

# Film Festivals Tourism Impact. Case study: ClujShorts International Shorts Film Festival, Romania

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study aims to make a brief analysis of festivals as events in general, and film festivals in particular, and consists of two distinct parts: the complexity of the impact factors of festivals on the phenomenon of tourism and a case study attention ClujShorts Film Festival. The first part is a theoretical introspection on the fields / directions of impact deriving from this type of human activity and we will refer, successively, to the financial side, the tourist side (strictly from the point of view of the destination) and the socio-cultural side, trying thus to completely cover the main angles of the approach. We have tried to focus on each the three sectors in order to highlight the benefits deriving from the development of this type of activity. The second part of the article makes a brief foray into the main film festivals in Romania, and is continued with the analysis of the results of a questionnaire survey, applied within the Cluj Shorts film festival, 2019 edition, and 2020 online. The questionnaire was constructed so that the results are relevant in order to be able to draw the profile of the participating tourist, as well as to emphasize the main elements of the tourist infrastructure that are preferred by the participants. Even if the data on the tourist flow in Cluj Napoca in April (the month in which the festival usually takes place) cannot be separated in terms of exact origin, the analysis of the trend in recent years shows that this international film event has an undoubted contribution in consolidating the city as a complex cultural tourist destination.

**KEY WORDS:** tourism, tourism impact, film festivals, ClujShorts.

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## 1. Introduction

Festivals are an important part of human society, with a long history of development and very different forms of manifestation. They reflect the spiritual and creative side of man, becoming a result of his immaterial identity, being a way to bring together people who have the same interests and passions. In tourism, they are analyzed, among other things, in terms of their ability to attract participants, to offer unique opportunities to spend free time, to use and create the need for

consumption of tourism infrastructure, as an integral part of the various human communities spread all over the world. As can be seen, the interaction of festivals as anthropic actions with the tourist phenomenon is a real and intense one; the problem of their study arises when trying to analyze them according to the classical scientific methodology, or when it is desired to measure their cultural, ideological, psychological or economic impact. Limitations of the methodological instruments and the very small number of specialized studies that offer scientific approaches from different angles (social, cultural, political, economic, physical contexts and international dimension impact) determine Newbold and collaborators (Newbold et al., 2015) to challenge the academic environment to get closer to the study of this form of human manifestation - "focus on festivals"!

## **2. Festivals and film festivals in tourism**

### **2.1. Theoretical considerations**

As part of the anthropic tourist potential, festivals are events intensely accessed by tourists who have the opportunity to get a total experience by destination, travel route, the specifics and content of the festival itself (musical, cultural, culinary, film, clothing) and more chosen by the possibility to meet new people with the same interests. Cudny (2013) makes an analysis of studies on tourism festivals in general and emphasizes the positive and negative aspects, considering that the first category dominates. In turn, Zou et al. (2021) creates a discussion on the sustainability of cultural tourism festivals, focusing on the ecological aspect and suggests some strategies that can preserve and perpetuate both cultural values and elements of the natural environment.

Seen as special places to live and travel, as international travel destinations and cultural exchanges, based on different and multiple constituents that act for and during their development (Mazdon, 2006), film festivals have an old tradition of their development. With the development of the film industry, more and more people have chosen to spend their free time watching such shows / events. From classic presentations in specially arranged places (cinemas), or even outdoors (drive through cinema), to international mega-events organized to promote the most important films as well as the companies, directors and actors that are part of them, this "industry" is extremely attractive to the general public in terms of, among other things, leisure.

Within the multiple segments of the financial-tourist capitalization of cinema, film festivals are also important events generating tourist flow. The organization of this type of activities involves a consistent effort both from the local administration and from the private environment (NGOs, cultural foundations), even from the local community. Originally, these events did not have a tourist purpose in themselves, but were focused on selling other products and services (Laing, 2017). However, we consider the direct benefits to be observed in at least 3 sectors: financial (net profit), tourism (destination, flow, city brand) and cultural. Ruling and Strandgaard Pedersen (2010), in a detailed study on film festivals in general, also delimit 3 directions of impact in the development of film festivals: emergence of the efforts of several institutions that offer and represent different sets of values, role in international similar festivals (and especially their role in local / regional events), independent organizations (with film productions, sponsors, audiences, media presence), in a somewhat insufficiently outlined environment outlined, on the border between art and commerce.

Tourism is a socio-economic phenomenon by definition. Financial profit is sometimes a way of development and an end in itself within the tourist phenomenon; not infrequently the notoriety of a tourist objective is measured according to the profit. Both the private and the governmental environment take into account this aspect, creating different tourism marketing strategies in order

to promote, specialize and make more efficient the tourist destination and the related infrastructure. The development of any event is an interaction between all tourist actors (event location, accommodation and food, means of transport, fields and related activities - shopping, various tourist attractions nearby) and the financial flow is an obvious and natural result. Also, the calendar of events can be a way to balance the tourist flow, financial balance and tourist infrastructure during a year by placing them in the off-season, beginning or end of the maximum season. Even the participants will be eager to take advantage of the low costs of these periods, and the tourist developers ensure a continuous operation and a balanced use of spaces throughout the year. The direct impact on the local economy is also evident in the fact that tourism, like any economic branch, involves a whole group of related sub-branches in the field of services, industry and manufacturing.

The tourist aspect of such an event derives from the appeal itself of the event, from its capacity to attract tourists, to generate tourist flow. The attractiveness of a tourist objective, of an event, is in any case a subjective aspect related to each tourist and their background; the presence of as many and varied possibilities to spend free time in a location, increases the tourist value of the destination. The dominance of some of these objectives / attractions and the increase in notoriety can even determine a re-branding of the location, a specialized, thematic tourism, a pillar of the local economy. An area in which the presence of tourism determines important transformations, is also represented by the urban dynamics, the territorial functionality. The development of the tourist infrastructure, the creation of new "tourist utilities", brings with it the shaping of a stable and diversified leisure area for the respective locality. Film festivals and events benefit from increased attention and promotion among the general public, therefore, hosting such an event brings real benefits of promotion and visibility for the host locality, a visible aspect, primarily by increasing the tourist flow. Tourism market segmentation and studies conducted for this purpose (Bloom, 2004; Jiménez-Barret et al., 2020) have shown that branding really helps a destination, be it a niche, to be more easy to find, to choose, when it already has "an emblem". Özdemir and Adan (2014) underline the idea of the emblematic location, especially when a certain place / objective is the scene of a part of a cinema projection, emphasizing the celebrity of that place; Depending on the success of such a film, filmmaking itself can become a destination. The two authors also offer some practical methods for researching the three mentioned directions.

The cultural impact, in the case of film festivals, is a major one. From one edition to another, the theme of the films changes, the avant-garde of the subjects being a goal in itself. The participants come into direct contact with the actors, screenwriters, directors, sponsors, promoters of the event and the cultural experience is amplified by the presence of visitors from all over the world. The cultural benefits at the linguistic level, traditions, customs increase, for most tourists who consume this type of activities, the attractiveness of the event, being an inseparable part of the purpose for which the trip is made.

In all this amalgam of factors that make up the event and increase its attractiveness, the media plays a special role. In an age of accelerated globalization, media tools have, in addition to the role of describing and informing about events, a great role of promoting and even evaluating them. We consider that the evaluation of this type of events derives from several totally different aspects: the intensity of the tourist flow, the size of the financial flow, the participants' feelings related to movie screenings and their quality itself, impressions and reviews of both tourism and film critics.

## **2.2. Romanian film festivals**

A study on the behaviour of Romanian tourists related to participation in festivals (Mahika, Rădulescu, Aluculesei, 2015) highlights the fact that in Romania there is already a "culture" of

participation in festivals (35.1% of respondents participate in 2-3 cultural activities per year, 33.2% one per month, and 98.3% at least one). Surprisingly, 81.08% are aged 18-34, and 92.6% of participants are residents of the urban environment. From the list of festivals proposed by the authors as possible destinations (film festival, theatre festival, music festival, art festival, food festival, folkloric festival, medieval festival and carnival), the film festivals obtained a cumulative score that placed them on the third place.

At a simple analysis, the list of film festivals in Romania (aprox 41 festivals in 2019, Table 1) is very generous, containing multiple genres, numerous locations in the country (Fig. 1) and with a calendar that covers almost a whole year, from which we only mention a few: Nordic Film Festival 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> February, Bucharest, BIEFF (Bucharest International Experimental Film Festival) – Bucharest, DaKINO – 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> March, Bucharest, KINOdissey – 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> April, Bucharest, ClujShorts - 5<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> April, Cluj-Napoca, FFF (Festival du Film Francais) – 8<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> May, Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Timișoara, Constanța, Brașov, Buzău, Arad, Sfântu Gheorghe, TIFF (Transylvania International Film Festival) - 31<sup>st</sup> May-9<sup>th</sup> June, Cluj-Napoca, Tres Court International Festival – 7<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> June, Bucharest and Suceava, European Film Festival – 11<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> June Bucharest, 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> June, Râmnicu Valcea, Târgu Mureș, 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> June, Sibiu, SFR (Romanian Movie Evenings) – 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> June, Iași, Pelicam (Film Festival about Environment and People) – 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> June, Tulcea, BIEFF (Bucharest International Film Festival) - 24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> June, Bucharest, FFIR (Râșnov Historical Film Festival) – 18<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> July, Râșnov, Animest (International Animation Film Festival) – 4<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> October, Bucharest, FARAD (Documentary Film Festival) – Arad, BFA (Bucharest Film Awards) – Bucharest, Hip Trip Travel Film Festival – Bucharest, Astra Film Festival - 14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> October, Sibiu, Les Films de Cannes a Bucharest – 18<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> October, Bucharest, Dracula Film Festival – Brașov etc.

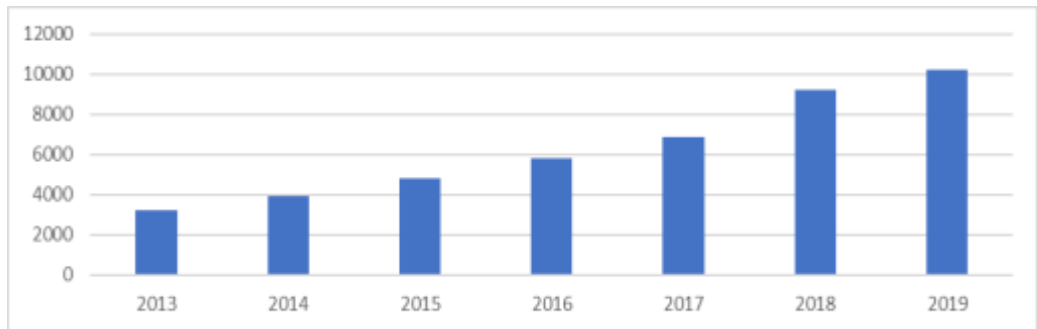
The extent of this type of activity, which is an integral part of the tourist phenomenon in Romania, can be exemplified, for instance, by the Film and History Festival, Râșnov (Fig. 2). It was in 2019 at the 8<sup>th</sup> edition and, according to statistics that provide information from the first edition from 2013 to 2019, it is easy to see that the number of participants increased considerably, tripling (minimum estimates provided by organizers only on the basis of those activities where entry was ticket-based). Although the pandemic situation in 2020 prevented the physical development of the festival, it had 2 online editions (July and August) where the organizers claim that they had a total of 3380 participants.

**Table 1** Number of days/festivals/year.



Year months (seasons)	Number of festivals	Number of days
XII-II	3	16
III-V	9	42
VI-VIII	9	49
IX-XI	20	124
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>231</b>

**Figure 1** Distribution of film festivals in Romania.

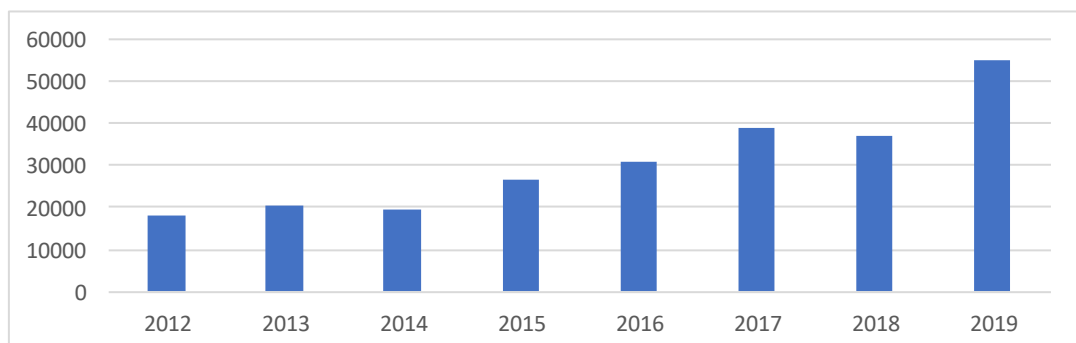


**Figure 2** Evolution of the participants number at Film and History Festival, Râșnov.

### 2.2.1. ClujShorts Film Festival case study

Our study continues with a questionnaire survey conducted during the Cluj Shorts festival, from April 2019, and it was continued online during the years 2019-2020. The survey was applied to a total of 186 people (125 on-site, 61 online), the on-site being applied randomly during the festival, with a balanced male vs. female component. The predominance of young participants is evident both in the field survey and in the online one. The purpose of the survey is to identify the role that the film festival has on the flow of tourists and tourist infrastructure (accommodation, food, transport) in the town, as well as the profile of the participating tourist, details that can help segment the tourist offer in future.

In order to intuit the contribution of the festival to the tourist flow, the official data were analyzed, for April of each year since its beginning (2012-2019) (Fig. 3), without taking into account those of 2020 (due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic). Obviously the trend is an increasing one, and the fact that April (the month in which this festival usually takes place) is practically in the tourist off-season, determines us to attribute this considerable increase to the existence of this festival and the fact that this genre of artistic activities have become so popular in Romania as well. The same thing happened with the index of overnight stays, which started from a value of about 31 thousand in April 2012, and reached about 98 thousand in 2019, practically a tripling of the number. Obviously, the increase in the notoriety of the city of Cluj as a business and tourist destination is an important cause of this reality.



**Figure 3** Visitors in Cluj Napoca city during april month of each year (data source: insse.ro/tempo-online).

### 3. Results and discussion

The survey shows that 86% of the participants in this type of festival are between 18-44 years old (only 2% are over 65 years old), so a mostly young audience with a background of 70% from urban areas. 49% have university and postgraduate studies, which denotes an educated, intellectual and predilection for cultural activities. 59% of them have between 2-4 attendances at the festival, and 15% of them are over 5 visits.

The fact that this type of festival is somewhat the prerogative of young participants, students, at the beginning of their careers, is highlighted by the fact that 44% of them used the train (38% personal car) as a means of travel (the gratuity provided by the government greatly favors this fact), 41% allocated as budget of expenses (accommodation, meals, film screenings) amounts between 201-500 lei; the next budget interval (501-1000 lei) corresponds to 36.8% of the participants. The same can be highlighted by looking at the type of accommodation chosen, where 39.2% stayed in student dormitories (with friends or being students themselves in Cluj) and in hostels, 25.6% in hostels and only 19% in hotels. The food units used place us, again, in the specifics of the young sample: 48.8% fast food, 24.8% canteen, 24.8% restaurant.

Although the festival has a duration of 9 days, 74% of tourists choose a stay of 1-3 days, which indicates that they specifically choose certain activities (workshops, concerts, interviews, film screenings) from the entire period of the festival. The management of personal time and the time of the year when it takes place can be a decisive factor for a shorter stay.

The experience of participating in the Cluj Shorts Film Festival was, for approx. 77.6% of the respondents, a good and very good one, 68% of them expressing their desire to return (this fact cannot be measured in the future, but it represents an important aspect in assessing the degree of satisfaction of the participant).

Obviously, the participant's profile must be analyzed from the concrete perspective of ClujShorts. The venue has a special role in the decision on participation (the city of Cluj-Napoca and its surroundings is a tourist destination in itself). The calendar period, being one outside the tourist season determines a beneficial impact on the local tourism economy, and at the same time it denotes that the participants are willing to make the necessary sacrifices to participate; it is also strange that the exact same reason is why the participants choose to stay only a few days, without sacrificing, perhaps, too many of the days of legal rest leave. The theme of the participating films attracts an amalgam of ages, levels of educational and varied international participation. The density and quality of the network of amenities vs. transport, also contributes to the crystallization of the general impression of the festival and the general organization around it.

### 4. Conclusion

Tourism as a social phenomenon is in a continuous development in terms of the different and unique use of free time, being a direct reflection of the structure of human society over time, reflecting human concerns from different periods of history, many times placing it right in front of it. The huge financial contribution it brings at regional or country level practically guarantees that it will continue to receive all the attention from governments and investors in the field.

Festivals as anthropic actions continue to be a dynamic, productive and attractive sector for the population. Their variety as content, theme, flexibility and location attracts participants from all

walks of life, ages and various levels of education, appealing to personal interests and the hobbies of tourists.

Film festivals have also delimited their passionate audience which makes participating in these events an annual goal, for some people. Through the interest in the films (subject, notoriety, exclusivism, avant-garde) or the desire to know the actors, directors, screenwriters, participants in this type of festival fall into the category of tourists for the purpose of travel, location (for those who come from other areas), by using the infrastructure dedicated to accommodation, food and various other leisure activities, and also by paying for the events in which they take part, souvenirs (or other material products), the services they consume.

As it was seen in the survey carried out during the ClujShorts festival, the profile of the participating tourist is not necessarily an atypical one; mostly from urban areas, with above average education, sequential participation (only a few days), with a not very high standard related to accommodation, food and transport amenities.

Through the multitude of factors that compose them and the socio-financial fields that trigger them, the study of this type of human and tourist activity becomes a challenging one. Through the research fields it contains (demographic, cultural, psychological, linguistic, financial, statistical, infrastructural, etc.), the research methodology can include both qualitative and quantitative methods. A detailed study will obviously include both, but here we are practically talking about the "classic" methodology. Perhaps, in time, such events will adapt or create their own research methods in order to analyze some more subtle aspects: the cultural-educational effect on the local population, the exchange of information between administrative-governmental and organizing institutions, criteria for classification and choice of new host destinations, outlining the network of interaction factors and their contribution / intensity (media, financial, accommodation, food, transport, communication, manufacturing etc.).

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