

WHAT'S CHANGING FOR DISTRIBUTORS



Based on conversations with distributors across Europe, the Americas and Africa, this snapshot captures what's really shaping film marketing in 2026.

1 Attention Isn't the Problem. Conversion Is.

Across markets, distributors described being able to generate awareness through a growing mix of digital advertising, press coverage and influencer activity. **The real challenge begins once interest has been created.** The journey from awareness to ticket purchase is fragmented, opaque, and often outside the distributor's control.

This conversion gap is exacerbated by limited screen availability, shifting showtimes, and the handoff to third-party ticketing environments. As a result, **teams are often left guessing which activity genuinely drives admissions.**

- Conversion drop-off points are poorly understood
- Limited screen counts amplify friction even when demand exists
- Success is often measured after release rather than optimised during campaigns

“We can generate huge traffic, but we don't know where or why it turns into ticket sales.”

/ UK distributor

2

Old Problems Haven't Gone Away – They've Become More Acute



Many of the pressures facing distributors are not new. Congested release calendars, competition for screens, and rising marketing costs have long been part of the landscape. **What has changed is the margin for error.** In a post-COVID, post-streaming environment, these challenges are now less forgiving and harder to absorb.

Late calendar changes, short theatrical windows, and uncertainty around bookings increase financial risk and make strategic planning more difficult, particularly for independent releases with limited P&A.

- Release schedules are increasingly volatile
- Screen access is harder to secure and harder to retain
- Booking uncertainty raises marketing risk and pressure on teams

“

Calendar congestion has always been an issue, but now it feels unforgiving.”

/ Italian distributor

3

Film Campaigns Are Now Global Before They're Local

Distributors consistently noted that audience awareness is no longer shaped primarily at a national level. Social platforms, influencers, critics and communities operate globally, meaning trends in one territory can influence audience expectations long before a film is released locally.

As a result, **local campaigns are increasingly reactive to global signals**, whether that's US campaigns, Letterboxd activity, TikTok trends or international influencer coverage. This creates opportunity, but also complexity, particularly for smaller teams. Sales agents, in particular, noted that **discovery now travels faster than release strategies**, creating both opportunity and misalignment between markets.





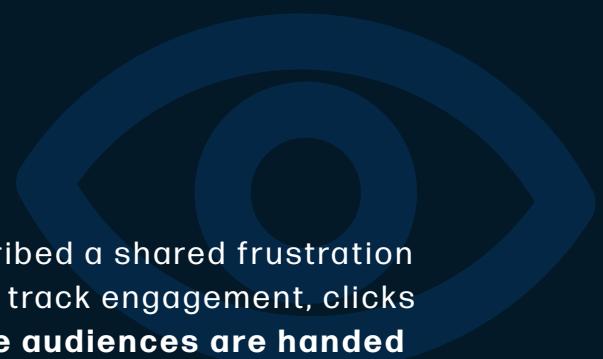
-  Social discovery increasingly crosses borders
-  Campaigns are not confined to one market
-  Local strategies must now account for global audience sentiment



A film can start trending in one territory and immediately influence audiences everywhere else. Discovery is global now, even if distribution isn't.

/ Sales Company, France

4 Everyone Is Working With Partial Data



Across territories, distributors described a shared frustration around data visibility. While they can track engagement, clicks and traffic, **insight often stops once audiences are handed over to exhibitor or third-party ticketing platforms.**

This lack of end-to-end visibility makes ROI difficult to assess and even harder to act on. With limited time and resources, teams struggle to analyse fragmented data and adapt campaigns in real time.



We send people to cinema sites, but what happens next is invisible to us.

/ Benelux distributor

-  Distributors lack visibility beyond click-through
-  Exhibitor data remains siloed
-  ROI is inferred rather than clearly understood
-  Time constraints limit meaningful analysis

5

What's Working Feels More Human (and More Hybrid)

Where distributors reported success, it was rarely driven by a single channel. Instead, **the most effective campaigns combined offline moments with online amplification** – community screenings, stunts, partnerships and culturally resonant activations that sparked organic digital momentum.

Younger audiences, in particular, are responding to cinema as a shared, social experience. Localisation, authenticity and relevance consistently outperformed scale alone.



Every time we take something into the real world, it explodes online.

/ Brazilian distributor

- Offline experiences fuel online engagement
- Micro-influencers often outperform larger accounts
- Local language and cultural context matter
- Younger audiences are returning for shared experiences

This is the first in a series of shared insights exploring how distributors are adapting and where collaboration may help build greater resilience across the sector.

Part of the Resilient Film Marketing initiative by **ushervu**