



REPORT ZOOM MEETING WITH FESTIVALS – 29/06/2020

MODERATOR: Margret Albers

SPEAKERS: Marta Nieto Postigo (Women's Film Festival Barcelona), Emily Jang (Busan Int'l Film Festival), Jitendra Mishra (#OneWorldChildren), Heleen Rouw (Cinekid), Xiaojuan Zhou (Attraction Distribution)

Presentation Marta Nieto Postigo (Women's Film Festival, Barcelona): How did it feel to be an online Festival?

Festival profile:

A small festival in June, programming approx. 100 films, reaching out to a local audience of 10,000 visitors + another 10,000 watching on VOD. This year the festival was organised as an online event.

Reasons for having the festival organised this year:

- To prove ourselves a small but resilient festival, as a political statement.
- To take care of the team and keep them together.
- To rethink the entire festival concept and to measure our resources accurately.
- To give visibility to the films and directors, and to foster access to quality content. VOD couldn't connect us with the international industry, but it could connect us with our local audience.
- To contribute to the many material that was freely available online throughout the entire crisis period.



Organising the children's section: limited to the films that we (= Drac Magic) distribute. BINTI and MARONA had their premiere online, hoping to create some buzz for a future release. Having the directors present online was highly appreciated by the audience.

Key learnings:

- Working with one virtual platform is better than working with five: we worked with Filmin, a big Spanish platform. We curated the programme more or less from their catalogue.
- Create special events and time-specific activities, like a festival opening, round tables, etc. We had presentations and interviews before every film. This was highly validated by our audience. Everything (conversations, round tables, tutorials, ...) was pre-recorded, but all was launched at specific moments throughout the festival.
- Ask your audiences for interaction (hashtags, comments, quizzes,...), make the virtual community feel alive and let them experience the festival atmosphere.
- Keep your festival image visible when going virtual.
- A lockdown does not necessary mean “a captive audience”.
- Feel the festival vibe within your team – take good care of your team, keep them motivated.

Positive facts & figures:

- We tripled our annual audience. We didn't expect 60,000 people to participate!
- We doubled our number of followers on social media, especially on Instagram. Every type of audience will use different types of social media.
- Media attention was massive, due to the postponing of other cultural events.

We did it once but why can we never do it again? Because:

- The situation has changed, everything is different now: the involvement of the audience is different, the reaction from the sales agents is different, budgets are different, ...
- It is frustrating not to be able to interact with your audience. We designed this edition as a way to get the films out there (online) but this edition wasn't designed as a festival with audience interaction, informal meetings, etc.
- We weren't able to bridge the technological gap.
- It was super harsh, you should only do this if you're well-prepared.

Q&A

- Was it a 'win-win' for both the festival and the online platform?

We both benefitted from each other. We found a new audience among their subscribers, and some of our supporters might become their new members. Filmin was the best choice. To reach out to a Spanish audience we needed geo-blocking (otherwise the discussion about film rights might have become much more complicated and expensive).

- Experience with sales agents and distributors?

We guaranteed the film would be part of the festival circuit. This helped us in dealing with sales agents. Having the films online for 15 days is something we could do only once, it won't work another time.

Reactions from participants:

- Maciej Jakubczyk: Putting a film online before its release might be problematic for a distributor. It will make it more complex for him to close deals with online platforms later.
- Jaroslava Hynstova & Julia Jarl & Heleen Rouw: As festivals we hardly had a problem in acquiring films, as long as we also guarantee physical screenings. Sales agents and distributors insist on cinema screenings. For the online content they ask for limitations in time and capacity: how long will these films be available and how many people can watch them?

Q&A with Emily Jang (Busan Int'l Kids & Youth Film Festival): Last preparations for an online / offline festival

In the BIKY festival approx. 10% of the films will be screened online, 90% will be screened offline as a physical festival. BIKY starts in 7 days, Emily and the team are currently making the last preparations.

The logo for BIKY features the word "BIKY" in a bold, green, sans-serif font. The letter "B" has a small orange circle on its left side, and the letter "I" has a small orange circle on its top side.

부산국제어린이청소년영화제
Busan International Kids & Youth Film Festival

Biggest challenge: keeping the festival a safe zone in terms of health and safety. Therefore different methods are used: the festival as a 'fenced' zone, a designated entrance gate, temperature control, a QR code offered by the government, bracelets, disinfection material, an instruction video, etc.

BIKY's advice: The sooner you take the decision about going online or offline with the festival, the better. Because you need to develop a stable online platform. Do it in an early stage to offer yourself more time to prepare.

Other challenges:

- How to promote a festival under such circumstances? We didn't have time to adapt our marketing plan. Moreover online access to our films is for free.
- How to persuade the filmmakers about having an online festival? They were often rather sceptical about protecting their content.
- Welcoming festival juries: Domestic juries will attend the festival in person, while international juries will watch films online and make their decisions in a Zoom conference.

Our biggest wish for this year: No cases of viral infection in the festival. BIKY is the first international event held in Busan this year. The success or failure of our festival might have a considerable impact on other events.

Presentation Jitendra Mishra (#OneWorldChildren project): A successful online campaign

#OneWorldChildren is a recent initiative that has become more than just an online campaign. Launched by Josep Arbiol (MICE, Spain) and Jitendra Mishra (SIFFCY, India) and with the approval of many leading children & youth film associations, #OneWorldChildren has the objective to empower and engage young people in turbulent times, through online workshops and masterclasses. After a successful pilot project an online media literacy programme was launched, reaching out to young people worldwide. Workshops were hosted in Spain, India, Russia, Iran, Belgium, which is a motivation to regularly continue these online activities, even after the lockdown period.



Jitendra Mishra: *"This informal online community contains no further obligations. With 'friends & family' in almost every continent, this is a truly global campaign, for global children by a global family. This is a labour of love and joy, it is not a mandate. Nobody owns this initiative, but everybody can contribute to it. It is our responsibility to act collectively, giving something back to society under the slogan: "Together we are stronger, together we achieve more, together we all win."*

The impact report: 43,000+ global audience reached through 5 different workshops. Workshops are already lined up for the next two months, while the organisers are looking for extra input. They can be contacted at owc2021@gmail.com.

Presentation Heleen Rouw (Cinekid): How will we do it?

Specific festival profile: both for a local audience and international professionals.

Pre-festival challenge: Cinekid was never in the first place a 'year round' event. But it had to become one. We had to reach out to our young audience (through Instagram stories, newsletters, etc.) very quickly and so we did.

Focus points for the festival:

- The online platform is the heart of the festival. This will enable us to be there for the children, whatever happens.
- Cinemas are open in the Netherlands, and for children social distancing is not even needed. This allows us to have the festival on 4 locations in Amsterdam, and in 6 other cities throughout the country, where we can organize "kids only" events, plus programmes for smaller children accompanied by adults.



How to go online?

- We're aiming for a playful, customer friendly user experience.
- Not every child has access to computer. That is why the online platform will not be designed primarily for mobile phones, but should be mobile friendly.

- We're currently building the platform, that should be up and running by the end of September. It will be like an "ecosystem" where you can watch films and participate in events. Daily live events should attract people to the platform, they'll create the need.
- We will try to translate our masterclasses, workshops, etc. into online formats.
- The content is not for free. We're currently developing our price strategy. We're not sure yet if we'll charge different prices for online and live events.
- After the festival, we will keep using this platform as a sustainable tool for presenting films, or supporting local initiatives, national premiers, etc.
- We're looking for ways to integrate our new media activities in this sustainable platform.
- Cross-selling: tickets for the physical festival might come with a discount for the online platform activities.
- We're building this online platform in cooperation with other festivals: Cinekid, IDFA, IFFR and Dutch Film Festival, with personalised front-sites for every festival. We might even be able to share this platform later and have it travelling to other festivals.
- We needed the expertise of outsiders to develop the platform. This changes the structure of your team. The project manager of the platform becomes a key figure in the organisation. The team will have to adapt to this situation and work very close together.
- A platform can help you to connect with your audience and to optimize the customer journey.
- Geo-blocking is a necessity.

Programme for professionals: will not happen as a physical event. We'll have a 3 days online industry forum and co-production market. And we'll add some fun elements to it, to make it more appealing. It might help us to expand our professional market.

Q&A

- The online programme will not be the same as the cinema programme. These 6 selected cinemas are willing to do more. We'll provide them with material to create a festival experience: interactives, workshops, live streams, etc. and probably films exclusively for cinema screen
- When getting interactive with children, you'll come across many privacy issues.
- Not all countries have the same social distancing policy for children.
- Audience satisfaction can even be measured online, for instance through heat maps that register cursor movement. The first and foremost challenge is to make your platform a fun place, it has to come alive as an online fantasy world.
- Producers planning to premiere their films at Cinekid didn't change their minds. We have as many titles in the programme as always, and distributors and sales agents still consider it as a physical event.

Presentation Xiaojuan Zhou (Attraction Distribution): A sales agent's point of view

A distributor like Attraction:

- Distributes children's films for money, representing filmmakers, producers and investors expecting a return for their investment.
- Has a big heart for children's films.

What is the value of festivals to a sales agent?

- Prestige (still in place under the current circumstances).

- Prizes and awards bring even more prestige (still in place under the current circumstances).
- Industry event can offer visibility to a film, and can sometimes even generate cash support for local distributors (still in place under the current circumstances).
- Festivals promote the producer's and filmmaker's profile (still in place under the current circumstances).
- For some films this is the only window to meet an audience (still in place under the current circumstances).



What are the challenges faced by a sales agent?

Theatrical and non-theatrical distribution come first, before digital distribution. But when putting films online on a digital festival platform, you are entering the area of digital exploitation. This could jeopardize a film's commercial exploitation. Festivals therefore may be perceived as "a distributor in disguise", often causing a loss for a sales agent, and maybe causing problems for local distributors.

Suggestion to the festivals: act like a VOD distributor, setting your brand in the market.

Current market situations:

Situation: Kids have never been so massively available online.

Advise: Create and maintain a long term Kids-VOD platform as a festival.

Situation: Multiple potentials have never been so exciting to reach the kids, locally, multi-territorially and even worldwide.

Advise: Some films will never be sold commercially and festivals may be their only chance.

Situation: This is a great opportunity to generate big data about the young audience's viewing habits that can be shared with producers and distributors.

Advise: Festivals have something to offer to the industry. Like prizes (prestige), visibility, voice-over or subtitle files, other child-friendly content in addition to the films, making of, etc. Festival audiences can even act like focus groups.

Q&A

- Building an online platform is difficult and financially risky. Would sales agents be willing to share this risk through creative financial constructions?

Probably not. Most of the revenues in sales are expected during the first months after a film's release. If it would take longer to collect the MG's that were promised to the producer, this causes trouble. Since such constructions would be time-consuming and would postpone the revenues, this would not be cross-effective for sales agents. It would not create a win-win situation.

Margret rounding up the meeting

These turbulent times come with plenty of challenges and opportunities, and it is up to us to grab them. We thank all participants for their encouraging and inspiring input in today's meeting. And we're looking forward to continue these Festival Zoom meetings in the future, together with you.

PARTICIPANTS: Betty Luan (China Children's Film Association), Hilde Steenssens (Filem'on), Gloria Morano (Luxembourg City Film Festival), Alicia McGivern (Dublin Int'l Filmfestival), Riina Ries (Just Film), Tessa van Grafhorst (Taartrovers), Remke Oosterhuis (Taartrovers), Maciej Jakubczyk (New Horizons Association), Levan Dvali (Taoba Int'l Youth Film Festival), Chiara Scurati (Cineteca Milano), Julia Jarl (BUFF), Yvonne Augustin (Zurich Film Festival), Martin Grund (Leeds Children's Film Festival), Debbie Maturi (Leeds Children's Film Festival), Karo Guetens (JEF), Iris Verhoeven (JEF), Gudrun Summer (doxs), Tanja Tlatlik (doxs), Ligia Kesisian (Kinodiseea), Mike Tait (Discovery Festival), Elisabeth Wenk (Goldener Spatz), Ziva Jurancic (Kinodvor), Jaroslava Hynstova (Zlin Film Festival), Jerzy Moszkowicz (Ale Kino), Tatiana Kauczor (AleKino), Boro Huertas (MICE), Josep Arbiol (MICE), Anna Schultka (KIDS Regio), Pantelis Panteloglou (Olympia Int'l Film Festival), Paula Berzina (Riga Int'l Film Festival), Sanja Zanki (Four Rivers Festival), Stina Ask Mikkelsen (Kristiansand Int'l Children's Film Festival), Anna Asplund (Oulu Int'l Children's Film Festival), Lina Uzkuaityte (Int'l Vilnius Film Festival), Louise H. Johansen (Athens Int'l Children's Film Festival), Sergio Marquez (Inflatable Cinema), Cristiana Giaccardi (Bellinzona Castellinaria Festival), Matija Sturm (CEE Animation), Laura Caesar (KUKI Festival), Uli Tondorf (Flensburger Kurzfilmtage), Nora Lakos (Cinemira Festival), Olaf Wehowsky (Lucas Film Festival), Michael Harbauer (Schlingel Festival), Martina Lassacher (Vienna Int'l KinderFilmFestival), Aska Kishi (Kineko), Volodymyr Diagilev (Dytiatko Int'l Festival), Felix Vanginderhuysen (ECFA), Gert Hermans (ECFA)

Report: Gert Hermans
29/06/2020