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Eventization and Targeting in Czech Theatrical Distribution after 1989

During the 1990s, Czech theatrical distribution and cinemas found themselves in a new situation characterized by a declining interest in cinema-going, the privatization of both distribution companies and a number of cinemas, and changes in offerings, as coveted screenings of films from the capitalist West were no longer restricted by censorship and a 30 per cent limit on films in distribution.¹⁾ The latter part of the 1990s was defined first by the introduction of multiplexes to the Czech Republic starting in 1996, which gradually stabilized film attendance, and, then from 1998 onwards also by the arrival of art-house cinemas, which marketed themselves in opposition to the culture of multiplexes.²⁾ In this study, I examine two further trends in theatrical distribution and the operation of cinemas that have been increasingly apparent since the mid-1990s. In the first part, I argue that Czech theatrical distribution has been undergoing a process of *eventization*, which was suggested by film distributor and scholar Přemysl Martinek in an interview published in 2013.³⁾ In the second part, I argue that cinemas have been increasingly employing the marketing method of *targeting* in order to reach their audiences.

Both of these trends display some aspects that are global in character and some that are locally conceived and implemented. The programming of cinemas may obviously involve both foreign and domestic film productions. The marketing of films and screenings may involve both global marketing campaigns and relatively small campaigns aimed at local communities. In this process, the global and local aspects of film marketing and the cinema-going experience intermingle within the efforts of distribution companies, cinemas, and the media to make cinema-going more attractive to audiences. Since both eventization and targeting are at least to a certain degree a result of the Americanization of film ex-

1) Aleš Danielis, 'Česká filmová distribuce po roce 1989', *Iluminace*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2007), p. 57.

2) For example, Cinema Světozor employed the motto 'popcorn free culture' in its marketing. Kino Světozor, 'Popcorn Free Culture V', online: <<http://www.kinosvetozor.cz/cz/program/filmy/2674/Popcorn-Free-Culture--aneb-5-narozeniny-kina-Svetozor/>> [accessed 10 October 2017].

3) Jiří Anger, 'Role filmových festivalů v ČR', *Dok.revue*, 25 October 2013. Online: <<http://www.dokrevue.cz/clanky/role-filmovych-festivalu-v-cr>>, [accessed 5 December 2017].

hibition, these trends will be examined mainly in the context of the history of American film distribution and exhibition, while I also recognize that other influences have played a significant role in the development as well.

It needs to be emphasized that neither of the two trends discussed in this study is entirely new. What is new, though, is the scale and frequency of their employment by distribution companies and cinemas. It should also be noted that while the Czech Republic serves here as a case study, the two trends are global in nature and are observable elsewhere in the world.

Cultural Events and the Eventization of Culture

The concept of *cultural event* has been approached from various perspectives by a growing body of scholarly literature. Glen Bouwdin et al. presented a useful, albeit broad definition of an *event* that was originally proposed by the Convention Industry Council and further elaborated by Donald Getz: in their words, it is an 'organized occasion such as a meeting, convention, exhibition, special event, gala dinner, etc. [...] composed of several different yet related functions. [...] Every such event is unique stemming from the blend of management, program, setting and people'.⁴⁾ In this text, cultural events will be understood along these lines with emphasis placed on their uniqueness and in many cases one-off character.

Although the concept of cultural event is certainly not a novelty, various authors have emphasized that for some years the offerings of and demand for cultural events of various kinds have been increasing. Ian Yeoman et al. for example noted that

[a]n entire global industry of festivals and events has evolved and developed since the early 1990s. [...] On a global basis there is unprecedented interest in festivals and events — at international and national level, in cities and towns, villages and hamlets, and in rural and coastal areas. Everyone wants to celebrate their particular form of culture, tradition, difference or similarity with others. Festivals and events can help promote their destination and attract tourists — they can be viewed as a new form of tourism in which to anchor economic prosperity and development.⁵⁾

This view of events, including festivals, is clearly a positive one as it stresses their contribution to economic prosperity and development. Yet Karl Spracklen et al. approached the rising number of events differently in their case study of the city of Leeds. They claim that gentrification and urban regeneration programs increasingly engineer 'profitable forms of leisure, venues and behaviours' while displacing alternative culture.⁶⁾ The rising

4) Glenn A. J. Bowdin, Johnny Allen, William O'Toole, Robert Harris and Ian McDonnell, *Events management*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), p. 14.

5) Ian Yeoman, Martin Robertson, Jane Ali-Knight, Siobhan Drummond and Una McMahon-Beattie (eds.), *Festival and Events Management. An international arts and culture perspective* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2004), p. xix.

6) Karl Spracklen, Anna Richter and Beverley Spracklen, 'The Eventization of Leisure and the Strange Death of Alternative Leeds' *City*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2013), p. 165.

number of events is imposed upon communities by private corporations rather than organized by communities for themselves and their well-being: 'Eventization [...] is the transformation of (free or cheap) communicative leisure activities and spaces into (expensive) corporatized spectacles and privatized spaces.'⁷⁾ A prominent example of this negative development these authors provide is the Olympics organized in London in 2012:

If the Olympics represent a particularly egregious example of the privatization and commodification of culture, and the eventization of urban spaces, it is nonetheless typical of the kind of instrumentalized leisure that transforms cities from spaces of belonging into spaces of exclusion.⁸⁾

In the following discussion, some of these changes will be discussed in relation to contemporary theatrical distribution in the Czech Republic.

Technological Wonders, Blockbusters, and Film Festivals as Events

Tom Gunning memorably claimed that in the earliest years of film exhibition, it was cinema itself that was advertised as an attraction, not specific films:

Early audiences went to exhibitions to see machines demonstrated, [...] rather than to view films. It was the Cinématographe, the Biograph or the Vitascope that were advertised on the variety bills in which they premiered, not *The Baby's Breakfast* or *The Black Diamond Express*.⁹⁾

Between 1906 and 1907 such self-aware 'exhibitionist' cinema, which emphasized the magic and wonders of new technology and uniqueness of experience, gave way to narrative cinema that offered realistic illusion and concealed the presence of film technology. Film experience, it could be argued, ceased to be a unique event presented only occasionally to the public by travelling projectionists and became more of a standardized experience available to many people on a regular basis in purpose-built cinemas. However, as the 'film industry has always been a technologically driven industry',¹⁰⁾ throughout the history of cinema various new technological 'machines', associated with the arrival of sound through wide-screen projection to the latest achievements of digital post-production and film exhibition, have on many occasions been invoked in order to attract spectators to cinemas. Although the exact days and places in which these new inventions were first introduced to the public are not given in film history books as often as the notorious first screening in Grand Café in 1895, they still get mentioned as major events in the history of cinema.

7) Ibid., p. 167.

8) Ibid., p. 167.

9) Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', *Wide Angle*, vol. 8, no. 3/4 (1986), p. 66.

10) Finola Kerrigan, *Film Marketing* (London: Elsevier, 2010), p. 193.

According to Michael Allen, Hollywood blockbusters often featured technological virtuosity that was utilized in their marketing campaigns. He noted in connection with the introduction of the CinemaScope format by 20th Century-Fox:

Having established the existence and imminent unveiling of a major new cinema technology, 20th Century-Fox then began a parallel programme of advertising and press releases. Between April and July [of 1953], articles and trade papers reported upcoming demonstrations of CinemaScope, then the success of those demonstrations, details of Fox's forthcoming CinemaScope production schedule, and Fox's increasing success in persuading the industry to adopt the system. [...] Once again, having successfully hyped the new technical system to the point where there was considerable public expectation and curiosity about it, it had to be given an impressive debut.¹¹⁾

Thus, spectators were lured to cinemas by technical achievements not only during the era of cinema of attractions, but also during the era of narrative cinema. The 'aim of special effects,' wrote Janet Wasko, 'has been to create things that do not actually exist.'¹²⁾ Spectators have been aware that films show things that do not actually exist and film critics have commented on the achievements or failures of doing so. Blockbusters were frequently promoted and presented in media as revolutionary events in cinemas, and in many cases through the technological advancements they showcased. For example, a review of *Jurassic Park* published in *Variety* in 1993 claimed that even though the film was 'one-dimensional' and 'clunky', 'it definitely delivers where it counts, in excitement, suspense and the stupendous realization of giant prehistoric reptiles.'¹³⁾

In mid-1970s, Hollywood blockbusters began to open in hundreds of cinemas simultaneously and their premiere weekends became global events, which is even more the case now in the era of digital projection, in which an unlimited number of digital 'film prints' is available to cinemas worldwide. The rigid system of distribution windows is becoming more flexible and theatrical holdback is shortening, with European debates and practice led by the US market,¹⁴⁾ especially the US Majors, who want to monetize films as quickly as possible through highly intensive marketing campaigns. The reduction of the time that films are available in cinemas contributes to the special and unique character of global openings for blockbusters designed to be screened on a large screen with quality sound. Together with the return of the cinema of attractions in 'New New Hollywood' since the

11) Michael Allen, 'Talking about a Revolution. The Blockbuster as Industrial Advertisement', in Julian Stringer (ed.), *Movie Blockbusters* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 105.

12) Janet Wasko, *Hollywood in the Information Age. Beyond the Silver Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 30.

13) Todd McCarthy, 'Jurassic Park', *Variety*, 7 June 1993. Online: <<http://variety.com/1993/film/reviews/jurassic-park-2-1200432562/>> [accessed 4 October 2017].

14) Geoffrey Macnab, Gabriele Niola, Martin Blaney, Elisabet Cabeza, Melanie Goodfellow, 'Are Much Shorter Theatrical Windows around the Corner?', *Screen Daily*, 2 January 2017. Online: <<https://www.screendaily.com/features/are-much-shorter-theatrical-windows-around-the-corner/5112398.article>> [accessed 4 October 2017].

turn of the millennium,¹⁵⁾ further technological innovations have been employed to create events worth experiencing at public screenings with the intent to combat film piracy. As Finola Kerrigan explained,

the mainstream cinema experience is seen as moving more towards special effect such as 3D and IMAX as well as enhancements such as vibrating seats and devices offering interactivity to film consumers. This helps in tackling the piracy issue as watching at home, on a computer or other device cannot come close to the cinema experience.¹⁶⁾

Several authors pointed out that, in contrast to Hollywood, in Europe the idea of marketing in relation to cinema had been traditionally opposed. Kerrigan noted that the introduction of market research into Europe encountered resistance from filmmakers.¹⁷⁾ Laurent Creton mentioned that the term ‘marketing’ in relation to cinema was met with ‘frontal opposition’ in France.¹⁸⁾ Yet for many decades, film festivals have constituted events that provide films with prestige and recognition that make them more attractive for audiences in the (not only) European context. As noted by Marijke de Valk, while there is no clear definition of the concept of film festival, distinct images come to mind when the term is used: ‘red carpets, open-air screenings, paparazzi, a bustling crowd that fills the theaters and dominates the public spaces that are temporarily taken over by the festival event.’¹⁹⁾ Taking into consideration that a film festival can take place without any of these elements, no further attempt will be made here at its definition, in line with de Valk’s assertion that the term is simply not possible to define. What is more important to this discussion is that film festivals are often described as a special type of event:

Film festivals are intense temporal happenings that are on the one hand unique events, and on the other, cyclical rituals repeated annually or on occasion biannually. [...] As annual events, film festivals are productive of a sense of cyclical calendar time sustained through rites that transform events into structures.²⁰⁾

Whereas blockbuster premieres are global events that take place all around the world, film festivals have specific sites that need to be attended by spectators:

15) Wanda Strauven, ‘Introduction to an Attractive Concept’, in Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 24.

16) F. Kerrigan, p. 198.

17) F. Kerrigan, p. 44.

18) Laurent Creton, ‘Le marketing et la relation avec les spectateurs en question’, in Laurent Creton and Kira Kitsopaniidou (eds.), *Les salles de cinéma: Enjeux, défis et perspectives* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2013), e-book.

19) Marijke de Valk, Introduction. ‘What Is a Film Festival? How to Study Film Festivals and Why You Should?’, in Marijke de Valk, Brendan Kredell, Skadi Loist (eds.), *Film Festivals. History, Theory, Method, Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 1.

20) Janet Harbord, ‘Contingency, Time, and Event’, in Marijke de Valk, Brendan Kredell and Skadi Loist, *Film Festivals. History, Theory, Method, Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 70.

It is possible to read about it later, or the following day, or watch it on the news or catch-up channel, but to experience the actuality of the event with all of the historical resonance of that term, the festival demands that you are there within the fold of its moment.²¹⁾

The process over the last two or three decades whereby the number of cultural festivals in general and film festivals in particular²²⁾ has consistently risen has been described by some authors as the *festivalization of culture*.²³⁾ However, as a festival is considered here as a specific type of event, the more general term 'eventization' seems to be better suited for the purposes of this study.

The Eventization of Czech Theatrical Distribution

Articles on and reviews of Hollywood blockbusters in Czech media during the 1990s quite expectedly emphasized their most characteristic feature: largeness, in various senses of the word.²⁴⁾ For example, the following excerpt from an article on *Titanic* introduced not only the 'monumental' tragedy of *Titanic*, but also the 'monumental' production costs and success of the film,²⁵⁾ effectively making its premiere an event on several levels:

The monumental theme of the luxury hotel on water, which was launched in the Atlantic Ocean in April 1912 and caused death of 1500 people who utterly believed in its 'unsinkability', has excited humankind for more than eighty years. [...] The production cost more than 200 million dollars and the film already ranks among the ten biggest films in the history of cinema.²⁶⁾

The largeness of the film and the success it achieved before actually hitting Czech screens was construed as a quality in itself, something spectators needed to pay attention to.

Industrial discourse disseminates this type of information in promotion materials. For example, the press release for *Mission Impossible III* by the Czech distribution company Bontonfilm stated: 'As the first two instalments earned more than 1 billion dollars, it is ex-

21) Ibid., p. 80.

22) Dina Iordanova, 'Introduction', in Dina Iordanova (ed.), *The Film Festival Reader* (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2013), p. 1.

23) Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor and Ian Woodward (eds.), *The Festivalization of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

24) Steve Neale, 'Hollywood Blockbusters: Historical Dimensions', in Julian Stringer (ed.), *Movie Blockbusters* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 48.

25) This confirms the assertion by Charles Acland that '[F]or movie fans, awareness of box office winners has now joined star biographies and genre identification as a fundamental component of film knowledge. [...] The publication in Monday's newspapers of the weekend's top grossing films is likewise a corollary of the reviews clustered in the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday papers.' Charles Acland, *Screen Traffic. Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 4.

26) 'Titanic vyplouvá nejen jako famózní film', *Hradecké noviny*, 4 February 1998, p. 15.

pected that the third film mission of Ethan Hunt will become a box-office hit of 2006.²⁷⁾ In media presentations of blockbusters, such information is commonly utilized and accompanied by emotionally loaded language:

Another instalment has been afoot — if for no other reason than the fact that the first two films earned more than 1 billion dollars. And for such a sum, it is worth it to get Cruise out of his Scientological fairytale kingdom.²⁸⁾

However, with most prominent blockbusters, this kind of information is amplified to the extreme and coupled with appraisals of the film's (technological or artistic) superiority:

Already on January 10, a spectacle will arrive in Czech cinemas the likes of which is rarely seen. The film *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* is full of magic and unparalleled visual effects. It earned well-deserved enthusiastic ovations from film critics and made more than 10 billion CZK in the first ten days in global cinemas. [...] In London, people came out of cinema in tears. Hany Knowles, a famous film journalist, declared that he will not be able to go to cinema ever again because he has just seen the best film in the world.²⁹⁾

The practice of constructing blockbusters in Czech media as unique and one-off wonders seems to have gradually intensified over years, with claims by the end of the first decade of the 21st century that some blockbusters may not only revolutionize cinema but will, in fact, render films obsolete. One film scholar was quoted in a television report on *Avatar* as saying '[w]e may really be on the brink of a revolution leading to entirely new types of audiovisual products that we might no longer even call films.'³⁰⁾ While technical revolutions do happen in the realm of cinema, *Avatar* seems in retrospect to be rather an exceptional film with exceptional marketing that persuaded not only audiences to go see it but also film scholars to muse on new audiovisual experiences well beyond reality.³¹⁾

A blockbuster 'revolution' need not be just technological. It can also involve film narration and style. For instance, *Inception* was described in a review by a prominent Czech film critic in the following way:

Unbelievably precisely written, directed, acted and endowed with magnificent music that takes one up to the celestial spheres. We have been long awaiting something

27) Bontonfilm, 'Mission: Impossible III. Distribuční list', provided to Czech journalists via e-mail correspondence on 26 April 2006.

28) Irena Hejdrová, 'Sorry, agente Cruisi, já nemluvim česky', *Aktuálně.cz*, 2 May 2006. Online: <<https://magazin.aktualne.cz/kultura/film/sorry-agente-cruisi-ja-nemluvim-cesky/r~i:article:141976/>> [accessed 8 October 2017].

29) Tomáš Baldýnský, 'Pán prstenů ovládl svět', *Mladá fronta Dnes*, 5 January 2002, supplement Víkend, p. 1.

30) Petra Hanáková quoted in Česká televize, *Události, komentáře* (Czech Television), 16 December 2009.

31) See, for example, the relatively slow development of virtual reality as discussed in Matt Donnelly and Matt Pressberg, 'Why Hollywood Studios Are Slow to Embrace Virtual Reality', *The Wrap*, 23 July 2017. Online: <<https://www.thewrap.com/hollywood-studios-virtual-reality-slow-embrace/>> [accessed 8 October 2017].

like this, probably since the first *Matrix* film. And it is hugely intoxicating to witness this historic event happening and be aware of it because you are not blindfolded.³²⁾

While such claims seem to be exaggerated in retrospect (which is not to say that *The Lord of the Rings*, *Avatar*, and *Inception* did not offer some degree of novelty), media discourse on blockbusters certainly does create or foster the construction of blockbusters and their premieres as 'revolutions' and 'historic events' that spectators on a global scale should be part of. As with film festivals in words of Janet Harbord quoted above, a blockbuster 'demands that you are there within the fold of its moment,' where 'there' means in a cinema, either on or as soon as possible after its opening night in order to witness the 'historic moment happening'.

Art house films obviously cannot rely on expensive marketing campaigns that create events of global significance. Nevertheless, producers, distributors, and cinema operators can create local events that serve a similar purpose, albeit on a different scale. For example, with the lack of theatrical infrastructure to show his films in Romania, director Cristian Mungiu travelled the country screening *4 months, 3 weeks, and 2 days* to spectators. In so doing, he created a phenomenon of film caravans that targeted various audiences (educational caravans, festival caravans, and auteur caravans),³³⁾ in fact reviving the tradition of travelling cinema exhibitors and creating attractive events for local communities. In the Czech context, an interesting similar experiment was undertaken by the production company Nutprodukce, which completely rejected regular theatrical distribution and screened its film *Gottland* only a limited number of times in a former railway station in Prague, with the tagline 'Not coming soon to theatres.'³⁴⁾

Czech film exhibition has been characterized by an unparalleled mushrooming of film festivals since 1989.³⁵⁾ In 2016 the National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture registered 57 film festivals in Czechia, counting only those that take place regularly every year and disregarding all others (and quite possibly also some small annually organized ones).³⁶⁾ Many events (festivals or one-off activities) are organized by distribution companies, art house cinemas, and multiplexes. The first Czech art house cinema, Aero, opened in 1998 and it was soon followed by several other art house cinemas operating in Prague and other large university cities of Czechia. Ivo Andrlé, one of the founders of Aero was quoted in media in 2001 saying:

32) Kamil Fila, 'Recenze: Počátek je Matrix pro první dekádu 21. století', *Aktuálně*, 26 July 2006. Online: <<https://magazin.aktualne.cz/kultura/film/recenze-pocatek-je-matrix-pro-prvni-dekadu-21-stoleti/r~i:article:673555/?redirected=1507460352>> [accessed 8 October 2017].

33) Constantin Parvulescu, 'Film Caravans in Contemporary Romania', *Screen Industries in East-Central Europe Conference. Transformation Processes and New Screen Media Technologies*. 20–21 November 2015, Faculty of Film and Television, Academy of Performing Arts, Bratislava, Slovakia.

34) Facebook page of *Gottland*, online: <<https://www.facebook.com/gottlandfilmCZ/>> [accessed 10 October 2017].

35) J. Anger, 'Role filmových festivalů v ČR'.

36) NIPOS, *Základní statistické údaje o kultuře v České republice 2016. II. díl. Umění. Divadla, hudební soubory, výstavní činnost a festivaly* (Praha: Národní informační a poradenské středisko pro kulturu, 2017), p. 95. Online: <http://www.nipos-mk.cz/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Statistika_2016_II.UMENI_web.pdf> [accessed 5 December 2017].

Our experience is that when films are offered in a certain package or accompanied by some form of entertainment, more people will come to see them than if we showed them at regular screenings.³⁷⁾

This strategy is indeed characteristic of current exhibition practices in Czech art house cinemas. Several of them have been organizing a large number of events that accompany screenings. These include traditional events such as film retrospectives (e.g., recently in Aero: David Lynch, Paolo Sorrentino, Aki Kaurismäki, Jim Jarmusch, Stanley Kubrick, etc.)³⁸⁾ and festivals either organized or hosted by these cinemas (from festivals focused on national cinemas, such as La Película³⁹⁾ or Bollywood Film Festival,⁴⁰⁾ to less traditionally themed festivals, such as Snow Film Fest,⁴¹⁾ The Shockproof Film Festival,⁴²⁾ Sherpafest,⁴³⁾ etc.). The distribution company Film Europe organizes Be2Can (a festival offering competition films from Cannes, Berlin, and Venice), Crème de la Crème (a festival of French cinema) and Scandi (a festival of Scandinavian cinema),⁴⁴⁾ and its strategy for theatrical distribution is based on eventization. The Association of Czech Film Clubs also organizes various events, most prominently the large festival called Summer Film School.⁴⁵⁾ The distribution company CinemArt operates two cinemas in Prague, which feature, for example, small festivals of Polish, Indian,⁴⁶⁾ and Scandinavian⁴⁷⁾ films. Apart from retrospectives and festivals, some art house cinemas have been organizing less typical events, some of which are presented in Table 1.

Interestingly, the increasing number of film festivals was criticized in an article written by Martinek in 2014, in which he claimed that the rising number of festivals marginalizes the standard theatrical distribution of films.⁴⁸⁾ Although this may well be the case, festivalization (eventization) seems to be a part of larger social and cultural changes and is, as such, impossible to avert. As Harbord put it,

[w]ithin an era of globalization, the film festival operates as a bulwark against its de-territorializing effects; the model of enclosure that defines the film festival may be

37) Tomáš Poláček, 'Hrajeme filmy, které se jinde nepromítají, říká Ivo Andrle z kina Aero', *iDnes.cz*, 10 January 2001. Online: <http://zpravy.idnes.cz/hrajeme-filmy-ktere-se-jinde-nepromitaji-rika-ivo-andrle-z-kina-aero-1pi-/domaci.aspx?c=A010109_165907_praha_lin> [accessed 9 October 2017].

38) Facebook page of the distribution company Aerofilms, 'Events', online: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/aerofilms.cz/events/?ref=page_internal> [accessed 9 October 2017].

39) La Película, <<http://www.lapelicula.cz/>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

40) Bollywood Film Festival, <<http://www.bollywood.cz/en/news/>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

41) Snow Film Fest, online: <<http://www.pohora.cz/snow-film-fest/eng/>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

42) Festival otrlého diváka, online: <<http://www.otrlydivak.cz/english/>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

43) Sherpafest, online: <<http://www.sherpafest.cz/?p=184>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

44) Film Europe, online: <http://www.filmeurope.cz/about_us?locale=en> [accessed 5 December 2017].

45) Letní filmová škola Uherské Hradiště, online: <<http://www.lfs.cz/>> [accessed 5 December 2017].

46) Kino Atlas, 'Filmové akce', online: <<http://www.kinoatlas.cz/klient-181/kino-52/stranka-8427>> [accessed 5 December 2017].

47) Komorní kino Evald, 'Nordfilmfest', online: <http://www.evald.cz/klient-181/kino-53/stranka-3729/jazyk-en_GB> [accessed 5 December 2017].

48) Přemysl Martinek, 'Jsou filmové festivaly skutečně platnou distribuční platformou? Instituce filmového festivalu pohledem distributora 'festivalových' filmů', *Iluminace*, vol. 26, no. 1 (2014), pp. 49–64.

Table 1. Selected events organized by Czech art house cinemas

Event	Description
Blind date with Aero	Spectators do not know till the last moment what film will be screened. Those who have seen the film already get a free beer. ⁴⁹⁾
Cinema Cuisine	Screening of films accompanied by a multicourse meal tasting (e.g. the Indian film <i>Lunchbox</i> accompanied by Indian meals). ⁵⁰⁾
Cinema Royal	Screenings organized in secret and unusual locations accompanied by themed performances with actors dressed in appropriate costumes (e.g. <i>Metropolis</i> screened in a high voltage laboratory). ⁵¹⁾
Cycle Cinema	Monthly screenings with projections enabled by electricity generators powered by bike pedals. ⁵²⁾
Different City Experience	Aero took part in an annual day long festival in the streets of Prague at which they presented a theatre, music, and film program. ⁵³⁾
Open-mic	Members of the audience were invited to try their own stand-up shows before a screening of <i>The Big Sick</i> . ⁵⁴⁾
Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD	A series of transmissions from New York's Metropolitan Opera
Scope100	An international project within which 100 selected film enthusiasts in each country watch several European films online and vote for a film that will enter theatrical distribution in that country. ⁵⁵⁾

said to create an enclave to protect against the deracinating effects of global capitalism, retaining and marking the distinctive identity of each festival location and its cultural offerings.⁵⁶⁾

Or, in words of Bennett, Taylor, and Woodward about the festivalization of culture in general:

In a world where notions of culture are becoming increasingly fragmented, the contemporary festival has developed in response to processes of cultural pluralization,

49) Kino Aero, 'Blind Date with Aero', online: <<http://www.kinoaero.cz/en/film/1809/aero-naslepo/>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

50) Bio Oko, 'Cinema Cuisine Volume I', online: <<http://www.biooko.net/en/film/6375/Cinema-Cuisine-Volume-I/>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

51) Cinema Royal, online: <<http://www.cinemaroyal.cz/>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

52) Kino Aero, 'Cycle Cinema', online: <<http://www.kinoaero.cz/en/film/8946/Cyklokino-%7C-Big-Lebowski/>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

53) Kino Aero, 'Different City Experience', online: <<http://www.kinoaero.cz/en/film/9136/Zazit-mesto-jinak-2017/>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

54) Facebook page of the distribution company Aerofilms, 'Event: Open-mic před projekcí filmu Pěkně blbě', online: <<https://www.facebook.com/events/470370053299440/>> [accessed 9 October 2017].

55) Scope 100, online: <<http://www.scope100.cz>> [accessed 5 December 2017].

56) J. Harbord, p. 70.

mobility and globalization, while also communicating something meaningful about identity, community, locality and belonging.⁵⁷⁾

In this sense, the focus of theatrical distribution on unique, one-off, authentic cinematic events may be understood in the context of an increasing demand for unique, authentic, locally-produced products in general. Examples of this trend include the boom of microbreweries producing local beers (not only)⁵⁸⁾ in Czechia⁵⁹⁾ or the recently developed interest of Czechs in the authentic cuisine of the Vietnamese minority that was previously ignored by them for many years of co-existence.⁶⁰⁾ The need for authenticity in modern societies was described most prominently by sociologist of leisure Dean MacCannell in relation to the rise of tourism in search of authentic experiences.⁶¹⁾ In a similar sense, the eventization of film screenings (and culture in general, including music, theatre, etc.) allows the audience to be part of something 'authentic': Art house cinemas attempt to re-create the neighbourhood and community in their events, while blockbusters construed as 'revolutions' allow their spectators to be part of events that are (construed as) historically and globally significant.⁶²⁾

Targeting in Theatrical Distribution

In marketing theory, the term *segmentation* designates the division of large heterogeneous markets into smaller segments that consist of potential buyers with similar wants, resources, locations, and buying attitudes and practices.⁶³⁾ The term *targeting* then designates the decision of how many and which segments the firm under question will serve, focusing primarily on the size and growth characteristics of individual segments.⁶⁴⁾ I employ here the term targeting in order to describe a tendency of contemporary Czech cinemas to target selected screenings at specific segments of the public.

57) Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor and Ian Woodward, 'Introduction', in A. Bennett, J. Taylor and I. Woodward (eds.), *The Festivalization of Culture*, p. 1.

58) Mike Danson, Laura Galloway, Laura, Ignazio Cabras and Tina Beatty, 'Microbrewing and Entrepreneurship: The Origins, Development and Integration of Real Ale Breweries in the UK', *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2015) pp. 135–144.

59) Stanislav Tripes and Jiří Dvořák, 'Strategic Forces in the Czech Brewing Industry From 1990–2015', *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia*, vol. 25, no. 3 (2014), pp. 3–38. Online: <<http://www.vse.cz/polek/download.php?jnl=aop&pdf=580.pdf>> [accessed 8 October 2017].

60) Karel Čada, Jakub Grygar, Tereza Freidingerová, *Vietnamese Diaspora in Prague: food, consumption, and socio-material proximity in the making of a cosmopolitan city* (Prague: ERSTE Foundation, 2016). Available online: <https://www.academia.edu/28761322/Vietnamese_Diaspora_in_Prague_food_consumption_and_socio-material_proximity_in_the_making_of_a_cosmopolitan_city> [accessed 8 October 2017].

61) Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist. A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 41.

62) Although, it could be argued at the same time that screenings of blockbusters in shopping mall multiplexes are reminiscent of the '(expensive) corporatized spectacles and privatized spaces' identified by Spracklen et al. (see above).

63) Gary Armstrong and Philip Kotler, *Marketing: An Introduction*. Twelfth Edition (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2015), p. 199.

64) *Ibid.*, p. 209.

In the context of the USA, specialized cinemas for various segments can be traced back to the segregated movie shows for African-Americans, starting from the early days of the nickelodeon era.⁶⁵⁾ African-Americans were 'the only group forced to have their own theatres,'⁶⁶⁾ yet various ethnic groups of first-generation immigrants were interested in seeing films in their own language and there were cinemas showing these films for specialized audiences in the USA already in the 1920s.⁶⁷⁾ Although multiplexes are generally associated with blockbusters and their operations are dependent on them, they do recognize exploitable niches and can be quite flexible in their programming, introducing foreign films and older successful films on their screens in many countries. For example, Douglas Gomery mentioned in the Canadian context that the multiplex chain Cineplex Odeon wooed sizable audiences in the 1980s by promoting reggae movies to Toronto's Caribbean audience and Yiddish movies to its Jewish population.⁶⁸⁾ Furthermore, during the late 1940s, the USA saw a rise in the number of art-house cinemas and the art house movement continued well into late 1970s.⁶⁹⁾ Although, the movement declined to a large degree in the late 1970s, mainly due to the rise of home video,⁷⁰⁾ it does not mean that art house cinemas and repertory cinemas in the USA have completely disappeared.

Of course, the targeting of ethnic groups or 'high-income, well-educated' spectators has been employed by cinemas in other countries of the world as well. For example, cinemas classified as 'art et essai'⁷¹⁾ cater to intellectual audiences in France while the 'arthouse or specialized'⁷²⁾ cinemas provide similar offerings of films in the UK.

Targeting in Czech Theatrical Distribution

Before World War II, the situation was rather complicated in Czechoslovakia regarding screenings for specific ethnic groups. Many cinemas presented films in the language of the German minority, while the majority wanted cinemas to show films in Czech. Demonstrations were even held in Prague against films shown in German.⁷³⁾ In this era, the business logic of movie theatres paradoxically went against the wishes of the majority, a very large target group indeed. Furthermore, no art house cinemas existed in the country before 1998 although by the end of the 1950s, those inhabitants of Czechoslovakia interested in

65) Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures. A History of the Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 155–170.

66) *Ibid.*, p. 171.

67) *Ibid.*, p. 172.

68) Douglas Gomery, 'Building a Movie Theatre Giant: The Rise of the Cineplex Odeon', in Tino Balio (ed.), *Hollywood in the Age of Television* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 380.

69) Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, p. 180.

70) *Ibid.*, p. 195.

71) Laurent Creton, 'Le devenir des salles d'art et essai: éléments d'économie politique', in Laurent Creton and Kira Kitsopaniidou (eds.), *Les salles de cinéma: Enjeux, défis et perspectives* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2013), e-book.

72) Stuart Hanson, *From silent screen to multi-screen. A history of cinema exhibition in Britain since 1896* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 182–5.

73) Ivan Klimeš, *Kinematografie a stát v českých zemích 1895–1945* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2016), pp. 196–233.

high art became organized in 'clubs of friends of art'. These soon became more specialized, with the formation of clubs of 'friends of plastic art', clubs of 'poetry friends' and, more importantly for this discussion, clubs of 'friends of film art'⁷⁴⁾ imitating the model established previously in other European countries. Interestingly, the film club movement was established in a bottom-up manner: from the initiative of the target group for art house films itself.⁷⁵⁾ Film clubs offering 'important works of world cinema' at screenings for club members organized in regular cinemas on selected days and times have survived to the present day, but the name of the federation was changed to 'Association of Czech Film Clubs' in 1993 when the former Czechoslovakia split into two states.

Multiplexes were introduced to the Czech Republic in 1996 and it is clear that at least some of them were very much aware of both their primary target audiences and the exploitable niches available to them as was the case with North-American multiplexes mentioned above. For example, in my study focused on the programming of two multiplexes situated in Prague's Anděl neighbourhood in 2008, I have shown that one of the two multiplexes (Palace Cinemas Nový Smíchov) targeted predominantly families with small children — showcasing, among other things, films from the Zlín Film Festival — International Film Festival for Children and Youth and a selection of television bedtime stories — while the other multiplex (Village Cinemas Anděl) targeted mainly young people and couples — for example, through 'seats for those who are in love' with foldable armrests or a box of chocolates offered to the first 1500 couples on Valentine's day — as well as 'discriminating spectators' through several film festivals organized on the multiplex's premises (e.g. Febiofest and the Festival of French Films). Apart from that, both the multiplexes offered a selection of art house films throughout the year. Village Cinemas Anděl even participated with two of its screens in the network 'Europa Cinemas' funded by MEDIA (Creative Europe) and aimed at the theatrical distribution of European films, and even featured two luxurious 'Gold Class' cinemas.⁷⁶⁾ Although both multiplexes changed owners after 2008, many of the features described above are still in place today, recognizing and catering to varied target groups.

Although the audience of art house films may be considered a target group in itself, Czech art house cinemas employ much more elaborate targeting. The following examples are mostly from Aero, being that it is the oldest art house cinema, yet other cinemas have adopted many of these activities as well. Mothers with babies are invited to screenings within the program 'Baby Bio', showing films with reduced sound level and increased lighting.⁷⁷⁾ Slightly older children may attend screenings of fairy tales within the program

74) Jiří Knapík, 'Czechoslovak Culture and Cinema, 1945–1960', in Lars Karl and Pavel Skopal (eds.), *Cinema in Service of the State. Perspectives on Film Culture in the GDR and Czechoslovakia, 1945–1960* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), pp. 59–60.

75) Jan Kastner, 'Co a hlavně kdy vlastně oslavovat?', in Tereza Dvořáková and Jan Kastner, *40 let filmových klubů (texty k připomenutí 40. výročí existence filmových klubů na XXIX. Letní filmové škole 2003)* (Uherské Hradiště: Asociace českých filmových klubů, 2003), p. 4.

76) Jan Hanzlík, *Kulturní zkušenost z českých multikin: Analýza diskurzu*. Unpublished dissertation (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2012), pp. 165–180.

77) Kino Aero, 'Baby Bio', online: <<http://www.kinoaero.cz/en/cykly-festivity/109/Baby-Bio/>> [accessed 10 October 2017]; Bio Oko, 'Baby Bio', online: <<http://www.biooko.net/en/cykly-festivity/109/baby-bio/>> [accessed 10 October 2017].

'Aero for Children'.⁷⁸⁾ Still older children, between 10 and 16 years of age, are invited to film workshops called 'Aertěk', at which they learn the basics of filmmaking.⁷⁹⁾ Elementary and secondary schools and universities are offered a special program for their students called 'For Schools'.⁸⁰⁾ Music fans are invited to live transmissions and recorded broadcasts of music concerts within the program 'Concerts in Cinemas'.⁸¹⁾ Theatre fans are invited to live transmissions of performances in world theatres within the program 'Theatre in Cinemas'.⁸²⁾ Elderly viewers are offered special screenings within the program 'Bio Senior'.⁸³⁾ And the list could go on, especially since new target groups for distributors and art house cinemas emerge virtually every year. Such elaborate marketing strategies are surprising given that the idea of marketing as such used to be frowned upon, especially in the field of arts, which held the negative 'perception of marketing as finding ways in which to sell things to people that they do not want or need'.⁸⁴⁾

Conclusion

The transformation of Czech theatrical distribution and exhibition since the 1990s has been characterized not only by the most apparent change, multiplexing, but also progressively by the adoption of two prominent marketing strategies that have changed the way Czechs watch films today: the rising number of events through which screenings of films are framed and promoted, and the recognition of and catering to specific segments of population that can be attracted to cinemas by targeted programming. These strategies were adapted equally by Czech multiplexes and arthouse cinemas, albeit through slightly different means. However, the two trends are neither entirely new (although their extent may well be) nor restricted to the Czech Republic and their origins may be traced to the development of theatrical distribution in both the USA and Western Europe.

The eventization of theatrical distribution may be viewed as a return to the business logic of the cinema of attractions, which together with the increasing emphasis on targeting is bolstering theatrical distribution, which has become fragile due to the competition of online piracy and the abundance of screens and audiovisual products in everyday life, as well as newly emerging leisure activities. In this respect, cinema is perhaps attempting to overcome similar problems as other cultural domains, such as the theatre and the mu-

78) Kino Aero, Aero for Children, online: <[http://www.kinoaero.cz/en/cykly-festivaly/81/Aero-detem!/>](http://www.kinoaero.cz/en/cykly-festivaly/81/Aero-detem!/) [accessed 10 October 2017].

79) Aertěk, online: <<http://www.aertek.cz>> [accessed 10 October 2017].

80) Kino Aero, 'For Schools', online: <[http://www.kinoaero.cz/en/static/aeroskola/>](http://www.kinoaero.cz/en/static/aeroskola/) [accessed 10 October 2017].

81) Kino Aero, 'Concerts in Cinemas', online: <[http://www.kinoaero.cz/en/cykly-festivaly/201/Concerts-in-cinema/>](http://www.kinoaero.cz/en/cykly-festivaly/201/Concerts-in-cinema/) [accessed 10 October 2017].

82) Kino Světozor, 'Theatre in Cinemas', online: <[http://www.kinosvetozor.cz/en/cykly-festivaly/102/Divadlo-v-kine/vseoakci/>](http://www.kinosvetozor.cz/en/cykly-festivaly/102/Divadlo-v-kine/vseoakci/) [accessed 10 October 2017].

83) Kino Světozor, 'Bio Senior', online: <[http://www.kinosvetozor.cz/en/cykly-festivaly/67/Bio-Senior/>](http://www.kinosvetozor.cz/en/cykly-festivaly/67/Bio-Senior/) [accessed 10 October 2017].

84) Kerrigan, p. 4.

sic industry. At the same time, the eventization of film exhibition may be viewed as a reaction to what sociologists and other authors describe as increasing globalization and decreasing senses of authenticity, community, and belonging in contemporary society.

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SUMMARY

Eventization and Targeting in Czech Theatrical Distribution after 1989

Jan Hanzlík

The article focuses on two marketing strategies that have been adopted by Czech film distributors and cinema operators after 1989: the increasing trend of screening films at various events rather than in regular distribution and the related rise in the number of film festivals, and the targeting of specific audience groups by distributors and cinemas. These trends are apparent in the distribution of both blockbusters and arthouse films, although different means are employed and different activities are endorsed by arthouse distributors and cinemas than those distributing or screening films by the Hollywood majors.