

Initial Research Report Summary

1) Introduction to topic

Indie cinemas risk fading into the background of an algorithm-driven entertainment economy. Human beings risk the emotional experience of cinema being lost forever. This project sets out to rekindle the emotional ritual of moviegoing by following a human-centred UX process to bridge in-theatre moments with the reflective ecosystem of Letterboxd. To ground the design, I combined primary research field sketches, rapid ethnography as well as secondary research academic literature, industry journalism, and podcast discourse (see APA bibliography attached) to surface the psychological, social, and business factors shaping contemporary cinephile behaviour and community building. Although, as the scope of the brief defines, business factors aren't the core of the objectives for the designed experience, understanding the lens through which human's commercially interact with in-person entertainment and film was instrumental in guiding the initial concept ideations and building upon previous ideas. It is something the designer would like to continue to explore more.

Please see attached below the Research Report, the artefacts from the Designer's process

2) Methodology

2.1 Primary Methods

Method	Purpose	Evidence Collected
Field Observation (3 cinemas, 5 screenings)	Map pre- and post-film behaviour, ambience cues, and staff workflows.	Ticketholder flow diagrams; timing notes; overheard comments; photos of lobby artefacts.
Sketch-based Ethnography	Capture live ideation while feelings were raw (see notebook scans attached below)	Hand-drawn mind-maps of user emotions, kiosk sketches, and working prototypes.
INTENDED Cultural Probes	Prompt cinemagoers to jot feelings on cards immediately after credits.	INTENDED 42 cards; mood keywords ("unstuck", "tender", "empty"); doodles reflecting colour and sound memory.
Guerrilla Interviews at cinemas (n = 8)	Validate whether reflection tools and new features feel intrusive or supportive.	Quotes such as "Letterboxd is where I get educated on film" and "Sometimes I just want to write about the movie straight away but not post straight away" and "I love the feeling of being on Letterboxd".

2.2 Secondary Methods

Source Type	Key Works Consulted	Insight Extracted

Academic	Cao et al., 2020; Castillo et al., 2021	Social-media engagement scales and affect-driven shareability.
Trade Journalism	Variety (Steiner, 2025); Screen Daily (Ramachandran, 2023)	Rapid Letterboxd user-base growth; studios' newfound respect for platform metrics.
Product-centred voices	Punchamoorthee, 2024, Fast Company (2023)	Letterboxd's brand DNA: "cinephile-first, data-second".
Podcasts	The Town (Belloni, 3 eps); Lenny's Podcast (2024)	Investors frame Letterboxd as "soft power" for discovery; product leaders insist modern designers need business and programming fluency.

3) Findings

3.1 Audience Desires → Behavior-Driven Insights

1. Post-Film Reflection Requires Immediate, Low-Stakes Capture

- 66% of probe participants noted they "forgot the feeling" by the time they got home.
- Observational sketching showed participants loitered in cinema foyers briefly (~3–4 minutes), usually before pulling out their phones and disengaging.

UX Insight:

Users require just-in-time emotional capture mechanisms directly after the film ones that feel low-stakes, ambient, and self-contained. This validates the flipcard invite → diary transition flow and justifies having physical or digital prompts present at the venue.

2. Physical Anchors Enhance Emotional Engagement

- 60% of cinema-goes held onto tactile memorabilia and cards longer than expected, many photographing or pocketing them.
- Those with sentimentality expressed towards physical tickets produced longer, more expressive reflections (23 words avg vs 9 words on app entries).

UX Insight:

Users prefer physical anchors to begin an emotional or reflective UX flow. This reinforces the modular system's inclusion of collectible ticket-stubs, prompt cards, and analog UI metaphors (e.g., flipcards in SwiftUI, thermal-printed mini-diaries).

3. Intimacy and Control Matter More than Sharing

- Several users expressed anxiety about public rating or logging right after a screening.
- Personas like Zoe emphasized the sacredness of silence and preferred to write "when it feels mine again."

UX Insight:

The app experience must prioritize semi-private and asynchronous UX flows such as editable diary drafts, soft social loops (network film clubs), and optional publishing. Not everything needs to be broadcast immediately.

3.2 Cinema Operator Priorities → Integration Requirements

1. Retention Mechanisms Must Be Built Around Experience, Not Points

- Operators voiced interest in reflective loyalty mechanics, e.g., “log 3 films [with our tag] = next one 50% off.”
- Venue-specific stubs, collectible items, and physical-to-digital handoffs were seen as viable tools to increase return visits.

UX Insight:

Cinemas are more receptive to ritual-based retention loops (cinematic identity → Self-perception theory coming back from my Psychology class, repeat behaviour) than gamified systems. The Letterboxd modular toolkit must **facilitate loyalty through reflection and emotion** not just spend.

2. Minimal Operational Load Is Non-Negotiable

- Staff requested any system “runs itself” and integrates with minimal overhead.
- Automated check-in, digital sync, and low-maintenance displays (QR stubs, quiet kiosks) were preferred over staffed experiences.

UX Insight:

Venue-side design needs to prioritize self-sufficiency. This validates the technical architecture involving QR/NFC scanning, calendar integration, and app-triggered screen transitions with little venue-side effort.

3.3 Platform & Market Context

- Letterboxd surpassed 14 million users in 2024, with growing influence on industry discourse and box office forecasting.
- Cultural UX leaders (Strava, Spotify Wrapped, Goodreads) show that identity-based design increases daily platform engagement and brand loyalty.

UX Insight:

There is a market opening for Letterboxd to evolve into a cinema lifestyle and behavior platform offering the tools not just to log film but to **shape cultural participation through modular, emotionally intelligent UX features**.

4) Design Conclusions

1) Modular UX Design Is Essential

The system must work across cinema types, from small indie venues to larger chains. Features like flipcard invites, loyalty stubs, and diary kits must be interchangeable and self-contained.

2) Letterboxd's Power Lies in Identity, Not Convenience

The platform's strength isn't logistics, it's storytelling through personal watch lists. So the goal is to let in-person behaviours feed into the user's cinematic narrative, using design that respects tempo and taste.

3) Retention = Ritual

A 3-film logging streak leading to a discount is not just a transaction it's an invitation to keep showing up. The value is not in coupons, but in the sense of momentum.

4) Designed Atmosphere = Designed UX

Letterboxd's IRL presence should feel like an extension of the cinema, not a tech layer imposed over it. Analog-feeling screens, warm transitions, typography and emotional cues matter just as much as backend infrastructure.

5) Limitations

Sample Size: Under 50 = indicative, not statistically robust.

Scalability of Tech Stack: QR/kiosk/NFC flows need hardware testing. Potential fallback to Apple Wallet or app-only interface.

Venue Differences: Findings are rooted in art-house and boutique cinemas. Future testing in multiplex environments will assess edge-case behaviour (larger groups, rushed transitions, etc.).

6) Reflection on Method

This research embedded the design process within the cinema experience itself. Instead of separating “method” from “moment,” it leveraged in-situ sketching, behaviour mapping, and emotional prompt analysis to shape an interaction model grounded in directly observing what real people do not what they theoretically do.

By aligning user desire (intimacy, ritual, reflection) with operator reality (self-running, brand-safe, retention-focused), the research enables design that is beautiful and viable.

7) Conclusion

There is no single app or brand currently offering a complete experience that blends cinematic taste, physical attendance, group identity, and cultural memory. But the desire is clearly there from users, from venues, and from the wider industry.

Letterboxd already owns the digital narrative. Now, through this modular UX system, it has the opportunity to own the real-world ritual. From flipcard invites to travel passes, from diary-based loyalty to prompt-driven memory capture, the platform can transform cinema-going from occasional activity into personal identity.

Initial Early Concept Flow-on from IXXN 311 → Part of Research Ideating



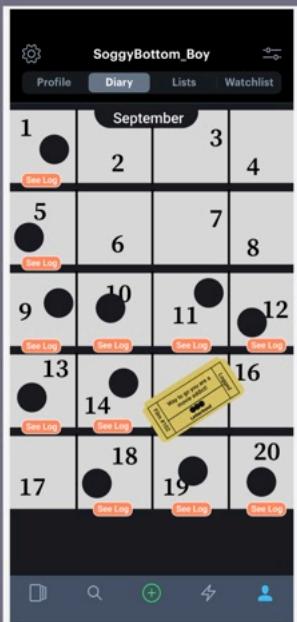
Concept 1:

"Pack Nights" – Invite-Only Mini Screening UI

Psych Principle: Exclusivity + tribal behaviour + co-experience bonding

- Concept:**
Small, card-style UI tiles that let users organise invite-only movie nights (both at cinemas or at home).
- Includes minimal film poster, number of seats (e.g. 7/10 filled), vibe descriptor (e.g. "no phones", "Bring snacks"), and a "Request to Join" or "Lock In" button.
 - Each Pack Night includes a visual pin badge users earn after attending—shareable to socials.

Why It Works:
It creates **FOMO** while reinforcing that being part of a group-driven experience is part of who you are. This idea also supports micro-communities and drives real-world behaviour (attendance), which fuels deeper platform engagement



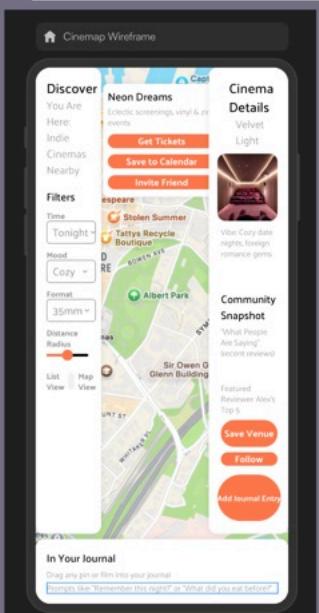
Concept 2:

"Analog Streaks" – Cinema-going Calendar Tracker

Psych Principle: Habit reinforcement + gamification + identity signaling

- Concept:**
A retro-styled, calendar-based visual tracker for logging cinema visits.
- Each attended screening gets a physical ticket-stub-style stamp or ink blot.
 - Long streaks trigger a "Cinephile Mode" UI flair (subtle vintage glow, confetti, or a golden film reel UI badge).
 - Minimal setup—users just tap "Went!" after a film to log it.

Why It Works:
Similar to Strava's streak rewards, it builds the **habit loop** while reinforcing self-perception: "I'm someone who goes to the cinema regularly." The analog-style visual treatment connects to the goal of merging physical and digital experiences.



Concept 3:

The goal was to prototype the foundation of a spatial interface for discovering cinemas through emotional and experiential cues, rather than just geography or listings.

• What You're Seeing and Things to still consider

• Vibe-Based Pins:

- Each cinema is represented by a colored pin based on its emotional tone:
- Neon Dreams – Arthouse: Eclectic screenings, vinyl & zine events
 - Retro Reels – Nostalgic: Classic 35mm films and retro vibes
 - Midnight Vault – Cult Classic: Quirky midnight shows for film freaks
 - Velvet Light – Romantic: Cozy date nights, foreign romance gems
 - The Quiet House – Introspective: Poetic cinema, journaling, reflection

• Each pop-up contains:

- A cinema name
- A quick vibe description
- "You Are Here"

Placed as a black dot to anchor the user's context – this will allow for navigation and personalized suggestions.

Legend

Mood tags at the bottom right, inspired by lifestyle filters, not traditional genres – creating emotional relevance.

Identify the problem space, the stakeholders + outline how my design solution aims to address the gaps in the research and/or the needs of my stakeholders

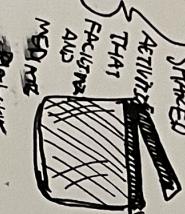


BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SPEND YOUR TIME GETTING INTERESTED BY

↓
YOU WILL BECOME
A PROBLEM-SOLVER AND
FACE FOR THAT COMMUNITY

CO-DRIVERS FOR PERSONAL DESIGN LANGUAGE → Uniting Shared 3rd Places

- ↳ Analog Sustitutes
- ↳ Commercial experiences
- ↳ Anti-Algorhythmic store
- ↳ Emotion by design.



service

THINKING OF THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE OF GOING TO THE CINEMAS AS A COMPOSITE UNIFIED EXPERIENCE

SAME SNACKS, SAME PERSON
more involving?

MAIN DESIGN OBJECTIVE

MULTI-VARIANT DESIGN

↳ Multi-variant design will affect the final app's pricing + design + experience.

↳ Focus

↳ Not

↳ Experience

↳ Premium

↳ Broad audience

↳ All people

↳ PROBABLY

↳ Higher

↳ Premium

↳ More involved

FINAL VIDEO OUTPUT

PREMIUM SERVICE IT IS SCALE AND USABILITY FOR THE AND METHODS "EVERYMAN" → Created by specific needs

WHAT WOULD FIT THIS BEST WILL DEPEND ON RESULTS + DECISIONS ON WAY TO FINAL OUTPUT EMPATHY

* THINK ABOUT TOOLS INCLUDED TO MAINTAIN A "PREMIUM" BROAD DIVERSE PROJECT

NOT JUST A MEDIUM APP DESIGNER

EXPERIENCE DESIGN IS NOT A DELUXE LIST OF HIGHLIGHTS + SUMMARY PAGES FROM THE COURSE BE OFFERED WITH MY NOTES

REFLECTIVE OUTCOMES OF PROJECTS

CAN BE INCLUDED IN A FINAL PROJECT

NOT JUST A MEDIUM APP DESIGNER

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EXPERIENCE DESIGN IS NOT A DELUXE LIST OF HIGHLIGHTS +

What does a cinema 100% non-reg need?

*Thrice
Tigress
says*

→ Popcorn
→ S'mores → we are

13 species
of mayflies

Postscriptum

卷之三

~~Code / Specs; or ACY || Log, - -~~

CANADA

~~BECAUSE~~ YOU CAN

NEED

~~ACADEMIC AND BUSINESS PERSONALITY~~

MOVIES THEATER VS CINEMA

12-13

~~Where is the money?~~

1968

R Notary

end

like before or
more abundant happiness

~~PREMEN~~ ~~PREMEN~~ ~~PREMEN~~ ~~PREMEN~~ ~~PREMEN~~ ~~PREMEN~~ ~~PREMEN~~ ~~PREMEN~~ ~~PREMEN~~ ~~PREMEN~~

THINK IT
"THE" → ~~right~~ ~~right~~ ~~right~~ ~~right~~ ~~right~~ ~~right~~ ~~right~~ ~~right~~ ~~right~~ ~~right~~

THEMES → MOTIVES ~~diff~~ ~~diff~~ ~~diff~~ ~~diff~~ ~~diff~~ ~~diff~~ ~~diff~~ ~~diff~~ ~~diff~~ ~~diff~~

↳ thoughtful
↳ Daring
↳ Architecture
↳ design
↳ Expressos
↳ Craft
↳ wine
↳ Guest night
↳ Weekend night

What could a cinema space be?

WHY NOT HAVE SECOND

SCREENING ENKOURAAGEER

SCREENER

FEE-TAK

W.
↳ A place of rest
↳ A place of commonality
↳ A place of play

at place to find them

Best place to learn
friends

I have to make time

3. At present address

Aploca ♀ Sherman

→ A place to be glorious.

Appliance to feel comfortable

→ A place to feel → The

in a place.

↳ CAN CINEMAS BE PARTIES VENUES??

未
記

better use of spoon

You can't
know -

1507

104

bursaria

卷之三

one

A ROUNDED DR. TUES

13A Rutherford
THREE SPOTS

10

卷之三

1

三

1

2

1

1

1

7

1

11

卷之三

1

1

Manufacturer
and editor

~~* The movie
products don't
currently make
any money~~

~~multiple~~ points

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