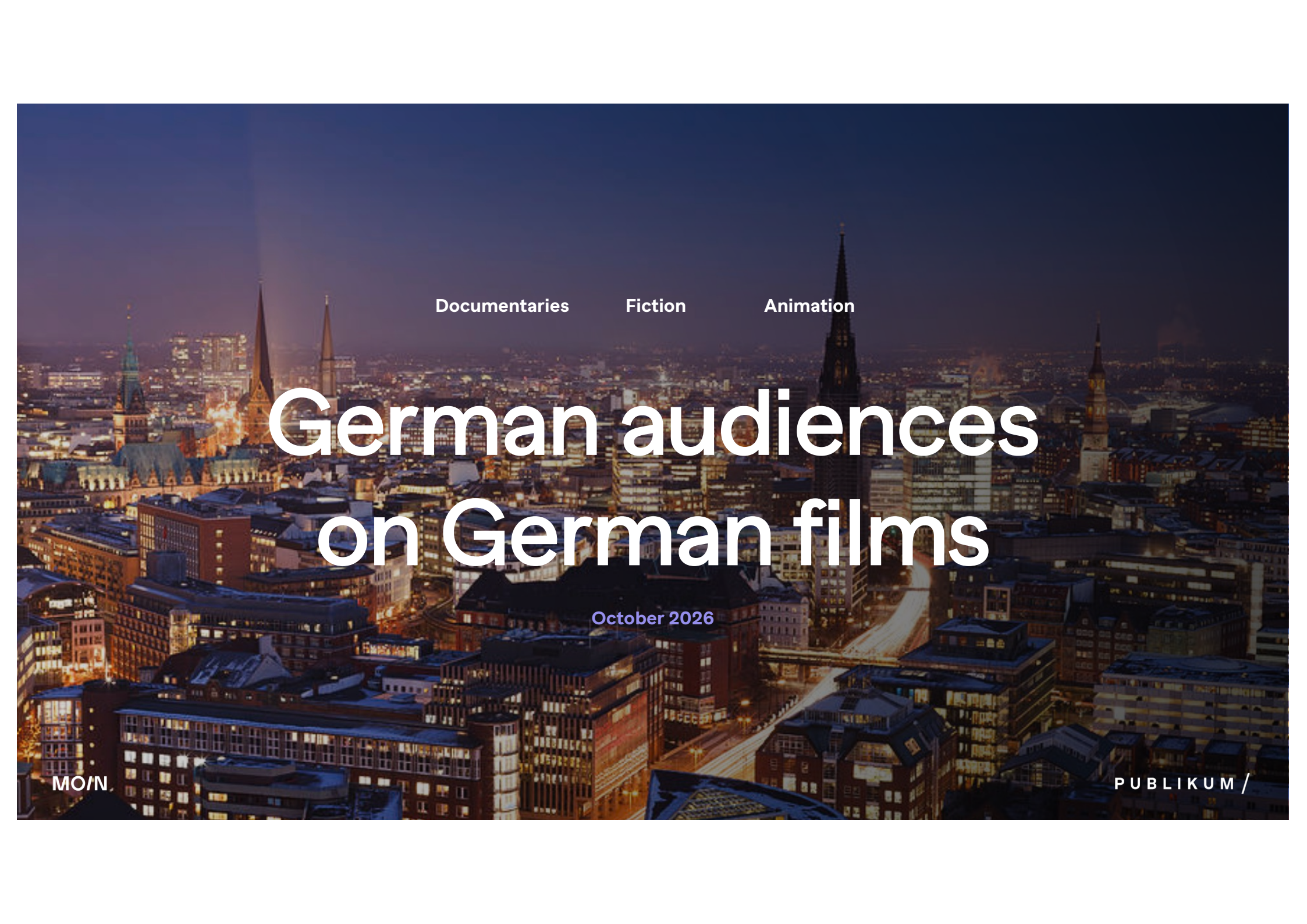




Documentaries

Fiction

Animation

German audiences on German films

October 2026

MO/N

PUBLIKUM /

Trusted, but with room to grow

German audiences trust German films. They value their depth, their authenticity and their closeness to everyday life, qualities foreign films rarely offer in the same way.

Yet that trust too seldom turns into tickets. 2025 was the best year for German films in five years, with a market share of 27.4%. Even so, almost three out of four cinema tickets in Germany were sold for foreign films. And the success German films did have rested on very few titles: around 220 new German films reached cinemas, but just two of them sold one in three tickets for German films, and ten sold more than 60%.

Why? And what would make German audiences choose a German film more often?

We cannot answer every part of that question here, but we can bring the industry closer to an answer. MOIN Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein and PUBLIKUM joined forces on a pilot programme, the first of its kind in Germany. Production companies from northern Germany were invited to apply, and three were selected, one per genre: JYOTI Film for documentary, Fabian & Fred for animation and Wüste Film for fiction. Alongside their projects, we ran an independent study of how German audiences relate to film, and to German films in particular.

This report brings together what we heard. It shows what German audiences expect, what draws them in and what makes them turn away, across documentary, fiction and animation. No study can guarantee a hit, but this one gives a clear picture of the audience you are making films for and what it takes to win them over.

” I wish German films were sometimes a bit bolder when it comes to action, suspense, and visual craft. German films can still keep their core strength: telling good, believable stories. For me, a mix of a German story and cinematic execution would be ideal.

- Man, 54

“I think German films work particularly well when they are realistic and close to real life.”

“What bothers me about German feature films is that they are sometimes told a bit slowly and focus heavily on dialogue. Sometimes I feel like the plot doesn't really move forward.”

“German cinema has immense potential for reflection... There is always a lot of acting depth and psychological depth in them.”

“The characters aren't perfect either—just like life actually runs in Germany—and that's exactly what makes them relatable to me.”

“German films are willing to tackle difficult subjects... They don't shy away from dark sides, and they show human flaws without sugarcoating them.”

“I'm a fan of German films... I find the actors more approachable, relatable, and realistic, not so detached. You can empathize with these characters much more easily.”

“What sets German films apart for us as an audience is that they have a storyline that actually affects you personally, where you can build a genuine connection.”

“With German films in particular, I often feel the ticket prices aren't worth it... The story often isn't gripping enough for me to say I need to see it in the cinema right now.”

“I like it when German films tell a good story and don't try to look bigger or more spectacular than they actually are.”

“What sometimes bothers me about German films is that they are too serious or too slow for me. Sometimes I feel like there's a lot of talking, but not really much happening.”

“German cinema has immense potential for reflection... There is always a lot of acting depth and psychological depth in them.”

“The German camera work and perspectives bother me—they can feel boring. I think you need to find a middle ground between the fast pace of American films and the German style.”

Methodology

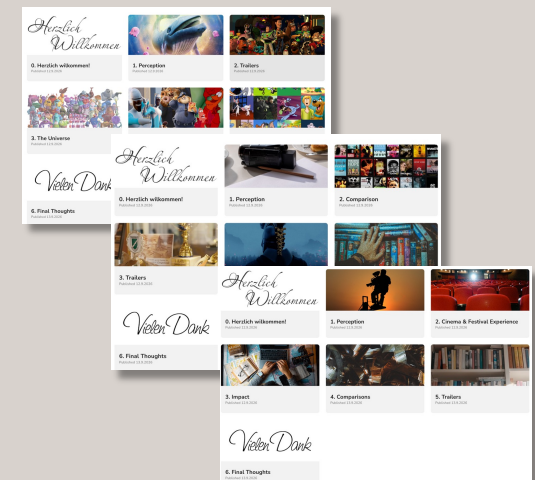
This qualitative study draws on around 180 participants, 4,500 audience reactions and 300,000 online conversations about film and German films.

At its core are 30 participants who took part in September 2026 through mobile ethnography on the PUBLIKUM platform. Over six days, they were divided into three groups, one per genre, and answered questions and reacted to material tailored to documentary, fiction or animation. Together, they gave around 500 qualitative responses.

The study collected input on central elements like:

- Overall brand perception of German films
- Comparison of US and German films
- Universes
- Main characters and side characters
- Topics and themes
- Settings
- Familiarity and adaptation
- Cinema experience

The remaining participants and reactions come from all nine projects in the pilot programme, conducted between May and September 2026 across the three genres, which add depth and cross-reference. In total, around 3,000 of the reactions are qualitative video responses. The 300,000 online conversations were analysed with PUBLIKUM's Zeitgeist tool and helped us understand how Germans talk about film and German films more broadly. The findings are qualitative. They show how and why German audiences think and feel about film, not how many of them share a given view.



Through mobile ethnography, participants were presented with different questions and materials and replied with video responses. In total, around 150 hours of input from German audiences was collected.

5 observations across genres

First job for any German film: “Gimme a break”

Across all three genres, the first thing German audiences ask of a film is a break from everyday life: a couple of hours to switch off, be absorbed and feel something.

What that break looks like depends on the genre. In fiction, it is a sense of flow and losing themselves in a story. In animation, it is shared time off, where the whole family can laugh and relax together. Even in documentary, where curiosity is the main driver, audiences want to be carried along by the story rather than work their way through the information.

This is why films that ask too much up front meet a barrier. When a film feels too heavy, too slow, too dialogue-driven or too eager to educate, audiences often opt out before its depth has a chance to land. Germans welcome depth, but mostly when it arrives as part of the break, not instead of it.

” I need to forget reality completely for a while. That's the best thing I could hope for from a movie. To shut out everyday life and my worries for a while.

- Woman, 40

* 82%

Use fiction primarily for entertainment

70%

Use fiction for relaxation

53%

Use fiction for inspiration and learning.

* Source: “The Claim”, a 2026 PUBLIKUM survey based on 689 respondents

Germans rarely go to the cinema alone: every film must meet shared and diverging needs

Cinema in Germany is a social decision. 84% of cinema tickets are bought for visits in company (FFA, 2025), so a film is rarely chosen for one person's taste alone. It is chosen for a constellation of parents and children, partners or friends, each with their own expectations.

The research shows how differently those needs play out. Families want to laugh together, and an animated film that is merely tolerable for either parent or child risks being rejected. Adults match the film to the company they are going with.

The occasion also raises the bar. When audiences buy a ticket or watch with others, they expect stronger production, more momentum and moments they can share. Serious, slower or heavier films are more often saved for watching alone at home. Germans expect a cinema film to win over the whole group, not just the person who suggested it.

” Depending on what kind of movie it is, I go to the cinema with the right people. If it's something on the comedic side, I'd rather go with kids. Whereas if it's something more like a thriller, I'd rather go with my girlfriend. And for an action movie, I'd to with my friends.

- Man, 36

Germans come for the entertainment, but always expect to take something away

Entertainment is the entry point, but German audiences also want a film to leave them with something that keeps the story alive after the credits.

What they take away looks different in each genre. From documentaries, it is the new insight, and audiences often remember the topic more than the film that delivered it. From fiction, it is something recognisable and true, whether a real-world struggle to reflect on, something new to talk about or a joke that feels true to life. From animation, it is something to play and something to share: children want to recreate the world at home, while parents look for a “we-learning” the family can talk about.

Big or small, these takeaways are where a film lives on and where IP is built: in heads, homes and conversations. The best films give German audiences a great time and a reason to keep the story going.

” My kids especially really get into that, and then they want to have or buy stuff with their favourite characters on it. And of course it stays even more present in your mind when the movie manages to be convincing enough that you end up thinking a character like that is kind of cool.

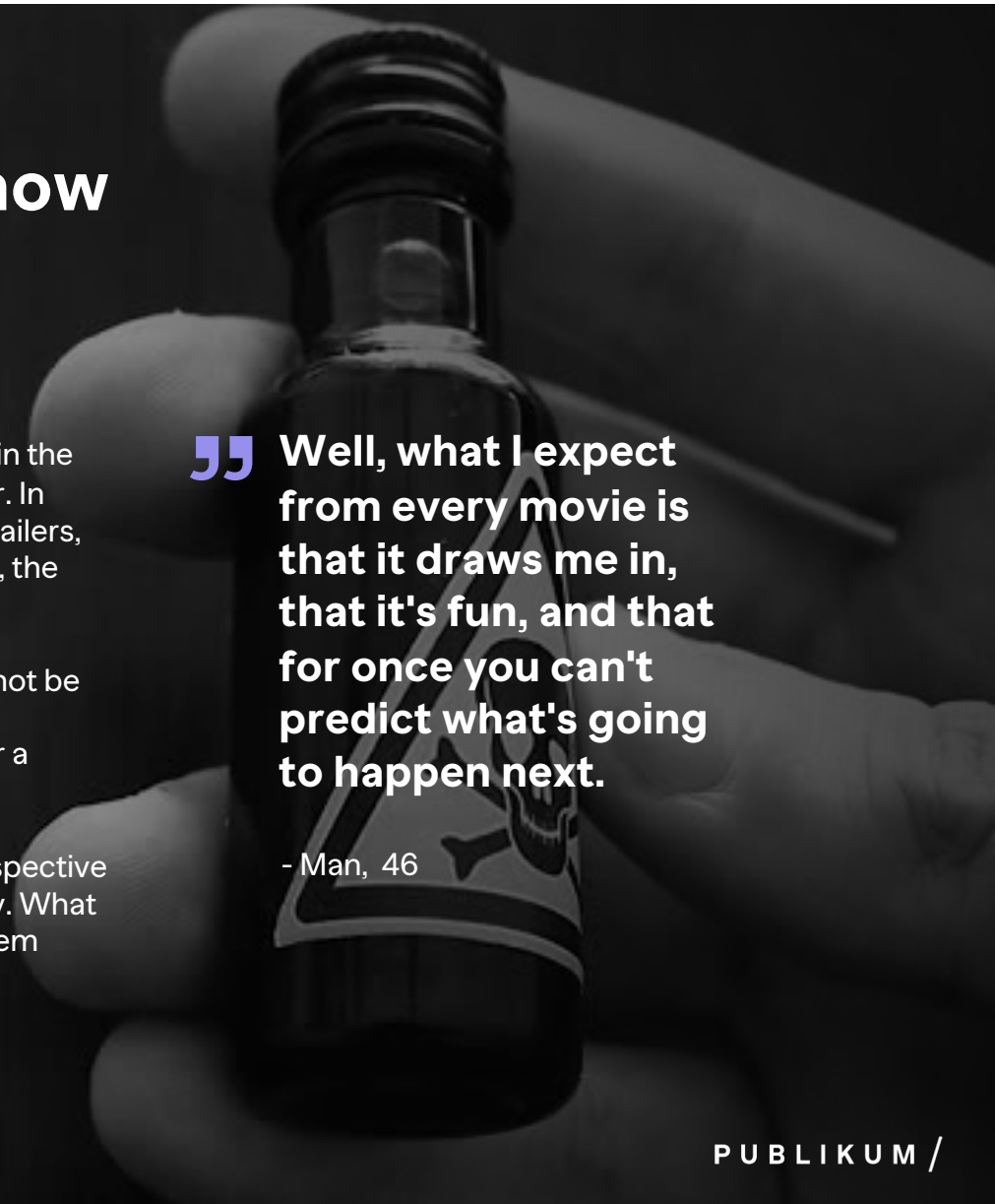
- Mother, 36

German audiences want to know what they will feel, but never what happens next

Predictability is poison to German audiences, but only in the story, not in the promise. Before choosing a film, they want to know what they are in for. In fiction, genre works as a mood contract. In animation, parents check trailers, reviews and age ratings to avoid unpleasant surprises. In documentary, the topic promises something new to learn.

Once the film starts, that promise has to be kept, but the path to it cannot be obvious. Across genres, predictability is one of the surest ways to lose audiences: a feature film whose ending is clear after twenty minutes, or a documentary that simply repackages what they already know.

Adaptations show how fine the line is. Audiences welcome a fresh perspective on a story they love, but not twists invented to feel more contemporary. What they ask of filmmakers is simple: make the promise clear, then keep them guessing.



„ Well, what I expect from every movie is that it draws me in, that it's fun, and that for once you can't predict what's going to happen next.

- Man, 46



Germans trust the depth of their own films, but call for bolder delivery

German films start with an advantage: German audiences trust them. They value their authenticity, their closeness to everyday German life and the depth with which they handle difficult topics, and they connect most strongly through characters that feel real.

What audiences miss is the delivery. German fiction is often described as dialogue-heavy, slow or preachy, and German documentaries as substantial but made for home in the eyes of many German audiences. US productions are seen as less deep, but stronger in the orchestration of visuals, sound and pace, which are exactly the things that make a film feel worth a cinema ticket.

Audiences do not want German films to become American. They welcome Hollywood's craft, but not its formula: bigger visuals, yes; manufactured emotion or diluted substance, no. Animation shows that craft alone is not enough either, since polished visuals keep a film from being rejected, but story and characters make it succeed. German films already have what is hardest to build, which is trust. The opportunity lies in delivering their depth with more boldness.

” **My advice to German filmmakers would be that they shouldn't be afraid to be a bit bolder... sometimes their films come across to me as a bit too serious, slow, or predictable. I don't want to feel like I already know how the movie is going to end after 20 minutes.**

- Man, 47

Documentary

” I speak relatively little about the documentary itself, and more about the topic and what I discovered through it.

- Man 37

German documentary audiences are driven by curiosity: they tend to remember the topic more than the documentary itself

There seems to be no topic that can't engage German documentary audiences and spark their curiosity.

Curiosity is the main reason they watch. Whether a subject is big or small, familiar or completely new to them, they are open to it, as long as it promises to teach them something they didn't know before.

This also shapes what they expect to take away. It is the new insight they remember and keep thinking about, not necessarily the film that delivered it.

The best documentaries leave them with a new question, a new perspective or a reason to explore further, long after the film has ended.



” I speak relatively little about the documentary itself, and more about the topic and what I discovered through it.

- Man 37

With huge curiosity it's rarely the topic that loses them but more often the creative delivery

When Germans describe a good documentary, they quickly point to the entry point: what hooks them and makes them want to keep watching.

A strong topic alone is not enough. German audiences are open to almost any subject, so the topic is rarely what makes them drop off. The difference lies in the story and the craft.

A strong narrative arc gives them the feeling that the story is always taking them somewhere, keeping their curiosity alive from the first hook to the end.

The craft matters just as much. When production feels underpowered, even a compelling topic loses impact: audiences see that it's interesting without feeling pulled in. But the craft should lift the story, not overshadow it. The topic is what stays with them. The delivery is what keeps them watching.

MO/N



” Sometimes it's actually less about the topic. For example, last year I watched a documentary about extreme birdwatching – a topic I know nothing about. But you could really tell the filmmakers loved it and it really carried me along.

- Man, 49

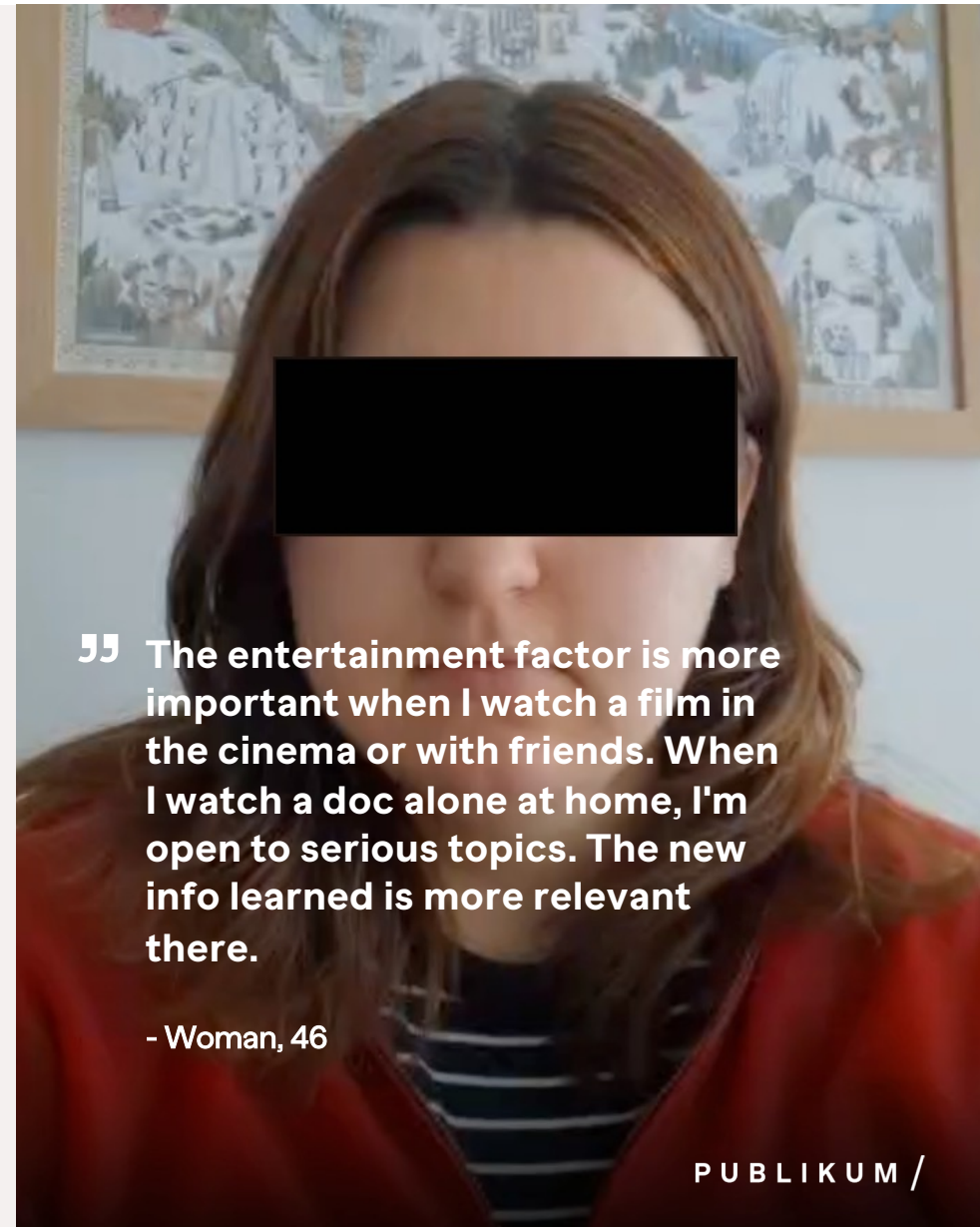
PUBLIKUM /

Germans trust their documentaries, but wish they had more “shared” elements

German audiences enjoy and trust the new knowledge their documentaries give them – a strong value proposition that foreign documentaries cannot match. The weak spot is entertainment. American documentaries feel easier to watch with others, while German ones feel like something to watch alone.

American documentaries sell the experience: emotional and made for the cinema. German ones sell understanding: substantial and made for home.

The gap matters most when a documentary becomes an occasion. Buying a cinema ticket or watching with friends raises the bar: audiences expect stronger production, narrative momentum and moments they can share. Entertainment makes it a shared watch. Information makes it a personal one.



” The entertainment factor is more important when I watch a film in the cinema or with friends. When I watch a doc alone at home, I'm open to serious topics. The new info learned is more relevant there.

- Woman, 46

That trust gives German documentaries room to take bigger creative risks

Audiences already trust German documentaries to tell stories with substance. That gives them permission to go beyond topics that feel immediately familiar.

They are open to documentaries that take them to other parts of the world, uncover overlooked histories and cultures, or shine a light on stories that rarely get attention, from indigenous communities and global history to women's sport and pressing social issues.

The appeal is not just going further geographically, but getting a perspective they would not easily find themselves. The same openness applies to how stories are told: when the substance is trusted, the form can afford to surprise.

The trust is already there. The opportunity lies in using it.

” What I look for is new perspectives, or stepping off the beaten path... inspiration, especially on topics you haven't dealt with before.

- Woman, 26

German documentary audiences are asking for more surprises – even 'plot twists'

Once the audience can predict the next point, the story has lost its pull. Audiences want to be surprised by a plot twist, a revelation or a real 'aha' moment.

Predictability is one of the most common reasons they lose interest. When the outcome is obvious from the start, or the film just repackages what they already know, the journey feels unnecessary. The same happens when a topic is stretched out without adding new insight. A documentary can take its time, but it cannot stand still. In the strongest documentaries, every moment deepens the story, shifts the perspective or reveals something new – without having to manufacture drama.

Unpredictability keeps them leaning in. When the next step is obvious, there is no reason to keep watching.

” There was no real 'aha' moment. And because you basically know, 'Well, okay, this thing happened'... it brought me no new insights. And personally, that brings me no added value.

- Man, 46

Hybrid formats and bigger visual experiences are also in high demand

Audiences see the greatest creative potential in documentaries that move beyond the familiar interview-led format towards more cinematic, hybrid forms.

Dynamic editing, creative visual sequences, reconstructed elements and stronger narrative tension can make a subject feel more immediate and immersive, while the factual depth and journalistic substance remain intact.

Visuals are the part of the American approach audiences welcome. German documentaries already have the authenticity. Stronger production can give it the impact it deserves, especially on the big screen, where audiences expect an experience worth leaving home for.

Bigger visual experiences can turn a personal watch into a shared one – without giving up the substance audiences trust.



” I'd say it's boring to just film a person and edit it together... For documentaries about people, if it fits, maybe work with animations or similar techniques—simply exploiting modern possibilities.

- Man, 36

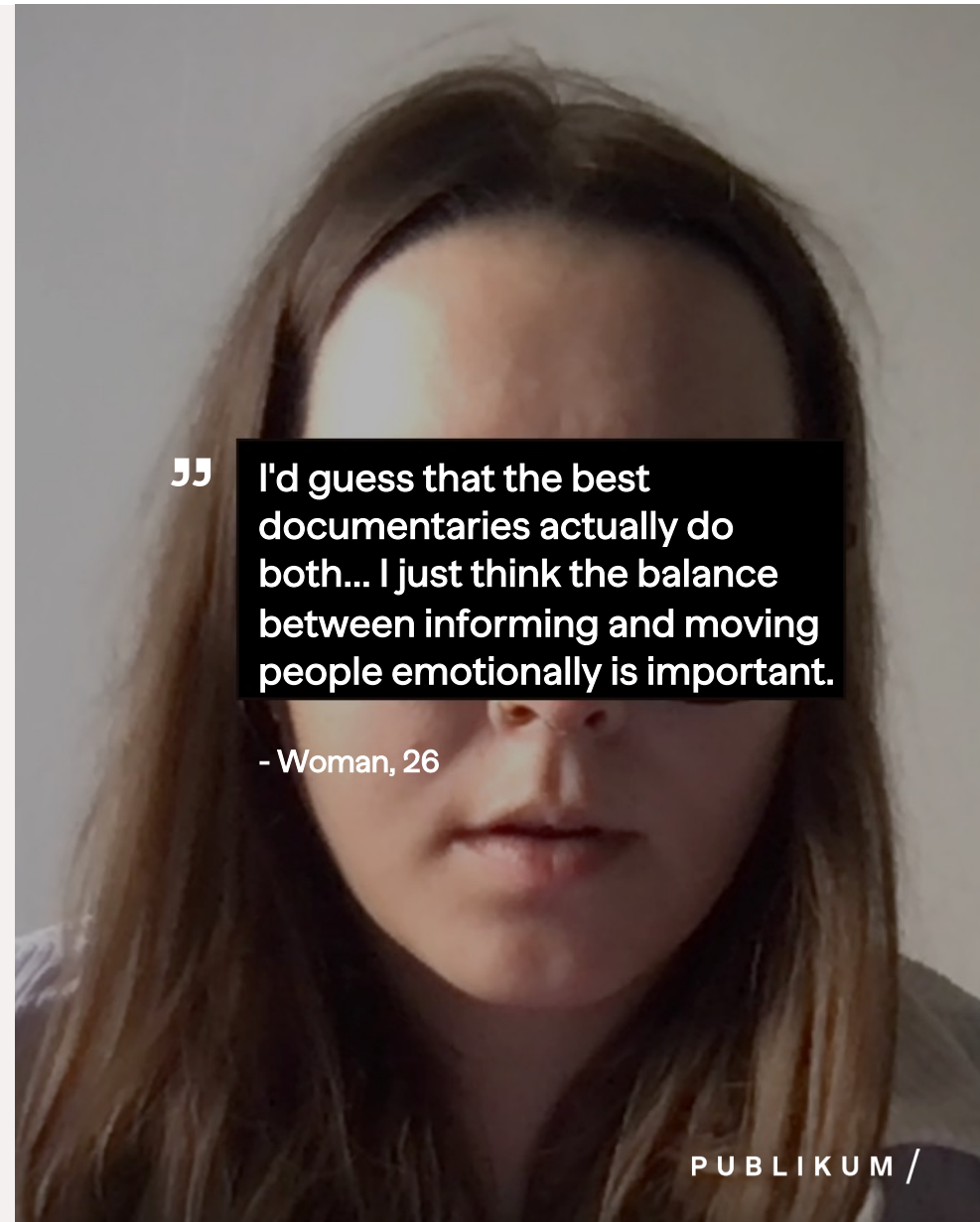
Emotional drama, however, is a tricky tool for German documentaries

Audiences don't want documentaries without emotion. The strongest ones make them feel something while giving them something new to take away.

But this is where German audiences are most sensitive. They notice the smallest cracks in authenticity, and suspense or drama that feels manufactured quickly undermines the realism they expect. The more a film tries to force a reaction, the more they notice the filmmaking itself.

This is also where the American comparison stops. It's okay to push the visuals to an American level, but not the emotion. The emotion has to come from the story and the connection to the people in it.

Emotion can create the pull, but information is why they came. Push it too far, and the film loses the credibility it was trusted for.



„ I'd guess that the best documentaries actually do both... I just think the balance between informing and moving people emotionally is important.

- Woman, 26

Documentary in short

- German documentary audiences are driven by curiosity: they tend to remember the topic more than the documentary itself
- It's rarely the topic that loses them, it's the creative delivery
- Germans trust their documentaries, but wish they had more “shared” elements
- That trust gives German documentaries room to take bigger creative risks
- German documentary audiences are asking for more surprises – even 'plot twists'
- Hybrid formats and bigger visual experiences are also in high demand
- Emotional drama, however, is a tricky tool for German documentaries

Key takeaways to remember

Germans' curiosity about the world is huge – but don't forget their hunger for creativity.

Surprises, twists and hybrid formats make documentaries worth watching together.

Keep the facts. Lift the visuals. Don't force the emotion.

Fiction

” I expect from a movie that I can forget reality for a certain time. This would be best for fiction to forget daily life and I want to have a feeling of flow.

- Woman 40

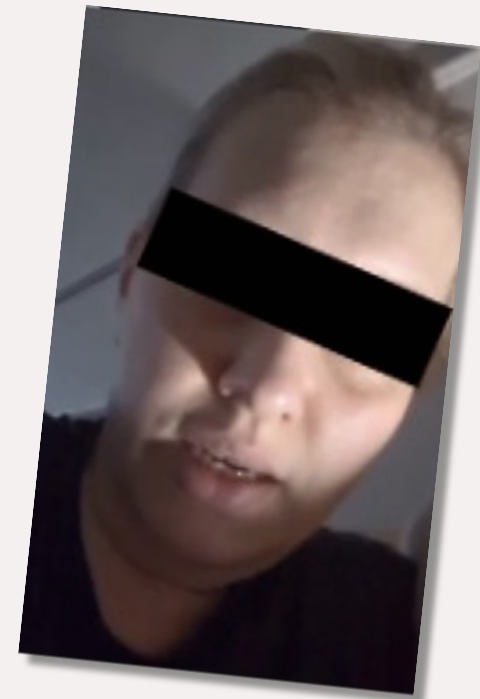
Germans are open to most stories when the promise of a little escape is clear

For German audiences, fiction is first and foremost an opportunity to switch off from everyday life and disappear into another reality. They want to be absorbed by the story, lose themselves in the characters, and experience a genuine sense of flow.

This makes them open to a wide range of stories, from light comedies to heavy dramas. The escape is less about the topic than about absorption, and even a serious film can offer it.

But in the eyes of audiences, German films too often fail to make that promise clear. They tend to lead with the topic, the message or the social relevance, while saying little about the experience itself – whether the film will pull audiences in or keep them at a distance. Without that promise, choosing a German film feels like a risk, and audiences turn to films that make the escape more explicit.

The opportunity is not to make German films lighter, but to make the promise of escape as visible as the topic.



” I expect from a movie that I can forget reality for a certain time. This would be best for fiction to forget daily life and I want to have a feeling of flow.

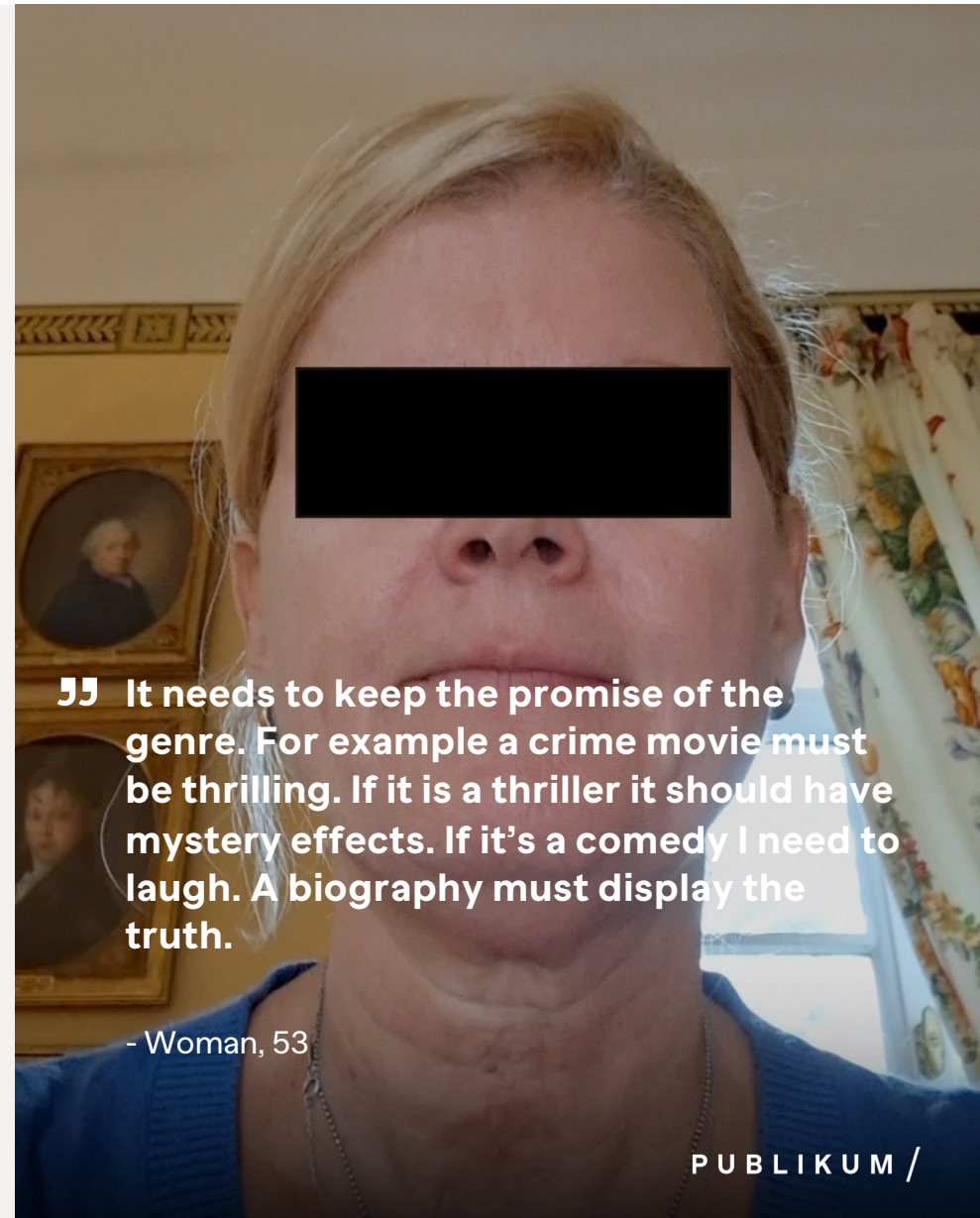
- Woman, 40

Audiences are calling for a clearer mood contract from German films

German audiences express a clear need for German films to be more explicit about the mood they offer. Escape comes in different moods – laughter, tension, tears or simply unwinding – and they want to know which one they are signing up for before they choose a film. Genre usually sets that expectation and works as a mood contract.

This is not a call for more genre films (only). Drama makes up a large part of German films, and a drama can be heartbreaking, hopeful or darkly funny, so the label alone says very little about what lies ahead. What audiences are asking for is a clearer signal of the emotional experience, so they can choose the right film for the right moment and the right company.

Once that promise has been made, the film also has to keep it. When a film sets up one mood and then delivers another, it breaks the spell. In the research, German audiences frequently criticised domestic cinema for breaching its "mood contract" – often prioritising heavy messages over a reliable genre experience.



” It needs to keep the promise of the genre. For example a crime movie must be thrilling. If it is a thriller it should have mystery effects. If it’s a comedy I need to laugh. A biography must display the truth.

- Woman, 53

”

The characters are approachable, deeply imperfect, and relatable - just like life actually runs here.

- Man, 46

”

What matters much more to me is that the characters are interesting and authentic, and that you as a viewer can empathize with them.

-Man, 29

German audiences will follow a film almost anywhere if the characters anchor it in reality

German audiences are willing to follow a film into almost any world, from intimate dramas to larger-than-life spectacles, but what keeps them grounded is not the setting, the genre or the topic but the characters. They look for something recognisable and authentic, and it is mainly through the characters that they find it: approachable, imperfect people with emotions that feel true and situations that connect to real life.

Through them, audiences get something to take away, whether it is a real-world struggle to reflect on, something new to talk about, a different perspective or simply a joke that feels true to life. For many, this matters more than a big budget or spectacular effects: a believable story is, first and foremost, a story with believable people in it.

The fiction can take them away from reality, but it cannot completely lose touch with it. When performances feel mechanical, characters become implausible, the ensemble feels unnatural or the visual world feels artificial, that connection breaks, and so does the immersion.

The best German films can take their stories as far as they like, as long as audiences feel they could meet the people in them.

While German audiences value films rooted in their own society, they criticise preachiness

The strongest German films seem to raise the question but trust the audience to answer it.

German audiences express excitement for films that feel close to home, portraying complex human relationships, regional realities and emotional vulnerability in a way that feels genuine and recognisable. This cultural proximity can create a particular sense of warmth, familiarity and connection, especially through grounded domestic characters, dry conversational humour, local mentalities and self-irony.

But there is a fine line between reflecting society and lecturing the audience. Films can address serious social issues and still be entertaining, as long as they leave room for the audience to interpret and engage with the topic themselves. When the message becomes too explicit, politically correct or heavy-handed, the film can start to feel preachy, educational and ultimately less authentic to many.

„I'd say in general that German films often do have preachy, politically correct and uncomfortably heavy-handed moments, and that overall German films are too bland, too uninspired and not entertaining enough.“

- Man, 37



„A good comedy, for example, can address a serious topic without the film constantly coming across as preachy.“

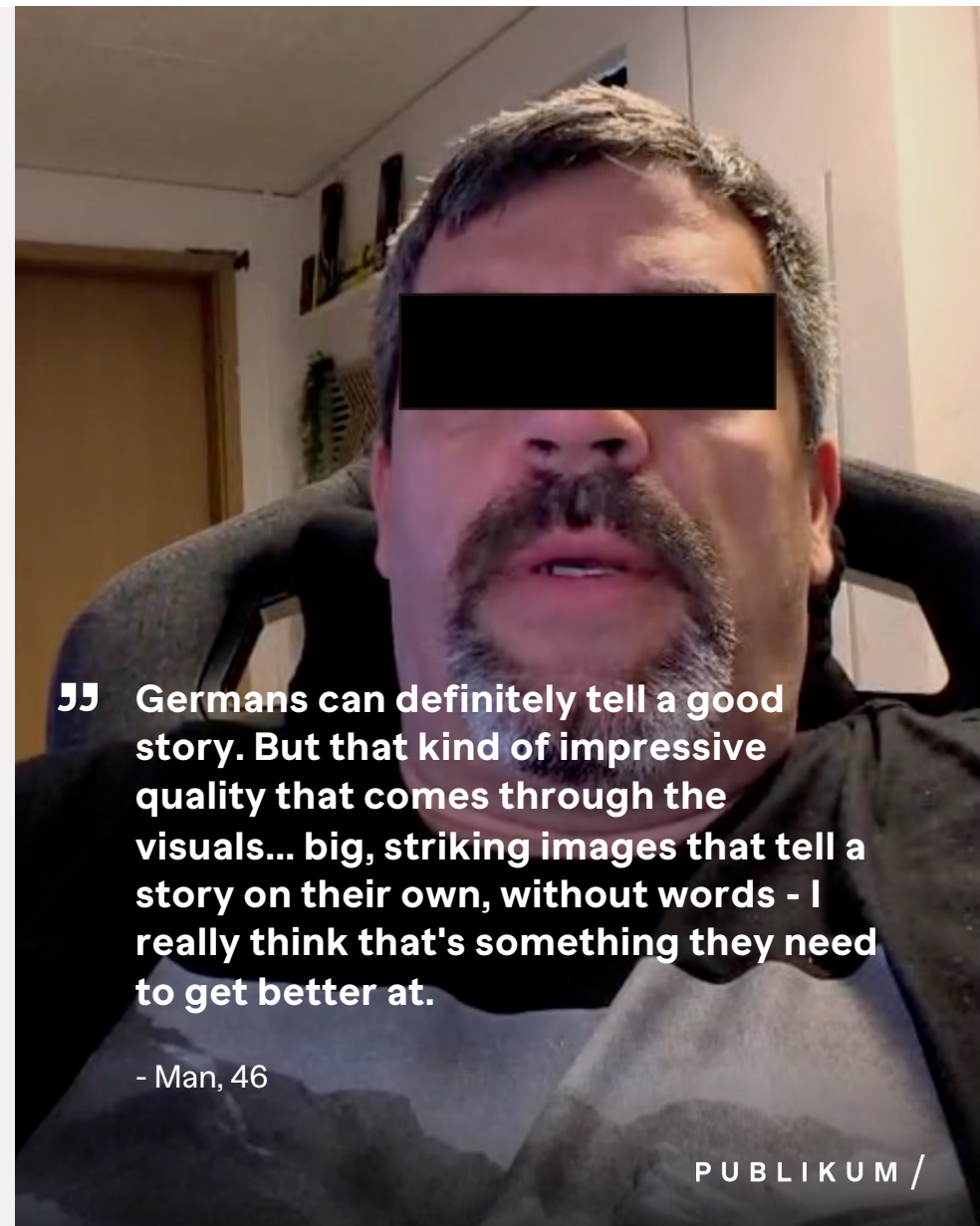
- Man, 53

German fiction has the substance – but not always the cinematic experience audiences expect

German fiction is valued for its depth and authenticity, but audiences often feel that its creative execution is too dialogue-heavy, slow-paced or reliant on familiar faces. The focus on narrative weight can also come across as overly constructed, making some films feel more suited to watching at home than experiencing in the cinema.

By comparison, US films are sometimes perceived by Germans as less deep, but stronger in the overall orchestration of music, visuals, sound and pacing, creating a more immersive experience that feels worth leaving the sofa for.

The opportunity is to find a stronger balance between depth and creative delivery. Germans want their fiction to retain its grounded, authentic stories and emotional substance, but to elevate the cinematic experience through stronger visual worlds, sound, pace and performances.



” **Germans can definitely tell a good story. But that kind of impressive quality that comes through the visuals... big, striking images that tell a story on their own, without words - I really think that's something they need to get better at.**

- Man, 46

Successful adaptations reframe character perspectives but do not sanitise the story or rewrite plot twists

German audiences give adaptations room to move. They accept that a 500-page book cannot fit into a two-hour film, and that scenes will be cut, condensed and combined.

What they do not accept is a different story. Readers arrive with the book already playing in their heads – their "Kopfkino" – and know its turning points and its raw edges. When a film softens difficult themes or rewrites key twists to feel more contemporary, it comes across as a breach of trust rather than a creative choice.

The freedom they welcome lies in perspective. Telling the story through a different character's eyes, deepening their motivations or looking at relationships through a contemporary lens can make a familiar story feel fresh – without changing what happens in it. Visual scale and atmosphere are welcome too, adding what the page could not.

The best adaptations change how the story is seen, but not what the story is.

” Feel free to add an afterword if you think it needs to be 'ideologically reinterpreted' – but the original text is the original text – and it's sacrosanct.

- Man, 66

” If I've read the book, then the movie should also stay true to the plot. With some artistic freedom, of course, and maybe updated for the times, if that fits the story.

- Woman, 48

Fiction in short

- Germans are open to most stories when the promise of a little escape is clear
- Audiences are calling for a clearer mood contract from German films
- German audiences will follow a film almost anywhere if the characters anchor it in reality
- While German audiences value films rooted in their own society, they criticise preachiness
- German fiction has the substance – but not always the cinematic experience audiences expect
- Successful adaptations reframe character perspectives but do not sanitise the story or rewrite plot twists

Key takeaways to remember

Make the mood clear –
and don't kill the vibe
with dialogue.

Let the story go
anywhere - but anchor it
in characters people
could meet.

Keep the depth, lift
the delivery - and
don't preach.

Animation

” Animated films need to be fun, as we often watch them together with the kids. And then I'm also in the mood for a film that doesn't ask too much of me.

- Mother, 36

First test for animation is the parental STO (Shared Time Off)

Animation is a genre that has to appeal to both children and adults, as it is usually watched together. Children often discover films through friends and conversations in the schoolyard, but it is German parents who act as the gatekeepers, deciding what the family actually watches – especially when it comes to a trip to the cinema.

What they look for the most is Shared Time Off: a break from everyday life that the whole family can enjoy at the same time. That means a colourful, warm-hearted world of relaxation and laughter, with a little bit of seriousness – but never so much that the film asks too much of the adults sitting next to their children. If a film is merely tolerable for one of them, it risks being rejected.

Parents therefore become active curators. They research trailers, reviews and age recommendations to avoid excessive brutality, frightening moments or heavy sadness, and they look for films where both they and their children can relax and enjoy the escape together. An animated film has to win the parents before it can win the child.



” Animated films need to be fun, as we often watch them together with the kids. And then I'm also in the mood for a film that doesn't ask too much of me.

-Mother, 36

Parents scan for a clear challenge and a “we-learning” to discuss

The strongest animated films give children an adventure and parents a conversation so when German parents choose an animated film, they look past the colours and characters to the challenge at its heart: what does the hero have to overcome, and is it something the family can learn from together? This is what we call the “we-learning”: the lesson is not meant to be delivered to the child, but shared by the family – something to talk about on the way home.

That challenge works best when it works on two levels at once. Children follow the external adventure – the obstacle, the villain, the goal – while parents connect with the inner journey underneath: doubt, friendship, growing up, finding where you belong. It is the same story, but each generation finds its own way into it.

And the lesson has to arrive lightly. German parents want to leave with a good feeling and something positive to take away, not with a message they were told.

” The story should somehow have a lesson too, so it should kind of leave you with a good feeling and maybe just give you something positive to take away.



- Mother, 30

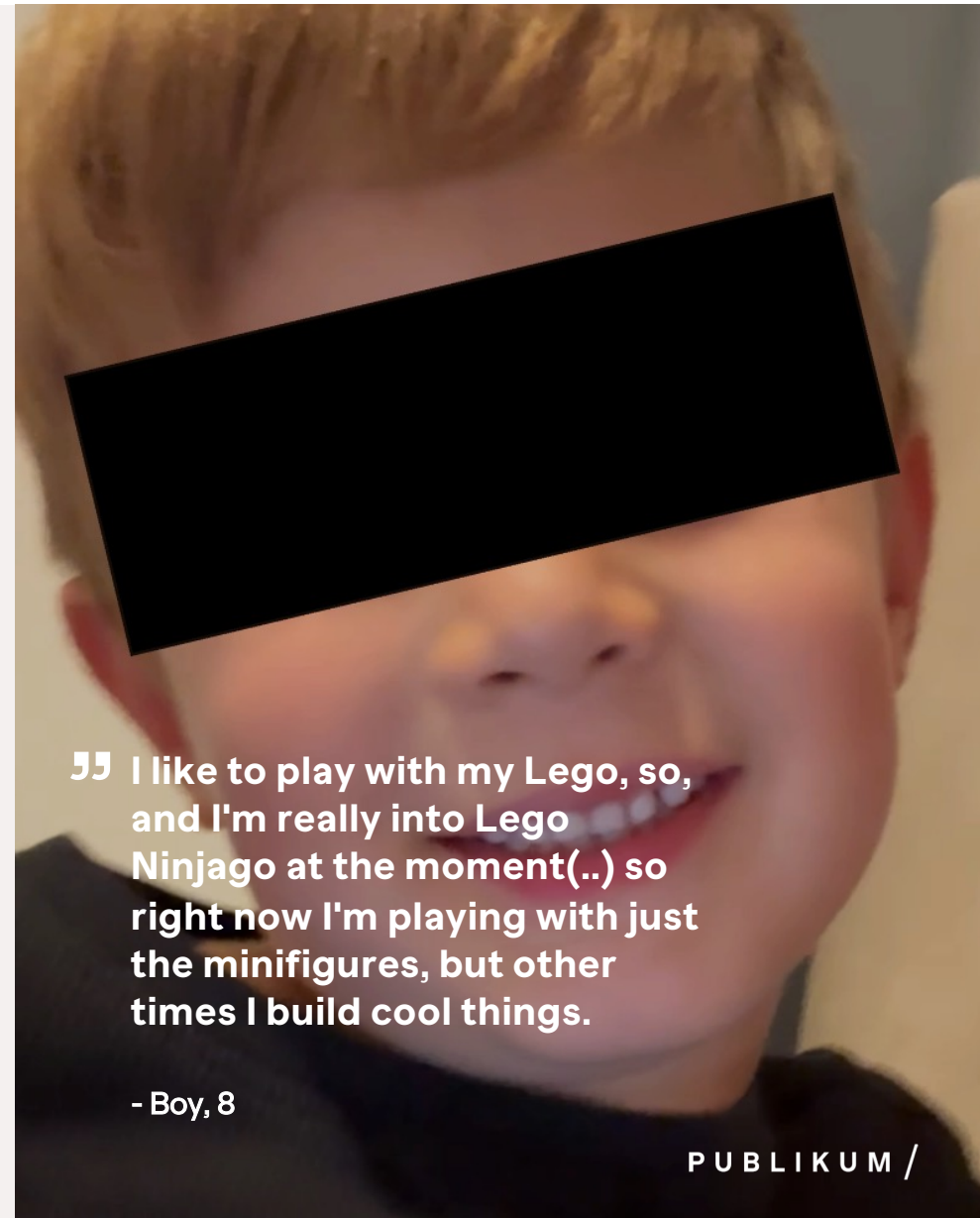
Worlds that spark children's imagination and leave them asking *“how can I play it?”* drive strong interest

Beyond the story itself, children in the research were drawn to animated worlds that feel open, tangible and imaginable – worlds they can mentally enter and keep exploring beyond what is shown on screen. The strongest worlds do not just give children something to watch, but also something to do.

Simple, recognisable materials, nature, animals and environments work especially well, because they feel within reach of a child's own imagination. When a world feels like something they could build, play with or recreate themselves, the line between watching the story and taking part in it starts to blur.

This also means creators do not have to control every part of the world across films, games and merchandise. Children value room to invent their own stories, and the gaps a film leaves open are often exactly where their play begins. The strongest animated IP gives children building blocks to explore the universe unscripted.

MO/N



” I like to play with my Lego, so, and I'm really into Lego Ninjago at the moment(..) so right now I'm playing with just the minifigures, but other times I build cool things.

- Boy, 8

PUBLIKUM /

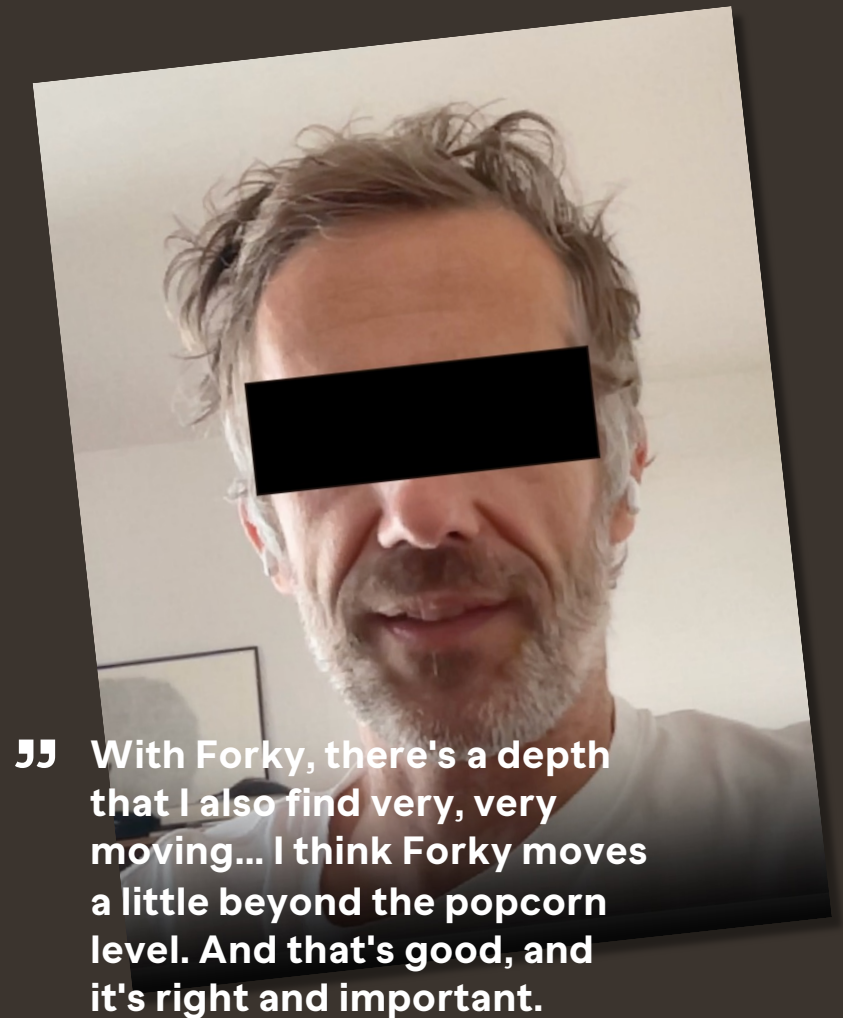
The characters kids and parents remember are the ones who make them feel – and often, they're not the leads

When children retell an animated film, they rarely start with the hero. They talk about the funny, clumsy or vulnerable side characters – the ones who made them laugh, worry or feel for them. And parents are often moved by the very same characters.

Side characters often have more room to be flawed than the lead, and that is exactly what makes them memorable. It is not their appearance that matters, but recognisable emotion: innocence, clumsiness, courage or being the underdog. Interesting characters feel human and do not need necessarily a typical sweet furry animal shape. Children connect just as easily with various animals, robots and objects.

These characters bring heart, humour and compassion to the story, and they give children and adults something to feel together. That makes a film more rewatchable, more shareable and easier to take home – especially when an ensemble of distinct characters gives everyone someone to identify with. The strongest animated films give the emotional weight to more than just the hero.

MO/N



” With Forky, there's a depth that I also find very, very moving... I think Forky moves a little beyond the popcorn level. And that's good, and it's right and important.

- Father, 48

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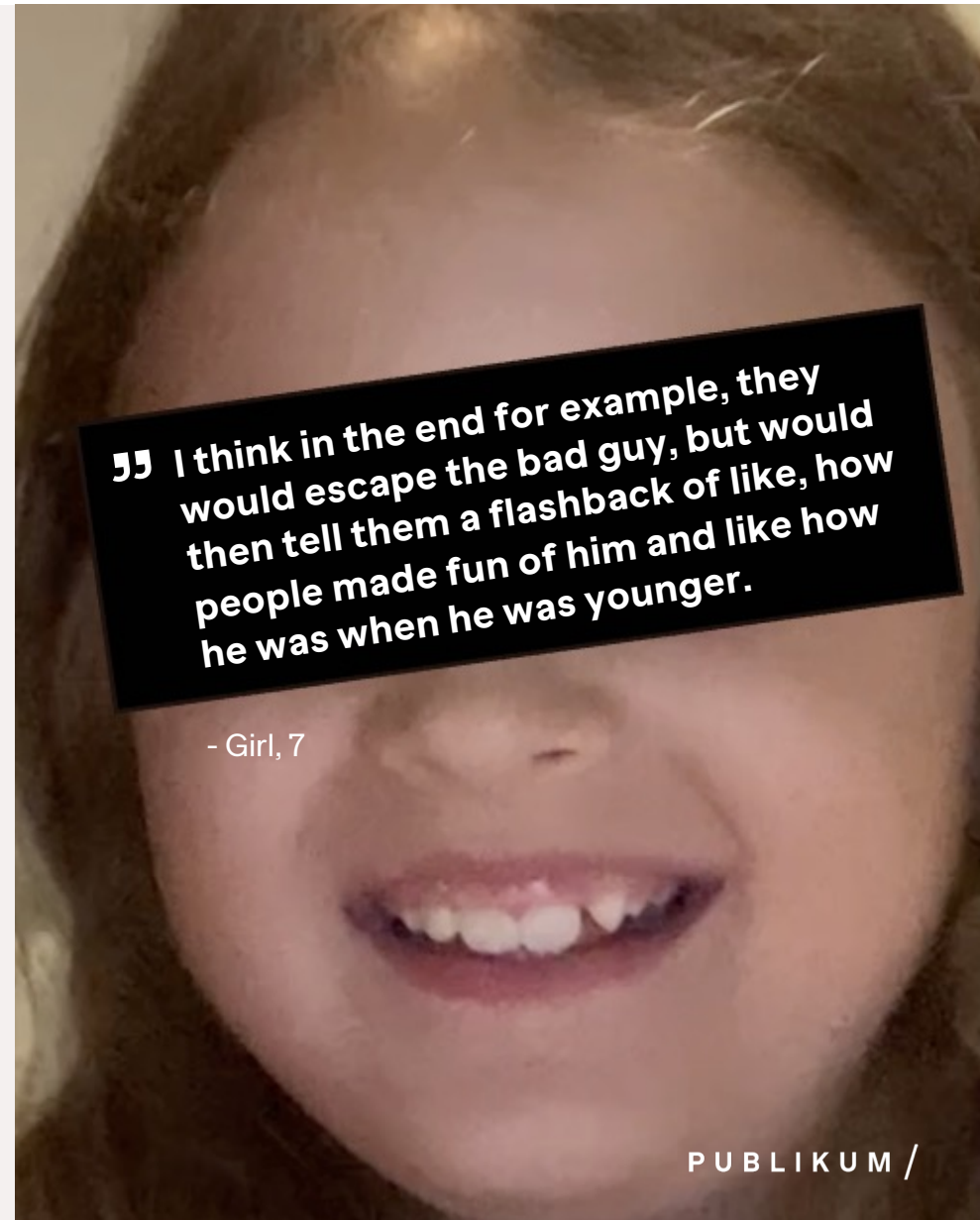
Being young and innocent creates a huge interest in understanding the evil backstory

German children bring their own innocent view of the world into films, and in that world nobody is simply born evil. When they meet an antagonist, they instinctively look for the reason – a secret, a hurt or a past experience that explains why the character became the way they are and often hope that the good in them can come back.

What they imagine is often very concrete: a flashback to when the villain was younger, or to the moment others made fun of him. Cruelty on its own does not make sense to them; cruelty with a cause does.

This gives the backstory a double role. It makes the antagonist less frightening for younger children, which German parents value, and it opens up questions the family can talk about afterwards – about exclusion, bullying and second chances. The strongest animated villains are not just obstacles to defeat, but characters children want to understand.

MO/N



„ I think in the end for example, they would escape the bad guy, but would then tell them a flashback of like, how people made fun of him and like how he was when he was younger.

- Girl, 7

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Visuals seem to be better at preventing deselection rather than securing success

In animation, strong visuals are the entry ticket, not the reason to go. German children today are highly media-savvy and grow up with a constant stream of exceptionally well-produced content, so high visual quality is simply what they expect.

Where visuals matter most is when something is off. Children quickly notice when a world does not hang together – when character design, materials and environments do not match, or when a character moves in a way that does not fit its shape, weight or personality. Smooth, polished movement is not enough; it has to feel specific to who the character is.

This makes visuals a matter of avoiding rejection rather than earning success. Flawless animation keeps a film in the running, but it is the story, the characters and the world behind them that make children want to see it again, talk about it and play it at home. Great visuals keep a film in the game with German kids, but they rarely win it alone.

” I liked it, but it needed to be a little bit better, like the walking, when they were in the restaurant.

- Boy, 8

Animation in short

- First test for animation is the parental STO (Shared Time Off)
- Parents scan for a clear challenge and a “we-learning” to discuss
- Worlds that spark children’s imagination and leave them asking “how can I play it?” drive strong interest
- The characters kids and parents remember are the ones who make them feel – and often, they're not the leads
- Being young and innocent creates a huge interest in understanding the evil backstory
- Visuals seem to be better at preventing deselection than at securing success

Key takeaways to remember

Win the parents with a
'we-learning' –
schoolyard buzz alone
won't get you there.

Kids look for worlds
they can play in – and
side characters they can
feel for.

Great visuals won't win
kids over – but one
wrong step can lose
them.

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