



Audience journeys into non-mainstream film

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Outline of talk

- Project background
- Research findings - what are the patterns of different journeys into non-mainstream film from the audience perspective?
- What do these patterns mean for audience development in terms of building and sustaining audiences?

Project background

- Beyond the Multiplex - an AHRC funded three-year project (2017-2020):
 - **Aim:**
To understand how to enable a wider range of audiences to participate in a more diverse film culture that embraces the wealth of films beyond the mainstream
 - **Context:**
Unequal provision of 'specialised' film and access to diverse film culture across the UK
 - **Focus:**
4 x English regions - North East | North West | South West | Yorkshire and Humber
 - **Innovative methodology:**
Policy analysis | Interviews | Focus groups | Large-scale survey
 - **Outputs:**
Website | Open-access data | Data visualisation and Search tools | Articles | Book

A question for you...

When and how did you develop a passion for film?

Journeys into non-mainstream film

Identifying patterns from an audience perspective

- Active introductions and sharing film experiences
- Building relationships with venues or platforms
- Education and learning
- Social environment - where you live and who you know
- Film engagement over the life course
- Disruptions and changes to everyday life

Active introductions and sharing film experiences

Introductions to different types of film play an important role in shaping people's film taste at different stages through the life course

- The significance of being introduced
- Sharing and developing taste across generations
- Being introduced to film by family members as a child or teenager
- Introducing children or teenagers to film as a family member
- Sharing and developing taste across friendship groups and with peers
- Recommending film to others
- Watching film together

Active introductions - family

...it was family...comes from my parents, maybe my mom. She introduced, quite consciously, like what we should watch.... One she told me to watch...it was like a German film, I think, and it was like an arthouse film, one of the earliest arthouse films I'd seen. And I think she told me to watch that, and it was like this...teenage girl who had deaf parents [Beyond Silence, 1996]. And the set-up is so wintery as well...you can see the message they're trying to tell you just by the role they set up, this girl, she's going through adolescence but her parents can't hear. And then they have this multiple, complex tension that they have to navigate... I think she gave me those films to... it gave me some license to deal with some anxiety.

Jing

25-34 | University student | North East

Active introductions - family

We used to watch endless musicals as children, you know, 'Carousel', 'Hello, Dolly!', Yellow Submarine...on these ropey old recordings, like on a video, so really in the '80s. And then, my parents divorced, and at my dad's house we watched more, we watch a lot of Laurel and Hardy [and] I think he was the first person that introduced me to like French cinema.

Caroline

35-44 | Creative Producer | South West

Active introductions - friends

...I saw lots of things that I would never perhaps have gone to by choice either, if I wasn't going with friends...for example, they used to get the lesbian and gay film festival come around, and so, one of my friends, I used to go with her, and we used to watch all sorts of things which I probably wouldn't have ever gone to see....

Sam

18-24 | University student | Yorkshire and the Humber

Building relationships with venues or platforms

Whether it is a local independent cinema, film society, television channel or online platform, overtime a relationship of trust can be built that creates a space for personal discovery...

- Spaces to broaden people's engagement with film
- Spaces for enjoyment and pleasure
- Spaces to learn about film history and wider film culture
- Spaces to share film experiences collectively
- Spaces to experience film differently
- Spaces to try out new films, to take risks and test individual taste

Venues and personal discovery

I first started watching what you might call independent movies when I was about 21...at a local film club, down at my local institute of higher education. And I just loved it and although I've not watched it continuously throughout my life or certainly 15 to 20 years, I've really, really got more and more and more involved....mainly because I started going to the cinema in Manchester...and there's now a new one called HOME. So I started going down regularly and really, really enjoyed it more and more and more and that led to me now I am 61. Film is just...just purely for pleasure.

Phillip

55-64 | Retired | North West

Venues, platforms and personal discovery

The first time I really got into cinema, into film, especially foreign film was when I was maybe 11 or 12 years old. And I used to have a cable box in my bedroom. And it only had like six channels but one of them was Film4. And I used to have trouble sleeping, I used to watch...I used to come across films on Film4, like, [at] two in the morning. And they were always the best ones, that's how I, kind of, discovered, French films...and Spanish films. And then, obviously, started going to Tyneside Cinema. And that, kind of, opened me up to...films”

Tom

18-24 | Graphic Designer | North East

Education and learning

Education plays an important role in shaping and broadening the knowledge and experiences that develop a person's film taste. Not only in terms of formal education about film but also the role that schools, colleges or universities play as spaces of personal cultural development...

- Experience, skills and resources
- Knowledge and confidence
- Space and time to learn and experience
- Opportunity for self-discovery
- Open to wider general cultural engagement

Education and learning

I probably started off watching very popular films...Disney and all the sort of traditional films that you know, you would have watched when you were younger. But then since growing up and I've seen a lot of theatre as well. So my taste has broadened... Broadened a lot and, especially, studying fine art.. by going to these courses I've been introduced to things that were a lot more kind of experimental... I would never probably watch if I hadn't done the fine arts, so I think that's definitely changed my viewing habits. Also being introduced to foreign film, you know, I wasn't really introduced when I was younger I don't think... Really but it's just something I've grown to kind of learn about [and] love myself.

Katie

35-44 | Development Coordinator | Yorkshire and The Humber

Education and learning

I didn't have the money or the inclination before I went to university to watch films unless they were on TV...B movies on the Saturday afternoon everybody fell asleep to. And with this undiscovered world, I realised when I went to university you can get access to lots of good films very cheaply. Liverpool University, where I went, they had a season ticket for films so like 50p a film, and that's where I caught up a little bit. I saw a catalogue of good movies that were shown at the university and that drew me then into exploring far more, and then I moved to London. My first job was in London, and...it's like an explosion of movies there.

Mark

55-64 | Undisclosed full-time job | North East

Social environment - where you live and who you know

Throughout people's lives they may find themselves in different situations that provide an opportunity for them to diversify the types of film they encounter. These situations can create opportunities for people to watch different types of films but they can also be limiting factors prohibiting people's opportunity...

- Where people live - opportunity through provision and access
- Who people know - shared interest, shared knowledge
- What interests people have - culture, sport, media, news, television, social media
- How much time and money people have

Social environment - where you live and who you know

From my childhood, I grew up in Poland so in Poland, close to my house, we had like you know the place you go and rent. So we had like you know like a memberships, that was me and my family were just watching loads of movies. I would spend like yeah my evenings watching movies. And then my friends were really into like independent stuff. So I would go more into that when I was growing up. So I moved to UK twelve years ago and then I started to have been to a group festivals that are fantastic. Leeds yes like a two day festival in Leeds once a year. They do short films documentaries, majority of independent stuff. So I would go because it also gives you opportunity to speak to directors.

Kasia

35-44 | Banking Customer Service Manager | North West

Social environment - where you live and who you know

My childhood was difficult, and if you got to the movies, it was a big event. You know, if you went to see a matinee or you went to... a film in the cinema, it was a massive event. It was really... Unusual. Like roast chicken was a special occasion (Laughs)...so that's how I saw movies....it was a form of escapism, you got a couple of hours of not thinking about...your life....It's always a bit of a surprise [to me] when anything happens in Newcastle...I'm never aware it's going to come on...well, my friends are all... well, it's mostly [my partners] friends really. They are all switched on because they are all artists...And they are all into the media...Where[as] I'm not from that environment, so it tends to be more established, sort of blockbuster stuff that I come across.

Dave

55-64 | Nurse | North East

Social environment - where you live and who you know

I'm literally in the middle of Manchester... a mile away from the centre. So that does give me an opportunity to see things that, perhaps, other people can't see. I don't particularly take advantage of it, but, yeah...Manchester is a very multi-cultural society anyway, you know...So, therefore, I do like to sort of push out beyond the normal stereotypical films, I think.

Mark

45-54 | Financial Manager | North West

Film engagement over the life course

In everyday life individual relationships with film and film watching patterns can change and develop throughout the life course. The value and meaning of film to people also changes depending the course of life.

Early years
School and education
Teenage years
Leaving home
First job
Working life
Travel and holidays
Moving to a new place
Bringing up children
Children leaving home
Grandchildren
Retirement

Change in life stage - university and self-discovery

I was studying literature at the time and...suddenly realised that, yeah, there was a whole raft of films and there was all sorts of different things out there [that] could be enjoyed in the same sort of way that I hadn't really had access to before, growing up in Bolton...only being around kind of mainstream, multiplex cinema.

Ben

25-34 | Journalist | North West

Change in life course - 'not on my radar'

When I was a child, either my parents used to take me to the cinema or I grew up in my early years in North Shields. And on a Saturday afternoon, there used to be a Children's Cinema Club. So we used to get dropped off at the cinema then. Me and my cousin, my brother and then picked up later on (laughs). And then similarly when we moved away, there was a Children's Cinema Club, but we lived abroad for few years on the Saturday morning and then again we used to go...my habits have changed because as I've grown older I've developed a liking for foreign language but when I was younger I would never have watched a foreign language film ever... It's not on my radar.

Margaret

45-54 | Charity Worker | North East

Change in life course - moving to a new place

I think it began watching television. I started to go occasionally to local cinema whenever I can to give me a treat, when I came up here [the Lake District], I joined a local film club which just started the month I moved here.

Andrew

55-64 | Engineer | North West

Change in life course - retirement

The first film I went to see, and I can't remember the title of the film, but it was a love story, and it had Alfred Molina in it, playing one part of the gay couple in New York, and it's got to be five or six years. No, it's like, maybe three or four years ago. I think it has been at Hexham, and then it came back again, and it was literally within the first month I retired, I went to see my sister who lives in Hexham, we had a coffee with [a friend], and got into the cinema, it was 12 o'clock midday...we went to the cinema in midday, and came out, there was an almost feeling of guilt when we got out of the cinema [because] it was dark, you know...

Peter

55-64 | Retiree | North East

Disruptions and changes to everyday life

Moments of disruption and change can provide space and opportunity for people to develop their relationship with film in new and meaningful ways.

- Episodes of illness or injury
- Stress
- Breaking-up/divorce
- Feeling socially or culturally isolated

Disruptions to everyday life - injury

I used to be a big sport player... I wasn't really a big film fan when I was kid and then, I broke my knee. And I was basically on the couch for six months... Nothing much to do, so I watched films... And so, em, I'd sit and watch films back when like blockbuster was a sort of thing... My mum would come home after work and she would have three films for me... she'd ask the guy, "Can you recommend three films?" And he recommended three films... My mum would go back and be like he likes this one, not this one, and this one and then, I eventually just started getting... films recommended for me... I would have been 14 going on 15... then. I just got soaked in film for six months.

James

18-24 | Student | North East

Disruptions to everyday life - illness

...Purely escapism. I had cancer and you don't want to sit there and think about it all the time...Watching a film just for an hour or two takes your mind off the bad time. It helps you refocus...especially if you watch an uplifting film, it leaves you uplifted...

Barbara

55-64 | Retiree | North East

Disruptions to everyday life - break-up

...I had difficult heartbreak, broke-up with someone, and I think I went to the cinema everyday for two weeks, and probably, twice a day when I had the time. It's really hard!...what I enjoyed the most at that time of my life is that, is to switch off my mind, and switch off every emotion. So that was very good for me at that time, and also because, I could see other people struggling - kind of, it's always, it's very, a question of struggle in movies, and I think I could relate to them, and it helped me but it's been something we do alone.

Jeanne

25-34 | Waiter / Freelance Writer | South West

Summary

Different journeys into non-mainstream film

- Active introductions and sharing film experiences / Building relationships with venues or platforms / Education and learning / Social environment / Film engagement over the life course / Disruptions and changes to everyday life

The values of engaging with non-mainstream film from the audience perspective

- Entertainment value
- Artistic and cultural value
- Social value and community role
- Film and enriching everyday cultural lives
- The political value of film
- Wellbeing, emotion and mood
- Educational value of film

Developing audiences

From an audience perspective journeys into non-mainstream film are shaped by many factors, these include...

- The way film is introduced into someone's life and how film is shared (e.g. social groups)
- Moments when film watching becomes important socially, culturally or emotionally (e.g. life-stages and moments of transition)
- The opportunities people have access to develop their film taste (the context of venues, places and events)
- Relationships with film are not demographically-determined (market segmentation)
- Relationships with film are not consistent or uniform (changes over life-course)

Audience development needs to create opportunities that...

- Sustain and build on-going relationships with audiences
- Develop solo or shared habitual practices and loyalty with venues, events or organisations
- Provide opportunities for new introductions - space for friends and family to share film
- Allow space for audiences to explore and develop their own personal interest in film
- Create opportunities for 'risk taking' and move audiences beyond their 'comfort zones'

Questions / Discussion

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