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"What type of cinema does the new generation i.e. GenZs like or a particular type of genre which is widely watched among GenZs ?"

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ABSTRACT:

In a world shaped by rapid change, digital saturation, and global conversations, Generation Z is emerging not just as a passive audience, but as a powerful cultural force redefining cinema itself. This research paper seeks to explore the evolving tastes of GenZ and identify the types of cinema—and particularly the genres—that resonate most deeply with this new generation.

The advent of digital technology and the proliferation of streaming platforms have revolutionized the way audiences engage with cinematic content. Among the various generational cohorts, GenZ stands out for its unique media consumption habits, characterized by a preference for on-demand content, diverse narratives, and interactive engagement. Understanding GenZ's cinematic preferences is crucial for content creators, marketers, and distributors aiming to cater to this influential audience segment.

GenZ doesn't just watch films; they connect with them on a personal and emotional level. They gravitate towards stories that reflect their inner struggles, social realities, and desire for authenticity. Whether it's the raw vulnerability of coming-of-age dramas, the escapism of fantasy and dystopian worlds, or the sharp wit of dark comedies and thrillers, GenZ embraces cinema that feels real—even when it's surreal.

This study combines viewership data with firsthand accounts, interviews, and cultural analysis to paint a vivid picture of GenZ's cinematic preferences. It also looks at how social issues, identity, mental health, and internet culture influence what they watch and why. By humanizing the data, this paper aims to understand not just what GenZ likes to watch, but what moves them, challenges them, and gives them a sense of belonging in an often chaotic world.

Cinema for GenZ is more than entertainment—it's reflection, rebellion, and release.

Index Terms- GenZ, movie genres, cinema preferences, OTT platforms, Bollywood, psychological themes, social media influence, cinematic trends, coming-of-age, film consumption behavior, globalization, Indian youth cinema, film industry, emotional engagement, streaming services

Introduction

Cinema has long been one of the most powerful tools for storytelling, social reflection, and entertainment. As the medium has evolved, so too have its audiences. Among the most influential and complex audiences today is Generation Z (Gen Z), a demographic cohort born roughly between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. These individuals are digital natives, having grown up in a world of smartphones, high-speed internet, and streaming services. As a result, their preferences, behaviors, and expectations when it comes to cinema are unlike those of any previous generation.

Understanding Gen Z's cinematic preferences is not only academically intriguing but also commercially significant. This generation holds immense sway over media consumption patterns and market trends, particularly in the entertainment sector. With platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, and Mubi at their fingertips, Gen Z has access to a diverse range of global content. They can watch Korean dramas, Scandinavian thrillers, American blockbusters, and independent Indian films all in one evening. This exposure has shaped a discerning audience that values authenticity, representation, and meaningful storytelling over formulaic narratives and traditional tropes.

In the Indian context, this generational shift is especially interesting. Bollywood, the country's dominant film industry, has long been known for its song-and-dance routines, melodrama, and star-driven narratives. However, Gen Z audiences are increasingly critical of this formula. They express a growing demand for better writing, nuanced characters, and culturally grounded yet globally competitive cinema. Films like Laapataa Ladies, Masaan, Ship of Theseus, and select South Indian films have managed to capture the attention of these viewers by deviating from mainstream expectations.

This research paper investigates what genres and themes resonate most with Gen Z and why. It also examines how they consume cinema—whether through traditional theaters or digital platforms—and what factors influence their movie choices. Additionally, it explores their views on current Bollywood trends and their aspirations for the future of Indian cinema. The research is grounded in both primary data, collected via a structured Google

Form survey, and secondary data, analyzed through rhetorical interpretation of articles from industry sources like Parrot Analytics, Statista, Variety, and more.

The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of Gen Z's cinematic preferences from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective. By doing so, this paper hopes to offer insights not only into the minds of young Indian moviegoers but also into the direction in which the industry must evolve to remain relevant. Whether it's through inclusive stories, socially relevant themes, psychological depth, or innovative storytelling formats, meeting Gen Z's expectations is crucial for the future of cinema.

In a media-saturated world, where attention spans are short but emotional and intellectual expectations are high, understanding Gen Z's relationship with cinema is not just useful—it's essential.

Research Questions:

- What genres and themes are most preferred by Gen Z?

- How do Gen Z audiences choose what movies to watch?

- What are their views on current Bollywood films?

- How does Gen Z consume cinema—OTT vs. traditional theaters?

- What expectations does Gen Z have for the future of cinema?

Methodology:

This is a mixed-method study employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches:

Survey Research: A structured Google Form survey was distributed among individuals aged 18 to 26, capturing preferences, habits, and opinions related to movies.

Secondary Research: Online articles and industry reports were analyzed through rhetorical analysis, focusing on the tone, credibility, emotional appeal, and logical arguments presented in each article.

Participants came from diverse urban and semi-urban backgrounds and regularly used streaming services. The sample was gender-balanced and tech-savvy, with most individuals actively engaging with both mainstream and niche genres through platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Hotstar.

Survey Findings (Primary Data Analysis):

Sample Size: 32 responses

1. *Favorite Genres:*

- High popularity: Action, Thriller, Comedy, Sci-Fi, Drama, Romantic, Fantasy

- Other interests: Documentary, Coming-of-Age, Psychological thrillers, Revenge, Survival

2. *Viewing Platforms:*

- OTT preference dominates: Most mentioned platforms include Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Hotstar, Mubi, and YouTube.

- Cinema visits are still regular: Many go once a month or a few times a year.

3. *Influences on Movie Choices:*

- Top influences: Trailers, Online Reviews, Social Media, and Friends' Recommendations

- Lesser but notable influences: Awards and nominations

4. Preferred Themes:

- Popular themes: Friendship, Love and Relationships, Social Issues, Survival, Psychological, Adventure, Coming-of-Age

5. Views on Current Bollywood Films:

- Overwhelming criticism: Many describe current Bollywood as lacking innovation, overly commercial, and dependent on nepotism.

- Desired improvements: More experimental storytelling, real cultural representation, better dialogue writing, and stronger narratives.

6. Expectations from Future Cinema:

- Requests for: More thrillers, socially driven films, Indian cultural roots blended with Hollywood-level execution, LGBTQ+ representation, and reduced dependency on nostalgia or meta-humor.

Top 10 Most Preferred Movie Genres Among Gen Z (Survey Data)
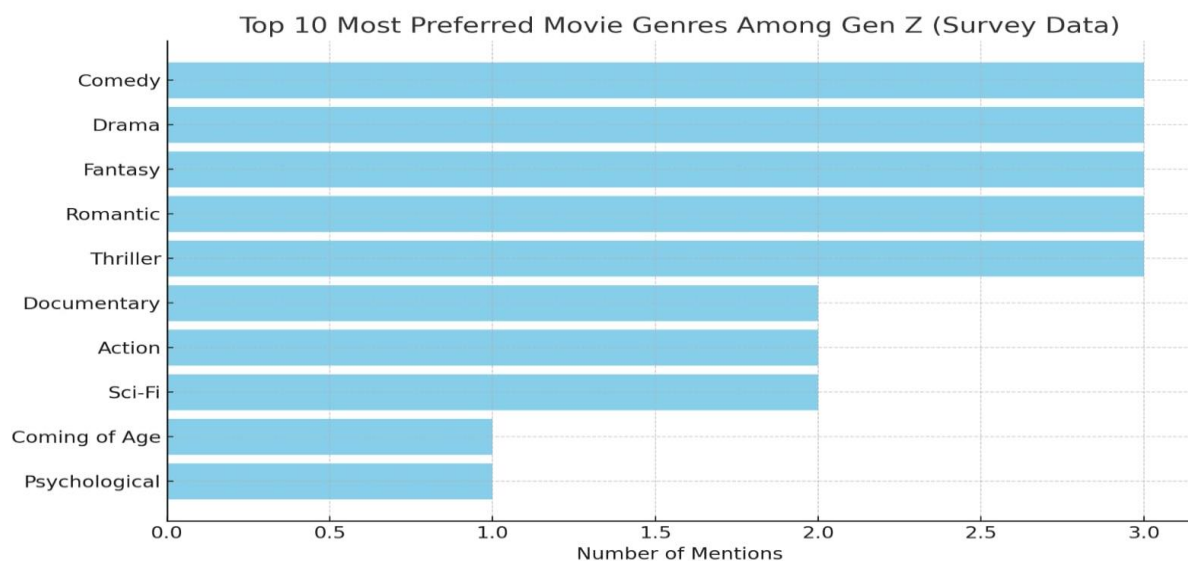
Secondary Source Analysis (Rhetorical Approach):

1. Parrot Analytics - Movie Genre Preferences by Generation

- Tone: Data-rich and analytical

- Appeal: Logos and ethos; uses data to draw generational patterns

- Finding: Gen Z shows high interest in genres like Sci-Fi and Fantasy that offer immersive experiences; emotional storytelling also appeals to them.

2. Statista - Favorite Movie Genres Among Gen Z (US)

- Tone: Neutral and statistical

- Appeal: Logos

- Finding: Top preferences include Comedy, Action, Adventure, and Horror; this reflects a desire for both escapism and entertainment.

3. StartQuestion - Favorite Movie Genre Among Indian Gen Z

- Tone: Interactive and engaging

- Appeal: Pathos and logos

- Finding: Indian Gen Z strongly prefers Drama and Social-Issue-based films, resonating with their real-life experiences and activism.

4. CivicScience - Gen Z in Focus: Movies and TV Shows

- Tone: Insightful and audience-focused

- Appeal: Ethos and pathos

- Finding: Gen Z values entertainment that speaks to identity, mental health, diversity, and social relevance; they prioritize content that 'gets them'.

5. Variety / Deloitte - Gen Z Entertainment Ranking

- Tone: Business-like with a cultural lens

- Appeal: Logos and ethos

- Finding: TV and movies rank highest in Gen Z's entertainment hierarchy; multitasking while watching is common, indicating passive yet consistent consumption.

6. The Storiculture Company - Gen Z Content Preferences

- Tone: Culturally aware, trend-driven

- Appeal: Pathos

- Finding: Gen Z is attracted to authentic, relatable storytelling. Genres like Coming-of-Age and Psychological Drama are highly favored.

Combined Trends from Survey and Literature

- When synthesizing primary and secondary data, several patterns emerge:

- Gen Z demands relatable, mentally stimulating, and socially conscious content.

- Psychological Thrillers, Sci-Fi, and Coming-of-Age dominate preferences.

- OTT has become the norm; theaters are secondary.

- Bollywood is often seen as stagnant and uncreative.

Discussion

The data confirms that Gen Z is both an emotional and intellectual audience. Their desire for meaningful narratives is matched by a strong inclination towards innovation and depth. Unlike the masala-driven preferences of previous generations, Gen Z appreciates films that balance storytelling with creativity.

Furthermore, Gen Z's skepticism towards Bollywood suggests a wider generational divide. While Hollywood and South Indian films are praised for narrative complexity and technical quality, Bollywood is criticized for being out of touch with current realities. Filmmakers must evolve to capture this market.

Cultural and Regional Influences on Gen Z Cinema Preferences Gen Z in India does not represent a homogeneous group. Preferences vary significantly based on regional language, local traditions, and socio-political environments. South Indian Gen Z audiences, for instance, exhibit loyalty to industries like Tollywood and Kollywood due to their strong narratives and high production values. Regional stories rooted in local folklore or culture receive higher appreciation among those from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Therefore, the film industry should recognize regional identities when producing content for OTT platforms and national releases. The global exposure available to Gen Z via social media and streaming platforms has heavily influenced their preferences. Hollywood-style storytelling, Korean dramas, anime, and European indie films have redefined their cinematic expectations. Many Indian Gen Z viewers now seek complex characters, non-linear narratives, and genre-blending techniques. This has led to increased pressure on Bollywood to upgrade its scriptwriting, visual effects, and thematic depth to remain competitive.Smartphones, tablets, and affordable internet have restructured how Gen Z watches content. Binge-watching, pausing mid-movie, or even watching films on mute while multitasking are common behaviors. Content

creators must now consider how screen size, platform interface, and algorithmic recommendations affect engagement. The transition from passive consumption to participatory viewing through fan culture, memes, and reviews is also a new phenomenon.Unlike older generations that often watched films for escapism, Gen Z values emotional connection and relatability. Themes involving mental health, identity crisis, personal growth, and existential conflict resonate strongly. Coming-of-age films that explore struggles like peer pressure, societal expectations, and family dynamics often find loyal audiences. Filmmakers tapping into these psychological aspects will be better able to retain Gen Z interest.Instagram, YouTube, and Reddit now act as cinema trendsetters. Trailer reactions, influencer reviews, meme virality, and user-generated content frequently dictate what becomes popular. A film's online "clout" can sometimes outweigh traditional marketing. Gen Z often discovers and shares niche films, creating cult followings. Studios need to actively integrate social media strategies into pre-release and post-release phases.

Industry Recommendations

1. Invest in stories that speak to social and psychological dimensions.

2. Embrace regional and cultural diversity in storytelling.

3. Use OTT as a testing ground for experimental genres.

4. Normalize LGBTQ+ and mental health narratives.

5. Avoid nostalgia and remake culture; instead, create a new cinematic language.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, the cinematic choices of Gen Z are influenced by a mix of global exposure, emotional needs, regional backgrounds, and technological conveniences. This generation is redefining cinema as not just a form of entertainment but a multidimensional cultural experience. For filmmakers and producers, understanding these evolving patterns is essential for storytelling that resonates, entertains, and leaves a lasting impact.

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