

THE DEATH OF THE CINEMA

A STUDY ON THE IMPACTS OF SHORTENING VIDEO MEDIA ON THE FILM INDUSTRY

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INTRODUCTION

Technology is steadily advancing and has been since the dawn of mankind, but with the birth of the new age and the creation of the World Wide Web, a new form of media has taken shape. The internet has caused a mass expansion of information sources and entertainment, dawning the era of social media and short-form video. Although these new platforms have granted interconnectedness between generations, the youth are losing their grip on reality. Instant gratification has corrupted and altered young minds and their ability to consume any information consistently in four-minute increments without checking their phones. These effects have the capability of causing catastrophic detriments to the modern entertainment business. Five-hour operas have turned into seven-second laughs; time has chipped at intriguing and thought-provoking entertainment. This decrease in attention and engagement endangers an entire industry that millions of individuals and families rely on for financial support. If this trend continues and is proven to be true, a great shift in not only these people's lives would take course, but a reconstruction of modern culture as we know it.

METHODOLOGY

Both qualitative and quantitative data were used in gathering information for this endeavor.

Surveys were conducted with one focus group (any person involved in the film industry, paid and unpaid). The questions were regarding the surveyor's demographics, their jobs within the industry, their observations of their industry over the past 10 years and their effects, and their evaluations of my hypothesis.

The two opinion-oriented questions were: SAQ #2 *"The growth of short-form video entertainment (TikTok, Vine, Instagram Reels) has negatively impacted engagement with Film-Oriented events (theatre screenings, film festivals, etc.)"* and SAQ #3 *"Because they have acclimated to shorter media, younger generations have begun to become disinterested in longer films."*

The survey questions are partially in graph form, and partially in short answer question form.

"TOO MUCH ANTI FILM RHETORIC, ANTI INTELLECTUALISM, AND DECREASING ATTENTION SPANS."

"THEY (LONG AND SHORT FORM MEDIA) ARE BOTH IMPORTANT IN THE LIFECYCLE OF A MODERN FILMMAKER."

"THEATRICAL EXHIBITION, BE IT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A FESTIVAL OR AT A LOCAL THEATER, IS AN INVESTMENT OF TIME AND ATTENTION."

RESULTS

FIGURE 1

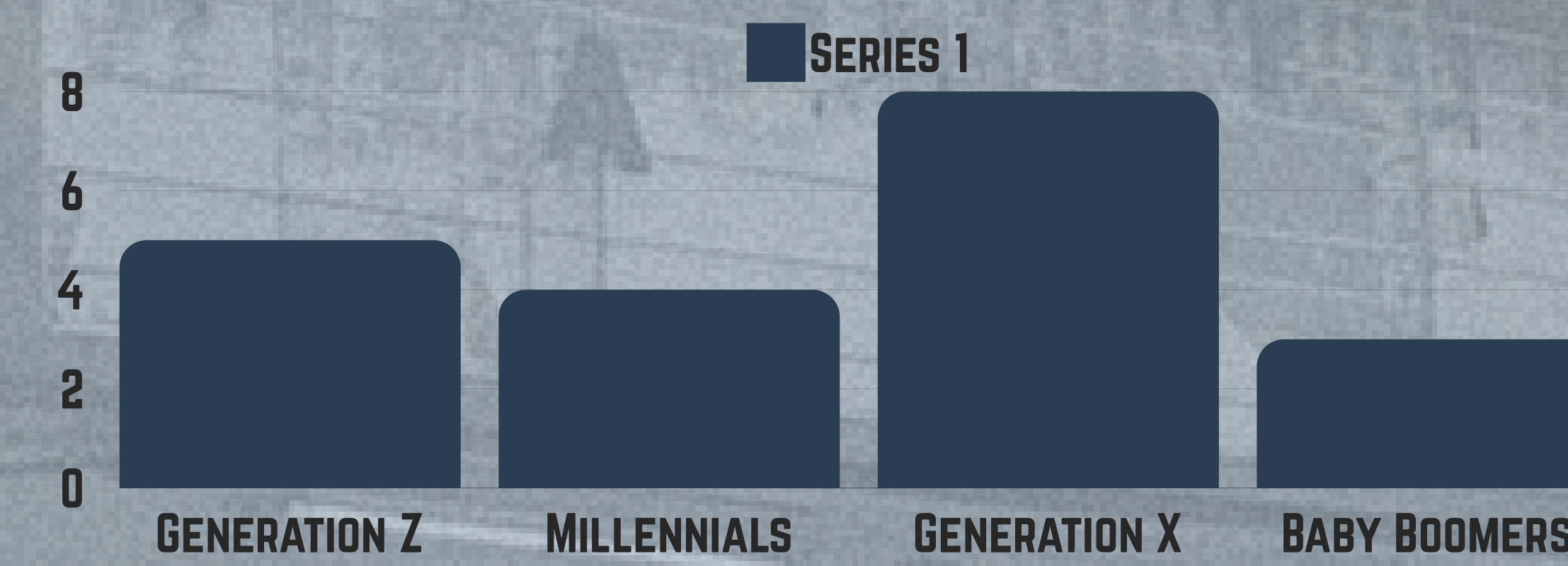


FIGURE 2

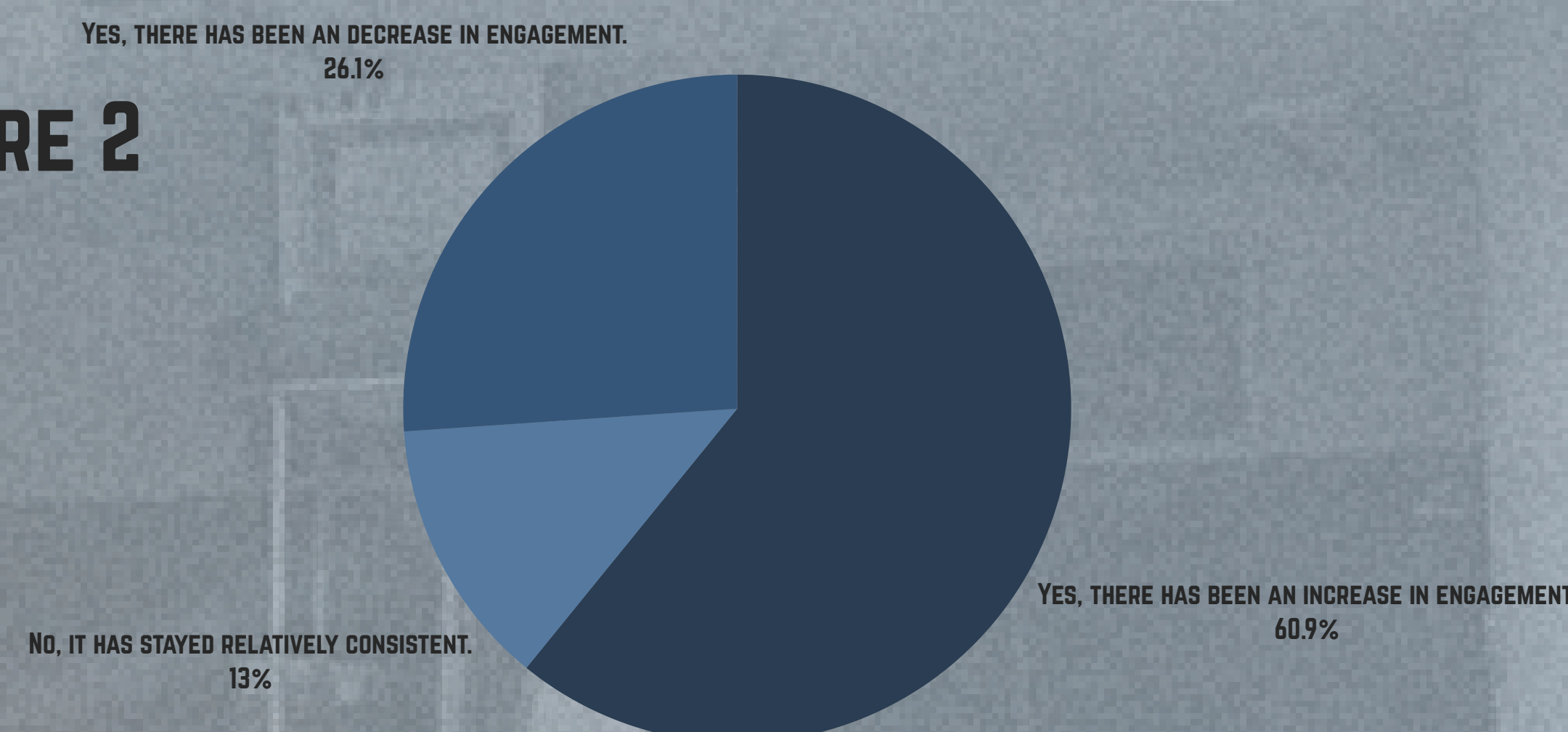


FIGURE 3

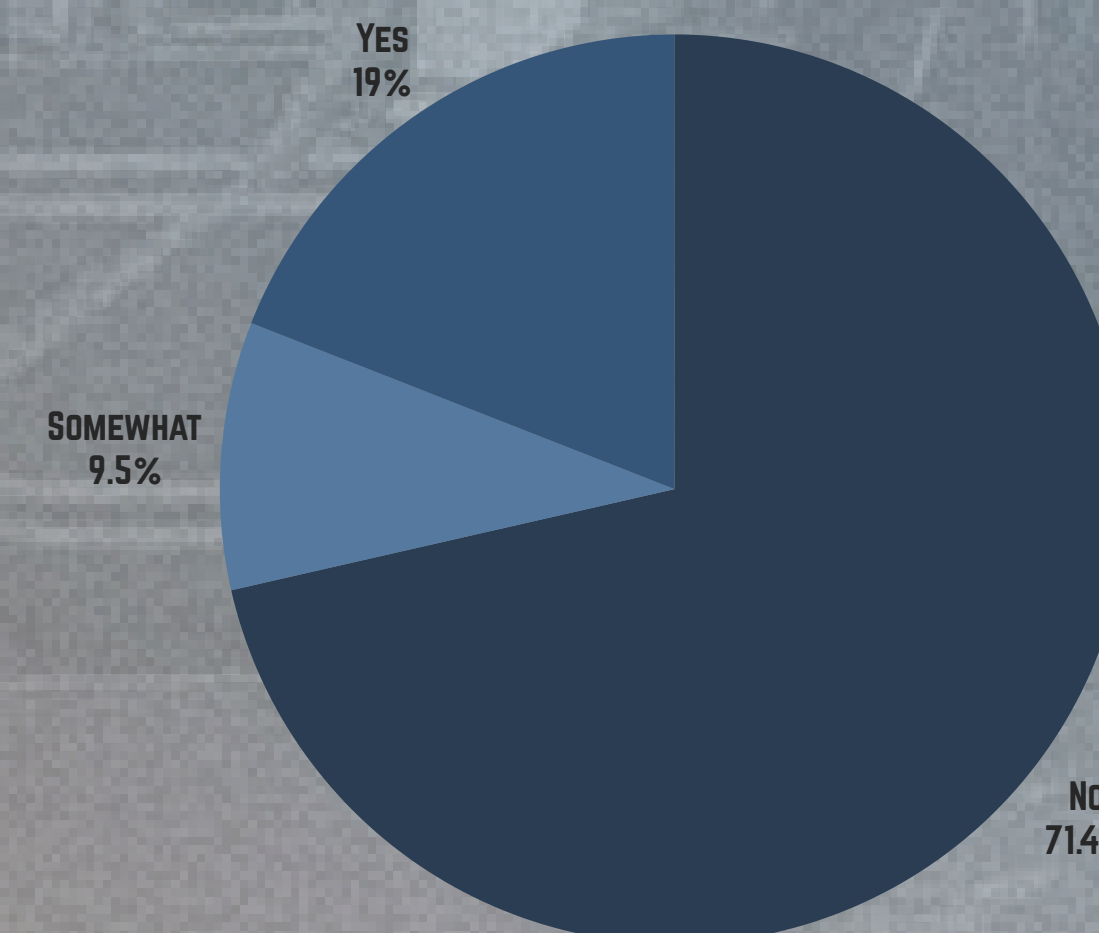
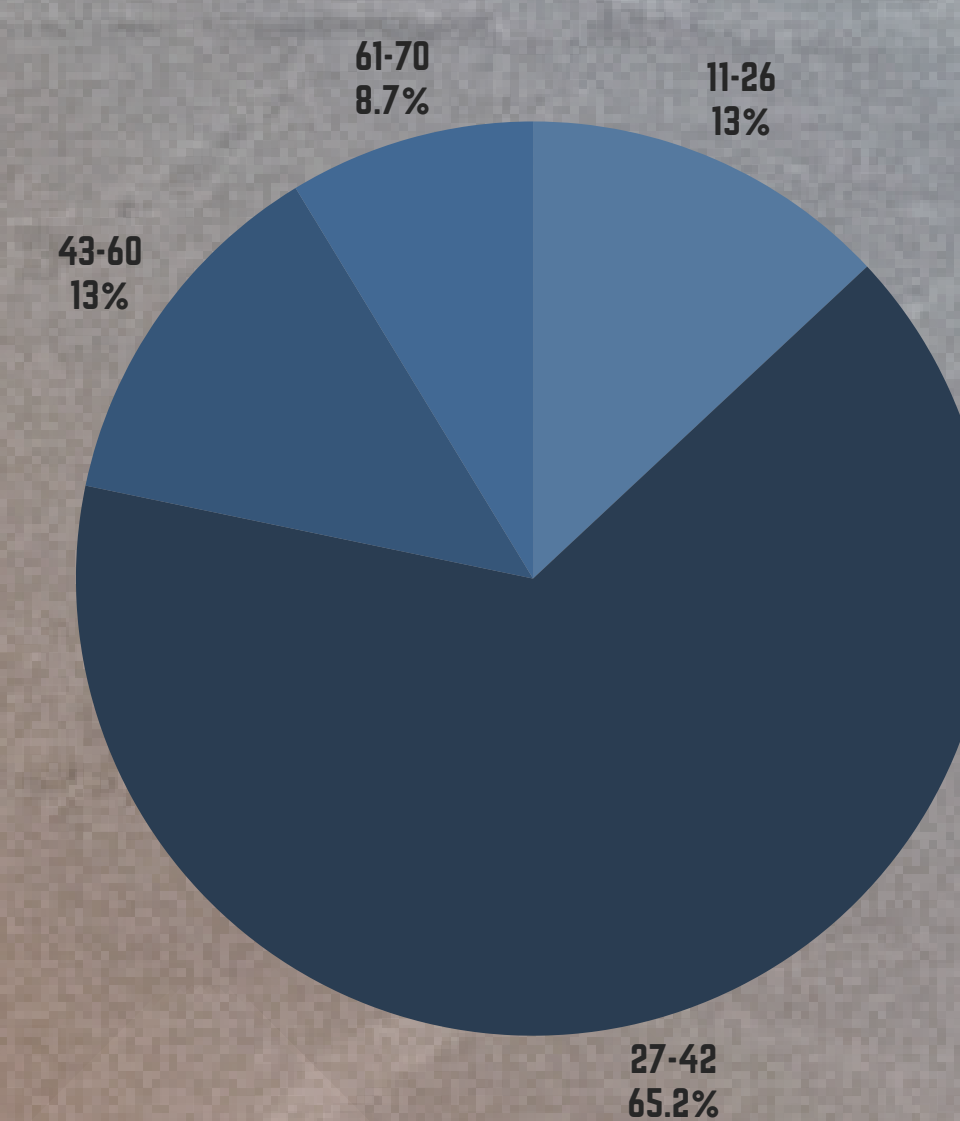


FIGURE 4



FINDINGS

The surveyor pool was an even distribution of seasoned industry professionals, casual volunteers, and budding filmmakers. The age demographic was also a level playing field (shown through Figure 1) offering an unbiased base for the rest of the data to lie atop. As shown in the collection of Figure 2's data, most filmmakers have noticed an increase in engagement with Film/Film related media. In relation to this fact, Figure 3 shows that this upward motion has not negatively affected their income. Tying into Figure 1 again, Figure 4 shows that the general engagement with film related media (by the surveyors) has been attributed to the age group of 27-42, or the millennial generation. When asked if they'd seen a shift in youth engagement with film-oriented works (SAQ #3), surveyors answered with a near 50/50 split. Those noticing a shift saw long-form at in-person exhibitions "appeal to an older demographic". One response noted the youth's preference to shorter media forms, posing the concerning aspects of "social media purposely encouraging addictive behavior with how algorithms and length work". One surveyor said, "there is a disconnect between emerging film tools and distribution channels and traditional "film-oriented events", meaning that institutional and community lead film events have little overlap, which could also be a contributing factor. For SAQ #4, most respondents agreed. One important point brought up in this discussion was how shorter media can work symbiotically with longer media by opening "new opportunities for creativity while supporting those who produce longer form". The main conclusion is that although shorter media is good for film advertising, it is bad as "competing media". As for SAQ #5, the answers were completely mixed, with no overarching consensus. Several answers claimed that the correlation between social media and youth disengagement was unreasonable. People who agreed claim that "people become impatient and want instant gratification instead of sitting through the journey a longer film takes them through". Some were sympathetic of both sides, arguing that social media is "a distraction form of entertainment, where longer films are the "escape" or suspension of reality". Overall, SAQ #5 was a complete mixed bag, offering perspectives from all sides.

DISCUSSION

I figured that the effects of this experiment would help solidify a voice for the current film industry and the conditions they are under as well as their predictions for the future concerning the decrease in youth engagement with film due to shorter form video media. I hypothesized in my previous experiment that the overall decreasing attention span within younger generations due to short content will drive them away from the theaters and watching longer media consistently. However, my results were much more nuanced than expected. I did not consider the other contributing factors that have already diminished the quality of film, such as AI, writers' strike, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

I do somewhat believe that although my surveyors were strong candidates, one of my questions was too community based for an endeavor such as this one. Local events benefit the communal scene but don't have a large impact on the industry. Many answers disagreeing with the claims presented did so because what they saw in their daily lives was teenagers and millennials showing up to screenings and events. This is not an accurate reflection of what is setting up the future of film as a landscape.

This alteration is what ended up surprising me through the results from Figure #1, showing that there has been an overwhelming increase in engagement with Film/Film related events in the last 10 years. This increase was observed on a smaller scale and could also be seen through the expansion of communication due to social media platforms. This evidence is reflected in SAQ #5, where several surveyors noted its importance on marketing films and film events. So, even though it is a damaging replacement for long video formats, it is a useful tool for communication.

The results from this study show that despite the dangerous potential of lessened youth interaction with the film industry due to short form media, the rise in overall engagement can be attributed to the presence of this same content. The best course of action for the industry is to figure out how to fully eradicate the possibility of total domination from social platforms and create more incentive to watch films consistently. Streaming services are still viable platforms, so in utilizing short form media as a tool and creating a more positive space for younger generations, the film industry can stay dominant when the older generations start to go.