

REPORT – EUROPA CINEMAS INNOVATION DAY LAB

GROWING CINEMAS' OUTREACH IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

SAN SEBASTIAN, 25 SEPTEMBER 2017

SAN SEBASTIÁN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - DONOSTIA ZINEMALDIA

On 25 September, as part of the **San Sebastián International Film Festival**, Europa Cinemas held its first San Sebastián Innovation Day Lab, in partnership with Zineuskadi and Europe Creative MEDIA Euskadi.

This Innovation Lab, "**Growing cinemas' outreach in their communities**", was aimed primarily at Spanish exhibitors. It looked at the positioning of cinemas in relation to their audiences, marketing, and specific features of the situation in Spain, such as the need to work in networks.

Almost 20 attendees, primarily from Spain, took part in this Innovation Lab. The workshop was held in Spanish and moderated by **Jon Barrenechea**, Deputy Director of Marketing at Picturehouse Cinemas (UK) and **Javier Pachón**, President of CineArte and CineCiutat (Spain).



The morning session opened with some words of welcome from Gurutze Peñalba on behalf of Zineuskadi and Claudia Droc for Europa Cinemas.

Attendees were then asked to introduce themselves in groups of two, led by the moderators.

Jon Barrenechea presented the introductory session, using the example of the Picturehouse network to mark out the **different stages in marketing cinemas and integrating them in their respective towns and communities**. The founding idea behind Picturehouse has been to offer local and easy-to-access cinemas that play a role in community life.

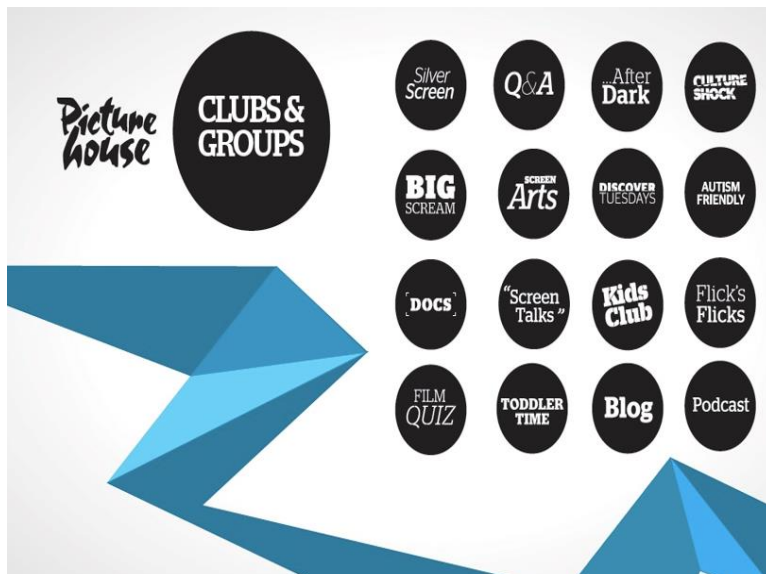
A key phrase emerged in this part of the lab – a cinema must go out and find its audience, listen to its audience and serve its audience. On this last point, as cinemas in the Picturehouse

network are located in diverse communities it has been essential to adapt programming, activities and communication methods (for example, special screenings – many cinemas in the UK offer activities for children with autism, family activities, film clubs, etc). These cinemas are unique and easily recognisable by their name and distinct identity. Every cinema serves as a "local centre" for activities, and is often affiliated to local associations and groups (town councils, businesses, NGOs, etc).

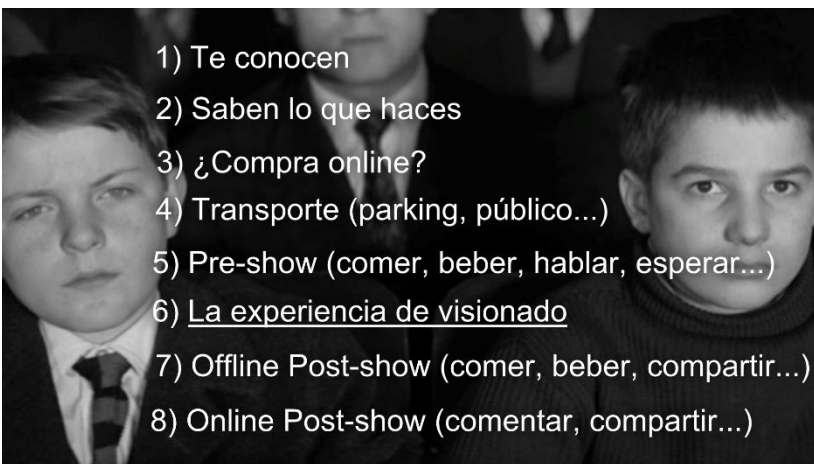
The audience is the start and end point in a cinema's development plan. Market research is needed to identify niches of underexploited potential and to allow for flexibility and adaptation within local markets. It is essential to create a unique offer for each cinema, with different types of activity, while also anticipating audience expectations. Local communication, based on a bank of local data, targets the core market, develops its loyalty and builds on a group of members.

There is not just one audience, but lots of audiences. It is essential to put together easily identifiable programmes for each audience category. In the case of Picturehouse this has meant creating "clubs" for each type of audience. This approach has been very successful.

The lab continued with what turned out to be a very lively Q&A session with participants which focused in particular on the practicalities of running special sessions, "clubs", and loyalty cards.



Javier Pachón ran the next session on **growing audiences**. Using the example of CineCiutat (Palma de Majorca, Spain) he began by highlighting the importance of knowing your audience and the community, in particular by using and analysing targeted data. It is essential for every cinema to find out about its current audience, to accurately assess its potential audiences and identify communication channels for reaching them. Initiatives such as **focus groups** help cinemas understand audience expectations (e.g. the questions on the image below). Growing audiences can involve a range of activities; establishing partnerships could be one example. Partnerships with brands, associations and opinion leaders can enable a cinema to diversify its audience. For this to have a long term impact, diversification must be accompanied by a series of concrete actions to secure audience loyalty.



resources Spanish exhibitors could take more advantage of.

The cinema is one of the last **community spaces** where the public can share an experience. For a marketing strategy to be effective, a cinema must, first and foremost, **listen and respond to its audience**.

Javier Pachón encouraged attendees to draw on the ideas, good practices and experiences of other cinemas, such as those summarised, for example, in the Europa Cinemas Innovation Survey, published in spring 2017. **Sharing experiences and networking** are valuable

The afternoon session began with an exercise in which **attendees** were asked to describe **setbacks their cinemas had experienced** and the lessons they had drawn from these. A number of specific examples were shared involving both technical (projection of 35mm films, etc) and strategic issues (programming for very young children, etc).



Javier Pachón then continued the workshop with a look at **marketing on social media**. The aim of this session was to understand how to reach audiences in the places where they spend much of their time, namely on various mobile devices (smartphone and tablet) and multiple social networks. The challenge is to successfully exploit the power of social networks and small screens to benefit cinemas. Promoting the cinema experience, and the quality and additional value of what it offers, to a generation of *digital natives* is a

matter of necessity as much as it is a challenge. Javier Pachón argued that the *storytelling* power of a cinema must make its presence felt on social media. The cinema experience needs to continue online, constantly, and via interesting and targeted content that both respects and is adapted to the audience and the hosting platform.

The Innovation Day Lab concluded with a **practical exercise**, in groups, during which participants had to **imagine a type of cinema and dedicated publicity campaign based on a target audience** allocated by the session moderators. Four groups formed to address different types of audience including the young (under 25s), young professionals (25-35s) and families. This exercise encouraged attendees to interact and think of a practical application for some of the workshop's lessons. Some surprising ideas and potential partnerships were discussed, which participants at this Innovation Day Lab will hopefully put into practice.

Claudia Droc