

# ***Barbenheimer*: Convergence in Contemporary Cinema**

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**Abstract.** In this article, we delve into the influence of audience behavior on modern-day Cinema and the ways in which it can enhance the debut and genuineness of movies. Our focus was on two highly anticipated films set to release in 2023, *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*, known as *Barbenheimer*, both of which have garnered attention for their exceptional and organic union made by the audience that ends up involving and captivating viewers through various forms of media. This phenomenon has resulted in increased audience involvement and what we refer to as a "movement" in this article.

**Keywords.** Contemporary Cinema, Convergence, Audience, *Barbenheimer*.

## **1. Introduction**

In April 2022, the internet saw the emergence of the portmanteau "*Barbenheimer*," the combination of two movies, [1] *Barbie* and [2] *Oppenheimer*, released on the same day; this happened during the casting calls for the *Barbie* film and *Oppenheimer* biopic. The term gained popularity for the first time in early 2023, sparking curiosity and the phenomenon of anticipation that is widely used in marketing. However, this was not a strategy created by the producers or the marketing time of these productions; this was an organic contribution from the audience. Helping these movies at the box office occurred in the middle of one of the most significant strikes in the history of Hollywood. The study will explore whether this phenomenon indicates a change in audience behavior patterns and a shift in contemporary Cinema.

## **2. Audience in Contemporary Cinema**

Created in the 19th century, Cinema is an art constantly evolving in production and distribution, which nowadays can have a direct change in how these movies come to the audience and what they represent. Nevertheless, there is the inverse, when the way the audience receives the idea of this movie can change directly how they watch it. In today's era, where people prefer to watch movies on their schedules, how can the film industry attract audiences and ensure the success of their highly budget productions? Is a transition period currently

underway? Digitization has transformed storytelling, allowing for distributed, deepened, shared, and personalized narratives on digital platforms and giving rise to new concepts.

In order to discover solutions, we need to analyze the present state of Cinema, taking into account its audience and the settings in which it is watched. We must also consider the modern-day person and the combination of different forms of media. Different historical and cultural shifts influence how individuals perceive the world and their identity. The media that emerged over the years were inserted into society so that they completed empty spaces instead of replacing pre-existing structures. As is the case of *Barbenheimer*, who invited the public to participate. In fact, the public became more than spectators. A necessary component arises for the initial question: convergence—the interaction of the audience and the movie itself.

### **2.1 Barbie and Oppenheimer**

When it comes to *Barbie*, we witnessed at first the appearance of a filter for *Barbie* Movie on *Instagram* that led the audience to engage by putting their photos and feeling of being part of the movie. This approach rose rapidly, and millions of people on the internet started to match their photos into the filter faster. Instantly, everybody's feeds were fed with these images; even people who did not know that the *Barbie* movie was about to launch immediately understood what was happening. *Barbie* boxes followed this in theaters, shop windows in malls, and people using pink in the premieres. It was a true

example of Transmedia unfolding right in front people's eyes.

*"Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story."* [3]

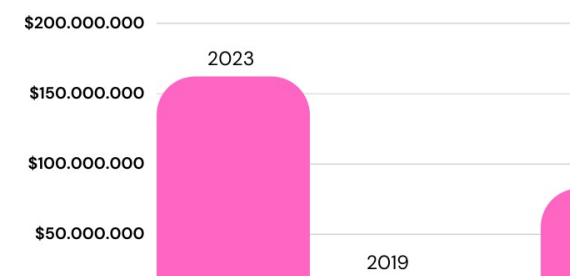
Oppenheimer offers a different narrative, aesthetic, and perspective when analyzing the film; this raises the question: what happened for these cinematic interpretations to converge? This momentum ended up being a true movement followed by discussion in social media that led to variations, such as the order of which film people would watch, and "has become a highly contested topic" [4] a new pop culture event of this century and time "split across two non-franchise, non-superhero, non-typical juggernauts" [5]. Due to the ongoing strike, actors were not permitted to interact on social media or even discuss their movies. As a result, the red-carpet events had to be cut short. These events are typically used as a promotional tool to attract audiences to the movies. However, The actor's strike has supported screenwriters, "It is never a good thing to have stars enable to promote their films" [6].

*"If the digital revolution paradigm assumed that new media would replace old media, the emerging convergence paradigm assumes that new and old media will interact in increasingly complex ways."* [7]

### 3. Changes in the Results

If a person's media consumption habits change, the media industry must adapt its production and distribution methods accordingly. This article takes an ethnographic approach to study how audiences interact with different movie elements, often unknowingly contributing to a film's success. We looked for signs of audience involvement and evaluated whether it had a positive impact. Furthermore, we examined recent works by filmmakers Greta Gerwig, known for directing Barbie and Little Women [8], and Christopher Nolan, known for directing Oppenheimer and Tenet [9], to gain a comprehensive understanding of these occurrences.

## DOMESTIC OPEN



Numbers by Mojo Box Office. [10]

Based on the graph, there has been a rise in the number of invoices for movies in both domestic openings. This is in contrast to the latest movies released by their respective directors. It suggests that Barbenheimer may have played a pivotal role in a notable change in their box office performance.

According to Lipovestky [11], when discussing the worldwide film industry and its current condition, we can see that nowadays, Cinema has lost its previous dominant position to television and the new IT industry. Electronic screens have surpassed it as a form of expression. However, Cinema's device still triumphs in hypermodern culture despite no longer being the predominant medium of the past. It does so imaginatively: through grand spectacles, transformation into an image, and the cult of celebrity beings elevated to spectacle. As Cinema suffers competition or is supplanted by other forms of entertainment, its phagocytic aesthetics devour the entire screen culture. Rather than causing Cinema to regress, the all-screen helps to disseminate the cinematic gaze, double the existence of the animated image, and create a generalized cinemania. Cinema appears as the matrix form of what is expressed outside it, infinitely more powerful and global than its native and specific universe.

### 4. Discussion and Results

Therefore, it encompasses the entire issue of the contemporary individual discussed so far, who, in addition to watching what they want, when they want, also wants to interact with this content.

Jenkins believes presenting a narrative through tangible and digital experiences can provide a deeper understanding of the world. This approach suggests that a story is the starting point for building a world where people can participate and contribute to creating characters, places, and objects. As a result, the world takes on a life of its own.

Besides huge franchises such as Harry Potter [12], Star Wars [13], and others, it could be risky to say.

However, it can be considered one of contemporary Cinema's most movement and commotion.

## 5. Conclusion

This new scenario that has developed is different from all others that came before and is not a threat to classical forms but rather a complement to the current situation of media convergence in which connection is the keyword for communication.

The power of anticipation has been demonstrated in marketing as a great strategy; this, allied with audience participation, demonstrated a suitable methodology for launching a film. Is there no coming back? Is this a new transition and way of "making" movies? Until it proves the contrary, it seems it is. There remains a need for an efficient method to study and find the vital aspect supporting this idea.

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