

# **Audiences' barriers and values of theatrical exhibition in small European markets'**

Task report / CresCine T7.5 / Piloting alternative forms of audience engagement to attract new audiences

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## Document Change Log

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### Statement of Originality

This deliverable contains original unpublished work except where clearly indicated otherwise. Acknowledgment of previously published material and of the work of others has been made through appropriate citation, quotation, or both.

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## Executive Summary

The cinema-going experience competes with the allure of other forms of entertainment, both at home and elsewhere; this report reveals the values it implies and the barriers to cinema attendance across diverse demographics.

Our findings indicate that certain barriers to cinema attendance are specific to particular demographics and socioeconomic conditions, while many values related to cinema-going are shared across the entire sample.

The necessity of commitment and the dedication of resources, both logistical and financial, significantly heightens competition with more accessible and agile forms of entertainment, especially at-home streaming. The theatrical experience is often perceived as less adaptable to individual preferences and may lack the physical comfort of home. Consequently, the increased commitment required for the cinema elevates the expectations for a satisfactory outcome, creating an emotional burden for audience members who have invested personal resources. The cinema, therefore, becomes a high-stakes endeavour. This stands in stark contrast to the low-stakes nature of streaming, where minimal financial and effort investment reduces the emotional cost of a "bad" movie experience and allows for easy flexibility.

In this competitive landscape, theatrical exhibitions find their unique value proposition by reconfiguring their role as a space for digital disconnection, mindful consumption, and focused viewing. This distraction-free environment offers a vital respite from the constant connectivity and attention fragmentation of modern digital life, providing a perception of quality time and consumption which contrasts sharply with the background consumption often associated with streaming platforms.

A core finding across all research groups is the significant social dimension of cinema attendance. This social aspect is so crucial that, as noted by older adults in Pilot 1, the absence of companionship acts as a notable barrier. Joint cinema attendance facilitates communal experiences and social bonding, promoting the immediate sharing of impressions,

enhancing the quality of the experience, and fostering lasting memories—an element particularly pronounced when compared to at-home viewing.

Accessibility is a key challenge, as highlighted by our special Pilot sessions (4.1-4.4). This includes addressing the lack of language options for expatriates and migrants, and the insufficient systematic provision for DHH, blind/low vision, and neurodivergent audiences. The report addresses the cinema-going experience as perceived by the groups and their requests for a comfortable viewing experience. Systematic dialogue and collaboration between the film industry and special organisations are argued to be essential for structurally changing the state of the art, ensuring a seamless, joint, up-to-date, and inclusive on-site experience that enhances the cinema's social value for a diverse audience.

Cinema-going is competing with an extensive array of entertainment options available in today's world, catering to various demographics with differing social, physical, and economic backgrounds. As seen from our sample, the cinema has evolved into a social event, providing focused, more immersive, and “worthy” film experiences that are often hard to replicate in other settings. The communal atmosphere of a cinema allows individuals to share in the understanding of storytelling and emotion, creating lasting memories with friends and family. In contrast to the endless flow of content online and the constant connectivity that digital life demands, the value of cinema-going lies in a growing demand for focus and disconnection.

We conclude by compiling these barriers and values, highlighting that the number of barriers identified by participants, as well as those resulting from the analysis of the pilot experiments, exceeds the shared values. However, the shared values envisioned in cinema-going across demographics simplify the process of value curation for cinema venues.

## Intro

The markets analysed by the Crescine consortium have not yet returned to pre-COVID admission levels; however, there is evidence of a gradual recovery (EAO, 2025a). Additionally, the number of Video-on-Demand (VoD) service subscriptions per household has been increasing (Nielsen et al., 2024). In terms of revenue generation within the European audiovisual market, there is a significant disparity between cinema and VoD revenues. The cinema sector accounts for 5% of total revenues, while the VoD sector represents 16% (EAO, 2025b). The European Observatory noted that it is remarkable that VoD services account for the majority of growth in the audiovisual industry, while other segments remain stable or decline in revenue.

Contemporary viewing habits are “relocating” the cinema through different intermediaries, spaces, and situations (Casetti, 2008; Lotz et al., 2025). The growing competition from streaming services and other entertainment alternatives indicates that attending the cinema requires a significant investment of time and effort from viewers. VoD services frequently provide “*connectivity*” but lack “*connectedness*” (van Dijck, 2013). Going to the cinema is associated with a shared social experience (Allen, 2011; Ravazolli, 2016; Van de Vijver, 2017), potentially fostering a “we-experience” built on “we-intentions” (Hanich, 2014). With the loss of gatekeeping power, the theatrical experience necessitates a reevaluation and calls for a more nuanced understanding of contemporary practices as perceived by diverse audiences. The audiences also recognise the comfort and convenience of digital services. Hence, the effort and dedication made toward cinema-going should not only justify the time and effort invested but also distinguish these venues from the multitude of entertainment options available at home. Such differentiation is essential for revitalising audience engagement and supporting a vibrant cultural cinema landscape.

To approach the problem, we have focused on the relationships between barriers and values, as theories are perceived by diverse audiences, to distinguish the advantages of theatrical

exhibition and the factors that prevent participation in this value. Some of these barriers are shared across demographics, while others are specific to certain groups. We propose that the likelihood of opting for on-site cinema attendance increases when there are fewer barriers, both physical and emotional, and when the perceived value is higher. We will identify these barriers and the values for each participant group involved in the study.

Our findings indicate that several socioeconomic, behavioural, and cultural factors are hindering theatre attendance. This situation leaves the industry vulnerable and creates a vicious cycle: a decline in audience numbers results in fewer resources for development, which in turn causes stagnation in cinema infrastructure development due to a lack of innovation and interest from funders.

Moreover, in identifying barriers, one of the primary objectives of our research was to examine accessibility in cinema venues. Insufficient accessibility can hinder individuals with special needs from fully engaging in the cinematic experience, thereby limiting their participation. It may subsequently lead cinema operators to miss out on attracting this demographic. To explore this hypothesis, we conducted four experimental pilots with diverse demographics, gathering quantitative and qualitative insights into participants' perceptions of cinema and their conceptualisation of an optimal screening experience.

The barrier serves as a critical intersection of factors that can catalyse innovative strategic choices within cinema venues. Acknowledging this reality underscores the need for a more nuanced and multifaceted approach tailored to diverse audience segments. Implementing advanced strategies in programming and exhibition not only enhances the contemporary cinema-going experience but also fosters inclusivity and diversity within the cinematic landscape. Such an approach would significantly enrich the audience's cinematic repertoire by incorporating works from smaller European markets, thereby broadening cultural appreciation and engagement.

This report outlines the findings and outcomes derived from Task 7.5 of the CresCine Research project, which has now been completed. The analysis presented herein is based on

both qualitative and quantitative data collected during pilot sessions at Cinema Fernando Lopes in Lisbon, Portugal, conducted between March 28 and May 17, 2025. A total of 12 sessions were administered, engaging 359 participants in this investigation. The primary aim of this research is to evaluate audience engagement strategies to maintain the value of onsite cinema-going and increase the demand for cinema venues, particularly in the context of the seven CresCine countries.

## Language Statement

This report adopts person-centred and evidence-based language to describe the diverse audiences who participated in the CresCine 7.5 pilot screenings, following international guidelines for inclusive communication, such as the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN CRPD), and contemporary disability and accessibility scholarship (Arciuli & Shakespeare, 2023). The goal is to ensure clarity, respect, and accuracy while acknowledging the evolving nature of identity and disability-related terminology across communities.

The term “neurodivergent” was adopted to describe participants whose cognitive profiles differ from dominant neurotypical norms (e.g., autistic people, individuals with ADHD, intellectual disabilities, dyslexia). This term is increasingly recognised in research and advocacy because it avoids deficit framing and is consistent with neurodiversity scholarship (Walker, 2021). When referring to the pilot itself, we follow the participants’ own preferences and refer to “neurodivergent audiences” as defined in Pilot 4.4, also based on scholarship in the field (Chellappa, 2023). Moreover, it is important to highlight that the term was always used descriptively and not diagnostically.

Consistent with Azizi-Zeinalhajloo et al. (2024) and Putnam (2015) recommendations, we use “older adults” to refer to participants in Pilot 1. These terms avoid ageist connotations and emphasise adulthood and agency. We refrain from using expressions such as “the elderly”,

which are discouraged in social sciences, gerontology and public-health communication for reducing people to a category rather than acknowledging individuality.

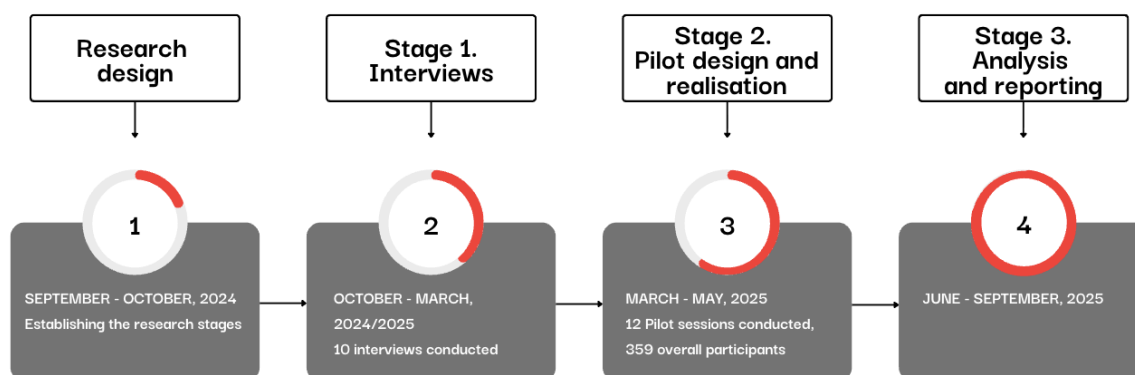
In line with disability-studies standards (Arciuli & Shakespeare, 2023) and the UN CRPD, we use “blind people” and “people with low vision” because both identity-first and person-first formulations are widely accepted within the blind and low-vision communities (Dunn & Andrews, 2015). Aligned with these premises, when describing accessibility features (e.g., audio description, headsets, environmental adjustments), we focus on barriers and environmental factors rather than impairment alone.

Also, we use “Deaf” (capitalised) when referring to individuals who identify as part of Deaf culture and use sign language, and or “hard-of-hearing” to refer to hearing-loss profiles more broadly, resulting in the umbrella designation Deaf and hard of hearing (DHH). This aligns with global best practices (Arciuli & Shakespeare, 2023; Dunn, 2024; Mikhailova et al., 2020) and with participants’ own terminology from Pilot 4.2. We also use “LGP users” when referring specifically to participants who rely primarily on Portuguese Sign Language (*Língua Gestual Portuguesa*), recognising sign language both as their native language and a full linguistic system rather than an assistive add-on.

Regarding non-Portuguese-speaking participants (Pilot 4.1.), who might face language-accessibility barriers in cinema contexts, we use “expats” (emerging from the main term “expatriates”). This was previously done by Koh and Sin (2020) or Przytuła (2023), as these terms emphasise residency status rather than cultural deficit. We avoid homogenising labels such as “foreigners”, and instead use terminology that reflects the group’s diversity and the linguistic accessibility barriers approached in this research.

All these considerations mirror the notion that language is performative (Pennycook, 2009), serving not only to describe realities, but also to simultaneously shape them. This pillar is deeply acknowledged in the present study, considering its nature of expanding the opportunities for different audiences in cinema experiences.

This research utilises an exploratory design and a mixed-methods framework to explore innovative strategies for the distribution and exhibition of films originating from smaller markets. To this extent, both qualitative and quantitative data will provide different, but potentially complementary, explanations of the phenomena surrounding the engagement of diverse audiences, through a triangulation perspective (Heesen et al., 2019; Hussein, 2009). The central aim is to delineate effective and feasible approaches for fostering audience engagement in on-site cinema venues, which offer an opportunity to enhance film success. The overarching objective of this study is to identify barriers and values associated with the theatrical exhibition, thereby facilitating broader accessibility to the cinematic experience for diverse audiences.



## Stage 1. Stakeholder Interviews

The foundational phase consisted of ten interviews with representatives of cinema venues and distributors. This research is dedicated to the rigorous refinement of the core constructs on "alternative forms of exhibition," as comprehended by a diverse array of industry

stakeholders. The objective is to formulate a stakeholder-informed conceptualisation of an alternative exhibition. This endeavour will yield a vital theoretical framework that will underpin the ensuing empirical inquiries. To this end, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with a strategically selected cohort of experts, encompassing professionals from film distribution, exhibition, and marketing sectors.

## **Stage 2. Pilot design and realisation**

The pilot screening has been launched following the completion of the interview phase, which resulted in the formulation of the pilot hypothesis. This report is dedicated to analysing the qualitative and quantitative inquiries from the pilots and making recommendations for legislators, social organisations, and cinema venues. The pilot screenings took place at Cinema Fernando Lopes in Lisbon, Portugal, from March 28 to May 17, 2025. A total of 12 sessions were conducted, engaging 359 participants.

The testing phase is designed to systematically gather both quantitative and qualitative data to achieve a comprehensive understanding of audience behaviours and perceptions. A purposive sample of five films was selected for screening, all sourced from productions launched between 2024 and 2025. The selection of these films was based on their thematic and aesthetic characteristics, with each targeting a different audience. As the core element of the CresCine research project focuses on European cinema from European markets, special emphasis was placed on showcasing such films, including "On Falling" (2024, UK, Portugal), "Kneecap" (2024, Ireland), and "My Grandfather's Demons" (2022, Portugal).

However, one exception was made at the request of a group of Older adults to increase participation in the session, resulting in the inclusion of the Brazilian film "I'm Still Here" (2024). The selection criteria aimed to ensure diverse representation of genres and narrative styles, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings across various cinematic products and their potential appeal to the target audiences. The teams from Cinema



Fernando Lopes and CresCine collaborated. Each session was structured as follows: pre-session questionnaire, film screening, and focus group (for Young Adults – Pilot 3, Older adults – Pilot 1, Expats and migrant community – Pilot 4.1) or Q&A sessions (for Children – Pilot 2, deaf – Pilot 4.2, Neurodivergent Individuals – 4.3, Blind and Low vision – 4.4). For Pilot 3 (Young adults), the post-screening questionnaire has been added.

The Accessibility Pilots (4.2, 4.3, 4.4) were conducted with the assistance of professionals from social organisations and the university team. These pilots required additional preparations for both the space and the film:

- For Pilot 4.2 (DHH), the film included subtitles and a Sign Language interpretation.
- For Pilot 4.3 (Blind and low vision), the film featured an audiovisual description.
- For Pilot 4.4 (Neurodivergent audiences), we adopted a relaxed screening approach. The cinema room was modified to lower sound levels; it wasn't completely dark, and attendees were allowed to move freely and sit on bean bags rather than just in chairs. Additionally, the door to the room remained open.

To summarise, the Pilots were structured as follows:

Pilot	Group	Film	Session	Participants (pp)	Methodology	Date	Hypothesis
Pilot 1	Older adults	On Falling, PT	Session 1	5	survey + focus group	28/03	H1: Do not go to the cinema because of the ticket prices
Pilot 1	Older adults	I'm still here, BR	Session 2	30	survey + focus group	07/05	H1: Do not go to the cinema because of the ticket prices
Pilot 2	Children	My Grandfather's Demons, PT	Session 1	49	survey + Q&A	03/04	H2: Do not go to the cinema because of family habits
Pilot 2	Children	My Grandfather's Demons, PT	Session 2	34	survey + Q&A	04/04	H2: Do not go to the cinema because of family habits
Pilot 2	Children	My Grandfather's Demons, PT	Session 3	62	survey + Q&A	10/04	H2: Do not go to the cinema because of family habits
Pilot 3	Young adults	Kneecap, IE	Session 1	12	pre-session + post-session surveys + FG	03/04	H3: Do not go to the cinema because of a lack of awareness
Pilot 3	Young adults	Kneecap, IE	Session 2	38	pre-session + post-session surveys + FG	03/04	H3: Do not go to the cinema because of a lack of awareness
Pilot 3	Young adults	Kneecap, IE	Session 3	46	pre-session + post-session surveys + FG	08/05	H3: Do not go to the cinema because of a lack of awareness
Pilot 4.1	Accessibility pilots (Expats)	Kneecap, IE	Session 1	16	survey + focus group	11/04	H4: Do not go to the cinema because cinemas are not equipped to serve the special needs
Pilot 4.2	Accessibility pilots (DHH)	My Grandfather's Demons, PT	Session 1	10	survey + Q&A	29/04	H4: Do not go to the cinema because cinemas are not equipped to serve the special needs
Pilot 4.3	Accessibility pilots (Blind and low vision)	My Grandfather's Demons, PT	Session 1	11	survey + Q&A	17/05	H4: Do not go to the cinema because cinemas are not equipped to serve the special needs
Pilot 4.4	Accessibility pilots (Neurodivergent audiences)	My Grandfather's Demons, PT	Session 1	90	survey + Q&A	30/04	H4: Do not go to the cinema because cinemas are not equipped to serve the special needs

**Table 1. The design of the Pilots**

The recruitment process was tailored specifically for each participant group. In Pilot 1, which focused on children, the university's management team invited participants from three schools: two private institutions with students aged approximately 12 to 14 years, and one public school with students aged approximately 9 to 11 years. To maintain confidentiality, the research team did not collect or retain any demographic information about the children, and all questionnaires were completed anonymously. The post-screening data collection utilised a

Q&A session format. This method was preferred because it allowed all children to express their views voluntarily and pressure-free, ensuring that every participant had the opportunity to engage. A significant limitation of this format is that not all participants may have felt comfortable expressing themselves openly in front of their peers, potentially leaving some voices unheard. Despite these limitations, all children were required to complete a pre-session questionnaire that provided quantifiable data. The research team recognised that question-and-answer sessions effectively promote meaningful dialogue, which aligns with the study's objectives, although challenges related to participant engagement remain.

For Pilot 2, targeting older adults, recruitment was conducted at senior social centres, where the event was actively promoted. The initial session had low attendance due to short notice given to potential participants and the extensive programming schedule at the centres, which hindered the inclusion of the cinema session on the agenda. Conversely, the second session achieved a significantly higher attendance rate, likely due to effective advance promotion and the group's explicit request for the film, which was welcomed. The focus group methodology was employed in these sessions, facilitated by the availability of participants. In the first session, all attendees engaged in a focus group discussion. Conversely, in the second session, those who expressed interest remained after the screening to participate in a collective conversation. This format allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of the group's shared experiences, preferences, and social dynamics. The focus group structure encouraged participants to elaborate on each other's contributions, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of their engagement with both the film and the screening event.

Nevertheless, these pilot studies are not without limitations. The heterogeneity of the group's gender and socioeconomic status could not be guaranteed, as participants were recruited solely from a specific social organisation. Nevertheless, the lack of participant preselection may be a strength of this research, as it creates a more organic environment for discussion.

In Pilot 3, participants were recruited from among university affiliates who are not involved in the film industry. The first session was extensively promoted through the university's

networks, resulting in a substantial turnout of cinema students for the screenings. To account for this demographic bias in our analysis, participants were instructed to denote their questionnaires with a specific marker. Given that the first two sessions included a considerable number of cinema students, the research team opted to conduct the third session exclusively with students from other faculties. The focus group methodology was selected for this session for reasons similar to those employed in Pilot 2.

Pilot 4 comprised four distinct sessions targeting different audiences: 1) expatriates and migrants, focusing on language accessibility for non-Portuguese-speaking individuals residing in Lisbon; 2) DHH individuals; 3) blind or low vision individuals; and 4) neurodivergent individuals. Recruitment for these groups was facilitated through social organisations and researchers in relevant fields, leveraging established networks and leads for outreach. The sessions were conducted with invaluable support and guidance from mentors affiliated with these organisations. In this particular pilot, we engaged international students, international organisations, and the personal networks of researchers. Specialised questionnaires were developed for participants in Pilots 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4, with input from researchers in related disciplines to ensure accessibility and comprehensibility. Furthermore, a question-and-answer method was implemented following the screenings to enhance the comfort and accessibility for participants with disabilities, thereby fostering a trusting and supportive environment.

### **Stage 3. Analysis of the results**

Audio-only (child participants) and video recordings were conducted with prior consent from the participants or their legal representatives. These recordings were subsequently transcribed using Descript and translated utilising DeepL Pro. All transcripts have been anonymised and preserved in two languages: Portuguese and English. The recordings, consent forms, completed survey instruments, and transcriptions are securely stored on a designated Microsoft Teams channel for the university, ensuring access is restricted to the

research team. Qualitative transcripts have been analysed through an inductive content analysis procedure, based on NVivo 1.7.2 software. Furthermore, survey data have been digitised and organised into Excel spreadsheets, thereby facilitating quantitative analysis and interpretation.

## Results

### Pilot 1 (Older adults) results

Before initiating the experimental Pilot 1 with older adults, we established a hypothesis regarding the price-sensitive barriers that may impede this demographic from attending on-site cinema screenings, as outlined in the Pilot design:

*H1: Do not go to the cinema because of the ticket prices*

Our analysis revealed that while price is a significant barrier for this group, it is not the primary factor affecting their attendance. In this section of the report, we provide an overview of the findings from the pre-screening survey (n = 50) and the focus groups conducted after the screening sessions. Among the surveyed participants, 8 expressed concerns about the high cost of tickets, while 29 felt that ticket prices in Portugal were reasonable. This noticeable difference highlights the challenge of overcoming financial barriers that can restrict cinema attendance. Participants who do not face financial constraints reported a broader range of obstacles, most of which are interconnected with the barriers identified in other groups. In contrast, financial barriers tend to be solely restrictive, preventing specific audiences from even considering attending.

The group highlighted the unique atmosphere of a cinema environment and its appreciation for it, particularly in comparison to watching films at home. The experience of being in a theatre is characterised by specific features and rituals that are essential to

traditional cinematic presentation. These factors create a distinctive audience experience shaped by the act of being physically present in the cinema. Elements such as logistical considerations, sound (which some may perceive as noise), and even popcorn can enhance the viewing experience for some, while leading others to prefer watching movies at home.

The phenomenon of distraction while engaging with film content within the home environment presents a significant challenge to the consumption experience. This concern will be further explored in subsequent pilots as a salient and distinguishing emerging feature of theatrical exhibition. The experience of film in a theatrical setting is inherently linked to heightened focus, reduced distractions, and an overall enhanced quality of perceptual engagement, particularly when compared to the proliferation of stimuli and distractions in a home setting. Thus, cinemas have carved out a niche for themselves as venues for mindful, high-quality film consumption, contrasting sharply with the binge-watching behaviours often observed on streaming platforms. However, the experience of cinema-going frequently finds itself in direct competition with the vast array of entertainment options available at home, a competition it often loses due to the considerable effort, commitment, and dedication required to engage with the theatrical experience.

Another factor defining the value of the cinema-going experience is the film's relevance. As described in the Pilots' design, for Pilot 1, the change involves the movie transitioning from a European small market to a Brazilian film that won the Oscar for Best International Film in 2025 – *I am still here*. Brazil is no stranger to Portugal, so the context of Brazil may spark greater interest among the Portuguese audience. Moreover, given their shared familiarity with the language and cultural awareness and assumed familiarity with the background context, the importance of resonating with and anticipation of quality film is clearly expressed as a motivator to prefer cinema as a unique and potentially remarkable experience, with a demand for a specific setting that the cinema venue can provide.

The first barrier hindering on-site cinema attendance among older adults is a social factor. Participants articulated a significant desire for companionship to enhance their viewing

experience. The absence of such companionship influences their inclination to watch films at home rather than in cinemas. For older adults, cinema attendance is primarily a social activity and occasion, with the venue's characteristics playing a pivotal role in enhancing this experience. Therefore, internal stakeholders must facilitate and support this social dimension. The second factor impacting attendance is organisational, encompassing logistical and accessibility issues, including the scheduling of film screenings. Some participants reported challenges in attending late-night showings and had difficulties with transportation to the venue. Financial factors notably influence the concept of accessibility, as several participants articulated. Although pricing is not considered the primary barrier, it remains an issue worth considering. The cinema experience is economically unattainable for specific demographic groups, thereby significantly restricting their engagement with this medium. Consequently, the lack of discourse regarding their experiences highlights the need for further examination of this issue.

The third factor concerns awareness. Numerous participants live near the cinema where the pilot sessions were held; however, they expressed a notable lack of knowledge about the venue's programming. They indicated that having access to this information would have been advantageous for them.

The fourth barrier is the competition that cinema faces from other entertainment options, particularly those available at home. The abundance of broadcast television and film productions reduces the need for people to commit to going to the cinema, as these alternatives are easily accessible and have a low barrier to entry. Additionally, cinema competes not only with home viewing but also with other activities, such as reading, which this group noted.

Barrier	Value
Lack of company for attending the cinema	Quality time (deeper focus, less distraction, and perceived

	higher quality of experience compared to the multiple sources of attention and triggers)
<b>Cinema attributes</b> (sound (for some – noise), and even popcorn can serve as a value, while for others, they are a reason to prefer at-home watching.	
<b>Abundance of at-home entertainment</b>	Exclusivity of offering
<b>Organisational commitment (encompassing logistical and accessibility pricing issues)</b>	
<b>Awareness of cinema sessions and venues</b>	

*Table 2. The barrier and value of cinema-going summary for Pilot 1 (Older Adults)*

## Pilot 2 (Children) results

In a pre-screening survey involving 151 children, 82 participants expressed a notable interest in action films, suggesting that this genre predominates their recent viewing habits. A substantial proportion of the identified films originates from well-established franchises (e.g., Moana/Vaiana, Despicable Me, Paddington), while European cinema has a comparatively limited presence. This inclination towards action-oriented, franchise-based content is potentially intrinsically linked to children's appreciation for the technical dimensions of filmmaking, as such films frequently exhibit superior audiovisual quality and advanced production techniques.

A range of perspectives was expressed regarding the comparative value of home versus cinema viewing. While some participants reported no perceived difference in film consumption between the two environments, others explicitly preferred the comfort of their

own homes. This divergence highlights the varied priorities children assign to factors such as convenience, personal control over the viewing environment, and the social aspects of attending the cinema.

Young audiences place significant value on the immersive qualities and heightened emotional impact that technologically advanced films deliver. Moreover, some respondents indicated that their access to home entertainment systems, which can replicate the experience of conventional movie theatres, diminishes their perceived necessity to attend cinemas. The readily accessible, high-quality viewing experiences available at home effectively satisfy their desire for immersive, emotionally engaging content. This trend aligns with their genre preferences and appreciation for sophisticated cinematic techniques.

The distinction between films deemed suitable for home viewing and those warranting a theatrical release is significant, particularly when examining children's perspectives on cinematic quality. For many children, the value of a film is intrinsically linked to the environment in which it is experienced. Films perceived as cinema-worthy often possess qualities that transcend mere entertainment, offering an immersive, communal experience that cannot be replicated in a domestic setting. This suggests that children's understanding of film quality extends beyond narrative content or visual aesthetics to encompass the social and experiential dimensions of cinema:

*– “I think going to the cinema is better, because the sound is stronger, you can feel the vibration, and the screen is bigger. So it's more immersive. But it's true, being at home is more comfortable [...]. So, for films that you don't think are very important or that aren't worth being there for the experience, and you just want to watch, it's always better to watch on television.” (from Q&A session)*





*Photo 1. Pilot 2\_Session 3\_During Q&A*

A crucial element contributing to the perceived value of the cinematic experience for children is the opportunity for shared emotional responses and peer discussion. The communal setting of a cinema fosters an environment where reactions are amplified and validated by those around them. This collective engagement transforms individual viewing into a shared social event, enriching the film's emotional impact. Furthermore, the discussions among friends about the plot, characters, or memorable scenes enhance the experience and reinforce social bonds.

Beyond the social aspect, a cinema visit represents a significant departure from daily routines for children, imbuing the experience with a sense of specialness and quality time. While the overwhelming majority (n = 119 out of 151) of children attend the cinema more frequently with their parents, the particular appreciation expressed during the Q&A for

sessions attended with friends underscores the importance of peer-based interaction. Such occasions provide a unique opportunity for children to spend dedicated time with their friends in a stimulating environment that potentially implies a wider set of activities around cinema-going. This shift from the ordinary, coupled with the shared enjoyment of a film, positions the cinema as a venue for fostering meaningful connections, whether with family or, notably, with peers. The value attributed to these peer-focused sessions suggests that children highly value autonomy and social interaction in their leisure activities, even during a family outing. Moreover, the cinema is noted to have a family bonding potential:

– *“Because maybe they want to spend more time with me. Because sometimes.... I’m always locked in my room [...]. That’s good too, isn’t it?”*

Going to the cinema is often a planned activity, considered a structured form of leisure that people engage in with friends and acquaintances. This indicates that visiting the cinema is not just a spontaneous event but an intentional part of leisure planning. Additionally, children recognise a clear distinction between trips to the cinema that they make independently and those organised by their schools. This difference is mainly due to two factors: the relevance of the films being shown and the expectation for analytical thinking that follows. School-sanctioned movie viewings are typically regarded as educational experiences with specific learning objectives, whereas outings with friends are viewed primarily as recreational activities.

Participants, contrary to common stereotypes, expressed an evident appreciation for the cinema, viewing it as a less distracting environment than their own homes. This preference highlights the cinema’s unique ability to maintain focus on the film, often surpassing the comfort and familiarity of watching movies at home. These preferences suggest that children are aware of their difficulties with attention and concentration, and they recognise the cinema as an effective way to help address these challenges. Participants displayed a degree of

caution and non-expectancy towards the film presented, suggesting a discernible preference for familiarity in their cinematic selections. This inclination towards familiar content suggests that comfort comes from predictable narratives, likely rooted in prior exposure or established genre affinities. Notably, a peculiar trend emerged in the viewing of Portuguese cartoons, with some participants exhibiting distinct reactions to this genre of animated content.

A significant barrier to cinema attendance, particularly for larger families, is the financial burden associated with ticket prices. The aggregated cost for multiple family members often renders collective cinema experiences prohibitively expensive, thereby impeding shared leisure activities. This situation may contribute to social exclusion from this cultural pastime, highlighting socioeconomic disparities in access to communal entertainment.

Barrier	Value
The comfort of their own homes (assigned to convenience, personal control over the viewing environment).	Quality time (deeper focus, less distraction, and perceived higher quality of experience compared to the multiple sources of attention and triggers)
Abundance of at-home entertainment	Technical dimensions of cinemas for immersive experience
The cumulative cost for multiple family members	Social bonding (family or friends)

Table 3. The barrier and value of cinema-going summary for Pilot 2 (Children)

### Pilot 3 (Young adults) results

In this pilot study, we used a two-step quantitative survey methodology. First, we administered a pre-screening questionnaire, which received 94 responses. This was followed by a post-screening questionnaire that collected 85 responses. The qualitative analysis

revealed that the primary obstacles to the cinema-going experience among young adults were time constraints ( $n = 21$ ) and financial limitations ( $n = 21$ ). This finding was supported by additional qualitative analysis, indicating that cinemas face competition for both time and financial resources.

The primary hypothesis for this group was that weak promotional campaigns are ineffective in motivating cinema attendance. Although this hypothesis was not supported, the following sections discuss various observations that are relevant to the topic. The pre-screening results indicated that a significant majority of participants ( $n = 75$  out of 94) primarily gathered information about films through social networks. While most participants reported using multiple methods to collect information, social media emerged as the most common source ( $n = 47$ ). This finding suggests that, for some participants, the information available on social media is considered sufficient. In contrast, other sources of information were infrequently mentioned on their own, suggesting that these alternative methods may be viewed as less effective, resulting in a unique media mix for each participant.

Additionally, participants were asked to identify the most influential factors that affected their decision to attend the cinema. The cultural factor was selected by the majority ( $n = 60$ ), whereas 46 participants identified the social factor. Notably, these factors were often chosen in tandem. Only 8 participants acknowledged promotion as an influential factor, indicating its comparatively lower impact in this context.

In the post-screening survey, we asked participants to evaluate their experience of watching a film at the cinema and at home, and to identify the distinguishing features of the cinema room. Sound was the outstanding feature of the cinema room, mentioned by the absolute majority ( $n = 73$  out of 85), and can also be influenced by the theme of the film being screened, as it relates to the music band with bold motives.  $N = 58$  participants preferred the cinema to in-home watching,  $n = 33$  selected at home, and  $n = 17$  considered these experiences equal. Moreover, we asked participants to rate their experiences on a scale of 1 to 5, and the cinema's overall evaluation was 396 out of a maximum of 425. Despite a nearly

50% difference in preferences between watching at home and the cinema, the assessment of this experience is relatively close to the cinema, with a score of 328 out of 425 possible. Participants observed that the immersive qualities and strong sense of presence inherent in a theatrical setting create an "aftertaste" that significantly enhances the cinematic experience. According to focus group participants, the on-site cinema experience is marked by a significant *commitment*. This *commitment* involves a deliberate investment of time, money, and energy, in contrast to the often passive nature of watching films at home. Such dedication transforms the movie into a "special" event that is worthy of the effort. The communal, distraction-free environment of a cinema allows viewers to maintain sustained focus, thereby enriching the immersive experience. As a result, the emotional impact of a disappointing film is heightened, as it is perceived as a loss of this substantial personal investment:

– *"I'd rather watch a cr\*ppy film at home with my friends than watch a crappy film at the cinema, I mean, like, when I go to the cinema I want it to be a unique experience"*  
(from the focus group)

Even though it can be challenging for larger groups to agree on a film genre due to differing tastes, attending the cinema serves as a powerful cultural and social motivator that brings people together. Watching a movie provides immediate topics for discussion and enriches interactions, especially when experienced as a group. When attending a friend's outing, a film can set the mood and introduce new subjects, making conversations easier and the evening more memorable:

– *"There's the aspect that you go out for a night, watch a film with friends, and then you're more likely to go out and talk about it afterwards. It's different from just watching something at home. Normally, when I watch films at home, it's on my computer, in bed. And some films I feel deserve that kind of experience."* (from the focus group)

*– “I think the really cool thing about the cinema is that it becomes an event. And as soon as it’s an event, we become much more interested. And, for example, if I watch a film at home, however much I like the film, I’m never going to get to the end of the film and have the same interest or fascination that I will have if I go and see the film at the cinema.”*  
*(from the focus group)*

Participants frequently discussed the significant benefits of physical comfort offered by the at-home cinema experience. This domestic setting effectively mitigates many of the negative aspects commonly associated with attending public cinemas, such as excessive noise levels and the general hustle and bustle of crowds. In the controlled environment of one’s home, viewers can create an optimal viewing atmosphere, free from external distractions that can detract from the immersive experience. Physical comfort at home allows for greater flexibility in seating arrangements and, most importantly, the ability to pause the film. The option to wait or even stop watching if the film fails to engage offers a level of choice that is often missing from the cinema experience. The pause control empowers viewers to address personal needs, discuss plot points, or simply take a break without missing key narrative elements.

This perceived benefit of flexibility highlights the significant commitment required for attending a movie in a theatre. The inability to pause or abandon a film in a theatre increases the stakes when deciding what to watch. Consequently, the emotional costs of choosing an unengaging or disappointing film are significantly higher in a theatrical setting, where the investment of time, money, and attention cannot be easily recouped or redirected. This contrasts sharply with the low-stakes environment of home viewing, where the ability to disengage easily reduces the potential for adverse emotional outcomes:

*– “I think another aspect that I was thinking about now is, if we’ve been to the cinema, we’ve paid for the ticket, so we’re going to see the whole film, but, if it’s a film that we sort of get halfway through and we’re not really enjoying it, at least in my experience, even though I want to boer, even though I think, wow, I’ve paid for the ticket, I can’t just, if I’m*

*at home, I'm not enjoying a film, I can go and find another one and put another one in"*  
(from the focus group)

A primary suggestion centred on optimising the physical comfort and perceived exclusivity of the viewing environment. Participants advocated for fewer seats and more space between them. This proposed adjustment aims to reduce feelings of crowding and enhance personal space. Another suggestion related to the buzz, with participants expressing a preference for attending the cinema when a film is nearing the end of its release window. This strategy is employed to avoid peak crowds and noisy audiences, thereby ensuring a more tranquil and focused viewing experience. For cinema operators, this suggests the potential to strategically market late-run screenings as a more serene option, catering to a segment of the audience that values quiet.

Finally, the need for more profound advertising of the versatility of films available was emphasised. Some shared that current marketing often focuses on blockbuster releases, potentially overlooking diverse genres and independent films. Enhanced advertising that highlights the breadth of cinematic offerings could attract a wider audience demographic. "Vicious circle" of film promotion, where already popular blockbusters receive disproportionately more marketing attention than films lacking initial public awareness. This qualitative observation underscores a systemic issue within the film industry's marketing ecosystem. It creates controversy, with films from established "top-of-mind" franchises saturated with extensive promotional campaigns.

In contrast, films lacking inherent brand recognition or a pre-existing fan base often face challenges in gaining audience traction within the contemporary market landscape. Despite possessing considerable artistic merit or distinctive narratives, these films typically receive significantly lower promotional budgets and reduced visibility. This qualitative observation supports the hypothesis that prevailing marketing strategies tend to prioritise amplifying

established successes over developing and promoting new or lesser-known cinematic offerings.

Barrier	Value
Price	Technical and cultural dimensions of exhibited cinemas for immersive experience
High commitment	Quality time
The comfort of their own homes (assigned to convenience, personal control over the viewing environment).	(deeper focus, less distraction, and perceived higher quality of experience compared to the multiple sources of attention and triggers)
Abundance of at-home entertainment	Social bonding
Lack of awareness of non-mainstream options	

*Table 4. The barrier and value of cinema-going summary for Pilot 3 (Young adults)*

## Pilot 4 (Accessibility) results

### *Pilot 4.1 – Expat and migrant community*

A significant issue identified in our qualitative inquiry is the limited availability of non-English-language films in theatres, which poses a considerable challenge for diverse audiences, especially expatriates. This problem manifests in two main ways, both of which limit the cinema experience. Firstly, films produced initially in languages such as Portuguese often lack screenings with English subtitles. This creates a significant barrier for non-Portuguese-speaking residents, including a large segment of the expatriate and migrant community, who would otherwise be interested in these films. As a result, they are effectively excluded from enjoying a portion of both local and international cinema due to a lack of linguistic accommodation.



Furthermore, the challenge encompasses films produced in various foreign languages, such as Italian, Hindi, and Ukrainian, which are exclusively subtitled in Portuguese. While this approach serves the needs of local audiences, it concurrently marginalises migrants who lack proficiency in Portuguese. As a result, their access to a diverse array of global cinema is significantly restricted, confining their cinematic experience primarily to films sourced from English-speaking markets or, when accessible, from their native-language markets, contingent on the availability of subtitles in their first language. This linguistic barrier not only limits exposure to international narratives but also hinders cultural exchange and appreciation among diverse populations.

The linguistic accessibility deficit markedly limits the broader versatility of the cinematic experience for expatriates. This limitation constrains their viewing options, compelling them to predominantly engage with English-language films or, on occasion, to seek out films that reflect their linguistic heritage, provided that adequately subtitled versions are available. Participants consistently reported challenges related to the awareness and discoverability of these limited non-English, English-subtitled screenings, even when they do occur. Moreover, the scarcity of such sessions, which are often infrequent or available for only a limited duration, exacerbates the issue, rendering actual attendance a considerable challenge for interested viewers. This situation ultimately undermines the potential for a genuinely diverse and inclusive cinematic landscape. Additionally, when expatriates form international groups, the logistical organisation of a joint cinema outing becomes increasingly unlikely due to the heterogeneous cultural representation involved.

As a mitigation strategy, the participants mentioned sessions featuring black-and-white silent films and international film festivals that offer films from various origins with English subtitles. The issue of linguistic accessibility for non-English films extends beyond subtitling, as highlighted by expatriate participants who expressed a distinct lack of appreciation for dubbing. For many expats, the preference for original language audio with subtitles is strong. Dubbing, even when professionally executed, is often perceived as a significant compromise

that detracts from the film’s artistic integrity and the nuances of the original performance. Participants also mentioned similar problems in the other countries.



Photo 2. Pilot 4.1\_Focus group

Barrier	Value
Lack of offering	Cultural involvement in diversity (not merely European cinema
Lack of awareness of options	International community(ies) building

Table 5. The barrier and value of cinema-going summary for Pilot 4.1 (Expats)

## ***Pilot 4.2 – Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH)***

Participants completed pre-screening surveys to assess the accessibility of cinema halls in Portugal, with the majority rating their experience as five or higher on a scale of ten. The preferred method of film consumption, identified by 5 of 13 participants in the pre-session survey, was the combination of LGP and subtitles. Responses varied regarding preferred viewing platforms, including television, cinema, tablets, and mobile phones, suggesting no distinct preference for any one medium.

Additional analysis revealed that LGP is more beneficial for children under approximately 10 years of age, while subtitles are favoured for children over approximately 12 years. Notably, the children did not report any negative aspects of LGP use in films, whereas the adult participants provided constructive feedback on potential enhancements.

The proposed adjustments to the film were documented in the Pilot design. The implementation of a black bar at the bottom of the screen was positively received, as it effectively highlighted the LGP interpretation while minimising visual conflict with the film's imagery, thereby preserving space for subtitles. Participants appreciated the inclusion of sound descriptions in the subtitles; however, when asked about the term "suspense music" that appeared at a particular moment in the film, only one participant offered a somewhat relevant explanation. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that the written Portuguese vocabulary of children who are hard of hearing tends to be less extensive than that of their hearing counterparts.

The session revealed that two minor children had difficulty thoroughly viewing the LGP video due to obstructed sightlines from adjacent seating. This observation underscores the importance of re-evaluating seating arrangements to ensure equitable viewing experiences for all participants. Regarding the quality of LGP performance in the film, participants' feedback varied. One deaf teacher and an interpreter expressed dissatisfaction, citing casual sign language behaviours (such as scratching their noses and adjusting their hair), a

noticeable decline in rhythm towards the conclusion—perhaps attributable to fatigue and a lack of expressiveness in the signing. They recommended that a deaf individual perform the LGP, arguing that their perspective and expressiveness would enhance the performance. Conversely, another deaf teacher, alongside an interpreter, assessed the LGP in the film as competent, acknowledging the incorporation of signs specific to Porto. While this geographical variation in sign language is not inherently problematic, it is crucial to recognise that there exist differences in signs between Porto and Lisbon. The deaf teacher concurred that involving a deaf performer in the signing would likely enhance the performance’s visual aspect. However, they noted the complexities this might introduce, as collaboration between deaf individuals and hearing interpreters is common: the interpreter conveys auditory information to the deaf individual, who then presents it to the camera or audience.

Barrier	Value
Lack of a technically established accessible offering	Social interactions
Lack of systematic collaboration and dialogue with organisations	Interest in the cinema as a more frequent activity

**Table 6. The barrier and value of cinema-going summary for Pilot 4.2 (DHH)**

**Pilot 4.3 – Blind and Low Vision**

During the session, the group representing blind and low vision individuals concern about persistently low attendance figures despite concerted promotional efforts. This observation underscores the imperative for enhanced collaboration between the organisation and the institution to effectively increase participant engagement. The blind and low-vision participants expressed their preferences for the cinema-going experience, articulating a strong desire to attend screenings in person despite the inherent challenges. This recurring sentiment among participants reinforces a significant theme across all groups

involved in the Pilots: cinema serves as a vital instrument for fostering social inclusion and engagement.



*Photo 3. Pilot 4.3\_Before session*

Technical problems with the audio description occurred when the film's sound increased (e.g., music), making the audio description inaudible. During the session, our participants did not have headsets, which later became the subject of discussion: whether it is a better or worse way of consuming film. Some participants preferred headsets with the expression "it's not the others' fault that I'm blind". In this case, the headset allows avoiding "disturbing" the normative visual, enabling blind people and normative viewers to share a session. However, experiencing it without a headset can raise awareness among the general public about the experience of blindness and/or visual disabilities. Then, audio description on the cinema sound system is a possible solution if it avoids overlapping with the film's sound. In favour of

sound in the general system, the group's coordinator emphasised the benefits for people with acoustic devices who may have difficulty associating with the earphones.

The limited use of the "we see" sentence, which was repeatedly used throughout the audio description and was pointed out as redundant and boring, was expressed and preferred. It was considered positive that the audio description focused only on "what was seen" and not on "what was not seen". Participants preferred the audio description's impartiality and minimal interpretation (e.g., "People smile" vs. "People are happy").

However, some opinions were expressed that headsets are more related to inclusivity, as they can unite diversity in one session:

*– "I liked seeing the audio description like this, without equipment, because, really, films should be played like this. When a film has audio description, it should be accessible to everyone. [...] In any case, the person who wants to, and who can attend screenings at their convenience, rather than the assigned screening with audio description."*

Participants shared that the lack of headsets made some people feel like they could enjoy the cinema like "the others" and in the same environment with their close ones. Sometimes, close ones can be the helpers while watching the film, as they already know what to say and how to communicate with a person who is visually impaired. Moreover, share some pedagogical aspects with the general public:

*– "I think that this way, I don't know how it would have to be done, but being audio-described for everyone has a way of sensitising everyone. And I think it's very interesting, because we should all know what it's like for everyone to see. And so, I think it was a very interesting way of raising awareness for those who see, for what is done, and for those who will see. This is also about inclusion and accessibility. So I think there's an interesting pedagogical aspect to it. Now, you'd have to realise how it could be done with sound, see how it could be done."*

As with DHH individuals, the preference for contextualising the film is expressed to facilitate preparation and deepen understanding of the upcoming session. The participants also

shared the desirability of an on-site cinema experience, motivating it with the opportunity for socialisation and intellectual stimulation:

- *“In the place where the film is playing, there is an intellectual dimension, a dimension of taste, of social pleasure that is sometimes completely different from what we see at home. At home, we only see what we don’t have the chance to actually go to the cinema, the proper space.”*
- *“It’s much preferable to come to the cinema, because just travelling from home, taking transport and then getting together here with several people, gives much more social cohesion, even. We all feel more equal.”*

Barrier	Value
Lack of a technically established accessible offering	Social interactions
Lack of systematic collaboration and dialogue with organisations	Interest in the cinema as a more frequent activity
Separate film sessions lack the up-to-date offering	

**Table 7. The barrier and value of cinema-going summary for Pilot 4.3 (Blind and Low Vision)**

**Pilot 4.4 – Neurodivergent**

Evaluations of cinema accessibility in Portugal indicate a moderately positive perception among participants. The most frequently reported accessibility rating was 3 out of 5, reported by 14 participants, followed by 4 out of 5, reported by 13 participants. The absence of strong consensus at either extreme – predominantly low (1s) or high (5s) ratings – suggests a complex interplay of factors influencing individual experiences, including physical infrastructure and information availability.



The majority of participants preferred watching films primarily on television. This inclination aligns with the desire for a safe, comfortable, and predictable viewing environment. The ability to control sensory inputs—such as lighting, sound levels, and unexpected social interactions—makes the home setting particularly beneficial for individuals who are neurodivergent. This controlled atmosphere enables deeper engagement with the content, mitigating the risks of sensory overload and anxiety.

Physical comfort emerged as a paramount concern across all participant groups when assessing the viewing experience. The fundamental need for a secure, comfortable, and predictable environment has a significant impact on a viewer's ability to enjoy a film. This emphasis on physical well-being implies that discomfort or unforeseen elements in a cinema setting can considerably diminish the overall experience, warranting careful consideration during session planning.



*Photo 4. Pilot 4.4\_During the session*



Notably, despite the provision of various alternative seating options, none of the participants opted to utilise them, remaining within the traditional cinema seating arrangement, a clear sign of social expectations management and behavioural masking. Post-screening discussions revealed that while some participants were open to considering alternative seating in the future, their primary concern centred around the comfort of others. Consequently, while the availability of versatile seating options is acknowledged as valuable, it is essential to communicate these alternatives effectively to the audience.

During the Q&A session, the focus was on the screening's sound quality, which was notably quieter than usual. Opinions among attendees were divided: some reported excessive noise, while others reported a lack of sound. This disparity highlights the complexity of perception and underscores the need for flexibility in cinema environments to better accommodate audience preferences. As mentioned in the methodology section, the relaxed screening format for this session allowed participants to move around the cinema. Although attendees were asked to refrain from using their mobile phones, the topic of noise levels during the screening became a significant point of discussion. Participants expressed discomfort from various sounds; some felt ambient noise made it difficult to hear the film, while others found the film's volume itself overwhelming.

In conclusion, reducing sound levels for this specific group can enhance their experience and foster respectful communication in the cinema. The question of light has also been discussed. For this pilot, the research team decided to retain some lightning, which was generally welcomed.

Barrier	Value
Lack of a technically established, accessible offering	Social interactions
Lack of systematic collaboration and dialogue with organisations	
Thought-through content programming due to the high versatility of the group	Interest in the cinema as a more frequent activity

**Table 8. The barrier and value of cinema-going summary for Pilot 4.4 (Blind and low vision)**

## Conclusion

This report evaluates the role of cinema-going in the lives of contemporary citizens amid intense competition from various audiovisual entertainment options. The theatrical experience competes for attention against a multitude of other entertainment forms, both at home and elsewhere. Therefore, it is essential to consider the perspectives of both viewers and non-viewers regarding their choices about attending the cinema. Our findings indicate that certain barriers to cinema attendance are specific to particular demographics and socioeconomic conditions, while many values related to cinema-going are shared across the entire sample. Table 9 presents a compilation of these barriers and values, highlighting that the number of barriers identified by participants, as well as those identified through the analysis of the pilot experiments, exceeds the shared values. However, shared values across demographics simplify the process of value curation for cinema venues.

Barrier	Value
Lack of company for attending the cinema	Quality time (deeper focus, less distraction, and perceived higher quality of experience compared to the multiple sources of attention and triggers)
Cinema attributes (sound (for some – noise), and even popcorn can serve as a value, while for others, they are a reason to prefer at-home watching.	
Abundance and agility of at-home entertainment	Exclusivity of offering

<b>Organisational commitment (encompassing logistical and accessibility pricing issues)</b>	<b>Technical and cultural dimensions of exhibited cinemas for immersive experience</b>
<b>The comfort of their own homes (assigned to convenience, personal control over the viewing environment)</b>	<b>Social bonding (family or friends) Social interactions</b>
<b>Lack of systematic collaboration and dialogue with organisations</b>	<b>Interest in the cinema as a more frequent activity</b>
<b>Lack of a technically established, accessible offering</b>	
<b>Awareness of cinema sessions and venues / Lack of awareness of non-mainstream options</b>	

***Table 9. The accumulated barrier and value of cinema-going summary for all Pilots***

The divisive role of theatrical atmosphere, with all its attributes, as both a barrier and a valuable experience, is influenced not by demographics but by individual preferences. While some people enjoy the entire atmosphere of sound, food, and a lively crowd, others prefer a quieter, almost private cinema experience, which then dictates the choice of the venue for cinema-watching.

The practice of attending the cinema has been identified as having a significant social dimension among all groups participating in the research. Older adults (Pilot 1) specifically cited the absence of companionship as a notable barrier to attending the cinema, underscoring the importance of social interaction during theatrical exhibitions. Participants acknowledged that social bonding constitutes a crucial element of leisure time spent with close companions, facilitating communal experiences that can be discussed and ultimately

strengthen interpersonal relationships. This social bonding is particularly pronounced compared to at-home entertainment, especially during film viewing. Joint cinema attendance promotes immediate sharing of impressions, enhancing the quality of the experience and fostering lasting memories across various types of relationships.

The resources required to attend a cinema significantly heighten competition with alternative forms of entertainment, particularly at-home movie watching. These resources include the time spent on logistics and the financial costs associated with going to the cinema. In contrast to the more accessible nature of watching movies at home, theatrical experiences can be less adaptable to individual preferences. They may have pricing structures that do not accommodate all demographics. Additionally, the physical comfort of home viewing often surpasses that of many cinema environments, which can have various shortcomings. As a result, the increased commitment required to attend a cinema leads to heightened expectations for a satisfactory overall experience. This dynamic creates an emotional burden, as audience members invest significant personal resources and effort into the cinema experience. Within this context, attending the cinema becomes a high-stakes endeavour, in contrast to the low-stakes nature of streaming experiences. Since both financial and effort investments in streaming are comparatively minimal, the emotional cost of a "bad" movie experience is also reduced. This flexibility allows viewers to easily switch channels or engage in other activities without feeling they have wasted time or resources. Consequently, streaming offers a more relaxed and less demanding viewing experience. In this situation, theatrical exhibitions can reconfigure their role as a space for digital disconnection, mindful consumption, and focused viewing. This aspect is vital when digital distractions and attention span issues are frequently discussed. The distraction-free environment provided by cinema venues is an attractive offering for quality time. Furthermore, films shown in theatres are generally expected to be of higher quality, with advanced technical capabilities, creating an event-like experience that stands in contrast to the frequent background noise of

binge-watching on streaming platforms. The cinema, due to its setting and technical facilities, is more immersive, which participants value.

Promoting cinema sessions represents a substantial opportunity for growth in cinema venues, where unconventional and creative strategies can effectively differentiate the venue and its programming from the competition. Relying exclusively on large-scale promotional efforts for blockbuster films may prove insufficient, particularly when specific productions fail to receive adequate attention due to limited marketing budgets and resources. These less mainstream films offer a potential avenue for experimentation; thus, implementing innovative promotional strategies can significantly enhance their visibility and audience engagement, potentially surpassing the awareness barrier.

Accessibility sessions (Pilot 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4) highlighted the lack of accessible cause-related offerings. It began with language accessibility for expatriates and migrants who lacked options to attend sessions in languages other than their native language. In the case of DHH, blind/low vision, and neurodivergent audiences, we noticed a lack of systematic collaboration between the film industry and special organisations. One-time experiments do not alter the state of the art in structural engineering. The systematic dialogue between the parties, we argue, will enable the potential solutions to provide a wholesome cinema experience for a diverse audience. Demand and collaboration have the potential to create a seamless, up-to-date on-site experience, enhancing the cinema's inclusivity and social value.

Cinema-going is competing with an extensive array of entertainment options available in today's world, catering to various demographics with differing social, physical, and economic backgrounds. As seen from our sample, the cinema has evolved into a significant social event, providing focused, more immersive, and higher-quality film experiences that are often hard to replicate in other settings. The communal atmosphere of a cinema allows individuals to share in the understanding of storytelling and emotion, creating lasting memories with friends and family. In contrast to the endless flow of content available online and the constant connectivity that digital life demands, the value of cinema-going is rooted in a

growing desire for disconnection. Many people seek the opportunity to immerse themselves in a film without distractions, enjoying a shared offline presence that fosters genuine connection and conversation. This shift highlights both a longing for quality experiences and a need for moments of respite from the frenetic pace of modern life.

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