

Audience Engagement and the Evolution of Film Festivals: A Mixed-Methods Study

Final Report

Prepared for:
Film Festivals

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December 18th, 2024

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Executive Summary

This study examines how hybrid formats could enhance engagement and accessibility for global film festivals, specifically focusing on younger audiences aged 18 to 25 by evaluating the following film festivals: Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), Cannes Film Festival (Cannes), Telluride Film Festival (TFF), Hong Kong Asian Film Festival (HKAFF). The research addresses two critical questions: (1) What attracts audiences to film festivals? (2) How can hybrid formats improve engagement while maintaining exclusivity? The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining focus groups, on-site observations at the HKAFF, secondary research, and survey design.

Key findings highlight distinct preferences between movie enthusiasts and casual viewers. Movie enthusiasts prioritize cultural relevance, interactive features like Q&A sessions and high production value, while casual viewers are more cost-sensitive and seek accessible, social, or low-commitment experiences. Observations at HKAFF revealed its strong local appeal but highlighted a lack of interactivity and limited hybrid elements, which could diminish its competitiveness. Secondary research on festivals like TIFF and Cannes underscores the success of hybrid models during the pandemic in expanding reach but also highlights shortcomings in the sustainability of these formats post-COVID.

The study concludes that hybrid models offer significant potential to broaden audience engagement, particularly among younger and geographically distant demographics. However, such models must balance accessibility with exclusivity. They can achieve this by incorporating interactive elements and providing clear value propositions.

Recommendations

- Develop Engaging Hybrid Formats: To attract diverse audiences, integrate live Q&A sessions, exclusive virtual content, and real-time screenings.
- Targeted Marketing: Through social media campaigns and partnerships, highlight the unique value of hybrid formats and appeal to younger, cost-conscious viewers.
- Collaborate with Regional Partners: Enhance regional outreach through localized marketing strategies and partnerships to improve accessibility in underserved markets.
- By implementing these strategies, film festivals can adapt to shifting audience needs while maintaining cultural significance and prestige.

Introduction

Background

The film festival industry has long been synonymous with exclusivity, cultural significance, and immersive experiences. Iconic festivals such as the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), Cannes Film Festival, and Telluride Film Festival (TFF) serve as prestigious platforms for showcasing high-caliber films, connecting industry professionals, and engaging passionate audiences. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional models, compelling festivals to adopt hybrid formats that combined in-person events with digital screenings. While this shift expanded accessibility and reached wider audiences, it also posed challenges in maintaining such events' prestige and financial sustainability.

Many festivals reverted to traditional formats post-pandemic, citing the cultural value of in-person experiences and the high costs of sustaining hybrid platforms (Roxborough & Stewart, 2022; Damiens & de Valek, 2023). However, as the industry grapples with evolving audience expectations, questions remain about how festivals balance exclusivity with accessibility to attract diverse, global audiences. Younger demographics, mainly those aged 18–25, are increasingly cost-sensitive and reliant on digital platforms for entertainment, making them an essential target group for exploring hybrid film festival formats.

Decision Problem

Should film festivals adopt hybrid formats to engage broader audiences while preserving their unique identity and cultural significance?

Research Objectives

This study aims to address the following key questions:

1. What factors attract audiences to film festivals?
2. How can hybrid formats improve engagement and accessibility without compromising the exclusivity of in-person experiences?

By focusing on audience preferences and exploring the feasibility of hybrid models, this research provides actionable insights for film festival organizers looking to adapt to shifting market dynamics and audience needs.

Purpose and Scope

This research aims to evaluate the potential of hybrid film festival formats to broaden audience engagement, particularly among younger demographics. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative insights from focus groups and on-site observations with secondary data analysis and survey design. The scope includes:

- Understanding audience preferences for in-person versus hybrid experiences.

- Assessing the willingness of audiences to pay for online or hybrid screenings.
- Analyzing the operational and marketing implications of hybrid models for film festivals.

Combining insights from movie enthusiasts and casual viewers, this research offers a comprehensive perspective on how film festivals can innovate while maintaining cultural and economic relevance in a rapidly changing entertainment landscape.

Methodology

Focus Groups

Design:

Two focus groups were conducted to capture diverse perspectives on movie-watching habits and film festival engagement. The first comprised nine self-identified movie enthusiasts, while the second included seven casual viewers. All participants were aged 20–22, representing a mix of local and international CUHK-SZ students, some of whom were exchange students. The focus groups were intentionally designed to contrast the preferences and behaviours of these two distinct audience types. By recruiting participants from the same demographic but with different interest levels in films, the study aimed to identify nuanced patterns in their preferences and engagement with cinema and film festivals.

Format:

The sessions were held outdoors in an informal setting on campus to encourage a relaxed and open environment conducive to candid discussion. Each group session lasted approximately 40–50 minutes and followed a semi-structured format with 7–8 open-ended questions. These covered topics such as movie-watching habits, preferred viewing platforms, attitudes toward film festivals, and willingness to pay for hybrid experiences. The discussions were recorded and later transcribed for thematic analysis (**Appendices A & B**), ensuring a comprehensive understanding of participant responses.

Casual Viewers:

- **Platform Preferences:** Casual viewers prioritized convenience and affordability. They frequently used free or shared streaming platforms like Netflix or Disney+ and reserved cinema visits for blockbuster releases or social outings.
- **Social Dynamics:** Viewing movies was seen as a social activity, with many enjoying the shared experience of watching with friends or family. Group movie nights were common, with an emphasis on light, nostalgic films that provide relaxation.
- **Festival Engagement:** Awareness of film festivals was limited. While some participants recognized high-profile events like Cannes or TIFF, none had attended a festival. Their interest was primarily driven by interactive and social elements, such as Q&A sessions or attending with family and friends. Price sensitivity was a major barrier, with most unwilling to pay more than the cost of a regular cinema ticket unless additional value was provided.

Movie Enthusiasts:

- **Platform Preferences:** Movie enthusiasts also preferred streaming platforms for their flexibility but were more willing to visit cinemas for high-quality, highly anticipated films. They viewed cinemas as an immersive experience reserved for films with superior sound and visual effects or significant cultural relevance.
- **Social and Analytical Engagement:** Although not always requiring a group to watch a movie, these participants valued post-viewing discussions and the opportunity to analyze films with friends or other enthusiasts.
- **Festival Engagement:** Enthusiasts were open to attending festivals but required exclusive or interactive features, such as behind-the-scenes content or filmmaker Q&A sessions, to justify the effort and cost.

HKAFF Observations

Design and Format:

The research was conducted at the Hong Kong Asian Film Festival (HKAFF), a long-standing event established in 2004 that celebrates local and Asian cinema through a diverse selection of films, many of which have gained recognition at prestigious international festivals like Cannes (HKAFF, n.d.). Observations occurred at Broadway Cinematheque, a renowned venue in Hong Kong known for its focus on independent and regional films. This qualitative study combined direct observation of audience behaviours during a screening and informal discussions with theatre staff, offering behavioural and operational insights. By analyzing the festival's audience demographics, operational structure, and engagement strategies, the research aimed to understand how HKAFF fosters cultural appreciation and delivers a unique cinematic experience while operating within a traditional, screening-only format.

- **Attendee Demographics:** The audience primarily consisted of local Hong Kong residents aged 20–50, indicating a strong regional connection to the festival. The presence of younger adults and middle-aged participants demonstrated a broad appeal across age groups. However, the absence of significant international attendance limited the festival's ability to engage with global audiences and expand its influence beyond the local community.
- **Engagement Behaviors:** While attendees were highly engaged during screenings, the festival offered few opportunities for deeper interaction. Features like Q&A sessions, panel discussions, or other interactive activities were only available on the opening day. This limited engagement made the festival less immersive for attendees who participated on other days. Pre- and post-screening interactions among attendees were also minimal, suggesting that the festival's format prioritizes film appreciation over community-building experiences.
- **Operational Insights:** HKAFF's commitment to showcasing high-quality Asian films aligns well with the cultural interests of its local audience. However, its operational structure presented challenges: the month-long duration diluted the festival's intensity, while the limited availability of films on specific days restricted audience accessibility. These factors and a lack of consistent interactive elements made the festival feel more like a traditional cinema experience than a dynamic and engaging film festival.

Secondary Research

Focus:

Our secondary research analyzed four prominent film festivals—Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), Cannes Film Festival (CFF), Telluride Film Festival (TFF), and Hong Kong Asian Film Festival (HKAFF)—chosen for their varied focus, audience demographics, and cultural influence. These festivals serve as benchmarks for understanding how traditional and hybrid formats impact audience engagement and the representation of global cinema.

- **Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF):** Established in 1976, TIFF is one of the most prestigious festivals in North America, renowned for its audience engagement and promotion of international films. It played a significant role in amplifying Asian cinema globally with screenings of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *In the Mood for Love*. The festival embraced digital innovation with “TIFF Digital,” a well-received online library that expanded audience reach during the pandemic. However, in early 2024, TIFF discontinued the platform, signalling a renewed emphasis on in-person attendance (Toronto International Film Festival, n.d.).
- **Cannes Film Festival (CFF):** A prestigious and traditional event held annually in Cannes, France, CFF has celebrated international cinema since its inception. It has showcased iconic Asian films, such as *Farewell My Concubine*, which won the Palme d’Or in 1993. While CFF remains largely in-person, it has cautiously incorporated online platforms for industry screenings through its *Marché du Film* (Marché du Film, 2021). This approach balances the festival’s traditional prestige with limited online adaptations.
- **Telluride Film Festival (TFF):** Known for its exclusivity and niche programming, TFF is held annually in Colorado and avoids online screenings altogether (Telluride Film Festival, n.d.). The festival’s intimate setting and mystery-driven schedule cater to cinephiles and industry insiders. While Asian films are a minority at TFF, notable exceptions include *The Farewell* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Its commitment to a purely in-person format underscores the value of exclusivity and community.
- **Hong Kong Asian Film Festival (HKAFF):** HKAFF, established in 2004, is a vital platform for Asian cinema, emphasizing cultural representation and storytelling. Despite its regional influence, the festival retains a traditional, in-person format with minimal integration of online elements (HKAFF, 2024).

Questionnaire Design

Focus:

The primary focus of the survey was to evaluate participants’ preferences for hybrid film festival formats, assess their motivations for attending such events, and understand the barriers to participation. Specific areas of interest included the perceived benefits of online screenings, such as flexibility and affordability, and the trade-offs compared to in-person experiences, such as networking and immersion. Insights from the questionnaire were intended to inform

strategies for enhancing the appeal of hybrid film festivals and addressing potential audience concerns (**Appendix C**).

Structure:

The questionnaire was carefully designed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data using a variety of question types, including multiple-choice, rating scales, and open-ended questions. This structure enabled us to capture a wide range of preferences, behaviours, and motivations related to film festivals and hybrid screening formats. For instance, questions explored movie-watching habits (e.g., frequency of watching movies, preferred platforms), prior experience with film festivals (both online and in-person), and willingness to pay for hybrid screenings. Demographic details such as age, gender, and nationality were also included to segment the data for more granular insights. By incorporating different question types, the survey aimed to balance ease of response with depth of understanding.

Distribution:

The questionnaire was disseminated online through university group chats and social media platforms to reach a diverse population of university students. This digital approach ensured accessibility and convenience for respondents, while the inclusion of a clear and concise introduction highlighted the purpose and estimated time required to complete the survey. Responses were collected anonymously to encourage honest and unbiased feedback.

Findings

Focus Group Insights: Casual Viewers

Platform Preferences:

Casual viewers demonstrated a strong preference for convenience and affordability in their movie-watching habits. The majority relied on streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime, often accessing these through free or shared accounts. This approach reflects their cost-conscious mindset and desire for flexibility, allowing them to watch movies at their convenience. Cinema visits were infrequent and typically reserved for blockbuster releases or social occasions, such as outings with friends or family. Their selective approach to in-person viewing underscored a preference for content that was either highly anticipated or considered a "must-watch" cultural phenomenon.

Social Dynamics:

For casual viewers, movie-watching was inherently a social activity. Many participants highlighted the enjoyment of shared experiences, such as family movie nights or group screenings with friends. These settings often involved lighthearted or nostalgic films, chosen for their relaxing and entertaining nature. The social aspect extended beyond the act of watching, with discussions, reactions, and collective enjoyment forming a key part of the experience. This group favoured accessible, low-commitment viewing options that allowed them to prioritize the communal aspects of movie-watching.

Festival Engagement

Awareness of film festivals among casual viewers was notably limited. While some participants recognized high-profile events like Cannes or TIFF, none had personally attended a film festival. Their interest in festivals was generally low unless the events featured interactive and social elements, such as Q&A sessions with filmmakers or opportunities to attend with friends and family. Price sensitivity was a significant barrier, with most participants unwilling to pay more than the cost of a standard cinema ticket. Many held misconceptions about the value of film festivals, perceiving them as exclusive events with limited relevance to their preferences. This highlights the need for festivals to address affordability concerns and emphasize inclusive, engaging elements to attract casual viewers.

Focus Group Insights: Movie Enthusiasts

Platform Preferences:

Movie enthusiasts also favoured streaming platforms for their convenience and extensive content libraries but differed from casual viewers in their willingness to visit cinemas. Enthusiasts viewed theatres as spaces for immersive experiences, particularly for films with high production quality, such as superior sound design or exceptional visual effects. Films with significant cultural relevance also motivated cinema visits, as enthusiasts valued the opportunity to engage deeply with stories and themes that resonated with them. Their approach reflected a more deliberate selection process, prioritizing content that justified the additional effort and expense of in-person viewing.

Social and Analytical Engagement:

Unlike casual viewers, movie enthusiasts did not always require a group to watch a film. However, they placed a high value on post-viewing discussions, which enriched their movie-watching experience. Conversations with friends or fellow enthusiasts allowed them to analyze and dissect films, exploring themes, narratives, and technical aspects in greater depth. This analytical engagement often extended to online platforms or forums where enthusiasts could connect with broader communities of like-minded individuals. For these viewers, the movie-watching experience was not limited to the screening itself but encompassed the intellectual and social interactions that followed.

Festival Engagement:

Movie enthusiasts expressed a higher degree of openness toward attending film festivals, though they held specific expectations. Many viewed festivals as opportunities to access exclusive or interactive features, such as behind-the-scenes content, filmmaker Q&A sessions, or screenings of films not yet available to the general public. These elements were seen as essential in justifying the time and cost associated with attending. Enthusiasts were less deterred by price than casual viewers but still expected significant value in return for their investment. They sought festivals that catered to their desire for cultural enrichment and unique cinematic experiences, emphasizing exclusivity and deeper engagement with the art of filmmaking.

Secondary Research

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced the film festival landscape, driving the adoption of online screenings and hybrid formats. These changes enhanced accessibility, financial resilience, and audience expectations. By enabling global participation, online formats reached younger demographics who valued flexibility and convenience. Financially, festivals like TIFF leveraged digital tools, including pay-per-view models and subscription services, to mitigate losses during the pandemic (Toronto International Film Festival, n.d.). However, in 2024, TIFF reverted to in-person formats, citing high licensing costs and a preference for the exclusivity of traditional screenings. This trend highlights how digital shifts have reshaped audience expectations, with hybrid models now seen as a way to offer both convenience and exclusivity, complementing traditional approaches while broadening cultural reach.

The comparison between traditional and hybrid formats underscored their distinct strengths and challenges. Traditional formats, such as those employed by Cannes and Telluride, excel in preserving cultural prestige and fostering community through immersive, in-person experiences. Cannes, while retaining its exclusivity, introduced digital screenings for industry professionals via its *Marché du Film*, blending tradition with limited digital access (Marché du Film, 2021). In contrast, Telluride maintained its niche appeal by prioritizing an entirely in-person format, emphasizing exclusivity and intimacy. However, these formats remain limited by geography, capacity, and vulnerability to disruptions like pandemics. On the other hand, hybrid models offer scalability, global reach, and additional revenue streams. Yet, they risk diluting the immersive nature of in-person events and reducing opportunities for networking and community-building.

The Hong Kong Asian Film Festival (HKAFF), with its strong focus on regional representation, exemplifies the challenges of balancing these models. While the festival celebrates Asian cinema through a traditional, screening-only format, it lacks interactive and hybrid elements that could enhance its global appeal. As festivals navigate the post-pandemic era, balancing the unique benefits of traditional formats with the scalability and accessibility of hybrid models will be critical to their success.

Discussion

Questionnaire findings

Qualitative data:

The questionnaire focused on quantitative information, so there were no explicit qualitative questions. The 'other' option was present in some questions but was rarely selected (five times in all responses), so these observations were discarded as outliers.

Quantitative data:

The questionnaire focused heavily on multiple-choice questions and Likert scales, which allowed for easier and more precise analysis of the responses.

The different answers were coded differently according to their type:

- If more than one choice was possible, they were coded in several dummy variables. For example, 'Which platform do you prefer to watch films on? (tick all that apply)" was transformed into four dummy variables (cinema, live TV streaming, unpaid streaming and paid streaming).
- Where only one choice was allowed, it was transformed into either a dummy variable (as in the case of gender) or a categorical variable (as in the case of the number of films watched in the last week).
- No coding was necessary if the question was already in Likert scale form.

General findings

- Paid streaming services are the most popular way of consuming movies among our respondents (74 out of 88), meaning that people are willing to pay to watch movies at home.
- 32 out of 88 respondents have attended an offline film festival (12 people more than once), and 11 participated online.
- 30 out of 88 people chose the general atmosphere as one of the most attractive things about film festivals, which is hard to replicate with online screenings. However, 19 people selected to see movies before public release, indicating a market for online premieres.
- The overall rating for offline film festivals (exclusively from people who attended) is 4.18, compared to 4.27 for online ones. We can infer that generally speaking, people are equally satisfied with both experiences in similar measures.
- 57% of people were unaware of the existence of online film festivals
- Lower ticket prices were selected as the main factor increasing respondents' interest, followed by exclusive content and interactive sessions.
- Accessibility to international audiences and lower costs were considered the main advantages.
- 84% of respondents would be willing to pay for an online film festival, with 43 people willing to spend more than 10 dollars.
- 49 out of 88 people declared they would not be more willing to participate in a film festival if it had online screenings, but only 30 believed they lacked the social and immersive experience.
- Lastly, for the demographics, almost 75% of respondents were within our target age range. The genders were almost equally split, and the most common country of origin was Italy, with 30 respondents.

Visualization of questionnaire results

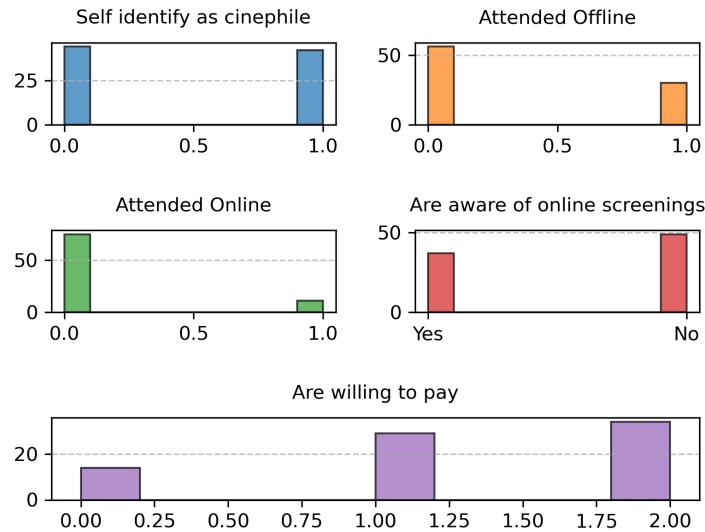
Our first step in analyzing the results was to visualize the coded data. To do this, we used the built-in Microsoft Office Form tool (**Appendix D**), which gave us a general understanding of the distributions, and created graphs using Python's Seaborn and Matplotlib libraries (**Appendix E**). We produced bar charts with the latter tool, but most importantly, a correlation matrix (**Appendix F**).

The correlation matrix helped us assess the quality of the responses we received and the relationship between the variables. For example, we see a high positive correlation between

self-identifying as a cinephile and going to the cinema, compared to a negative correlation with liking simple films, both of which are to be expected from film lovers who (should) have more sophisticated tastes. Furthermore, although we know correlation does not imply causation, we used this data to decide which variables to include in our regression, as a stronger relationship could lead to better results in the model, especially when using only one regressor.

Predicting offline attendance - Method

Fig. 1: Bar chart overview of the questionnaire variables for predicting offline film festival attendance



We decided to build a model that could predict whether a person would attend an offline film festival based on the questionnaire's answers. The reason why we decided not to predict online attendance is due to the unbalanced nature of the variable. Looking at the bar chart (see **Fig. 1**), we can see that only 12% of people attended an online film festival, compared to around 35% of offline festivals. By predicting off-line attendance, we hope to create a less biased model. The same method could be applied to the online sector with the necessary fine-tuning. To make our predictions, we tested 3 different models:

- **Linear Regression (see Fig. 2):**

We first attempted a linear regression using self-identification as a cinephile and willingness to pay online as predictors. As explained above, the choice was based on a correlation with the target variable and a theoretical basis (movie lovers should be more likely to attend a film festival and be more willing to pay money for movies they want to see). There are only a few missing observations, so we drop those instead of inferring them to avoid confusion in the model. The resulting coefficients were 0.571 for self-identification as a cinephile and 0.675 for willingness to pay online when using a single model (they slightly differed when using k-fold cross-validation, but not significantly).

- **Logistic Regression (see Fig. 3):**

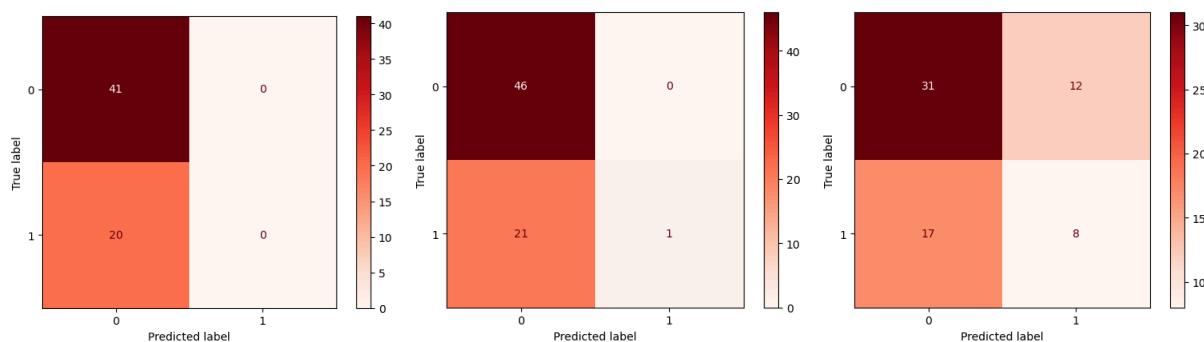
For our second model, we use a logistic regression using all variables at our disposal to reduce the possibility of omitted-variable bias. We attempted two different approaches, both yielding very similar results. First, we did not consider the “grade_online” variable, as it had too many missing values (since only people who attended an event online could answer). The grade_offline variable was always omitted since a missing value would indicate that the person attended, missing the point of our regression. In the second version, the “grade_online” variable is not eliminated. All missing values are inferred using the mean (using the median instead does not influence the analysis meaningfully). All these changes can be tested by commenting and uncommenting the relevant lines in the code and running the cell.

- **Histogram Gradient Boosting (see Fig. 4):**

For the third and last model, we used histogram gradient boosting on all the variables, excluding the grades given to online and offline experiences. A version where online attendance is also removed can be tested on the Jupyter Notebook. Still, there is no significant difference (actually, there is a little decrease in performance). The reason for this choice is that this model deals with missing values independently, without a need for removal or inference. Moreover, it is not a linear model but an ensemble of binary trees, allowing more complex relationships to be captured. The flip side is its tendency to overfit. Interpreting the results is not as easy as the other two models, but it could still provide insight.

Predicting offline attendance - Results

Figs. 2-4: Confusion matrices for predicting offline film festival attendance across models: a) linear regression, b) logistic regression, c) histogram gradient boosting



As can be seen from the confusion matrices above (representing in order linear regression, logistic regression, and histogram gradient boosting), the results of our predictions were not good for any of the tree models. There are many reasons for this, the most important being the lack of data. 88 data points are, generally speaking, an extremely small number, so the models are more likely to pick up on noise without being able to discern the actual pattern. The imbalance between the majority (never attending) and minority (having attended at least once) classes in the target variable is also a source of concern, as it pushes models toward predicting the majority class in most cases. Using the

confusion matrices to evaluate our models allows us to see this pattern clearly, especially in the first two models. Using the p-value as a measure for the linear regression was not feasible due to the limited size of the sample (a larger size is recommended to assume data fitting the t-distribution).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Our findings indicate that hybrid film festival formats offer significant potential to broaden audience engagement and enhance accessibility. However, their implementation must carefully balance the unique advantages of traditional in-person experiences with the scalability and convenience of digital platforms. Movie enthusiasts and casual viewers value film festivals' immersive and cultural aspects, but their preferences regarding cost sensitivity and interactivity differ. Observations from HKAFF and insights from leading festivals like TIFF and Cannes further emphasize the importance of incorporating interactive elements and ensuring value for all audiences.

Key takeaways include:

1. Exclusivity and Accessibility: While in-person experiences remain highly valued, hybrid models can address barriers related to geography and cost, expanding reach to younger and international audiences.
2. Interactivity: Enhancing engagement through features like live Q&A sessions, virtual networking, and behind-the-scenes content can increase the appeal of hybrid formats.
3. Market Trends: The success of hybrid models during the pandemic underscores their potential as a complementary approach, particularly for festivals aiming to grow their global footprint.

Recommendations

1. *Develop Engaging Hybrid Models*
 - Introduce interactive features such as live Q&A sessions with filmmakers, panel discussions, and exclusive behind-the-scenes content for online and in-person attendees.
 - Ensure high production quality for digital components to maintain the festival's prestige.
2. *Targeted Marketing*
 - Utilize social media platforms to promote the unique value of hybrid formats, appealing to younger, tech-savvy audiences.
 - Highlight the convenience and affordability of hybrid options alongside the exclusivity of in-person experiences.
3. *Collaborate with Regional Partners*
 - Partner with local cultural organizations and influencers to enhance regional accessibility and build stronger connections with underserved markets.

- Leverage partnerships to co-create tailored programming that resonates with diverse audiences.
4. *Enhance Audience Engagement*
 - Design hybrid festivals to include community-building elements like discussion forums, audience awards, and interactive voting mechanisms.
 - Foster connections between online and in-person audiences through synchronized events and shared platforms.
 5. *Measure and Adapt*
 - Continuously collect feedback from attendees to refine hybrid formats and address emerging needs.
 - Invest in data analytics to track engagement metrics and identify areas for improvement.

By implementing these strategies, film festivals can adapt to shifting audience expectations, ensuring cultural relevance while embracing technological advancements. Hybrid formats represent an opportunity to survive in a post-pandemic world and thrive by reaching new heights of inclusivity and global engagement.

Appendices

Appendix A

"Movie enthusiasts" focus group transcript summary

Recording Begins

Timestamp: 00:00-00:06

"Recording now. Once you speak, I'll pass the phone to you so it's easier to transcribe your answer. To start, could you tell us your favourite movie and why?"

Favorite Movies

Timestamp: 00:17-03:30

- "It's tough to choose just one because I have so many movies I'm passionate about. But right now, my favorite would be *Kung Fu Panda*. Since we're in China, it feels fitting. The humor, the animation—it's really impressive for its time, and of course, everyone loves Jack Black!"
- "I don't have a single favorite movie, but I love rewatching *Pitch Perfect*. It might be a bit cliché, but there's so much happening—singing, dancing, a great storyline."
- "One of my favorites to rewatch is *Gladiator*. It brings back nostalgic memories, especially since I first watched it with my brother. Revisiting it now brings a different perspective each time, so I never get bored."
- "For me, it's *The Parent Trap*. It's something I can watch again and again. It's heartwarming, funny, and I think Lindsay Lohan did such a great job."
- "My favorite is *Parasite* (2019). It's a masterpiece—the editing, cinematography. Each time I watch it, I notice something new, and the imagery and symbolism are amazing."
- "My favorite would have to be *Avengers: Endgame*. I grew up with these characters, so it felt like a perfect conclusion. In my opinion, it was the last great Marvel movie."
- "As a film enthusiast, it's hard to pick just one, but *Casablanca* is my favorite older film for its groundbreaking use of dialogue and cinematography. For more recent films, I'd go with *Kung Fu Panda 3*—the story evolved so well across the series."
- "I really enjoy Chinese movies, like Jiang Wen's *Let the Bullets Fly*. It's filled with metaphors about modern China, and it's one of my favorites."

Movie-Watching Habits

Timestamp: 00:00-08:05

- "For convenience, I mostly use streaming platforms like Netflix or Disney+. Theaters are usually reserved for big releases I'm excited about, like *Wicked* or a Marvel movie."

- "I also use streaming because it's accessible and flexible. If there's a movie I'm really looking forward to, I'll go to the theater."
- "It depends on the type of movie. If it's something cinematic, like *Gladiator*, I prefer the theater for the full experience. But for something casual, I'll watch at home."
- "Streaming is my go-to because of convenience, but for movies with great sound design, like *Oppenheimer*, theaters are a must."

Social Aspect of Movie-Watching

Timestamp: 13:17-14:14

- "For me, it's crucial. I try to keep quiet during a movie, but discussing it afterward with friends really adds to the experience."
- "I enjoy sharing comments during the movie with friends, especially for comedies or light-hearted films."
- "It depends on the movie. If it's serious, I prefer silence, but for something light, I love making fun of it with friends."

Interest in Interactive Screenings

Timestamp: 19:01-20:05

- "I haven't attended one, but I'd love to. It's always interesting to hear others' perspectives and ask questions."
- "I went once as a reporter and really enjoyed hearing other opinions. I'd definitely attend for my own interest next time."
- "I'd be open to it, but I'd prefer sharing my thoughts freely, rather than under pressure to provide feedback."

Factors Influencing Movie Choices

Timestamp: 24:35-25:11

- "For me, it's usually the reviews. If there's a lot of buzz—whether positive or polarizing—I'm more likely to watch it."
- "I usually go by my mood. Sometimes, I'll check reviews, but mostly I just go with Netflix's recommendations."
- "I don't look at reviews. I prefer watching interviews with the actors or director to get a feel for the movie."
- "Recommendations from friends and family are a big influence, but if I'm in a certain mood, I might search for reviews."

Willingness to Pay for Exclusive Screenings

Timestamp: 36:12-36:18

- "It depends on the cost. I'd be more likely to discuss movies with friends, but I might pay if it's a director I'm a big fan of."
- "I'm price-sensitive, so I'd probably wait, unless it was a director I'm really passionate about."
- "If it's for a renowned festival and the only time I could see the film, I might pay. But it would depend on the exclusivity."

Interest in International Film Festival Screenings Online

Timestamp: 38:30-39:22

- "Given the chance to see international films I wouldn't otherwise access, I'd probably rate my interest around an 8 out of 10 if there's interactive content like discussions."
- "For me, timing is a big factor—if it's in a different timezone and late at night, my interest drops to a 3. Otherwise, I'd give it an 8."
- "I'm not sure if I'd pay. I enjoy movies, but making specific plans around it is a stretch."
- "If I really care about the movie or director, I might spend money for early access, but otherwise, probably not."

Appendix B

"Casual viewers" focus group transcript summary

Recording Begins

Timestamp: 00:00-00:15

"So first of all, to kick things off, what is your favorite movie and why? In a couple brief sentences."

Favorite Movies

Timestamp: 00:33-04:02

- "Soul Surfer – Inspiring and motivational. An easy, relaxing watch that doesn't require much effort to follow."
- "Cars 2 – Animated, fun, and convenient for when tired but not ready to sleep."
- "Mamma Mia! – Combines musicals, songs, and favorite genres."
- "The Wandering Earth 2 – Chinese sci-fi movie showing collectivism and uniting countries to save Earth."
- "Luca – Lighthearted yet meaningful Disney movie about societal acceptance."
- "How to Train Your Dragon – Nostalgic childhood favorite with great music and character designs."
- "Legally Blonde – Female empowerment, casual viewing, and nostalgic comfort."

Movie-Watching Habits

Timestamp: 04:33-10:15

- "Usually, I go to the cinema only for movies I'm really excited about. Otherwise, I use Amazon Prime, or sometimes I stream illegally because I don't want to pay for multiple subscriptions."
- "I like the cinema for the experience, especially with friends. But for everyday watching, I use Netflix or Disney+. Sometimes I'll catch movies on TV if I stumble upon them."
- "I watch movies in the cinema for big releases or when I'm out with friends. Otherwise, I'll watch movies on planes since there's nothing else to do."
- "I rarely go to the cinema unless I'm really looking forward to a movie—like It Ends With Us because I read the book. I use Netflix because it's my parents' account, but I canceled Disney+ since I wasn't using it enough."
- "Going to the theater is usually a social thing if someone suggests it. Otherwise, I watch movies at home or on planes during breaks."
- "I go to cinemas for movies like Oppenheimer, where the IMAX experience is worth it. For everything else, I watch on my iPad or TV."
- "I use Netflix, HBO, Disney+, and sometimes flow TV. Watching with commercials has a charm—you can grab snacks during breaks."

Social Aspect of Movie-Watching

Timestamp: 10:50-14:02

- "I prefer watching movies alone because I like skipping scenes or speeding them up. I know it's disrespectful, but I'm impatient."
- "I don't enjoy watching alone—it's boring, and I lose focus. I'd rather watch with friends and talk during the movie or discuss it afterward."
- "I like watching with one or two people to share thoughts after the movie. My roommate and I started a tradition of watching movies together at night."
- "It depends on who I'm with. If someone asks too many questions, I don't want to watch with them again. But I like small comments and discussions after."
- "I don't like silence during movies—it's boring. I prefer fun comments while watching."
- "I like watching movies with others because it's about the shared experience. If no one's available, I'll just wait until I can share it with someone."

Factors Influencing Movie Choices

Timestamp: 14:42-20:31

- "I watch movies that are popular or recommended by friends. If it's around a theme I like, I'm more likely to watch it."
- "If a movie matches my favorite genres, I'd watch it, but I won't go out of my way to search for lesser-known ones. Subtitles are a barrier for me—I prefer movies in English or Hindi."
- "I wouldn't watch movies in a language I don't understand. Reading subtitles feels like too much effort."
- "I watch based on themes or movies similar to ones I've enjoyed. I'd be open to international films, but accessibility matters—I won't put too much effort into finding them."
- "I rely on online comments and recommendations to decide which movies to watch."

Interest in Film Festivals

Timestamp: 20:50-35:06

- "I've never been to a film festival, but I'd be interested if there were interactive Q&A sessions or panels with directors and actors."
- "I'd go to a festival if the venue were unique or fun, like a rooftop or outdoor setting. That would make it worth it."
- "I'd only go if it was affordable, and I'd be more inclined if food or merch was included in the ticket."
- "Festivals with extra activities—like food trucks or concerts—would attract me more. If it's just movies, I'd be less interested."
- "For a local festival, I'd go because it's cheaper and easier. If it's far, the experience has to be much better to justify the effort."
- "I'd pay a little more than a cinema ticket if the festival offered a variety of movies and a unique experience."

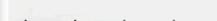
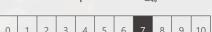
Willingness to Pay for Film Festivals

Timestamp: 25:35-28:48

- "On a scale of 1 to 10, I'd give it a 4. I wouldn't pay much unless it's affordable—like under 10 euros."
- "I'd give it a 7. If the venue and experience were great, I'd pay 15 to 20 euros."
- "If friends wanted to go, I'd join, but I wouldn't go alone. If food or merch were included, I'd pay more—otherwise, 10 US dollars is my limit."
- "Maybe 4 out of 10. I wouldn't travel far or pay much, but I'd go to a fun, local event for the experience."
- "If the venue, movies, and experience aligned perfectly, I'd give it an 8. I'd pay up to 450 (currency unspecified)."

Appendix C

Online film festival viewership survey was available at forms.office.com.

<p>1. Do you consider yourself a movie enthusiast/cinephile? *</p> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Maybe <p>2. How many movies did you watch this week? *</p> <input checked="" type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> Between 2 and 5 <input type="radio"/> More than 5 <p>3. What your preferred platform to watch movies on?(select all that apply)*</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Paid streaming services (e.g. Netflix) <input type="checkbox"/> Cinema <input type="checkbox"/> Live TV Streaming <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Un-paid streaming services <input type="checkbox"/> Festivals <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<p>3. What your preferred platform to watch movies on?(select all that apply) *</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Paid streaming services (e.g. Netflix) <input type="checkbox"/> Cinema <input type="checkbox"/> Live TV Streaming <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Un-paid streaming services <input type="checkbox"/> Festivals <input type="checkbox"/> Other <p>4. How often do you watch international movies? (i.e. not produced in English-speaking countries like the US, Australia, etc.) *</p> <input type="radio"/> Never, I only watch english movies <input checked="" type="radio"/> Less frequently than the english ones <input type="radio"/> The same as the english ones <input type="radio"/> More often than the english ones <input type="radio"/> I only watch international movies <p>5. What language do you watch movies in? *</p> <input type="radio"/> Original language (with or without subtitles) <input checked="" type="radio"/> Local dubbing	<p>4. How often do you watch international movies? (i.e. not produced in English-speaking countries like the US, Australia, etc.) *</p> <input type="radio"/> Never, I only watch english movies <input checked="" type="radio"/> Less frequently than the english ones <input type="radio"/> The same as the english ones <input type="radio"/> More often than the english ones <input type="radio"/> I only watch international movies <p>6. Whom do you prefer to watch movies with *</p> <input type="radio"/> Always alone <input type="radio"/> Usually alone <input type="radio"/> Alone or with other people (no preference) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Usually with other people <input type="radio"/> Always with other people	<p>6. Whom do you prefer to watch movies with *</p> <input type="radio"/> Always alone <input type="radio"/> Usually alone <input type="radio"/> Alone or with other people (no preference) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Usually with other people <input type="radio"/> Always with other people
<p>8. How many times have you attended a film festival in person? *</p> <input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> Once <input checked="" type="radio"/> I attended the same festival multiple times <input type="radio"/> I attended different festivals <p>9. What aspect attracted you the most about film festivals? (select all that apply) *</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Seeing films before public release <input type="checkbox"/> Interacting with filmmakers <input type="checkbox"/> Interacting with other film enthusiasts <input type="checkbox"/> The general atmosphere <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Networking opportunities	<p>10. Rate your overall experience *</p>  <p>11. Are you aware of festivals offering online screenings? *</p> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<p>13. Rate your overall experience *</p>  <p>14. Which of the following would increase your interest in online screenings? (select all that apply) *</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Lower ticket prices <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exclusive online content <input type="checkbox"/> Interactive sessions with directors or actors <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<p>16. How much would you be willing to pay to access a hybrid screening at a film festival (USD)? *</p> <input type="radio"/> For free only <input type="radio"/> Less than 10\$ <input checked="" type="radio"/> Between 10\$ and 20\$ (included) <input type="radio"/> Between 21\$ and 40\$ (included) <input type="radio"/> More than 40\$
<p>* Required</p> <p>To what extent do you agree with the following statements?</p> <p>17. Online screenings can replace the in person experience of a film festival *</p>  <input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree <input type="radio"/> Strongly agree <p>18. I would be more likely to participate in a film festival if it had online screenings *</p>  <input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree <input type="radio"/> Strongly agree <p>19. Online screenings lack the social and immersive experience *</p>  <input type="radio"/> Strongly disagree <input type="radio"/> Strongly agree		<p>15. What advantage of onl. Immersive Reader do you see? (Select all that apply) *</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility to international audiences	
<p>Next</p> <p>Page 1 of 3</p>			
<p>Tell us something about you!</p> <p>21. How old are you *</p> <input type="radio"/> Under 18 <input type="radio"/> Between 18 and 21 <input checked="" type="radio"/> Between 22 and 26 <input type="radio"/> Older than 26 <p>22. What gender do you identify as? *</p> <input type="radio"/> Woman <input checked="" type="radio"/> Man <input type="radio"/> Other <p>23. What is your nationality? *</p> <p>Enter your answer</p> <p>Back Submit</p> <p>Page 2 of 3</p>			

Appendix D

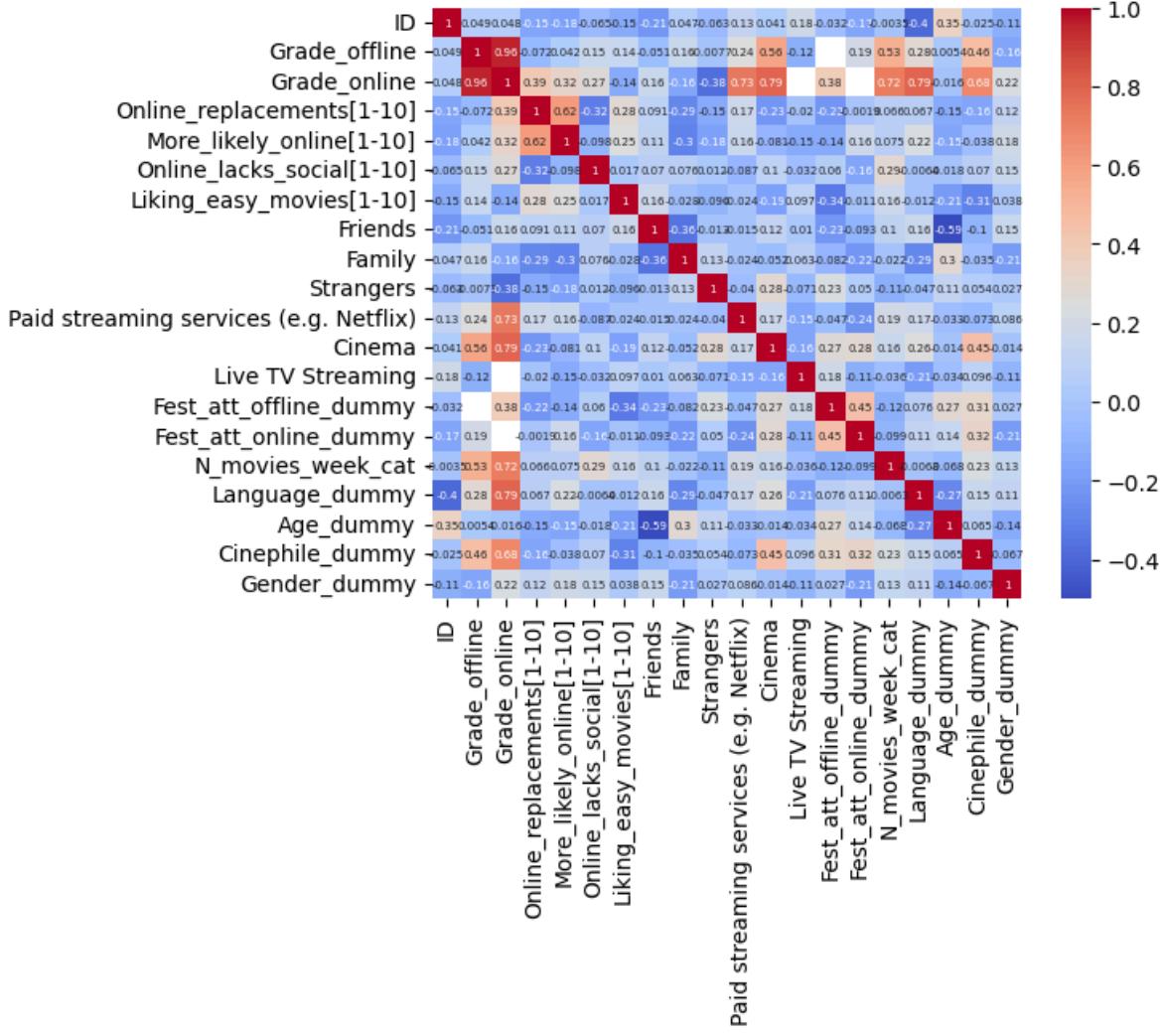
The data file for the online film festival viewership survey has been archived at github.com and available for access and download.

Appendix E

The python code script for the online film festival viewership survey analysis has been archived at github.com and available for access and download. Please make sure to download both the code and data file.

Appendix F

A correlation matrix of the results collected from the online film festival viewership survey



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