**Why Dine-In Movie Theater Operators Should Employ Psychology of Clean to Drive Results**

Written by OpenWorks

As the facility manager or owner of an Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, you know how psychology can play a huge role in how you run your theater.

**Giving Customers A WHOLE Experience**

As just one example, you know from experience that when you show a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle film, you may stock up on pizza and sell a lot more since it is a favorite food of the reptilian foursome.

You know your patrons appreciate it when your chefs create special menus inspired by classic cinema and big upcoming blockbusters, like an all-Pakistani menu curated by Kumail Nanjiani for “The Big Sick” or a burger shop takeover for “The Bob’s Burgers Movie.”

After all, when movie-goers identify with the movie characters, they will most likely emulate their food choices since watching a movie can be an immersive experience.

You also know eating is a goal-related behavior, so when movie-goers care about the characters in the movie, they will subconsciously adopt their goals as their own.

Just think back to when the movie E.T. first premiered; [sales of Reese’s Pieces](https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/the-reason-why-et-eats-reeces-pieces/)jumped 85% in the weeks following its release in June of 1982. Why? Because when Elliott offered E.T. the candy, E.T. relished them.

Certainly, the folks at Mars Incorporated learned that lesson after they denied Stephen Spielberg permission to use M&Ms during filming.

Now consider the psychology and importance of cleanliness to your theater’s operation. A [survey](https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150609005439/en/Poll-Reveals-85-percent-Americans-Patronize-Business#.VX3Dcfmqqkr)conducted online for Cintas by Harris Poll among 2,023 adults ages 18 and older revealed that 85% of respondents would not patronize businesses with negative online reviews about the cleanliness of their facilities.

Restaurants (75%) and hotels (70%) ranked at the top of the businesses where cleanliness most greatly impacted buying habits.

**Alamo Seeks to Offer Good Food, Good Beer, and Good Film, All at the Same Place**

When patrons visit an Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, you want them to enjoy the movie and feel comfortable ordering food and drinks instead of worrying about the potential of suffering food poisoning.

After all, the Alamo Drafthouse Theater’s goal is to offer good food, good beer, and good film, all at the same place. The last thing you want patrons to experience is stepping on, sitting on, feeling, or seeing remnants of previous movie-goers on the floors and seats of your theater.

The bathrooms must also be cleaned every night by the end-of-day cleaning teams. And your theater staff needs to have [ample cleaning supplies](http://www.openworksweb.com/blog/lights-camera-action-how-to-keep-your-movie-theater-sparkling) on-hand to clean and disinfect all high-traffic areas, door handles, and box office counters and to deal with those issues that inevitably occur and require attention throughout the day.

OpenWorks service providers work to ensure your theaters are stocked with ample cleaning supplies for daytime staff and provide skilled workers who can adequately prepare your theaters to offer the experiences your patrons expect when they open the next day.

The consequences for those theaters that don’t get it right can be quite damaging as the results of a survey of 1,101 diners carried out on behalf of Checkit for its report [“The Financial Impact of Getting Food Safety Wrong,”](https://www.restaurantonline.co.uk/Article/2016/09/12/Restaurant-cleanliness-more-important-than-customer-service-finds-report) demonstrate.

The survey found that 66% of respondents cited bad food hygiene as a reason for not returning to a restaurant compared to 16% who said slow or bad service would cause them not to return.

The survey also found the type of venue made no difference, either. Respondents were equally as likely to be put off by a low food hygiene rating regardless of if the venue was a sandwich shop, pub, or fine-dining restaurant.

**Survey Responders Rank Cleanliness Higher Than Cost in Restaurants**

Also consider a survey by[Simon-Kucher & Partners](https://www.restaurantonline.co.uk/Article/2016/09/12/Restaurant-cleanliness-more-important-than-customer-service-finds-report) conducted immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic in which respondents say they will spend twice as much per month at restaurants that meet cleanliness standards compared to those that don’t.

Survey respondents also ranked cleanliness and sanitation higher than cost.

You also know that movie-goers have many more options as dozens of theaters offering dine-in experiences have opened throughout the country. Before the pandemic, many cinemas were upgrading their facilities with cushier seating, bigger screens, better sound equipment, and tastier food and beverage options.

Many of them also went into 2020 with thin margins when the industry lost 80 percent of its domestic box office revenue due to the pandemic, according to ComScore, a compiler of moviegoing data.

Federal pandemic relief programs may have saved some, but nearly 15% of the more than 5,800 theaters open in 2019 have since shuttered.

Michael O’Leary, president and chief executive of the National Association of Theater Owners, a trade organization, recently told the New York Times that there is tremendous optimism within the industry right now.

“But we also have to be mindful of what happened a few years ago,” O’Leary said. “That compels us to keep innovating.”‍

A growing number of theaters and theater chains offer enhanced accommodations. Here are some to name just a few:

* EVO Entertainment Center in Southlake, Texas
* Showcase SuperLuxe in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts
* The Brew and View in Chicago
* Central Cinema in Seattle
* McMenamins in Oregon and Washington
* AMC Dine-in Theaters, several locations throughout the country;
* iPic Theaters, several locations throughout the country
* Cinepolis Theaters in Florida and California
* Marcus Theaters in the Midwest
* Frank Theatres Cine Bowl and Grill on the East Coast
* Sundance Kabuki Theatre in San Francisco
* Look Dine-In Cinemas in Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, New York, Texas and Virginia
* Star Cinema Grill in Illinois and Texas

With more competition each year, it’s important to consider that when customers contemplate whether to revisit your theater, it doesn’t really matter how good the movie is or how outstanding your employees are if your facility isn’t clean.

 According to a 2017 Consumer Cleaning Insights Survey conducted by P&G Professional, what matters most for 92% of consumers is how clean and fresh a hotel, restaurant, salon, or office is. In fact, 9 in 10 agree that they are more likely to have an overall negative opinion of an independent business if the public spaces (lounges, restrooms, or lobbies) are not clean.

The survey finds that if a restaurant’s restrooms are not clean, 88% of respondents wonder about the food's safety. The survey results also present opportunities. 95% of consumers agree that cleanliness can elevate a good business into a great one, and 92% agree that if a restaurant is clean, they are more likely to recommend it to friends.

In addition, nearly three-quarters (74%) say they are more willing to overlook slow service if the business is noticeably clean.

**Food, Glorious Food**

Just two years after the height of the COVID pandemic, a survey conducted in 2022 by P&G Professional, the away-from-home division of Procter and Gamble, shows Americans generally feel comfortable about dining out.

The survey found a vast majority of Americans feel comfortable ordering takeout (91%), dining outdoors (83%), and even indoors at a restaurant (77%). This comfort, however, comes with high expectations of cleanliness.

With food and beverage being a vital part of the Alamo Drafthouse experience, these survey results demonstrate the importance of cleanliness to your theater’s bottom line.

According to P&G Professional, most Americans express how important it is to see a visible clean environment when dining indoors (93%). Additionally, four out of five (82%) say they lose their appetite when they see grease or dirt at a restaurant, making it critical for restaurants to arm themselves with the tools they need to keep kitchen and dining room surfaces visibly clean.

Transparency also remains a top priority, with 70% of Americans yearning for restaurants to be more open about their cleaning products.

Though food safety is an obvious concern for Alamo theaters, a littered environment also presents some problematic sociological issues that worsen the longer they remain unaddressed.

**Clean Environments Help People Focus**

 Numerous studies over the past 46 years have demonstrated that littered environments stimulate people to litter, and social norms play an essential role in regulating human behavior, particularly in the case of littering.

The COVID pandemic also permanently changed how the public views the cleanliness of public facilities like Alamo theaters. Taking it one crucial step further, according to Stratus Building Solutions, 86% of Americans said they want *proof* that workplaces and businesses are clean following a regular cleaning and sanitation process.

A clean and organized environment also [impacts employee productivity](https://www.openworksweb.com/blog/helping-topgolf-maintain-a-competitive-advantage-with-a-culture-of-cleanliness). A study by the University of Arizona found that employees who work in a clean and organized environment are up to 15% more productive than those who work in a cluttered and messy environment.

The study also found that employees who work in a clean environment are less likely to take sick days, and they are more likely to stay focused on task.

A study by the University of Michigan found that employees who work in a clean environment are more likely to be [satisfied with their jobs](https://www.openworksweb.com/blog/this-professional-cleaning-benefit-is-1-on-peoples-list-you-wont-guess-what-it-is) and have a positive attitude toward their work. The study also found that employees who work in a clean environment are less likely to experience stress and burnout and can offer customers better service.

When organizations can skillfully manage the entire customer experience, they reap enormous rewards: enhanced customer satisfaction, reduced churn, increased revenue, and greater employee satisfaction. Employees also discover more effective ways to collaborate across functions and levels, which delivers gains throughout the company.

These rewards greatly interest Alamo Drafthouse Cinemas as they help fulfill the company’s goal to make its theaters the best cinematic experience in the world.

If your company is rooted in a positive culture of fun and teamwork, let's work together![Reach out](https://www.openworksweb.com/about-openworks/contact)for a complimentary cleaning assessment so we can keep customers enjoying your services.