

**“THERE IS FUTURE IN OUR YOUTH”:
THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH
COMMUNICATION TO ATTRACT A
YOUNGER AUDIENCE**
CASE STUDY: FILM FEST GHENT

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“After this one, I will never ever ever write a thesis again!”- me, graduating in February 2021 in Iberoromance Literature and Languages, with a thesis concerning the films of Pedro Almodóvar. Well, here I am once again, with my second master’s thesis about Film Fest Ghent, this time from a marketing and communication perspective. I guess the circle is complete now: film has been and always will be my biggest passion, next to my love for language, writing and literature. And I couldn’t be more proud of all the achievements I’ve reached and all the skills I’ve learned this year: from communicative obstacles, to a real marketing research and presenting the result at a big congress, I did it all!

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Samenvatting

Jongerencommunicatie is een onderwerp dat zowel taalkundig, als in de sociologie en de marketing uitvoerig werd bestudeerd. Aangezien jongeren de klanten (of bezoekers, in het geval van deze thesis) van de toekomst zijn, zoeken naar nieuwe manieren over hoe ze meer jongeren kunnen aantrekken en aan zich kunnen binden. Dat was ook het geval bij Film Fest Gent. Jaarlijks bereikt het grootste filmfestival van België 100.000 bezoekers. Toch merken ze in hun bezoekersaantallen dat jongeren hun weg nog niet genoeg vinden naar het festival. Daarom onderzoekt deze thesis met welke marketingfactoren Film Fest Gent jongeren blijvend aan zich kan binden als bezoeker. In de voorbije maanden, hebben we een uitgebreide literatuurstudie ondernomen, waarin onderwerpen als jongerencommunicatie, jongerenmarketing, huidige jongerentargeting bij Film Fest Gent en merkwaarde (*brand equity*) aan bod kwamen. De bedoeling was om in dit hoofdstuk te weten te komen wat het onderwerp 'jongeren' precies betekende, en om bepaalde factoren te vinden die zouden kunnen helpen om meer jongeren aan te trekken bij Film Fest Gent.

De kennis over voorgaande onderwerpen namen we mee naar het kwalitatieve onderzoek. Dat bestond uit enerzijds een aantal informele interviews met medewerkers van Film Fest Gent, en anderzijds 4 focusgroepen, met jongeren uit de leeftijdscategorie 18-25 jaar. Belangrijk om te vermelden hierbij is dat de informele interviews werden geleid als gesprekken, zonder voorbereide vragen, om de flow van het gesprek zo optimaal mogelijk te houden. Hierbij werd de huidige jongerenwerking en -communicatie van Film Fest Gent bevestigd, en wat de toekomstige doelen zijn. De focusgroepen hadden evenwel wel een interviewgids, zodat de gesprekken beter geleid konden worden. In de focusgroepen werden allereerst het imago en de perceptie van Film Fest Gent bevestigd. Daarnaast kwamen onderwerpen als sociale media, Explore Zone en jeugd tijdens Film Fest Gent aan bod. Tot slot was er nog een luikje met 'andere ideeën', waar de participanten konden brainstormen over nieuwe ideeën voor het festival.

Aangezien Film Fest Gent een van de grootste filmfestivals is in België beseft het dat het moet blijven inzetten op jongeren om zo het publiek van de toekomst te kunnen garanderen. Deze thesis probeert een aantal concrete handvaten aan te reiken om dit op een goede manier te doen. Allereerst moet het festival inzetten op zijn merkwaarde bij de doelgroep 'jongeren'. Op basis van de literatuur, de informele interviews en de focusgroepen focust het laatste hoofdstuk dus op enkele aanbevelingen voor Film Fest Gent. Die aanbevelingen werden opgesplitst in twee soorten: 'offline

meer jongeren informeren en aantrekken' en 'online meer jongeren informeren en aantrekken', omdat we merkten dat de mix van online en offline marketing nog steeds heel belangrijk is en de focusgroepen dat ook aantoonden.

Summary

Youth communication is a subject that has been studied extensively in linguistics, sociology and marketing. Since young people are the customers (or visitors, in the case of this thesis) of the future, new ways of attracting and retaining more young people are being sought. This was also the case with Film Fest Gent. Belgium's biggest film festival reaches 100,000 visitors every year. Yet they notice in their visitor numbers that young people do not find their way to the festival enough. Therefore, this thesis examines with which marketing factors Film Fest Gent can keep on binding young people as visitors. In the past few months, we have undertaken an extensive literature study, in which topics such as youth communication, youth marketing, current youth targeting at Film Fest Gent and brand equity were discussed. The intention was to find out what the topic 'young people' exactly meant and to find certain factors that could help to attract more young people to Film Fest Gent.

We took the knowledge about the previous subjects to the qualitative research. This consisted of, on the one hand, a number of informal interviews with employees of Film Fest Gent and, on the other hand, four focus groups with young people in the age category 18-25 years. It is important to mention here that the informal interviews were conducted as conversations, without prepared questions, in order to keep the flow of the conversation as optimal as possible. The current youth work and communication of Film Fest Gent was questioned as well as future goals. The focus groups did have an interview guide, however, so that the conversations could be better guided. In the focus groups first of all the image and perception of Film Fest Gent was questioned. In addition, topics such as social media, Explore Zone and youth during Film Fest Gent were discussed. Finally, there was a section with 'other ideas', where participants could brainstorm about new ideas for the festival.

Since Film Fest Gent is one of the biggest film festivals in Belgium, it realises that it has to keep focusing on young people in order to guarantee the audience of the future. This thesis tries to provide some concrete tools to do this in a good way. First of all, the festival needs to focus on its brand value among the target group 'young people'. Based on the literature, the informal interviews and the focus groups, the last chapter therefore focuses on some recommendations for Film Fest Gent. These recommendations were divided into two types: 'inform and attract more young people offline' and 'inform and attract more young people online', because we noticed that the mix of online and offline marketing is still very important and the focus groups also demonstrated this.

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1 Introduction

In the course of ten weeks, I was working as an intern for Belgium's biggest film festival, Film Fest Gent (FFG for short). I was a team member of the press and communication department, which deals with both the communication of Film Fest Ghent and the World Soundtrack Awards (WSA). This rather small department consists out of two permanent members and deals with both internal and external communication. Each year, the festival takes place during ten days in the month of October. During this period, it goes without saying that the press and communication department play an important role. At the same time, the communication with press and public remains equally as essential during the rest of the year. That is why the communication team willingly accepts internships and temporary volunteers. FFG relies on the help of interns and volunteers, otherwise, the festival wouldn't even survive.

Film Fest Gent is a cultural, non-profit organization, with an international orientation. Since its first edition in 1973, FFG has grown into the largest film festival in Belgium with more than 100,000 visitors every year. For decades, the festival has had a special focus on film music, which makes it a unique and much-loved event on the film festival calendar. That is the reason why since 2001, Film Fest Gent has presented the World Soundtrack Awards, a variation of prizes for the best soundtracks in the film and television industry. From 2013 onwards, when the festival underwent a transformation with a new name, each edition of the festival focuses on cinema from a specific place. For example, American Independent Cinema in 2013 and French cinema in 2014 (Film Fest Ghent). In 2023, the festival will celebrate its 50th edition, with a specific focus on the past editions.

In the mission of Film Fest Ghent, it can be read that the festival "wants to contribute to the development and spread of film culture". Furthermore, it "highlights filmmakers and the collective experience of cinema. Presenting their films to a diverse audience of professionals and film lovers, the festival offers a platform to upcoming as well as established talent" (Film Fest Ghent). More specifically, it has always been the goal of FFG to reach a broad and diverse audience of film lovers. The festival aims to attract spectators of all ages: from children, to the young, to the old, and everything in between. To reach each specific target audience, FFG divides each film into 'sections' and 'tags', the difference between both is that a film can receive only one section but can have multiple tags. In that way, the festival's visitors can make a choice more easily. As already

mentioned, each section and tag are targeted on a specific audience: e.g., the sections ‘Official Selection’ and ‘Classics’, and the tags ‘Explore Zone’ and ‘Plus Parcours’.

Each year, the festival aims to fulfil the needs of their visitors. As stated by the organisers, the festival already reaches a large audience of different kinds of visitors. At the same time, they want to continue to renew their festival. That is why FFG wants to target specific groups in order to attract more visitors and possibly even a new kind of audience. In this thesis, the main focus will be the target group defined by ‘youth’. More specifically, we will focus on the group between 18 and 25 years old. We already know that this target audience requires a different approach, and therefore a specific kind of communication. This leads us to the following research question:

- What are the marketing determinants that determine the attractiveness of cultural programs for youth aged 18-25?
 - o How can a youth label (Explore Zone) within a broad cultural programme (Film Fest Gent) attract more visitors within the young target audience?

Film Fest Ghent will thus serve as a case study about youth communication. To come to answers to the questions above, I will read an extensive body of academic literature. This literature addresses youth and communication, youth and social media, how Film Fest Ghent already targets youth and brand equity. At the end of this chapter, we will have enough information to hop onto the practical part of this thesis: the qualitative research.

The next chapter will briefly discuss the methodology and the data. In chapter four, the literature is confronted with reality, in two big parts. First, we want to know what the festival already does. This has been answered by conducting informal interviews. In addition to that, we delved into the target group: what do 18 to 25 year olds actually think about Film Fest Ghent? What are good measures? Which measures can still be improved? What do 18 to 25 year olds like in regard to social media? These, and a lot more questions, will be asked and answered in this chapter. After this extensive chapter, a conclusion will be formed, and practical recommendations will be given that Film Fest Ghent could consider.

2 Literature

2.1 Youth and communication

A lot of scholars have already pointed out that the academic literature about youth culture and communication is very ambiguous. We must keep in mind that the group of young people labelled as ‘youth’ is not a homogeneous target group (Godfroid 2021). On the one hand, Bucholtz (2002: 526) notes that the youth category “lacks clear definition and in some situations may be based on one’s social circumstances rather than chronological age or cultural position”. What is certain, on the other hand, is that “youth as a cultural stage often marks the beginning of a long-term, even lifelong, engagement in particular cultural practices, whether its practitioners continue to be included in the youth category or not” (Bucholtz 2002: 526). That is why organisations recognise the need to engage with young people as early as possible, in order to ensure a long-term engagement.

In addition to that, it is important to state the difference between ‘adolescence’ and ‘youth’, because this thesis particularly focuses on the latter. Bucholtz (2002: 532) states that senses as growth, transition and incompleteness are historically embedded in the concept of adolescence, while youth highlights age not as a trajectory, but as identity, where identity is intended to invoke neither the familiar psychological formulation of adolescence as a prolonged “search for identity”, nor the rigid and essentialized concept. In that perspective, it can be interesting to keep this difference in mind while targeting ‘youth’. Moreover, there does not exist a correct definition for the concept of ‘youth’, however, the United Nations define ‘youth’ as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Therefore, they declare that it is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence (United Nations). Again, we can recognize the ambiguity of the concept.

As stated in the introduction, in this thesis, we will focus on ‘youth’, which will be used interchangeable with the term ‘young people’. Here, we narrowed the scope of the term down: ‘youth’ or ‘young people’ will refer to the people between 18 to 25 years old. The reason for this narrowing down is simple: as this research is very limited, a broad target group was nearly impossible to include. Important to mention here is that the ‘Explore Zone’ tag focusses on young people between 18 and 28 years old. Furthermore, the festival itself mentions that the people older

than 25 years old are already very well reached, that is why they would like to focus on the younger group of people.

Anyone who targets young people knows that it can be a challenge to get through to them. In reality, there are an abundance of guidelines and measures that a company can take in order to reach more young people on their social media. But the most important “rule” to remember is that youth communication is a matter of trust (Godfroid 2021): “Anyone who succeeds in empathising with their motivations and their world wins the game of trust”.

2.2 Youth and marketing

In both marketing and popular business literature, youth has been considered as the prototypical example of a global segment, as we can see in Kjeldgaard & Askegaard (2006: 231). Furthermore, Kjeldgaard & Askegaard state that “the combination of emergent identity articulation and its expression through style constitutes the last dominant dimension of youth, namely youth as cultural innovation. Youth is, for good reasons, thought as the adult culture of the future [...]” (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard 2006: 233). In effect, the perspective of youth as the adult culture of the future returns not only in scientific literature, but also in marketing and in popular business literature, as we stated above. That is why a lot of organisations want to focus on young people, binding them to their organisation.

On top of that, “youth behaviours are driven by how young people perceive the behaviours of people like themselves” (McKenna et al. 2000: 9). Where are there more young people present nowadays than on social media? Ramnairan and Govender (2013: 1886) observe that “marketeers across the globe are recognizing the importance of understanding consumer behaviour as a key element of ensuring success. As consumers are moving away from traditional media to new media platforms such as social media, they have become more demanding, more time driven, more information and content intensive and highly individualistic”. Thus, youth consumers are drawn to social media platforms primarily because it serves as a platform for entertainment and socialization, as opposed to traditional media (Ramnairan and Govender 2013: 1887). Therefore, there is a great opportunity in marketing, publicity etc. via social media.

But which social media should a cultural organisation like Film Fest Ghent use, especially to target youth? In this respect, we should look at the most recent imec.digimeter (2021), issued annually by

the Flemish government. Since 2009, the imec.digimeter has been charting the trends surrounding the possession and use of media and technology in Flanders, and shedding light on attitudes and expectations regarding new technologies. The results and findings are based on a survey of 2,981 Flemish people aged at least 16 (Schuurman et al 2022: 11). The results of this report are extremely interesting for this thesis, since they show the reality of what media and what technology the Flemish youth uses. In this research, we will particularly focus on the results of social media. Moreover, we will compare the results from the imec.digimeter (2021) with what we've learned from the interviews and focus-groups in the next chapter of this thesis.

According to the imec.digimeter (2021: 38) no less than 98 % of 16-24 year olds use social media, or as they state “the younger you are, the more intensive your use of social media is”. While the use of Facebook is decreasing in this segment, this is compensated by the increasing of other social media like Whatsapp and Instagram (2021: 39). Moreover, we can see that there is great potential for TikTok: 62 % of 16-24 year olds use the application at least once a month. Important to mention here is that this number is only growing: “TikTok therefore seems to be breaking the hegemony of the Meta platforms [such as Facebook and Instagram e.g.] more and more among young people. The largest growth is reported by 16-24 year olds (62% adoption, +12), while a quarter of 25-34 year olds also use TikTok at least once a month.” This is an interesting evolution, as we stated earlier, as young people adopt behaviour of their environment. In other words, if young people are present on certain social media, there is a greater chance that their friends will be too and will adopt their behaviour. Furthermore, the social media mentioned in the imec.digimeter can be used as a marketing strategy to attract more youth.

2.3 How does FFG already target youth?

As we touched briefly in the introduction of this research, Film Fest Ghent already takes a few measures to target youth, the most important being the tag ‘Explore Zone’. The festival itself describes the tag the following way: “Specifically for Gen Z (and for some millennials) we’ve gathered a selection of films and tagged them as Explore Zone. Follow this tag through the festival programme and discover quirky coming-of-age stories, talented actors in their first big part, our society through the eyes of the next generation, but also universal stories about love, family and identity” (Film Fest Ghent). This tag is meant to ease the festival experience of young people and

makes a selection of 16 movies, since there are a lot of films to choose from, which can be overwhelming. On top of that, there is the Explore Zone Jury: five young people between the ages of 18 and 26 years. During the ten days of the festival, this group gets the chance to judge the films from the Explore Zone tag. At the end of Film Fest Ghent, the jury presents the Explore Zone Award, which gives the winning film a free media campaign in *De Morgen*, *Knack Focus* and on *Studio Brussel*. Winning films of the Explore Zone Award have been *Pleasure* from Ninja Thyberg (2021), *Monos* by Alejandro Landes (2019), and *Call Me By Your Name* by Luca Guadagnino (2017).

In 2021, the festival created a leaflet of the Explore Zone selection for the first time. This leaflet was meant to attract and inform more young people, but according to the communication team, it was not a great success. In the qualitative research of this thesis, the participants were asked about this brochure, what they thought of it and if they would be attracted to visit the festival because of it. The results of these questions can be found in chapter four. The leaflet itself can be found as an annex at the end of this thesis. A year earlier, in 2020, the festival created FFG Tips on Instagram. This hashtag (#FFGTips) showcases the personal choice of a few famous Belgian visitors of the festival, such as Dominique Van Malder, Griet Op De Beeck and Sioen. In a short video, the interviewed person describes the film they are most looking forward to seeing at Film Fest Ghent. To give an impression of the concept, a few screenshots were added as an annex to the end of this thesis.

In a way, this concept can be seen as a first step of the festival in influencer marketing. As we discussed in 2.1, nowadays, social media are omnipresent. In addition to that, social media influencers are equally as present in social media domains (Gräve 2019: 1). That's why the concept of influencer marketing is already being adopted by a great number of companies in their marketing strategies. There are a few factors why companies should think about this type of marketing. Influencer marketing can be defined as "a marketing strategy in which social media influencers enter into paid partnerships with brands to promote their product (and therefore brand) on the influencer's personal social media page" (De Veirman et al. 2017: 5). These collaborations can look very different: from a few posts to promote one particular product to collaborations where the influencer is an ambassador for the brand for a long period of time.

2.4 Can brand equity help to attract more young people?

Now, what can we do to combine all the above (youth, social media, marketing)? Or, in other words, what kind of concept can help to attract more young visitors to a festival like Film Fest Ghent? If we combine and research all the factors above, we can come to the conclusion that they all influence the brand equity. Aaker (1991) suggests that brand equity consists of brand associations (image), brand loyalty, brand awareness and other assets, as described below. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that brand equity is “a multidimensional construct and any measurement attempts must recognize its different dimensions” (Faircloth et al 2001: 63). That is why, for the empirical part of this thesis, we wanted to consider every dimension of brand equity, and not only brand awareness. We think that this can be a great tool for Film Fest Ghent to consider, since all these factors are at the base of their marketing strategy to attract more youth. More specifically, the literature described in this chapter will serve as a starting point for the qualitative part.

A well-known concept in marketing literature is brand awareness, which refers to “how aware customers and potential customers are of your business and your products” (Gustafson and Chabot 2007). In the light of the research question of this thesis, brand awareness is extremely important, because it ultimately means that your brand is well-known and easily recognizable. In essence, the more aware consumers are of your product and your brand (or in our case: Film Fest Ghent, the festival), the more likely they will buy from you, or here: the more likely they will visit the festival (Gustafson and Chabot 2007). There are a few important components of a plan to develop brand awareness, some more evident than others, as Gustafson and Chabot (2007) listed:

- Identifying and understanding your target customers;
- Creating a company name, logo, and slogans;
- Adding value through packaging, location, service, special events, etc.;
- Advertising;
- After-sale follow-up and customer relations management.

In reality, the target audience of Film Fest Ghent is simple and complex at the same time. They describe their audience as “a diverse audience of [film] professionals and film lovers”. In addition to that, they want to support the “spread of film culture to a broad and diverse audience”. And finally, they want to encourage “visual and media literacy among all ages” (Film Fest Ghent website). Film Fest Ghent already reaches that broader audience: each year, more than 100,000

people visit the festival. At the same time, it has difficulties reaching the target group of young people (18 to 26 years).

In that light, it can be a good idea to also investigate the brand association, the brand loyalty and the brand image of Film Fest Ghent in the specific target group of 18 to 26 year olds, next to the brand awareness. Sasmita and Norazah Mohd (2015: 277) define brand association as what is “related to information on what is in the customer’s mind about the brand, either positive or negative, connected to the node of the brain memory. Brand loyalty, on the other hand, is related to “the user’s repetitive buying behaviour over time with a positively biased emotive, evaluative and/or behavioural tendency towards a branded, labelled or graded alternative or product choice (Sasmita and Norazah Mohd 2015: 278). A last concept is brand image, which is related to “the consumer’s use of the brand to reflect their symbolic meaning of consumption and identity in self-expression” (Sasmita and Norazah 2015: 278).

3 Methodology and data

What do the theoretical frameworks and definitions from the literature part of this thesis mean for the actual youth communication at Film Fest Ghent? What are some good measures that they are already adopting and what measures can be taken to improve the communication, and therefore, attract more youth? This is what we want to find out in the empirical part of this thesis. First, we conducted a few informal interviews with some key players of the organisation, to figure out what is the current policy at Film Fest Ghent in regard to youth communication. Despite not being very formal or official, these interviews, or rather, informative talks, were necessary to get to know how the organisation actually works, on which social media they are already present, what they plan on doing in the future concerning youth communication, etc. These interviews were merely informative and therefore were not registered. A part of the information gathered by these interviews is already embedded in 2.3 from the second chapter, but we will get in more detail in 4.1.

In addition to these interviews, there was no better way to collect data than by actually talking to the targeted group: the youth between 18 and 25 years. That is why we decided to conduct some focus groups, rather than an enquiry, because we wanted to gather raw and honest opinions. More specifically, we wanted to analyse qualitative in-depth data, rather than an enquiry that does not go as deep. To do so, we conducted 4 focus groups, each consisting of 5 to 6 participants. We tried to target a diverse group of participants, which resulted in two groups of young people who never visited the festival, and vaguely heard of it, and two groups of young people who already visited Film Fest Ghent, as a volunteer or as a film lover. On top of that, all the participants were between 18 and 25 years old. In that way, new and fresh ideas could be deduced from different perspectives. The questionnaire used for the focus groups was added at the end of this thesis. These focus groups all took place during the months of May and June 2022, and they lasted for about an hour. One of the focus groups was conducted online, another at Sint-Lucas in Ghent and the two last ones at the offices of Film Fest Ghent.

All of the information as described in chapter 2 of this thesis was used to compose the questionnaire. One of our first goals was to get to know what the participants already knew or thought about FFG, e.g. “What are the first words that come to mind when you think of FFG?” and “What is the type of audience that you’d expect during the festival?”. In short, the goal was to find out the brand equity

of Film Fest Ghent, as described in 2.4, more specifically, we wanted to find what the current image and perception of FFG is by young people. In addition to that, there were specific questions about Explore Zone, the tag that was especially created for young people and about social media. In that way, this thesis can form a clearer view about what young people between 18 and 25 years actually want to see on social media of a cultural player like Film Fest Ghent, or briefly, what they would expect under ‘youth communication’.

To facilitate the structure of the next chapter, I tried to follow the structure of chapter 2. Doing so, it is easier to compare what is already known in (scientific) literature to the reality. First of all, there will be a subchapter concerning the informal interviews that were conducted at the beginning of my internship at Film Fest Ghent. Then, the next subchapter focuses on the focus groups. Factors like brand equity (consisting of brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and brand image), online and offline media and other ideas will be discussed. At the end of this chapter, we hope to have a clearer image of what young people think of Film Fest Ghent and what they would hope to see in the future.

4 Analysis and results

4.1 Informal interviews

From my first day on, it was clear that there are different types of communication at Film Fest Ghent, depending on the target audience. For three months, I worked at the press and communication department and my task was to, among other things, proofread articles (mostly in Dutch), compose mail campaigns (in both Dutch and English) for different types of audiences and work on the back end of the website. Interestingly, all of these tasks consisted of writing bodies of texts for different types of audiences, like press, industry, students and others. Logically, every type of audience needs their own type of language use and this was very clear since the beginning of my internship. Furthermore, in the light of my thesis, it was good to know that young people (like students etc.) are already being addressed in a specific way.

In addition to that, I wanted to know what the current measures are in regard to what is already being done for the target group of youth. Like we discussed in 2.3, there are already a few measures that are being taken to reach this target group. These measures can be split up into offline and online measures, some lie in the middle of both. First of all, there is the tag 'Explore Zone', for people between 18 and 26 years old. This tag exists both online, as offline, since it can be found on the website during the festival and is used to ease the festival experience and choices of youth, and also has had a leaflet during Film Fest Ghent 2021. As the brochure was not a success, the festival team has stated that there will no longer be one for the next edition of the festival, at least not physically.

Likewise, and not unimportant, Film Fest Ghent is present on social media like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Soundcloud, Spotify, YouTube, Vimeo and LinkedIn. While the last five are for a public that already knows the festival, the first three can be used to attract a new audience. Here (on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter), the festival posts regularly, but the communication team has stated that there isn't a real strategy or fixed schedule here. They post when there's something to post, for example when there is important news from the film industry world. Best practices of other companies show that it is a good idea to post consistently (Fan et al 2017), so it can be a good idea to focus more on this.

On the other hand, the festival is still not present on TikTok, but is aiming to be in the next few months. With this goal in mind, the team is currently brainstorming about concepts that could be

popular on TikTok, but that at the same time reflect the spirit of the festival. Like we explained in 2.2, TikTok has great potential in the youth segment, which is proven by the imec.digimeter (2021). During my internship at the festival, I participated in brainstorming about the TikTok account and its content. The conclusion here was that the Film Fest Ghent must stay as authentic as possible and that it won't mindlessly participate in TikTok trends that have nothing to do with the festival. In other words, the content must be film oriented. With the 50th anniversary of Film Fest Ghent in mind in 2024, it was also an idea to create content with throwbacks to the earlier editions. Looking at literature about this subject, it is certainly a good idea to, as a brand, stay authentic in order to attract more youth (Leppänen et al 2015: 6).

This takes us to the offline media. Another place where Film Fest Ghent wants to be more present is the day-to-day life of students. They want to, for example, be present at events like De Gentse Feesten or Student Kick-Off to reach more brand awareness. Next to that, it is also an option to have publicity in the "Guido Zak" or the "Guido Gids": the more someone gets in contact with something from the festival, the more they would want to investigate it online, maybe resulting in a visit to the actual festival in October.

4.2 Focus groups

To get a clearer image on what the target group actually would want to see or would expect to see at Film Fest Ghent, I organised a few focus groups in the next part of this chapter. There were four focus groups: two focus groups with people who never really visited the festival, and two other focus groups with people who already visited the festival or did some volunteer work during Film Fest Ghent. All the participants were between 18 and 25 years old and the same questions were asked (see annex for the interview guide). What we discussed in the literature part of this thesis, was questioned during the focus groups in one way or another, forming an actual toolbox for Film Fest Ghent: what does the target group (youth) want and why? What ideas do they have for the festival?

First of all, the brand equity of Film Fest Ghent was investigated, including brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty (if there is any) and brand image. Furthermore, I wanted to find out what the participants thought of what the festival is currently doing to reach them and their peers. Other factors such as online and offline media also formed a part of these conversations. To top that all

off, a greater part of the focus groups focused on new ideas: what would attract them to finally visit the festival and why?

4.2.1 Image and perception of Film Fest Ghent

First of all, every focus group opened with a brief introduction of the participants and what they did in their daily life to break the ice. This was followed by a question about what their connection to film and potentially to Film Fest Ghent was. Almost every participant had some connection to film, but in a different gradation: while some only watched films sporadically, in a homely context with their parents or friends for example, others actually had a passion for film and visited the cinema once or multiple times a month. Interestingly enough, 'a passion for cinema' was not only an answer for the focus groups where the participants already knew Film Fest Ghent, but also in the other focus groups. Another popular answer was watching films through streaming services: almost every participant had a subscription to Netflix or other streaming platforms and watched films through it. While streaming services were popular, the general consensus was that the catalogue of films is often too big and that this leads to stress when choosing a film. The diversity in the groups (loving/liking films vs having nothing to do with it) was very interesting for the continuation of the conversations. It was striking that how younger the participants were, the less they were interested in movies (or culture in general).

When asked how the participants make a choice when they choose a film, there were different types of answers. Like we mentioned, the wide range of films on streaming platforms, but also in cinemas, can be very overwhelming for a young viewer or festival visitor. With that in mind, they almost immediately started giving tools that helped them in making their choices. Most of them liked choosing films through lists, which can be on websites like BuzzFeed, but also on social media like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. In general, it was interesting to see that all the participants liked the idea of a list that can bring some guidance in an abundance of films. That is exactly what Explore Zone aims to do too. Furthermore, some of the participants (generally the older ones) mentioned that they like reviews in newspapers or online. Typically, they said that they will watch a movie more quickly when it has good reviews.

The image and perception of Film Fest Ghent was asked to the participants by giving them post-its on which they had to write three words that came to mind when thinking of the festival. The first

words that came to mind were ‘cinema’, ‘international’, ‘films’ and ‘multilingual’. In short, these are words that were expectable. In addition to that, some rather unexpected words were ‘big event’, ‘alternative/difficult films’ and ‘elite’. Here, some of the reasons why the youth doesn’t visit Film Fest Ghent (yet) revealed themselves. They mentioned that they think that Film Fest Ghent is for an older, more experienced public and that, because the public consists of ‘older’ and ‘more experienced’ visitors, like press, they feel intimidated to watch a film there. At the same time, most of the participants do not mind the more alternative choice of films, they state that this is the strength of the festival.

Another factor that was mentioned when talking about the image and the perception of Film Fest Ghent were the entrance prices. Interestingly, the participants that never visited the festival all thought that the prices to watch a film at the festival were extremely high and that it was expensive. As one of the locations of the festival is at Kinopolis Ghent, they thought that this automatically meant that the prices were the same as the ticket prices during the year at Kinopolis. Furthermore, as most of them are students, they said that they did not want to spend a lot of money when going to the film, explaining that this is one of the reasons why they did not go to the cinema as often as they would want to. Because of this, I mentioned the *10-rittenkaart* from Film Fest Ghent, which is a 10-ticket pack you can buy for € 75 (a normal ‘discounted’ ticket for people under 26 costs € 11). On the one hand, everyone thought that this type of discount is a good thing for students. On the other, the participants found that the pricing was still too high.

4.2.2 Social media

The next set of questions in the focus groups were about social media, both personal social media, as the social media of Film Fest Ghent. In general, every participant had some sort of social media: all of them had an account on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. A part of the ‘older’ participants (older than 22 years old) also had Twitter, while, in general, none of the ‘younger’ participants (below 20 years old) had an account there. What was interesting was that, although all of the participants had an account on Facebook, all of them considered it as a medium that is no longer used a lot: they only use it because they have access to Messenger, on which they can talk to their friends. This is an effect that the imec.digimeter (2021) also mentions: the use of Facebook is descending. At the same time, all of them stated that they used Instagram the most.

As opposed to what the imec.digimeter (2021) states, TikTok was not really popular among the participants. Again, the younger the participants were, the more chance there was that they had an account on TikTok. When asked why the other didn't have a TikTok account, they answered that "TikTok is too addictive, and that they didn't want to spend hours mindlessly scrolling on the application" (an 18-year-old participant), or that "TikTok is for the younger generation" (a 22-year-old participant). The minority of the participants that did have an account on the medium, liked that TikTok is "more personal than other applications": the more videos you like, the more the platform knows about your taste and likings, thus, the more 'tailored' content you will receive.

Like we mentioned, Film Fest Ghent is already present on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The participants were surprised that Film Fest Ghent didn't have a TikTok account yet. They stressed that a lot of their peers (and younger) already had TikTok and that this can be the way to attract younger people to visit the festival. When I asked what they would like to see specifically on the TikTok account on Film Fest Ghent, they referred to the lists we talked about earlier. For them, it would be a good idea that the festival would offer lists to their followers, as well as behind the scenes. More specifically, lists along the lines of "watch these movies if you liked this movie" or a behind the scenes video of what happens at Film Fest Ghent would attract them.

4.2.3 Explore Zone

As this thesis wants to find out which marketing factors can attract more youth at Film Fest Ghent, a big part of the focus groups focussed on the 'Explore Zone' tag of the festival. First of all, I wanted to know if all the participants knew 'Explore Zone' or had at least heard of it. The participants who never visited the festival had never heard of the tag and didn't know what it consisted of. Some participants who had only once visited Film Fest Ghent neither knew the tag. The other ones, who had visited the festival multiple times or who had volunteered, did hear of the tag. But, although the tag was not known to everyone, there was a general consensus that the name did not cover the load. Some of the participants were confused. Here, we can conclude that the more the participant was involved with the festival, the more they knew about the different types of tags like Explore Zone.

As we mentioned, the festival takes a few offline and online measures to promote the tag. One of the goals of the focus groups was to find out what the participants thought of the measures and if they were enough. In a first instance, I showed the Explore Zone brochure to the groups. They had

the opportunity to have a quick look and to then share their opinion in group. Next to the Explore Zone brochure, I also showed the brochure that appears yearly in Knack Focus. On the one hand, according to the participants, the Explore Zone brochure wasn't an added value. Just as the name of the tag, it wasn't clear from the beginning that the brochure was made for young people. On the other hand, the brochure in Knack Focus was considered as an added value by the participants. Moreover, the most of them looked at this brochure as if it was a gadget that they can collect each year.

However, something that the participants brought up is that the social media of Film Fest Ghent should target more on youth. The participants that followed the social media accounts of the festival mentioned that they could not really see a line in, for example, their Instagram. An idea that came up in two of the four focus groups was the visibility of the Explore Zone tag on the photos and videos posted in this context. A participant said that "they could do the same [create some sort of sticker/logo] for posts about the other tags". In that way, "every tag would be recognizable" and "it could be clearer which posts are meant for youth and which ones are meant for the broader audience". Of course, they also concluded that it could be difficult for Film Fest Ghent to target one group, because of the diversity that they are after.

In this part, we focused again on TikTok. Yet again, the participants mentioned that there could be a chance in the Explore Zone tag on TikTok. Because they already said that the Explore Zone tag was a bit vague, I asked them what they wanted to see on TikTok that could help attract more youth and make the tag more visible/well-known. One of the first ideas that came to mind were short snippets of movies from the Explore Zone selection. At the same time, they would like it if "there were some more well-known films thrown in the mix". Even those who already knew the festival and visited it, said that it can be a barrier to only have a list of "unknown films". Bringing in some films that are more well known, or even classics, could be a solution according to the participants. This could be then mentioned on the TikTok account of Film Fest Ghent, to attract more young people and to awaken their curiosity.

In general, the red line in this part of the focus groups was that Explore Zone is not known well enough. Most of the participants had never heard of it. At the same time, they thought it was an interesting concept. Furthermore, they liked that the tag helped them to choose the films that they could see at the festival. This was a 'problem' that returned in every focus group: the abundance of

films on platforms like Netflix, but also in cinemas and on Film Fest Ghent, can be overwhelming and is often considered as a barrier. To sum up, young people like lists and would want to see more types of lists, also of more popular films and not only of alternative ones, that could persuade them to visit the festival. In addition to that, they like a mix of online and offline media. A big brochure where all the movies are listed with all the synopses is still a plus, while a little brochure with only the Explore Zone Films is not.

4.2.4 Youth at Film Fest Ghent

The last theme of the focus groups tied all of the previous themes together: youth at Film Fest Ghent. Of course, there was ‘Explore Zone’ on which we focused, but we also wanted to know what the youth thought of their representation at Film Fest Ghent, and what the festival could do better. Here, there was a big difference between the answers of the participants that already had been to the festival and the ones that had not. More specifically, the people who had already been to the festival knew that there are not only a lot of young visitors, but that there are also a lot of volunteers and temporary employees that are between 18 and 25 years old. The people who had never been to the festival thought that the audience consisted of older, more mature film lovers.

In general, the idea still prevails that Film Fest Ghent is a festival for an older, experienced public, while the festival actually wants to target and attract more young people. The participants told that “they would have liked to have heard about the festival during their time at university or at college”. Film Fest Ghent could be promoted at the beginning/end of some lessons or it could be “an interesting cultural outing for student associations”. According to them, the barrier for the festival could be lowered this way, because they didn’t know that the festival was meant for such a broad public.

Another factor all the focus groups concluded on were the posters and offline publicity of Film Fest Ghent. Every year, there is a poster that represents that year’s focus of Film Fest Ghent. In 2021 for example, this focus was Greece, and the campaign image of that year was that of a Greek director. When asked if the participants remembered this campaign image (because they had seen it in the street for example), most of them could not remember it, except for the participants that had been at the festival previously. Again, in the offline media, the participants stated that they wanted to see “that the festival is for a broad public, youth included”. Knowing that there is the ‘Explore Zone’

tag, they thought that it could be an idea to make the tag more popular through the posters of Film Fest Ghent. Worth mentioning is that in the focus group that took place at the office of Film Fest Ghent, one of the participants (24 years old), and thus still considered youth by their age, stated that she isn't a student anymore. She mentioned that a lot of the communication of FFG is targeted for students, and that she felt left out. In that light, according to the participants, FFG must highlight that their festival is not only for students, but for all young people, including the ones who are already working.

4.2.5 Other ideas

A big reason why these focus groups were conducted is that it is a great way to generate new ideas. This is also why some of the focus groups were organised at the offices of Film Fest Ghent. That way, the participants could see how the offices (which are situated in the Leeuwstraat in Ghent, behind the Kinepolis) are structured. In addition, the focus groups in the office of Film Fest Ghent reflect the open attitude of the festival towards youth and new ideas. In the last part of the focus groups, the participants were invited to brainstorm about new ideas for the festivals.

The first idea that came to mind in all of the focus groups was that Film Fest Ghent, and the Belgian culture sector in general, could cooperate more with education. More specifically, a participant stated that she “would have loved hearing about Film Fest Ghent during her first year at university”. What she meant were the talks that some organisations and associations give before or after some courses at university or college. As some of the participants only had heard vaguely of Film Fest Ghent, they all concurred that this would be a good idea, or as one participant said, “the interest of students could be sparked and incited”. On the question of what they would want to hear during such a talk, there were a few answers. First of all, they would want some information about the festival, like when and where it takes place, what films will be shown etc. Then, they would like to get the feeling that young people are welcome there, as a visitor or even as a volunteer.

In connection to the previous, there was not only an idea to be more present in universities and colleges, but also in the day-to-day life of students and young people. Film Fest Ghent could be more present at other cultural events that are frequented by youth, a few of the examples that the participants gave were FACTS, De Gentse Feesten and Student Kick-Off. One participant (23 years

old) stated that “the cultural sector has to work together more”, because, after all, “they are one sector and all of them would be benefited in attracting more youth.

As we discussed in 4.2.1, young people often struggle from ‘choice stress’ (*keuzestress* in Dutch), resulting in feeling overwhelmed. As a solution to this problem, the focus group gave some ideas. Here, the list idea made a comeback: the participants would like lists where they can see what films are at that moment being shown at Film Fest Ghent. According to them, these lists should have connections to other films that are liked by their peers, resulting in lists like “If you liked *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, you certainly will like these 10 films that are being showed during FFG2022”. Another idea to minimise the ‘choice stress’ is showing short teasers or trailers of, for example, the films in the Explore Zone selection, on Instagram or TikTok. According to a participant, the young festival visitor “should be triggered by something they see on the social media of Film Fest Ghent”.

While we did not discuss influencer marketing in the literature, since it is a subject on which an entire research could be based, the matter did appear in the focus groups. More particularly, it appeared, when talking about the promotion of FFG and in the discussions regarding the abundance of films and the stress that comes with that. Next to the lists from the previous paragraph, a younger participant (18 years old) said that the choice of an influencer or well-known person would matter for her. This is a subject that returned in the other focus groups: the personal film choice of an important person (like an influencer) could be barrier reducing.

4.3 Brand equity: literature vs reality

In the literature part of this thesis, we discussed that brand equity is important, and that it is multidimensional and therefore consists of different factors like brand associations, brand loyalty, brand awareness. It is really important to keep all of these factors in mind when targeting a specific group. First of all, the brand awareness of Film Fest Ghent could be considered quite good in the target groups that it already reaches: the older, more experienced film lover that returns every year. They know what FFG does, when it takes place etc. At the same time, the brand awareness in the youth target group could be greater, as we can conclude from the focus groups.

As regards to the image, in other words, the brand association of Film Fest Ghent, there is still a general idea that the festival is targeted for an older, more experienced group of people. While the

festival wants to “spread film culture to a broad and diverse audience” (Film Fest Ghent), it is clear that the audience could be even more broad and more diverse by targeting the right groups. Furthermore, it is interesting that the people who already had visited the festival, had a more positive brand association than the people who never visited. By increasing the positive brand association, for example by targeting youth via social media, Film Fest Ghent could attract more 18 to 25 year olds.

In addition to that, there was a general consensus between the participants who already visited that they would visit the festival again in the future. This is an excellent example of brand loyalty: if the visitor had positive emotions during the last edition of Film Fest Ghent they visited, like some of our participants, they will most likely visit the festival in the future. Therefore, Film Fest Ghent has to organise even more youth targeted events during the period of the festival. In the focus groups, the participants gave some examples of what they wanted to see at the festival, from films to events.

5 Conclusion

In this thesis, we tried to find an answer on the following research question: “What are the marketing determinants that determine the attractiveness of cultural programs for youth ages 18-25?”. First, there was a chapter regarding the (academic) literature that was already available about this topic. Here, we focused on different aspects that had to do with the research question on how to attract more youth: first, of course, youth and communication, where we zoomed in on what we can understand under ‘youth’ and on youth culture. Then, because youth is a very specific and complex target group, we delved into youth and marketing. After that, we enlisted what Film Fest Ghent already does to target youth. We gave a list of current measures, but of course, it is impossible to give an exhaustive list of everything. Lastly, to conclude the literature chapter, we delved a bit deeper in brand equity, which is a popular marketing measure.

After that, it was time to put this knowledge into practice. In the second chapter, we discussed the type of investigation I would conduct and the type of data I got out of it. First and foremost, I wanted to have more details on what Film Fest Ghent already did for youth. To do so, I conducted a few informal interviews with the employees at Film Fest Ghent. In addition to that, it was also time to interview the target group of 18 to 25 year olds. To be more specific, 4 focus groups were organised during the months of May and June. During these focus groups, there were specific questions asked concerning the image of Film Fest Ghent, the current communication of Film Fest Ghent, what could be done better, etc.

Next, in the third chapter, the actual interviews and focus groups were discussed. To give the chapter more structure, we first discussed the informal interviews. Then, we followed the structure of the focus groups and split the data into specific themes: the image and perception of Film Fest Ghent, social media, Explore Zone, youth at Film Fest Ghent and other ideas for the festival. That way, we worked our way from a broader topic to more specific ones. We concluded the focus groups with the ‘other ideas’, as some of the focus groups gave some interesting ideas that could not be subdivided under one of the other topics. Next to that, it was interesting to see that there was a big difference between the ages of the participants, especially between the ‘younger’ and the older’ participants. Here, the difference between generations can really be sensed. Last but not least, we compared what we learned in the literature about brand equity with what we see in reality. This comparison provided some interesting insights that we would not have had without the literature.

In reality, it is interesting to see that the participants, and thus, youth, still prefer a mix of online and offline targeting. On the one hand, they like that a company is present on social media and that there is a lot of effort put in it. On the other, it is clear that the target group likes to see publicity of the brand 'in real life', or rather, in the streets but also in their day-to-day life. That's why the recommendations in the last chapter will focus on both online and offline marketing, combining the factors that youth like best.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Inform and attract more youth: offline

As a first step, Film Fest Ghent should be brought to the attention of the target group, as the focus groups showed that there is still a general misconception that the festival is for older people or for professional film lovers. Film Fest Ghent must look further than the festival itself and its social media, it has to branch out. This could be helped by organising informative talks at the beginning of an academic schoolyear, a month before the festival usually takes place. To be more specific, current young visitors or employees could go to classes or events to explain what Film Fest Ghent is, for whom it is, which films will be played, etc. The diversity of the festival should be highlighted during these informative moments, as well as the fact that everyone is welcome.

The most important offline channel of communication among young people still appears to be word of mouth. That is why events like Student Kick-Off, Gentse Feesten or FACTS also appear to be ideal to influence the image of Film Fest Ghent. It is known that these events attract a lot of young people, and that the visitors of those events tend to tell their friends about the things they did there. By being present at these kinds of events, with a stand or a promotional team, Film Fest Ghent can show to the target group that they are a young, open-minded festival, open to everyone. In order to ensure that Film Fest Ghent will certainly be remembered, it could work with some incentives. This could be a gadget, like a sticker or a t-shirt. That way, Film Fest Ghent as a brand will become more visible because other young people will get curious as to where the gadget came from, and they will tell their friends about it, post it on social media, etc.

As to the Explore Zone tag, it could be an idea to incorporate this brand in the other branding of Film Fest Ghent. During the informative moments or the presence at big events, Explore Zone should be mentioned in one way or another. The focus groups made clear that the format is still not known by youth who never visited the festival, so the events above can be an opportunity to do so. At the same time, the festival should highlight that young people are not only welcome at the Explore Zone selection, but at Film Fest in general. During the focus groups, the participants made clear that they don't like it when they are put into one category (e.g., 'youth'), as the expression 'youth' sometimes can have a negative connotation. Doing so, the target group will feel much more welcome and at ease at the festival.

6.2 Inform and attract more youth: online

In connection to what we said in the conclusion of this thesis, online marketing is as important as offline marketing. That is why this part will focus on the online measures that Film Fest Ghent can take, next to the ones they are already taking. A first step that should be considered on the social media of Film Fest Ghent is consistency. All of the participants indicated that they would like it if the festival posted more frequently and more consistently. Next to that, the type of posts has to be consistent also. When posting a post about Explore Zone or specifically for youth, this should be visible on the content. This can be done by incorporating a specific logo for Explore Zone on the content, and by creating a hashtag.

Another great way to inform and attract more youth will be the creation of a Film Fest Ghent TikTok account. The imec.digimeter (2021) has proven that there is great potential in this medium, since it is growing every day and more young people find their way to the application. Although TikTok is a popular medium, the focus groups have shown that Film Fest Ghent should be authentic in their posts on the platform. This means that they should not mindlessly engage in popular trends on TikTok if these have nothing to do with their brand, as this would work in the wrong direction. The same goes for Reels on Instagram: the key is to be authentic, staying true to what Film Fest Ghent is.

In regard to the type of content that Film Fest Ghent should post on their social media, the focus groups also gave some great ideas. According to the focus groups, the posts should help young people in making their planning for the festival. They like lists where they immediately can see what genre a film is, if it is like other films they have already seen, etc. At the same time, it is clear that young people like quick content. More specifically, they would rather like a teaser than a long trailer. It would be an opportunity for Film Fest Ghent to focus on this type of content: short and attractive.

6.3 Future investigation

This last part gives some light on how future investigation could help Film Fest Ghent even more to attract more young people. In this research, we focused on which marketing factors can attract more youth. But, as we saw in some of the focus groups, there are still some negative factors and barriers left that might discourage a young person from attending the festival. That is why it could

be noteworthy to do research on how the influence of negative factors and barriers could be mitigated to increase attractiveness. A subject that we touched briefly during the focus groups and that could be considered is the specific group of youth between the ages of 18-25 that do not study anymore and are already working. This is a subcategory of youth in our society that don't belong to the 'student' group, but also don't feel like they belong to the 'adult' group. A case study on how Film Fest Ghent would reach this group would be interesting and very valuable.

Another subject that could be investigated is the diversity at the festival, but not from a perspective of age, but rather from a migration perspective or even a LGBTQ+ perspective. Are these groups represented well enough at Film Fest Ghent? Are there existing measures that target these subgroups of youth? This, and much more, could be investigated in the future. To conclude, the target group of 'youth' is very complex. This thesis mostly focussed on the youth that is studying, but there are of course a lot more groups to be considered.

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8 Annexes

8.1 Questionnaire focus groups (Dutch)

Hallo iedereen, ik ben Iana en allereerst wil ik jullie bedenken om vanochtend/vanmiddag/vanavond tijd vrij te maken voor deze focusgroep. Ik zal mij eerst even kort voorstellen en uitleggen waar mijn onderzoek over gaat. Ik ben een studente meertalige bedrijfscommunicatie en ik ben momenteel volop bezig met mijn stage bij Film Fest Gent. Mijn thesis staat volledig in het teken van mijn stage. Ik wil ook nog eens benadrukken dat er geen foute of juiste antwoorden zijn, ik wil jullie eerlijke mening horen.

Voordat we beginnen, is het oké voor jullie als ik dit gesprek opneem? Ik zal de opnames enkel gebruiken om mijn notities verder aan te vullen.

1. Introductie en interesse in films

- We zullen even kort een voorstellingsronde doen. Hierbij mag iedereen zijn/haar naam vertellen, vanwaar hij/zij komt, en wat zijn/haar link is met film. (Vb: Ik ben Laura, ik kom uit Antwerpen, en ik ben studente taal- en letterkunde en films hebben mij altijd geboeid)
- Hoe komt jullie interesse in film naar voren in jullie vrije tijd? (cinema, films bekijken, naar festivals gaan, ...)
 - Hoe is deze interesse voor film ontstaan? Bv. vanuit je familie, vanuit activiteiten, reizen, bezoeken, vrienden, studies...

2. Imago en bekendheid Film Fest Gent & Explore Zone

- Kennen jullie Film Fest Gent?
 - Heeft iemand FFG al bezocht?
 - Wat is je indruk van het festival?
 - Welke woorden komen er bij je op als je aan Film Fest Gent denkt? Jullie mogen elk 3 kernwoorden geven.
 - Volgt er iemand een van de sociale media kanalen van Film Fest Gent?
- Wat voor imago heeft FFG?

- Welke drie woorden komen er bij je op?
- Hoe zou je de leeftijd van de huidige bezoekers van FFG omschrijven? Welk soort publiek komt er naar FFG?
- Waarom zou je FFG bezoeken? Hoe zou je het festival beschrijven aan iemand die er nog nooit van gehoord heeft?
- Vinden jullie het goed dat FFG aanwezig is op sociale media? Wat zou er op de sociale media van FFG zeker aanwezig moeten zijn?

3. Jongeren op Film Fest Gent

Zoals jullie weten is iedere organisatie tegenwoordig wel op zoek naar een verjonging van het publiek. Dat is ook zo bij Film Fest Gent. Er wordt echter wel al gefocust op jongeren, maar we voelen dat er nog niet genoeg jongeren interesse hebben in het festival. In dit laatste stukje van onze focusgroep gaan we in op de manieren waarop FFG jongeren aantrekt en kan aantrekken.

- Heb je al gehoord van Explore Zone?
 - Weet iemand wat dit precies inhoudt?
 - Kort uitleggen wat Explore Zone precies is.
 - Wat vind je van het idee?
- Brochure Explore Zone tonen
 - Wat vinden jullie van deze brochure?
 - Zouden jullie zo'n brochure willen ontvangen? Waarom wel/niet? Zou je het gebruiken om je keuze voor een film te maken?
- Hoe zou jij meer jongeren aantrekken naar FFG? Heb je specifieke voorbeelden van andere festivals, organisaties, ...?
- Heb je nog andere ideeën?

8.2 Explore Zone brochure: p.1- p.7 (Film Fest Ghent)





WHAT DO WE SEE WHEN WE LOOK AT THE SKY



LES OLYMPIADES

Ga en ontdek

Ik ken het gevoel. Film Fest Gent maakt zijn programma bekend en met veel goesting struin je door de vele films, concerten, talks ... Niet evident. Een overrompeling van indrukken: onuitspreekbare namen en bizarre trailers voor schijnbaar woordloze arthousemysteries. Het is een hele opgave om in een festivalselectie van zo'n omvang goed en wel je weg te vinden.

Met de tag 'Explore Zone' helpen we een handje. De collectie van zestien films die volgt, richt zich op jou - op de vele jonge studenten en artiesten die Gent tot zo'n sprankelende stad maken. Het zijn films die gaan over jong zijn: over katers en gebroken harten, over seks en seksualiteit, over vriendschap en nieuwe oorden. Over zoeken ook.

Bovenal zijn het stuk voor stuk films die geen compromissen sluiten. Ze zeggen wat ze willen zeggen, zonder een blad voor de mond te nemen. Soms doen ze dat heel zacht, soms met veel bloedvergieten. Sommige films dromen luidop, sommige placeren zonder veel scrupules een doffe vuist op je kaaklijn.

Alle zestien zijn ze volkomen uniek.

Aan jou om ze te ontdekken.



Michiel Philippaerts,
programator Film Fest Gent

In samenwerking met **StuBru**

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Jury Duty

Vijf jongeren tussen 18 en 26 mogen tien dagen lang film vreten en beslissen over de winnaar van de Explore Award. Een onvergetelijke ervaring!

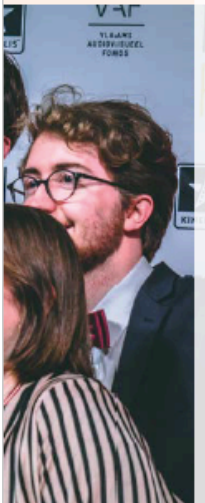
"Lid zijn van de Explore Zone Jury betekent tien dagen films verslinden, vriendschappen voor het leven smeden en het festival vanop de eerste rij meemaken. En uiteraard ook geestdriftige deliberatie." - Alexander De Man, Explore Zone 2018



Explore Zone Jury 2017.



Explore Award Ceremony in 2017, met als winnaar *Call Me By Your Name*.



"Je ziet boeiende, bijzondere films over jonge mensen, voor jonge mensen en (vaak) gemaakt door jonge mensen. En met genoeg koffie en een strakke planning kan je ook heel wat andere films meepikken. Ik ontdekte hoe heerlijk het is om de hele dag in een donkere cinemazaal en al napratend op de stoep voor de bioscoop door te brengen."
 - Bo Boulliaert, *Explore Zone 2017*



Julia Ducournau, Gouden Palmwinnaar in 2021 voor *Titane*, krijgt de Explore Award uit handen van de jury in 2016.



Explore Zone Jury 2020.

"Tien dagen gratis films kijken op het grote scherm en die met andere cinefiele leeftijdsgenoten beleven, bespreken en belonen. Zalig!" - Masha Berkers, *Explore Zone 2016*

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A Chiara

Jonas Carpignano

- 17.10 • 19:30 • Kinopolis 8
- 19.10 • 14:30 • Kinopolis 4
- 21.10 • 22:30 • Kinopolis 1

ITALY - FRANCE-
2021, DCP, 87'
CAST | Swamy Rotolo,
Claudio Rotolo, Rosa Caccamo
MUSIC | Dan Romer, Benh Zeitlin
LANGUAGE | Italiaans / Italian
SUBTITLES | Nederlands / Dutch
Frans / French

6 | FILM FEST GENT 2021



Je hebt familie en je hebt Familia, met hoofdletter 'F'. Die eerste hangt samen door liefde en bloed, de andere kleeft aan elkaar door eer en bloederige hebzucht. Deze twee werelden clashen in *A Chiara*, de derde en laatste film in Jonas Carpignano's trilogie over het leven en lijden in de verpauperde Zuid-Italiaanse regio Calabrië. De Italiaans-Amerikaanse cineast boort via door de goegemeente verguisde bevolkingsgroepen naar de onderbuik van de Italiaanse samenleving, in zijn kenmerkende grauwe, neorealistische en intuïtieve documentairestijl. Na de portretten over de Afrikaanse vluchtelingen en de Roma in Calabrië, richt Carpignano nu zijn camera op de lokale maffia in de streek. De vijftienjarige Chiara leidt een typisch tienerleventje in Gioia Tauro, maar ontdekt het dubbelleven van haar perfecte papa. En ze gaat op zoek naar nog meer antwoorden. Dit prikkelende portret over de frictie tussen familie en Familia geeft een fikse zwier aan zowel het coming-of-age- als het maffiagenre en eindigt de eigenzinnige Calabrië-trilogie dan ook op een indrukwekkende noot.

"In his Calabrian series that began with *Mediterranea*, about the North African refugee influx, and shifted to a Romani community in *A Ciambra*, writer-director Jonas Carpignano brought unvarnished naturalism to vivid snapshots of a place where poverty, racism and crime to a large extent shape the social fabric. He completes the trilogy with *A Chiara*, for the first time focusing on a young female protagonist and delivering what's arguably his most accomplished and affecting film to date. A too-protracted final act notwithstanding, this chronicle of a keen-eyed teen's loss of innocence builds to a shattering climax." - *The Hollywood Reporter*

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