

# Data sharing: A new way of building audiences for small and medium-sized arthouse cinemas

## Interview with Jens Lanestrand, Biografcentralen (Stockholm, Sweden)

by Birgit Heidsiek

### Learning by sharing

The availability, accessibility, and analysis of customer data is opening new marketing opportunities in the cinema sector. In Sweden, the Collaborate to Innovate project “Data sharing: A new way of building audiences for small and medium-sized arthouse cinemas” is also improving communication and collaboration within the industry, as Jens Lanestrand, Manager of Operations at Biografcentralen, points out.

#### **What approach is the data sharing project for arthouse cinemas taking?**

The industry is struggling to reach out to different target groups. In Sweden, we have a rather low 1.6 or 1.7 cinema visits per person per year. We are interested in gathering data and learning how other industries are using Customer Relation Management (CRM) systems and data to address target groups in order to motivate customers to return more frequently. Our goal is to provide independent cinemas, arthouse and smaller cinemas, with the benefits of a professional CRM system. We love European films, and we want Swedish audiences to see films in the cinema that move them and give them a new way of looking at the world.

#### **What data is being collected, and what data needed for marketing is still lacking?**

In 2020, we began collecting data by using the cloud-based online cinema management solution Veezi, developed by the ticketing system company Vista. Thanks

to our payment provider, we can extract certain data, for example, name, email address, mobile phone number, postal code, address, and information about the film and screening time for which a ticket was purchased. Our project will be integrated into the Swedish film database, which contains films from all over the world, with data on directors, genre, and country of origin. This data is available, but many independent cinemas don't have the know-how to actually use it effectively. Therefore, our search for a solution led us to Salesforce, a global company that offers a tool called the Marketing Cloud, which guides customers through their journey with a brand. We are now implementing it. For example, we can help a partner cinema tailor a newsletter for a new Finnish film by targeting audiences who have already purchased tickets for past screenings of Finnish films.

#### **Do you plan to develop new marketing tools?**

Our industry's problem is the

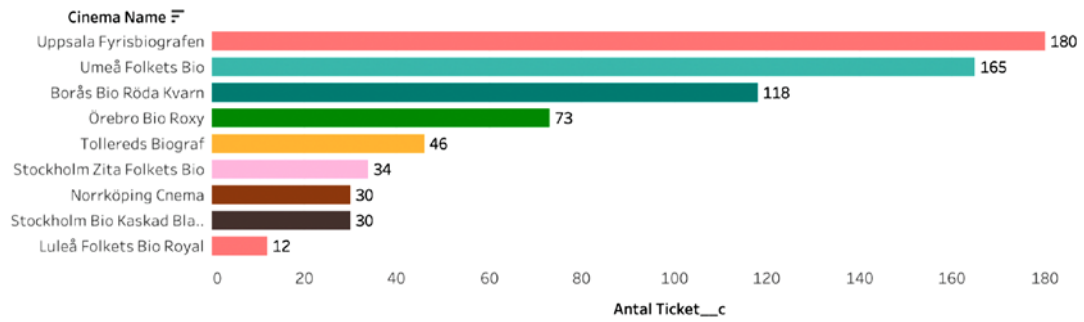
terrific number of films being released. The cinemas are unable to market these films to special interest groups. We want to give audiences the ability to choose their favourites when they see a trailer, an interview, or hear about award-winning films screened at the Cannes Film Festival, for example, which may be released in Sweden six-to-twelve months later. Once we have their wish list, we can notify potential viewers of the film's screening dates and times in their city and provide them with a link to purchase a ticket.

#### **Can the CRM system also serve as an information pool for exhibitors?**

By sharing data, we can learn from each other and track films that go under the radar. Due to the number of new films, we may miss a certain film that audiences love. The system enables us to identify which age group might show interest in this film, and it can help other cinemas attract audiences. We can also work with journeys in Marketing

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Cloud, which helps cinemas create audience loyalty, and thus gives the system added value. For instance, a cinemagoer will receive a welcome email with a discount code or coupon for the concession stand. Depending on audience behaviour, they receive a reminder, or, if they have already purchased a ticket, a thank-you message for attending. The CRM system can also manage sending out newsletters and ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) law. Otherwise, it's a great deal of work to handle messaging with an excel sheet and Mail Chimp.

### How will audience interaction change?

Every interaction should have value for the audience. If a customer gets a newsletter that lists all the films on the schedule, it is harder for a cinema-goer, initially, to grasp what is actually most interesting for them. A newsletter that informs cinema-goers of films similar to those the cinema-goer has already seen may make the cinema-goer feel more like a valued customer. We are trying to figure out how to induce movie-goers to attend cinemas more often to see European films. It will take some time, but the ticketing system and new tools from Salesforce are enabling us to use more targeted marketing.

### Will audience behaviour become more predictable because of data collection?

The data can actually help

distributors with local marketing. Swedish distributors are marketing their films to a potential age group that aligns with the distributors' assumptions of interest in the film. We have real-time data from 110 cinemas in Sweden on ticket purchases. This data gives distributors an insight into the number of tickets sold per cinema and city, as well as sales breakdowns according to age group. Then, they can tweak their marketing on Facebook and Google in order to increase ticket sales in selected cities. They can also compare ticket sales with earlier releases of films that were targeted to similar audiences. Real-time data not only provides opportunities for sales forecasting, but it also enables distributors to increase their knowledge of the market by comparative studies with other, earlier releases.

### What are the benefits to cinemas and distributors?

Our project is titled "Sharing data to gain experience and knowledge." It refers to the situation in Sweden where exhibitors get a Top 10 list but not complete box office figures. Only distributors have access to these numbers. We hope that data sharing will make exhibitors aware of titles that have worked well in other cinemas, so that they can expand their releases. For distributors, it will, of course, be useful to know the number of pre-sold tickets before a film opens, as opposed to waiting for the box office reports.

### What impact can data analysis have on cinema programming?

This is what we are investigating. Distributors start marketing campaigns and screening trailers six weeks before a film's release, so they want audiences to be able to buy tickets three weeks in advance. Few cinemas are set up for such advance ticket sales. Some cinemas sell tickets two weeks in advance; others sell advance tickets for the week. Distributors complain that this is too late of a start, because social media needs ten to fourteen days just to identify target groups. In Sweden, about 65%–70% of cinema tickets are sold online. We should offer the audience the opportunity to plan to attend a cinema screening just as they would plan to attend a concert, a play, or a football game. If the ticket is purchased weeks in advance, then people attend – come rain or shine.

### Partner cinemas:

**Tollereds Biograf**, (Coordinator)  
**Folkets Bio**, Tollereds  
**Bio Kaskad**, Bromma  
**Bio Roxy**, Örebro  
**Biografen Zita**, Stockholm  
**Borås Bio Röda Kvarn**, Borås  
**Cnema**, Norrköping  
**Folkets Bio Umeå**, Umeå  
**Fyrisbiografen**, Uppsala  
**Royal**, Luleå