

## **Networking and audiovisual heritage in Ibero-American film festivals**

*Networking y patrimonio audiovisual  
en festivales de cine iberoamericanos*

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### **Abstract**

*Film festivals attract a diverse audience interested in the films being screened and the parallel activities offered. Additionally, these events perform various functions that support the development of the audiovisual sector. Therefore, the objective of this research is to examine the processes of networking and safeguarding of audiovisual heritage at some of the major Ibero-American film festivals. To achieve this, a qualitative approach was employed through semi-structure interviews with film journalists covering these events, as well as consultations with festival organizers. Among the main findings, it was discovered that festivals implicitly perform several functions that UNESCO identifies as part of the protection of audiovisual heritage. Furthermore, they promote various forms of interaction among different stakeholders in local and international audiovisual industries. Consequently, it is concluded that festivals facilitate in-person networking during the event itself, while virtual networking extends beyond the festival to maintain the relationships established or to collaborate on joint projects. These projects include initiatives related to the preservation of audiovisual heritage.*

### **Keywords**

*Audiovisual heritage, audiovisual networking, preservation, film festival.*

### **Resumen**

Los festivales de cine atraen a una diversidad de públicos interesados en las películas que serán exhibidas y en las actividades paralelas ofrecidas. Además, estos eventos realizan diversas funciones que apoyan en el desarrollo del sector audiovisual. Por ello, el objetivo de esta investigación es examinar los procesos de *networking* y la salvaguardia del patrimonio audiovisual en algunos de los principales festivales cinematográficos iberoamericanos. Para lograrlo, se empleó un enfoque cualitativo mediante la aplicación de entrevistas semiestructuradas a periodistas cinematográficos que cubren estos eventos, además de consultar a gestores de festivales. Entre los principales resultados se encontró que los festivales realizan, de manera implícita, varias de las funciones que la UNESCO determina como parte de la protección del patrimonio audiovisual. Además, promueven distintas formas de relacionamiento entre los diversos actores de las industrias audiovisuales locales e internacionales. Por lo tanto, se concluye que en los festivales se propicia el *networking* presencial, realizado durante el desarrollo del certamen, mientras que el virtual se extiende más allá del evento para continuar con las interrelaciones que surgieron y colaborar en proyectos en común. Entre estos proyectos, también se incluyen iniciativas relacionadas con la preservación del patrimonio audiovisual.

### **Palabras clave**

Patrimonio audiovisual, networking audiovisual, preservación, festival de cine.

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## **Introduction**

Film festivals are events that, in addition to contributing to the training of new generations of filmmakers, encourage encounters between specialized

and general audiences, who are drawn to the festival's programming (Ruoff, 2012; Peirano, 2016; Campos, 2020). One of the keys to festivals lies in the possibility of screening films that often cannot be seen in commercial theaters, providing exhibition windows for less commercial genres—such as documentaries—and thus constituting immersive and socializing experiences for the attending audience (Salles, 2021).

Authors such as de Valck (2007) argue that festivals tend to promote the strengthening of national and international audiovisual culture and, in general, the dissemination of alternatives to the dominant position of Hollywood. For his part, Vallejo (2012) defines the festival as an attractor that brings together creation, production, and the durability of genres thanks to its institutional nature and periodicity. For Moscoso *et al.* (2014), there is a relationship between space, community, and the preservation of heritage, social inclusion, and the recognition of diversity.

In this sense, festivals allow actors with disparate interests to converge (Dayan, 2013), as they are platforms where markets, cultural showcases, and competition sections come together, as well as organizers, audiences, exhibitors, among others (Peirano, 2016). Not all festivals, however, have the same interests; Devesa *et al.* (2012) state that these spaces can be classified according to their influence on aspects such as their economic, tourist, cultural, social, and physical repercussions.

In the following pages, we focus on the case of Ibero-American festivals, specifically seeking to understand two essential aspects within the relational and cultural structure of these spaces: *networking*, understood as the way in which common agendas are built among participants (Barcelona Activa, 2017); and the preservation of audiovisual heritage, which is linked to *networking* (Mata Caravaca *et al.*, 2014), as intangible works are preserved through their assimilation into the networks of festival participants. Next, from a theoretical point of view, we will examine both of these conceptual references.

## **Audiovisual heritage at festivals**

Audiovisual heritage, in general terms, consists of audio, radio, film, and television recordings, whether or not they are intended for public broadcast (Edmondson, 2004). Also included in this set are any related video games, home recordings, and objects and artifacts that form part of audiovi-

sual culture, such as posters, press archives, manuscripts, photographs, and programs, among others (Ministerio de las culturas, las artes y el patrimonio de Chile, 2022).

Audiovisual heritage is a tool for learning about contemporary history, as well as a source of historical, scientific, or cultural information for future generations; it also provides insight into the technological context of its time (Comunidad Baratz, 2020). Audiovisual heritage contributes to the preservation and creation of collective memory (Cinemateca de Bogotá, 2022). It has a legal and juridical character due to the intellectual property rights it generates, as well as being documented and registered, which facilitates its inventorying (Díaz, 2014). Audiovisual heritage must be understood from four interrelated areas for its care: conservation, preservation, restoration, and access (Euroinnova, 2023). According to Edmondson (2004), preservation and access are two sides of the same coin. In the archival environment, this term is used to classify products, referring to them as documents that are preserved and managed in film and television archives, as well as in other institutions such as museums, universities, foundations, or private collections (Hidalgo, 2016).

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1980), in this now classic document, asserts that audiovisual heritage consists of content made up of moving images. This institution recommends that the relevant state agencies establish measures for its preservation. However, just a few decades later, Hoog (2004) estimated that 80% of humanity's audiovisual memory was at risk of disappearing. In 2011, Irina Bokova, then director of UNESCO, warned of the risk of losing humanity's audiovisual heritage forever due to deterioration and technological obsolescence (Señalmemoria, 2022). Regarding the preservation of audiovisual heritage, the archival community raises a worrying situation: it takes 10 to 15 years to recover content stored on magnetic media and safeguard it in digital format, and there is even content whose media are already irretrievable (IASA, 2020). Consequently, given its vulnerability, audiovisual heritage is in a critical situation because it becomes more sensitive over time. Its content tends to lose image and sound quality, making it essential to safeguard it with multi-platform strategies (Prestince and Gaustard, 2020) to prevent the fragmentation of a work that is not only cultural but also historical.

In some cases, such as television content, the situation is critical. Television was not created with archiving in mind, and much material has been

lost. Digitization is preserving content, but the medium itself has also entered a process of being considered necessary for preservation (Adduci, 2021). UNESCO (2015) argues that individuals and private and local institutions that have collections should have the support of the state and participate in the national directories responsible for this issue. The same organization recommends involving different social actors in order to promote research, policies, and models for the preservation of documentary heritage.

Against this backdrop, film and audiovisual festivals play a decisive role in the preservation of audiovisual heritage. In France, for example, more than half of film and audiovisual festivals dedicate sessions to film heritage in activities such as retrospectives, tributes, or one-off screenings, with some even focusing all their activities on heritage issues (Taillibert, 2016). The Museum of Modern Art in New York promotes a festival where restored works from archives, foundations, studios, and other institutions from around the world are exhibited (Moma, 2025). In Chile, the government has sought to promote the recovery, enhancement, and public access to audiovisual heritage through film festivals, exhibitions, traveling shows, film series, training activities, seminars, and other activities (CNCA, 2015).

In Latin America, the preservation of audiovisual heritage faces challenges that require a comprehensive approach. Ramos (2023) highlights the importance of creating a Peruvian Film Library to ensure conservation and cultural access. For his part, Cuarterolo (2020) identifies gaps in preservation policies and practices in regional film libraries, highlighting problems such as the loss of film heritage, institutional instability, and a lack of resources. Cossalter (2024) points out that the dictatorships imposed in Chile and Brazil during the last century created difficulties in the cultural sector, mainly by limiting economic resources, affecting institutional stability, and compromising the fate of audiovisual cultural collections.

## **Networking and film festivals**

Networking is a good way to build professional and personal relationships, allowing solid connections to be established that help businesses grow (Alemán, 2023). Networking cannot be understood without talking about relational networks, which include formal relational networks, which are driven by an institution, and informal networks established by individuals

during their lives and are less structural (Factor Huma, 2004). There are two types of networking, depending on how it is carried out: physical or offline, which involves face-to-face interactions, and online or virtual, which is done through the internet and social media (Famet-Andalucía, 2014).

**Table 1**  
*Types of networking*

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Physical networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It reinforces the message because it shows nonverbal communication.</li><li>• It is close and natural.</li><li>• You can receive and perceive the reactions of the people you are talking to.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Requires finding the right time and space.</li><li>• It requires a proactive attitude and social skills among participants.</li></ul>
Virtual networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication is possible anywhere, anytime.</li><li>• Allows you to focus on the message you want to communicate.</li><li>• Allows you to connect with people you would not otherwise be able to meet.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lacks nonverbal communication that reinforces the message being communicated (can lead to misunderstandings).</li><li>• Depends on technology (telephone, computer, etc.).</li><li>• Communication can be slow or one-way.</li></ul>

*Note.* Barcelona Activa (2017, p. 2).

For networking to be effective, all protocols established in the various communication channels used must be followed (Peset *et al.*, 2008). Networking can contribute to the following benefits: social capital, intellectual capital, internal and inter-area cooperation, and lasting relationships (Mendoza, 2022).

In the audiovisual context, Alberich and Roig (2010) argue that networking occurs through collaborative creative practices, which are both social and cultural, and which allow for decentralized production and management, alternating with the hierarchies and dominant models in cultural systems. A study on the instrumental preferences of Colombian communicators reveals

that their preferred means of communication are email—due to the formality it offers—and face-to-face interaction (Suárez, 2016).

An example of networking is taking place in Colombia: Cine SENA—a government initiative launched at the Cartagena Film Festival in 2016—aims to promote the Colombian audiovisual sector (EGEDA, 2022). By establishing interactive spaces, it has forged alliances that have benefited more than 1,500 trainees through links with international film festivals, companies, and production companies, as explained by this institution. But it is not only institutional spaces that serve as collaborative platforms. Networking can also take place through user participation. Thus, with the emergence of Web 2.0 and the accessibility of audiovisual production devices, users have become content creators, which has encouraged greater engagement with the community (Pérez and Gómez, 2010).

Another aspect of interest for networking is the protection of audiovisual archives. On this point, Deggeller (2012) concluded that the associations involved should establish relationships that would improve the networks linked to this issue and, in turn, link up with institutions related to heritage. In this regard, Mata Caravaca *et al.* (2014) argue that the preservation of audiovisual materials requires knowledge of the context in which the work was created. In addition to the management and creation of networks, it is advisable to include those involved in the issue.

## Methodology

In the theoretical section, a significant gap in research on the relationship between the topics discussed has been observed. Therefore, the following research objective has been determined: To examine the processes of networking and the safeguarding of audiovisual heritage in some of the main Ibero-American film festivals. In addition, the following specific objectives were proposed:

- To describe the types of networking that take place at film festivals.
- Define the contribution of film festivals to the preservation of audiovisual heritage.

To obtain the information requested in the specific objectives, this research was carried out using a non-experimental approach, with a descriptive and cross-sectional scope, according to the data extraction. A qualitative methodology was chosen, as it allows us to delve into the experiences of

the people involved and to learn about the opinions, perceptions, and experiences of the participants in a research study (Quecedo and Castaño, 2002; Creswell, 2013; Katayama, 2014; Krauze, 1995). This is basic research, with the application of an analytical method, because the concepts of networking and protection of audiovisual heritage have been studied through the way in which their elements are developed at film festivals.

Empirical information was collected using the semi-structured interview technique. Specifically, a questionnaire was used, which contained guiding questions that were then supplemented with other unscripted follow-up questions asked during the interviews as they unfolded. Prior to the interviews, a bibliographic documentary research was carried out (Corbetta, 2013); this preliminary research work allowed for the compilation, comparison, and definition of the categories, subcategories, and operational indicators of the research. After the conceptual structuring of the research was completed, the interviews were conducted. The participants were selected using the criteria of contrast and complementarity. The first criterion—contrast—serves to gather the opinions that one group of participants has about another; the second criterion—complementarity—allows us to identify the aspects in which the participants in the sample agree, as well as their experiences and expertise. For this reason, the sample of interviewees consisted of two subgroups, the first made up of festival managers and the second of journalists specializing in covering them. The sample was selected using non-probabilistic sampling, which has the limitation that the results obtained from it cannot be generalized; however, it allows us to reach populations that are difficult to access in order to obtain the relevant information (Otzen and Manterola, 2017; Vasila-chis, 2006). Some of the participants met the above characteristic, given the high level of specialization required by subgroups in the sample.

In order to locate each interviewee, each of them was contacted through a key informant, who collaborated in the arrangements for conducting the interviews; others were contacted through their social or professional networks. The interviews were conducted via video calls from May to August 2023, with some participants being consulted a second time on emerging issues, which extended until December 2024. As these were semi-structured interviews, the interviewers relied on their experience to ask follow-up questions, which allowed them to access more in-depth and unprecedented information about the categories raised in the research. Participants were selected according to the following inclusion criteria:

- For festival managers: they were selected because their professional profiles indicated that they managed international festivals, admitting various audiovisual genres—fiction, animation, documentary, among others—and also carried out activities parallel to the competition and film screenings, such as workshops, discussions, and parallel exhibitions, among others.
- For film journalists: they were selected because their professional profiles indicated that they covered national and international festivals for various media outlets and platforms.
- The final sample consists of the following 11 interviewees:

**Table 2**  
*List of participants*

Participant	Professional experience	Country	Years of experience
Luis Vélez (LV)	Journalist and film critic	Peru	11
Federico Karstulovich (FC)	Journalist and film critic	Argentina	18
Sergio López (SL)	Journalist and film critic	Mexico	23
Leopoldo Muñoz (LM)	Journalist and film critic	Chile	21
Rob Reyna (RR)	Cultural and film journalist	Peru	15
Sugey López (SL)	Director of the Cortos de vista International Short Film Festival	Peru	11
David Jean Robert Dupunchel (DD)	Director of the international festivals: Al Este	Held in France, Colombia, and Peru	17
Natalia Morales (NM)	Director of the Fusagasugá International Film Festival	Colombia	11
Enrique García (EG)	Director of the Ojo Móvil International Film Festival	Peru	14
Jon Apaolaza (JA)	Film journalist and film festival programmer	Spain	45
Joel Poblete (JP)	Film journalist and programmer for the Iquique International Film Festival and the Ñuble National Film Festival	Chile	20

Once the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and the results were coded and organized. Systematic coding was applied, which went through three interrelated phases: first, open coding, where the initial codes related to the categories of this research were identified; second, axial coding, in which the relationships between the codes and their correspondence with their categories and subcategories were established; and, finally, selective coding, which culminated in the formulation of the substantive theoretical approaches for the study (Creswell, 2013; Strauss and Corbin, 2002). The initials of each interviewee have been added to their surname to facilitate the description of the results. As can be seen in the table above, the average number of years of experience of the interviewees is 18.7 years.

## **Results**

### **Festivals and the protection of audiovisual cultural heritage**

The various audiovisual materials that have become cultural heritage must be conserved, preserved, restored, and made accessible to the public (Euroinnova, 2023), as indicated in the introductory sections of this paper. Accordingly, several of the interviewees stated that film festivals perform the specific functions of cataloging and storage, because they collect a variety of materials, which they exhibit at their events and then must store in an orderly manner.

As for the archiving of audiovisual works, this is done in different ways, mainly through hard drives, and in a few cases, some copies are stored on film (DD, SL, EG). At some of the festivals consulted, this archiving task is also complemented by the publication of the films on the festival's audiovisual social networks, many of them on their YouTube accounts. However, the transfer of publication rights must be managed because many of the films are in rotation at various festivals. Thus, publication on social networks may jeopardize their participation in other events that require exclusive screening rights:

In the case of short films, for example, if we know that they are going to be premiered at the festival or that their actual year of production is 2022 or 2023, we cannot broadcast them live and leave them on social media forever, because we know that some festivals do not accept short films that are freely available online. (Sugey López, personal communication, July 20, 2023)

As part of their management needs, festivals are required to purchase storage devices and must allocate funds within their budget for the purchase of the necessary *hardware*. However, state funds often do not allocate budget for these purchases: “I only asked for a subsidy once to strengthen the video library, and I didn’t get it, so I stopped insisting because I do better with traveling exhibitions” (Natalia Morales, personal communication, July 25, 2023). In any case, some managers argue that festivals that receive financial incentives from the state could be required to allocate part of their budget to the archiving and preservation of audiovisual material:

When we talk about having an archive, we are also talking about adding value. In particular, I believe that festivals that receive financial support from the state have an obligation to do so, and this obligation should apply in all aspects. And heritage is the worst aspect we have as a country. So yes, but it would have to start with the state and also be consistent with what festivals are. (Sugey López, personal communication, July 20, 2023)

Another technological resource for archiving and exhibiting material is the official websites of the festivals themselves (NM-SL). On the other hand, material is also stored on digital devices that were in use until recently, such as DVDs.

*Festivals* allow for the storage of a variety of audiovisual material, but thematic festivals also preserve the films that participate in them. This will allow those interested in researching these topics to directly access these particular repositories that address specific themes such as: films made with cell phones, films made by women, ecological films, inclusive themes, among others (EG). On the other hand, regional festivals become the only entities that systematically archive the audiovisual heritage of their locality: “There you have your stories from the region, whether they are from one side or the other, whether they are well photographed or poorly acted, whatever they may be, we are having the collection preserved there” (Natalia Morales, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

In addition to films and audiovisual works, manuscripts, posters, press archives, photographs, and programs, among other items, are also considered part of the audiovisual heritage (Ministerio de las culturas, las artes y el patrimonio de Chile, 2022). These materials are also archived by festival organizers on their disks or storage devices, but in some cases, they have been damaged. For this reason, the festivals’ social media accounts have become

alternative repositories for this type of material and, on some occasions, have served as backups, allowing the material that was originally published on these platforms to be recovered. In this sense, the preservation of these materials is important because they contain the memory of the festivals (NM-SL). It should also be noted that: “In the future, perhaps in 20 years, festivals will be a kind of repository, thanks to digital technology that allows films to be stored on the host” (Rob Reyna, personal communication, July 17, 2023).

Another aspect of audiovisual heritage protection is restoration. In this regard, film festivals perform some of these audiovisual heritage preservation functions, but not all of them do so, with some doing more than others (JA). In the festival world, this is already a more complicated task to carry out due to its high cost. Even so, some festivals do carry out some restoration activities, but this task is unusual because it requires an extra budget. The festivals that are able to do so are the so-called major festivals (DD-LV). Some festivals also have private preservation programs, which is positive, but this is usually more common in large festivals, as restoration and preservation are expensive activities that their budget can cover (LV):

It would be difficult for us to do the restoration ourselves. It would be great if we could do it. In fact, we have done it. We held a workshop on audiovisual material recovery in Barrios Altos [Lima, Peru], although it was not fully realized. During that event, we found 16 mm reels, cassettes, and other materials that were in the process of being restored. It was an effort that we carried out over two years, but the truth is that we do not have an extensive budget, which limits independent festivals. (David Duponchel, personal communication, July 28, 2023)

More and more films are being restored, and access to older films is becoming more difficult for young viewers. In this sense, festivals are becoming an excellent showcase for restored films, and some of them include this type of screening in their programming (JA-LV):

A film that is now being presented as new, 30 years from now, should be shown as a historical item. The festival should always have a section dedicated to the historical review of Peruvian audiovisual works because they are part of the nation’s heritage. Every festival should have a section for viewing the past, both internationally and nationally. (Luis Vélez, personal communication, July 22, 2023)

Out of all the functions mentioned with regard to the protection of audiovisual heritage, most of those interviewed agree that their work is geared toward the dissemination of audiovisual heritage. Festivals screen restored works, which may be by filmmakers from the festival's country of origin or by international authors, integrating them into their programming. Some festivals even create a section for restored classics. In addition, it is considered that what is currently being shown will in some years be the audiovisual heritage of that era and, therefore, all festivals should have a section for retrospective exhibitions (DD-JV).

In some circumstances, collaborative contributions are established between film journalists, their associations, and festivals. These links help to carry out activities that fall within the framework of audiovisual heritage protection—such as the dissemination of works that are already cataloged—through screenings or exhibitions that are integrated into the festival's parallel activities program:

We are celebrating the centenary of Armando Robles Godoy, and we have formed a committee within the association for this commemoration. We consider Robles Godoy to be our greatest reference point among Peruvian filmmakers. Fortunately, festivals have welcomed us as an association to hold screenings and exhibitions. (Luis Vélez, personal communication, July 22, 2023)

Compared to other festivals, some may offer retrospectives of William Wyler and, at the same time, highlight a new author, but they manage to establish a dialogue between the two proposals. I think that's great, and I wish all festivals had that. (Joel Poblete, personal communication, July 20, 2023)

Despite this, some of the interviewees state that there are no policies or legal instruments that promote links between the state entities responsible for protecting audiovisual heritage and festivals that allow for joint preservation actions under a legal framework and budgetary support (SL-NM).

## **Film festivals and audiovisual networking**

In the audiovisual field, networking is carried out through collaborative creative practices, which are both social and cultural (Alberich and Roig, 2010). This research determined that film festivals are spaces where inten-

se social activity takes place, favoring the establishment of various types of networking. In this regard, the interviews revealed that there are various forms of networking at festivals. The first is between the organizers of these events, i.e., between the managers of various festivals, who form alliances with each other (DD, SL, EG). The other occurs among the participants of the event; in this sense, the organizers generate these links through planned activities. However, they also occur spontaneously during the event's activities, where attendees connect with each other in activities such as exhibitions, discussions, workshops, laboratories, etc. In some cases, specific activities are created with the aim of networking among event participants, especially filmmakers (DD, EB, SL):

We have a space created exactly for that purpose, called Networking CDV. It is a closed event where we bring together all the directors or producers with the jury, some guests, friends, and filmmakers from Lambayeque. (Sugey López, personal communication, July 20, 2023)

<...> I think that the strong point of a festival is precisely networking. When you go to a festival, it is precisely to meet other filmmakers, to meet people who are in the industry, and also to meet critics who are also looking for new filmmakers, new forms, new content, new stories. I think that's what connects people. It's like a hub that seeks to bring together different people who are directly or indirectly related to audiovisual production. (Enrique García, personal communication, July 26, 2023)

Networking involves initial contact between interested parties, and festivals become a hub for this, but the circuit closes when those involved extend the relationship beyond the initial encounter and establish relationships of mutual assistance, participation, or collaboration that transcend the time and space in which the festival took place:

Networking is based on establishing contacts with people who are then invited to other festivals; films and ideas are shared, the invitation to the festivals is also reflected upon, and artists form contacts. When people meet once, it is not networking. It is necessary for people to meet several times. (David Duponchel, personal communication, July 28, 2023)

Thematic audiovisual festivals, by their very nature, encourage networking among people who have a professional connection to the festival,

between national and international participants (EG). Another aspect that arises within the establishment of networking is the formation of alliances between participants with the same professional interests, such as when new filmmakers make contacts with whom they later carry out audiovisual projects. It also happens that the festival organizers are filmmakers themselves, so they invite former festival participants to take on production roles in their audiovisual projects, with co-production being one of the most common formulas among the projects they develop together (EG-SL). With so many changes affecting festivals, the interrelationships between them are also changing:

The networking that is taking place will continue to develop, because we are in the midst of this change; every year we discover new things, strengths and weaknesses, “this didn’t work out last year, we should call on this person,” “last year we did very well communicating this, but not that.” So, if before we could continue with the same approach, today we can no longer do so. (Joel Poblete, personal communication, July 20, 2023)

Similarly, in the responses analyzed, we found the existence of a type of *networking* among journalists or critics who are at the festival, from which they generate their national and international contact networks. This even helps them to support each other when they have to cover events abroad, since the media often does not cover all the expenses, so they turn to their contacts, either individually or as a group. This is the case with FIPRESCI (the International Federation of Film Critics) (LV-FK), which connects with producers, making it easier for them to obtain exclusive news stories (SL-RR-JA): “The more people, producers, directors, and actors you have in your address book, the more useful it will be later on for future interviews, to get exclusives on projects that are in the works.” (Rob Reyna, personal communication, July 17, 2023). At the same time, this possibility also encourages the establishment of professional relationships:

I can tell you that, as a result of these festivals, and also as a result of attending the Platino Awards, we have founded an association of Ibero-American film journalists, which did not exist before and of which I am the president. I think that has been thanks precisely to that networking. (Joan Apaolaza, personal communication, June 14, 2023)

Networking is something that happens naturally. People get to know each other and collaborative projects are achieved. There was the case of a critic who worked alone and then met another and they started a project together. There is also networking between critics and filmmakers. (Luis Vélez, personal communication, July 22, 2023)

Film journalists who cover festivals often establish connections with the organizers. In these spaces, after interaction, journalists are often invited to be part of the juries or to work in the management of these events, even taking charge of their communication departments, which constitutes an expansion of their professional experience (JP-JA-LV). At some large festivals, such as Berlin or BAFICI, spaces are created for the specialized press to meet with programmers, and training is provided where networking is also established (JV).

Based on the results, it has been established that the following types of networking take place at festivals:

- Institutional networking. This occurs when members of communities, associations, entities, or institutions come together and interact around common themes, interests, or projects.
- Inter-institutional networking. This occurs when members of different institutions or associations interact to carry out projects in which their interests converge, such as when film journalists join forces with festival organizers to hold screenings, training workshops, debates, among others.
- Audiovisual networking. This is a type of specialized networking in which different actors in the audiovisual field interact to carry out activities, projects, or alliances related to audiovisual production. Festivals are not the only space where this takes place, but they are one of the spaces where it is explicitly encouraged.
- Intentional networking. This arises from activities organized by the festival itself to bring participants together.
- Spontaneous networking. This arises from interactions between festival participants who connect with each other through the various activities offered in the event's program.

**Table 3**  
*Theoretical-empirical comparison matrix*

Category	Subcategory	Definition and evidence
Networking	Forms: in-person and virtual	Types of networking at festivals: in person during the event and extended virtual networking afterwards for collaboration (Karbaum <i>et al.</i> , 2025; Barcelona Activa, 2017; Famet-Andalucía, 2014). Empirical evidence obtained in this study: Karbaum <i>et al.</i> (2025).
	Relational networks: formal and informal	Formal networks promoted by institutions and informal networks promoted by individuals; they enable collaboration and the creation of alliances (Factor Huma, 2004; Mata Caravaca <i>et al.</i> , 2014). In interviews, managers and journalists confirmed the fundamental role of these networks (DD, SL, EG).
	Benefits and protocols	Social and intellectual capital and lasting relationships strengthen networking; effectiveness depends on clear protocols (Mendoza, 2022; Peset <i>et al.</i> , 2008). According to interviewees, networking is key to contact between filmmakers (Enrique García, personal communication, 2023).
Safeguarding	Audiovisual heritage management	This includes conservation, preservation, restoration, and storage on hard drives and film material. Budget constraints hinder effective archiving (Euroinnova, 2023; Edmondson, 2004). Testimonies reveal a shortage of state funds and a continuing need for resources (Sugey López, Natalia Morales, personal communication, 2023).
	Dissemination and legal custody	Festivals promote the dissemination of restored works, establish classic film sections, and ensure legal protection in relation to copyright (UNESCO, 1980, 2015; Taillibert, 2016). Journalists' associations collaborate in commemorations and exhibitions (Luis Vélez, personal communication, 2023).
	Risks and strategies	Interviewees warn about technological obsolescence and loss of heritage, making multiplatform strategies and stable policies necessary (Hoog, 2004; Prestince and Gaustard, 2020; Cuarterolo, 2020). Restoration is costly and limited to large festivals (David Duponchel, personal communication, 2023).
Festivals	Audiences and segmentation	Training and segmentation of specialized and general audiences to support exhibitions of less commercial genres (Ruoff, 2012; Salles, 2021). Testimonials highlight the importance of these audiences for the continuity of the festival (Natalia Morales, personal communication, 2023).
	Economic and cultural roles	Festivals strengthen audiovisual culture and offer spaces for new genres and productions, also impacting the local and international market (De Valck, 2007; Peirano, 2016; Devesa <i>et al.</i> , 2012). Their role as cultural showcases is valued by journalists and managers (Joel Poblete, personal communication, 2023).

## Discussion and conclusions

Festivals are events that bring together diverse participants with different objectives (Dayan, 2013). However, there is a common motivator: a love of cinema. Based on this, various actors share an interest in protecting audiovisual heritage, which gives rise to different activities within the festival program. In this regard, Moscoso (2014) states that festivals are related to the space and community where they take place, in addition to promoting heritage preservation, social inclusion, and recognition of diversity. Regarding the second aspect, this research concludes that these events not only contribute to the conservation of cultural heritage in general, but also to specific heritage, such as audiovisual heritage.

The four areas that make up the protection of audiovisual heritage are: conservation, preservation, restoration, and access (Euroinnova, 2023). Festivals play a role in the conservation and preservation of audiovisual heritage by archiving their materials, although restoration is limited by its high costs and is only viable at large events. Access to these archives is mainly provided through screenings during the festival and publications on their networks or websites, performing these safeguarding tasks unofficially. In this dynamic, there is a need for the integration or promotion of public policies that link all these efforts and the social actors who carry them out, as proposed by UNESCO (2015) and as is being done in Chile, where the state promotes preservation through film festivals (CNCA, 2015).

In this regard, the discussion of the results reveals that Ibero-American festivals play a fundamental role in the preservation and dissemination of audiovisual heritage, coinciding with Ramos (2023) on the need for institutions, such as film libraries, that guarantee such conservation and cultural access. However, state policies or governments in Latin America have not contributed to this purpose (Cuarterolo, 2020; Cossalter, 2024).

As seen, networking establishes formal and informal networks of relationships (Factorhuma, 2004) which, in the case of festivals, are common to both types of interaction. Managers schedule events to facilitate the integration of the various actors in the audiovisual industry. However, informal relationships also develop through interpersonal contacts that arise during the various activities that are part of the festival program. There are two types of networking: face-to-face and virtual (Barcelona Activa, 2017). Due to their face-to-face nature, festivals use the first type of networking for initial

contacts, while the second type is used for maintenance, with the first type being used again when those involved meet again at other festivals and develop joint projects.

As De Valck (2007) argues, film festivals contribute to the strengthening of audiovisual cultures in the face of Hollywood's dominant position. In this sense, the relationships established by managers, filmmakers, and young directors through the networking developed at these events constitute a specialized function. This function allows production to go beyond the hierarchies exercised by the predominant industries, becoming yet another manifestation of what Alberich Pascual and Roig Tello (2010) had already proposed as a counterpart to the dominant models in the audiovisual industry.

Regarding the preservation of audiovisual heritage, Mata Caravaca et al. (2014) proposed that this should be achieved through actions that enable networking or the establishment of collaborative networks among those involved in the issue. Following these authors, this research allows us to conclude that audiovisual festivals are events that bring together social actors linked to the issue, such as festival managers, film journalists, audiovisual industry agents, and film lovers, who establish relationships to develop initiatives and projects aimed at safeguarding audiovisual heritage.

Despite the effort made, this research had limitations, among which those related to the composition and contact of the sample of participants stand out. Although the data analyzed reveal particular circumstances regarding networking and the preservation of audiovisual heritage developed at film festivals, both topics are still current. They can continue to be studied individually or jointly in other areas of the audiovisual industries, because the literature review also revealed gaps in knowledge on the topics raised. For this reason, further research is needed to determine whether what has been proposed can be defined as audiovisual networking, breaking it down as one of the specialties of networking in general.

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Declaration of Authorship - CRediT Taxonomy	
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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence
The authors <b>DECLARE</b> that no artificial intelligence-based tools were used in the preparation of the article entitled <i>Networking and Audiovisual Heritage at Ibero-American Film Festivals</i> .