

Film festival coverage: an interview with journalists, critics, and event programmers of Latin American film festivals

La cobertura de festivales cinematográficos: una entrevista con periodistas, críticos y programadores de festivales de Iberoamérica



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Abstract:

Film festivals are places of encounter where different social actors come together, including professionals from the audio-visual industry, students, film buffs, and journalists, as well as the figures who organise these events. The aim of this research is to describe the journalistic coverage of film festivals carried out by the Ibero-American media, which is composed of generalist, traditional, specialised, and digital native outlets. The authors have used a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interviews with film journalists and festival managers. The most significant findings reveal that each journalist develops their own particular type of frame building to cover an event, which is subject to the informative agenda of the media through which they are commissioned. At the same time, new actors such as influencers have also appeared, who report on the festivals as well. In addition, the festivals themselves have created their own platforms in order to fill the information gap resulting from the failure of the specialised press to report on certain aspects of these events. As a result, the authors conclude that festivals have become media hubs where different types of content generators converge, and in which they offer a diversity of information thanks to the technological facilities offered by digitisation, the Internet, and social media.

Keywords:

Film festivals; press coverage; journalists; film critics; audio-visual.

Resumen:

Los festivales de cine son espacios de encuentro donde confluyen distintos actores sociales como agentes de la industria audiovisual, estudiantes, cinéfilos, periodistas y los mismos organizadores de estos eventos. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo describir las experiencias en la cobertura periodística de festivales cinematográficos para medios: generalistas, especializados tradicionales y nativos digitales de Iberoamérica. Para ello se aplicó un enfoque cualitativo a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas a periodistas cinematográficos y gestores de festivales. Los resultados más relevantes han revelado que cada periodista aplica sus framebuilding para realizar la cobertura del evento, lo que se supedita a la agenda informativa del medio que los comisiona. En paralelo, también han aparecido nuevos agentes que comunican sobre los festivales como son los influencers, además los festivales han creado sus propias plataformas para cubrir los vacíos informativos que la prensa especializada no informa sobre el festival, por ello se concluye que los festivales son epicentros mediáticos donde actualmente confluyen distintos tipos de generadores de contenidos que diversifican la oferta informativa gracias a las facilidades tecnológicas que ofrece la digitalización, el internet y las redes sociales.

Palabras clave:

Festivales cinematográficos; cobertura periodística; periodistas; críticos; audiovisual.

1. Introduction

Film festivals are gatherings in which audio-visual content is displayed for the duration of these events. This fosters assemblies of generalist and specialised audiences based on the festivals' programmes, which help to promote new filmmakers (Ruof, 2012; Peirano, 2016; Campos, 2020; Jurado-Martín, 2006). Vallejo (2014) defines film festivals as magnetic events, which are composed of a variety of features due to their institutional nature and the fact that they take place on a periodic basis. According to Peirano (2016), festivals are legal platforms where activities converge that link them as markets, cultural showcases for exhibitions, and competitive environments, which can be described as a combination of diverse interests on the part of organisers, audiences, exhibitors, and others. Devesa et al. (2012) classify festivals according to their economic, touristic, cultural, social, and even physical impact. Some festivals play an important role in the production and distribution process, as they complement the support provided by states as alternative funding instruments (Campos, 2012; Campos, 2013). Other festivals help promote and strengthen the audio-visual culture of countries that must confront dominating influences, such as that of Hollywood (De Valck, 2007). Thus, these events represent points of convergence among symbolic epicentres and intermediaries for the interrelation of a wide variety of institutions linked to the culture industry, which serve as mediators in this value chain (Burgess, 2020). Some festival audiences have prior knowledge that determines how they participate in such events. Their presence in festivals confirms their interest in the audio-visual world (Calderon-Acero, 2020). Participants are linked to the festival according to various criteria, including their preferences, expectations, and socio-demographic aspects (Alonso, 2019), as well as similar interests and compatible personalities (Dayan, 2000). From this viewpoint, Radakovich (2019) asserts that specialised assistants are erudite and postmodern filmgoers, due to their interest in *auteur* cinematography and non-commercial films. More specifically, these films have the honour of being screened at these festivals, which offers the only opportunity for their exhibition, thereby enabling socialisation and immersive experiences among the public based on non-commercial genres such as documentaries (Salles, 2021). On the other hand, certain thematic festivals such as those related to science are associated with audiences that are not necessarily regular filmgoers (Archer, 2020).

With the appearance of the Covid-19 pandemic, festivals were postponed, cancelled or reduced to online events. This led to an increase in the virtual attendance of some festivals, which managed to become established despite the confinement, ultimately leading to a global re-invention of these events (Meier, 2020; Galletti, 2021). However, some experts argue that festivals which have chosen the hybrid format have achieved a massive number of views, yet these viewings must be carefully analysed, as the audience does not watch many of the films in their entirety (Fernández et al., 2021). Nevertheless, among the advantages of the hybrid format is the ability to disseminate very local products to a global audience. Despite this advantage, the format has led to gaps between festivals with more resources and a longer history, and the more local events. In the case of the pandemic, the former managed to adapt their websites in order to reinforce the dynamics of the festival, whereas the latter were forced to use adapted platforms such as social networks in order to survive (Salles, 2021). On the other hand, medium-sized and small festivals were affected not only economically and in terms of self-sufficiency, but also in terms of the relationship with the community in which they operate (De Valck and Damiens, 2023). Another peculiar feature that resulted from the pandemic was that several festivals were launched specifically due to the health crisis by exploiting the virtual situation and the pandemic theme (Escalante, 2020). Cheyroux (2022) concludes that despite the bleak outlook of those years, festivals presented themselves as an opportunity

to create new partnerships. In short, the post-pandemic era has meant the end of isolation almost everywhere in the world, and is bringing about new scenarios for a return to in-person contact. In Europe, festivals are undergoing a transformation: some festivals are exclusively presenting films in-person, while others are using a hybrid system in which online film viewing caters to timeframes when streaming is predominant (Smits, 2021).

Therefore, the aim of this research is to describe the first-hand experiences of journalists in their coverage of film festivals, including generalist, traditional, specialised, and digital native media in Ibero-America. This will be achieved through interviews with intermediaries, or journalists, as well as those who have first-hand knowledge of these events, such as festival managers.

2. Theoretical framework. Media coverage of festivals

As festivals transform their jovial value into media value, they are considered major hubs where a large amount of information is generated and disseminated to its fullest extent during the festival period (De Valck, 2007). These events bring together a wide range of participants including filmmakers, programming specialists, industry professionals, critics, journalists, film buffs, and the general public (Lordanova, 2013). As such, film festivals can be seen as events with various perspectives, often representing diverse positions from the miscellaneous participants (Vivar, 2016). With regard to specialised press coverage, this would be a useful subject of research and analysis (Paz and Vallejo, 2021), as films are analysed and presented by journalists to a larger audience, thereby fulfilling their intermediary role (Maza, 2008). Covering these types of international festivals requires film journalists to have a budget, which is an investment that allows them to transcend the coverage of local festivals. According to Navarro (2018), working at these events involves watching five or more films per day. In spite of this, not all the activities organised by the festivals are covered by the specialised press, as some subjects are simply not of interest to them. Nevertheless, such activities are often covered by other media due to their importance, such as checking data on audience attendance, panels of judges, the relationship with the industry, and other issues (Panel of Judges, 2018). Thus, news coverage should be viewed as a process in which the information produced is recorded, which is of two types: expected or planned coverage; and that which is unexpected (Estremadoyro, 2004). Broadly speaking, film reviewing is seen as a genre of cultural journalism and is carried out by journalists, writers, and audio-visual researchers (Noguera and Esqueda, 2011), all of whom adhere to the journalistic practice of timeliness and immediate relevance, together with the logical connection of the latter to the newsworthiness of the event, or to news published in the media (Gutierrez Palacio, 1984). From a broad perspective, Bordwell (1996) places film reviews into three categories: journalism, which is published in newspapers, weekly magazines, and journals; the film essay, published in specialised media on a monthly or quarterly basis; and academic critiques, based on scientific research. At the same time, the film review is considered a journalistic genre, along with news or information, reportage, features, and articles (Martínez Albertos, 1991; Gomis, 2008).

With the digital convergence, many paradigms and conditions have changed, including one that seemed impossible before, which is having a media company (Rey, 2022). Thanks to lower costs of news production, we have witnessed the emergence of digital native media, which are defined by the Gabo Foundation (2022, p. 39) as “those who produce or distribute 50 percent or more of their own information through different types of digital media”. Moreover, generally speaking, we have also seen the rise of cyber-journalism, which is a type of reporting designed to be carried out on the web (Larrondo and Meso, 2011). In this context, digital

native newspapers are considered to be those that have emerged in the digital domain, or which have been digitally transformed in a period of no more than five years (Olivar-Julián, et al. 2022). While it is assumed that online journalism adheres to traditional journalistic values, this type of media requires deontological considerations of the profession due to the innovations proposed by these native media in comparison to the journalism practised by analogue outlets (Suárez, 2015). These new media are specific to a context in which narratives have been created that are disseminated on social media. As such, they are known as social media narratives (Karbaum, 2018). It should also be kept in mind that genres and narrative formats generally shift from a dominant medium to one that is emerging, in a process known as *discursive transfer* (Karbaum, 2021). Moreover, there are now claims that the Internet and the new media are enabling film-related content to be created by citizens, or cinephile bloggers, who are challenging the hegemony of the traditional media (Vivar, 2016, pp. 133, 138).

Finally, festival coverage should not be approached without referring to the theory of framing. According to Gitlin (1980) and Entman (1993), this concept allows for the selection, filtering, emphasis, exclusion, and prescription of a certain fact that is transformed into an informative text, which is then communicated to the audience. To do so, the following aspects must be considered: the content included in the information; how and where it is published; and its cognitive and affective features (Ghanem, 2009). Koziner (2013) argues that frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information, thereby allowing them to decide what is newsworthy and what is not. From a frame building perspective, journalists demarcate their coverage according to their own viewpoint and interpretation of a news event, and they decide what is a matter of public interest and what is not (Koziner, 2022).

3. Method

As the purpose of this research is to study the experiences of journalists as primary sources of film festival coverage, the authors have used a foundational, non-experimental, descriptive, and cross-sectional methodology. This research has also taken a qualitative approach, which delves into the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of a group of participants (Quecedo and Castaño, 2002; Creswell, 2013; Katayama, 2014; Krause, 1995).

According to Peirano and Vallejo (2021), the qualitative approach is relevant in studying festivals, as it enables an understanding of the interconnected relationships and networking that is created at these events. This interconnection is a narrative created by the social actors and institutional organisations that converge in these festivals. Furthermore, the study of the symbolic and discursive fields that are developed at these events allows them to be placed in their respective cultural fields. The design is phenomenological, as it “enables the consciousness of the person to be explored; in other words, it allows the researchers to understand its very essence, the way of perceiving life through experiences, the meanings they encompass, and the way they are defined in the psychic life of the individual” (Fuster, 2019, p. 205). For this purpose, an analytical methodology was used, as it enables an examination of the essential elements of the two communicative spheres –festivals and the film press– along with their interconnection. With regard to the foregoing, the following research questions have been formulated:

Main question:

What are the conditions that influence the journalistic coverage of film festivals in the Ibero-American region, according to the journalists and managers of these events?

Specific questions:

What are the limitations perceived by the target population groups with regard to understanding the content disseminated at film festivals?

How does the appearance of new actors associated with social media narratives influence the coverage of these events?

The empirical gathering of information was carried out using semi-structured interviews, for which a questionnaire was prepared with foundational questions validated by experts. As a preliminary step, a bibliographic search was carried out (Corbetta, 2007), which helped to define the categories, subcategories, and research indicators in order to design the questionnaire. In turn, the literature review allowed for the state of the issue to be drawn up (del Río and Velázquez, 2005). Using this conceptual framework as a foundation, the interviews were carried out. The interviewees were selected according to contrast and complementarity. The former criterion was used to gather the opinion of one group of participants regarding the functions of the other group, and the latter was used to reveal the typologies, opinions, experiences, and functions they have in common. Thus, the target population is divided into two subgroups; the first is comprised of journalists and film critics; the second consists of film festival managers. In order to segment the population, a non-probability sampling by judgement was used based on one characteristic: the relationship of the individuals of each group with film festivals. The constraint of this type of sampling is that the results cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, it is useful for populations that are difficult to access (Otzen and Manterola, 2017; Vasilachis, 2006), and for which it is difficult to calculate a sample size using statistical methods. Due to the limited access to the participants, some were contacted through a key individual who assisted with the interview arrangements, and others were reached through their personal or professional social media channels. A pilot interview was conducted with a film journalist who has had a long professional career, which yielded a finding that refocused the research, as it was revealed that some of the participants had professional experience in both fields: film journalism and festival management. This allowed for the triangulation of data from both subgroups. Interviews were conducted by video calls from May to August of 2023. The first step in designing the questionnaire was to use an initial script, which was created on the basis of previous literature. The second step was to make adjustments to the questions by contrasting and reconsidering the concepts garnered from the first interviews, which contained seven structured questions on the categories studied. This allowed the authors to redesign the questions in order to delve more deeply into the information provided. As the interviews were semi-structured, it was possible to rely on the interviewer's expertise and ask reformulated questions, which provided more specific information about the research categories to be extracted and explored more deeply. After the data collection was completed, transcription was carried out, which allowed the information to be processed, coded, and organised into results (Strauss and Corbin, 2002). Participants were selected based on to the following criteria:

a.- Festival managers were chosen according to the following criteria: demonstrated experience in performing managerial duties in international festivals, with a variety of audio-visual genres including fiction, animation, and documentaries, among others; and contributions made in carrying out activities that run parallel to film competitions, including workshops, talks, parallel exhibitions, and others.

b.- Film journalists were selected according to demonstrated experience covering national and international festivals for various media and platforms.

Based on these criteria, the sample was comprised of the following participants:

Table 1. Participant list

Participant	Professional experience	Country	Years of experience
Luis Vélez	Journalist and film critic	Peru	10
Federico Karstulovich	Journalist and film critic	Argentina	17
Sergio López	Journalist and film critic	Mexico	22
Leopoldo Muñoz	Journalist and film critic	Chile	20
Rob Reyna	Film and cultural journalist	Peru	14
Sugey López	Director of International Short Film Festival <i>Cortos de vista</i> [short-sighted]	Peru	10
David Jean Robert Dupunchel	Director of the International Festival <i>Al Este</i> [toward the east]	In France, Colombia and Peru	17
Natalia Morales	Director of the International Film Festival of Fusagasugá	Colombia	10
Enrique García	Director of the International Festival <i>Ojo Móvil</i> [moving eye]	Peru	13
Jon Apaolaza	Film journalist and film festival programme coordinator	Spain	44
Joel Poblete	Film journalist and programme coordinator of the <i>Iquique</i> International Film Festival and the <i>Nuble</i> National Film Festival.	Chile	19

Source: prepared by the authors

4. Results

4.1. Festivals and the film press during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the pandemic, film journalists had to transform their reporting procedures, as there were difficulties associated with widespread isolation: “The pandemic made us rethink not only the way we related to each other, but also the way we were able to cover festivals, and the films that were coming out on platforms” (Federico Karstulovich). One of the changes mentioned in the interviews was the continuity of observation: viewing the content remotely did not allow for the same flow of observation as in a cinema. In a film theatre, the observation is continuous. During the COVID-19 confinement, films could not be viewed in cinema screen format. Instead, they were seen on whatever device the critic or journalist had at hand, which limited the experience. On the other hand, one advantage of multi-device viewing was the ease of access to the material through links. Nevertheless, the lack of a large screen due to the closure of exhibition halls restricted the experience of these professionals and, above all, the factor of social interaction among journalists, the public, guests, and others (Federico Karstulovich, Leopoldo Muñoz). The same difficulties were also experienced in the concurrent activities such as talks, workshops, press conferences, and debates:

“We were discussing that issue. In those places, you address something that is very interesting; you compare the ideological-political view versus the ideological-aesthetic perspective in the author’s theory. Then, one colleague said, ‘I can’t vote for a film that humanises evil.’ So I told him if that were the case, art would not exist. Art is precisely a contradiction. That conversation would have been much more enriching and interesting if it had taken place while sitting around a table. I wish I had been able to talk to him about the issue in person, but instead, it was quite sanitised; you had to follow certain protocols and use very diplomatic behaviour” (Leopoldo Muñoz).

Despite the lack of direct human interaction, due to the virtual life resulting from the pandemic, the situation sparked the development of a new level of professional competence, which later provided the option of covering foreign festivals remotely. Before the pandemic, it was often difficult for critics and journalists to travel to these international events, as it raised the cost of coverage immensely. However, during the pandemic, as festival websites were already operational, they were merely adapted in order to carry out the events virtually and, in other cases, specialised platforms such as *Festival Scope* were used (Luis Vélez). Moreover, some festivals relied on social networks like Facebook for live broadcasts. In these cases, certain criteria had to be applied in order to broadcast the content. The regular activities of the festivals such as lectures and workshops were not a problem; however, restrictions had to be applied when broadcasting the films, due to exhibition criteria based on the copyrights of the films programmed in the festivals. This protocol is still in place in several festivals as an innovative legacy of the pandemic (Sugel Lopez). Several interviewees stated that there were three phases, depending on the evolution of Covid-19 itself, and its influence on global health: total virtuality; partially in-person; and the return of in-person festivities, while leaving only a few virtual activities at the festivals, which also implied the return to on-site coverage.

4.2. *Self-management of coverage*

Before, during, and after the pandemic, the key moment of interaction between the press and the festival organisers has always been the opening of the festival. However, one of the factors that influences journalistic participation is the economic component, because not all festivals cover the expenses of reporters and critics: “The fact is, not all festivals invite all critics from all parts of the world. Some festivals only cover the costs of participants from Europe or the northern hemisphere, or those who do not have connections to airports” (Leopoldo Muñoz). Several of the interviewees said that the big media with resources send their reporters, but the coverage is not necessarily related to journalism or film reviewing, but rather to the journalistic coverage of *big shows*. In this regard, some of the interviewees stated that financing the coverage also depends on each festival’s communication plan and budget for allocating resources to fund the journalists’ stay. Otherwise, they have to manage their own expenses: “The Cannes Film Festival [...] usually invites very few international journalists. In other words, it’s the media or journalist who pays all the expenses of attending the festival” (Jon Apaolaza). “Now the festivals have less money, and those cuts obviously don’t go to their international guests –they go to the press” (Sergio López). This type of budget also includes invitations for new participants in the communication ecosystem of the festivals, based on the broadcasting dynamics and the acceptance of communication-based products, which is the case of influencers. In these circumstances, some film journalists even finance their own stay at festivals by generating income through the creation of content for various media in the genres and formats requested of them:

“When I first started going to the Cannes Film Festival, I paid for my own expenses at the festival. Both accommodation and food are very expensive, and I had to organise a series of collaborations with different media, which consisted of selling interviews with famous actors and radio reports to magazines. I managed to carry out the task due to my years of experience in radio, so I had some contacts, and I also managed to do some reports for a radio station” (Jon Apaolaza).

“You have to make arrangements with other colleagues to pay for a place to sleep, or you have to know someone who can offer the use of their sofa. In my case, I had an acquaintance who let me sleep on his couch. I worked for two media at the time, but neither of them paid me to do the coverage; you do it out of love for the cinema, not because it’s economically profitable” (Luis Vélez).

According to two of the interviewees, Karstulovich and Vélez, the economic issue determines the coverage of the festivals, yet in some cases it can be overcome due to the help provided by international film press associations such as FIPRESCI, which provide support through their affiliates. In this way, support is given to the reporters who are sent to cover the festivals. However, when the journalists have to manage the resources on their own, the quality of the coverage itself is compromised. There is another criterion by which both the media and festivals do not invite or commission journalists to cover these events, which is related to nationality. Journalists are often not sent, or not invited, because there are no films from their country competing in the event: “Many times, either the festivals don’t invite you because there are no films from your country competing, or the media don’t support you financially in covering the festival, even if you are invited, because there are no films from your country” (Leopoldo Muñoz).

4.3. Coverage as a process of discursive selection

Once the financing of the festival coverage has been arranged, planning the venture begins, which depends on aspects such as the number of journalists that the media is able to commission. According to Robinson Reyna, planning starts by understanding that some festivals are permanent, and others are not. Based on this information, the annual agenda is drawn up. Another important stage is the press conference that takes place when the festival is presented, at which time the agenda of the event is announced. For Karstulovich, the way a film magazine organises coverage is to start by coordinating the films to be covered by the reporters, which implies defining the specialised interests of each one and avoiding crossovers. Thus, in some editions, more than twenty journalists sign up. In the generalist mass media, which have a greater capability for coverage, the allocation of commissions can vary depending on whether the media outlet assigns several reporters to the festival, or just one: “[This] depends greatly on the platform for which you work. I’ve worked with teams that were assigned for just one day, with three or four reporters in charge of the coverage. At other times, only one person covers all five days of the festival” (Rob Reyna). One must also bear in mind that the coverage of a festival is a very intense process, and the work is much more demanding than the weekly coverage of premieres used to report on film listings (Sergio López, Luis Véliz). Coverage is organised according to the nature of the medium, whether it is television, the print press, networks, or radio. Depending on the profile of the medium, an agenda of coverage is designed for the most important films, interviews, talks with guests from the industry, masterclasses, or the awards ceremony, as well as the red carpet spectacle (Rob Reyna). Broadcasting is also targeted on the basis of films that are of the nationality of the media sending the journalist, films under the radar¹, and show business:

“You have to add a bit of show business flair, such as which personalities walked the red carpet, or what cocktail parties they went to. I don’t know if it’s so much about how they’re dressed, but you have to enhance the narration a bit by using the glitter inherent to the festival itself, which shouldn’t be ignored. Otherwise, for that you could just watch the films on the laptop” (Leopoldo Muñoz).

“The more specialised media tend to give more importance to reviews, whereas the media that’s more focused on what could be called the ‘entertainment press’ are more interested in getting racy or controversial statements from guests. They’re more focused on fame” (Luis Véliz).

Conversely, the agenda set by the traditional media in covering festivals emphasises topics that are considered to be of interest to the mass audience. Nevertheless, festival organisers often have to lobby for exclusive films, festival side-events, and even interviews with renowned guests in the audio-visual field:

“Festivals in Latin America are a constant struggle because journalists, or our colleagues, sometimes focus only on two or three things, neglecting very important aspects. As a press or communications officer, you nearly have to beg to get an interview with certain directors” (Joel Poblete).

As for the selection of films to be screened, each journalist systemises his or her coverage procedure, with two trends having been identified. The first is oriented toward the exclusivity that the festival offers. For example, for film journalists or critics, one of the selection criteria for viewing films at festivals is to programme the films that “do not reach the screens at the national level,

1 Films under the radar is a term that several interviewees used to refer to non-commercial films that are highly regarded at festivals by film fans and journalists.

and also because you get an idea more or less of what the momentum is, or what's happening in film production in the rest of the world" (Leopoldo Muñoz). This criterion is similar to that of Karstulovich, who makes a tiered selection by establishing the viewing according to certain criteria that consider the potential impact of each film: "The first is to choose films that have no repetition; then, the ones that have a bit more repetition; and finally, the ones that I know might be released, or that are actually in the library. Those are the ones I leave" (Federico Karstulovich). There is another selection criterion that reflects mass media logic: "Usually, what is customary is to schedule regular coverage of the most important films, or those that are in competition within the festival" (Rob Reyna). The journalist plans the viewing according to the distribution made by the festivals, as there are viewings for the press, while others are scheduled as part of the event's own programme, which is open to the public (Luis Vélez).

4.4. *Communicational convergence*

According to the interviewees, the festivals also have dynamics of co-participation, thereby allowing views to be interchanged. Thus, beyond simply covering the event, journalists either participate in the festivals' own activities, or the festivals offer opportunities for training or promotion of film journalism.

Several of the interviewees stated that journalists and film critics have a role within the festivals, in most cases as judges for the different sections or activities of the event, such as talks, workshops, lectures, or curatorships. Another highly valued role is that of participating in various activities aimed at educating audiences (David Duponchel). In addition, communicators can also work within the festival organisation on a more permanent basis. For Jon Apalaza and Joel Poblete, this situation occurs when journalists have previously covered festivals and, by networking with the organisers, they are later called on to work at the festivals as programming managers, press officers, content producers, coordinators who work with press agencies, and other positions:

"Many programming managers started out as film critics. That tends to be the case because the critical observer has certain tools to offer a fine-tuned appraisal of what makes a good film in terms of cinematographic expression" (Luis Vélez).

When journalists become part of the organisation of a festival, they acquire skills and knowledge related to the audio-visual industry which, when they return to journalism, provides them with narrative, networking and logistical resources that allow them to understand and deal with issues that the media agenda does not require:

"We don't know more about how the film was funded, what is going to happen to it afterwards, whether they have a sales agency or not, and whether they got any international sales during the festival. In other words, all these kinds of things are information that I think are interesting for the public to know about, but they're not normally talked about. However, they are important, and the fact that you have access to a lot of this information by working at the festival, this helps you as a journalist, without a doubt" (Jon Apalaza).

Some of those interviewed in this study do not believe it is necessary to participate in the organisation of festivals, nor to work as judges: "I believe the place of the film critic always has to be distant with regard to the power structure at all times, whether it's the political power of the moment, or the power of discursive hegemony" (Federico Karstulovich). However, those who decide to participate do so because there is some connection with their interests, such as the fact that apart from being journalists, they might also be filmmakers, or that some festivals match their film interests. Faced with the questions that might arise from these relationships of similar interests, it is important to make a deontological distinction, in order to avoid being both

judge and interested party at the same time (Luis Vélez). “I’ve never been paid for being a judge, perhaps because I’ve always been on the side of those who offer criticism, so by not receiving a stipend, you have freedom. There is no coercion or suggestion of going any further” (Leopoldo Muñoz). From the perspective of festival organisers, the participation of journalists and film critics is highly valued, as these professionals offer different points of view, such as having their own opinions regarding the field of audio-visual distribution, but also because the journalist or film critic is essentially a huge film fan, so his or her opinion has significant artistic value (David Duponchel). In many festivals, there is also a panel of judges composed of journalists or critics who are part of the festival, and who award prizes (Luis Vélez).

A reverse process also occurs in which the festivals and their organisers design activities linked to journalism and film criticism. In these spaces, training in these communication disciplines is promoted:

“We decided to open a section in our festival that would focus on film reviews and film appreciation as such. We did this because there wasn’t much opportunity for young people to learn about these aspects” (Sugel López).

To this end, training workshops are offered, and the publication of reviews, reports, features and interviews is encouraged. Moreover, some of these compositions are then published in specialised media. During the pandemic, other formats such as podcasts were also used for this purpose. Some festivals provide spaces for this content on their websites, yet it is not just a matter of educational work; several festivals create their own content based on journalistic logic in order to communicate information that the media fails to cover. To do so, they have implemented digital platforms to create newspapers, magazines, podcasts, blogs, and broadcasts:

“I find this very interesting, because the festival itself created a separate channel to reinforce what the traditional media sometimes doesn’t do. I’m referring to all the directors and guests that the traditional press were ignoring. I was giving coverage to these people using our own medium” (Joel Poblete).

“I make some notes and a blog, and the person in charge of social media tells me to continue because it seems to have very good results. So, to give you an example, I write an entire article with pictures. Then the article is re-written, more pictures are added, and so on. And she says the ranking is high, so it makes the number of searches go up” (Natalia Morales).

4.5. Influencers involved in the coverage

In the course of the research, the interviewees disclosed the presence of new participants in the media communication dynamics of the festivals, such as influencers. All the journalists included in this study affirm that the presence of influencers is increasing at these events. Some, in fact, agree that the content generated by these creators does not meet the rigour applied by journalists and film critics. Nevertheless, despite the lack of precision, they are invited to festivals because of the audience they have on their social media accounts: “Now the hits are measured by Twitter. In other words, a mention made on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok is becoming the equivalent of a journalistic essay, a well-crafted article, or a long interview” (Sergio López). Several of the interviewees agreed that the content generated by influencers does not meet several criteria that are fundamental in film reviews, such as argumentation or reflection for content writing. Moreover, they do not generally receive broad support from either mainstream or film culture:

“The reason is, what is important today are youtubers and influencers, who are now the driving force of communication, transfer, and influence for the audience. As a journalist and film critic, it is also important to have your own point of view. If you don’t have your own opinion, you’re basically useless –you’re an influencer” (Leopoldo Muñoz).

“From what I have observed, influencers can be at festivals, on red carpets, at cocktail parties, and at all the social events, but you don’t see them in the theatre watching the films. So, I would say their role is more for propaganda purposes, because they’re not necessarily involved in the festivals” (Luis Vélez).

According to Kartulovich, the views expressed above can be contextualised by the existence of a fallacious standardisation and a deceptive audio-visual democratisation. In addition, this circumstance also results from the fact that access to production teams and publishing networks does not guarantee the quality of what is published, and this also extends to content generators and influencers (Federico Karstulovich). Several interviewees believe that this situation is correlated with a lack of reading. As the public no longer reads, they prefer to consume short audio-visual content made by influencers rather than long texts published in newspapers or magazines. Consequently, this type of long, specialised content such as reviews, columns, and film sections have been disappearing. Some of the interviewees agree that there are shortcomings in the content produced by influencers. As such, the latter do not usually take a critical stance in their content in order not to be banned by the festivals. Furthermore, there is an inherent constraint in the TikTok platform, which limits the duration of the content, whereas on YouTube there are creators who produce more elaborate content, such as productions broadcast by the traditional media on this platform (Rob Reyna). Faced with this scenario, some of the interviewees feel that film reviewers are navigating through some very rough seas at the moment: “I would say that film reviews are a dying occupation. Of course, I say this in the most classical sense” (Leopoldo Muñoz).

On the other hand, some journalists have a different point of view, especially the interviewees who operate in the realm of festival organisation. For these professionals, there is no comparison between film critics and cinematic journalists, on the one hand, and influencers on the other. Each of the groups belongs to different communication fields, and the festivals that include the latter as part of their accredited members do so because they understand that the communication channels must be diversified in order to obtain the necessary dissemination of their activities:

“Festivals have to modernise as much as possible (...) because, obviously, it would’ve been very old-fashioned to think that journalists from the mainstream media would be the ones to support you, or the ones to help you in the promotion and dissemination of the festival. Nowadays, youtubers and influencers are very important (...) I think we have to be very attentive to these modern times in the sense of being open to all these different ways of communicating” (Joel Poblete).

“We check our Instagram accounts to see how many followers they have, because we know it can help us. What I know is that social media has become increasingly important and is becoming more and more specialised, so it’s absolutely essential” (David Duponchel).

In spite of this, influencers are not the only communicators who use social media to provide coverage and content related to festivals. According to several of the interviewees, some journalists and film critics have already migrated to digital media and are creating their own content according to the discursive options offered by each platform or social media; “Gradually, we have witnessed the change: from Facebook fan pages to Instagram and TikTok accounts, and for those who want to expand a bit more, to YouTube. And now, another medium that is crucial is podcasting” (Luis Vélez).

5. Discussion

Film festivals bring together a diversity of audiences with various interests and perspectives (Dayan, 2013; Campos, 2020; Jurado-Martín, 2006; Vallejo 2014). Thus, they are events that promote both convergence and inter-connection among a variety discourses (Vivar, 2016). De Valck (2007) calls them major hubs, insofar as the attending media generate content that helps to disseminate and expand the reach of the exhibited works. Nevertheless, the use of online resources has been transforming the festivals and their coverage; regarding the festivals, a variety of content creators have converged, such as traditional media, digital native media (Gabo Foundation, 2022), influencers, and even channels launched by the festivals themselves. In this sense, the authors can affirm that festivals are *media epicentres*, which can be defined as events or happenings where an extensive variety of content is generated for different audiences and platforms. According to Jurado (2018) many of the events that take place at a festival are not covered by the mass or specialised media. For that reason, some festivals create their own media by taking advantage of digital technology. In this way, they manage to cover the issues that are not covered by the press, using genres characteristic of traditional or contemporary journalism, such as interviews, reports, reviews, print or digital magazines, photo-reports, podcasts and others, which allow them to establish their own agenda and informative approach.

Within these media epicentres, journalistic coverage takes place, which is a series of actions that journalists carry out in order to collect, record, and narrate the facts (Estremadoyro, 2004), based on certain frames or criteria of selection and hierarchism of the events (Gitlin, 1980; Entman, 1993).

6. Conclusions

This research affirms that there are no longer only two traditional media approaches to covering film festivals –shows, and cinephile specialisation. Instead, at least six trends now coexist, which can be analysed from the perspective of frame building (Koziner, 2022), due to the fact that journalists use frames to define their coverage based on their own perspective of the news as follows:

- a.- Generalist media coverage is guided by the frames of entertainment journalism.
- b.- Specialised coverage is organised according to the frames of film journalism for traditional media, such as magazines, and is defined by a close relationship with the world of cinephiles, which is also spreading to digital native media.
- c.- Coverage carried out by influencers from a perspective that converges with the festival's promotional objectives. This is part of what Karbaum (2018) describes as social media narratives.
- d.- Specialised social media coverage is carried out by film journalists, but produced specifically for digital media, whether digital native media or the accounts of the journalists or film critics themselves.
- e.- Internal coverage is produced by the festivals' own in-house media, which addresses topics that are important for the values of the festival itself, yet not for the mainstream press.
- f.- Remote coverage was implemented during the pandemic through the Internet; this was a temporary solution to widespread confinement and, even though its use has declined, it is still used for specific events at certain festivals.

The first two approaches are taken by the traditional media, which use the genres and formats of journalism and film reviews. The remaining four are specific to the digital realm. They take advantage of social media, mobile telephony, and the digitisation of production devices and the web for their publications, which are known as social media narratives (Karbaum, 2018; Karbaum, 2021). This outline clearly shows that as media epicentres, festivals encourage the coexistence of coverage frames that cater to the interests and agendas of each of the creators of the news content. Festivals are encounters that foster relationships among diverse social actors in the development of these events (Campos, 2020; Jurado-Martín, 2006; Alonso, 2019). As such, the present research also concludes that relationships have been established between journalists and festival organisers in which the following trends have been confirmed:

- a.- *Management relationships*. The journalist or film critic makes a professional shift and holds a permanent position within the festival organisation, such as that of a festival planner, press officer, or media agency coordinator, among others.
- b.- *Collaborative relationships*. The journalist or film critic carries out activities that are specific to the festival, such as working as a panel judge, workshop leader, speaker, or curator, all within the context of carrying out the event.
- c.- *In-house discursive productions of the festivals*. The members of the festival promote the creation of their own media, with journalistic content they produce themselves, through which they disseminate the issues that the mainstream media do not cover in their agenda and frames. The festivals also create activities and training spaces for film reviewing and journalism.

Another aspect revealed by the research involves impediments to financing the cost of coverage. As stated by Navarro (2018), journalists who cover these events must have a budget that is large enough to allow them to transcend local coverage carried out in their home countries. With regard to funding, this research has also enabled us to establish certain categories in this regard:

- a.- Coverage funded by the media companies.
- b.- Self-management of the cost of coverage, which the journalists and film critics carry out themselves by diversifying their content and offering it to several media or platforms at the same time, in order to pay for their expenses.
- c.- Collaborative financing, where journalists rely on their associations to fund the tasks they carry out.
- d.- Coverage financed by the festivals themselves, in which these organisations assume all or part of the expenses of the guest reporters.

Although this research has been carried out meticulously in order to achieve a comprehensive analysis, it is not without limitations. One constraint is the selection of the sample. Despite the fact that there are a wide variety of festivals, there are considerable obstacles that must be overcome in gaining access to their organisers, as well as to the journalists and film critics who cover these events. Nevertheless, a strong effort has been made to identify and organise the trends that create a link between the various actors who generate information content and the managers of these events. Although the findings of this research cannot be considered broadly applicable, they can be used in other studies in order to contrast the conclusions of this work with other techniques or samples, in order to reach further conclusions that could be more extensively applied.

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8. Specific contributions of each author

	Name and surname
Conception and design of the work	Gerardo Karbaum Padilla
Methodology	Gerardo Karbaum Padilla and Daniel Barredo Ibáñez
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Discussion and conclusions	Gerardo Karbaum Padilla and Daniel Barredo Ibáñez
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Gerardo Karbaum Padilla and Daniel Barredo Ibáñez

9. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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