

Managing Bogota film festivals: Beyond audience formation

Gestión de festivales de cine en Bogotá: Más allá de la formación de públicos

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Abstract

From in-depth interviews with four organizers of relevant and recognized film festivals held in Bogotá, Colombia, this article explores the correspondence between the objectives of public promotion policies; especially in terms of forming audiences and their perceptions and experiences in practice. The speeches of the programmers of Bogoshorts, MIDBO, El Espejo and Smartfilms make visible the perspectives of these events in tension and, at the same time, in dialogue with the purposes expressed in state policies. This is why testimonies from the Ministry of Culture and the Cinematheca de Bogotá are also included. The interviews transcend the figures of previous quantitative studies in order to put into dialogue various voices of the alternative exhibition. In the end this allows to explore other dimensions of these events, usually ignored by public policies, and other challenges are pointed out for the management of a film festival.

Keywords: Cultural Industries, film festivals, Alternative film exhibition, Cultural Diversity, Film industry.

Resumen

A partir de entrevistas en profundidad con organizadores de cuatro festivales de cine relevantes y reconocidos que se celebran en Bogotá (Colombia), el presente artículo explora la correspondencia entre los objetivos de las políticas públicas de fomento en cuanto a formar audiencias y las percepciones y experiencias en la práctica. Los discursos de los programadores de Bogoshorts, MIDBO, El Espejo y Smartfilms visibilizan las perspectivas de estos certámenes en tensión y, al mismo tiempo, en diálogo con los propósitos expresados en las políticas del Estado. Por eso también se incluyen testimonios del Ministerio de Cultura y la Cinemateca de Bogotá. Las entrevistas trascienden las cifras de estudios cuantitativos previos para así poner en diálogo diversas voces de la exhibición alternativa. Al final esto permite explorar otras dimensiones de esos eventos, normalmente ignoradas por las políticas públicas, y se puntualizan otros retos para la gestión de un festival de cine.

Palabras clave: Industrias Culturales, Festivales de cine, Exhibición alternativa, Diversidad Cultural, industria cinematográfica.

1. Introducción

By way of public policies, the government of Colombia has defined what type of vehicles film festivals should be for the promotion of cultural diversity and audience formation. Nevertheless, there is as yet not enough evidence to verify in depth whether or not this expectation is met in the specific practices of these competitions. This is even more important considering that cinema festivals do not only exhibit films, but also organize events like lectures, workshops, industry gatherings and other conferences for various cultural markets, all of which are crucial to revitalizing the audiovisual industry circuit.

Meanwhile, the organization and realization of this type of competition has increased in Colombia during the 21st century. Therefore, film festivals have become an object of interest for the field of communication and culture studies. In fact, in 2002, twelve cinema festivals were held in seven different departments throughout Colombia. In barely eight years, this number almost quintupled. In 2010, there were fifty-five festivals in twenty-two departments (Ministry of Culture of Colombia, 2010). This descriptive panorama reflects a certain diversity in this circuit:

Among the events held in Colombia today, there are the open air film festivals found in beautiful little historic colonial cities like Barichara, San Agustín, Santafé de Antioquia and Villa de Leyva; themed festivals like Festiver (green film), Cinexcusa (social issues), El Espejo and Invitro (specializing in short films), FesticineKids (children's cinema) and CineToro (specializing in experimental cinema); large city festivals like those of Bogota, Cali and the Colombian film festival in Medellin, cities that also have alternative festivals in marginal areas like Ojo al sancocho (Ciudad Bolívar) and Festival Comuna 13. Recently, festivals have emerged emphasizing digital media like the Festival Audiovisual CC (Creative Commons) and Los 140 Caracteres (videos inspired on Twitter) (Rivera, 2012).

Although Colombia's Ministry of Culture keeps a registry of the number and types of film festivals held in the country, it only offers a summarized description, without going into detail on the cha-

racteristics of each competition and its organizers. Considering the role that the State attributes to festivals as an audience forming events, the question is whether said regulatory expectations are shared or not by other actors in the landscape and if they are satisfied by the specific design, organization and execution of these events and of the audiovisual sector in general.

With the purpose of understanding the motivations and perceptions of the various actors of the creative sector of alternative audiovisual film, this article explores how four film festivals held in Bogota perceive their work and development. We held interviews via which, in addition, this study sheds light on other dynamics related to the management of this type of event and that have not been sufficiently recognized in Colombia. Here we discuss the dynamics that are different or complementary to the aforementioned audience formation that emerges as a fundamental element in government policies.

2. Theoretical Framework

In order to study film festivals, they must be considered as activities with a particular characteristic: they offer a supply of cultural goods and services. As stated by García-Canclini (1991): "so-called cultural products have use and barter value, contribute to social reproduction and, at times, to the expansion of capital, but their symbolic value prevails over their utilitarian and commercial values" (p. 42).

This focus frames the analysis within the field of study of political economy of communication, in which various types of media -such as cinema-, offer a cultural good and, therefore, fall within the scope of cultural industries. Therefore, their function can be explained in relation to the logics of the capitalist market. In this sense, the political economy of communication and culture's main object of study is "the social relationships (particularly the relationships of power) that constitute the production, distribution and consumption of symbolic goods" (Gómez-García & Sánchez-Ruiz, 2011, p.2).

In this way, film festivals occupy an important place in culture as vehicles that comprise new forms of access to the market without compromising the promotion of cultural identity. This type of research broadens the academic universe related to film considering that, according to Vallejo (2014), the texts (the films) are no longer the only center of interest which has shifted to favor contexts. For this author, festivals are perfectly ideal objects of study given that they allow for analysis of the powers that condition the selection and production of certain films and also the decision-making processes behind these practices. For example, a film that makes up part of an official selection is validated, and subsequently will enjoy greater audience and begin the tour of local and overseas commercial exhibitions.

A film festival also establishes forms of exhibition different to those of commercial film, and present a new additional distinction: in the execution of these competitions, there is a new context that comes into play, in which what communities consider essential is making themselves visible in order to make an impact:

Innovation in this field implies the creation of a new cultural product different from the previous, and therefore implies an increase in diversity. The processes of cultural creation contribute new products to the market and, therefore, economic resources that expand and energize the markets (López, 2006, p.1).

Based on the uniqueness promoted in and by film festivals their multidimensional nature in which multiple interests coexist becomes apparent. According to Dayan (2013), the festival is a space where dissimilar actors operate collectively. In this melting pot there are journalists, sales representatives, distributors, filmmakers, organizers and the audience among others. In fact, in the same event, numerous and diverse dynamics simultaneously occur based on the relationships and motivations of these multiple interest groups. Vallejo (2014) concurs with this vision to highlight "the need to understand festivals not as a sum of events on the same level, but rather an interconnected network where there are power relationships and hierarchies" (p. 22). This focus confirms the need to frame the purposes of these competitions in the research on the interests of a specific

group of the film industry instead of building a one and only homogeneous response for all these experiences.

In that same sense, Peirano (2016) considered film festivals as complex global platforms where practices and diverse objects converge and overlap, like markets, showcases for cultural exhibition and competitive sections, as well as the multiple agendas of different participants embodying multiple interests, like festival organizers, sales agents and the industry professionals themselves.

2.1 The Functions of a Film Festival

Given this object of study with such suggestive multidimensional characteristics, it is pertinent and necessary to examine the dynamics that surround the management and execution of a film festival in Bogota. A study where what's important is to "analyze different aspects of the indicated events that have to do with the participation of communities, their relationship with the space, plus the safeguarding of heritage, appropriation and social inclusion, and recognition of diversity among others" (Moscoso *et al.*, 2012, p. 21).

Such aspects may consider the function of these festivals, the objectives of a competition that include, for example, economic and social impacts. For example, some of the objectives of a festival can be measured according to audience appeal and attendance. Therefore, a study of that kind would verify the social impact of the social contest in terms of its audiences, the sectors of the population involved, and those that become excluded from cultural activities (Colombo, 2010). Likewise, it's feasible to carry out economic impact studies that focus on measuring the importance and effects of a cultural activity in the economy in a determined area and period (2010).

Both the studies on economic impact, like those of social impact, shed light on the dynamics that create and produce film festivals, but are ultimately only partial. A festival can have a social impact (a good number of attendees) and nevertheless, have a low economic impact. For this reason, speaking about impact is insufficient and it is necessary to explore other perspectives that contribute more elements to the comprehension and

scope of the phenomenon. Therefore, it is possible to classify the festivals according to their economic, touristic, cultural, social and physical effects as well (Devesa, Báez, Figueroa & Herrero, 2012):

1. Economic effects: “festivals attract local spectators and visitors that spend their money on cultural activities, as well as on other related goods and services” (p. 3).
2. Touristic effects: they can be key for the tourist’s choice of destination.
3. Cultural effects: by being in a place where you can see and participate in artistic manifestations that are not available the rest of the year.
4. Social effects: allow for “the creation of a sense of place on behalf of the citizens, as well as the generation of a social and interactive space” (p. 4).
5. Physical effects: as a result of its execution, there may be changes made to the urban environment and/or use of space where it takes place.

Montserrat Jurado-Martí (2006) states that film festivals also comply with the function of being “the platform for new filmmakers to make themselves known in the complex world of film” (p.3). To achieve his objective he identified, in addition to the function he was looking for, the others as they emerged in bibliographic review and field work.

De Valck and Loist (2009) analyze the different approaches to the study of festivals. For our analysis, the studies focusing on the different types of festival programming are the closest. The authors mention that, among the more traditional focuses, there is the axis related to the economic processes that mark the festivals, such as making “noise” before premieres; the axis that festivals use as an institution and the axis narrowing down on researching festivals as a historic process and their relation with a larger circuit. The work of De Valck and Loist (2009) points out two necessary characteristics in film festivals studies to consider: “any attempt to answer the question of why film festivals must gravitate to the issue of distribution” (p.185) and any theorization on film festivals needs to be contextualized (p. 188)¹. This obliges us to address

the diverse facets that affect the festival management, considering not only creators but also other actors such as the State and the private sector, and explore the processes that explain their work.

In the Latin American context, there is research that addresses these aspects. Peirano (2018), for example, analyzes the execution of film festivals in Chile by way of multi-situated methodologies. Her work confirms the need to understand these spaces based on the diversity of the actors that participate. Peirano identifies these spaces as “hubs” where there are both cinephiles interested in the production of this circuit as well as those who seek to promote their work themselves as creators, including planning to increase their recognition on an international level.

In addition, there is an interest in finding out more about audiences due to the complexity of elements and processes present in a film festival audience and how, from these experiences, elements emerge that affect event management. With the previous it makes sense to form audiences, dissociating and, to a certain degree, confronting a rather one-directional vision from which an institution “illuminates” an undetermined audience.

Approaches like that of Alonso (2019) aim at defining these cinephile audiences. In his work, which collects information from attendees at BAFICI and the Mar del Plata International Film Festival, the author concludes that “there are certain socio-demographic characteristics and, in particular, certain aspects linked to tastes, expectations and cinematographic consumption that condition spectators’ relationship with festivals” (p.423). Film festival goers tend to arrive with a previously-acquired cultural knowledge, which often affects the way in which they will assimilate the event. In fact, one could think that those who attend a film festival already have an affinity, at some level, for alternative films and that there is no larger formation environment but rather a confirmation of interests:

It could be considered that the festivals attract not only specialized audiences, in the modern sense of the word, considered modern, expert cinephiles but also post-modern cinephiles, audiences interested in experimental film and works of art not strictly characterized as commercial (Radakovich, 2019, p. 436).

Findings like those ratify the need to think about the forming of audiences beyond the mere expression of intentions, and instead delve into its implications. With this, we are closer to understanding the audience and the relationships that later form in that circuit among exhibitors, the State, festivals and audiences. We propose to not only question the assumptions on which the conceptualization of audience formation lies, not just highlight the labor of management that these contests imply, but also strengthen the knowledge on this complex object of study.

3. Methodological Framework

The first function attributed to film festivals in Colombia consists in the formation of audiences and support of alternative film circulation, an established focus in legislation related to cinematographic activity. The current definition for 2020 is:

Film Festival or Screening: Event, whether single or held at regular intervals of no less than a year, carried out in national territory, in which films are shown, with the purpose of valuating sampled cinematographic work or award them prizes or distinctions, and that provide training activities or cultural or cinematographic industry promotion. (Ministry of Culture of Colombia, s.f.)

Considering this as the basic definition, the next step is to contrast that vision with what happens in the sector via what the actors themselves express and declare about their management. In order to delve deeper into this aspect, four representative examples were chosen from the array of Bogota film festivals to carry out in-depth interviews. It began with a total of nineteen active festivals in the city for 2016, according to lists from Colombia's Ministry of Culture and the ANAFE (National Association of Film and Audiovisual Festivals, Screenings and Events). The four selected events were Bogoshorts, a festival specializing in short films; MIDBO, focusing on documentaries; El Espejo that showcases student, community and indigenous films; and SmartFilms, a festival that includes digital narratives within its scheduling². Also included were interviews of representatives

of public film policies on a city (Bogota) and national level. This inclusion proved indispensable in order to contrast and discuss the State's perspective, related with the function of audience formation and with that mentioned in the interviews by the four festivals.

The in-depth interview uses ethnographic methods, without arriving at a level of empirical questioning like that which occurs when the festival is analyzed at the same time it is being held. As in this case the focus is on the vision of the festival planners (managers, organizers and programmers), their interviews give insight as to their motivations and interests. Numerous studies consider "ethnographic methods as a solution to the limitations of written sources, whose data often do not match the real practices of the contemporary audiovisual sector" (Vallejo, 2016, p.25). A future task would be to corroborate whether the intentions of the organizers actually materialize in the festival. However, this aspect is classified under another line of research.).

The following section analyzes the focuses and perceptions of four representatives of these festivals, looking at programming methods and their vision of alternative exhibitions, the State and the guilds. Their points of view converse, complement, and contrast with the vision of representatives of the cinematographic board of Colombia's Ministry of Culture and the Cinemateca de Bogotá (Bogota Film Archive).

4. Analysis

4.1 State and Festival Offerings

In the case of Bogota, there are two entities that have close relations with festivals. On one hand, there is the Ministry of Culture by way of the cinematographic board and, on the other, the District Film Archive, that doubles as the city's Audiovisual Arts Management Department. The latter promotes the activities of a film archive and is in charge of the audiovisual policies on a district level.

From Mincultura, Yenny Chaverra, a professional in the area of audience appropriation and formation,

considers that festivals in Bogota stand apart for the processes carried out within, given they are of a different nature.

The BIFF (Bogotá International Film Festival) is a festival that has a very international festival type profile where we see films that have been in very important international festivals or Latin American or Colombian premieres. It does not make sense to include community films because they are not the focus, but there is the Ojo al Sancocho which is community-based. Let's say that there is a series of small neighborhood festivals that focus heavily on community issues. And that type of festival is seen often in these environments because it is the way they circulate their own productions [2018]³.

Ricardo Cantor, mission advisor of the Cinemateca⁴, agrees with the aforementioned and also notes that within film festivals in Bogota there are many cases where there is an intent to spotlight communities, portraying their own dynamics and issues. Therefore,

los mismos creadores de esas esferas o grupos poblacionales son quienes finalmente al ver que están creando y, de pronto, no encontrar fácilmente lugares en los escenarios de circulación, desarrollan dentro de su proyecto cultural, no solamente unos pilares para la creación, sino también unos escenarios que permitan que lo que están creando circule.

There are two types of festivals according to their scope: some linked to social and community processes and others with more structured organizational and curatorial qualities. Based on this recognition of their diversity, we can deduce that, from the State's perspective, there is no limitation on the offer of film festivals, despite the national government having declared its interest in promoting Colombian cinema. For the Ministry of Culture, a film festival must be a showcase of Colombian cinema. As Chaverra (2018) states, "one of the possibilities of film festivals is bringing Colombian cinema and audiences closer in a friendlier way and in a context where value is distributed more fairly, in contrast to the competition of commercial billboards".

Colombian film promotion intersects with the vision of audience formation, given that by creating audiences via audiovisual literacy, an affinity is

created for domestic films. For the State, audience formation is part of the role of film festivals in addition to the promotion of Colombian cinema:

They are the main showcase for Colombian cinema, in terms of premieres as well as diversity. They serve to complement the current offer, and perhaps fill a void that we have in regards to the behavior of commercial exhibition of Colombian cinema (...) Although the appearance of film festivals is fairly recent, that short period of time turns its entire strategy of promotion, audience formation, dialogue with the sector, and cinema visibility to domestic and Latin American cinema (Chaverra, 2018).

Festivals also fulfill a decentralizing role in terms of supply as many films do not appear on commercial billboards and are not even released in large cities. In fact, places with reduced populations or smaller in size often do not have an alternative exhibition theater. According to information from the Ministry of Culture of Colombia (2017), in 2016 there were seventy-seven festivals or film screenings that took place in nineteen departments and twenty-four different municipalities; many of them usually do not even offer commercial cinema in their lineups. This contrasts with film theater availability in the country, which is estimated to be one for every 28 089 inhabitants and one seat for every 156 people. In addition to audience formation, festivals are necessary in the sense that "the creators and producers of audiovisual works of art need spaces and platforms that facilitate circulation and also commercial exploitation of the products or works they make" (interview with Ricardo Cantor).

In summary, the State sees a diverse supply of film festivals in Bogota, that complement and reinforce the shortcomings of the commercial billboard and strengthen relationships within and between industry communities, audiences and the State. However, they also believe it is necessary to propose new horizons. According to Chaverra (2018), we must review current circumstances of the audiovisual industry, especially in relation to web series and the various digital narratives that are currently in expansion.

4.2 Hold Festivals and Not Just Form Audiences

Interviews with representatives of state institutions reveal that audience formation as a direction in cinematographic public policy linked to film festivals is not a strait jacket. However, this discourse has indeed affected the way festivals regard their activity. Based on this perspective, other processes are developed that come hand in hand with audience formation and that, to a certain degree, have given personality to this type of event. In the case of Bogotá Short Film Festival-Bogoshorts, Felipe Montoya, current programming chief⁵, claims that

we feel like we should make a festival precisely for that, for audience formation. We purposefully develop a very broad strategy of audience formation because we believe that it is the answer to a limited presence of Colombian film in theaters and a limited presence of short films in other exhibition opportunities (...) it is good that there are other components that complement exhibition so that short films can find an audience or that they get to see content being presented at a festival in a different way. Because if it is just to watch, it's most likely that the audience will reject it a little at first" (2018).

In that same sense, according to Felipe Moreno Salazar, cultural manager and current artistic programmer of El Espejo Festival of short films and film schools⁶:

the matter of audience formation is necessary and should be indispensable in all cultural matters. There is no point to the same elite crowd enjoying the products that said elite crowd creates. Therefore, it is indeed necessary not to forget that important role audience formation plays in all film events and screenings, and academic processes such as academic and university programs.

It is in this position where one can discover the scope of audience formation not only as a tool for film festivals, but also as an element found in all types of cultural and artistic manifestations.

In fact, audience formation is also seen as a fundamental objective to increasing attendance. Paola Figueroa Cantino, coordinator of the board of Mues-

tra Internacional Documental de Bogotá, MIDBO, notes the varied offer of festivals and how formation forces them consider how to make an impact and position themselves with specific content such as the documentary: "The objective is to have a larger audience, to open up and reach others, to avoid having the same people watch and listen to us, but it is hard work"⁷.

A competition like SmartFilms Festival, whose fourth annual event took place in 2018, also highlights audience formation as a vital characteristic in events related to creativity. Moreover, the contest increases its impact by emphasizing that, beyond formation, the audience should be a creator, very in line with new consumption and collaborative production trends. According to Juan Beltrán, creator and cofounder⁸:

each festival and each project that wants to make a social impact has to transform in some way. If it does not transform, then what is the point: provide entertainment which is what these cultural events like fairs, parades or beauty contests used to do? No, this is a space where you can have parties, you can have workshops, you can have networking, but you can also have formation and in addition once you enter, you'll never be the same once the four days are over.

In this way, a film festival is not only addressed in terms of its execution but also, on the basis of its relationship with the cinematographic industry, via its interaction with the commercial cinematic offer. The festival should have a *leitmotiv*, so as to separate itself from another program with another offer. When asked, those responsible for the festivals indicate the importance of these guiding motifs when compared to a commercial program, and how they are different.

Festivals complement the cinematographic programming presented to the Colombian audience because they are showing things that in no way would arrive to commercial cinemas, or that are going to spread via word-of-mouth before being shown in theaters (Felipe Montoya, head of programming for Bogotá Short Film Festival-Bogoshorts).

Likewise, the sentiment is echoed at the MIDBO, given that documentaries are not shown in com-

mercial programming, at least not the same degree that they are produced

the role that we have as festivals is vital in terms of that other offer, which is to say, what people may go watch there. There is a constant supply during the year and we have a widely varied programming that cannot be found in standard commercial fare. You won't have a featurette, an experimental short or a full-length audiovisual essay in a commercial program, but you will have them at festivals.

Using that complementarity with commercial programming is how festivals are able to differentiate themselves and give the audience content that they otherwise would not see. This not only includes exhibitions but also the chance to converse with the creators and other audiences with the same artistic interests. According to Felipe Moreno:

It's about discovering new things, providing what commercial programming doesn't, audiovisual products that, if not for film festivals, you wouldn't see. In a certain way, film festivals also see cinema as an object of study. Here they show films that have a higher aesthetic value than commercial products that people would like (Festival El Espejo).

In fact, within the alternative circuit, festivals have conquered spaces as premiere windows of exhibition while film clubs and alternative arts and essay theaters have lost popularity. Without this alternative network, there would be no established function for these festivals, given that they are supported by entities like Cinemateca Distrital, colleges and universities or alternative film theaters that generally associate themselves as partners, allies or sponsors for the events. Festivals are the first instance out of all these other exhibition opportunities. If the film does well in festivals then it is assumed that it will do well in other venues: "Therefore, a film festival is a permanent window of exhibition that uses the others to continue making noise and attracting attention so that it has more support and more films are submitted" (Felipe Moreno Salazar, cultural manager and programmer for the El Espejo Festival).

One clear example of how these synergies function in the alternative sector is Bogoshorts

If I am offering a type of content in an alternative theater to this sector, given that an audience has already been formed for me that will be more receptive when my festival arrives. For that reason, Bogoshorts has both: it has an annual festival that offers its content exclusively and special instance during a certain period, but also an audience formation and continuous program of short films during the entire year. In a premiere in Cine Tonalá Bogotá on Tuesdays, in open-air under-the-moonlight screenings in Bogoshorts at Universidad de los Andes, with a roundtable discussion with its directors the last Friday of each month in the Cinemateca Distrital in addition to many others (Felipe Montoya).

In the end, despite being an island whose subsistence depends on its singularity, a festival cannot persist if it is not thought of as part of an interconnected archipelago where there is constant exchange with other actors within the ecosystem of alternative exhibition.

4.3 Support Networks within Alternative Exhibition

Festival online networking, as well as their relationship with the alternative circuit, is seen as constitutive bastion for this activity.

We are in an alliance with the entire alternative distribution circuit, given a large part of the programming of these theaters comes from the festival selection, and I believe that they are our fundamental allies, for both their audience and the space they provide us for our proposals (Paola Figueroa, MIDBO).

Festivals have developed community strategies like the incorporation of the ANAFE (National Association of Film and Audiovisual Festivals, Screenings and Events of Colombia)⁹, in order to create united spaces not only for sector alliances but also for intercommunication with governmental instances.

In fact, in the festivals studied, it is common to find terms like proximity, allies, brother festivals

or collaborations where the programming of one festival are rotated through the programming of another. Although it is true, they could be seen as competitors, networks have been created that even lead international guests to attend more than one festival during their trip.

We have yet to study, beyond the relevant and specific, lasting synergies where the union plays a larger role, and there is less dependence on the State and more interaction with the private industry. For Juan Beltrán of SmartFilms, it is best not only to rely on State financing:

I believe that relying on state-sponsored spaces limits me, and creativity is much more than that. If we give power to that imagination and creativity, we can create things that can even help the State, one of them being that I'm not going to be strengthened by just the government, but also by private investment.

From the perspective of institutionality, there is a need to continue promoting not only scenarios of formalization, but also dialogue with a union that, as it organizes, aims to play a larger role in decision-making within the audiovisual industry.

It is a field in flux, but without a doubt it is important to determine, discover, and discuss ways that incentivize the circulation of other content. In other words, if we do not expose audiences to other content, there will be no interest, demand, or appropriation of these other contents on behalf of the audience (Ricardo Cantor, Cinemateca).

Once a diverse supply is guaranteed, formalized and organized, festivals determine that the surplus on the calendar, or resource deficits can be resolved more effectively. The festival sector, as well as the Colombian audiovisual industry itself, is still in a process of consolidation; therefore, the future of these cultural initiatives relies on what is currently being built.

In the end the balance, in response to the work of the state and according to the indications seen in festivals, leans toward the positive, in the understanding that both agents as well as entities must work together on the promotion of this alternative content and even more so with the challenges presented by multi-platforms and digital distribution.

5. Conclusions

In-depth interviews of Bogota film festival representatives reveal aspects in common regarding the vision of cinema and festival execution. Large festivals like Bogoshorts and MIDBO have conquered spaces and have become landmark events in the city; El Espejo, which is focused more on student and community films, where the exhibition is a space of dialogue between the powers and the community; or SmartFilms where new technology lead to creativity in different forms and formats.

Each one of them emphasizes the value of cinema as an instance for audience formation, without this being its only valid purpose. Therefore, they emphasize the need for a constant dialogue among guild members and the State. The State plays an active role in promoting initiatives that elevate alternative exhibitions by way of financing, as well as other aspects of promotion and training. However, there is still a call for more resources, especially when the number of festivals in the country grows daily. The sustainability of this type of event therefore becomes one of the major challenges for its survival, together with their formal recognition as organizations and even as companies.

Exploring the connection between public cultural policy revealed, in terms of film festivals and their practical reality, nuances regarding the path of audience formation. Festivals, aiming to increase the cultural heritage of attendees, consider audience formation as constitutive within the festival actions and reinforces their role.

The state was recently found to be interested in formally recognizing the sector and how important it has become, not just for audiences, but also for the entities that may become prospective partners or collaborators. The festivals themselves have strengthened their strategies to ensure their continuity, branching out from audience formation to become instances for conversation, industry, workshops, classes, conferences, travelling exhibitions and other activities during the year. In fact, research has demonstrated how festivals function in that they don't rely solely on the

state, but also on a series of other entities and organizations interested in culture, coming together to form an incipient support network, which could be a source for future studies.

Film screenings and festivals in Bogota are turning into an attractive and sustainable alternative in comparison to the commercial offer, in addition to being complementary and creating alliances in regards to exhibition.

While attendance at commercial theaters is at an all-time low, festivals are sold out night after night. This is a phenomenon that shows not only the importance, but also the need for their presence in order to maintain and ensure the future of film culture (Vallejo, 2014, p.36).

The findings in this study present an opportunity to learn more about this sector. With an ever-growing supply, it makes one think about what is to come in terms of consumption and its relationship with supply. There is a paradox in Colombian cinema in recent years: production has increased, but fewer people are going to see it. Similar cases should be analyzed in future studies on Bogota and Colombian film festival audiences.

Similarly, it is impossible to deny the role of new technologies, given that they play a part of the new

audiovisual landscape, and here lie more opportunities to continue increasing diversity. This ever-nearing future gives a chance for festivals to continue being key players, given their long trajectory in the alternative dissemination and exhibition scene.

Notes

1. Author's translation of the original.
2. The research consisted of a quantitative part describing nineteen Bogota film festivals. The findings in said part shed light on dominant trends in programming. In-depth interviews seek to complement data found based on qualitative information on four representative festivals of those identified trends.
3. In-person interview on July 1, 2018.
4. In-person interview on July 5, 2018.
5. In-person interview on August 28th, 2018.
6. Telephone interview on August 6th, 2018.
7. Telephone interview on September 1st, 2018.
8. Telephone interview on July 13th, 2018.
9. The ANAFE was founded in 2011 and in 2016 had fifty-four film festivals, screenings and events as members.

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