

Literary festivals: Digital technology and sustainability

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Abstract

This study focuses on the importance of digital technology for literary festivals, examining the international dimension of these events, which has been significantly enhanced in recent years. Literary festivals have evolved into international platforms for the interaction of writers and readers from different corners of the world, offering unique opportunities for the dissemination of literature and poetry. The digital transition and the integration of new technologies have led to the creation of hybrid festivals, combining the physical and digital worlds. This allows people from different countries to participate and interact, overcoming geographical limitations and promoting international cooperation.

Furthermore, sustainability and social responsibility are fundamental elements for contemporary literary festivals, which adopt practices that enhance sustainable development and social inclusion. The connection between literature and the new technologies and social challenges of today offers new perspectives for understanding and promoting literature. The festivals incorporate educational activities and interactive programmes that encourage young people's participation, fostering their love of literature and enhancing their understanding of cultural heritage in a contemporary context.

Keywords: Literary Festivals; Digital Technology; Sustainability; Literature Festivals; Digital Technology; Sustainability

1 Introduction

The promotion of literary festivals has evolved rapidly, utilizing modern marketing tools. Digital communication through official websites, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and live streaming platforms enhance audience awareness, attracting international attention (Weber, 2018). Partnerships with cultural institutions and media outlets such as publishers, booksellers and journalists help to promote festivals and the new books presented, creating a multifaceted network of information and advertising (Hoppen et al., 2014). The creation of multimedia content, such as videos, podcasts and online interviews with authors, enhances the overall experience and makes the festival attractive to audiences seeking contemporary ways of engaging (Roach, 2024).

The use of technology is a key factor in the interactivity between festivals and audiences. Websites provide information about the programme, tickets and side events, often with the possibility of online booking. Social networks, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, allow for constant updates, live streaming of events and direct interaction with participants (Driscoll, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to hybrid forms of organizing, moving much of the program online (Throsby et al., 2022). The ability to attend remotely significantly increases accessibility, allowing international audiences to participate without geographical restrictions (Weber, 2018).

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Strategically targeting different audience groups is critical to the success of a literary festival. Students and literary communities are often a key audience, with many festivals offering special programs or free admission to encourage the younger generation to develop a love of literature (Weber, 2018). At the same time, tourists are an important group, as the association of festivals with cultural tours and culinary experiences attracts visitors who wish to combine travel with cultural activities (Hoppen et al., 2014). This strategy enhances the tourism image of the region and offers significant benefits to local businesses.

2 Literary festivals as a source of attraction

Literary tourism is significantly promoted through literary festivals, which aim to disseminate the works of local and foreign authors, poets and writers to the general public. Their main aim is to inform the public about literature and the arts in general, enhancing people's contact with the history of literature and contemporary developments in this field. In particular, international festivals offer participants the opportunity to meet authors, learn about their work and exchange views, thus experiencing the interaction of different cultures (Manola, & Angelopoulos, 2020) (Manola, & Koltsikoglou, 2020)

Many festivals focus on 'promoting' contemporary writers, as opposed to others that focus on analysing the works of great writers from earlier times. This link between literary tourism and festivals began to be studied intensively in the 1970s (Rossetti & Quinn 2019). In Greece, tourists have the opportunity to discover the work of great writers through international festivals, such as the International Poetry Festival in Athens and other festivals organized in different regions, such as the Ammos Festival, LEA, Athens Con, Tinos International Festival and Thessaloniki International Book Fair (Manola 2019). (Dychkovskyy, and Ivanov, 2020)

Although literary festivals are not primarily aimed at attracting tourists, they are closely linked to tourism, in terms of a 'niche' market that is mainly targeted at middle-aged, female readers who are avid readers and are often professionally involved in literature (Rossetti & Quinn 2019).

The growth of literary tourism in recent years highlights the potential of literary festivals in boosting the tourist flow. Their organization in areas of cultural interest attracts not only literature lovers, but also a general public, contributing to the economic and cultural development of the region. Cultural tourism, as Polyzoidou (2018) states, focuses on getting to know the local cultural heritage, arts and lifestyle, and literary festivals are perfectly integrated in this context, linking local history and literary works with natural and historical sites. (Georgoula, and Terkenli, 2017) Manola, & Gioka, 2021) (Manola et al., 2022a)

Tourists interested in literary festivals often seek to experience the cultural and literary 'roots' of the region, as Manola (2019) observes. Examples such as Papadiamantis' route to Athens or literary tours in Edinburgh offer a unique experience where literature is combined with the natural and historical places that inspired it (Anagnostou, 2018). Thus, literary festivals are evolving into tourist attractions, creating new opportunities for tourism professionals such as hoteliers, restaurateurs and traders of cultural products (Hoppen et al., 2014) (Manola et al., 2023b)

The economic activity generated around literary festivals directly benefits many local businesses, such as:

- 1. Hotels and accommodation: Increased footfall during festivals creates a greater demand for accommodation. This provides an incentive to improve services and often leads to the creation of new hotels (Roach, 2024).
- 2. Food and gastronomy: Visitors usually combine cultural events with local cuisine, enhancing restaurants, taverns and local markets (Hoppen et al., 2014).
- 3. Transportation and tour operators: Increased visitor traffic, especially those coming from abroad, is boosting transportation services and tour operators, and creating new opportunities for developing travel packages and tours (Weber, 2018).

- Collaboration with local businesses is vital for the successful organisation of festivals. This interaction enhances the sustainability of both the festivals and the businesses, while strengthening the local economy (Anagnostou, 2018). (Manola et al., 2022b) (Manola et al., 2023a)

3 Literary festival of Tinos

In Greece, the International Literary Festival of Tinos (ILFT) celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, continuing to attract distinguished writers from Greece and abroad. The events take place in the heart of Tinos, with writers from six different countries participating in a rich programme full of words, images, ideas and meanings.

The festival celebrates this year with several innovative additions, such as the establishment of an annual award for distinguished personalities of Greek letters, poetry film screenings, art exhibitions, music nights and a variety of artistic activities that will run throughout the year.

The DLFT continues to grow, strengthening its links with the local community and economy of Tinos, while promoting cultural entertainment and the well-being of both residents and visitors to the island. The event is supported by the South Aegean Region, the Municipality of Tinos, the Holy Foundation of Panagia Evangelistria and the Tinian Culture Foundation. (Manola 2019)

Since its launch in 2010, the festival has managed to establish itself as an annual literary celebration with an international character. So far, writers from 31 countries have participated. This year, the program is being extended by an extra day, emphasizing the island's literary potential, as well as offering more author presentations and side events.

It is planned to develop cultural and educational activities throughout the year, in cooperation with Greek and foreign institutions, with the aim of strengthening literature and the arts on the island.

Tinos, with its rich cultural heritage, welcomes the festival and its visitors, offering a special space for the cultivation of arts and literature (Manola & Teliopoulou, 2021) (Manola, 2020),

4 International dimension of literary festivals

Literary festivals are not only limited to the local level. Through international collaborations and showcasing writers from all over the world, they promote literature as a global commodity, bridging cultural borders. Some festivals, such as the Hay Festival, which began in Wales and has grown to international versions in Colombia, Mexico and Spain, offer a space to showcase both well-known and new, marginalised literary voices (Hoppen et al., 2014). (Søndergaard, 2021)

Moreover, the spread of festivals to international markets promotes the translation and release of books in multiple languages, facilitating the global dissemination of literature and creating new markets for publishing houses (Ferenc, 2016)

Literary festivals also have the potential to act as tools of cultural diplomacy, enhancing cross-cultural understanding through discussions on social and political issues. Through participation in international initiatives such as UNESCO's Cities of Literature programme, festivals significantly contribute to the promotion of literary heritage, while, simultaneously, attracting wider sources of funding and international recognition (Roach, 2024).

Collaboration with international publishing houses is equally important, as it provides a platform to promote new authors and translated works, while enhancing cross-cultural communication and the extroversion of literature (O'Sullivan and Jackson, 2002)

5 Financing and economic viability

The sustainability challenges facing literary festivals determine their ability to continue to exist and evolve in an ever-changing cultural environment. The contemporary cultural sector is characterized by an increased supply of events and by the complexity of the demands of audiences seeking quality and innovative experiences. In this context, the main challenges that emerge include securing stable funding, dealing with competition and integrating new technologies. (Maniou,2023), (Maniou & Mitoula, 2024)

Securing stable sources of funding is essential for the long-term sustainability of festivals, which typically rely on a complex mix of financial resources, such as private sponsorships, tickets from the public and public grants (Roach, 2024). However, this balance is vulnerable to economic fluctuations and budgetary constraints. Reliance on

sponsorships is a challenge as companies invest in culture in order to enhance their corporate profile through social responsibility (Weber, 2014).

At the same time, public bodies, especially for smaller festivals, often assume a key role in funding, as the difficulties in finding private sponsorship for local or small-scale events are significant (Ferreira & Villares, 2022). Transparency in resource management and enhancing the reputation of the festival as a public good can increase the confidence of government agencies and private sponsors, while diversity in funding will contribute to stability. (Maniou et al., 2024)

The international and national expansion of literary festivals creates increased competition to attract authors, publishers and audiences. Larger festivals typically have higher budgets and greater visibility, which allows them to attract more recognized authors and greater media coverage (Hoppen et al., 2014). Smaller festivals often struggle to stand out, particularly in a saturated cultural landscape.

An effective strategy to address this competition is to differentiate through local identity and authenticity. Connecting with local history, gastronomy and cultural heritage enhances a sense of uniqueness and attracts local and international audiences seeking new experiences (Manola, 2019). Creating partnerships between festivals and sharing knowledge and expertise can also enhance the overall impact and sustainability of the industry, maintaining a healthy competition (Roach, 2024)

6 New technologies - hybrid festivals

The speed at which new technologies are evolving has a direct impact on the cultural sector, including literary festivals. The need to adapt to new technologies is urgent, as they offer new ways for audiences to access and interact with literature. Digital platforms and social networks allow reaching a global audience, facilitating the dissemination of events and attracting participants from all over the world.

In addition, online events and hybrid events can offer solutions in cases of limited budgets or physical distances, while technology also contributes to the development of innovative forms of participation, such as the use of virtual reality to create unique literary experiences (Ferreira & Villares, 2022).

Technological advances and the widespread use of digital media have influenced the way in which audiences interact with cultural events, including literary festivals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many festivals adopted digital forms of presentation, such as livestreaming events, virtual meetings with authors, and digital creative writing workshops, in order to remain active and reach their audiences (Throsby et al., 2022).

This shift to digital and hybrid formats has not just been a temporary solution, but seems to be establishing itself as a new normal for literary festivals. Organizers are now realizing that the use of digital tools, such as livestreaming platforms, forum discussions or virtual tours of literary landscapes, offer the potential to attract a wider audience. Thus, participants from anywhere in the world can take part, extending the reach and impact of festivals beyond local or national boundaries.

However, the adoption of these digital formats requires investment in technological infrastructure, skilled staff, and careful planning to maintain the high quality of events. Festivals are also required to strike a balance between the physical and digital worlds, ensuring that both formats offer memorable experiences for participants.

7 Sustainability and social responsibility

The concept of sustainability is becoming increasingly important in the planning and implementation of literary festivals. Sustainability concerns both the economic dimension, aiming at the long-term survival of festivals, and the environmental and social dimension. Festivals should operate in ways that respect the environment and strengthen local communities without putting a burden on the areas where they are hosted.

Incorporating environmentally friendly practices such as reducing waste, using renewable energy sources and promoting sustainable transport for participants are just a few examples of the challenges faced by organizers. Furthermore, securing funding from diverse sources such as sponsorships, government grants are crucial for the long-term economic sustainability of festivals (Manola, 2020)

Linking literary festivals to local communities is also important as festivals may serve as platforms for the promotion of local cultural heritage. Reliance on sponsorships is a challenge as companies invest in culture in order to enhance their corporate profile through social responsibility (Weber, 2014).

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Linking literary festivals to local communities is also important as festivals can act as platforms for the promotion of local cultural heritage. This link with the local community can enhance participation and support from the public, making festivals more resilient and successful.

7.1 Educational Activities and Attracting Young Generations

The long-term survival of literary festivals depends on their ability to inspire and encourage the participation of younger generations. Educational activities aimed at children, adolescents and students are a foundation for the creation of new readers and writers. Many festivals offer writing competitions, creative writing workshops and seminars, giving young people the opportunity to engage with literature in a creative and interactive way (Driscoll, 2015).

The focus on children's and young adult literature broadens the social footprint of the festivals, attracting families and introducing literature into their daily activities. In this way, festivals are not just cultural events but become part of an ongoing educational process that fosters a love of reading and writing in different age groups (Ferreira & Villares, 2022).

Concluding this chapter, we emphasize the significance of all digital technologies in all domains of education and training, which is highly effective and productive and facilitates and improves assessment, intervention, and educational procedures via mobile devices that bring educational activities everywhere [27-29], various ICTs applications that are the main supporters of education [30-43], and AI, STEM, and ROBOTICS that raise educational procedures to new performance levers [44-49]. Additionally, the development and integration of ICTs with theories and models of metacognition, mindfulness, meditation, and the cultivation of emotional intelligence [50-61], accelerates and improves the educational practices and results.

7.2 Linking Literature with Technology and Contemporary Society

Contemporary society is characterized by rapid technological changes and new social issues, which literary festivals are called upon to incorporate in their activities. Organisers can introduce themes around issues such as climate change, human rights, or artificial intelligence, engaging writers, researchers and audiences in interdisciplinary discussions (Sapiro, 2022).

In addition, innovative forms of literary expression, such as e-books, podcasts, and interactive storytelling apps, create new opportunities for organizers to reach their audiences. Festivals can offer exhibitions and workshops that explore these forms, enabling audiences to experience literature in more contemporary and interactive forms (Hoppen et al., 2014).

Linking literature with other art forms or cultural events - such as technology or ecology festivals - helps to create multidimensional experiences for audiences. These initiatives are more responsive to the needs and interests of contemporary, multicultural audiences, enhancing the impact of festivals internationally (Weber, 2018).

The future evolution of literary festivals will be determined by their ability to adapt to an ever-changing environment, combining innovation with the preservation of their cultural heritage

8 Research-methodology

The questionnaire combines closed-ended questions, which facilitate statistical analysis, and open-ended questions, which allow for the collection of qualitative data. Data collection was conducted at the Little Tree Books & Coffee book café, a venue strategically chosen due to the public's interest in literature. The survey sample consisted of 130 participants with varying levels of participation in cultural events. Descriptive statistical methods were used to analyze the data, including the presentation of quantitative data and the processing of qualitative responses. In addition, the Two-Step Clustering method was applied to categorize the participants. The largest percentage was female 65%, in terms of age 80% were in the age group 50 to 70 the educational level was majority high school and university graduates and their income was majority 70% 15-20,000 per year.

8.1 Question 1. Chart 1. How important do you believe state funding is for organizing festivals?

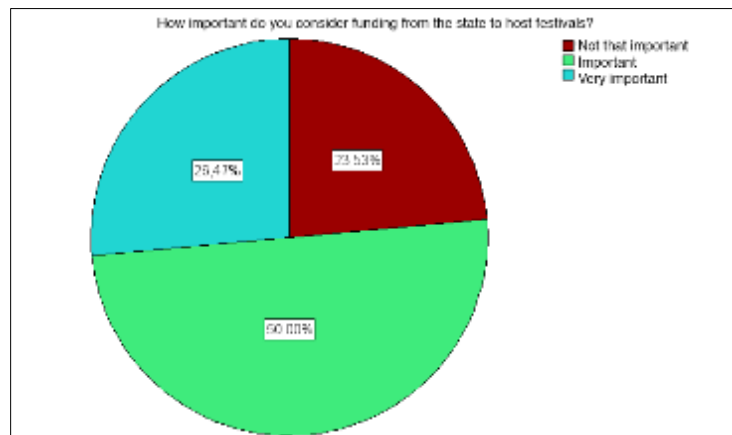


Figure 1 How important do you believe state funding is for organizing festivals?

8.2 Question 2. Chart 2. Would you travel to another country to attend a literary festival?

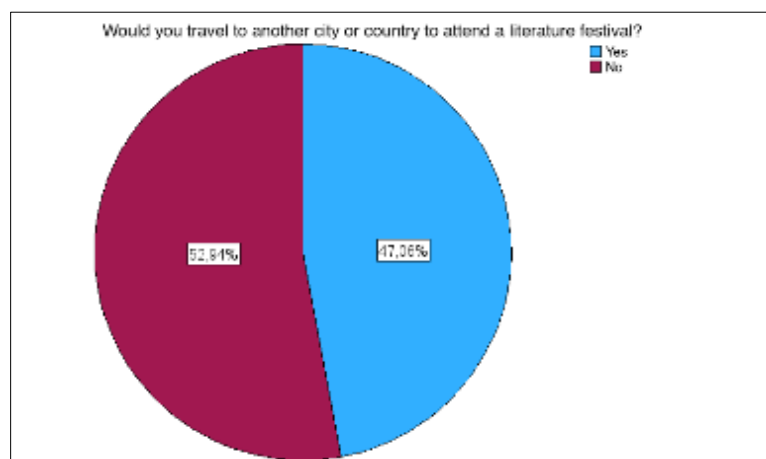


Figure 2 Would you travel to another country to attend a literary festival?

8.3 Question 3. Chart 3. Would you be interested in attending a literary festival online?

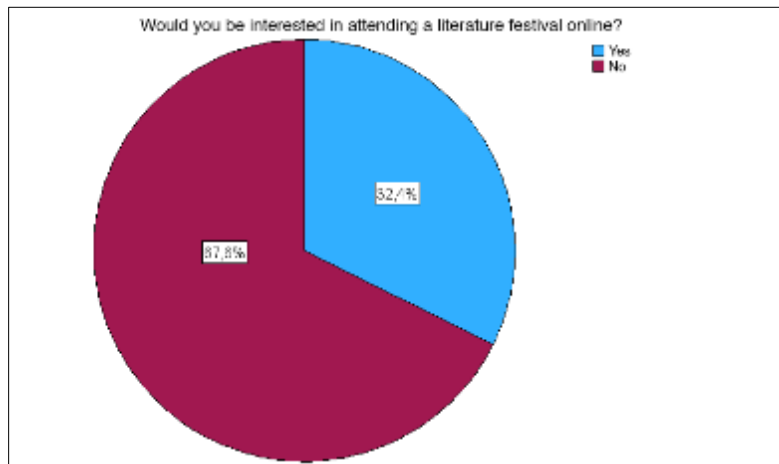


Figure 3 Would you be interested in attending a literary festival online?

8.4 Question 4. Chart 4. Do you believe that literature can be an important element of a country's policy?

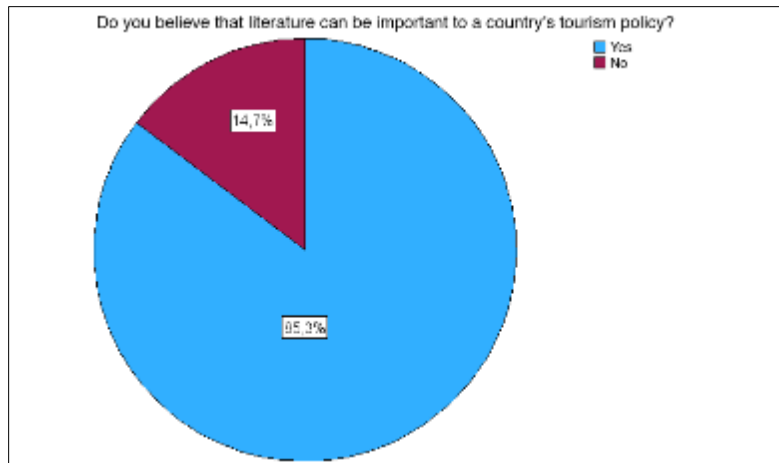


Figure 4 Do you believe that literature can be an important element of a country's policy?

8.5 Question 5. Chart 5. Do you think festivals should invest in digital formats (e.g., online activities)?

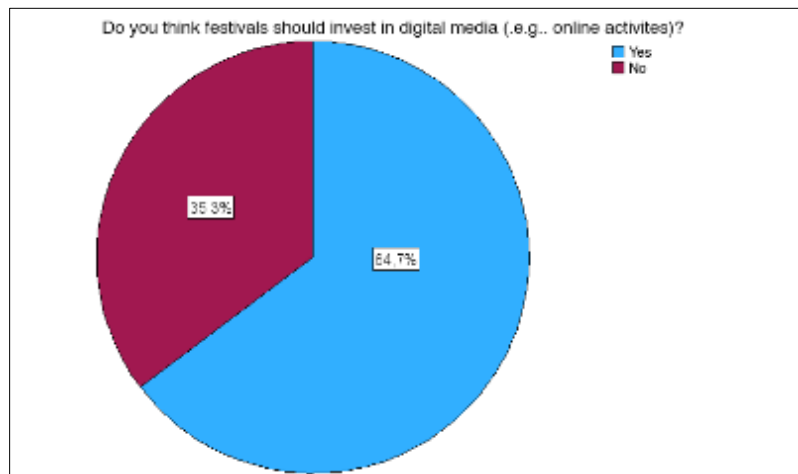


Figure 5 Do you think festivals should invest in digital formats (e.g., online activities)?

9 Conclusions

The organization of literary festivals in areas of cultural and historical interest contributes to boosting tourism and the economic and cultural development of these regions. In Greece, a characteristic example of this trend is the Tinos Festival, which combines literature with the local cultural environment, attracting visitors from all over the world and highlighting the relationship between literature and cultural heritage.

The sustainability challenges faced by literary festivals are multidimensional and require strategies that include securing stable funding, addressing competition, and adopting new technologies. Through adaptation to new conditions and the development of partnerships, festivals can ensure their long-term sustainability and continue to contribute to cultural and economic growth both locally and internationally.

The future evolution of literary festivals will be shaped by their adaptation to a world that is constantly changing due to technological progress and social shifts. Expanding the audience and leveraging new technologies are central strategies, as organizers seek ways to attract both traditional and new participants. The hybrid format of events —combining physical and digital presence— is expected to become established, allowing festivals to reach audiences from every corner of the world.

Sustainability, not only economic but also environmental, will be a key factor for the success of festivals. The adoption of environmentally friendly practices and strengthening the relationship with local communities will contribute to their long-term survival.

At the same time, the inclusion of educational activities for children and young people will ensure the future development of festivals, fostering a love of literature in new generations. Literary festivals will continue to evolve as meeting places for literature, technology, and contemporary social challenges, providing opportunities for dialogue and creativity on a multidimensional level.

The future development of literary festivals seems likely to be influenced by various factors related to technological advances, social changes, and the need for economic and environmental sustainability. Literary festivals, traditionally based on the physical presence of authors, readers, and audiences, have begun to transform, adopting hybrid and digital forms in order to keep pace with the new demands of the times.

Compliance with ethical standards

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The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

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