Innovative Strategies for Audiovisual Literacy at Film Festivals. The Case of Peru

Claudia Chura[1] , Ángel Torres Toukoumidis [2] , Gerardo Karbaum*[1] ,
and Andrea de Jesús Oré [3]

[1] Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas, Lima, Perú
[2] Universidad Politécnica Salesiana, Cuenca, Ecuador
[3] Universidad Privada del Norte, Lima, Perú
gkarbaump@gmail.com

Abstract. Film festivals play a crucial role in promoting audiovisual literacy. Therefore, this research explores the strategies employed by these events in the Peruvian context. The study applied a qualitative approach through semi-structure interviews conducted with managers of Peruvian film festivals of various themes. The results revealed the implementation and importance of diversifying funding sources for sustainability. Hence, managers resort to state funds, self-financing strategies, and partnerships with public and private entities. Additionally, a growing integration of technology in educational activities was found. On one hand, video conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet are being used, thus expanding the participation and geographical reach of festivals. On the other hand, some events are gradually incorporating training activities in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality. It is thus concluded that film festivals, by diversifying their funding sources and adapting to changing needs, strengthen their offering of audiovisual literacy in the Peruvian context. This is relevant given that formal education in the country does not address this formative aspect.

Keywords: Film Festivals, Audiovisual Literacy, Funding, Emerging Technologies, Peru.

1   Introduction

Since the establishment of the Mostra D'arte Cinematográfica in Venice in 1932, film festivals have emerged as essential spaces in cinematic culture, playing crucial roles in the exhibition, promotion, and distribution of works by emerging filmmakers [1, 2]. In addition, they offer alternative forms of dissemination and commercialization that deviate from the conventional model of cinema [3]. These events bring together various participating actors, including film critics and journalists, filmmakers, film students, and an audience eager to find an alternative experience to commercial offerings. For Peña [4], film festivals worldwide are classified considering aspects such as geographical location, degree of competitiveness, format, and duration. Vallejo [5] proposes a classification differentiating between generalist festivals, which encompass various

genres without and specific theme, and specialized festivals, focused on a particular genre and theme. The latter, as noted by De Valck [6], have gained relevance since the early 2000s, and currently, we can identify events specializing in documentaries, animation, LGBTQI+ themes, environmental issues, among other categories.

Film festivals serve various functions for each of their participating agents: they promote and distribute non-commercial or emerging cinematographic works, foster the formation of audiences, and introduce viewers to new themes and diverse perspectives [7, 2, 8]. According to Cruz [9], festivals elaborate strategies to obtain the recognition and acceptance from the audience towards audiovisual works. They also facilitate encounters with creators and encourage critical analysis through screenings, forums, and other activities addressing social issues [10]. Moreover, they actively promote networking by organizing social and educational events that connect industry professionals [1, 11]. Finally, festivals have committed to audience development as an alternative to "formal audiovisual education." According to Calderón [12] these events offer activities tailored to the level of preparation of the participants, whether they have previous experience in the field or not.

1.1   Audiovisual Literacy and Film Festivals

Audiovisual literacy is a process that involves acquiring skills to effectively interact with audiovisual content [13]. These competencies encompass understanding the audiovisual language, critical reading, and audiovisual creation [14, 15]. The audiovisual language comprises visu-al and auditory elements that combine to convey a specific message, using codes such as shot compositions, camera angles and movements, as well as music, voice, sound effects, and ambient sounds [16, 17]. Critical reading, in turn, allows for an analysis of consumed audiovisual information, ques-tioning the creator's intentions, and stimulating debate [18]. This competence is crucial for countering misinformation and prevalent biases in media such as television and social networks [19]. Audiovisual creation involves applying principles of the audiovisual language to produce a work. It is divided into four phases: project development, preproduction, filming, and postproduction, starting with the conception of the idea and culminating in editing, where spatial-temporal perception is adjusted to establish a rhythm that evokes sensations in the audience [20, 21].
This competence becomes crucial from the new millennium, where the expansion of the internet and mobile devices has democratized the consumption and production of content [14]. However, this has led to audiovisual illiteracy, as many consumers lack a deep understanding of the media they use and the construction of messages [22, 23].

In Ibero-America, there is a significant momentum of initiatives to promote audiovisual literacy, focused on children and adolescents, while the training of adults remains in the background [24]. At the European school context, the implementation of specific plans for audiovisual subjects is limited. Therefore, informal education practices supported by itinerant film screenings and youth-focused film festivals stand out as options to address audiovisual literacy [25]. Film festivals have actively engaged in the education of their attendees by offering training activities for all those interested, whether they are professionals or newcomers in the audiovisual field [26, 27]. In the case of

generalist festivals, activities such as masterclasses and workshops are offered, aimed at both industry professionals and film students, addressing topics that transcend the mere introduction to the realm of visual media [12]. On the other hand, festivals specialized in youth audiences focus on promoting the understanding of the use of technologies as a means of expression [28]. Arteseros and Arbiol [7] attribute to these film events two additional functions in terms of audiovisual literacy: the reading function, which involves teaching technical and theoretical knowledge to understand the production process; and the creative function, where the practical application of the acquired knowledge is promoted. In view of the above, there is a notable lack of studies focused specifically on its educational dimension, especially in the Latin American context.

1.2   Challenges and Funding Alternatives in Film Festivals

Film festivals, regardless of their nature, face challenges in securing stable economic resources, necessitating various strategies to ensure their long-term sustainability [29, 11]. These resources support both the competitive and formative activities of the contest, ranging from obtaining funds to remunerate jurors and workshop leaders, to ensuring adequate spaces for the screening of movies and short films in competition [30]. Local collaborations often involve the provision of spaces for festival activities, such as screenings or closing events, rather than direct economic support, reflecting the limitations of available resources [31]. Additionally, partnerships with companies are sought to actively promote their brands in the media of the festival, while agreements are negotiated with hotels and restaurants to cover accommodation and food expenses for guests. These agreements are referred to as exchange deals [32, 31]. By involving the private sector, this financial diversification provides greater flexibility for the execution of creative projects at festivals. This situation allows such events to explore innovative ideas, experiment with a wide range of topics, and adapt more nimbly to audience needs and industry trends. This is possible thanks to collaborations with collectives, cultural associations, and other related entities [12].

2   Methodology

This study applies a basic, non-experimental, descriptive, and cross-sectional methodological approach, which analyzes in detail the practices of audiovisual literacy in Peruvian film festivals. It is qualitative in nature, because it is based on the collection and description of non-quantifiable data to identify connections and patterns [33, 34]. This allows examining how the different festival stakeholders interact: organizers, attendees, institutions, and local communities [26]. In addition, it helps to understand how these events function in terms of their formative activities, and to identify the challenges faced. The design is phenomenological because it captures events as individuals experience them, without imposing preset biases [35, 36]. Also, the analytical method is used to examine content and generate conclusions, facilitating the identification of trends and links in the experiences of managers and training activities. Based on this, the following is proposed:

General Objective

To examine the strategies applied by Peruvian film festivals to promote audiovisual literacy among their target audiences.

Specific Objectives

- To investigate how Peruvian film festivals utilize emerging technologies for audiovisual literacy.
- To analyze the financing strategies implemented by Peruvian film festivals to facilitate audiovisual literacy.

During the data collection phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Prior to this stage, existing literature was reviewed to define subcategories and objectives, as well as to obtain knowledge about audiovisual literacy in the context of international film festivals, thus establishing a solid methodological framework [37]. The sample for this study was selected using a convenience non-probabilistic sampling approach, aiming to recruit accessible individuals or those who volunteered to participate in the research [38]. Festivals managers from various thematic areas were contacted. In this process, an adaptative approach was employed, allowing adjustments to the selection based on the responses received, reflecting the dynamic nature of qualitative research [39]. Participants were reached through social networks, emails and contact numbers extracted from the web platforms of their festivals. It should be noted that the nature of this technique does not allow for the representation of a population and, consequently, to generalize results [40].

The thematic diversity and heterogeneous scope of the interviewed festivals significantly influence the variability of their budgets. These events obtain funding from various sources, making it difficult to stablish a representative average of the required budget. This complexity, exacerbated by the sensitive nature of financial information hinders obtaining precise data in this regard.

Interviews were conducted between January and February 2024 via Zoom. A guide was used which included an introduction to the topic, a form to collect personal data, and questions aligned with the objectives of this research. The semi-structured design of the questionnaire allowed for modification and addition of questions based on the responses and thematic particularities shared by the interviewees. This adaptability was applied in real time during the conversations [41]. After each videocall, an accurate transcription was made, facilitating immersion in the data, and speeding up analysis and coding [42]. Participants were selected based on two criteria: firstly, their experience in the organization of Peruvian film festivals, covering a wide range of themes such as non-fiction, environmental, animation, among others. Secondly, their participation in the planning of complementary activities to the competition, such as workshops, forums, and travelling cinema screenings. Based on these considerations, the sample includes the following participants:

Table 1: List of Participants

Participant	Professional Experience	Place of Origin	Years of Experience
Enrique Beó (EB)	Director of the Internacional Film and Video Festival with Mobile Devices "Ojo Móvil"	Lima	5
Marco Vera (MV)	Director of the Festival Hanan Cine	Puno	4
Karen Ortega (KO)	General Producer of the AJAYU International Animation Festival	Puno	9
Rolando Salazar (RS)	Director of the OutFest Peru International LGBTIQ+ Film Festival	Lima	20
Samuel Urbina (SU) and Arturo Palacios (AP)	Director and Producer of the Piura Short Film Festival "Cine con Chifles" (Joint interview).	Piura	7
Sugey López (SL)	Director of the Cortos de Vista International Short Film Festival	Chiclayo (Lambayeque)	10
Paulo Puerta (PP)	Director of the International Peruvian Short Film Festival	Lambayeque	21
Carmen Vásquez Uriol (CV) and Adriana García (AG)	Director and General Producer of Atemporal - Itinerant Festival of Latin American Cinema (Joint interview)	Trujillo (La Libertad)	4
Miguel Apaza (MA)	Director of the Vertical 9:16 Film Festival	Arequipa	2
Karolay Ramírez (KR)	Director of the Áncash Film Festival	Ancash	4
Miguel Huamán Mateo (MH)	Director of the Render University Film Festival	Lima	7
Roger Neira (RN)	Artistic Director of the Latin American Film Festival in Native Languages	Trujillo	5

Source: Own elaboration

For the organization and writing of the results, the initials of the names and surnames of each interviewee have been added. The average years of experience of the participants is 8.2 years, as detailed in the previous table.

3   Results

3.1   Challenges and Sustainability Strategies

The sustainability of film festivals relies on consistent funding to support both competitive and educational activities offered in each event [29, 11, 30]. This responsibility is crucial for the interviewed managers, who encounter challenges related to securing stable funding and efficiently managing available financial resources. "Each edition of the festival is different and has diverse needs, so it is always a challenge to adjust to the budget, which sometimes proves insufficient. Budget management is a crucial aspect in the festival's development." (AG).

To address this issue, some festivals implement self-financing strategies to obtain economic resources. Among these initiatives, the sale of merchandising and raffles stand out; as well as charging for the issuance of participation certificates – either digital

or physical-, crowdfunding, donations, and sponsorships. Although most of the educational activities are free, festivals such as Ajayu and 9:16 have established a cost for certain events, such as workshops and masterclasses respectively, demonstrating a specific self-financing approach in selected areas of their programming.

> "In the case of Ajayu, the 60,000 soles [obtained from the State] are not enough due to the substantial number of activities it conducts. Therefore, we must resort to other sources of financing, such as our own resources, workshops, alliances with embassies and sponsors to execute all the activities that the festival proposes" (KO).

> "In the last edition, some masterclasses had a cost. These covered topics such as character design, art direction or an approach to documentary filmmaking. All of them were virtual, conducted by specialists in the field and lasted approximately one hour" (MA).

According to most of the interviewed managers, the incentives provided by the Ministry of Culture through the Directorate of Audiovisual, Phonography and New Media (DAFO) are essential for the sustainability of several festivals. These incentives, such as the "Stimulus for Audience Development through Festivals and Gatherings", aim to boost audience development and promote participation in cultural events. In certain festivals, these subsidies allow for significant improvements in their technical infrastructure, such as the acquisition of inflatable movie screens, projectors, and sound equipment (MV). In other cases, it enables the expansion of educational proposals, as occurred at the Ancash Film Festival, where a new educational activity called the Ancashino Film Laboratory (KR) was introduced, or at the Cine con Chifles Festival, which expanded literacy activities by taking itinerant workshops to one school in Sechura (SU - AP). These initiatives, aimed at children and adolescents, included screenings, and teaching the theoretical foundations for the creation of audiovisual works.

> "The activity in schools is part of the project we presented to DAFO, with the aim of benefitting the community. Our project included visiting different schools in Piura, and thanks to winning the stimulus from the Ministry of Culture, we began the tour at a school in Sechura. We also plan to visit two more: one in Ayabaca and another in Tambo Grande" (SU).

In addition to the seeking funding at the national level, some festivals also turn to international funds to conduct their activities, highlighting the financial support provided by the British Council Peru, and the Onaway Foundation (RN). This contribution was crucial for the Latin American Film Festival in Native Languages to materialize the initiative of the "Floating Cinema", a boat powered by renewable energy intended to reach the most remote villages of the Peruvian Amazon to screen works in indigenous languages.

3.2   Partnerships for Education

Festival partnerships are strategic collaborations established with local entities, which, although not always involving direct financial support, provide resources to support the various activities of the event [31, 32].Withing the framework of this research, the

establishment of alliances with private and public entities emerges as a fundamental strategy for the sustainability and diversification of the educational proposals of the studied festivals. These partnerships not only strengthen financial support but also allow access to additional resources, such as suitable spaces for screenings and the participation of experts, enriching the quality of the activities developed.

As a specific strategy, festivals tend to establish alliances with collectives, film schools and audiovisual production companies at the national and international level, to facilitate workshops related to audiovisual work. These workshops address various topics, from mobile filmmaking to feminist criticism. The determining factor in forging these alliances is that both parties share similar values and principles in terms of the type of cinema they promote (MH - AG). The key also lies in the affinity of perspectives regarding the value of the presented works. Festivals with a university focus, such as Render and Cortos de Vista, have established strong links with both public and private academic institutions.These festivals use university spaces to facilitate educational activities aimed at the student community, organizing screenings and workshops focused on various audiovisual disciplines. This approach not only seeks to complement classroom learning but also provides opportunities to delve into the complexities of the cinema world.

> "Last year we organized a sort of film forum plus workshop, plus discussion in four universities: two in Chiclayo, one in Trujillo and one in Piura, where, apart from exhibiting short films, we gave talks on the different roles in the audiovisual field. For example, during the post-production session, a specialist explained the basic principles of editing using as examples some of the short films viewed that day. At USAT, which is a university here in Trujillo, we addressed the subject of directing actors. At the Señor de Sipan University in Chiclayo we talked about lighting and the role of the gaffer in production companies. We also held a talk in Trujillo about sound" (SL).

> "With the aim of reinventing itinerancy and expanding activities to different regions of the country, festivals forge alliances with film clubs, alternative cinemas, auditoriums, and cultural associations for the screening of films and discussions, "They are key allies that allow us to train regular attendees so that, when the festival arrives, they can travel and also consume the films we offer" (MV).

Another type of alliance is established with entities that provide significant benefits, such as discounts for their students and scholarships. For example, the North American Cultural Center (ICPNA) collaborates with the Ajayu Festival by providing spaces to screenings and offering its students discounts on workshops held during the event. Additionally, the French Embassy supports the festival by awarding a scholarship to study animation at the Gobelins Academy in France. This prize is granted to the winner of the "Fogón de Proyectos", an Ajayu training program.

Festivals also establish key partnerships with various private sector organizations, playing a crucial role in the execution of educational activities. In this context, partnerships with local hotels, restaurants and transportation services are relevant in offering significant discounts on accommodation and food, as well as facilitating the transportation of the festival team and participants, if required for training activities (KR). These partnerships are essential to ensure the economic viability of both participants and

festival collaborators.Additionally, alliances with local political authorities are sought to obtain spaces and logistical support to facilitate the realization of training activities. Regarding this issue, some managers have expressed difficulties for audiovisual literacy due to the lack of openness and interest from local and regional authorities "When you propose to make a film screening, sometimes they ask: 'What good is it to us?' You may encounter lack of interest or the perception that culture is not a priority" (KO), 'The main challenges are with local authorities, corruption, endless bureaucratic procedures and a lack of understanding about the importance of cultural promotion' (KR). According to the managers, these obstacles affect the realization of film activities in various locations, while the willingness and openness in private institutions demonstrate that commitment and effective collaboration can be more positive in some cases.

3.3   Integration of technologies and digital media for education

Various festivals have integrated new technologies and digital media as tools to support audiovisual literacy. Platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Facebook Live have been adapted for workshops, discussions, masterclasses, and labs. Although they were initially implemented to cope with restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, their use has persisted to the present day. In this context, the use of digital platforms emerges as an opportunity to enrich training and overcome geographical barriers, facilitating interaction between filmmakers and participants at national and international level, allowing greater participation and outreach, "We have had participants from Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia, who have attended virtually. We consider that holding face-to-face workshops for those who are not in Peruvian territory may be less practical" (EB), "Virtuality has allowed us to think about this, because in another context the festival would not have resources to reach films that are so present or in the climax of their distribution stage" (MH).

The selection of platforms, by some festivals, is adjusted to the preferences of their audience. The 9:16 festival, for example, has incorporated Twitch for the screening of short films in competition, dialogues with directors and talks. This is because the platform is popular among its audience, composed of young filmmakers.

On the other hand, some festivals have integrated activities related to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality to update their offer of literacy content, "It seems necessary to us to include them in our programming lineup. Therefore, we are aiming towards it, and we try to integrate these tools in a reflexive and educational way" (CV).

To address these technological themes, festivals also establish alliances with companies or organizations that already apply these technological innovations. For example, Atemporal, the Itinerant Festival of Latin American Cinema, partnered with the production company Chamana Films, enabling participants to experiment and design stories aligned with new technological trends. Similarly, the Ancash Film Festival, in collaboration with the Asimtria organization, held the "Suyuypichu" workshop for participants from the region to discover how to produce 360-degree audiovisual content.

Some of the interviewees express their interest in promoting training in new technologies (MV-RN-CV-AG). However, there is a deficit in finding specialists in these

topics or the necessary resources to implement these proposals, "We were thinking of holding a workshop on artificial intelligence, but the topic is still new, and we have not found a specialist at the national level. Unfortunately, budget restrictions prevented us from contacting international experts" (MV). Other managers resort to self-training to learn more about emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and in turn, incorporate them into the various activities of their festivals, "I am already exploring its use and it is likely that in the future we'll offer workshops to help people create short films using artificial intelligence exclusively, which is also fascinating" (EB).

However, these trends are not uniform because not all events choose to integrate the emerging technologies mentioned, "We haven't worked with more complex things yet, mixed arts, virtual reality and transmedia environments, because it does not go with our focus, but our work is aligned to the use of virtuality" (MH).

Other managers take an intermediate position and point out that the inclusion of such technologies depends on each festival (PP-SL). They also highlight the challenges that digital and virtual transformation implies for their festivals, emphasizing the need to adapt to different languages and digital platforms.

4   Discussion and Conclusions

As highlighted in Peña's research (2023), in this study, festival managers face a shortage of resources to meet the financial needs of their events. Consequently, they employ various strategies to secure the necessary funds to execute their activities. These strategies include forming alliances with entities from both the public and private sectors to obtain resources through the provision of services and infrastructure, as well as direct economic incentives provided by the State (Bonet and Schargorodsky, 2011; Peirano, 2021). As a differential comparison with previous literature, the results of this study show that most Peruvian festival managers are resorting to self-financing strategies such as the sale of merchandising, raffles and crowdfunding to supplement their budgets. This underscores the importance of diversifying sources of income and how funding strategies are adapted according to the context and specific needs of each festival, considering the cultural, geographic, and economic diversity of Peru, factors that influence the realization of these events.

The research highlights what Calderón (2020) points out about partnerships. Collaboration with the private sector allows film festivals to have greater flexibility to execute innovative ideas and adapt to new industry trends and audience preferences. The findings reveal that festivals are adopting strategies to educate on emerging technologies, such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence, in the audiovisual field. However, some managers face challenges such as a shortage of specialists, technical and financial resources to implement these initiatives.

Given its qualitative nature, this research inherently has limitations, and therefore, the results of the sample cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, these findings can serve as a starting point for further research. Consequently, the importance of delving into the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality, in film festivals is emphasized. It is necessary to investigate how these events can leverage

these technologies to enhance their programming and to effectively incorporate them as themes within audiovisual literacy activities. Additionally, it is suggested to examine the effectiveness of the various self-financing strategies found in this study, such as crowdfunding, merchandising sales, and charging for workshops and masterclass registration. This would enable the evaluation of how these tactics impact both the accessibility and financial viability of each festival. Hence, new questions arise that can guide future research: How can festival organizers use this information to improve their events? What strategies could be replicated in other cultural or geographic contexts? These questions need to be investigated to enrich studies on audiovisual literacy and Film Festival Studies.

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