

HOW INTERESTED YOUNG PEOPLE ARE IN FILM FESTIVALS?

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Abstract

Festivals are generally considered one of the key activities that stimulate the economy. The first film festivals originated in Europe about 90 years ago and quickly became a global phenomenon. The most important reasons why tourists participate in festivals could be integrated into the "push dimensions" (family reunion, socializing, escape, novelty of events, self-esteem) and the "pull dimensions" (fun, food and drink, information and marketing, transport). In general, festivals are considered a thriving tourist activity, the destinations offering unique events, combined with high quality services and opportunities for socialization. This study is based on research aimed at identifying young people's interest in film festivals and the influence of socio-demographic aspects on this interest. The sample consisted of 438 young respondents aged between 18 and 26 years. The research has shown that young tourists tend to behave similarly, which makes them a very attractive segment of tourists, even if their budgets are not very high. The results also showed that young people have as main tourism motivation to spend time with family or friends. Moreover, the preferences of young people for basic tourist services are quite clear and unsophisticated. However, the results suggest some need to adapt the commercial communication according to the gender of young tourists.

Keywords: Film festival, tourism, tourists' motivation

JEL Classification: M30, Z32, L83

1. Introduction

Europe is the cradle of the film festival phenomenon. The European geopolitical situation in the period leading up to the Second World War and in the immediate post-war period brought together the necessary incentives to initiate this phenomenon, which later expanded to become global.

In 2003, FIAPF, the International Federation of Film Producers Associations, estimated the total number of international film festivals at 700-800 (FIAPF, 2018), and their number has increased over the past decade. Industry experts estimate that up to 3,500 film festivals are held every year. In light of the growing importance of film festivals, film and media researchers have begun to focus on festival events.

FIAPF has classified film festivals into categories, based on several criteria. Thus, we can speak of famous festivals, considered, in an unofficial ranking, of category A, about which even the non-cinephile public has a minimum of information (Cannes, Berlin, Venice, to name just a few), and festivals of smaller size, which could be classified as belonging to category B.

2. Literature review

Festivals are generally considered one of the key activities that stimulate the economy, and many cities around the world use festivals to attract visitors (Dieck et al., 2018). According to Røling and Pedersen (2010), film festivals can be understood as temporary organizations in which values, both economic and aesthetic, are built around films and linked to films, forms and processes of making films and actors from industry.

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Film festivals vary greatly in size and context. Many cities host film festivals, from the largest and most famous (such as the Cannes International Film Festival) to smaller festivals, which rather address a niche audience (Beeton, 2005). Getz (2008, p.403) showed that "events are an important motivator of tourism and are important in the development and marketing plans of most destinations".

Many studies on event tourism have focused on motivation (Nicholson and Pearce, 2001; Van Zyl and Botha, 2003; Kim and Chalip, 2004; Bowen and Daniels, 2005; Park et al., 2008; Park et al., 2009, among many others). Most of these studies have built their theoretical frameworks on two major theories:

1. The push-pull theory (Dann, 1981; 1977), which states that people are motivated to travel by push factors (e.g., their emotional needs) and pull factors (e.g., offer of a specific destination). The theory was later improved by Crompton (1979), who showed that push factors will not only determine when a person chooses to travel, as previously stated by Dann (1977), but also where he will travel.
2. The theory of seeking and escaping (Iso-Ahola, 1982), derived from the theory of leisure pursuit (Iso-Ahola, 1983; 1980), states that people travel outside their place of residence to get rid of stressful or boring life and to seek personal rewards and relaxation. Iso-Ahola (1990) also argued that the two reasons are not mutually exclusive, as it is possible for a person to be determined by both reasons simultaneously. He identified two dimensions for each of the two factors: the personal (psychological) dimension and the interpersonal (social) dimension (Iso-Ahola, 1990). In other words, a person can get involved in tourism activities for cultural enrichment (psychological dimension) and for socialization (social dimension) at the same time.

Although researchers have paid special attention to festivals, however, the literature provides less information when analyzing the segmentation of participants (Yolal, Cetinel and Uysal 2009; Yolal et al., 2012).

Studies have shown that there are differences in motivation by age groups. While younger participants gave more importance to 'socialization' and 'loyalty to events', older participants were more motivated by 'family reunion' and 'novelty of events'. A very similar level was noticed at the educational level.

Summarizing the main reasons for participating in festivals, Maeng et al. (2016) presented the following list:

Table no. 1: Motivating factors for participating in festivals

Categories	Description
Socialization	Socialization, family reunion, gregariousness / community, reciprocity, meeting people, interaction, friendship, achievement, connection, affiliation
Enthusiasm	Novelty, enthusiasm, attraction to the festival, entertainment, fun and curiosity, sports attraction, fun, specific, local special events, stimulation, art, variety, music in the form of fun experience, fascination
Escape	Escape, relaxation, recovery of emotional balance, leisure and psychology, change, escape
Learning	Learning, cultural exploration, free time and education, meeting with experts
Shopping	Wine, food and beverages, taste pleasure, information and marketing

Source: Maeng et al. (2016:16-25)

Gannon et al. (2019) show that festivals offer opportunities for experiential consumption, attracting both first-time and returning visitors.

Consequently, research on festivals has grown, with studies exploring the motivations, behaviors and characteristics of visitors, quality of service, satisfaction and loyalty of visitors, contributing significantly to the wider tourist discourse (Lee, Lee and Yoon, 2009). Hence, tourism planners have long recognized the different perceptions and behaviors of both first-time and returning visitors who engage in the consumption of experiential tourism services (Yolal, Chi, and Pesämaa, 2017).

Understanding the potential differences between first-time tourists and returning visitors become very important when developing destination management and marketing strategies (Yolal et al., 2017). The decision to revisit a destination is influenced by several factors (e.g., loyalty, familiarity, price sensitivity, quality of service), the influence of each differing between groups of first-time visitors and returning visitors (Lau and McKercher, 2004; Tanford and Jung, 2017).

In conclusion, festivals are a thriving tourist activity, with destinations competing to host visitors looking for unique events, combined with high quality services and socializing opportunities (Gration et al., 2011).

3. Research methodology

The research aimed to identify young people's interest in film festivals and the influence of socio-demographic aspects on this interest. To achieve this goal, an online search was conducted between April 30 and May 17, 2020, using the GoogleDocs platform. During this period, 438 valid answers were registered. The sample consists of young people aged between 18 and 26 years. The minimum age limit of 18 years was imposed by legal considerations, and the upper age limit of 26 years was determined based on previous studies among young people (Richards and Wilson, 2003).

The respondents are students of the Faculty of Business and Tourism from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, each respondent being asked to distribute the questionnaire to be filled in by a young person who does not study in the same university. The motivation of this was to avoid a possible influence of specialized studies on the interest in a tourist activity such as film festivals.

The questionnaire used in the present research is a modified and improved version of a first variant of the questionnaire that was used by direct application to a number of 30 participants in the Alpin Film Festival, on February 26, 2020. It can be considered that it was a pilot survey, but the changes to the questionnaire are broader than those that usually occur after the pilot survey, as the objectives have been revised.

The first part of the questionnaire was aimed at identifying sociodemographic variables (place of provenance, gender, age ranges, gender, education level, employment status and personal income levels). The other questions pursued the actual objectives of the research, formulated as follows: identifying the extent to which respondents would like to participate in a film festival; identifying the main reasons why respondents would participate in a film festival; identifying the travel package options they would purchase while attending a film festival; identifying the willingness to travel (how far) to participate in a film festival.

The questionnaire was a structured one, with closed questions, and the questions formulated to identify the desire and reasons for participating in a film festival were based on a 5-step semantic differential scale.

The processing of the collected data was performed with Excel, and the identification of the correlations was obtained using the statistical program SPSS.

4. Results and discussion

The structure of the sample is given in table no. 2.

Table no.2: Sample structure

1. Place of provenance	%	Number of respondents	5. Education level	%	Number of respondents
Urban	77,7	348	High school student	1,1	5
Rural	22,3	100	College student	67,2	301
2. Age			Studies completed	31,7	142
18 - 22	58	260	6. Net monthly personal		

1. Place of provenance	%	Number of respondents	5. Education level	%	Number of respondents
			income		
23 – 26	42	188	Less than 1500 lei	47,8	214
3. Gender			Between 1500 - 2500 lei	21,4	96
Female	50	224	Between 2501 - 3500 lei	19,9	89
Male	50	224	Between 3501 - 5000 lei	6,9	31
4. Employment status			More than 5000 lei	4	18
Employed / own business	49,1	220			
Unemployed	50,9	228			

Source: data from research

The main results of the research are presented below.

a) The desire to participate in a film festival in Romania or abroad, in the next 1-2 years

The results show that young people would like to participate in a film festival in the near future. For participating in a festival in Romania, the weighted average of the answers is 3.68, and for a festival abroad, the average is 3.65. To identify a possible correlation between the place of provenance and the desire to participate in a film festival, in the country or abroad, the Chi-Square Test and the Cramer Test were used.

In connection with participating in a festival in Romania, the tests showed that there is no association between the place of provenance and the desire to participate ($p = .237 > 0.05$). Therefore, both those from urban and rural areas equally want to participate in a film festival in Romania.

The situation changes to a certain extent when analyzing the desire to participate in a festival abroad. In this case, $p = .023$, which shows that there is a statistical correlation between the place of provenance and the desire to participate in an outside festival. The Cramer test has a value of 0.161 that shows a weak association. Therefore, even if there is a statistical correlation between the place of provenance and the desire to participate in a festival outside the country, the association between the two variables is weak.

Another set of demographic data analyzed in connection with the desire to participate in a film festival was that of the gender of the participants. In this case, $p = .000$, which shows that it is statistically significant. The Cramer test has a value of 0.227 for participating in a festival in Romania and 0.217 for participating in a festival abroad, which shows a weak association. Therefore, there is a correlation between people's gender and the desire to participate in a film festival both in the country and abroad, but the association between the two variables is weak.

b) Reasons for participating in a film festival

Question 9 of the questionnaire addressed this important objective of the research. This question was composed of a set of statements, based on the literature. Thus, items 1-3 are related to "Socialization", items 4-5 refer to "Escape", items 6-7, to "Cultural", and items 8-12 are related to the field "Event Novelty". These motivations were also analyzed in correlation with the socio-demographic variables, in order to observe possible influences.

The following table shows the means and standard deviation for each statement-reason for participation.

Table no. 3: Mean and standard deviation for the reasons of participating in a film festival

Reasons of participation	Mean	Standard deviation
1. To be with people who have the same interests as mine	3.743	1.152
2. I like the festival atmosphere and being in the crowd	3.518	1.166
3. This way I can spend time with family / friends	3.922	1.060
4. To change my daily routine	3.404	1.162

Reasons of participation	Mean	Standard deviation
5. Out of curiosity	3.429	1.117
6. There are participants from many countries	2.996	1.230
7. I am interested in such cultural experiences	3.455	1.220
8. I like movies	4.123	1.023
9. I like to see and do new things	4.123	0.988
10. I am excited (to participate in festivals)	3.598	1.187
11. I am interested in certain films that will be presented at the festival	3.708	1.124
12. It is a famous festival	3.471	1.238

Source: authors' calculation based on research results

A first observation is that the statements that have the highest mean also have the smallest value for standard deviation. Thus, it can be said that there is a greater consensus among young people about those statements, so those reasons characterize most of them. A second observation is related to the types of reason that motivate young people the most to participate in a film festival. Statements 8, 9 and 3 have the highest average values. Statement 3 is in the "Socialization" group of reasons, and statements 8 and 9 are in the "Event Novelty" group. At first glance, these seem to be the most important reasons why young people would participate in a film festival: the time spent with family / friends, the movies themselves and the pleasure of seeing and doing new things.

In order to analyze more carefully what other reasons influence young people to participate in a festival, the statements that recorded an average bigger than 3.55 will also be analyzed. Thus, there are 3 statements that have means above 3.55. These are (in descending order): statement 1 (To be with people who have the same interests as mine – 3.743), statement 11 (I am interested in certain films that will be presented at the festival – 3.708) and statement 10 (I am excited to participate in festivals – 3.598).

It should be noted that these statements are part of the same types of reasons as the previous statements analyzed. Statements 10 and 11 are part of the 'Event Novelty' group of reasons, and statement 1 belongs to the 'Socialization' types.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the "Cultural" and "Escape" types of reasons motivate less the young people to participate in a film festival, while the reasons from "Event Novelty" and "Socialization" groups motivate them more.

The table 4 summarizes the main correlations between the reasons for participation in a film festival and the socio-demographic variables.

Table no. 4: The main correlations between the reasons of participating and the socio-demographic variables

Reasons of participation	Place of provenance	Age	Gender
1. To be with people who have the same interests as mine	p=,041; Cramer=0,151		p=,008; Cramer =0,178
3. This way I can spend time with family / friends		p=,003; Cramer=0,190	p=,000; Cramer=0,236
4. To change my daily routine			p=,041; Cramer=0,151
5. Out of curiosity			p=,008; Cramer=0,177
6. There are participants from many countries			p=,000; Cramer=0,227
7. I am interested in such cultural experiences	p=,015; Cramer=0,168		
8. I like movies			p=,007; Cramer=0,179
9. I like to see and do new things			p=,010; Cramer=0,174

Reasons of participation	Place of provenance	Age	Gender
10. I am excited (to participate in festivals)	p=,048; Cramer=0,148		p =,000; Cramer = 0,225
11. I am interested in certain films that will be presented at the festival			p=,001; Cramer=0,213
12. It is a famous festival			p=,004; Cramer=0,187

Source: authors' calculation based on research results

The statement 2 did not register any statistically significant correlation.

c) What services they would pay for during the festival

Regarding the services they would purchase during the festival, the answers of the respondents are presented in table no. 5.

Table no. 5: Services that would be purchased during the participation in the festival

Type of services	Number of choices	% (of the total number of choices)
Accommodation	22	5
Accommodation, entertainment (sports, clubs, museums, etc.)	13	3
Accommodation, meals	122	27,9
Accommodation, meals, entertainment (sports, clubs, museums, etc.)	242	55,3
Entertainment (sports, clubs, museums, etc.)	19	4,3
Meals	8	1,8
Meals, entertainment (sports, clubs, museums, etc.)	12	2,7
TOTAL	438	100

Source: authors' calculation based on research results

It is mainly observed that young people tend to choose a package consisting of at least two services. At the same time, the most desired service is accommodation (chosen by 399 respondents), followed by dining (384) and, finally, various entertainment services (286). Young people would buy 2-3 nights of accommodation, in proportion of 60.9%, and 19.4% of respondents would buy between 4-5 nights of accommodation. Over 98% of respondents directed their choices to the following 4 types of accommodation units, in descending order: pension, maximum 3-star hotel, Airbnb accommodation, and 4-5-star hotels. The correlation between the type of unit and the place of provenance proved to be statistically significant ($p = .001$), with the value of the Cramer test equal to 0.209, which shows a weak to average link. The second correlation is made with the monthly net personal income and it is statistically significant ($p = .000$). The Cramer test is equal to 0.193, which shows a correlation of medium intensity. Consequently, the choice of the type of accommodation unit is, generally speaking, influenced on average by the monthly net personal income and the place of provenance.

d) How far they would go for a festival

Regarding the willingness of young people to travel for participating in a film festival, the correlation with the place of provenance is statistically significant, with $p = .030$, and Cramer = 0.127, which shows a weak correlation. Correlation with the gender of the respondents shows $p = .030$, so it is statistically significant, and the Cramer Test has the value 0.126, which shows a low intensity association. The correlation with the intention to purchase the accommodation service is statistically significant, $p = .000$, and the Cramer Test has the value 0.231, which shows a weak association. This result shows that the farther young person goes for a film festival, the more he/she will be tempted to purchase accommodation.

The correlation with the number of nights of accommodation purchased is statistically significant ($p = .000$), with the value of the Cramer Test = 0.260, which shows an average level association. Thus, it turns out that the more a young person is willing to travel as far from home to participate in a film festival, the more nights of accommodation he/she will buy. Further analysis shows that the farther away a young person would travel for a festival, the more likely he or she is to spend more during this travel and the more likely he or she is to buy more expensive accommodation.

5. Conclusions and suggestions

Film festivals are a phenomenon extensively analyzed from many angles. Many researchers consider festivals as events that contribute to the economic growth of the area in which they are organized, and many cities have strategies to attract tourists using the film festivals they host.

Tourists participate in festivals for a variety of reasons. A well-established classification of these reasons shows that people are interested in such events because they want to socialize, to feel the enthusiasm generated by the event, the desire to escape, to learn new things and even for shopping.

Recent studies (Yolal et al., 2017) have shown that differences in motivation between tourists become important for the development of management and marketing strategies of the destination hosting a festival. This fact is also relevant for the present research, which aims to identify the extent to which film festivals can be a motivation for young people to travel.

Research has shown that young people tend to have a similar tourist behavior, which makes them a very attractive segment of tourists, even if their budgets are not very high. Travel packages for young people can be relatively easily customized for their age and do not require significant individual customizations. This fact is strengthened especially by the research result which shows that young people have as main motivation to travel to spend time with family or friends.

Also, young people's preferences for basic tourism services are quite clear, so it would be a relatively simple approach to meet these expectations which are not sophisticated.

An idea from the research suggests a certain need to adapt the commercial communication according to the gender of young tourists. In other words, the message should reach girls on other channels and in a different form than boys.

Young tourists from other countries would be likely to respond in the same way to the tourist offers created around local festivals, thus representing an important segment of customers.

All these ideas can quite easily become directions of action through a closer collaboration between the actors of the two industries that have, in essence, a common goal: the film and festival industry and the tourism industry. Their collaboration would benefit both parties, and this would happen in the context in which the main winner would be the local community.

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