

Essay Prompt #1 - More Gen Z guests are choosing to return to their local theatre to see more movies - what do you believe is driving this trend?

I believe that the influx of Gen Z guests in movie theatres is due to a few main reasons. First, it offers a sense of nostalgia. Gen Z was the last generation to spend our early childhood growing up much like the generations before us did, using toys and low stimulation movies and shows to curb our boredom. For many, ipads and other devices weren't introduced until anywhere from 10-15 years old. Streaming movies from home didn't become prominent until mid teens, especially around COVID, meaning that most of us grew up anticipating movies to release and then seeing them for the first time on the big screen. Going back to those theaters with friends and family, anticipating sequels and counting down the days until release brings back that classic childhood wonder in a world that can be overwhelming with expectations. When it remains an affordable option, the theatre provides a break to relax and socialize in a nostalgic and mainly stress-free environment. This leads into a second main reason, the need for safe socialization. The world right now is chaotic and scary and as an older teen or young adult, it can feel as though no one is approachable, and yet we still crave being in a social environment where we don't feel threatened. A local movie theatre is quick to provide a stable environment and furthermore have people similar to each other watching a certain kind of movie. With polite employees, classic snacks and drinks, and an aesthetic atmosphere. People flock to these locations as a way to get out of the house with low stress and expectation. A third main reason, particularly for the later group of Gen Z whom are still in their teens or very early twenties is that its a safe yet fun place to hang out with friends. While older generations were able to wander outside all day long and group to popular hangout spots in parks or small businesses, Gen Z was born right when that social comfortability began to change. Growing up Gen Z and trying to find a place to hang out with friends is difficult. In public spaces such as parks or along back roads in town people often assume teens are up to no good and often the police are called just on a point of suspicion. Furthermore, places of business such as cafés, ice cream shops, and small restaurants not only became fewer and further in between, but less hospitable to teens who couldn't afford to buy anything and then are considered to be loitering. Small local movie theatres on the other hand, tended to remain a place that teens could save up a little money and then go and hang out to watch a movie of shared interest among their friend group. An addition to theatres of all kinds that could attract more teen and young adult guests could be a lobby with comfortable seats and classic games with little expectation to buy anything in order to stay. Although it may seem crowded at first, people in that age group talk and before long any theatre would become the go-to entertainment in that area. With this analysis and suggestions, I believe that not only can the reason for the influx of Gen Z guests be understood, but improvements could make room for even future generations to follow suite and frequent their local theatres.