



# ENGAGING A GENERATION—

Attracting the iGeneration to the cinema



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# HAERE MAI iGENERATION: AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION

One of the major challenges the exhibition industry around the world faces is attracting young people to cinemas. The New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) therefore sought to research the changing behaviour of young film audiences – the iGeneration. While we embrace the fact that there are multiple platforms on which to see films, the NZFC also seeks to ensure that the unique nature of the cinema experience continues to develop and evolve to meet the needs of young New Zealanders.

Qualitative research into the cinema experience was undertaken by GfK in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom in 2016 and NZFC was interested to discover whether similar attitudes towards cinema are evident in the New Zealand context. In December 2017, NZFC contracted Colmar Brunton to undertake an on-line qualitative discussion forum with 37 young New Zealanders aged between 12 and 25. This report outlines who the iGeneration is, how they think and behave, and what influences

and motivates the decisions they make around the cinema versus home experience. We also look at the high value young New Zealanders place on New Zealand films.

Changing social behaviours and technologies mean that while the iGeneration continue to value film, the cinema experience is not an essential part of their lives – film is easily watched online and at home.

Drawing on the research the report therefore offers some practical suggestions regarding the ways in which exhibitors, film distributors, marketers, publicists and filmmakers might further engage with the iGeneration and make them a vital part of the New Zealand cinema audience.

**Annabelle Sheehan**  
Chief Executive  
New Zealand Film Commission



# MEET THE LATEST GENERATION OF CINEMA AUDIENCES – THE iGENERATION

The iGens are the generation of people born from about the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. iGen are socially aware, involved in a wide range of activities and value their family and friends.

Although they generally lead busy lives, iGens believe a good work-life balance is important. iGens told us that they enjoy a wide range of activities, including sports, as well as more relaxed and solitary pursuits.

Favourite activities include playing or listening to music, hanging out with friends and family, watching movies and TV series, reading, shopping and being creative. Though many iGens find life exciting, some express anxiety about 'growing up' and transitioning to the next stage of life.

## WHO ARE THE iGENS?

Born between  
1993 and 2005



*"I read, watch movies  
online by myself or with  
friends or family and I'm on  
social media."*

FEMALE, 15-17 YEARS, MĀORI



*"I like to relax and watch  
YouTube or Netflix or do creative  
things such as painting."*

FEMALE, 22-25 YEARS, PĀKEHĀ



## In my spare time...

*"I spend time with  
my friends and family.  
We just hang out and it's  
neat to have that chill  
time."*

FEMALE, 18-21 YEARS, PASIFIKA



*"I do a paper run and  
pamphlet run, tennis, soccer  
and badminton and hanging  
out with mates. I'm starting  
high school which is exciting."*

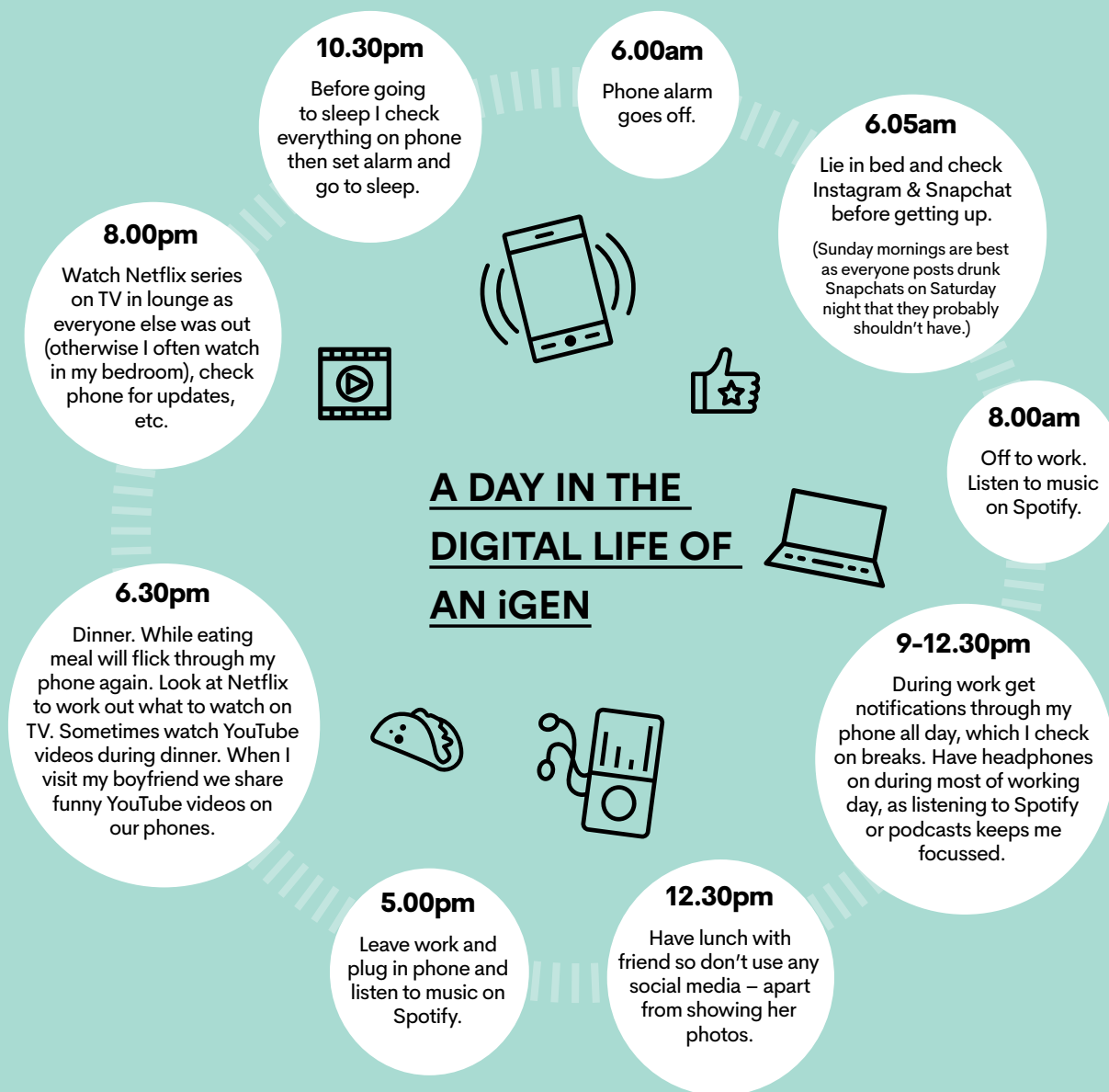
MALE, 12-14 YEARS, PĀKEHA

# THE iGENERATION

## ARE DIGITAL NATIVES

iGens are the first generation to spend their entire lives growing up with iPads, iPods and iPhones etc. iGen spend all day connected online.

From early in the morning until late at night, iGen are digitally connected, accessing anything they want online. There are many digital platforms with which they engage, including YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter.



# FILM CONTRIBUTES TO THE iGENERATION'S IDEAS ABOUT SOCIAL ISSUES

Films influence iGens' opinions on a whole variety of social, political and environmental issues, and act as a catalyst for discussion with friends and family.

iGens are concerned with social issues like climate change, social inequality and gender roles. They describe 'well-being' as very important. Films can have a major impact on the opinions and beliefs of the iGeneration. Though they like to be entertained, they are also curious about the world and are eager to be confronted and educated about a wide range of serious social issues. Films are a way for them to see how other people live, broaden their horizons and provoke debate. iGens want to see something new as soon as they possibly can and become part of the conversation. They also want to see content that inspires them to enjoy the 'little things in life' and to be reminded to chill out and not to take life too seriously.



# NEW ZEALAND FILMS ARE IMPORTANT TO THE iGENERATION

iGens take pride in New Zealand's cultural diversity and recognise the social, cultural and economic value of our film industry. New Zealand films can reflect their own lives or give them insights into the lives of others.

New Zealand films contribute to the iGeneration learning about our country and people. They feel it's important to share our stories. This helps them experience other people's lives. Watching New Zealand movies also gives iGens a sense of pride and an understanding of what makes us unique as a nation. Some iGens may have friends or relatives who work in some aspect of the film or television industry so want to support their work. Some like to follow the progress of particular New Zealand filmmakers. iGens feel proud seeing and supporting New Zealand stories on film.



*"There is an essence a New Zealander can bring to a film that no other ethnicity can - a sort of Kiwi spirit that is shown throughout the film. Without Kiwis making films, this spirit would be lost. Films made in New Zealand bring in money, but they also encourage tourists to come and visit after they see how beautiful New Zealand is on film."*

FEMALE, 15-17 YEARS, PĀKEHĀ

*"I was never brought up to see the Māori culture or the real Kiwi experience. But movies like Boy and Once Were Warriors really make you feel something - bad and good. So Kiwi film is huge for our own people to understand, and also to put us on the map."*

MALE, 22-25 YEARS, MĀORI

*"Boy was a movie that made me think and have a chat about it afterwards and how he really wanted a Dad but his Dad didn't want him."*

MALE, 12-14 YEARS, PĀKEHĀ

## THE iGENERATION SPEAKS: What we like and value about New Zealand movies

*"We are such a diverse, creative, multifaceted group of people and it's so important we let our voices be heard! It is even more important that the right people are telling the stories, whether it's from the perspective of a 10-year-old Māori kid or an 89-year-old Samoan lady with 20 grandchildren."*

FEMALE, 22-25 YEARS, PASIFIKA

*"I fully support seeing films, directed by Kiwis for Kiwis, in our cinemas because our culture is unique and deserves to be shown not only at a local level but on the world stage. Look at the widespread positive response to Taika Waititi's Thor: Ragnarok. The Kiwi-isms are amazing and show how a Kiwi perspective can freshen up a formulaic film franchise."*

FEMALE, 22-25 YEARS, MĀORI



## SOCIAL MEDIA IS AN UNDER-UTILISED OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE THE iGENERATION

Social media plays a huge part in iGen lives. It is an under-utilised opportunity for cinemas, film distributors and filmmakers to reach out and directly engage with the iGeneration in their world and in their way.

Though movie trailers (both on-line and at the cinema) remain a major source of influence, iGens are critical of trailers that 'give too much away'. Word-of-mouth recommendations are still very influential, but the iGeneration is not just influenced by friends. Influencers – people they follow on social media – create 'virtual' word of mouth. If influencers recommend a movie, their iGen followers may be strongly drawn to watching it. Rather than wait for iGens to come to the cinema and watch trailers, cinemas and distributors need to join them in their world. They need to be where the iGeneration 'hangs out' – social media – and market films and cinema-going there. Online platforms like Spotify and Netflix currently tailor their recommendations to the individual users. iGen want film recommendations to be tailored to them.

*"The last movie I watched was **The Belladonna of Sadness**, a Japanese animated film. I decided to watch this movie because **Rowan Blanchard** (American actor with 5.1 million followers) recommended it on Instagram."*

FEMALE, 15-17 YEARS, PĀKEHĀ

## THE iGENERATION SPEAKS:

*"I've been looking for an app that uses machine learning to give recommendations on movies you might like. If you said you felt like watching something similar to **Saving Private Ryan**, **Inglourious Bastards**, and **Hacksaw Ridge**, the app would suggest you watch **Dunkirk**."*

MALE, 22-25 YEARS, PĀKEHĀ

# CINEMA FULFILS CORE EMOTIONAL MOTIVATIONS

Watching a movie at the cinema fulfils core emotional needs in people. This fulfilment can be marketed to the iGeneration. Our research identified six core motivations for the iGeneration.

Watching a movie at the cinema presents the iGeneration with an opportunity for being:

**Chilled:** escaping for a couple of hours, relaxing and chilling out with no interruptions.

**Intimate:** being intimate with others through social connection and shared experiences with partners, friends, colleagues and families.

**Hyped:** experiencing heightened emotions including being hyped and excited (action movies), shocked and terrified (horror), sad (dramas), and laughing (comedy).

**In the know:** feeling that by watching the latest movies you are a leader – that you are at the forefront of the culture and leading social media commentary and opinion.

**Creative:** becoming a 'film buff' and being creative by following directors and other creative artists involved in filmmaking.

**Socially conscious:** thinking and being curious about the issues raised in the film and using the film to help shape discussion, opinions, views and beliefs.

## CORE EMOTIONAL BENEFITS



In the know



Hyped



Chilled



Intimate



Socially Conscious

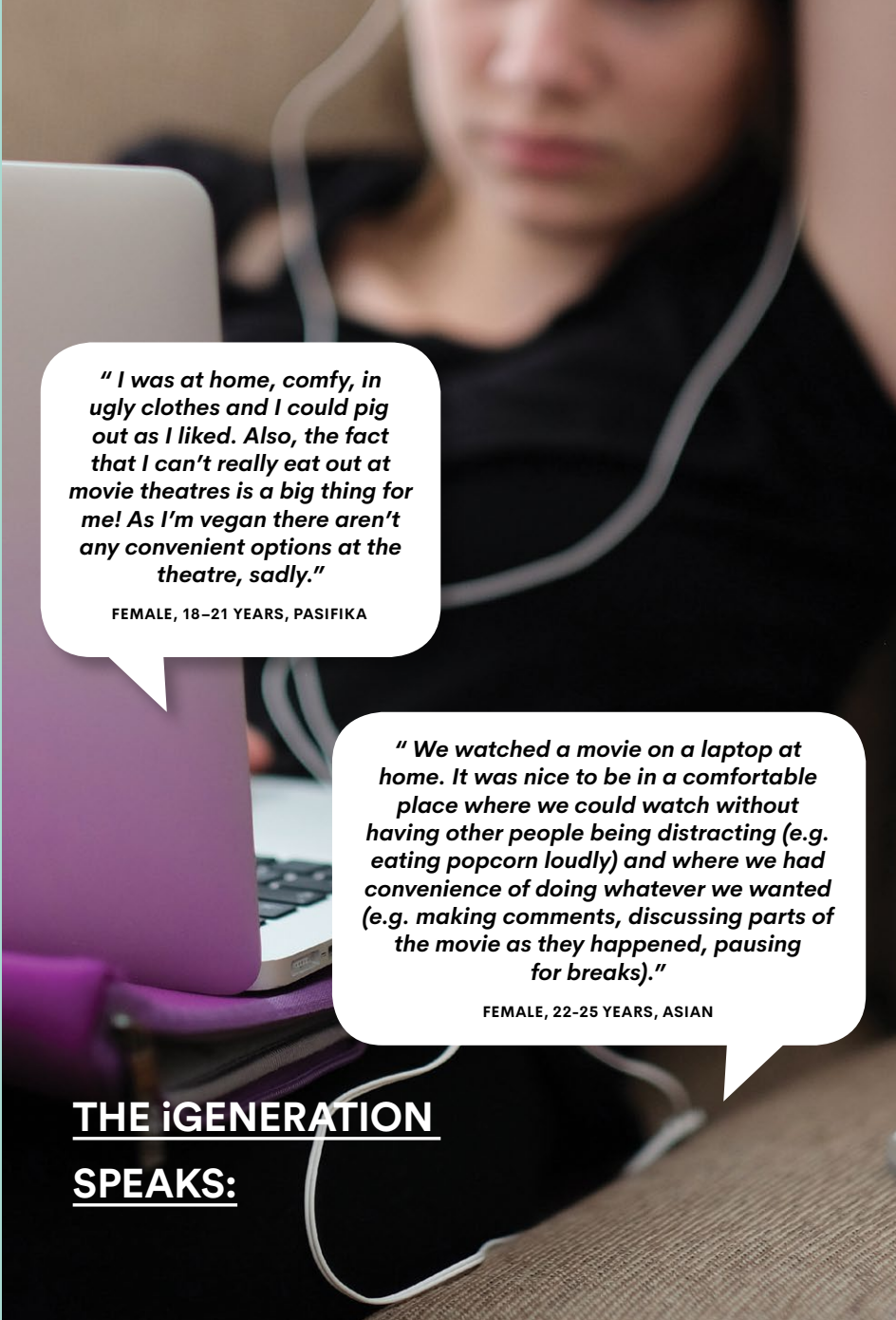


Creative Film Buff

## WATCHING FILMS ONLINE AND AT HOME IN ‘MY SPACE’ HAS HIGH APPEAL

Although iGens say they like going to the cinema, watching films online and at home has very high appeal. In-home viewing is easy, convenient, safe, comfortable and costs very little. It can be sociable or equally enjoyable alone.

For many iGens, the ease and comfort of watching films at home outweighs the benefits of going to the cinema. Films are available, both legally and illegally, online, and can often be seen before they are released in New Zealand. iGens can watch a film where and when they choose, and don't have to work around screening schedules or stand around queuing for tickets and food. The low cost of watching movies at home means they can stop watching if they are not enjoying a film and move on to another option. They can also pause and discuss scenes with others – often important to iGens – take a break or check their phone. There is more choice of food and drink at home, at a much lower cost than at the cinema.



*"I was at home, comfy, in ugly clothes and I could pig out as I liked. Also, the fact that I can't really eat out at movie theatres is a big thing for me! As I'm vegan there aren't any convenient options at the theatre, sadly."*

FEMALE, 18-21 YEARS, PASIFIKA

*"We watched a movie on a laptop at home. It was nice to be in a comfortable place where we could watch without having other people being distracting (e.g. eating popcorn loudly) and where we had convenience of doing whatever we wanted (e.g. making comments, discussing parts of the movie as they happened, pausing for breaks)."*

FEMALE, 22-25 YEARS, ASIAN

## THE iGENERATION SPEAKS:

# CINEMA OFFERS A SOCIAL OCCASION AND IMMERSIVE, STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY

The iGeneration values the immersive, state-of-the-art, sight and sound technology of cinemas that they cannot access at home. They also value the entire experience and the emotional fulfilment. There is potential to develop complete wrap-around immersive experiences that include all five senses: sight, sound, touch, taste (food) and smell.

The iGeneration still values cinema. They see it as an inclusive social occasion that can be spent with friends, family and colleagues. It's also an opportunity to meet new people. Enjoying a sense of community with a shared experience is greatly appealing to iGen. They also value the unique, uninterrupted time spent at the cinema where they can immerse themselves in a film. iGens are very aware of the latest technologies in sound and image, including Virtual Reality, and are seeking a fully immersive, multisensory experience at the cinema.



*"The atmosphere of going to this huge dark room and watching a movie the way it's meant to be watched and the community aspect of it.*

*You have a group of mostly strangers all in the same room, disconnected from the rest of the world for a couple of hours, sharing an experience where they are all laughing/crying/scared/enthralled about the same thing. There's not many other experiences left like that today."*

MALE, 22-25 YEARS, PĀKEHĀ

*"I actually think what I would miss most is all the social moments that come with going to the cinema and the event surrounding going to the cinema. And while most people would argue that these moments will still exist, most of them are created from the mood of the film shown in the cinema and the content of the film."*

FEMALE, 15-17 YEARS, MĀORI



## THE iGENERATION SPEAKS:

*"I had a really good time because the cinema was full, it was late at night and the movie was really scary, this all added to the experience and something you wouldn't be able to replicate at home. Afterwards we walked home to my friends flat (at almost midnight - adding to the scariness!!)."*

FEMALE, 18-21 YEARS, PĀKEHĀ

*"I think it's the excitement of being together with a whole bunch of people and watching a movie together. It's the inclusiveness of it all."*

FEMALE, 22-25 YEARS, PASIFIKA



## CINEMAS BRING MUCH TO THE FILM EXPERIENCE, BUT THEY ARE EXPENSIVE AND INCONVENIENT

The cost and 'administration' involved with the cinema experience is somewhat out of step with iGens. It is expensive, inflexible and inconvenient compared to watching a movie at home. The lack of flexibility, lining up for tickets and limited food and drink options can all add up to too much bother.

iGens are used to accessing films at home, online and often for free. The cost of attending the cinema means that for many iGens, it is only seen as a special treat. And it requires planning ahead. The need to check screening schedules and arrange a suitable time to go with a group of friends can be difficult for iGens. Compared to online choice, there is a very limited menu of what they can see at the movies, and there are limited opportunities and platforms for discussing the film with friends before during or after. iGens think queuing for tickets, food and drink is old-fashioned – and the food and drink options are limited and expensive. They need to be strongly persuaded that the entire cinema experience will be enjoyable and provide value for money.



*"At home it's easier to chat about the movie while it is happening without getting angry stares from other moviegoers. It's also nice just hanging out on the couch, pyjamas on, wine in hand (that didn't cost a fortune), enjoying each other's company as well as the movie."*

FEMALE, 22-25 YEARS, MĀORI

*"There's the tickets and the food and the drink and the transport. Planning can also be difficult. I would not go to the movies alone. When I'm at home I'm much more relaxed, I'm happy to watch a movie by myself and try new movies that I'm not sure if I'll like since I can just stop watching it."*

FEMALE, 22-25 YEARS, PĀKEHA

## THE iGENERATION SPEAKS:

*"I think the comfort of watching a movie at home or anywhere you like can outweigh going to the cinema because you're free to watch a movie how you want to."*

FEMALE, 15-17 YEARS, MĀORI

*"Today we have social media and an overexposure to the technology used in theatres, so we are not as interested in going to the cinema."*

FEMALE, 15-17 YEARS, PASIFIKA

*"Watching movies at home is free but if you add all the prices for movie ticket, food together it comes to about \$20-30. So if you go every weekend, we just can't afford to do this."*

MALE, 15-17 YEARS, PĀKEHĀ

# FACING THE CHALLENGE

## – CREATING AN ENTIRE WRAP-AROUND EXPERIENCE

Even though the iGeneration enjoy visiting the cinema, it is something they say they can live without. If cinemas and film distributors don't radically change the entire cinema experience – from before the iGen audience arrives until after they leave – they risk losing this important audience.

The iGeneration value the unique cinema experience but they feel it could be quite easily replaced by home viewing. If this happened, it would not bother some iGens at all. The iGens we talked to identified a number of areas where they think cinemas can do better. These changes need to be made to bring cinema into the iGeneration world. The improvements and innovations that they suggest start well before they arrive at the cinema. They include pre-film experiences, the viewing experience itself and what happens afterwards, both at the cinema after the movie and later online.



## USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MARKETING

The iGeneration need more than trailers and posters to engage them with cinema. They need to feel that cinema-going is a 'must go' social event. The best place to attract their interest is where they spend a lot of time – on social media.

Because the iGeneration constantly engages with social media, this is where marketing and advertising should be directed. However, iGens don't just want to see trailers but would like to know more background information and 'soft-sell' content. Some of this can be very inexpensive content and free to post. iGens don't just want to know what a movie is about and who is in it, but also what the people who influence them on social media think about that movie. They enjoy the customised approach of platforms like Netflix which say 'if you enjoyed movie X then you would probably love movies Y and Z'. With a more targeted approach to social media that isn't just trailers that often give the story away, larger numbers of iGens may seriously consider attending the cinema as a great way to enjoy a movie.



## PROVIDE APPS FOR ADMINISTRATION AND CONVENIENCE

Use apps to make booking, tickets and food and drink ordering more streamlined and convenient. To have to queue makes the cinema experience seem old-fashioned.

Having apps for tickets and other things such as food and drink is very important to iGens. They'd rather be spending time with their friends than queuing and want their tickets scanned from their phone at the door. Note, iGens we spoke to did not seem to be aware that apps already exist, suggesting there may need to be more marketing and promotions of this opportunity.





## PROVIDE

## ‘HANG-OUT’ SPACE

The iGeneration suggest dedicated spaces at the cinema where they can hang out with their friends.

Social spaces at cinemas where iGens can socialise before and after screenings would have high appeal. Many iGens want food and drink they can pre-order. Though treats like popcorn are liked for the nostalgia value and are strongly associated with the cinema experience, they would like a wider range of snacks available and/or be able to bring their own food to the cinema. A wide range of snacks were mentioned but pizza was common.



## THE iGENERATION EXPECT STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN AT THE CINEMA

As home theatre technology improves, cinemas need to compete. The iGeneration want cinemas to be immersive, super-comfortable, well designed, and incorporate the latest technologies such as surround sound and virtual reality (VR).

The iGeneration expect cinemas to continue to evolve by using the very latest technology, far superior to anything they can get at home. They want a full sensory and immersive experience at the cinema and many are prepared to pay for it. If they don't get it, they will simply watch movies at home. Enormous curved screens, technology built into seating so it can move with the action, VR headsets, bean bags, augmented reality and fully reclining seats to view movies are just some of the ideas which excite the iGeneration.



*"I would fill my ideal cinema with big couches and pillows and the biggest of fridges to have either alcohol or fizzy. Couches and pillows because they are comfy and would suit when sitting down for more than one hour at a time."*

MALE, 15-17 YEARS, PĀKEHĀ

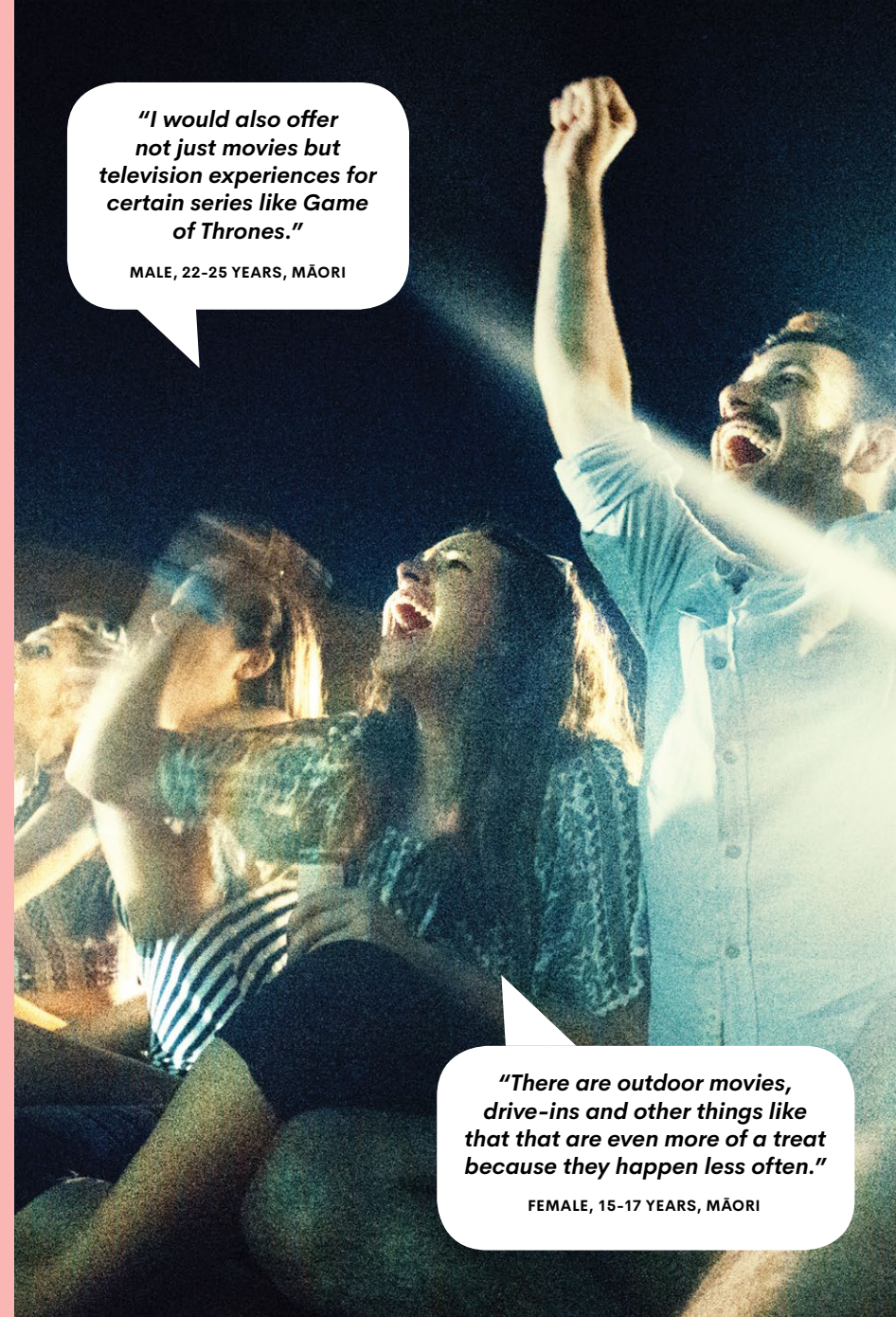


## EXTEND 'THE OFFER'

## BEYOND FILM SCREENINGS

Rather than just watch movies, the iGeneration would also like to be able to view other forms of entertainment such as live sports, e-sports (competitive gaming) and 'binge-watch' entire TV series. They are also interested in outdoor and drive-in cinema, and being able to select or vote for what they view and when they view it.

The iGeneration is interested in being able to watch major sports events at the cinema, with big screens providing a more exciting 'live' viewing experience than watching at home or in a bar. They are also interested in being able to watch and participate in 'e-sport' gaming at the cinema. 'Binge-watching' entire TV series in a few sittings is now a common home-viewing experience for many iGens. They would like to be able to view TV series with high production values at the cinema. They are also interested in activities like outdoor and drive-in cinema, which they see as a social event in itself, and having far more value and enjoyment than just watching the movie.



*"I would also offer not just movies but television experiences for certain series like Game of Thrones."*

MALE, 22-25 YEARS, MĀORI

*"There are outdoor movies, drive-ins and other things like that that are even more of a treat because they happen less often."*

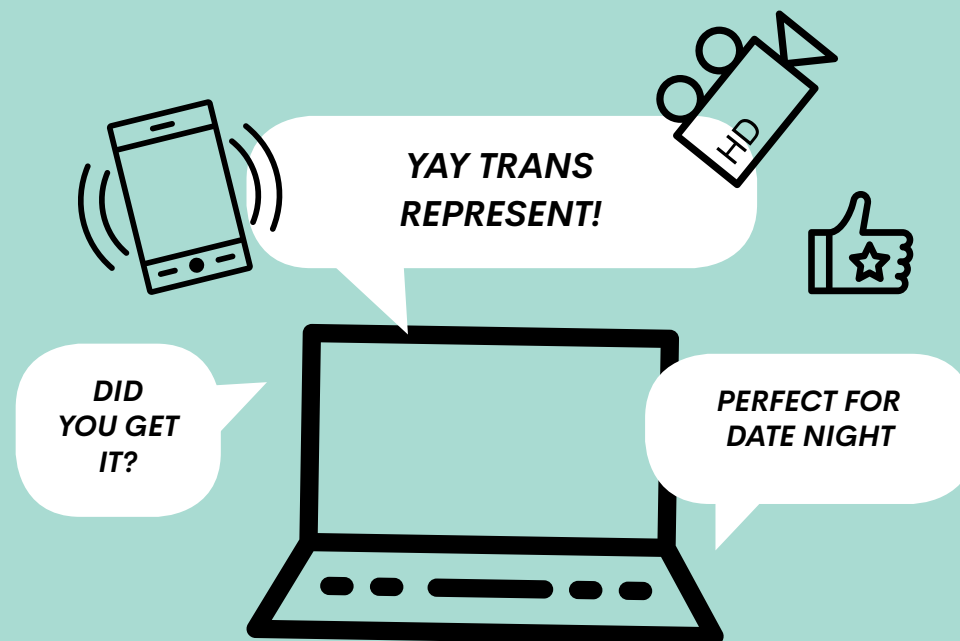
FEMALE, 15-17 YEARS, MĀORI

## ROLL THE END CREDITS

### POST-FILM ACTIVITY

Once they have seen a movie, many iGens want to be involved in discussing it both online and offline. Cinemas and distributors who provide both virtual and real spaces in which to do this are likely to attract more iGens.

For iGens, seeing a movie is only part of what they regard as the whole cinema experience. They are active both socially and on social media, and want opportunities to discuss what they have just seen, either in person or online. They want to become more involved by being asked what they think of a film, how they would rate the film and then be directed to other similar films which may interest them. Cinemas providing inviting, comfortable spaces where iGens can hang out and discuss the movie afterwards would help facilitate this. Facilitating on-line forums where iGens can review, comment and rate films will also help increase their engagement. Note iGens seemed unaware of any current platforms for this, suggesting lack of relevance or promotion of these sites to iGens.



## THAT'S A WRAP!

The iGeneration enjoy watching films, especially at home. Though they enjoy the cinema when they go, some would not really be bothered at all by its demise. They would probably shrug and say "that's just how things go" and continue to watch movies at home.

However, iGens have lots of good ideas and they hope that cinemas will up their game so there is less reliance on simply sight and sound technology to pull people in. They want more emphasis on the entire package – all five senses, online engagement, improving convenience, innovative and well-designed spaces, and marketing to the core emotional fulfilments as well as good promotion of individual films. The challenge for cinemas and distributors is to keep up with each new generation or face becoming irrelevant. Though meeting this challenge requires an investment of both time and money, and involves rethinking the entire iGeneration cinema experience – from the very beginning when iGens first consider watching a movie right through to the way they might feed back after watching a movie. For many New Zealanders, going to the cinema with friends or family is an experience that cannot be replicated at home, online or anywhere else. We must all ensure that it remains that way and that the iGeneration and the generations who come after it continue to see cinema as a highly fulfilling experience.



# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The New Zealand Film Commission contracted Colmar Brunton to undertake research through on-line interactive forums in December 2017.

## Who did we talk to?

Thirty-seven young people aged 12-25 years. Participants included a mix of genders, ages, ethnicities and regions.

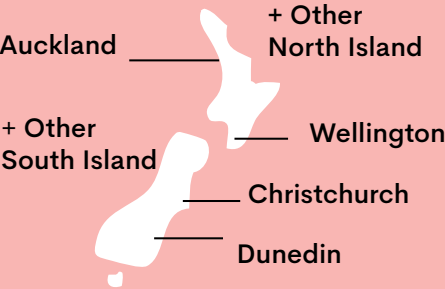


## How often do they go to the cinema?

Participants in the research ranged from attending at least once a month (at least 12 times a year) to visiting only 3-5 times a year. This allowed us to explore motivations for visiting, or not visiting, and the reasons for this behaviour.



## Where do participants come from?



## What is the ethnicity of participants?

- Māori
- Pākehā
- Pasifika
- Asian

## How old are the participants & what do they do?

Age, occupation and educational level of participants	Number participating
12-14 YEAR OLD SECONDARY STUDENTS	5
15-17 YEAR OLD SECONDARY STUDENTS	6
TERTIARY STUDENTS	8
EMPLOYED/TERTIARY EDUCATED	8
EMPLOYED/NON-TERTIARY EDUCATED	10
TOTAL	37



This study was commissioned by the New Zealand Film Commission  
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