

CREATIVE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Sector focus



Festivals

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Ajuntament de
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 Barcelona
Activa

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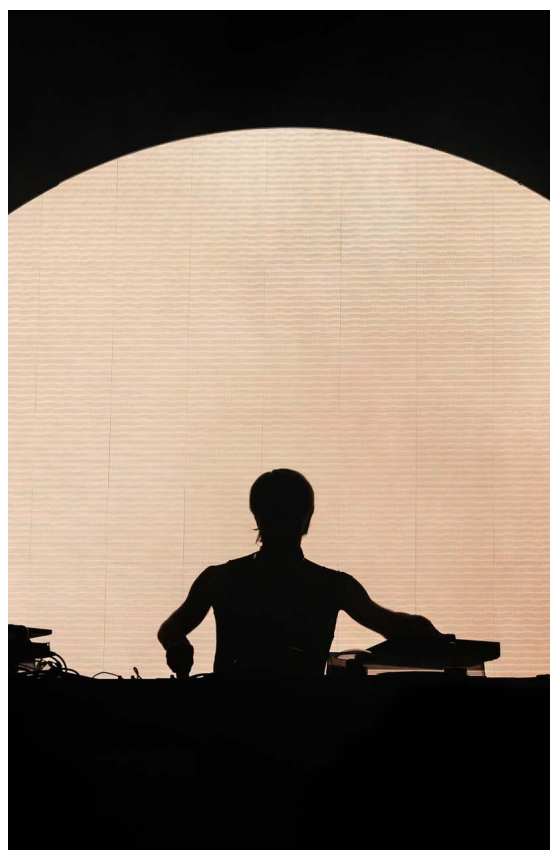


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Festivals, the first-person cultural experience

Festivals are cultural events, a source of vitality and artistic innovation with a clear impact on the public and cultural sphere. These are manifestations that become **transformative and exchange agents** that can be strategic drivers for mobilising new audiences, facilitating new alliances with stakeholders and creating spaces for intercultural dialogue and exchange. A festival is also a showcase of the latest trends in a specific disciplinary field, where companies can detect new interesting movements and meet new groups or companies to establish connections with.

However, festivals are events that go beyond creative encounters, as they promote the territory where they are located and help to make it more visible. An example might be the [International Festival of Plassas Circ Cric](#) in Sant Esteve de Palautordera or, in the case of cinema, the [Sitges Film Festival](#). In this sense, festivals become a **tool for economic and cultural revival** of many cities, towns and villages.



The festival culture in Barcelona

There is a city festival model that began to appear in Barcelona in the early 1990s, permeating environments that had not been designed to host music, such as the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB), a museum where the first editions of the [Sónar festival](#) were held. These **festivals are characterised by the fact that they take place in the city**, and they became popular at the very moment that worldwide music festivals that were based on the hippy festival model, such as [Woodstock](#), were breaking out: the [Doctor Music Festival](#) in Escararre, or those currently held at the Isle of Wight in the United Kingdom, the [Roskilde](#) in Denmark, the [Benicàssim International Festival](#) or [Canet Rock](#) here in Catalonia. These festivals stood out because they offered camping, as they took place in unurbanised spaces, on the beach or in the middle of nature. They went on for 3 days with activities, concerts, etc. and then, when the festival finished, they were dismantled and disappeared.

Urban festivals create proposals for each stage according to the moment of the day and **their content allows the audience to experience relevant cultural experiences**. In the case of Barcelona, the festival culture is clearly urban (Sónar, Primavera Sound, BAM, etc.).

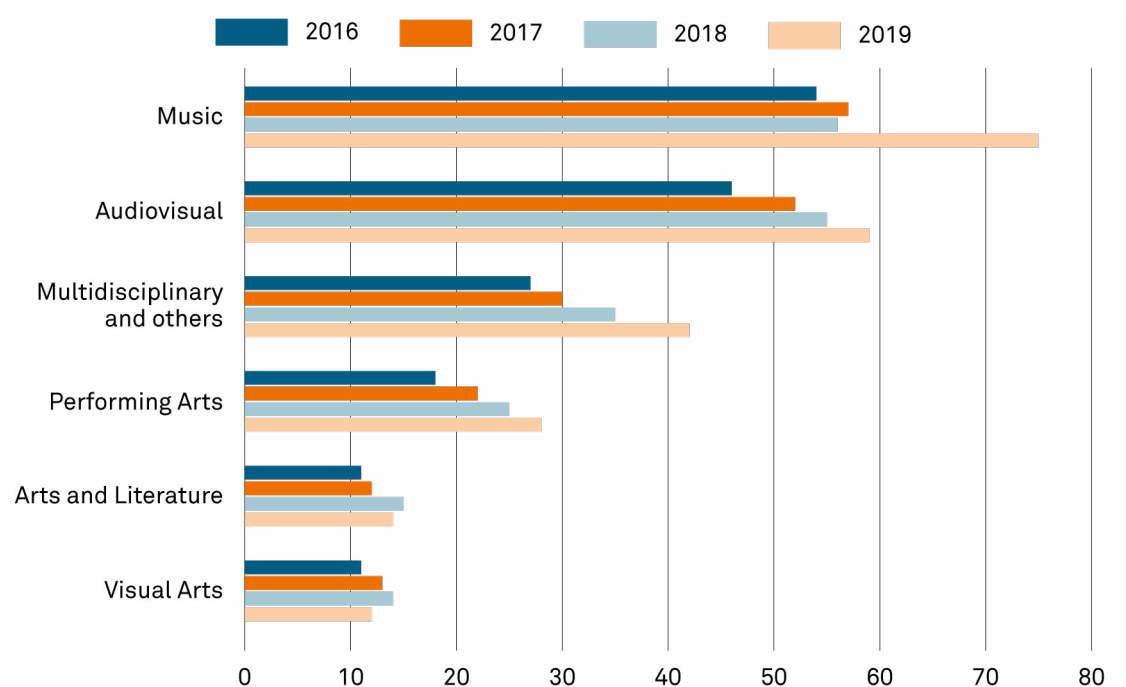
These kind of festivals refer us to a specific lifestyle, and they stand out for the quality of their content and for a commitment to contemporariness and innovation, as well as for a determined international vocation. It could be said that **festivals have largely shaped the cultural vitality of Barcelona**. In many cases, they are international benchmark events, but the city also hosts initiatives that, although targeted at more minority audiences, are samples of the most emerging and unique creativity. **All these events articulate a high-quality cultural grid** that complements the activity of the city's great cultural facilities.

This vitality of Barcelona results in the constant emergence of new initiatives, new festivals that fill the city's cultural landscape. This is why it is currently difficult to understand the cultural production unleashed by the existence of festivals, in that they constitute the state of innovation and creativity of the cultural scene.

Festivals in Barcelona, some data

Barcelona hosts around **200 cultural festivals of all artistic disciplines annually**. It is a sector of great vitality, but also of enormous diversity, with very different proposals in terms of size, duration or impact.

Figure 1. Evolution of the number of festivals held in Barcelona (2016-2019)



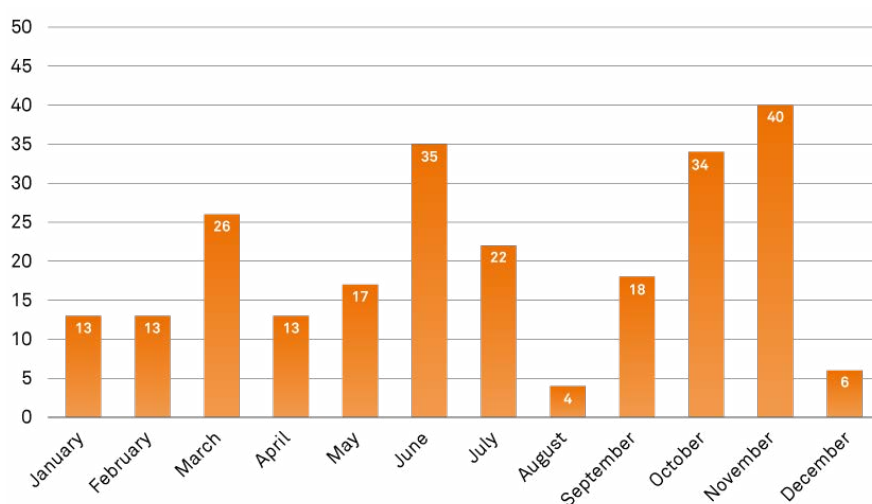
Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data by Observatori de Dades Culturals. Institute of Culture. Barcelona City Council.

The impact of festivals on employment

The proliferation of festivals has led to an increasing professionalisation of these events. However, it is also important to emphasise that this sector is characterised by a **high degree of temporality and seasonality in employment**. For this reason, most professionals work at many different festivals in order to be able to stay busy for much of the year. In this regard, they can be hired by event-organisation companies that are constantly organising festivals, although there are also many self-employed professionals, who bill per project.

In the case of Barcelona, **festivals are held mainly in spring and autumn**.

Figure 2. Number festivals and fairs held in Barcelona (2019)



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data by Open Data Bcn – Open data service by the Barcelona City Council

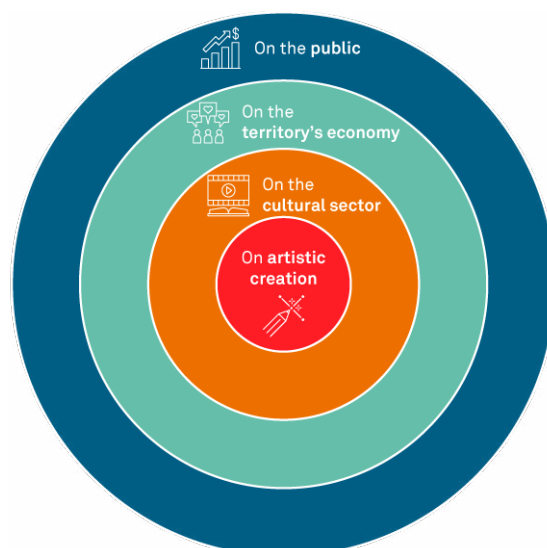
In any case, there is no doubt that festivals have an economic impact on the territory and on employment, and the festivals themselves highlight these impacts. For example, the [Castell de Peralada Festival](#) **measured the economic impact that it generates**. They estimated having contributed with 12.9 million € to the Catalan GDP in 2018, in which the festival attracted a total of 26,500 viewers, and the development of the festival contributes to the maintenance of 328 annual jobs.

However, there are also those who have been concerned, not only about the economic impact of festivals, but also about the **social return they generate around it**. One example is the Sónar case. A festival that has since 2013 works in the field of **entrepreneurship, ideas and emerging companies** through [Sónar +D](#). This initiative explores how creativity modifies our present and imagines new futures, in collaboration with artists, researchers, scientists, technologists, entrepreneurs, makers, hackers, etc. Another example would be the [Cruïlla Festival](#), which seeks a **social and environmental impact** and, therefore, all companies they work with are local, with the exception of international artists and their teams.

The impacts of a festival could resemble **concentric circles**.

- The first circle would refer to **artistic creation in itself**, as festivals are an **artists' meeting**, a place where formats, ideas, exhibits, etc. are added, and that allows artists to know and learn from each other's creations.
- The second circle of impacts would be on the **cultural sector**, that is to say, on the people making the festival possible, creating employment opportunities for production, programming, marketing, communication, sponsorship, technical personnel, etc.
- The next concentric circle is the **economic impact**, which refers to everything that happens in the geographic environment around the festival: restaurants, accommodation, shops, tourism, mobility and logistics, etc.

Figure 3. The impacts of a festival on its surroundings



Source: Prepared by the authors

Often, in parallel to large festivals, **initiatives aligned with the cultural themes of the event** and addressed to the same target audience arise: parties held during the festival week or city concert halls that organise their programming in harmony with the festival's musical proposal.

- The last circle to be highlighted is the impact on the **audience**, because the **audience also generates its own concentric waves**. A festival generates a mouth-ear effect — both in-person and through social media— that will attract new audiences for the following editions.

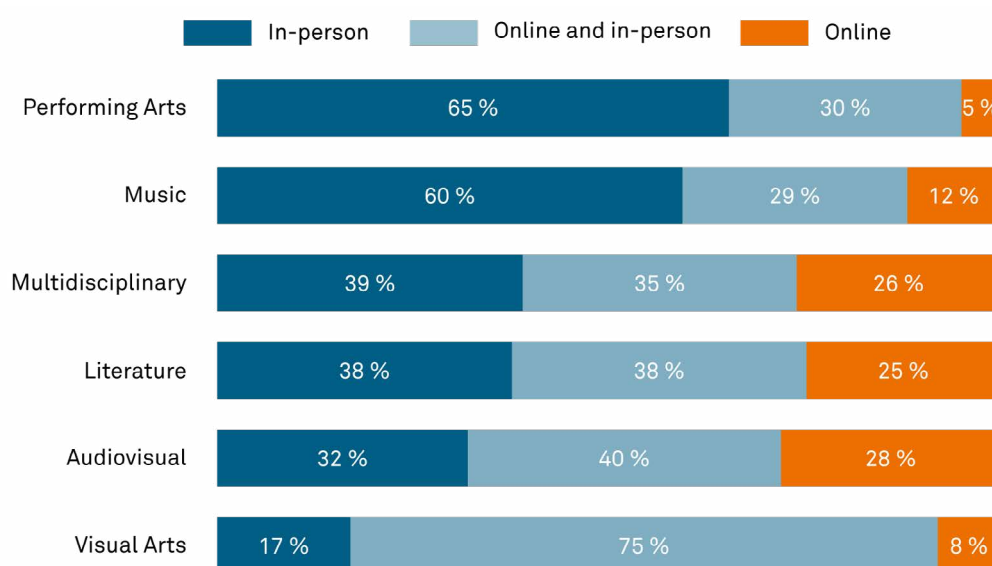


Professional profiles at festivals

Festivals have a wide variety of providers performing different tasks linked to the world of management and production of live shows. In the wake of the Covid-19 two-year crisis (2020-2021), **the sector requires new ways of doing**. For example, many festivals during the pandemic have been ‘digitalised’, and **adaptation to new digital formats** entails a greater ability to rethink what is done and to offer it in a different way.

In 2020, 160 festivals were held in Barcelona, which had to adapt the exhibition format depending on the time of the year and its discipline:

Figure 4. Format of the festivals held in Barcelona in 2020



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data by the Observatori de Dades Culturals. Institute of Culture. Barcelona City Council.

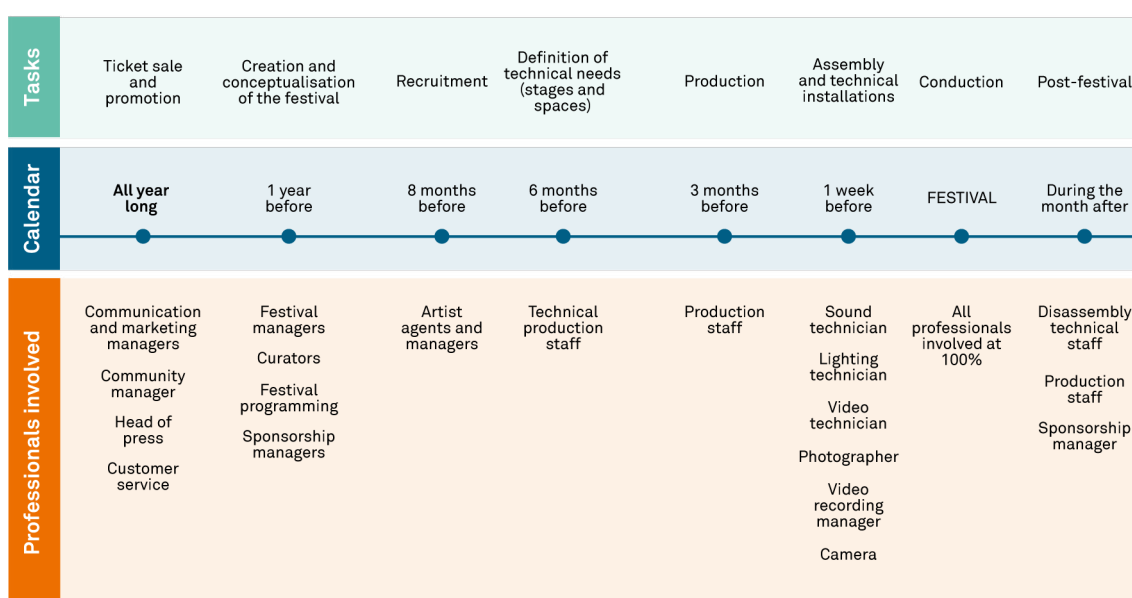
This digitisation —which in some cases involved adopting **hybrid formats**— actually meant adopting technologies that, rather than being new, had no chance of use. Today, **festivals have both the physical and the virtual aspect**, but, in order for this virtual version to be of quality and to ensure the festival’s cultural experience, new elements need to be incorporated into stages, such as screens or systems to interact with the public in the audiovisual and online environment.

In this line, we should also mention more innovative formats such as the **metaverse**, which some festivals have already adopted to make it the virtual environment in which to generate interaction with the audience. Similarly, the event’s website can be converted into a meeting place and space from which to interact and create, developing a format that had hitherto not been initially considered in the conceptualisation of the festival.

Therefore, festivals increasingly require **professionals dedicated to event management with a broad 360-degree vision**, able to contextualise management strategy in a local environment and at the same time collaborate in networking at an international level. Thus, like other management professionals, they will increasingly need to develop skills such as **taking initiative in the resolution of incidents, flexibility and management of change, creativity, planning and organisation**, among others.

Different professionals can be identified in the process of organising a festival depending on the time they participate.

Figura 5. Stages of festival organisation and professional profiles involved



Source: Prepared by the authors

We can also identify **large groups of activities and tasks in the organisation of a festival** and the main professionals involved:

Assembly and disassembly

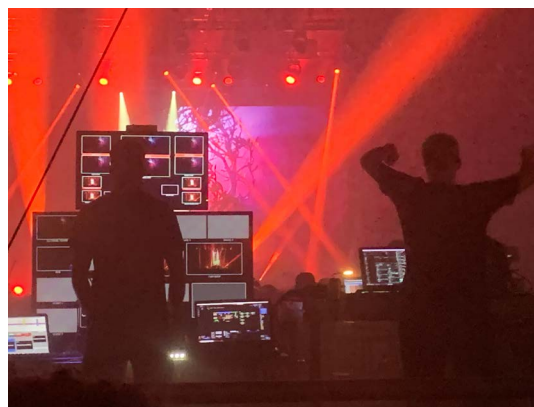
- **Hands:** loading and unloading, moving materials, assembling technical equipment, decorative equipment and furniture.
- **Basic and superior assistants:** multi-purpose personnel assisting in the various machine handling tasks and taking responsibility for the production of the event.
- **Works in height with scaffolding:** specialised equipment and equipped for mounting scenarios, towers, stands, carp or other structures requiring work in height.
- **Image and sound technician:** professionals who deal with the assembly of equipment and manage sound and image systems in the production of the event.
- **Lighting technician:** specialised professionals responsible for handling tracking cannons or lighting focus.

- **Camera operator:** technical professional for video recording responsible for selecting and mounting the most suitable equipment and making adjustments to the infrastructure of stages, if applicable.
- **Woodwork:** professionals who assemble stands and/or decorated for any type of event.
- **Scene shifter:** staff of builders or operators of scenic machinery, stage and curtain-up of a theatre or similar shows
- **Machinery operator:** professional dedicated to operations requiring elevator carts, vertical or articulated platforms.
- **Logistic services:** professionals involved in the assembly and disassembly of the event, adapting to the characteristics and peculiarities of a space (auditoriums, museums, cultural centres, conference rooms, etc.).



Production and technical staff

- **Cultural manager:** is in charge of organising the offer of cultural and artistic activities within its field of work (sectoral and/or territorial).
- **Production services:** professionals assisting the execution of work related to the production and organisation of the event.
- **Translator:** indispensable roles when an event has international artists and technical teams.
- **Production secretariat:** administrative management of the different aspects of a production, from organising the travels of artists to management in collaboration with the technical team.
- **Stage manager:** charged with coordinating in and out of the stage.
- **Costume services:** professionals in charge of the costume of artists. They also assist artists in changing costumes.
- **Assistance services:** professionals that accompany and assist artists or other people linked to the event.
- **Sound services, lighting and image:** technical personnel, already mentioned in the assembly. But in this case, they perform technical tasks in the production of the technical event. **Image and sound technician**, **Lighting technician** and **Camera operator**.



Customer service

- **Customer service manager:** personnel with knowledge of languages to attend to the public in any kind of event.
- **Blocking and ticketing service:** responsible for ticket sales, handing invitations and following up on the event's guest list.
- **Usher:** At many events it may be necessary to inform, direct, and accommodate the public.
- **Security services:** professionals dedicated to access control and security supervision in scenarios and/or in installed stage infrastructures, etc.

Advertising and Public relations

- **Advertising services:** they are in charge of designing and implementing the event's marketing and communication plan, both online and offline. Also, they are dedicated to designing strategies for recruitment and creating new audiences.
- **Communication and press team:** they coordinate the people responsible for social media, web development, promotional materials design, SEO optimisation, SEM, etc.
- **Public relations services:** professionals who deal with the fidelity of the audience through the management of ticketing databases, through Big Data analytics tools.
- **Artists and show managers:** a professional profile that combines the skills of the marketing and public relations expert with a deep knowledge of the world of performing arts and entertainment in general.



Other services and occupations indirectly related to the organisation of a festival can be those linked to **hospitality activities**, such as **catering attendants**, **waiters**, **bar staff** and **cooking services**, **furniture assembly personnel**, **cleaning personnel**, **coordination managers** in charge of coordinating the activities held in parallel to the event, **protocol** if required, **volunteer management**, **festival sustainability measures**, **reference professionals for the fight against violence and/or sexual harassment**, etc.

In addition, the professional profiles of **festival directors** should also be mentioned, as well as the figure of the **commissioner** behind these events, which in most cases come from the artistic world and often remain in office for several years or editions. A leadership which, in most cases, is central to the festival's orientation towards one direction or another.

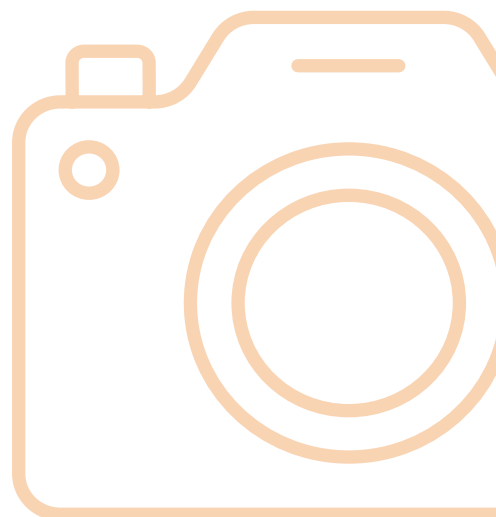
Festivals, focused

Festivals are events or artistic manifestations that generate economic, social, cultural, political and environmental impacts.

The most important thing in terms of employment, however, is the **cross-cutting nature** of festivals, in that they involve **professional profiles from various sectors and areas of economic activity**: from people engaged in the entertainment world and in creative and cultural industries, professionals in information and communication technologies or the mobility and logistics sector, to the whole range of management tasks in the organisation and business sector.

Festivals are a source of vitality: new initiatives are appearing in Barcelona -and in many other places- that continue to generate multiple impacts in the form of concentric circles, both locally and internationally. The sector is growing rapidly and finds itself in a **changing context** that requires rapid adaptation, a broad outlook in the direction and management of festivals, and working closely with the local environment while also maintaining the connection with international markets. This requires professional profiles capable of imagining, rethinking, redefining and designing **flexible festival models**, that incorporate **digitalisation** as a necessary condition from the conceptualisation stage, and who have key skills such as **agility of response** or **problem solving**.

In short, festivals look for artists who can attract and mobilise local and international audiences, but also the professional talent that makes them possible, occupations typical of the creative and cultural industry.



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