+4.9%)	203.5 (-6.3%)	192.8 (-5.3%)
United Kingdom	173.5 (+5.7%)	169.2 (-2.5%)	171.6 (+1.4%)	172.5 (+0.5%)	165.5 (-4.1%)
United States	1.419.8 (+2.4%)	1.336.3 (-5.8%)	1.284.6 (-3.8%)	1.360.0 (+5.8%)	1.335.7 (-1.7%)

Figure 5.4: Figures on cinema admissions in France, the United Kingdom and the United States (2009 – 2013)

5.3 Average price of tickets in France, the United Kingdom and the United States 2009 – 2013

Not only did the average price of movie tickets increased significantly in the Netherlands, but all three other countries observed a rise of average price of a cinema ticket throughout the last five years. This ongoing trend does ensure high gross receipts, but it might, on the other hand, affect the cinema admissions. In 2010, for instance, the average price of tickets rose with 7.1% in the United Kingdom, while in that same year the number of movie tickets sold dropped with 2.5%. Moreover, the United States faced an increase of 5.2% in average ticket price in 2010 and during this year, the total number of cinema visits dropped with 5.8%. Unfortunately, the cinema exhibitor's association of France and the United Kingdom did not publish the most recent figures on average price, but the next table outlines the average price of cinema tickets as has been published so far.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
France	€6.14 (+2.1%)	€6.32 (+2.9%)	€6.33 (+0.1%)	-	-
United Kingdom	£5.44 (+5.0%)	£5.83 (+7.1%)	£6.04 (+3.6%)	£6.37 (+5.4%)	-
United States	\$7.50 (+4.4%)	\$7.89 (+5.2%)	\$7.93 (+0.5%)	\$7.96 (+0.3%)	\$8.16 (+2.5%)

(UK Cinema – box office and average annual spending 2000 – 2012, 2013)

Figure 5.5: Average price of cinema tickets in France, the United Kingdom and the United States (2009 – 2013)

5.4 Summary

So, France, the United Kingdom and the United States have observed an undulating trend throughout the last decade. In other words, while attendance in the Netherlands observed

remarkable changes, cinema admissions have not changed significantly, but industries have seen a more normal evolution.

Chapter 6: Results

The following part presents the most significant outcomes of the responses on the final questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix 1. The questionnaire was filled in by 137 young adults, who are mostly students at The Hague University of Applied Science which could cause differences between the outcome of this study and the reality as the attitudes and behaviour of the respondents can differ from attitudes and behaviour of young adults who are not living in The Hague or another (big) city. However, due to missing answers, only 116 complete questionnaires were used to analyse the results.

This chapter first outlines the context variables – income, impact of the recession, access to the cinema and parental amount of view – after which personality variables – need for cognition, loneliness, impulsiveness and life satisfaction (see in figure 2.1) – will be shown. Lastly, some additional variables will be analysed.

6.1 Basic results

In total, 44 men (38%) and 72 women (62%) took part in the questionnaire, see figure 6.1. Most participants were 23 years old or younger: only 14 men were 24 years old or older and from the women, 26 were older than 23 years old.

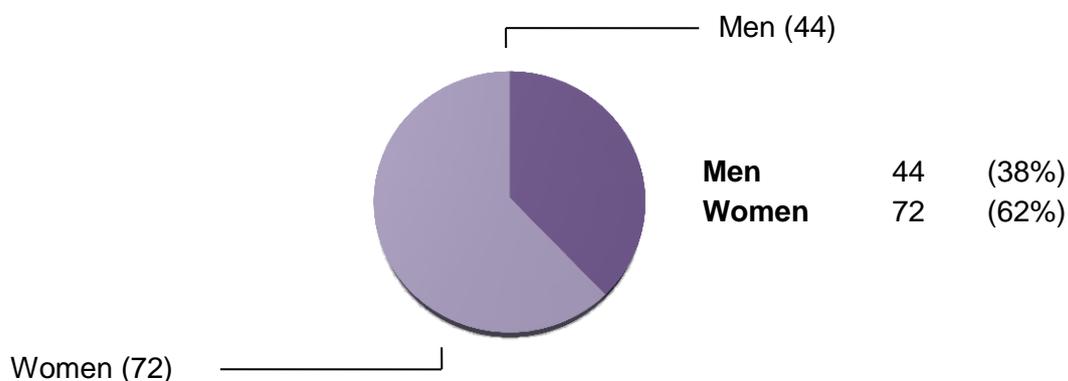


Figure 6.1: Results of question 1 - What is your gender?

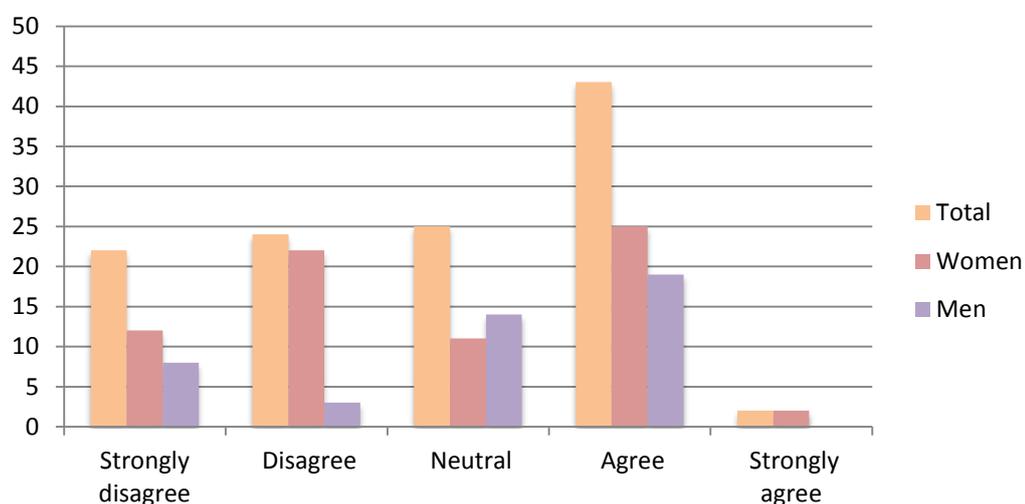
6.2 Context variables

Half of the respondents had a monthly income of €500 or less of which 46 respondents were still living with their parents or relatives. There has no large difference been observed between the monthly income of women and men; around half of both groups have €500 euros or less per month. Significant are, however, the differences between adapting a different spending pattern. In total, 55% of the respondents have faced negatives impact on their lives due to the recession. As a result, they changed their spending pattern in the last five years. Remarkably is that, of all men, only 36% changed

their spending habits during the recession, while an overwhelming two third of the women (67%) adjusted their spending habits mainly by doing cheaper groceries and fewer activities outside of the house. In addition, it is noteworthy that, from the men who adjusted their spending pattern, 63% was 24 years old or older and none of them were living with parents or relatives, while 80% of the women were 23 years old or younger and twenty of them were still living at home.

Since it is plausible that, when something is more accessible, chances of going there are greater, attitudes towards the accessibility of the cinema have been measures. Of all the respondents, an overwhelming 95% have stated that the cinema is easily accessible and, almost equally striking, more than half of the respondents felt that the cinema is even better accessible nowadays.

Even though, almost all respondents indicated that the cinema is easily accessible, only 40% often went to the cinema with their parents, see figure 6.2. Significant is the difference between men and women. Only around one third of the female respondents indicated that they often went to the cinema with their parents or relatives, while a little under half of the male respondents have stated that they often went to the cinema with their parents or relatives in the past. Moreover, all the participants of the focus group stated that they only went to the cinema with their parents or relatives on special



occasions, such as Christmas or birthdays.

Figure 6.2: Results of question 20.7 – I often went to the cinema with my parents or relatives.

6.3 Personality variables

Need for cognition has also been mentioned as a variable that could influence cinema

admissions. According to the answers of the respondents, only 40% like the educational or intellectual aspect of visiting the cinema. Moreover, 31% agrees to prefer complex to simple problems and 40% prefers their life to be filled with puzzles.

There were three questions in the questionnaire covering loneliness. In total, 43% of all respondents stated to be by their selves quite often. However, 78 participants like to be by alone every now and then. Therefore, the answers of these questions are compared in another way and from the respondents, who answered that they do not like to be alone, 12% is by their selves quite often. Remarkable is that only 5% of all respondents felt like people do not want to be around them of which four were 23 years old or younger and the other two were above 24 years old. Moreover, the respondents of the focus group have stated to not feel lonely and they stated that, when they felt that people did not like to be around them, they would just stop hanging out with those persons.

Previously, connections between escapism and impulse buying behaviour were made. Therefore, one of the questions covered impulsive behaviour. In total, almost half of all respondents agreed to be impulsive. An overwhelming 75% were women, mostly of 23 years old or younger, while men answered to not be impulsive and there was nearly no difference between men based on age.

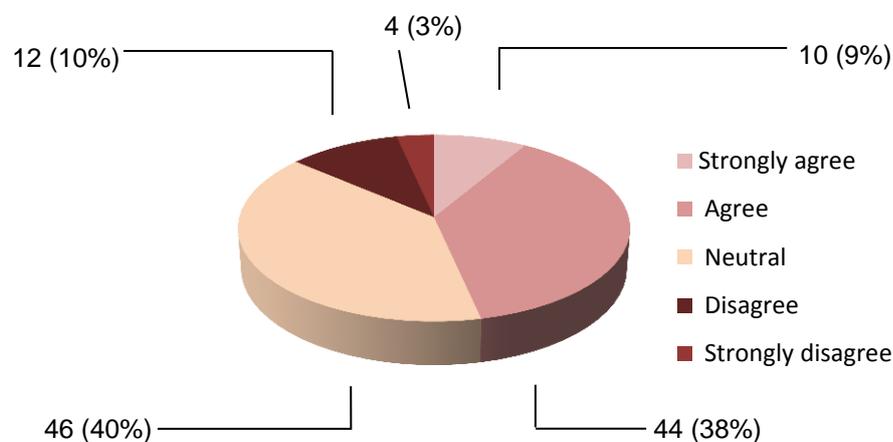


Figure 6.3: Results of questions 23.13 – I am impulsive.

6.4 The internet as a variable

Even though the Internet has many advantages, the World Wide Web has a downside. Many of today's Internet users can easily upload movies or parts of movies through which others are able to download these movies or watch these movies online. Of the respondents, only 12% indicated not to download or watch movies online (see figure 6.4) and all the participants of the focus group stated to download or stream films, because it is not only considerably cheaper, but also faster and easier. Moreover, more than half of

the men and 42% of the women, who download or stream movies, have stated to visit the cinema less often since they have started downloading or streaming.

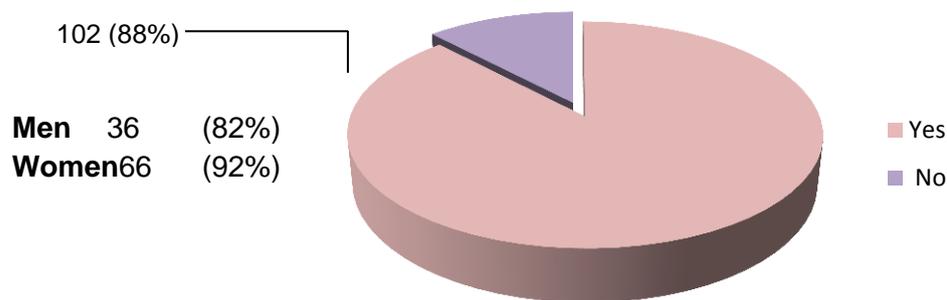


Figure 6.4: Results question 21 – Do you illegally download movies or watch movies online?

It was emphasised by two participant of the focus group that, due to the bankruptcy of a local Video-on-Demand store in the neighbourhood, renting movies, so the actual physical products, had become less accessible and since visiting the cinema is more expensive than renting, they have started downloading.

In addition, these numbers have also been supported by research of Top-X, a component of 1V jongerenpanel, in cooperation with youth forum Fok!. This study showed that 54.5% of the 3.500 youngsters, download often, 29.1% download sometimes and only 7.4% never downloads. Of the respondents, an overwhelming 61% downloads movies (YoungWorksTrendteam, 2009).

6.5 Other variables

Since escapism is associated with impulse buying behaviour and the previously given definition also emphasizes there is mention of an immediate reward. In Appendix 2: additional result figures, figure 1 does not only outline the attitudes of all the respondents, but also men and women separately, towards having an immediate rewards instead of having to wait for it. Remarkable is that women clearly are more eager to receive an immediate reward instead of having to wait for something. This was also emphasized in the focus group in which women emphasized that an immediate reward could also be seen as a result or as a result of fulfilling something.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This chapter presents the discussion on basis of the results, which have been presented in the previous chapter. The aim of this chapter is to interpret the results observed and to illuminate both sides of escapism; that is, the potential existence of the consumer trend and the counterarguments, which support the non-existence of escapism in order to answer the central question: what causes the discussion on escapism with regard to cinema admissions during the recession. Therefore, this chapter is divided into two parts of which the first will outline the arguments in favour of escapism and the second part will present the counterargument.

7.1 Argument in favour of escapism

7.1.1 Context influences

As is seen in figure 2.1 of chapter 2: methodology, access to the cinema can be of influence on the amounts of visits paid to the cinema. Even though, the number of cinemas has decreased throughout the last years, see Chapters 4 and 5, it did not seem to have influenced the accessibility. According to the respondents of the questionnaire and participants of the focus group, cinemas are easily accessible and some even emphasized that cinemas are more easily accessible nowadays. In other words, because the accessibility is high, this could thus result in more cinema visits. On the other hand, it does not necessarily support escapism, but cinema admissions in general, especially since most respondents were of opinion that the accessibility did not necessarily improved in the last five years. Therefore, even though it has now been grouped under arguments in favour of escapism, it can actually be a valid argument for both views.

7.1.2. Personality influences

As mentioned before, need for cognition could potentially influence cinema admissions and, since a great part of the respondents have answered to prefer simple over complex problems, mainly small daily projects, and an easy life without many puzzles, it could be concluded that there is not a great need for cognition. Moreover, it is remarkable that most respondents, despite their level of education, did not like the intellectual or educational aspect of visiting the cinema, which, in that case, it could have a positive influence on cinema admissions.

In addition, the fact that people enjoy looking at the life of a fictional character seems to support the concept of escapism. Yet, it is remarkable that mainly women have stated to enjoy that. On the other hand, it seems quite logical because women have also indicated to often feel intense emotions, such as happiness and sadness, which implies that women are more emotionally sensitive than men, see figure 2 in Appendix 2: additional result

figures. So, it is less remarkable that women clearly visit the cinema more often than men, even when the few male outliers are included. Not only are women more sensitive and emotional than men, but they also faced negative impact of the recession: significant more women than men adjusted their spending habits since the recession started. As a consequence, they could visit the cinema more often in order to be distracted from their own situation and to be reassured that they are not the only one struggling with problems, which is thus escapism.

7.2 Counterargument

7.2.1 Context influences

As Henning and Vorderer have also stated, “highly plausible is an effect of the amount of visits of the parents on their own behaviour” (Henning & Vorderer, 2001, p. 106). Most participants of the questionnaire and all participants of the focus group have, however, stated that they did not often go to cinema with their parents or relatives. Moreover, many other theories, including the theory of reasoned behaviour and impulse buying behaviour, suggest that the direct environment of someone influences their behaviour and behavioural intentions and after all, most behaviour of humans is due to nurture and thus learned, which is also the case with visiting the cinema.

7.2.2 Personality influences

Since none of the participants of the focus group perceived themselves as being lonely or as being alone and similar answers were given in the questionnaire, it can be concluded that loneliness among young adults is almost non-existent. This could imply that, on basis of loneliness, the admissions observed are not influenced by escapism, because many researchers, such as Kubey and Vorderer, have argued that loneliness influences the amount of visits in a positive way since loneliness is a negative experience based on social needs.

Furthermore, impulsiveness is an aspect of a person’s personality, or in other words a characteristic, which means that it is always part of someone’s behaviour, regardless of hard economic woes. Therefore, it can be concluded that, even though around half of the respondents of the questionnaire and all participants of the focus group are impulsive, there is no matter of escapism, since impulse buying can also occur when there is no recession.

7.2.3 The effects of digitalisation

The advent of the digital world creates a sharp change in the way consumers make their purchases, which causes that the retail landscape is undergoing a metamorphosis. An increasing number of traditional physical retailers are forced to make place for online

retailers. Moreover, the competition is bigger than ever and digital entertainment has become an integral part of today's entertainment industry. For the entertainment industry, it provides an excellent range of options. Notwithstanding, it has not become easier for the tangible product.

With an "all-you-can-eat" model, it is expected that more consumers will turn to Netflix, or similar services, because a subscription to Netflix has more advantages than subscribing to the cinema: the consumer is not only able to watch new movies on Netflix, but also old(er) movies and many television series, while the cinema only offers its customers new releases. In addition, with a Netflix subscription the subscriber may have up to six unique authorised Netflix ready devices associated with its Netflix account, which means that a Netflix user is able to share its account and split the costs of a subscription (How does Netflix work?, n.d.).

Moreover, the emergence of the World Wide Web did not only result in a trend of watching movies online, either legal or illegal, but also does the further development of the World Wide Web and its opportunities together with the price increase of cinema tickets lead to a decrease of cinema admissions in the longer term, which would have negative effects on the revenues and overall industry in the Netherlands and, most likely, abroad as well.

7.2.3 Other facts

Lastly, the numbers published by the Dutch cinema exhibitor's association suggest that escapism exists for an overwhelming increase of overall cinema admissions has been observed in the last five years. However, escapism is believed to be an universal consumer trend and would therefore not only have effect in the Netherlands. Yet, this growth in cinema attendance is not clearly observed in France, the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries observed a more undulating trend, which was not only observed in the last five years, but also in the five years before 2009. So, cinema admissions have not changed extremely in those countries in contrast to what the theory on escapism suggests.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

For years, researchers have argued that the cinema industry is a recession-proof industry due to the existence of the universal consumer trend escapism. The most simplistic and widely adopted definition of escapism is “a way of escaping from reality and thereby focussing on enjoyable things rather than the hard or depressive situation someone is in”, but this study has further expanded the definition as “the act of outweighing the future benefits of a postponing a purchase, in this case a cinema ticket, too rapidly during times of economic hardship due to unsatisfying life circumstances by which the consumer can focus on something other than his or her own situation”. Escapism is thus a hedonically complex experience as he or she is seeking short-term pleasure, which is based on emotional motives and influenced by the external environment, especially peers, family members and, most importantly, the economic situation.

Even though, the cinema admissions trend seen in the Netherlands throughout the last few years suggests that escapism exists, the consumer trend would not solely be observed in the Netherlands since it is believed to be a universal consumer trend and, therefore, would have been observed in other countries as well. This is, nevertheless, not the case as the increase in cinema admissions is not clearly observed in France, the United Kingdom and the United States. The cinemas in these countries noticed a more undulating movement instead of a continuing rise and a similar trend has been observed in the years before the recession started. This movement, therefore, seems to be normal and could, for instance, be based on the quantity and quality of released movies.

So, since it has been concluded that the consumer trend does not exist, there has to be another explanation for the evolving trends seen in the movie industry and the recession. In many studies from several cinema exhibitor's associations, it was advocated that a cinema has been and still is the cheapest form of leisure throughout the last couple of years and, despite the fact that the cinema has become more expensive both in the Netherlands and in France, the United Kingdom and the United States as over the years, everyone who participated in this study agreed that visiting the cinema is not only a nice activity outside the house, but also a good activity to do with friends, family or with a partner. In other words, whether the recession has impact on everyday life or not, it is perceived as a leisure activity where one speaks of a short trip or a day out.

Although downloading or streaming movies, either legal or illegal, will have some impact on the cinema industry in the long run and Video-on-Demand is likely to continue to grow in the future and therefore affect cinema admissions as well, it will not completely destroy

cinema attendance. As mentioned previously, a cinema visit is seen as a leisure activity and therefore perceived to be different from watching a movie at home, but, even though many of today's young adults use the Internet to download or stream movies, not even half of the respondents indicated to go to the cinema less often since they have started downloading and since streaming or downloading have existed for a good while now, it is plausible that this attitude stays the same in the future.

Lastly, it is surely remarkable that visiting the cinema appears to be more popular among women. Not only have women stated to go to the cinema more often and more women than men have a cinema subscription, they are also more impulsive, prefer an immediate reward and like to delve into the life of a fictional character, which indicates that women are more likely to visit the cinema in general. However, cinema attendance is affected by the direct environment of a person. Even though, many young adults did not go to the cinema with their parents or relatives regularly, but only on special occasions, young adults influence each other to visit a movie which will influence cinema admissions in a positive way.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Cinema visits during the recession

This questionnaire is designed in order to measure the attitude and behaviour of consumers. Since the credit crunch in 2007, the world economy has struggled. Therefore, it seems plausible that consumers changed their spending habits and have cut unnecessary costs. Even though, consumers tend to save up more money, they still spend money on entertainment by, for instance, going to the cinema. In order to test this, the following questionnaire has been put together. It focusses on four different areas which are: (1) personal information, (2) spending habits during the recession, (3) cinema visits and (4) personality/personal preferences.

Please fill in this questionnaire truthfully. The information will be collected anonymously and it will only be used during this research.

Personal information

Q1: What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Q2: What is your age?

Q3: What is your nationality?

- Dutch
- Other, _____.

Q4: What is your highest level of education?

- High school diploma
- Vocational training degree (MBO)
- Bachelor's degree (HBO)
- Master's degree
- Professional's degree (WO)
- Doctorate degree
- Other, _____.

Q5: What is your most important daily occupation?

- I have a salaried job as an employee.
- I am a self-employed/independent worker.
- I am unemployed.
- I am a student/I am still at school.
- I take care of the household.
- I am retired.
- I am (partially) disabled to work.

Q6: What is your monthly income?

- €500 or less
- Between €501 and €1000
- Between €1001 and €1501
- Between €1501 and €2000
- Between €2001 and €2500
- €2501 or more

Q7: What type of household do you have?

- Single
- Living with parents or other relatives.
- Living together (un)married without children.
- Living together (un)married with children.
- Living together with roommates.

Questions on spending habits during the recession

Q8: On a scale where 5 represents strongly agree and 1 represents strongly disagree, how would you

rate the following statements?

Please keep in mind that the following statements focus on your behaviour since 2007-2008 until present.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have changed my spending habits since the recession started.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I postpone big expenses since the recession started.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I have cut costs in order to live a more low-cost life.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I write down my purchases in order to have an overview of my expenses.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I tend to buy cheaper products in order to save money.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I have been saving more money in case the current situation gets worse.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel like I have to spend more money to buy the same amount of goods compared with five years ago.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I tend to do more at home (for instance, instead of going to a coffee bar, making a cup of coffee at home in order to save money).	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Q9: How have you changed your spending habits?

- I have not changed it.
- I do less activities outside the house.
- I tend to buy cheaper groceries (i.e. the home brand).
- I try to sell goods I do not use anymore online.
- Other, _____.

Please notice you can fill in more than one answer.

Q10: Have people in your immediate environment (i.e. family, friends or partner) changed their spending habits (as well)?

- Yes.
- No.

If you have answered 'yes', please go to question 11. If people in your immediate environment have not changed their spending habits, please go to question 12.

Q11: How do you think they changed their spending habits?

- Doing fewer activities outside the house.
- Buying cheaper groceries (i.e. the home brand) or other goods.
- Selling goods they do not use anymore online.
- Other, _____.

Please notice you can fill in more than one answer.

Questions on cinema visits during the recession

Q12: In the last 12 months, I went to the movies _____ times.

Q13: Do you think you have visited the cinema more often during the last five years than before 2009?

- Yes.
- No.

Q14: The last five years, I visited the cinema on average _____ times per year, which means I visit the cinema at least once per...?

- Year
- Quarter (three months)
- Month
- Week

Q15: When you go to the cinema, what do you pay for the ticket?

- The normal price for a cinema ticket, incl. 3D glasses.
- The normal price for a cinema ticket, excl. 3D glasses.
- I get discount from _____.
- I have a subscription (for instance, an unlimited pass).
- Other, _____.

If you are subscribed to the cinema, please go to question 16. If you are not subscribed to the cinema, please go to question 18.

Q16: Since when are you subscribed to the cinema?

- I already had a subscription before 2007.
- I have had a subscription since 2007-2009.
- I have had a subscription since 2009-2011.
- I have had a subscription since 2011-2013.
- I have had a subscription since the beginning of 2014.

Q17: What was the reason you decided to be subscribed to the cinema?

If you are subscribed to the cinema and have filled in questions 16 and 17, please continue to question 19.

Q18: Have you ever thought of subscribed to the cinema and, if so, why haven't you subscribed?

Yes/No, _____

Q19: Would a subscription to the cinema mean that you will visit the cinema more often? / Since you are subscribed to the cinema, did you visit the cinema more often? Why?

Yes/No, _____

Q20: On a scale where 5 represents strongly agree and 1 represents strongly disagree, how would you rate the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think going to the cinema is a good activity to do with friends, family or with my partner.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I often talk with friends about the new released movies/my friends talk about them.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

It is a nice activity outside the house.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I think it is nice to watch the life of a fictional character.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I go to movies I wanted to see wanted to see beforehand	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I often go to the cinema unplanned	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I often went to the cinema with my parents/relatives.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I sometimes go to the cinema by myself	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I like the educational or intellectual aspect of movies.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I generally go to 3D movies.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I think cinemas now have a much better image and sound quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The effects on screens are stunning nowadays.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The movies released are better/nicer than before.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
There is more advertisement for new movies.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cinemas are more enjoyable nowadays.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cinemas are more/better accessible nowadays.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I believe going to the cinema is part of the youth culture in the Netherlands.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Q21: Do you sometimes illegally download movies/watch movies online (for instance, through Netflix)?

- Yes
- No

If you have answered 'yes', please go to question 22. If you do not download movies or watch movies online, please go to question 23.

Q22: Since you have been downloading movies or watching them online, did you go to the cinema less often?

Yes, because _____

No, because _____

Questions on your personality/personal preferences

Q23: On a scale where 5 represents strongly agree and 1 represents strongly disagree, how would you rate the following statements?

Strongly Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly

	Disagree			Agree		
I prefer complex to simple problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I prefer structured activities more than unstructured activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I prefer activities with a clear goal.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I prefer to think about small, daily project than about long-term ones.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I prefer my life to be filled with puzzles that I must solve.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I often feel intense emotions, such as happiness, sadness, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I often postpone things I need to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I tend to search for distraction when I have important tasks to fulfil.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I often feel like I have too much to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I often think people do not like me.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I often feel like people do not want to be around me.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I am very spontaneous.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I am impulsive.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I like being by myself	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I am by myself quite often	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I am easily bored.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I am easily satisfied.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
I prefer having something immediately than having to wait for it.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Thank you for your co-operation!

Appendix 2: Additional result figures

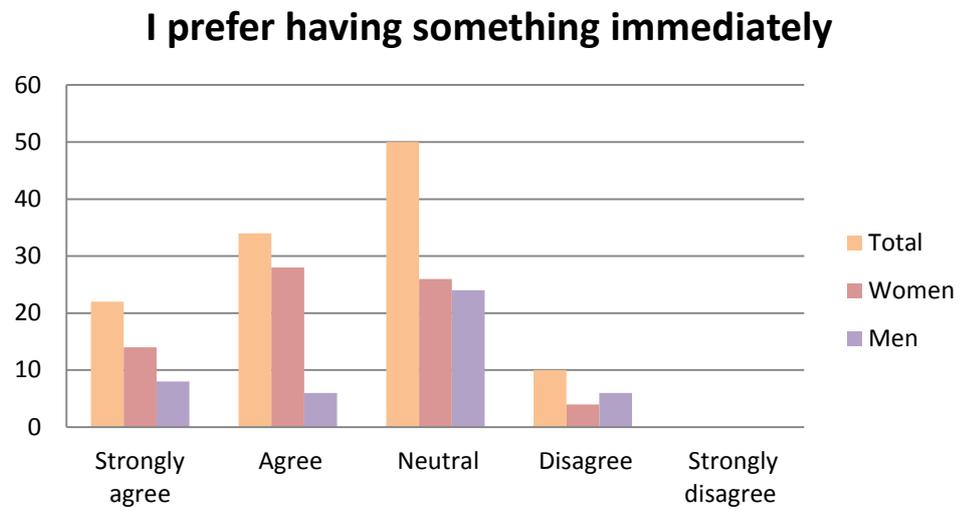


Figure 1: Results of question 23.18 – I prefer having something immediate than having to wait for it.

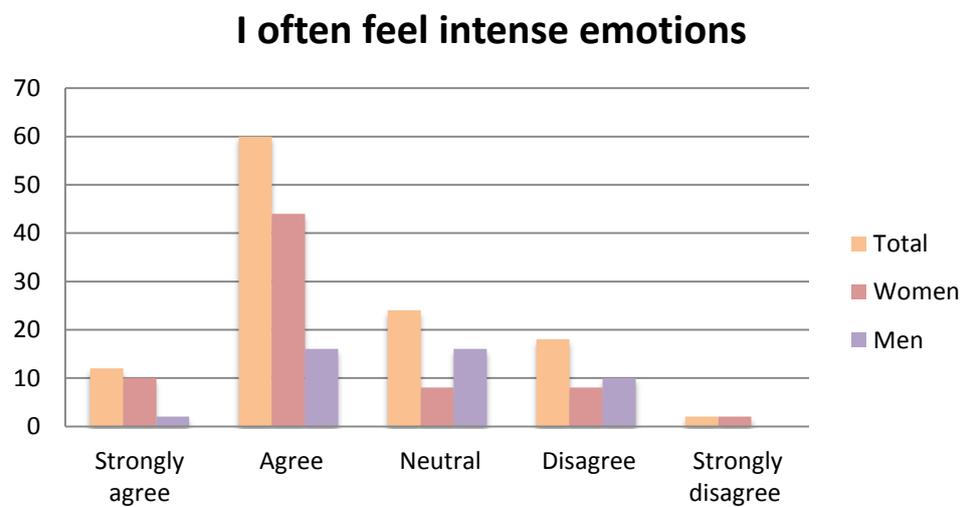


Figure 2: Results of question 23.6 – I often feel intense emotions.

Appendix 3: Additional figures

Country	Visits (x1.000)	%	Revenues (€1.000)	%	Most popular movie
European Union (EU)					
Belgium	318	1.04%	2.077	0.85%	<i>K3 Bengeltjes</i>
Denmark	253	0.83%	1.855	0.76%	<i>Jagten</i>
Finland	63	0.21%	454	0.19%	<i>Niko 2</i>
France	1.986	6.50%	15.278	6.25%	<i>Intouchables</i>
Germany	109	0.36%	782	0.32%	<i>Wickie and the treasure of the gods</i>
Italy	58	0.19%	4.03	0.16%	<i>Winx Club: magical adventure 3D</i>
The Netherlands	4.831	15.81%	35.926	14.69%	<i>Alles is familie</i>
Spain	32	0.11%	219	0.09%	<i>7 Days in heaven</i>
Sweden	38	0.12%	241	0.10%	<i>Simon and the oaks</i>
United Kingdom	2.996	9.80%	24.629	10.07%	<i>Skyfall</i>
Subtotal EU	10.715	35.06%	82.066	3.55%	
Outside European Union (EU)					
Australia	24	0.08%	199	0.08%	<i>Biat (3D)</i>
Brazil	20	0.07%	111	0.05%	<i>Historiasque so existemquandolambradas</i>
Canada	111	0.36%	775	0.32%	<i>Monsieur Lazhar</i>
Hong Kong	11	0.04%	75	0.03%	<i>A simple life</i>
India	121	0.40%	905	0.37%	<i>Jab tak haj jaan</i>
Norway	47	0.15%	305	0.12%	<i>Headhunters</i>
Turkey	160	0.52%	1.383	0.57%	<i>Fetih 1453</i>
United States	19.264	63.04%	158.199	64.68%	<i>The hobbit: an unexpected journey (3D)</i>
Subtotal outside EU	19.845	64.94%	162.534	66.45%	
Total	30.560	100%	244.600	100%	

Figure 1: Market shares and results of movies per country of origin in the Netherlands in 2012



Figure 2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Glossary

- Attitude* A person's consistently favourable or unfavourable evaluations, feelings, beliefs and tendencies towards certain situations, ideas and people (Ebert & Griffin, p.272; Armstrong & Kotler, p. 617).
- Behavioural intentions* An antecedent of behaviour, which indicates if a person is ready to perform certain behaviour (Ajzen, 2002).
- Buyer decision process* A process consisting of five stages - need for cognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post purchase behaviour - that consumers pass through while making a purchase (Armstrong & Kotler, p. 180).
- Cash squeezing* Saving money on necessary purchases, such as groceries, by the use of, for instance, discount coupons or special offers.
- Credit crisis* A certain period of time when the economic growth declined and was lower than normal. The inducement for the crisis, this text is referring to, was the devaluation of mortgages granted by American banks as people could not pay the increased interest rates anymore. Consequently, many banks had to forcibly sell the homes of people, who could not pay their interest rates anymore. However, not only did the mortgages drop in value as there were too many defaulters, the houses also dropped in value, which meant that the sold houses did not cover the unredeemed mortgages (Elliot, 2011);(Kalse, 2008). The crisis started in the United States in 2007 and began to show its effects worldwide in late 2008 – beginning of 2009.
- Disposable income* "Income after deduction of taxes, plus benefits, that is spent on consumption and savings" (CBS, n.d.).
- Emotional motives* "Reasons for purchasing a product that are based on non-objective factors (Ebert & Griffin, p. 277)
- Escapism* Behaviour performed by someone who would like to escape from the hard or depressing situation he or she is in by focussing on enjoyable things, such as fictional characters and stories.
- Hedonically complex experience* An purchasing experience that relates to emotional aspects by which pleasure is found.
- Impulse buying* A buying behaviour that appears when the consumer outweighs the future too rapidly because of the reward from buying the product. So, there was no previous intention to make a certain purchase, but, due to a certain impulse, certain emotions are triggered which influence the purchase (Strotz, 1995; Ma, Wei & Chen, 2013).

Individual-psychological escapism Escapism caused by someone's emotional status and/or perception, which is not (directly) socially caused, but mostly by activities without a clear goal, such as waiting.

Patronage motives Reasons for purchasing a product in a particular store or outlet.

Rational motives "Reasons for purchasing a product that are based on a logical evaluation of product attributes" (Ebert & Griffin, p. 288).

Sellsuming The resale of someone's belongings that are no longer used or needed to a third party – so second hand sales - mostly through the use of websites, such as EBay and Marktplaats.

Social-psychological escapism Escapism caused by deficits in the social interaction.

Sociological escapism Escapism caused by unpleasant situations at work.

Subjective norms A person's perception that people within their direct environment expect certain behaviour from him or her (Fishbein&Azjen, 1975).