

CINEMA OPERATIONS & HOW TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS



Thanks for downloading this cinema operations guide.

- We're delighted to share it with you, as it's packed with insights, knowledge, and examples of applicable initiatives and case studies from other cinema operators and experts in the sector, to support you in the day to day running of your cinema business.

We see this guide as a resource to help you drive more business, attract new audiences, and retain your loyal customers.

Specifically, we want to:

- Help you understand the current state of the cinema sector, with a focus on Europe in particular, and look at the opportunities and tools available to meet the challenges in our industry.
- Show you how cinema management software, understanding and using data and new technology can help you increase your business efficiency, and give you time back to focus on business growth, marketing, and more creative initiatives.
- Give you concrete examples of how other cinemas and operators use data analytics and insights to help them maximise ticket sales, programme for optimum capacity and engage their audiences.
- Inspire you with creative marketing ideas to drive attendance.
- Help you understand how memberships and subscriptions can support loyalty, frequency, and reach younger audiences.

We've gathered together a wide range of case studies, the latest data and reporting from the leading bodies across our industry, alongside practical advice and proven methods that have positively impacted cinemas large and small when it comes to growing their business in the hopes they inspire and support you.

"Welcome to this practical e-book on optimising your cinema operations! We hope you enjoy the read, learn new things and get inspired by some of the many best practices we've collected. See you at the cinema!" - Martin Berg, CEO, DX



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01

THE CINEMA SECTOR -
AN INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

As busy cinema operators you wear many hats, like orchestra conductors creating harmony from a mass of different instruments. Every minute of your day is full, overseeing practical and technical logistics, developing marketing activity, managing staff and customer service - all with time and resource constraints.

The good news? There are a multitude of tools, activities, and innovations available that can help you save time, minimise laborious tasks, deliver more targeted and successful marketing campaigns, and attract new audiences no matter the size of your business.

Not everything has to involve big changes either. Small steps and incremental changes, starting with low-hanging fruit, can make a big impact. It's better to start small, experiment with different ideas and see what positive operational benefits you can achieve sustainably over time if you don't have the luxury of big resources.



Enjoying popcorn in the cinema



Buying cinema tickets online is now commonplace, predominantly via mobile

We've reached out to our DX cinema operator friends and beyond for their insights, knowledge and practical advice, covering everything from TikTok to data-analysis, creative programming to subscriptions, from promotional offers to using ChatGPT for planning ahead!

We are all familiar with the challenges affecting cinemas that have emerged in recent years. Declining ticket sales, increased competition from streaming services, and changing consumer habits have all contributed to a more complex operating environment. This guide aims to address these pain points by exploring how modern solutions—software, innovative marketing strategies, and understanding how to interpret data—can help you not only survive but thrive in the new cinema landscape.

2. THE STATE OF THE CINEMA SECTOR – INSIGHTS FROM ACROSS EUROPE

'*Cautious optimism*' is a recurring term when describing how industry leaders feel about the current state of the cinema industry.

After a couple of tumultuous years following the pandemic, and a 2023 marred by Hollywood strikes, we're seeing a renewed appetite in audiences to return to the big screen, driven by "a strong, diverse, and reliable film slate" (Phil Clapp, [UNIC](#)) with box office numbers looking more buoyant.

We are certain that late 2024 and 2025 will see a steadier stream of blockbusters making their way to the big screen, and the rise in people – especially younger age groups – choosing to see independent or arthouse films in cinemas is a positive signal that exhibitors can afford to offer broader programming and attract a wider audience.

The 2024 film slate was lighter than usual due to the US industry strikes, leading to a summer low on tentpole blockbusters. This shift encouraged cinemas to programme a wider variety of films – indies, repertory, foreign-language – to fill the gaps, drawing increasingly diverse and younger audiences – however these titles do require more concerted marketing efforts to build awareness and drive sales.

Figures indicate that while ample European content is available to fill Hollywood's void, there are fewer blockbusters, and the quality of

content is inconsistent. Large multiplexes, such as Cineplexx, Odeon, etc. are moving towards more indie film programming. The distinction between traditional commercial cinemas and independent theatres is blurring as venues get creative with their offerings to compensate for the Hollywood content shortfall. Vue's CEO, Tim Richards, notes that [70%](#) of independent film grosses come from multiplex operators, highlighting their importance to the ecosystem.

Vue Cinemas has also expanded into distribution, starting with Paola Cortellesi's *C'è Ancora Domani*, a black-and-white Italian-language film that outperformed *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* at the Italian box office. Similarly, Picturehouse Cinemas, part of Cineworld, is [investing more in film production](#) and financing to support smaller filmmakers.



'*C'è Ancora Domani*' by Paola Cortellesi. The first film to be distributed in the UK and Ireland by Vue Cinemas who are expanding into distribution to meet content needs.

The ongoing energy crisis, cost-of-living crisis, and the increase in fixed costs for operators continues to pose a challenge, with little sign that global unrest is set to slow down in the next 12-18 months.

Despite this challenge, there is much to hope for and plenty of opportunity. We are seeing renewed interest from studios in exclusive theatrical releases, and renewed trust that promoting cinema exhibition drives benefits for the film industry as a whole.

Despite several critical articles around cinema ticket pricing, we can see that audiences are prepared to pay for a quality cinema experience and have seen increased spendings on concessions, with cinemagoers clearly wanting to indulge themselves when they visit. We are seeing a plethora of creative, and practical initiatives across Europe driving a resurgence in enthusiasm for the movie theatre experience.

EUROPEAN CINEMA IN NUMBERS

The European box office reached €7.2 billion in 2023, a 23.7% increase on 2022 (UNIC). While this remains -12.3% below the 2017-2019 average, several territories including the Netherlands, Romania and Croatia have in fact managed to do better, all this in a highly challenging context.

Admissions in the same region grew by 21.6% in 2023 to reach 986 million tickets sold, 25.3% below the pre-pandemic average.

39 European films exceeded 1 million in attendance, with 14 titles in total from the year's releases making over 10 million ticket sales. We continue to see a strong link between a successful local film slate and national box office performances.

Astérix & Obélix (France) and C'è ancora domani (Italy) were Europe's two most successful local box office hits in 2023. 21 European markets had a local or European film in their box office top five.

*Numbers published by UNIC, June 2024 and the European Audiovisual Observatory, May-June 2024

2.1) DRIVING AUDIENCES BACK

Audiences are returning: In 2023 Kantar reporting for Cinema First showed that [82% of pre-pandemic audiences](#) had come back to the cinema in the UK. Surprisingly, younger moviegoers (16-24) are a growing demographic, however returning with less frequency than before. Of the 18% that have not returned yet, or have no intention of returning, the majority sits in the 65+ age bracket, either due to the loss of habit, or continued anxieties around social activity since COVID.

Both the youngest and oldest audiences need more attention with dedicated campaigns, offers, and a focus on the overall cinema experience to drive return and frequency. The former age group responds well to more creative marketing, more imaginative and diverse programming, and attractive ticket prices; the latter group will benefit from having their concerns around safety, accessibility, and also programming addressed, to encourage them back.

To encourage frequency, cinemas need to consider:

- Loyalty systems that offer perks and discounts for regular visitors
- Dynamic ticket pricing, or targeted ticket offers around days of the week (e.g. low cost Mondays), Under-25s discounts, bundled offer with tea or coffee and a biscuit for older audiences visiting midweek, lower cost matinee screenings or family tickets.
- Regular events and seasons - e.g. Picturehouse regularly offer curated repertory film seasons around a theme

or director, like their recent Kubrick Collection, showing a Stanley Kubrick film every Sunday afternoon for 4 weeks. Picturehouse Members can access these screenings for just £1. The trailer for the seasons shows all upcoming movies in that collection to build awareness.

- Earlier marketing for upcoming releases, letting people know 4-6 weeks ahead what films are coming out to increase awareness - consider newsletters, social media, advance previews, early trailers and posters in your lobby.

2.1.1) Increasing frequency among younger audiences

Teenagers and young adults are the highest demographic returning to cinemas - with 48% of 16-24s in the UK having bought at least one cinema ticket in the year 2023-4. In France, 85% of 16-25 year olds went to the cinema at least once in 2023, compared with 64% of older audiences. During the 2023 National Cinema Day in the US, 22% of ticket purchases were made by under 25s. In Italy, 16-25 year olds are the largest returning group post-pandemic.

Despite a few exceptions, such as Odeon showing 16-25 year olds as the most frequent cinemagoers, this age group has the lowest frequency of visits. Overall they still perceive the movie theatre as somewhere they only visit for a special occasion.

Under-25s are [increasingly watching arthouse](#) and independent cinema, with horror, comedy, anime, and international cinema generating strong interest alongside more obvious blockbuster action films. Vista Group's

[presentation](#) at UKCA's 2024 conference showed Gen-Z visiting cinemas for one-off big event films (*BTS*, *Taylor Swift*, etc), with those more frequent Gen Z cinemagoers enjoying R-rated comedies, lower budget horror, and indie films such as *Asteroid City*.

Titles like *Triangle of Sadness*, *Scraper*, and *Aftersun* [performed well](#) - indie titles featuring younger actors and characters, supported by marketing initiatives targeted at the under 30s segment. With the glut and variety of content available to 21st century audiences, young people have more access than ever to a wide variety of film genres and international cinema. Cool film brands like MUBI and Letterboxd are driving awareness of arthouse films to the under 30s, and more indie films are being made with a youthful audience in mind, such as *Priscilla*, *Saltburn*, *Passages*, etc.

Early awareness of these films is key; across social media, out of home, and through extensive sharing of trailers before other films. Offering enhanced screenings in some way (adding a director Q&A, a post-film discussion, a themed menu, etc), or creating bigger events around film screenings, helps build engagement and the “special occasion” feeling that excites younger audiences - the ‘FOMO’ factor.

“We don’t see enough trailers - at least in mainstream cinema chains - for arthouse or independent films. Which I think is a real shame, because arthouse films are starting to gain a lot more prominence”

- Thomas, attending UKCA
Young People’s Panel 2024



2.1.2) Dedicated young people programmes

Initiatives designed around young people's needs and viewing habits also drive awareness of films and encourage repeat visitation.

[Into Film UK](#) charity focuses on film as an educational tool to inspire and engage young people. It offers a wide range of programs and resources to support learning through film and creative activities for students. This includes film clubs in schools, putting on film festivals and events offering access to professionals, and opportunities for discussion and engagement, filmmaking or learning opportunities.

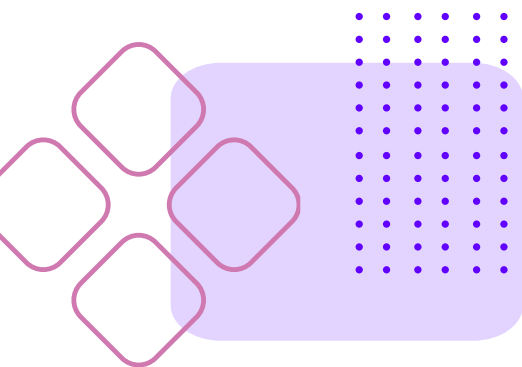
In Europe, several countries offer a [Cultural Pass](#) scheme, where young people are offered government money to spend specifically in arts and cultural spaces, including going to the cinema. In Germany, 18 year olds can apply for the €200 credit to spend in participating venues. In France 15 year olds can accumulate small credit amounts each year towards museums, galleries, cinemas, then apply for €300 cultural credit pass at 18, valid for 24 months. Whilst these initiatives have undergone some scaling back, or adjustments, owing to ongoing economic challenges across the EU, they remain in place.

The recently announced [European Film Club](#) is a youth-curated platform helping 12-19 years olds across Europe discover Europe-made films together through watch parties, discussion forums and online Q&As with filmmakers. While the platform itself is online, these initiatives help develop wider interest and film knowledge in the cinema audiences of tomorrow - organising in-person events in collaboration with platforms such as this presents an opportunity for cinemas.

Discounted tickets and membership programs for young people make repeat cinema visits more affordable. Many cinemas offer young people passed like Pathe's Under 25s subscription, The Barbican's [Young Barbican scheme](#), which provides discounted tickets for under 25s for all screenings, is a successful example of this approach: A recent screening of *Challengers* saw 34% of admissions via Young Barbican tickets.

"Films like *Saltburn*, *Poor Things* and *All of Us Strangers* are bringing in a younger audience, and that's very exciting for us in terms of the future of our business. Under-25s are embracing arthouse cinema in a way we haven't seen before."

- Damian Spandley,
Managing Director Curzon Cinemas



2.1.3) Building buzz on social media

Cinemas benefit from a strong presence on social media to engage with younger audiences - especially if they focus on interaction, conversation, entertaining audiences, and consistent, regular content.

Using platforms like Instagram and TikTok for marketing and community building can drive higher engagement. Additionally, collaborating with relevant, or local influencers and using platforms like Letterboxd can help attract cinephile communities.



An example of eventising an indie film release for younger audiences: MUBI x Letterboxd partnering with Polyester magazine to run a Priscilla Party

Even the simple act of asking younger audience members what they want to see on screen can help cinemas develop relevant programming where younger audiences feel heard, reflected, and have a stake. Host a focus group of students, visit local youth clubs, or run a survey through email or social media to get young people's opinions and insights.

Social media platforms like Letterboxd and [TikTok's partnership with IMDb](#) are reaching younger audiences where they hang out online. Roblox and Fortnite have also become popular channels for film brands to creatively market to the youngest viewers through community engagement, conversation, and working with gamers and influencers already active in the space.

For the recent Godzilla vs Kong release, [Warner Bros teamed up with Roblox](#), targeting its 71 million users (predominantly Gen Z), with a playable version of the film's trailer that immerses gamers in an obstacle course set in Hollow Earth.



Godzilla vs Kong's playable trailer on Roblox, targeting Gen Z audiences

The 2021 Suzi survey demonstrated that 52% of TikTok users claimed to have discovered a new film, TV show or actor through their feeds. By 2023, data platform LiveRamp analysed twelve UK film release campaigns on TikTok, using sales lift measurement analysis to show [92% of film campaigns](#) on TikTok saw a resulting increase in ticket sales and customers. Whilst direct ROI on social media activity remains challenging to prove, there's little doubt that well executed social media campaigns drive tangible awareness and interest in film releases amongst younger audiences.

In an effort to increase viewership of the Oscars amongst Gen Z, a TikTok campaign was developed to gamify participation in the event. This was delivered via an in-app 'Oscars Search Hub': a 3-phase [TikTok content portal](#) where users could:

- Unlock themed frames by creating [#Oscars-related](#) content
- Find all relevant Oscars content creators in one place
- See trending topics around the Oscars in real-time
- Vote in live-stream polls
- Access exclusive videos from actors, influencers, and behind the scenes at the event

The campaign was divided into three "acts" with different activities for pre-Oscars week, the event itself, and the post-event discussion: winners, losers, and celebrity gossip. The result? 1.7M total posts and a 70% increase in engagement from last year. The concept roll is a clear sign the Oscars are thinking about ways to engage the next generation.

2.1.4) Event marketing to attract and engage

Consumers increasingly crave memorable experiences, immersive, shareable, something above and beyond. The competition for our attention is everywhere, online and off in every sphere, and everything is becoming eventised. Cinemas looking at ways to add experiential elements to screenings are seeing the pay off.

Hosting special events, such as curated film seasons, midnight screenings, and interactive events (e.g. sing-a-longs, costumed screenings, Q&As, quizzes, etc.), can make the cinemagoing experience more engaging.

Indie cinemas have found success by [partnering with community organisations](#) to create unique film events, like live performances alongside film screenings, fan-curated programmes, debates, or craft workshops.

Matchbox CineClub in Glasgow hosts pop-up cult-film festivals - like [KeanuCon](#), tapping into fandoms and curating themed programmes, often accompanied by parties, a fanzine, fan-created merchandise markets, etc. Artist-led cinema collective [Kino Club](#) in Helsinki, Finland hosts curated film screenings, film installation art, and programmes including a sauna-themed film festival!

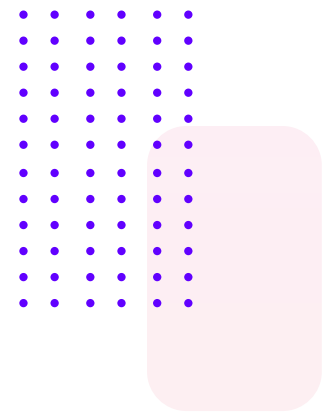
Alternative film production brands like A24, MUBI, and NEON are boosting interest in independent cinema by targeting a slightly older (30s and 40s) hipster, cinephile audience with edgy films, quirky merchandising, and cool branding - even branching out into film festivals and screening events, and partnering with theatres to offer cheap or free tickets to subscribers to experience their content on the big screen.

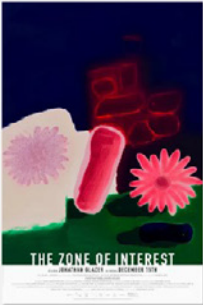
MUBI has just announced a 9-city, in-person MUBI FEST and has been running MUBI Go free cinema tickets as part of its subscription tier for several years.



An example of eventising an indie film release for younger audiences: MUBI x Letterboxd partnering with Polyester magazine to run a Priscilla Party

Through their strategies of investing in lower-budget, character-driven films and targeting richer audiences, these film brands have built very strong reputations - there is a 'cool factor' to belonging to the A24 'club'. That brand-building has proven effective with *Civil War* grossing \$113 million globally, surging way past predictions for a low-budget, controversial war film with few big name stars.



 The Zone Of Interest by Neil Kellerhouse \$50	 The Iron Claw Original Motion Picture Soundtrack \$30	 PREORDER The Iron Claw Kevin Von Erich Action Figure \$48
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A24 creates quirky, collectible film merchandise around its releases that appeals to the hip, cinephile, 20-40 year old audience and helps build their brand reputation

FRANCE EMBRACES 'EVENTISING' RELEASES FOR BOX OFFICE SUCCESS

"Événementialiser" is a new buzzword in French cinema; Event Marketing in English - a strategy being adopted globally to attract audiences and generate high engagement ahead of releases. This strategy is proving effective at driving audiences to see both US imports and French-made films, which resulted in a positive box office in 2023.

Distributors are doing more countrywide tours and big premieres, and audiences are responding positively.

A Difficult Year saw directors Éric Toledano and Olivier Nakache visit 140 venues across France - their presence at Q&As and introductions to accompany the screenings adding personal insights that gave audiences something extra. The film sold over a million tickets.

Diaphana, the distribution company behind Quentin Dupieux's 2023 hit *Yannick* offered a free ticket

to anyone named Yannick during its first week, a simple stunt that caught the eye of the press, and engaged cinemagoers, making it the director's biggest hit in France.

Marketing agency Cartel specialises in working with influencers to promote movies. They teamed up with Formula 1 driver Pierre Gasly for a promotional partnership around the release of *The Flash* and sent Gen-Z fashion and lifestyle influencer Lena Mahfouf to the *Barbie* premiere in LA, to broadcast her experience to her 8 million combined followers across social media.

More traditional studios, like SND and Gaumont, are now spending more on digital marketing to attract younger crowds. This push aligns with making the moviegoing experience seamless, from booking tickets online to enjoying the cinema, as noted by Pathé Cinémas.

Further reading



SCREEN DAILY

National Cinema Days

To drive a general return to cinemas, National Cinema Days - where tickets are greatly reduced across a majority of cinema chains over one or multiple days - have proven very successful globally at boosting admissions, with some countries, such as Italy and France now hosting several editions a year, rather than just one offs.

France's 2023 La Fête du Cinéma attracted over 3.2 million visitors, a performance 4% above the average admissions for the three previous pre-pandemic editions.

2.1.5) Inclusivity, accessibility, and representation

Cinemas are focusing on inclusivity and accessibility to ensure a wider number of people are able to visit the cinema, and feel represented and catered for both on screen and off. Making cinemas safe, accessible spaces where people of all backgrounds feel welcome and able to participate fully in the cinemagoing experience is vital for the health of our industry's ecosystem.

Increasingly, cinemas are providing provision for the hearing or visually impaired (e.g. closed caption solutions), dementia, or autism-friendly screenings or relaxed performances for neurodivergent audiences. Helping audiences find accessible screenings is also vital: French website Allociné has introduced a feature detailing all accessible screenings across France in partnership with AccessLibre.



Ciné Relax is a French initiative to encourage relaxed screenings for disabled and autistic audiences.

Promoting diversity on screen, and giving space to emerging and marginalised voices and stories is bringing in new audiences who previously may not have felt their experiences reflected in cinemas. A recent report on diversity in Hollywood also recognises the [box office impact of diversity on screen](#), with women and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) audiences buying the majority of opening weekend tickets for the US's top 10 films of 2023.

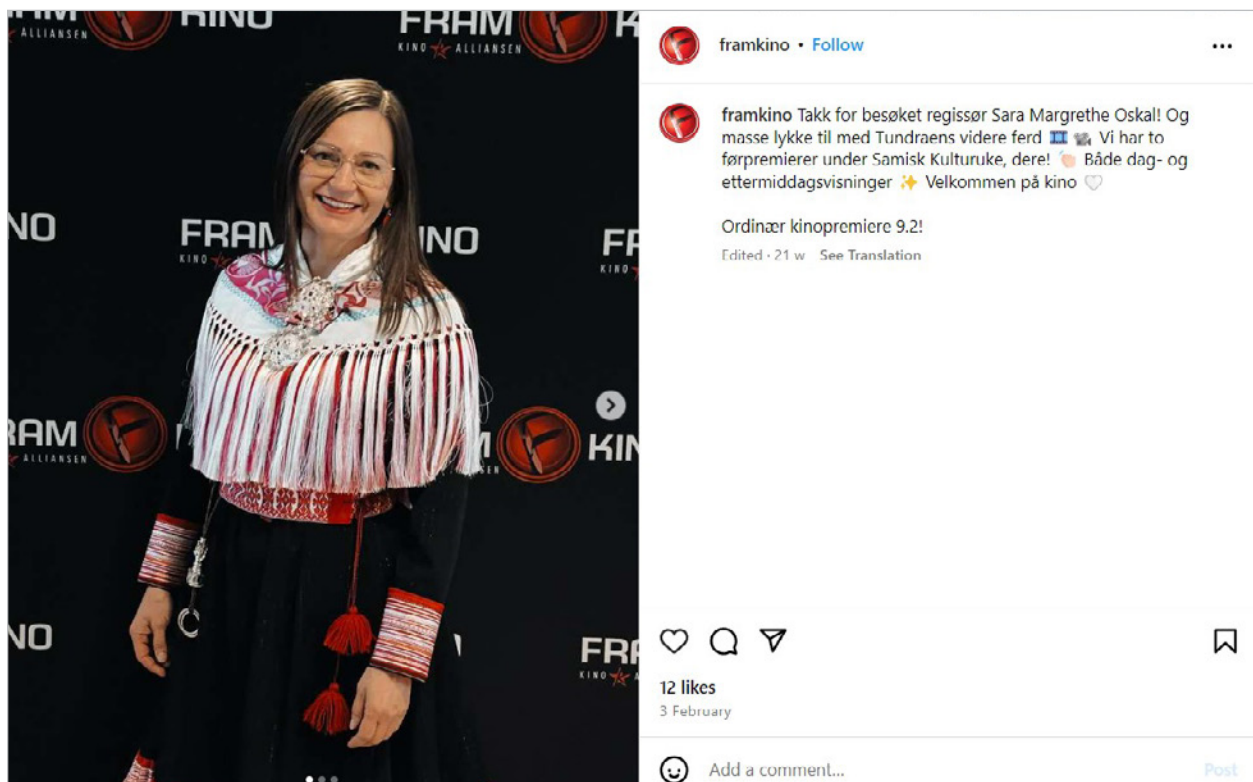
[We Are Parable](#) creates unique cinematic experiences for Black audiences in the UK and increasingly across the Atlantic. They regularly work with cinema and film festivals to programme engaging, enhanced screenings that showcase Black voices and productions on screen. They curate events showcasing Black films, and also provide mentorship initiatives for young and emerging Black and Brown filmmakers.

[Milk Tea Films](#) is a London-based collective bringing South East Asian cinema to UK audiences through interactive, and creative screenings and partnering with distributors like A24 and Studiocanal. Recent events

include a haiku-poetry workshop alongside a screening of Wim Wender's *Perfect Days*, and a preview showing of Celine Song's *Past Lives* followed by a panel discussion on diaspora and identity with journalists and filmmakers.

Local films continue to perform well in European countries, as does finding ways to localise the cinema experience around a film release. Iceland performed particularly well in 2023 with three of its best performing films being Icelandic productions, demonstrating once more that [audiences respond positively](#) to local representation and seeing themselves reflected in stories on screen.

In France, for example, local films accounted for 36.7% of the national market share in 2023. As we write these lines, the local comedy *Un p'tit truc en plus* has attracted over 7 million visitors and led at the box office for 8 consecutive weeks until the release of *Inside Out 2*. Similar local success stories could be reported across the region throughout 2023 and the first half of this year.



Sami Culture Week screenings at DX customer Fram Kino, Norway - with visiting directors, helping create buzz around stories of indigenous cultures of the Nordics.

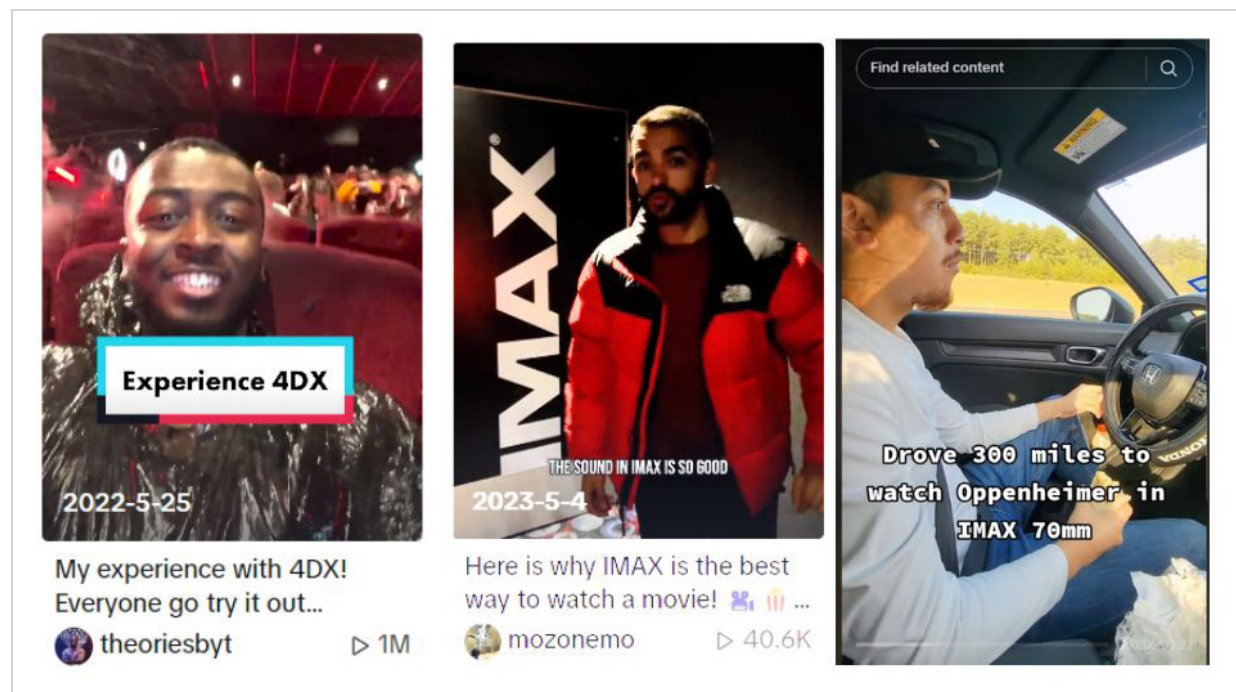
2.1.6) Premium format cinema - the big experience

Over the past five years, Premium Large Format (PLF) screens have grown from 5,000 to 7,500 across Europe. In fact, Europe has enjoyed an increase in screen density for the past few years, when the opposite has happened in the US. These upgrades allow cinemas to charge premium ticket prices, and in several case studies, have proven to drive an increase in visitation and occupancy rates.

Cinemagoers are prepared to pay extra to see films in premium format: 20% of *Dune: Part Two* and *Oppenheimer* sales were IMAX tickets according to [Variety](#), and a 4%

rise in European cinema ticket prices has been partly attributed to sales of premium format screenings. Despite the media noise to the contrary, price is not actually an issue that is deterring most cinemagoers.

Where smaller cinemas might not be able to upgrade their entire premises, or invest in so many new technological innovations in screening rooms, many are making upgrades to their concessions and catering, with more sophisticated food and drink offerings, opening their cinema spaces to local community groups or businesses for conferencing and events, or creating more “event” experiences around bigger film releases.



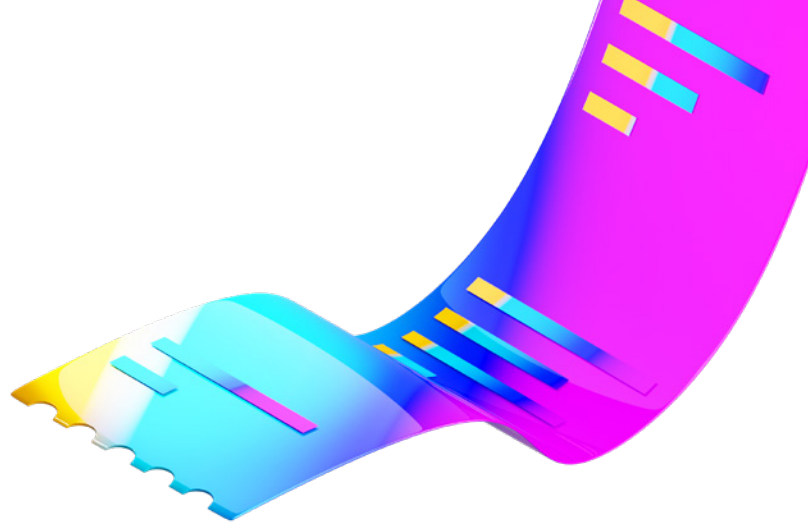
Fans and influencers share their experience of PLF screenings on social media!

2.2) LOYALTY AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Loyalty and subscription models support cinema attendance through discounted or value-add tickets, tailored perks and rewards with a large number of successful models operating across Europe.

In the UK, Cineworld's Unlimited card offers unlimited movie access for a monthly fee, including additional perks like discounts on snacks and drinks. Similarly, Odeon's myODEON membership provides tailored discounts and offers based on individual viewing habits, enhancing customer engagement and satisfaction.

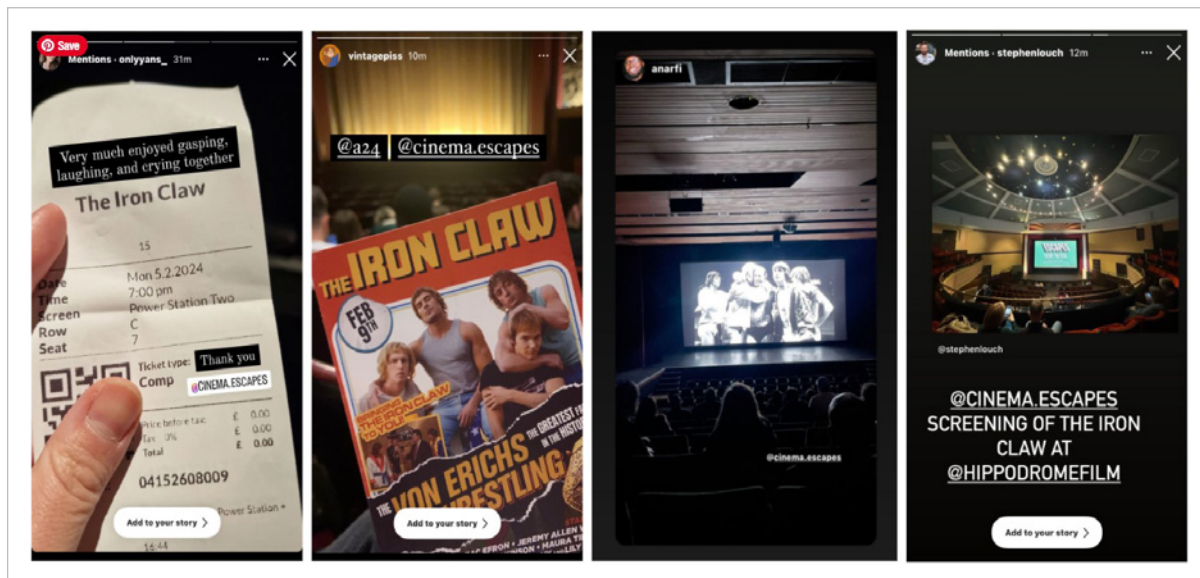
In France almost all chains offer an unlimited pass for a monthly subscription fee, as does Pathé Pass in the Netherlands. In Switzerland, the Pathé Pass also offers preferential rates for event cinema and monthly reward points to be exchanged for food and drink discounts.



Brand partnership discounts

Cinema partnerships with brands that offer discounted tickets or ticket offers to those who sign up to the brand's emails or purchase a product is also popular. In the UK Meerkat Movies offers 2-for-1 cinema tickets once a week to anyone who has purchased an insurance or broadband product via Comparethemarket.com.

[Escapes](#), a new initiative by EleventyFive and the BFI offers people the chance to see a free film per month at participating cinemas across the UK, and vote for which films are part of the offer.



Fans sharing photos from Escapes free screening of The Iron Claw across the UK

Targeting Younger Audiences Through Innovative Loyalty Schemes

A significant focus of these loyalty and subscription programs is on attracting under-30s, crucial for long-term cinema sustainability. These usually app-based services are meeting the increasing appetite of young people to access more arthouse, independent, and repertory cinema, the current economic impact on their social spending, and their familiarity and ease with mobile shopping and digital lifestyles.

Subscription models like Cineville in the Netherlands (and recently Belgium) have successfully driven an increase in under-30s cinemagoing (which we expand on in our case studies further on).

Student tickets or Under-25 ticket offers are also attracting Gen Z, for example Picturehouse Cinemas' U25, where under-25s enjoy £4.99/£5.99 tickets every Monday-Thursday.

Through the insights and data gathered from integrated cinema management software, POS, website, social and newsletter data, cinema operators are able to implement more targeted and responsive loyalty campaigns and offers tailored to different demographics.

2.3) SOFTWARE AND DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS

According to UNIC, the European cinema sector is leading the way in investment and innovation in cinema technology, from transitioning to digital projection, to updating ticket sales software. Increasing numbers of cinemas are installing integrated cinema management solutions (like DX's solution)

that streamline the operations process and provide valuable data and analytics to operators, enabling them to make smart, data-driven, and effective business decisions.

Whilst other areas of the leisure and entertainment sector - travel, retail, hospitality, and sports - began to embrace and implement digital innovations from the early 2000s: investing in e-commerce platforms, digital and social media marketing, and data-analysis software with a rapid escalation in the decade before the pandemic, the cinema industry has been slower to make these moves, with big accelerated changes only taking off across the board in the last few years.

The benefits of booking cinema tickets online are obvious for audiences:

- Can be done from anywhere / on the go
- Times, dates, reviews, trailers, ticket availability all in one place
- Usually cheaper online or easier to pre-book concessions
- No need for physical ticket, just scan QR code or show screen at the cinema
- Limited to no queuing

For cinemas too, investing in online ticket sales capability through an integrated platform and / or app means:

Access to detailed audience preference and sales data which help inform operational and marketing strategies

- Track trends and performance to enable cinemas to forecast and plan
- Reduction in staffing costs
- Dynamic pricing in real-time

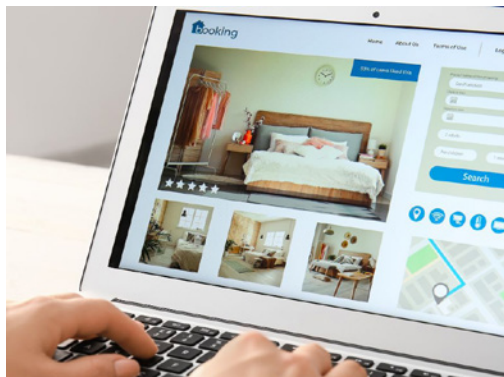
- [People who buy tickets online are 2.1x more likely to buy concessions](#) and (where applicable) 1.7x more likely to buy a meal compared to those who buy tickets at the cinema ticket desk

Smart integrated cinema management solutions connect different operational tools seamlessly, greatly reducing laborious admin, reducing human error, and saving valuable resources (time and money). This frees up cinema operators to focus their energy on developing more innovative marketing activity, business development, and partnerships / team building.

2.3.1) Learnings from outside the cinema sector

The leisure sector embraced technology and data in the early 2000s alongside the rise in e-commerce, low-cost air travel, before really taking off with the boom in smartphones after 2007.

The integration across travel, hospitality, and retail of digital management software, digital sales and marketing, and the sharing of data within those sectors is now commonplace.



Booking holidays and travel online has become commonplace.

In the restaurant industry, for example, restaurant management software is ubiquitous, with [69% of restaurants in the US](#) using one or more technologies to manage their operations more smoothly. In the UK, 47% of people prefer booking online, and 37% of people say they are more likely to visit a restaurant offering online reservations.

Integrated, cloud-based restaurant management solutions offer (some or all) the following:

- Online reservations
- Smart seating management that determines the best seating planning for any given time slot
- Staffing management, identifying peak / low booking times
- Real-time inventory of tables / seats: customers on a waiting list are automatically informed when tables become free, no shows become free tables after a certain time period, etc.
- Ability to update menu items in real-time on the POS system
- Add notes and tags about customers to create diner segments (e.g. high-spenders, track repeat orders so you can anticipate their favourite wine, etc)
- POS integration to track spend per head, food and drink stocks, manage table turnover times, etc.
- Automated email campaigns and marketing activity - send out menu updates, promotional offers, dining club offers, birthday treats, and seasonal news for example based on diner segmentation, or other selected demographics.

The examples above have transformed how the restaurant industry operates. Integrated cinema management solutions, such as we are developing at DX, offer the cinema sector similarly endless possibilities for streamlining processes, enabling smarter business decisions based on tangible data and trends, and operating more effectively.

2.3.2) How can data, and technology benefit cinemas?

At DX we are - to put it mildly - obsessed with the power that data, technology, and analytics have to [transform the cinemagoing experience](#) and support more [efficiently run](#), profitable cinemas.

By leveraging the data accessible via cinema solutions software, theatre-management systems (TMS), point of sale (POS), social media, websites, mobile apps, email marketing and CRM systems, operators can tap into detailed, expansive, and valuable insights into audience preferences and behaviours, box office and admissions trends, and the effectiveness of marketing activity.

These insights enable cinema operators to deliver better marketing strategies, tailored to different audience segments, curate programmes and schedules designed to drive maximum attendance, and make informed business decisions to support greater ticket sales - all of which drive higher profitability.

We have a number of DX customers already making great use of our cinema solution reports and analytics to help them better understand their audience demographics, booking habits, and local seasonal admissions trends.

For example, Cinema Manager Erlend at Bryne Kino has [freed up valuable time](#) to focus on planning events and delivering high quality service thanks to our DX solution scheduling tool that allows him to programme large numbers of films seamlessly across his TMS system and the Bryne Kino website all from one place.

Understanding Film Audience Data for Cinema Operators

Cinema operators can collect and analyse various types of audience data to enhance their operations:

- Demographic data such as age, gender, and location helps to segment target audiences and tailor marketing efforts accordingly.
- Viewing behaviour data can highlight what content different audiences prefer, what viewing times, days and locations are most popular, what promotions deliver the most return, booking windows and seasonal patterns, and even which snacks sell best with which movie.
- Sentiment analysis looks at gathered feedback from online reviews, social media mentions, and surveys to understand how people are responding to different films, or promotions and help operators refine their programming or offers.
- Loyalty programme data gives operators insights from people's purchase history, what promotions perform best, what spending habits are like for different audience segments or time periods. This can be used to reward loyal customers and encourage repeat visits with relevant offers. Knowing an audience's viewing history also allows you to provide tailored

film recommendations and early-booking prompts to loyalty program members whether by email, through your app, etc.

- Historical data to look at how comparable films, promotions, and seasonal holidays performed in the past to help predict what will work well in the future. For example, identifying possible peaks and troughs in admissions, or deciding whether to book certain films for one or two screenings, or several weeks.
- Being able to analyse your staffing, scheduling, F&B consumption, concession sales, and customer visitation patterns can help you forecast peak and quiet times and quiet times to support more efficient staffing and inventory management.

Using insights to deliver relevant, creative, and targeted marketing activity

Having access to detailed information about your audience and how they behave online puts you in a better position to [craft more targeted and relevant marketing campaigns](#), and means a lot less time wasted trying lots of things without really having a plan.

Some examples of the type of insights you might get to support effective marketing campaigns are:

- Social media analytics - these tell you what types of content and platforms your audience respond well to, which social media activity generates excitement, and which ads drive ticket sales or traffic to your website.
- Website analytics - Understanding how audiences are finding your website and the customer journey that results in a

ticket sale helps you prioritise where to invest in marketing, if it's from referral traffic, Google, social media, etc.

- Identifying habits - is a particular genre of film, actor, director, or theme generating more interest? You can programme more of that...
- Paid advertising - By experimenting with different versions of trailers, film assets, and ad formats you can see which ones drive higher engagement, or result in an uptick in bookings.
- Targeted promotions - If you notice that it's mostly over-25s attending certain times, days, or films, you might want to create a reduced ticket offer for under-25s to increase overall attendance in those slots, or introduce a new audience to certain kinds of films they might not otherwise go and see.

Data that tells you the best performing programming approach

Predictive and historical data can help you forecast box office performance by looking at variables such as genre, cast, director, social media engagement, and similar titles. This can help you:

- Schedule films strategically by choosing the best times and dates to show films based on demand forecasts.
- Allocate marketing budget strategically to films that are likely to perform well, ensuring a higher return on investment.
- Decide how many and which screens to dedicate to different films to maximise occupancy and revenue.

VUE - LEVERAGING AI FOR OPTIMISED CINEMA SCHEDULING

For eight years, VUE International, which operates across Europe with 226 sites and 2,010 screens, has been investing in developing its own AI-powered programming tools to leverage audience data and maximise the admissions and revenue opportunities of each screening.

Looking at historic performance data for different films, genres, screening times, seasonality etc, as well as individual cinemagoer behaviour, helps the tool learn and identify patterns and forecast the best programming schedule down to the individual screen.

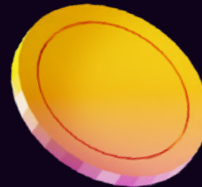
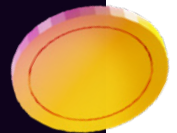
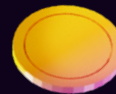
This way, VUE is able to programme strategically, maximise revenue opportunities, cater to audience needs and preferences, and get the most out of each cinema as the optimised programmes means programming as many screenings as possible throughout the day, giving it a big competitive advantage.

This investment in AI is also a major factor in VUE's expansion into distribution, as they know they can offer films the best possible opportunity to be seen widely in the right places at the right time.

"We know who wants to see Asian films, Turkish films, Polish or Italian films. We know where those audiences are because of our extensive use of AI,"- VUE International CEO, Tim Richards.

Further reading

DEADLINE



Sergio Chavez of TynsetKino integrates data pulled from the DX cinema solution with ChatGPT to help him [identify the most profitable screening times](#) and days and identify audience trends across Norway (you can read more in our case studies further on).

Data analytics is an indispensable tool for cinema operators to master, providing them a more strategic overview of their operations, sales, and marketing performance. This can help optimise campaigns, programming, staffing and lessen the amount of time teams spend on laborious processes. A good understanding of data and ability to interpret it, supports more efficient, less stressed teams, more focused marketing for better audience engagement, more ticket sales, which equals more revenue!

As the industry continues to evolve, the role of data analytics will only become more critical in maintaining a competitive edge.

At DX we see a [positive future outlook for cinemas](#) thanks to the increased adoption of new technologies to streamline operations, investment in data analytics, and integrated cinema management solutions.

We also see a rise in AI-powered software able to manage labour-intensive and time-consuming tasks, freeing up operators to focus on where their skills and business minds are best used, and the embracing of innovative marketing strategies across digital and social media platforms, and enhanced screenings to generate big buzz.

In the second part of this book, we look at practical case studies and examples from our cinema colleagues across Europe with key takeaways, and actions you can implement, that can help you in your day to day as cinema operators, no matter how small your business.





02

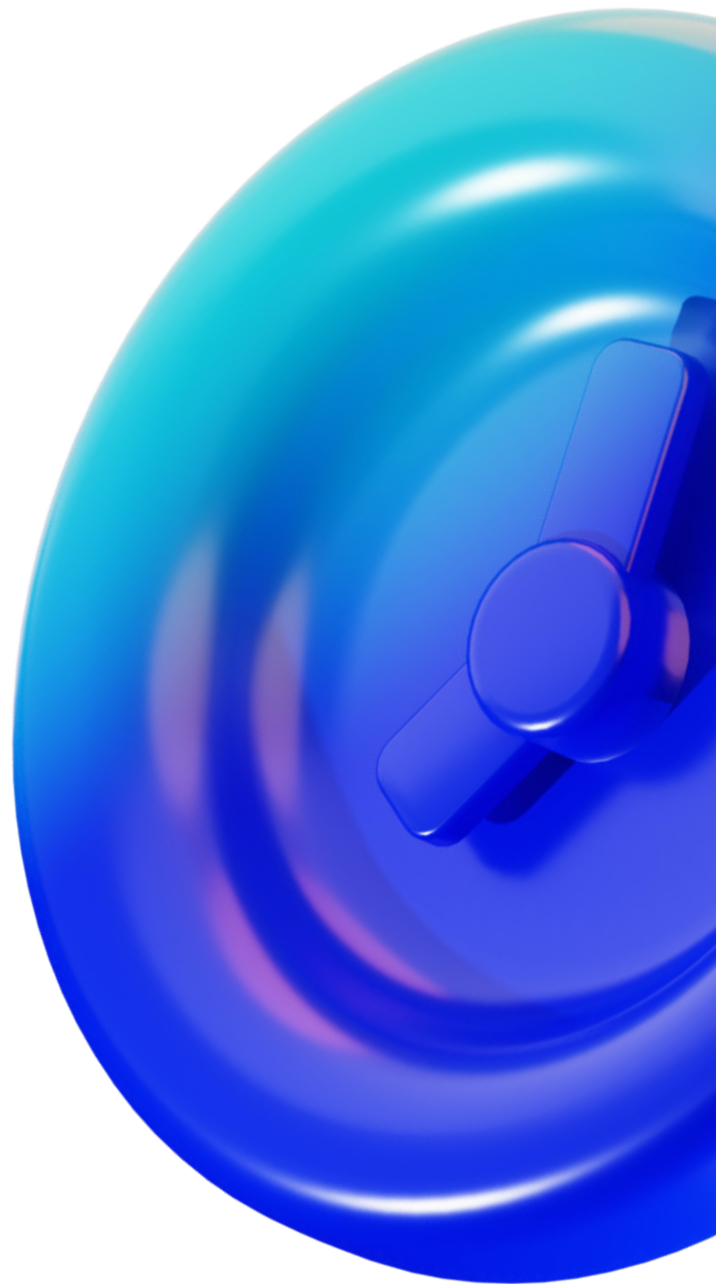
HOW TO GROW YOUR
CINEMA BUSINESS
- A PRACTICAL GUIDE

1. INTRODUCTION

Whilst understanding the bigger picture is useful, we want to share some practical case studies that demonstrate some of the tools and innovations we've covered in a day-to-day operational setting.

We've reached out to some DX friends and colleagues in the cinema sector to share their real life experiences, from how they built social media strategies to attract younger audiences, to using data insights to create more efficient operations processes, or sharing tips to get the most out of your programming.

If you want some deeper insights on any specific topics, we've included some further reading for your enjoyment!



2. CINEMA OPERATIONS – CASE STUDIES TO INSPIRE

TYNSET KINO – DATA-DRIVEN OPERATIONS TO MAXIMISE EFFICIENCY

Sergio Chavez is the Cinema Manager at Tynset Kino, one of DX's customers, overseeing all operational matters. Alongside this role, Sergio is also Cultural Advisor for the Tynset municipality supporting projects aiming to foster local resident participation both in and around the cinema and city's cultural centres.

Tynset Kino was built in the 1950s and has undergone multiple renovations, now boasting two modern screening rooms boasting the latest technology, housed within a striking, contemporary architectural building. Despite the small community within which the cinema sits (5,600 inhabitants), it serves a wide community and is a home for many film-led events beyond traditional screenings.



Sergio Chavez, manager of Tynset Kino

Sergio has always been a data-driven operator, with a genuine interest in understanding new technologies like AI and analytics, and how data-insights can help build efficiency in his business.

Sergio uses publicly available AI software such as ChatGPT to help streamline processes, save time, create more efficient operations and increase cinema admissions, integrating the data he gathers with the DX solution which he uses for day to day cinema management.

Increasing cinema visits by 26% in 2023, compared with 2019

Sergio has always had a personal interest in data and technology, staying on top of trends and new tools, and finding ways to integrate them into his daily and business life. It is thanks to the use of these tools, in tandem with exploring creative approaches to programming (involving some trial and error to learn), that Sergio was able to oversee the really strong rise in cinema attendance at Tynset.

The below are three examples of how Sergio has used data and tech to grow visitation and box office:

Using ChatGPT to schedule films for maximum attendance

When ChatGPT first became available to the public, Sergio looked for a way to integrate the software's API with the DX solution's API (an API is the means with which a piece of software can communicate with another piece of software) to understand the most profitable times to schedule films, or use historical data trends to forecast best screening times or programmes.

To do this, he downloaded data from the DX solution, such as:

- Visits per week at Tynset Kino for the entire years of 2021, 2022, and 2023
- Sales average per screening
- Previous week's admissions rates per film
- Etc.

By then feeding this data into ChatGPT, Sergio can ask it to analyse and propose optimum schedules with prompts such as *"What is the best time to screen XX film in the two week period of March 1 - March 16 to drive maximum admissions, based on the following opening times for Tynset Kino..."*

Building on this, Sergio can expand for ever more variations of useful predictive data. For example, integrating weather pattern data (both historic, and forecasts) to determine if weather will have an impact on what he screens and when.

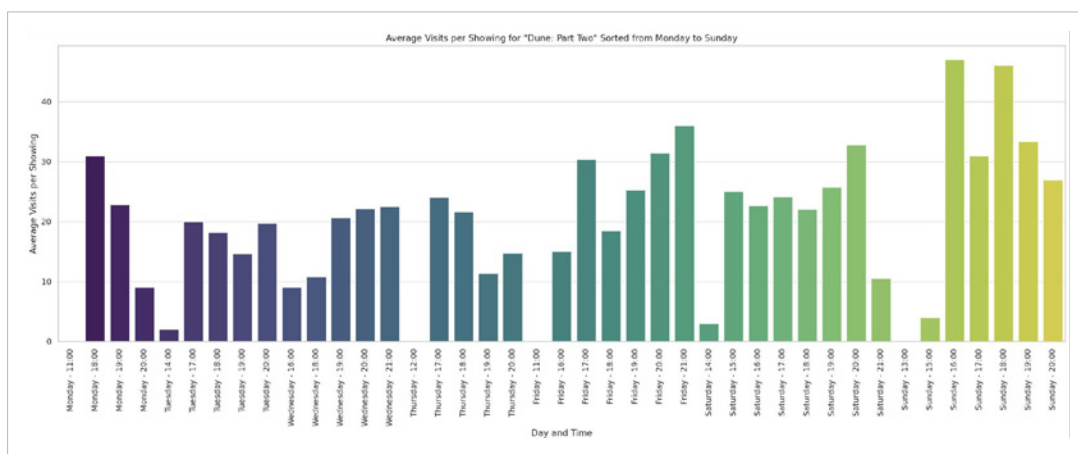
Taking it one step further for maximum efficiency programming

The above data helps Sergio make cinema-level scheduling decisions. He can look at, for example, the past three years of audience habits during May school holidays and identify patterns that help him programme kids films at the times that have worked best in the past for admissions and spend.

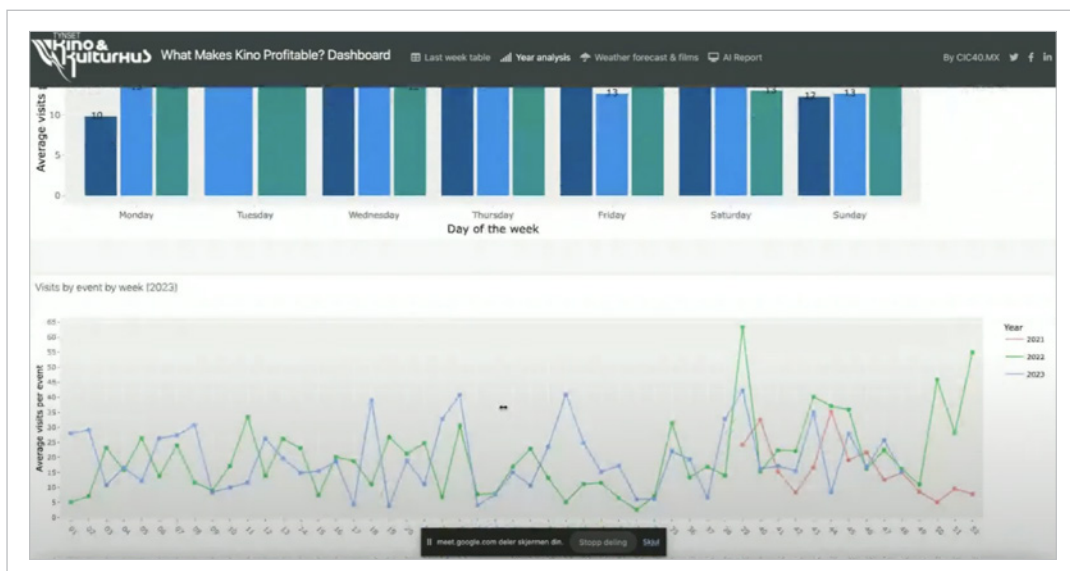
But Sergio now looks at much vaster data sets from across Norway, to help him with his decision-making, accessing statistics available from the Norwegian cinema industry.

For example, inputting the country-wide data for major anticipated films like *Dune 2*, or *Kung Fu Panda* Sergio asked ChatGPT “analyse the average visits per exhibition time and date for these films, and present this in a graph”, this allowing him a simple snapshot of the most popular screening times for the films across Norway as a whole.

By pairing this knowledge, with his own local-level insights, Sergio can programme the summer blockbuster slate for highest possible admittance and revenue based on audience interest, as well as knowing which films to schedule more often, or not.



Data analysis showing most popular screening times and days for *Dune 2* in Norwegian cinemas similar to Tynset Kino, by attendance.



Custom built dashboard by Sergio Chavez and his brother, showing highest visitation times by screening event for every week in 2023.

In the future, Sergio would love to increase the revenue optimisation possibilities further, by understanding which concession items sell best for each film locally and nationwide, in order to tailor individual promotions around this knowledge.

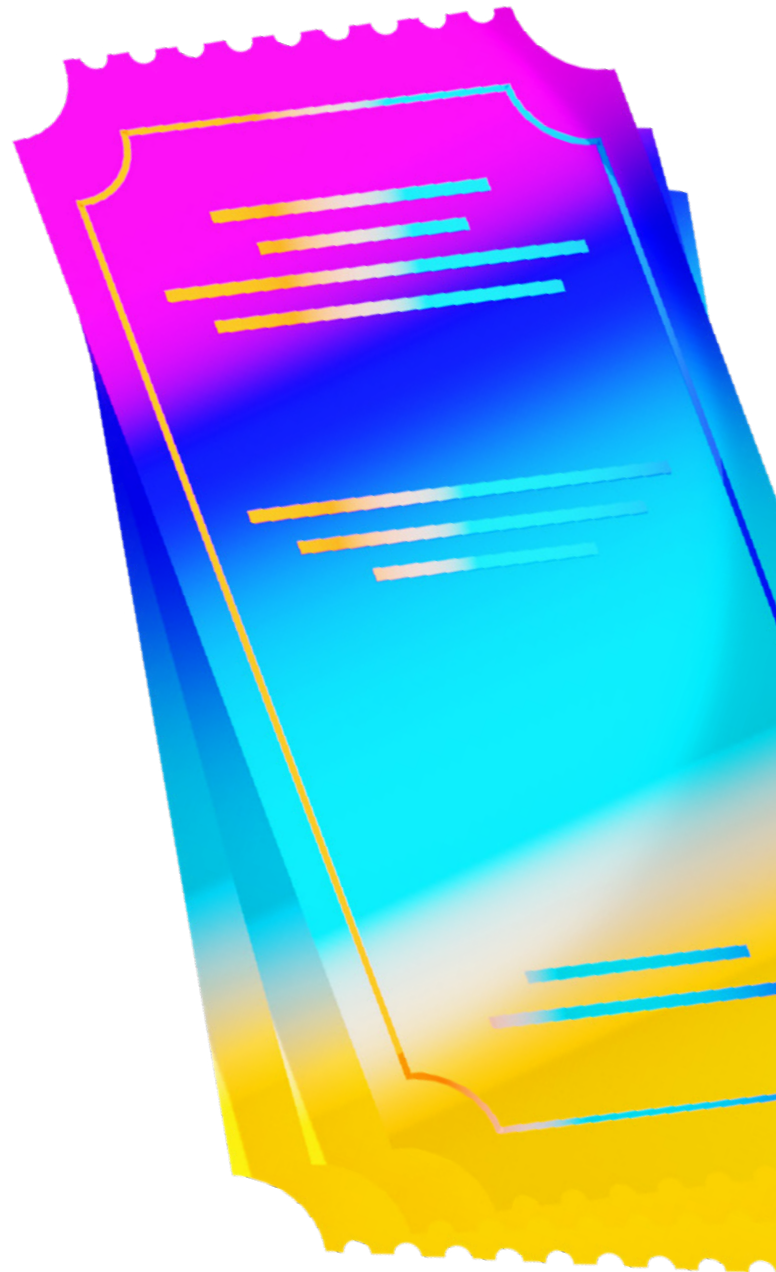
Knowing, for example, that hotdogs and Pepsi sold best during Kung Fu Panda most, but popcorn and chocolate sold more during Dune 2, can inform how to arrange concession item displays, how to bundle up ticket + snack promotions around most popular items, or which items to upsell in person at the kiosk, or in the ticket purchasing journey online.

Optimised marketing for awareness

Given the small local community of Tynset, the cinema's newsletter is a powerful awareness tool for Sergio and his team.

By downloading all the data from his email marketing software, showing dates and times where the newsletter got the highest opening rate, the most click throughs to booking pages, or the most engagement, helps him schedule mailings at the best time to reach the most people and drive the most traffic to the bookings page.

ChatGPT not only provides the summarised analysis with this information, but also recommendations based on aggregated knowledge of email marketing best practice and expanded data from similar cinemas and industries.



Based on the updated analysis of your data, here are the insights into the best times to send your newsletter:

Best Days of the Week:

1. **Saturday** has the highest open rate at approximately 47.57%, with a click rate of about 5.47%.
2. **Friday** follows closely with an open rate of around 45.97% and a click rate of 3.84%.
3. **Wednesday** has an open rate of 37.60% and a click rate of 4.66%.

Best Hours of the Day:

1. **15:00 (3 PM)** stands out with the highest open rate at 52.25% and a click rate of 8.29%.
2. **22:00 (10 PM)** has a notable open rate of 50.45% but a click rate of 0.00%.
3. **16:00 (4 PM)** shows a strong open rate of 47.88% with a click rate of 6.35%.

Recommendations:

- **Optimal Sending Time:** Based on the data, sending your newsletter on **Saturday afternoons at 3 PM** could potentially yield the highest engagement in terms of both open and click rates.
- **Alternative Options:** Friday also appears to be an effective day for sending newsletters. Considering the engagement levels across different hours, early afternoons and late evenings show promising open rates but aim for times when click rates are also high to ensure active engagement.

It's important to consider your audience's specific habits and preferences, as these general trends might vary depending on factors like your industry, the nature of your content, and the demographics of your subscribers. A/B testing with different days and times can further refine your strategy to maximize engagement. [\[>\]](#)

ChatGPT summarised analysis of Tynset Kino box office data in 2023.

Opportunities for the future

One area where Sergio sees lots of opportunity for further integration between DX solution, analytics APIs like ChatGPT, and existing software is in the area of social media and marketing.

Social media management tools have long existed to help people plan content, schedule it in advance, and manage moderation, engagement and insights in one place.

If these tools could be incorporated into cinema management software like the DX solution, this would save managers a lot of time, by taking the information and assets available in DX (for example, the film database, images, copy, and knowledge of the programme schedule) to automatically create, schedule, and post social media content around those films ahead of time to generate awareness drive ticket sales.

Imagine knowing that your cinema solution is automatically posting social media content around the upcoming weekly programme, new films or events, and at a time that best matches audience booking habits, without having to create or schedule anything. Whilst the output would be quite generic, it would be both useful for audiences, and for cinemas with very small teams who struggle to manage regular social media content. It would be much better than having no presence online at all.

Cinema teams would then have more time back to create more personalised, local, and creative content for engagement, and community building - the sort of content that is more specific to the individual cinema, localised and personal, like fun reels and TikToks, behind-the-scenes, influencer or UGC campaign content, and partner promotions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Looking at historical sales, admissions, and box office data can help you plan ahead for busy / quiet periods
- Freely available AI tools such as ChatGPT can analyse your data, identify patterns and make recommendations also taking into account regional, or local trends
- AI tools are also great at supporting marketing activity, such as understanding the performance of marketing activities like email newsletters, providing recommendations for optimal scheduling and content, brainstorming marketing ideas, etc.

Further reading



[How Sergio Chavez builds operational efficiency with data, AI, and automation at Tynset Kino](#)

EVERYMAN CINEMAS - USING DATA ANALYSIS FOR PROGRAMMING TO MAXIMISE ATTENDANCE.

Zsófi Varga is Senior Film Manager at Everyman Group, with extensive experience programming for the cinema chain. Everyman is a premium, independent cinema group operating 45 cinemas across the UK, with 155 screens. It is known for its high quality food and beverage offering, strong focus on service, and boutique-style cinemas.



*Zsófi Varga - Senior Film Manager
(formerly Programmer)*

Zsófi started out on the floor, on the concessions stand, before moving into the head office as an administrator then working up to programmer for the group. This has given her a good understanding of cinema operations from the ground up, and lots of experience working with distributors and studios, as well as with the Everyman marketing team. Zsófi's team keeps a constant eye on the evolving UK, European and US markets and updates to the film slate.



Zsófi shares her strategic approach to programming, using data analysis and time planning to drive maximum admissions.

Be familiar with the upcoming film slate and plan for weaker weeks / months

To give yourself the best chance of drawing audiences and filling seats, it is crucial to stay informed about upcoming film slates. Being aware of the slate weeks and months ahead, allows you to anticipate quieter periods and plan alternative programming in advance to fill the gaps if you have the space and capacity.

For example, you could introduce a selection of Classics, or 1-2 films by a local director with a Q&A, etc.

Be flexible and manage distributor expectations

Be very clear what distributors are expecting from you, especially from bigger, more commercial releases. You might agree to show a film two weeks in advance, but that could potentially limit you being able to book a film in week two.

If you have the option for more flexible show requirements, don't be afraid to push back to week two if you want more time to make the decision.

Focus on Local

Programming films that have local relevance can significantly boost attendance, whether that's movies by a local director, or featuring local actors, or stories centred on locally relevant history or issues.

Creating space for local content helps create a personal connection with your community and can also be enhanced with Q&A sessions, local expert workshops, etc that are easier to organise at community level.

Sell tickets in advance

Opening ticket sales well in advance is an effective way to maximise audience reach, especially for bigger, blockbuster movies. This goes for marketing as well, making sure to use the tools at your disposal (email, social media, posters, website) to inform followers that tickets are live, and build anticipation.

Allow time for new initiatives to have impact

When trying and testing new initiatives, whether it's a new promotional offer, new film strand, or a membership scheme, etc. It's really important to allow it sufficient time and repeat marketing for them to gain traction. Trying something once doesn't allow time for word of mouth and familiarity to build, and giving up straight away might mean missing out on a long-term revenue driver.

Track the performance of any new initiative over several months (3-6 ideally), looking at revenue / admissions data, gathering customer feedback, allowing for multiple tests, and only then evaluate effectiveness (or whether something just needs tweaking).

Cost-Effectiveness in Film Hiring

Assessing the cost-effectiveness of film hiring is another important consideration. You might sometimes choose to programme a film during its second or third week of release which can help you manage expenses whilst still attracting audiences.

If you have loyal cinemagoers who are happy to wait until after opening week, this gives you flexibility to show a wider variety of films without the high costs associated with first-week releases.

Use data to help you make informed decisions

By looking at your historical box office and admissions data you can make more informed programming decisions. By analysing past performance of comparable films, seasonal trends, etc. can help you plan best performing time slots, film selection, and predict programming outcomes.

This approach can help you select films that are likely to perform well, optimise screening times and drive more admissions.

Looking at your data also helps you understand your cinema's peak times for different screening rooms, to ensure that popular movies are shown during high-traffic periods in the largest screens, or moved down.

If you're in a busy urban area competing with other cinemas, you might want to look at market share for new releases to help you set priorities and gauge audience preferences for different films.

Experimenting with Off-Peak Programming

Programming new content during off-peak times allows cinemas to experiment with minimal risk. This strategy provides an opportunity to gather feedback and refine offerings based on audience response. Leveraging local relevance, such as featuring local talent or partnering with community organisations, can further mitigate risks associated with unconventional programming.



Everyman Cinema Bristol

Take advantage of early sales and off-day screenings

Selling tickets in advance for specialty screenings not only generates early awareness but also reduces financial risk. Off-day screenings of special content can attract niche audiences and fill otherwise low-traffic times, contributing to overall admissions.

Balance taking risks by analysing the film slate

Taking calculated risks is essential for innovative programming. By considering the overall film slate, cinemas can identify suitable periods for experimentation. Quiet months, outside of major releases, are ideal for trying out new film strands or screening times. This balanced approach ensures that risks are managed while still exploring new opportunities to drive admissions.

In summary, driving admissions requires a dynamic combination of strategic planning, data analysis, and community engagement. By understanding film slates, being flexible with distributors, leveraging local relevance, and utilising data, cinemas can

optimise their programming and enhance audience reach. Allowing time for new initiatives to grow and experimenting with off-peak programming further contributes to a successful admissions strategy.



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Know and study the upcoming film slate
- Use data to help plan ahead for peak / quiet times and determine best programming schedules
- Go on sale and market films early where possible
- Give new marketing initiatives and programmes proper time to build awareness before evaluating success
- Experiment with different films and initiatives during low-risk times

LILLEHAMMER KINO - USING SOCIAL MEDIA AND EVENTS TO ENGAGE AUDIENCES

Clarissa has been Managing Director at Lillehammer Kino for six years after pivoting from a previous career in the fitness industry where she oversaw a fitness centre, acting with the freedom of a CEO in terms of making impactful decisions on operations and marketing. When her fitness centre was merged into a larger chain, Clarissa felt dissatisfied with the increase in bureaucracy and restrictions of working for a big corporate group and decided to take her skills to a new industry. Her lifelong love of movies was what prompted her to apply for a job with Lillehammer.

As the director at Lillehammer Kino, Clarissa oversees the operations of a five screen cinema and concessions stand serving a local community of 30,000. Despite the small team and prospective audience size, Clarissa has made Lillehammer Kino a vibrant focal point for the community,



Clarissa Bergh - Managing Director

using her creative leadership skills to deliver fun, engaging events around her film programming and finding ways to include local businesses and organisations in partnerships to elevate the cinema experience.

A key investment Clarissa made was into social media for marketing and awareness activity. Allowing her team to take ownership of the cinema's TikTok channel, creating a content plan and experimenting with all the possibilities the platforms offer has helped Clarissa grow the cinema's reach and audience engagement and loyalty.

Clarissa shares advice and examples on how to leverage social media to elevate your cinema's profile, drive audience engagement - especially younger audiences - and increase awareness of your programme and events.

Getting started with social media and understanding each platform

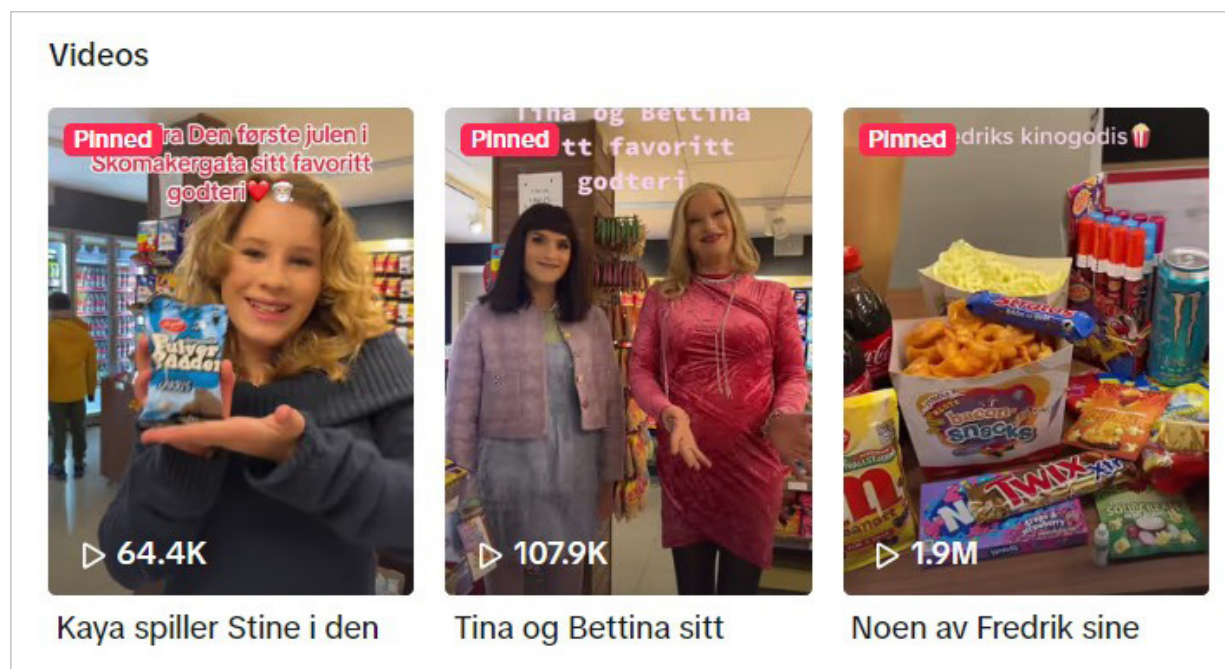
When Clarissa first joined Lillehammer Kino, the cinema had a limited social media presence. One of her first priorities was to build up a community online, as an extension of the community physically visiting the cinema, to reach more people.

Clarissa uses different channels for different purposes, leveraging the advantages of each one: Instagram is for more personalised content, featuring staff and visitors, and

fun content. They never show a movie poster or trailer on the Instagram feed - as that information is available on the website and isn't what makes the cinema unique. The team shares upcoming films in stories, and shares the unique aspects and personality of the cinema, and community engagement on the feed.

Facebook targets a slightly older audience, and is used to share trailers, programmes, and upcoming events.

TikTok was introduced a couple of years ago to engage a younger 16-25 audience. It is run by the younger staff at the cinema, who also work in concessions, and they create behind the scenes content, jump on memes and trends they can make relevant to the cinema, or showcase upcoming films in funny, and creative ways.



Lillehammer Kino's TikTok generates impressive viewing figures with its fun, informal approach

Trusting your staff to manage social media

Clarissa understands that people go to social media for entertainment, fun, and content that is shareable and relateable, not salesy content or advertising. She also understood that the best way to reach young people with the sort of content that would appeal to them most and build engagement, was through other young people owning and managing the channels.

She started to hire concessions and cinema staff, adding in the job description that they needed to have a good knowledge of the social media platforms, know how to create content, and be willing to manage channels as part of their role.

She's built a trusted team that feels encouraged to make the most of the channels, free of many restrictions or micromanaging, as long as they follow basic guidelines. The brief for the team is really: 'Connect with young people. Build a connection and community. That's it.' It's not about trying to push ticket sales, but creating an online space where young people are engaged with us, and that, in turn, drives interest and a greater desire to visit.

The importance of having a plan

TikTok is very ad hoc and focused on creative engagement, so there's less planning around that. Clarissa lets the team manage it and only occasionally when a big blockbuster like Minions is coming out they might plan some specific content around that 2-3 weeks ahead.

Instagram and Facebook, however, are planned. For time and resource efficiency, content is planned and scheduled in advance using Meta Business Suite, usually around events that are coming up, content saved from around the cinema, or fun things Clarissa's team creates around a particular movie release. They leave some space for ad hoc posts on the day, or spontaneous content when something interesting happens, but generally having things planned and scheduled saves time.

Localising content and events for greater awareness and engagement

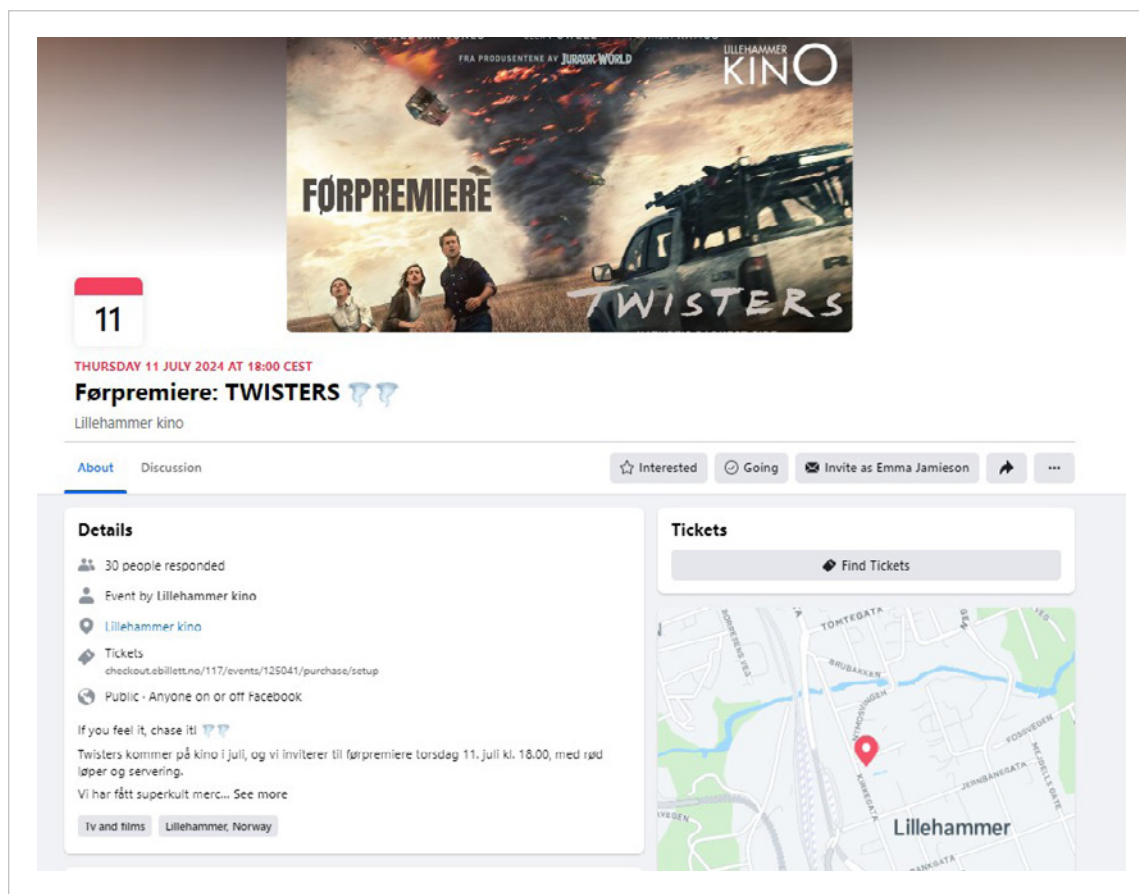
Clarissa's team uses Facebook events tool a lot to reach people to increase reach. This allows them to show up in local event searches on the app. For things like Ladies Night screenings, where they organise movies with a drinks reception and goodie bags and turn it into more of an event cinema occasion, the Events tool is particularly useful.



Goodie bag and complimentary pizza for Ladies Night screening of Madame Web

As a small team, they can't do event cinema marketing for every release, but Clarissa will plan ahead, looking at the film slate, what films will work locally as bigger 'events' that she can create more of a buzz around, with activities and partnerships. Sometimes it's an obvious major blockbuster like Barbie, which is a national event and easy to plan lots of additional activity around.

Sometimes, with a film that might not sell so well as just a regular screening, Clarissa will decide to make it into an event - for example Madame Webb, which became a Ladies Night screening with goodie bags, complementary Prosecco and lots of local area marketing online and offline.



Fans sharing photos from Escapes free screening of The Iron Claw across the UK

Tracking success of online and event efforts to better identify future opportunities

Clarissa regularly looks at her social media insights and data to measure the effectiveness of her campaigns, events, and social media engagement. This helps the team understand what content works, and what doesn't. What events generate more buzz and advance bookings and what don't.

Now she has a good formula in place for certain films that she can more or less predict will work well as events, and how to set them up.

This way Clarissa can also track the popularity of individual promotions and partnerships

Creating Film 'Events' to drive buzz and sell more tickets

Lillehammer Kino organises various events and 'enhanced' screenings to attract specific audience segments and create excitement around visiting the cinema.

- **Ladies Night and Gentlemen's Events:** Regular themed events like "Ladies Night" where cinemagoers get a complimentary welcome Prosecco and goodie bag with their ticket, or "Burgers and Beer" screenings in partnership with a local beer producer.

- **Unique Cinema Events:** For bigger movies, or those with a strong local connection, Lillehammer Kino will create a bigger event around the film. One notable example involved creating an outdoor pop-up screen "on ice" during the winter, in the local Olympic arena, to show a local Norwegian movie about ice-skating! For Barbie, Lillehammer Kino organised Barbie dance classes in collaboration with a local fitness centre and lots of themed food and decorations.
- **Community-focused Events:** Lillehammer Kino has a monthly Knitting and Film screening club, and student nights with pizza from a local restaurant. These often get booked out in advance, with attendees booking the next one as soon as the screening is over.

Measuring Success and Marketing Impact

Success is measured through a combination of social media engagement, ticket sales, and ranking reports. Paid media has shown significant impact, particularly for movies targeting adults. Events have proven effective in increasing awareness and attendance, as seen with the premiere event for "Paw Patrol."

Advice for Smaller Cinemas on Social Media



KINO lillehammerkino Thank you for yesterday!! 🎬 5 tasteful hall
We 🍿 U! @pawpatrolmovie #uipnorway #kinooplevelsen
40 w See Original



44 likes
24 September 2023

Clarissa's advice for cinemas just getting started is to maintain a consistent posting schedule - even if it's just 1-2 times a week, not worry about perfectionism but focus on sharing information, and making content personal and engaging. The key is being authentic and relatable - show off your personality and team and have fun, this sort of content always works better than polished advertisements.

Impact of Social Media on Audience Demographics

The cinema has seen a positive shift in audience demographics, particularly in attracting younger audiences, as confirmed by a survey conducted by the Norwegian online film platform Filmweb.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Social media is a key marketing tool that all cinemas can benefit from - especially for reaching younger audiences
- Having a plan is key, even just topline - it helps give focus, stay consistent, and make the process manageable (but don't let a plan stop you from having fun with ad hoc content!)
- Hire social media savvy team members and give them the authority and trust to create content - this will ensure it is authentic, platform relevant, and relatable
- Share your cinema's personality - that's what sets you apart and creates a relationship with your audience!

Further reading



[How Clarissa Bergh made Lillehammer Kino the "cultural provider for everyone"](#)

FRAM KINO: TRACKING AND MEASURING MARKETING ACTIVITY AND OPTIMISE PROMOTIONS

Benedikte grew up in the cinema world, and has worked at Fram Kino since she was a teenager, starting part time helping out at the concessions kiosk.

Fram Kino is one of the oldest independent cinemas in Norway, family-run, and beloved in the wider cinema community: Eric Jorgensen, former cinema manager and fourth generation of the family that owns Fram Kino set up Norway's KinoAlliansen.

The cinema is also one of DX's oldest clients, it was one of the first cinemas to adopt an electronic ticketing system, working directly with two people who went on to found DX in the late 1980s to help develop the first version of our software.

The cinema is located in Bodø municipality, Norway, has three



Benedikte Schuitema - Cinema Sales and Marketing Manager

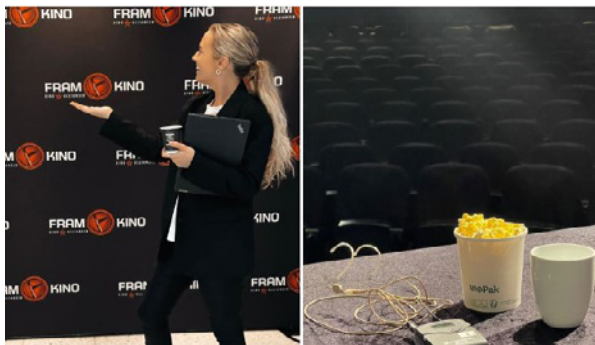
screens, and a concessions kiosk. It serves a local community of around 54,000 people.

Because of her extensive experience across all aspects of running a cinema over so many years and witnessing so many technological developments and changes in the industry, Benedikte is used to adapting and finding new ways to market and attract audiences and has lots of advice to share!

Benedikte shares a few initiatives that have helped her attract new audiences and open up new revenue streams.

Fram Kino as an event space beyond cinema

Recently Benedikte has been promoting the cinema's hall as an event space for hire for both conferences and work events, as well as birthdays and workshops. Using the unique selling points of being one of the largest screens in Bodø, with state-of-the-art sound and projection, and comfortable seats - as well as being a more creative and welcoming space than the traditional conference centre, this new revenue stream is also introducing (or reintroducing) Fram Kino to people who might otherwise not have visited for a while, or at all.



Promoting conferences and events at Fram Kino for external businesses

Targeted promotions

Fram Kino offers a family ticket (2 adults 2 children) at a reduced rate on films before 6pm, as well as 2-for-1 Tuesdays on all films.

There are also one-off days for kids to attract families, where tickets are half-price, with discounted snacks, activities for kids like drawing, and prize draws which generate regular large bookings.

Engagement touchpoints to make film screenings “a little extra”

Benedikte is always experimenting with different engagement activities, and also shares these across the cinema's social media to showcase the Fram Kino 'personality' and the community-driven approach to how they operate.

For a new animated film, Fram Kino gave out free personalised diplomas awarded to the youngest audience members to celebrate their first trip to the cinema.

The team introduces new popcorn flavours and snacks by offering free samples at different screenings to get audience feedback.

She invites directors to attend and introduce their films, most recently during a film season celebrating Sami Culture Week. At a preview screening of Norwegian film SAU in March, 350 people attended - helped by the introduction from the director in person who met people after the screening too. This reinforces again the power that local films have in attracting cinemagoers, who love to see stories they can relate to on screen.



A younger audience member with his official 'cinema visit diploma' at a screening of Paw Patrol

Personal, fun, and entertaining social media to engage the cinema community

Fram Kino's approach to their cinema social media is light on sales promotions, and much more focused on sharing behind the scenes at the cinema, highlighting offers in creative ways - whether it's dressing up in costume, getting staff to take funny pictures, or making informal, approachable Reels videos.

The team recommend their favourite films, and the imagery across all their platforms showcases a lot of family-oriented pictures featuring real people from the community having fun, rather than stock photos or graphics - both to reach their target audience and create a feeling of relatability and connection.

Benedikte understands that younger audiences rely heavily on social media to discover films and are led by recommendations from their peers or influencers. Given more time and resources, she would absolutely look to work with local influential youngsters and personalities in the community to create partnership content, and fun promotional campaigns, and it is something she strongly recommends cinemas explore if they can.



Benedikte focuses on sharing fun, personality-filled content on social media

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Social media is a key marketing tool that all cinemas can benefit from - especially for reaching younger audiences
- Having a plan is key, even just topline - it helps give focus, stay consistent, and make the process manageable (but don't let a plan stop you from having fun with ad hoc content!)
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Further reading



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CINEVILLE - DRIVING INDIE CINEMA ADMISSIONS THROUGH MOBILE APP SUBSCRIPTIONS



The official Cineville Card

Thomas Hosman is the founder of Dutch cinema subscription app Cineville.

Noticing a decline in independent cinema attendance amongst younger audiences, and the rise in e-commerce and loyalty schemes across other industries that attracted tech savvy under 30s, he decided to meet the gap in the market with a new service combining mobile interface,

online community building, and independent cinema to drive admissions and spending in the indie sector.

As a movie nerd himself, he wanted to support these suffering businesses and revive a part of the industry that was struggling to modernise and adapt to a digital-first world. Cineville has recently expanded into Belgium with its successful business model.

How the idea for Cineville came about

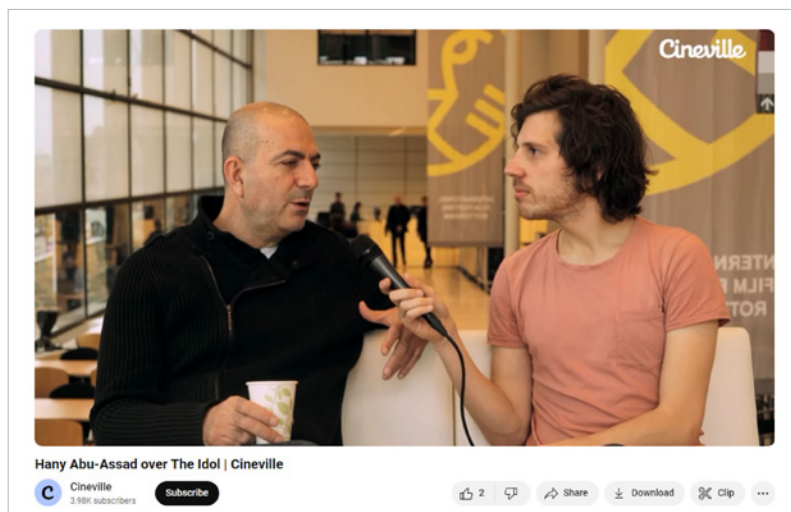
Cineville was established in 2009 at the Kriterion cinema in Amsterdam - a venue run entirely by University students. Despite a lot of students using the cinema's bar and cafe throughout the day - for coffee and working, or beers and food in the evenings, the team struggled to convert them into audiences. This was mostly down to the cinema's predominantly arthouse programming, a label which the under-30s crowd found off-putting, or associated with old-fashioned films aimed at older audiences.

In an effort to address the issue and understand how other cinemas were meeting this challenge, the Kriterion team decided to club together and collaborate with the city's other independent cinemas (13 at the time) to find a way to change the perception of arthouse films and get their young audiences from the bar space into the cinema screen. This led to the creation of Cineville, a network of cinemas sharing data, revenue, and subscribers with a fresh, youthfully branded membership programme and online community.

A strong digital presence and leveraging partnerships

Today, Cineville counts over 70 cinemas drawing 1.5 million admissions annually from over 55,000 members. The service has launched various advertising campaigns, has a website and an app for greater accessibility. It also focuses on community-building with a strong social media presence, working with local influencers, partnerships with popular venues, brands, and events, and by offering members enhanced screenings, Q&As, quizzes, parties, and merchandise.

During the pandemic, Cineville allowed members to pause their subscriptions or keep them active to support cinemas, while also launching Vitamine Cineville, a streaming service that garnered 450,000 views. Remarkably, 70% of subscribers continued paying during the Netherlands' six-month lockdown.



Cineville unite their community around films on their Youtube channel and through mobile app content, sharing interviews and movie recommendations

How it works

The Cineville card is an all-you-can-watch subscription model, with the Unlimited Card costing €18.50 per month for under 30s to watch unlimited films at participating cinemas. Most members are aged 20-25 and visit cinemas 2.5 times per month, totaling around 30 visits per year. Cineville members tend to watch international films (non-English) more, attributing this to the adventurous nature of their brand and audience, and Cineville's concerted effort to lower access barriers to arthouse cinema.

Financially, Cineville allocates 10-15% of card revenue to cover subscriber expenses, with 85-90% going to cinemas and distributors. The fixed ticket price is around €7.50, set annually based on expected visits and paid out to cinemas when a member attends a screening. Cineville maintains transparency, providing detailed audience behaviour insights and a dashboard for stakeholders to enable them to devise targeted marketing strategies and understand their audience's preferences.

In June 2022, the Cineville model expanded to Belgium and a similar model, called Non-Stop Cinema, launched at 18 participating venues in Austria in 2023.

During the first half of 2024, many of the Dutch and Belgian independent cinemas that are part of the Cineville network registered highly positive figures, in some cases above the 2017-2019 average. While it's not possible to say for certain this is all down to the subscription scheme, it certainly has played a role in building frequency from regular visitors, a key pillar for a successful operation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Collaboration and data-sharing benefits everyone when trying to achieve the same goal
- By pooling resource, cinemas have a support network they can rely on in challenging periods
- Challenging preconceived perceptions and lowering barriers to access (ticket price, awareness) are key drivers for attracting audiences to independent / arthouse films

Further reading



[European Film Marketing podcast](#)
[- How Subscription Models are](#)
[Vitalising the Big Screen](#)

DANISH CINEMA CLUB - A CINEMA MEMBERSHIP SUPPORTING INDIE FILMS

Biografklub Danmark (Danish Cinema Club) started in 1995, primarily as an initiative to encourage older audiences, retired or late middle age, to go back to the cinema with affordable screenings and a social mission.

Their long-established community, and focus on older demographic meant that they weathered the global trend that saw over 60s audiences decline rapidly following the pandemic, due to fear or change in social habits.

Their current demographic is still predominantly over 50, and their 250,000 current members has helped support local Danish cinemas through the last few challenging years.



How it works

Danish Cinema Club has nearly 250,000 members aged between 18-90 (but predominantly 50+) who pay €17.00 annually which gives them access to 10, curated, half-price films in selected cinemas across Denmark.

In addition to this, club members can access up to six premieres or preview screenings per year, and other perks in each cinema (e.g. F&B discounts).

The selection committee, comprising four exhibitors and three distributors, rotates every two years, ensuring a continuously evolving curation style - the films chosen are a mix of studio titles, European, pan-Nordic films, and local Danish productions.

The club ensures that its selected films release during less competitive periods, driving cinema attendance even during off-peak times.

A positive impact on smaller titles and distributors

The club's film selection can significantly impact the box office success of smaller productions. For example, Lina Flint, producer of *The Guilty*, noted that the film's selection alongside bigger titles forced a large advertising campaign and helped it reach over 140,000 admissions.

More recently, the distributors for Lukas Dhont's Cannes winner *Close* credited Danish Cinema Club for ticket sales that climbed way past their expected target of 20,000-25,000. After being selected as one of the Club's curated films it sold over 140,000 tickets in Denmark alone.

Bigger titles also benefit from the scheme. Most recently, the remake of *The Color Purple*, which was part of the 2023 programme for the film club, registered its best performance outside of the US in Denmark.



As well as an app, the Danish Cinema Club also prints an attractive programme which has an appeal for older audiences

Engaging an older audience

Over-50s account for the majority of club members, whereas across many European countries this is an audience that has been in decline since the pandemic. The Club's Managing Director Lykke Lind Thomsen believes the winning formula is down to the following:

- Trust in the quality of films because they are curated by knowledgeable experts in the industry
- Set dates for screenings are fixed far in advance allowing older audiences to plan ahead, around family commitments and provide reassurance
- Screenings outside of off-peak times or holiday dates favours those who have families, are retired, or have more time freedom and prefer not to see films during crowded opening weekends
- As well as a mobile app and strong social media presence, the Club still prints its programme, appealing to older generations who like the physical reading material, and might not be so tech savvy or active online

Collaboration is the key to success

Biografklub Danmark is a collaborative effort between exhibitors, distributors, film producers and the Danish Film Institute - and the curation involves input from all. This means everyone has a stake in its success and each member of the curating committee has to work harmoniously towards the same goal. This close working relationship has benefits that trickle down beyond the Cinema Club.

The regular turnover of the selection committee means there are always fresh ideas being brought to the table and no single voice dominates.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Danish Film Club offers 10 curated films a year at half price in every Danish cinema
- The selection committee changes regularly ensuring constantly fresh, evolving curation
- The club has been credited with driving record audiences even for small films
- The club is particularly popular with older audiences who value the elections by trusted, expert curators, the social aspect of the club, and the printed magazine

Further reading



[How Denmark's Cinema Club is boosting arthouse releases](#)

NORDISK FILM - LEVERAGING AI TO REDUCE TEAM WORKLOAD

Nordisk Film is the Nordic regions' leading entertainment brand, based out of Copenhagen. They produce films and television, as well as games, they operate 23 cinemas in Denmark, 21 in Norway, and 2 in Sweden - overall they attract approximately 10 million cinemagoers a year.

Nordisk Film is part of the Egmont Group, a prominent Danish media corporation.

As a brand they are constantly looking at tech innovation and development within the entertainment sector and host an annual conference dedicated to the intersection between technology, film production, and exhibition, called Picture This.



As interactions with Nordisk Film Cinemas across their digital platforms grew, especially via the mobile app and cinema booking sites, the group saw an opportunity to improve ticket sales efficiency, reduce the increasingly overwhelming workload of their customer service teams, and provide customers with the simple, fast, digital interaction they expect by leverage AI-powered software.

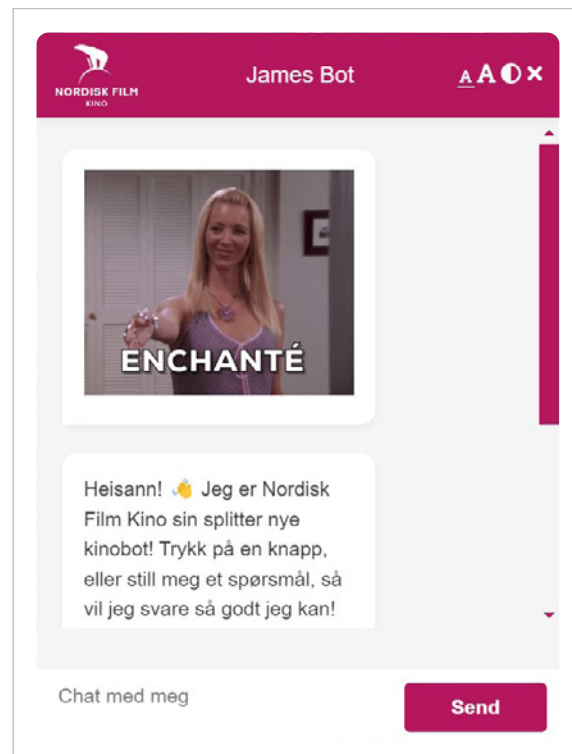
Significant results reduce workload by 22%

Nordisk Film Cinemas invested in an AI chatbot developed by LeadDesk, who have previously had success in Finland with the Finnkino cinema chain. This partnership promised:

The AI chatbot's deployment has already affected positive change:

- The workload on customer service agents has decreased by 22%.
- 86% of customers surveyed reported a satisfactory answer to their query

By learning and analysing repeat queries, or common challenges, the AI chatbot can quickly and improve its response rate and quality, providing accurate responses to the most common queries. This frees up human agents' time to respond to more complex requests, or customer interactions that require a more personal touch.



The Nordisk AI chatbot is playful and informal, creating more of a connection with customers

Are voice bots next?

Following the chatbot's success, Nordisk Film Cinemas plans to further integrate AI, exploring features like VoiceBots for phone support and multilingual capabilities. This collaboration exemplifies how Nordisk Film Cinemas leverages AI to enhance customer service and operational efficiency, setting a new standard in the cinema industry.

At DX, we are also exploring AI to support higher quality and more efficient customer support. In Norway, when developing our cinema solution, we integrated AI to help filter, analyse, and categorise customer query emails. The AI identified common topics and responses, improving and refining solutions over time. This saved us valuable admin time and enabled high quality, predefined topic-based replies. This resulted in much faster response times and service workflows, and helped the DX team develop tailored solutions by analysing customer needs and pain points.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

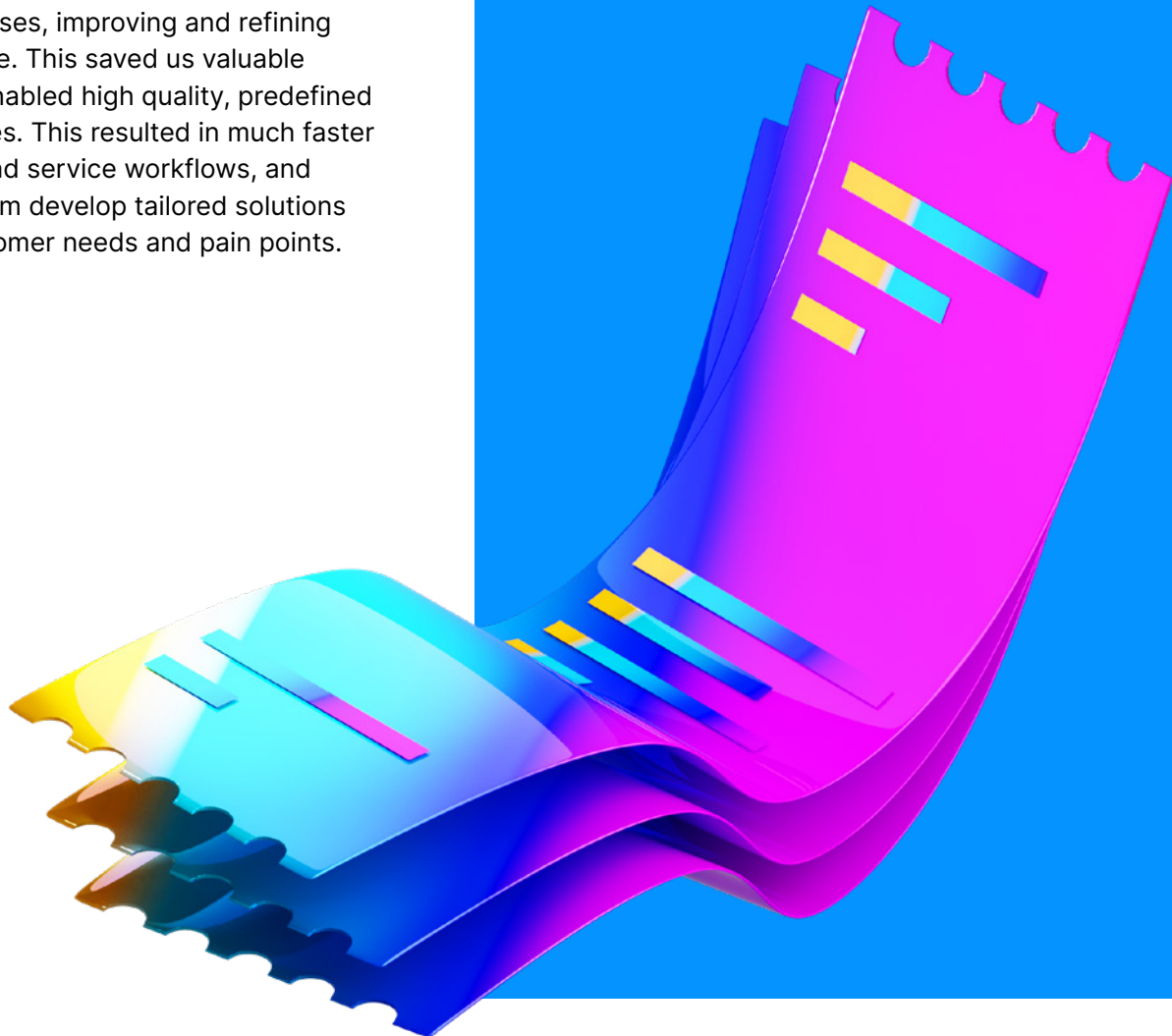
Further reading



[DX's Exploratory Guide: Web3, NFTs, AI, and the Future of Cinema](#)



[How Nordisk Film Cinemas Improved Efficiency Without Additional Resources Using AI Chatbots](#)



DX'S CEO MARTIN BERG - CLOSING THOUGHTS

As an industry we're at an inflection point. Like every other industry we need to adapt to the times and the environment around us. Including shifting consumer behaviours and preferences. But that should be done in a balanced way, cherishing the core value proposition that makes the cinematic experience so unique.

At DX, we believe the road ahead is one of opportunity for cinemas and the ecosystem that exists around them. We shouldn't be ignorant to the challenges that lie ahead too, but this is a time to take initiative. Lean in.

New technologies, with AI at the forefront, play an important role here. We're starting a new chapter. It begins with software gradually becoming a little smarter. But, if we project further out, it's going to vastly improve entire workflows. The optimal scenario is one where software becomes a proactive assistant that helps make continuous, marginal improvements to your cinema operations, while also freeing you, the most important resource, to invest your time in the highest value activities.

We're not going to get there tomorrow, but we're already further along than we were yesterday. At DX we're excited to continue partnering with our cinema customers and the wider industry to continue pushing the boundaries of how great, quality cinema operations software can contribute to your continued success.



FURTHER READING

Please find links to additional articles, e-books, videos and more covering the various topics explored in this guide.

FROM DX:

[E-GUIDES](#): DX has published other guides for the industry covering everything from innovative cinema marketing strategies to the future landscape of Web3, NFTs, AI, and beyond.

[CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORIES](#): Hear and learn from our DX customers sharing tips, learnings and best practices that have helped them grow their cinema businesses.

[THE DX BLOG](#): A rich resource covering a wide variety of topics, trends, and innovations in the cinema and film sectors.

ACROSS THE INDUSTRY:

[UNIC Annual Report 2024 \(Union of International Cinemas\)](#)

[UKCA Annual Conference recordings and presentations \(UK Cinema Association\)](#)

[ICO report on UK Indie Cinema sector health in 2023 \(Independent Cinema Office\)](#)

[How UK indie exhibitors are engaging younger audiences with arthouse cinema](#)
(Screen Daily)

[France is Embracing hit-making strategies](#) (Screen Daily)

[Arthouse hits draws young audience](#) (Guardian)

[Box Office and Beyond: the cultural, social and economic impact of cinema](#)
(OMDIA, UNIC, Europa Cinemas and CICAIE)

[Innovation and the Big Screen \(UNIC\)](#)

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM

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SEE ALL AVAILABLE DX GUIDES AND RESOURCES

Film Forward. An Operator's Guide to Elevating Cinema Marketing

"Film Forward" is your practical guide to leveraging the latest marketing trends and also classic cinema tactics to grow your business and bring more audiences through the door.

[Get your copy](#)



Tech Innovation & Cinema

Welcome to your first aggregator of the latest trends and experiments in the world of new, immersive technologies applied to the cinema space. From AI to blockchain and everything in between!

Go through these resources one by one or filter by the type you're most interested in (e.g. AI or Web3) and start learning about what's new and disruptive in our industry.

[Artificial Intelligence](#)

[Industry Explorations](#)

[Industry Live or Past Tests](#)

[Metaverse](#)

[Web3](#)

[NFT](#)



Customer Success Stories

Discover how cinema managers like you grow their cinema business, leverage best practices, and use DX in their workflows.

[Read More](#)

