The GREAT
Millennial Clawback

The topic of attracting Millennials (born c.1980-2000) to the cinema is not a new one and was discussed at CineEurope, recently, because the cinema-attendance trend for this particular generation has been downward. However, UNIC undertook an interesting study on Millennials, and reported that attendance for that demographic was actually up in 2015, compared with the downturn in prior years. If this is true, then how can we build upon this momentum? Let's start by examining strategies utilised by leading [non-cinema] companies to see how cinemas might use design elements to recapture this next generation as passionate movie-going customers.

The first question might be: How are leading-edge brands marketing to, and engaging with, Millennials? Well, one example might use the Lodging industry, which is facing serious competition from the on-demand

With Millennials comprising almost a lost generation of movie-goers, today, **Mike Cummings**, Senior Principal at TK Architects International, discusses cinema design as a way to start reversing the trend.

economy, such as Airbnb. This whole new approach to a traditional business is, so far, a much more serious threat to lodging than the threats that exist from, say, Netflix, or alternative methods to consume movies. Some lodging companies have responded by creating whole new brands focusing on features of particular importance to Millennials. The Marriott chain has created Moxy, and Radisson has developed Radisson Red, specifically targeted at Millennials. Here, these new hotel brands emphasise more of what Millennials consider to be

important, factors such as: the experience, communal spaces, digital-connectivity, personalised [or self-] service, purpose and/or cause, price and value, localised design; also artwork, food and mixology, as well as overall look-and-feel. So, using the above as a starting point, how, again, might cinemas reinvent themselves, and the experience, to attract Millennials? One view is that movie-going has always been about the 'experience' as it comprises the core of a shared social event. Much of the focus, to date, has been on the auditorium portion of that experience, and, while that is sufficiently important in itself, we must expand our thinking to include the *whole* movie-going experience.
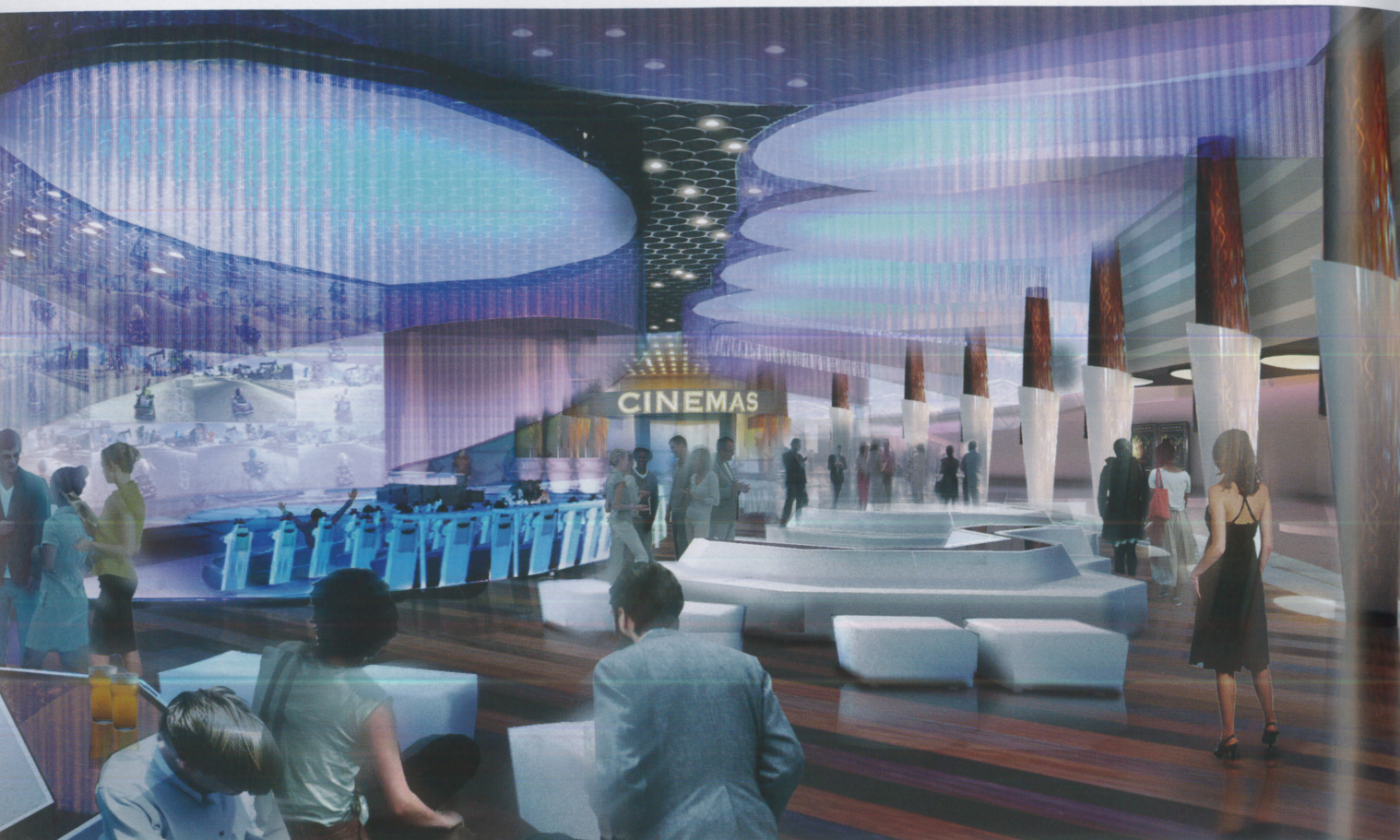
CUSTOMER SERVICE, DESIGN & FEEL

The first part of the 'experience' equation is customer service, the good news being that this is quite controllable by exhibitors; and, starting with online and kiosk-

ticketing, and combining this with a concierge within the lobby, allows Millennials to buy their tickets in advance or else digitally at your cinema. Simply create a loyalty app that permits advance ticket-sales with an option for tickets to be stored on their phone without requiring printing. Of course, the same app can also keep track of preferences along with offering digital personalised service. A concierge counter also offers opportunity for more personalised service while, in turn, demonstrating commitment also.

Design, together with the feel of the environment, is another critical component of the customer experience. Millennials now expect to watch movies – and/or, indeed, other forms of content – whenever they want, using the methodology they choose. After all, today, you can watch a movie on your smartphone, tablet, laptop or smart TV. Yet, while these are all convenient methods, they do ➤

emphasises the shared social experience remains critical to success – for example, why not make bowling feel more like a nightclub or game-space more like a sportsbook, bookies or betting shop?

However, should the cinema-of-the-future *necessarily* look, or be, fundamentally any different from today's theatres? The Hollywood studio model has changed and, today, comprises, at its core, primarily global tent-pole blockbuster releases. Therefore, as one suggestion, cinemas might include six-to-eight large auditoriums for screening blockbusters in addition to a group of smaller, more flexible, pod-spaces to accommodate a wider-range of content.

IN REVIEW

Summing up: why focus on the Millennial generation? For a start, they're the largest demographic group comprising more than 25% of the global population. They're also larger than the Baby-Boomer generation (even in the U.S.) and represent some 30% of the population in growth-regions, such as Asia and Africa. The generation also represents almost a quarter of the population of the

KEEP IT SOCIAL
Millennials want flexible and innovative communal spaces, good digital connectivity and affordability
[all pics]

lack the 'experience' factor, to say nothing of contributing much less toward a social event. Some might even say anti-social. Therefore, the focus on design outside of the auditorium should provide flexible communal spaces and digital connectivity. Millennials also appreciate localised design which can be incorporated using locally-sourced materials; also local artwork, and food and drink available from recognisable local brands. Millennials can also be very sensitive to pricing but, it seems, are willing to pay more for recognisable quality, service and purpose.

What other features or areas might theatre-owners consider in attracting Millennials to their cinemas? Bars/lounges and alternative food-choices are among the most obvious as well as the most common. Bowling and game-space have also been successful; and, depending upon location and demographic, there are more options to evaluate. All must be considered from the Millennial viewpoint and, again, with focus on the experience. Think communal space, think rich content; and provide configuration flexibility. Creating an environment that

European Union. Design does need to be sensitive to many demographic groups in order to maintain its popularity against the onslaught of competitive entertainments; but a key advantage that Cinema cannot lose is its affordability, which appeals to everyone from Millennials and Baby-Boomers, and especially families. Developing specific strategies that will appeal to Millennials remains imperative for our industry's sustained success, and that begins with focusing on the whole experience of movie-going, and of design, in particular. **S**

Describe your job.
As film-buyer for my client theatre-owners, I negotiate with studio suppliers to acquire, set pricing, and other, terms for upcoming titles; and to provide the optimum weekly booking-mix tailored to the characteristics of each theatre.

How has film-buying changed in your 25 years in the sector?
Most notably in the compression of the theatrical shelf-life due to the ongoing windows-erosion, coupled with the expansion of both the theatre-counts taken and the multiple screen-counts given on the initial release date. This means the marketplace now delivers substantial total revenues in the initial weeks of release. Another shift has been the explosion of global market revenues and the impact on forward title-selection.

What are the hardest, also most rewarding, things about the film-buying process?
The ongoing tensions between studio and theatre are historic and are difficult to overcome. While we share revenues, our individual interests don't always align over film-pricing, run-length, trailer-placement etc; but, then, like all true gamblers, the reward lies in picking winners.

After years of film-buying experience, can you quickly intuit a hit or a pup, or are all-bets-off until showtime?
I can spot the obvious winners and losers and hazard a fair guess at the rest, but the public sometimes embraces pictures, pushing their performance far beyond expectation.

At the ShowEast screening of *Office Christmas Party*, how might you have evaluated this kind of movie?
Pre-screening, I tried to gauge audience expectation based upon the trailer and casting to determine whether the picture would deliver. The trailer promised much adult humour and sight gags – so, was it all in the trailer or would the picture deliver above and beyond? Would it be raunchy, but not funny; merely mildly funny, or (ideally) so funny that it easily justified any raunchy content?