

Getting hooked on cinema.

Even though the golden age of DVDs has gone, cinema websites can still service the demand for bonus materials and extras. By getting the right content and in carefully choosing a strategy, arthouse cinemas in the Netherlands are improving their interaction with potential customers. Bob van der Meer, General Manager of Film Hallen, speaks about the Collaborate to Innovate project Cinema+.

What is the approach of your project?

Our aim is to create a more compelling online experience built around the cinema visit. We focus on interesting supplementary information on filmmakers and cinematographers, as well as their earlier films. We are looking for additional visual content, such as interviews, and we use this content to upgrade our marketing. Our goal is to turn regular visitors into film fans.

How do you get cinema-goers to visit cinema websites more regularly?

Part of our project was to invest in a Customer Relation Management (CRM) system to collect customer data as well as website hits. We create digital campaigns that prompt people to return to the website after their theatre experience so that they can see the digital content which we have provided for them. Most of the content is behind a paywall, but people who have purchased a ticket for the movie are able to access these extras. Our CRM system knows who bought tickets. It can send out automated email campaigns, social media campaigns, personalized pop-ups, and forward information based on customer profiles and interests.



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What are the technical requirements?

We implemented an existing CRM system called Squeezely that has a powerful recommendation engine. Its algorithms can create recommendations based on the cinemagoer's behaviour on the website combined with the cinemagoer's actual film-viewing history. We use it to create personalized digital journeys. On the technical side, the CRM system needs to be connected to the ticketing system as well as to the website analytics. It is possible to add widgets to the website to reveal the data coming out of the CRM system.

Can it be used with any kind of ticketing software?

It's a simple procedure. You can skip connecting to your ticketing system and only use your website data in the CRM system. We sell about 90% of our tickets through our website. The CRM system uses the same kind of data structure as Google Analytics & Ecommerce tracking, which is commonly used by web designers worldwide. By placing a small script on your website, you can get most of its data into a CRM system, start generating recommendations, and create digital journeys and personalized pop-ups. The first step hardly requires any specific technical



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skills. But it is crucial to invest time in learning to use the CRM system. But what we are doing goes much deeper.

How are you using the CRM system?

Adding this extra information to our websites tailors a more individualized journey. We trace the steps that people take on our websites, and we programme specific points of contact. When they return, they get recommendations first. The next step is them receiving an email. When they click on the email link, they enter through an individualized funnel, which steers them toward specific behaviours.

How does this benefit cinema-goers?

Cinema-goers have better access to material. They feel a stronger connection both to the cinema and to the movie they have just seen, because it not only reinforces their sense of the uniqueness of the experience, but it also whets their appetite to see more; it broadens their perspective.

What kind of impact do you expect to make on European Cinema?

The CRM system can be used for all sorts of movies and campaigns. We are trying to do it for 30 movies a year. We go through the process to create all this extra content – the ‘making of’ of the movie or earlier short films made by the same director – and we build a marketing campaign around it.



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What does it cost?

At the end of the project, we are going to perform a cost-benefit analysis. It’s definitely cheaper to host videos on YouTube and send out emails. But, in the long run, the extra content and this additional work to engage cinema-goers will show results – five years from now. We want to get people hooked on cinema – that’s the long game.

Where can exhibitors get more information?

We’re going to present a white paper at a Europa Cinemas event. It will explain what we’ve done and what other cinemas can do to get started. The first steps are not hard, and a cinema can do this even if it is a smaller operation. It will provide exhibitors with a painless entry point because they will not be burdened with doing all of the research themselves.



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Partner cinemas:

- FilmHallen**, Amsterdam (Coordinator)
- Kino Rotterdam**
- Kijkhuis**, Amsterdam
- The Movies**, Amsterdam
- Trianon**, Leiden
- FilmKoepel**, Haarlem
- Lido**, Leiden