INTERACTIVE FILMS AND ITS POTENTIAL INFLUENCE ON AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE

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SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

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INTERACTIVE FILMS AND ITS POTENTIAL INFLUENCE ON AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of interactive films marks a transformative shift in cinematic storytelling, blending traditional narratives with game-like interactivity to develop deeper audience engagement. This research investigates the key elements of interactive films and their potential influence on audience experience. By using Netflix's interactive film We Lost Our Human as a case study, this study aims to identify unique characteristics of interactive films, analyze the impact of interactivity on audience engagement, and propose best practices for creating interactive content. A qualitative methodology was adopted, utilizing two research methods: (1) Focus Group Interviews and (2) Expert Interviews. The feedback and data obtained from these interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, leading to the identification of core elements of interactive films. Findings shows three core elements, which is that compelling narratives, meaningful choices, and seamless integration of interactivity are critical to effective interactive storytelling. Regarding audience experience, this study highlights how viewers engage with interactive content, showing an increased sense of involvement with interactive films. Moreover, challenges in the production and reception of interactive films were identified, including increased production costs, technical challenges, and the necessity of thorough planning during pre-production. The research culminated in the development of an Interactive Flow Diagram, which visually represents the interaction of narrative choices, timing, and interactive elements to form an Interactive Flow Channel. These findings provide valuable insights for industry professionals and content creators, offering a structured approach of producing and delivering interactive content.

FILEM INTERAKTIF DAN POTENSINYA DALAM MEMPENGARUHI PENGALAMAN PENONTON

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan genre filem interaktif menandakan satu anjakan paradigma dalam industri perfileman dan penceritaan, dengan menggabungkan unsur penceritaan tradisional dan unsur-unsur permainan interaktif untuk memupuk penglibatan penonton yang lebih mendalam. Kajian ini menyelidik elemen-elemen penting dalam filem interaktif dan potensinya dalam mempengaruhi keterlibatan penonton. Dengan menjadikan filem interaktif "We Lost Our Human" sebagai kajian kes, kajian ini telah mengenal pasti ciri-ciri unik filem interaktif, menganalisa impak unsur interaktif ke atas keterlibatan penonton, dan mencadangkan cara yang optimum untuk menghasilkan sesebuah filem interaktif. Metodologi kajian kualitatif telah digunakan, melalui dua pendekatan kajian iaitu (1) Temubual Kumpulan Fokus dan (2) Temubual Pakar. Maklumbalas dan data yang diperoleh telah dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik, dan telah membawa kepada identifikasi elemen-elemen utama untuk filem interaktif. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan tiga elemen utama iaitu penceritaan yang menarik, pilihan yang bermakna dan integrasi elemen interaktif yang lancar merupakan elemen penting dalam penceritaan interaktif yang berkesan. Dari sudut keterlibatan penonton, kajian ini memperlihatkan bagaimana penonton berinteraksi dengan kandungan interaktif, menunjukkan tahap penglibatan yang lebih tinggi dengan kandungan interaktif. Tambahan lagi, cabaran dalam pembikinan dan penerimaan filem interaktif telah dikenal pasti, termasuk penambahan kos produksi, cabaran teknikal dan keperluan kepada perancangan yang jitu semasa fasa pra-produksi. Kajian ini telah membuahkan hasil dalam bentuk penghasilan Rajah Aliran Interaktif (Interactive Flow Diagram), yang menggambarkan hubungkait antara pilihan naratif, masa dan elemen interaktif dalam membentuk Saluran Aliran Interaktif (Interactive Flow Channel). Dapatan kajian ini memberikan maklumat yang berharga kepada pakar-pakar industri dan juga para pencipta kandungan dengan menawarkan pendekatan yang berstruktur dalam penghasilan kandungan interaktif.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Through hundreds of years, the film industry has gone through a remarkable change, driven by the revolutionary emergence of interactive films. Breaking away from the tradition of conventional linear narratives that have long characterized cinematic storytelling, interactive films have paved a way into a dynamic era where audiences actively shape the unfolding story within a film. This principle shift allows viewers to become co-creators of their entertainment experience by making choices that steer the direction of the plot, sparking a sense of agency and personal involvement. As noted by Gallon (2021), users get to be active or engaged in interactive films, experiencing a level of involvement previously unattainable in traditional cinema. This innovative approach has introduced a transformative dimension to storytelling, paving the way for an interactive and participatory form of cinematic experience that transcends passive observation.

The fusion of games and film into interactive films revolutionizes storytelling by transforming passive spectators into active participants. By blending the narrative experience of movies with the interactivity of games, these films immerse audiences in decision-making processes that shape the unfolding story. As highlighted by Ahmed (2022), interactive films blend the interaction of games with the movie narrative experience, allowing two or more viewers to interact with the movie and influence the events. This convergence not only caters to the evolving preferences of modern audiences but also unlocks a realm of unexplored possibilities, enriching the cinematic experience by challenging cognitive and emotional responses. Interactive films thus create a unique form of engagement that extends beyond mere entertainment, resonating with audiences long after the viewing experience concludes.

This research seeks to explore the potential impact of interactive films on audience experience, aiming to explore ways of how they can be effectively harnessed to create immersive and captivating storytelling experiences. Through a qualitative method research approach, the study will employ expert interviews and focus group discussions to explore the vast dimensions of audience experience, by looking into the factors that influence the level of viewer involvement. The focus will be on the latest Netflix interactive film, "We Lost Our Human" (2023), as a case study to dissect the design elements and narrative strategies that contribute to its immersive appeal. By highlighting the underlying mechanisms that drive audience interaction in this context, this research aims to offer valuable insights for the continuingly evolving nature of interactive filmmaking, paving the way for a deeper understanding of its potential in shaping the future landscape of cinematic storytelling. Through an in-depth analysis of viewer responses and the examination of various cinematic techniques employed in

interactive films, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics between audience engagement and narrative construction, ultimately contributing to the advancement of interactive storytelling as a powerful tool for audience immersion and emotional resonance.

1.2   Background of Study

In the 2000s, interactive technology was still in its infancy, especially compared to what we have today. Full-fledged interactivity, like the kind we now associate with apps, video games, or interactive films, wasn't yet fully achievable for mainstream media. However, there was an early effort to engage audiences, particularly young children, through limited forms of interactivity in TV shows like Dora the Explorer and Blue's Clues.

"Dora the Explorer," an educational animated series that premiered in 2000, transformed children's television with its unique blend of adventure and interactive learning. Created by Chris Gifford, Valerie Walsh Valdes, and Eric Weiner, the show follows the adventures of a young Latina girl named Dora and her monkey companion, Boots. Each episode features Dora embarking on a quest to find something or help someone, overcoming obstacles along the way. This format not only entertains but also educates preschool-aged children by engaging them in interactive problem-solving and bilingual language skills. What makes "Dora the Explorer" particularly impactful is its direct engagement with the audience. Throughout the show, Dora frequently breaks the fourth wall, asking viewers to participate by answering questions, repeating phrases in English and Spanish, and performing physical activities like clapping or jumping.

Dora's pauses after asking questions allow children time to respond, fostering a sense of participation and dialogue. This interactive element is critical in reinforcing learning and keeping young viewers actively involved.

In addition to language skills, "Dora the Explorer" focuses on problem-solving and critical thinking. Each episode features a series of puzzles and challenges that Dora and the viewers must solve to progress in the adventure. These activities help develop children's logic, memory, and sequencing skills. The show's structure, with its clear goals and steps to achieve them, mirrors effective educational practices, providing a framework that children can easily follow and understand. The show's vibrant animation and catchy musical elements also play a significant role in its educational impact. The visual and auditory stimuli keep children engaged, making learning enjoyable and dynamic. Characters like the mischievous fox Swiper and helpful tools like the Map and Backpack add layers of interaction and fun, encouraging viewers to think ahead and plan their actions.

Figure 1.1

(Dora the Explorer Wiki, Tall Mountain from the episode Call me Mr. Riddles Retrieved March 23, 2024)

Figure 1.2

Blues Clues. Retrieved 6th June 2024 from Buzzfeed.com

Retrieved 6th June 2024 from Buzzfeed.com

Let's take a look at Blues Clues, the groundbreaking children's television show, which redefined interactivity in educational programming when it first aired in 1996. Created by Traci Paige Johnson, Todd Kessler, and Angela Santomero, the show featured a unique interactive format that actively engaged its young audience, making it a pioneer in interactive TV for preschoolers. The primary character, an animated blue dog named Blue, would leave paw print clues for the live-action host, Steve (played by Steve Burns), and later Joe (played by Donovan Patton), to find and solve a puzzle by the end of each episode. What set "Blue's Clues" apart was its unique approach to viewer participation. Throughout each episode, the host directly addressed the audience, asking questions and then pausing to allow children time to think and respond. This intentional use of pauses gave kids the feeling that they were having a conversation with Steve or Joe, rather than just passively watching. The hosts would then affirm the viewers' responses, creating a sense of validation and boosting the children's confidence in their problem-solving abilities. This technique, known as "direct address," was instrumental in making learning feel personal and engaging.

The interactive format of "Blue's Clues" was meticulously designed based on research in child development and early childhood education. Studies showed that children learned best when they were actively involved in the process. By inviting viewers to shout out answers, participate in songs, and engage in critical thinking exercises, the show helped develop essential skills such as memory, logic, and spatial reasoning. The show's repetition and consistent structure also provided a comforting and predictable learning environment for young viewers. Extensive experience with Blue's Clues can teach preschool children a more interactive and efficient way to view television, potentially benefiting their understanding of familiar content (Crawley, A., Anderson, D., Santomero, A., Wilder, A., Williams, M., Evans, M., & Bryant, J., 2002). "Blue's Clues" also utilized simple yet vibrant animation and a clean, easily understandable visual style, which helped maintain the children's focus and made the clues easier to follow. The combination of visual and auditory stimuli ensured that the show catered to various learning styles, making it accessible to a broader audience, as supported by Anderson et. al. (2000) who stated that Blue's Clues positively impacts cognitive development in preschool children by promoting mastery of thinking and problem-solving skills through television viewing behaviors (Anderson, D., Bryant, J., Wilder, A., Santomero, A., Williams, M., & Crawley, A. (2000).

Other shows like Mickey Mouse Clubhouse were also considered interactive shows but with additional decent amount of learning elements, marking an early exploration of interactive engagement within animated content and laying the groundwork for future innovations in audience interaction within the medium. However, these types of interactive animations were only one-sided, where the characters break the fourth wall by asking the viewers questions and wait for them to

answer. These interactions, while engaging, do not directly affect the decision of the characters nor the plotline of the story, highlighting a limitation in the depth of interactivity in early animated programming. Lennon (2010) in their research argued that both the participation process and the relationship between the character and the audience in Dora The Explorer are fabricated. The interface's limitations force participation and calls for involvement to be pre-calculated, leading to planned responses and a programmed interaction that just mimics a hyper-interplay. Despite this limitation, these early interactive elements laid the foundation for more complex forms of audience engagement to come, serving as a starting point for the evolution of interactive storytelling in animation.

The evolution of technology has opened up new possibilities for filmmakers to explore interactivity within films. Interactive films, where viewers can actively engage with the narrative and characters, have the potential to revolutionize the audience experience. By incorporating interactive elements, such as branching narratives, user-controlled camera angles, or interactive characters, filmmakers can provide audiences with a more immersive and personalized experience, elevating the medium beyond passive consumption and transforming viewers into active participants in the storytelling process.

These interactive features allow viewers to influence the story's progression, making them active participants rather than passive observers, thus enhancing their sense of agency and investment in the narrative unfolding before them. This heightened level of engagement fosters a deeper connection between the audience and the story,

resulting in a more impactful and memorable viewing experience that resonates long after the credits roll.

The existing body of research on interactive films is limited but shows promising potential for enhancing the audience experience. One of the earliest researches on this topic was conducted by Vorderer, P., Knobloch, S., and Schramm, H. (2001). In their research, they investigated whether interactivity enhances entertainment in interdependence with individual factors and concluded that, in general, interactive entertainment may, in fact, be even more attractive than regular entertainment if the right audience is addressed, highlighting the importance of audience segmentation and targeted engagement strategies in interactive storytelling. This early research laid the groundwork for future studies exploring the impact of interactivity on audience engagement and satisfaction, paving the way for a deeper understanding of the psychological and emotional dynamics at play in interactive media experiences.

The concept of interactivity is also often equated with gameplay (Landay, L. 2019). It is important to address the difference between games, film, and interactive films. Frome, J. (2019) in their research concluded that by differentiating gameplay and interactivity, a better discussion can be made on degrees of interactivity, emotions by interactive and non-interactive works, and how different types of hybrid objects such as interactive narratives can be understood to generate emotions in either unique or common ways, underscoring the need for nuanced distinctions in the study of interactive media forms. This distinction is crucial for understanding the unique

affordances and challenges of interactive storytelling and its potential impact on audience engagement and emotional response.

Figure 1.3

Intersection of game and movie figure (Chen, M., 2023)
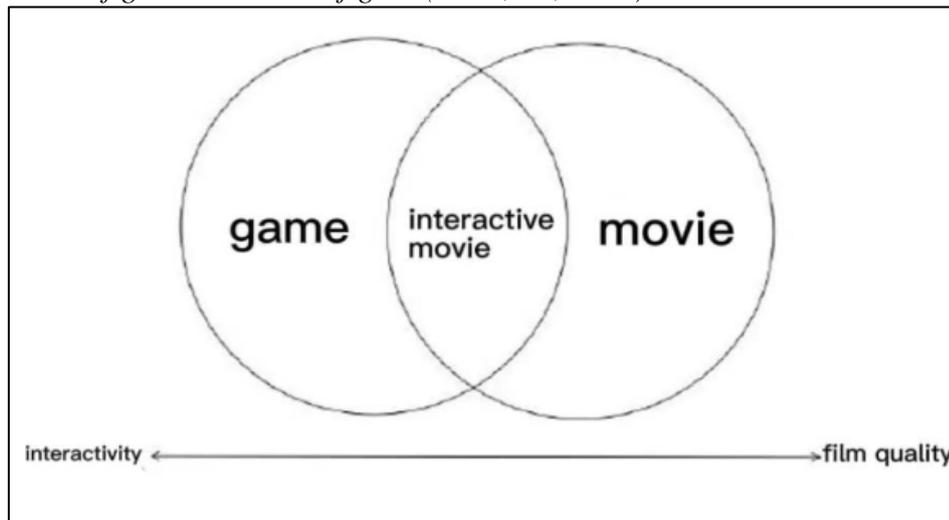
(Chen, M., 2023).

Figure 1.3 shows the intersection of game and movie. The primary element of interactive film is interactivity. It is a type of interactive art that uses moving images as its medium. Figure 1.3 shows how interactive movies are positioned between a computer game and a film, with the audience acting as both game players and viewers of the film thanks to the interactivity of the video game and the audiovisual artistic expression of traditional film (Chen, M. 2023). Interactive movies exist at the center of the intersection between games and movies, blending elements from both to create a unique media experience. Unlike traditional movies that emphasize cinematic quality with polished storytelling, visual aesthetics, and production values, interactive movies incorporate elements of user interactivity, typically seen in games. This combination allows the audience to influence the narrative or outcomes within the film, providing a more engaging and personalized experience. The key difference between interactive

movies, pure games, and traditional movies lies in their balance of interactivity and cinematic qualities. While games prioritize high levels of user control and engagement, often at the expense of filmic elements, and traditional movies focus on delivering a crafted visual and narrative experience with minimal audience interaction, interactive movies strive to harmonize these aspects. They offer a middle ground where users can enjoy both the immersive, story-driven experience of a movie and the engaging, participatory nature of a game.

Looking at the latest trend of interactive contents, the famous interactive film by Netflix; Black Mirror: Bandersnatch which was released in 2018, garnered global attention with a 7.1 score on IMDb from a total of 132,656 votes. In 2019, after the huge success of Bandersnatch, Netflix's Vice President of Product, Todd Yellin, announced that the streaming service will be "doubling down" on the experimental format from here on out. In the same year, The Government of Malaysia, through TPB2030, introduced 7 elements of Key Economic Growth Activity (KEGA), where the first Development Program was to create a Media Channel Platform to help local publishers market creative contents. These are signs for local studios and productions, especially in Malaysia, to hop on this ongoing trend and do more experimental content like interactive films, indicating a growing recognition of the potential economic and creative benefits of investing in interactive storytelling ventures. This shift in industry focus towards interactive content reflects a broader cultural shift towards participatory media experiences, signaling a potential turning point in the future of entertainment consumption and production.

In conclusion, the field of interactive films is an emerging area with enormous potential for transforming the audience experience. This research aims to bridge these gaps by studying the characteristics and elements of interactive films and study how interactive films can affect audience experience, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of interactive storytelling and its implications for the future of cinematic engagement. Through comprehensive analysis and exploration of the interplay between technology, narrative, and audience engagement, this research seeks to unlock new insights into the transformative power of interactive storytelling, paving the way for innovative approaches to entertainment production and consumption in the digital age.

1.3   Problem Statement

Interactive films represent a fascinating fusion of ludology and narratology, merging gameplay mechanics with narrative structures to create a hybrid experience. These films require viewers to make choices that influence the storyline, thereby engaging with the medium in a way that blends traditional storytelling with interactive gameplay elements. This duality is at the heart of the ongoing debate between ludologists, who focus on the mechanical and interactive aspects of games, and narratologists, who view video games as a narrative form akin to movies and novels.

In the entertainment world, this debate has persisted for over two decades. Ludology emphasizes the unique interactive qualities of video games, suggesting that their mechanical features should be the primary lens through which they are understood. In contrast, narratology considers video games as another medium for storytelling,

prioritizing narrative elements over gameplay mechanics (Mcmanus & Harrah, 2006; Veloya, 2023). This challenge in ludonarrative can be seen in the famous game "The Last Of Us" developed by Naughty Dog back in 2013. Ludonarrative dissonance in "The Last of Us" arises from the tension between its rich narrative and often violent gameplay. Much of the game's production is well executed and realistic, both in graphics and storytelling; however, a few unrealistic gameplay elements, designed to appeal to a mass audience, can undercut the otherwise compelling narrative. Joel's character is portrayed with moral ambiguity and vulnerability, yet during gameplay, players frequently engage in ruthless violence. This dissonance can be jarring, sometimes distracting from the emotional stakes at the heart of the story (Hughes, 2015).

While some argue that these elements break immersion and diminish the narrative's impact, others believe they add to the game's complexity, highlighting the brutal reality of its post-apocalyptic world. This contrast enhances themes of survival and moral ambiguity, though it also underscores a fundamental challenge in game design: balancing meaningful storytelling with engaging gameplay. As technology advances, the old-fashioned elements of gameplay become more glaring, challenging the narrative cohesion that games like "The Last of Us" strive to achieve.

The emergence of interactive films presents a distinct challenge at the narratology-ludology intersection, as these works must balance narrative engagement with gaming mechanisms. This challenge is exemplified in interactive films such as "Black Mirror: Bandersnatch." In "Bandersnatch," the audience's choices directly impact the direction of the story, creating a dynamic and immersive experience.

However, this interactivity can limit character development and in-depth exploration of backstories. The focus on player choice often necessitates a broader narrative approach, leaving little room for detailed character arcs and background information (Hunt, 2019). "Bandersnatch" illustrates the tension between narrative depth and interactive freedom. While the interactive nature allows for multiple story paths and endings, it often sacrifices the rich character development found in more linear narratives. This trade-off highlights the ongoing struggle to balance the ludic elements of choice and interactivity with the narratological elements of storytelling and character development.

Dahdal, S. (2020) conducted an extensive study on ludonarrativity and the challenges with emergent interactive storytelling models in interactive movies. Their research involved surveys, interviews, and observations of 150 university students who were asked to play the interactive movie 'The Outbreak'. The study concluded that the primary issue with interactive movies is the absence of a successful model for emergent interactive narratives that can effectively balance meaningful gameplay with narrative coherence. In interactive digital media, there is a constant struggle between interactivity and narrativity. Traditional movies offer full narrative construction with no interactivity, while traditional games provide full interactivity with minimal narrative. Interactive movies fall in the middle, where increased interactivity often results in a loss of narrative structure, making them more game-like. For instance, FMV games, despite their high ratio of live-footage cut scenes, are classified as games rather than interactive movies. Conversely, reduced interactivity makes these works more like simple branching movies. Thus, the core challenge for interactive movies is to engage both moviegoers and gamers without sacrificing narrative integrity or meaningful gameplay.

By studying how audiences engage with and perceive these hybrid narratives, strategies can be developed to enhance both narrative depth and interactive engagement. This research can provide insights into audience preferences, helping creators to design interactive films that offer meaningful choices without compromising on character development and story coherence. As the medium evolves, such research will be essential in pushing the boundaries of both ludology and narratology, ultimately creating more immersive and satisfying experiences for audiences.

Moreover, despite the growing interest in interactive media, the production of interactive films remains scarce and limited. According to IGN Southeast Asia, as of 2020, Netflix remains as the most prominent and consistent platform producing these types of interactive contents, with 8 choose-your-own-adventure titles available to watch (or play), spanning a remarkable range of genres and age groups though its sample size is still considered small (Griffin, 2020). Compared to other companies like HBO, Amazon, and CBS All Access who have also dabbled in interactive contents, but they haven't made it a significant focus. For example, HBO's Mosaic and CBS's Interrogation are notable but remain limited compared to Netflix's output. While these platforms explore interactive media, it isn't a core part of their strategies, unlike Netflix, which continues to invest heavily in expanding its interactive catalog consolidating its position as a pioneer in this innovative format.

Content creators and film producers exhibit hesitancy towards adopting this concept, largely due to perceived risks and uncertainties surrounding its implementation. Concerns over audience reception, technical challenges, and narrative cohesion deter many creators and producers from venturing into this innovative

territory, reflecting the cautious approach adopted by the industry towards new and untested formats, as discussed by Hausenblas (2008), challenges in creating non-linear interactive media include developing and evaluating an authoring suite that enables the creation and testing of non-linear narratives. The platform channel may limit the interactive movie's target audience and make it harder for it to become broadly popular, which might affect its financial success (Zhao, 2019). Moreover, the complexity of interactive narratology also increases the cost of making an interactive movie (Sun, H. & Azahari, M.H., 2023), further increasing the financial risks associated with such productions. Consequently, the untapped potential of interactive films to revolutionize storytelling and audience experience remains largely unexplored, highlighting a critical gap in the current media landscape that demands attention and exploration.

These issues highlight the need for further exploration and understanding behind the technicalities of interactive films, and how interactivity can be effectively employed in films to enhance the audience experience. As the medium continues to evolve, it is essential for researchers, creators, and industry stakeholders to collaborate in addressing these challenges and unlocking the full potential of interactive storytelling in films. By looking deep into the intricacies of interactive narrative design, audience engagement strategies, and technological advancements, a way can be paved for a new era of immersive and interactive cinematic experiences that captivate and inspire audiences around the world, ushering in a transformative shift in the way stories are told and experienced in the digital age.

1.4   Research Objectives

This research focuses on the essence of interactive films, and to do that, researchers take audience experience into account to study the influence of interactive films and finds the essential elements of a good interactive content, leading to the three main objectives of this research which are:

RO1 : To identify the characteristics of interactive films.

RO2 : To analyze the impact of interactivity on audience experience.

RO3 : To propose best practices in creating interactive content.

1.5   Research Questions

Based on the research objectives listed above, this research will answer these questions:

RQ1 : What are the characteristics and key elements of an interactive film?

RQ2 : How does interactivity influence audience experience in films?

RQ3 : What challenges exist in the production and reception of interactive films?

The alignment between the research questions (RQs) and research objectives (ROs) in this study ensures a focused and comprehensive examination of interactive films and their influence on audience experience. Each RQ is specifically crafted to address a specific RO, thereby creating a structured framework for the research. RQ1 aligns with RO1 by investigating the characteristics and key elements of interactive films, which is essential for establishing a foundational understanding. RQ2 corresponds with RO2 by assessing the impact of interactivity on audience experience,

providing critical insights into engagement, emotional response, and satisfaction. RQ3 is linked to RO3 by identifying the challenges in the production and reception of interactive films, which is crucial for deriving best practices.

This alignment is important as it ensures comprehensive coverage of both theoretical and practical aspects. RQ1 offers the necessary background on the definitive features of interactive films, while RQ2 focuses on the audience's perspective, which is central to understanding the impact of interactivity. RQ3 addresses practical issues related to production and reception, ensuring that the research findings are both applicable and beneficial to creators within the field. This structure helps to prevent the research from becoming too broad or unfocused, thereby facilitating in-depth analysis and producing solid results that are directly relevant to the research objectives.

1.6   Research Limitations

While this research focuses on exploring into the evolving world of interactive films and their impact on audience experience, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in this study. Expanding on these limitations, it's essential to recognize that the research may not capture the full breadth of interactive storytelling experiences within the broader context of digital media. Interactive documentaries, for example, offer a distinct narrative format with its own set of interactive features and audience engagement dynamics that differ from those found in traditional films. Moreover, while branching narratives are a prominent interactive element, there are other interactive features such as movement control or virtual reality that contribute to the overall immersive experience, warranting further exploration in future studies.

Additionally, the focus on Netflix users may limit the generalizability of the findings to audiences who are less familiar with or do not have access to the platform. Different streaming services or interactive platforms may offer unique user experiences and technological capabilities that could influence audience engagement and reception of interactive films differently. Therefore, future research could benefit from expanding the sample to include users of diverse streaming platforms or interactive content providers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of audience experiences and preferences across various contexts.

Figure 1.4

Research Scope

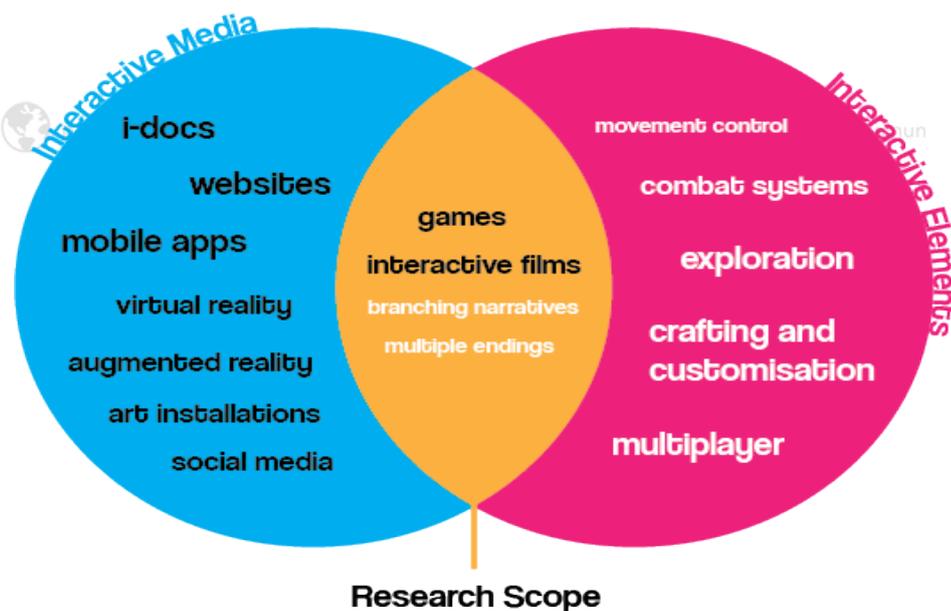Figure 1.4 visualizes the various types of interactive media (blue circle, black words) and various types of interactive elements (pink circle, white words); and the intersecting area which is the limited scope of this research, covering games and interactive films and interactive elements such as branching narrative and multiple endings. Overall, while this study provides valuable insights into the impact of

interactive films on audience experience, it is crucial to recognize and acknowledge the limitations inherent in the research design and scope.

1.7   Operational Definition

In this study, some of the terms used are defined as follows:

a   Interactive

Interactive is a quality or characteristic of a system, interface, or experience that enables real-time communication, collaboration, or engagement between users or participants. It involves the exchange of information, feedback, or actions that actively involves users and allows them to influence or affect the system or experience. Interactivity refers to the two-way exchange of information contingent on previous input, with functional interactivity based on system affordances and perceived interactivity based on users' perceptions of the responsiveness of the system (Willoughby, J., 2016). According to Britannica, T. (2023), interactive media is any form of media that enables users to integrate, control, and alter various media forms, including text, sound, video, computer graphics, and animation. In this research, interactive refers to the real-time engagement between the content and audience that directly affects the storyline of a film.

b   Film

Film, or cinema, basically means moving pictures of time, space, sound and story (Nafisah, N., 2010). The term films in research were usually associated to the term cinema, as stated by Kellner, D. (2015) on how films came to light as one of the earliest mass-produced artistic endeavours of the twentieth century and cinema subsequently became one of its most notable and impactful industries. Films in research go by a lot of various definitions, based on the context it was in. In the context of film studies, a film is a visual narrative that plays on a screen, often focusing on a single character or event, often with music and sound effects (Patel, V., 2022). In moral studies, a film acts as a tool to deliver messages or moral values to the society through visual media and artistic expressions performed by artists and film people to convey story and ideas (Rhosid, A., & Sumarlan, I., 2023).

c   Influence

According to Shi & Wilson (2017), the process of influence is transactional, including both the source and the target. An influence effort is not a one-way activity; rather, it entails several stages of action (e.g., commencement, consulting and testing, execution) as well as a sequence of messages between the two parties. Ultimately, the efficacy of an attempt at persuasion is determined by the individual receiving the message. Juma, T. O. (2020) in their study discusses how influence can be used as an applicable measure in social science research. Their study argues that, "influence" is a construct—that is, a theory or notion that combines several conceptual elements—and an indicator variable that quantifies the qualities and attributes of people and social activities (Juma,

2020). Therefore the term influence in this research was used to see how interactive films impact the audience in what way.

d   Audience

Audience, according to Zhao,T (2019), on the concept of audience, for a very long time, the term "audience" has been considered the "receiver" in the source, channel, message recipient, and impact basic sequential model of the mass communication process (Schramm and Roberts, 1977). But in the past, the term "audience" was much more disparaging: "target," which comes from the "magic bullet theory" and was quite common in America in the 1930s. Zhao,T argued that today's audiences, in stark contrast to those in the past, have options, and they are willing to step into the position of "storyteller," taking on the responsibility of creating information themselves, and becoming the information producer (Zhao,T. 2019). In media studies, an audience is defined as any group of individuals who consume media information (Lobo, V., & Bhat, K., 2022).

e   Audience Experience

Audience experience refers to the collective perception, emotions, and engagement of individuals attending or participating in a particular event, performance, or media content. It encompasses the overall impact and impression left on the audience members, including their level of enjoyment, immersion, understanding, and connection with the presented material (Smith, J.D., 2020). The term audience experience can be mostly found in studies of performance arts such as theatre and

musical events. Audience experience involves the attraction, enjoyment, and social engagement in musical events, shaped by various disciplinary backgrounds and contexts (Pitts,S., 2010). Therefore, the audience experience in this research was measured based on their level of immersion, understanding, and personal connection with interactive films.

1.8 Research Significance

This research on interactive film and its potential influence on audience experience holds significance in the essence of the study itself. As media and film evolves, the audience also evolves which means film producers and content creators also subsequently need to level up their game by producing more immersive and interactive contents. These evolutions needs the utmost support especially from the government itself, which influences the types of contents and most importantly the financial support in these sectors. Therefore, there are three main groups that will be the most significant for this study which are audiences, film and content creators, and the government.

a Audiences and Film Goers

The research on interactive films and its potential influence on audience experience holds significant importance for audience members and film enthusiasts. In this era where interactivity and engagement are important, interactive films offer a unique viewing experience that goes beyond traditional passive consumption. This study will explore how these types of films can enhance audience experience, emotional involvement, and decision-making engagement. By examining the ways in which

interactive elements can deepen narrative connection and personalized viewer experiences, the research will provide valuable insights into how audience preferences and satisfaction can be enhanced. Additionally, understanding the impact of interactive films on audience engagement can inform broader entertainment trends, catering to the growing demand for more dynamic and participatory media experiences.

b   Film Directors, Content Creators, and Producers

For film directors, content creators, and producers, this research is particularly both important and beneficial as it sheds light on innovative storytelling techniques and production methodologies. Interactive films represent a distinct area in narrative design, where audience agency can shape the storyline and outcome. By studying the mechanisms and effects of interactive storytelling, this research will provide creative professionals with practical guidance on how to effectively integrate interactivity into their projects. It will explore the technical, artistic, and narrative challenges and opportunities associated with this medium, offering strategies to optimize viewer engagement and satisfaction. Moreover, insights from this research can inspire new genres and hybrid formats, pushing the boundaries of creative expression and expanding the market for interactive content. This could lead to a diversification of film offerings and potentially higher returns on investment for producers willing to embrace this emerging trend.

c   Government

From a governmental perspective, particularly within the Ministry of Multimedia and Entertainment, this research carries substantial policy and strategic implications. Interactive films can be a significant cultural and economic asset, promoting local talent and innovation in the multimedia sector. The findings of this study can inform policy decisions regarding funding, support, and promotion of interactive media projects, aligning with broader objectives to foster a vibrant and competitive creative industry. Additionally, this research can aid in the development of educational and cultural programs that leverage interactive storytelling to enhance learning and cultural dissemination. Understanding the potential of interactive films can also help in setting regulatory standards and frameworks that ensure high-quality, accessible, and ethically produced content. By supporting the growth of interactive films, government agencies can contribute to the evolution of the entertainment industry, driving cultural enrichment and economic development.

1.9   Conclusion

In summary, the research on interactive films promises to offer valuable contributions across multiple domains. For audiences, it enhances engagement and personalization in film experiences. For creative professionals, it opens new avenues for storytelling and content production. For government agencies, it supports cultural innovation and economic growth in the multimedia and entertainment sectors. This comprehensive exploration highlights the transformative potential of interactive films in shaping the future of entertainment.