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The impact of festivals on the image of a cultural industry: The case of the new Italian dance platform

Ludovica Leone ^{*},¹, Fabrizio Montanari ²

Department of Communication and Economics, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy

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ABSTRACT

Over the last years, there has been a growing attention on the impacts generated by festivals both on the host territories and the internal dynamics of the celebrated cultural industry. However, extant literature has overlooked the impact that festivals produce on the image of the industry. This study thus aims at filling this gap by exploring how a festival improves the image that the professionals attending the event have of their cultural industry. More particularly, the paper is based on a case study on the New Italian Dance Platform, the Italian biennial contemporary dance festival. Findings suggest that a festival provides industry professionals with the opportunity to conduct two groups of activities: *crafting a shared space* and *building a shared vision*. The two groups of activities trigger both social and cognitive mechanisms through which the attending professionals construe and share a positive image of their cultural industry.

1. Introduction

Festivals can be defined as “short term, recurring, publicly-accessible events that usually celebrate and/or perform particular elements of culture” (Mair, 2019:4). Over the past two decades, festivals have flourished, becoming prominent events in cities across various countries (Duffy, 2018; Grappi & Montanari, 2011; Saayman & Rossouw, 2011). For example, while in 1992 there were about 1000 festivals in France, in 2005, the number had seen a threefold increase (Mason, 2020). Similarly, besides the 12 largest competitive film festivals accredited by the international federation of film producers association, around 3500 are organized in the world every year (Rüling & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2010).

There are multiple, often intertwined reasons for such a proliferation. Importantly, festivals provide valuable opportunities for recreation and entertainment, which meet the increasing demand, from both citizens and tourists, for more authentic leisure activities and unique cultural experiences (Prentice & Andersen, 2003). Additionally, as occasions for celebrating an art form and creative expression, festivals have a major role in sustaining cultural production. As a matter of fact, festivals allow professionals in an industry (producers, distributors, artists, etc.) to get together in one place, appreciate original creative productions, discover new talents, and create business opportunities (Friedman, 2014; Lampel, 2011). Third, festivals may also represent important policy tools for local development, as they sustain processes of urban regeneration, contribute to increase touristic attractiveness, and renew local pride and

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: ludovica.leone@unimore.it (L. Leone).

¹ Ludovica Leone – Research Fellow at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy

² Fabrizio Montanari - Associate Professor of Organization Studies and Scientific Coordinator of OPERA, a Research Unit specialized in the study of creativity and innovation, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy

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sense of community (Delamere, Wankel & Hinch, 2001; 2020(Gomez-Casero et al., 2020); Wallstam, Ioannides & Pettersson, 2020).

It is no surprise, then, that the positive impacts of festivals have been addressed by researchers who adopted different perspectives and methodologies (e.g., Getz, Andersson, & Carlsen, 2010; Quinn, 2009; Wilson, Arshed, Shaw & Pret, 2017). Within this stream of research, particular attention has been devoted to the study of the economic impact, which regards the economic flows generated by a festival in terms of employment opportunities, higher levels of public expenditures, and increased demand for products and services (e.g., Davies, Coleman & Ramchandani, 2013; Dwyer & Jago, 2019; Getz, 2008). Scholars have also investigated other kinds of impact, such as the effects on the quality of life perceived by the inhabitants of the city that hosts a festival (Delamere et al., 2001; Kaplanidou et al., 2013), changes in the local social dynamics in terms of inclusion and cohesion (Duffy & Waitt, 2011; George, 2015; Van Winkle & Woosnam, 2014), increased patterns of cultural consumption generated in attendees (Garcia, 2005; Wilmersdörffer & Schlicher, 2019), and the environmental footprint caused on the host territory (Collins & Cooper, 2017; Jones, 2019).

Moving beyond the vast spectrum of potential impacts that festivals generate on the host territories and local communities, research has also considered the impact on the internal dynamics of the celebrated cultural industry. Most notably, studies highlighted how festivals act as gatekeepers between cultural producers and consumers (Larson, 2002) and as “tastemakers” that can attract consumers’ attention to specific cultural products (Montoro-Pons & Cuadrado-García, 2020). An interesting viewpoint is offered by research on festivals as field-configuring events, which concentrates on the micro-level, field-building activities of participants during such events (e.g., Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Lampel, 2011; Müller-Seitz & Schüßler, 2013). Within this stream, research investigated how festivals impact the internal dynamics of a cultural field, for example setting accepted standards of behavior, recognizing accomplishments through awards and prizes, and defining common practices among the members of a field (Anand & Watson, 2004; Lampel & Meyer, 2008; Rüling & Strandgaard Pedersen, 2010).

One area that still calls for extensive investigation is the potential impact that festivals can make on the image of a cultural industry. Such an impact represents potentially an interesting issue, as it contributes to a more fine-grained understanding of how festivals support cultural industries. Indeed, a festival can generate several potential benefits for the celebrated cultural industry when attending professionals, such as producers and artists, gain a positive image of their field. Professionals with a positive image of their cultural industry, in turn, may feel more committed to sustain their field, more legitimated before relevant audiences (e.g., critics, public institutions), and more motivated in developing their artistic projects. This issue takes on special relevance when a cultural industry is a niche context that struggles in attracting relevant resources such as public funding, private support, or even general audiences. If this is the case, having a positive image of a cultural field could help professionals deal with the hurdles and challenges related to their cultural activities.

This paper, thus, will address the impact of a festival on the image of the celebrated cultural industry by presenting the case of the New Italian Dance Platform (NID), a biennial dance festival for professionals operating in contemporary dance. By analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data related to the 2019 edition of the festival, we discuss the impacts that the event generates on how attendees perceive the image of Italian contemporary dance. More particularly, from the analysis of a survey submitted to participants and of the interviews we conducted with 12 professionals and four members of the organizing committee, we show that festivals can improve the image of a cultural industry by providing participants with the opportunity to conduct two groups of activities – *crafting a shared space* and *building a shared vision*. The two groups of activities trigger both the social and cognitive dynamics through which the attending professionals construe and share a defined image of the cultural industry they belong to.

The paper is organized as follows. Following a review of the literature on festivals’ impacts, we turn to methodology for data collection (surveys and interviews) and framework of analysis, and then present and discuss our findings. Finally, we draw some conclusions and consider theoretical and managerial implications.

2. Theoretical background

Scholars have addressed the impact of festivals from different viewpoints in order to better understand the varied returns that are potentially generated. Indeed, festivals “create a series of impacts, both positive and negative, on contextual environments” (Quinn, 2009: 10), namely the territory, the local community, and the involved stakeholders.

Extant literature devotes particular attention to the economic impact generated by festivals, which may result into increased tourism flows in the host city and new employment opportunities (e.g., Litvin, Pan, & Smith, 2013; Moscardo, 2007). On this view, festivals could become a driver for renewing the image of a city and local development, particularly in areas that have experienced de-industrialization processes (Richards, 2017; Van Den Berg, 2012). Researchers have advanced different models to evaluate the economic outcomes of festivals and estimate the benefits generated on the host territory (for a recent review on the different models and techniques, see Dwyer & Jago, 2019). These contributions mainly consider the number of participants and the direct expenditure on the host territory as principal indicators of a festival’s success (Davies et al., 2013; Jago and Dwyer, 2006). Besides the economic results, scholars devoted attention to other potential impacts. For example, impacts related to the social effects generated on local communities in terms of social inclusion and cohesion (Duffy & Waitt, 2011; George, 2015; Van Winkle & Woosnam, 2014), increased patterns of cultural consumption (Garcia, 2005; Wilmersdörffer & Schlicher, 2019), or overcrowding and other potential damages to the environment (Collins & Cooper, 2017; Jones, 2019).

In addition to the effects generated on the host territory and the local community, research suggests that festivals potentially produce relevant impacts on the internal dynamics of the cultural industry they celebrate. For example, festivals provide a unique setting for the gatekeepers of an industry to meet and interact with each other while attending performances and exhibitions to seek new talents and cultural products (Friedman, 2014). In cultural industries, gatekeepers play a critical role in orienting cultural consumptions as they evaluate, select, and classify cultural productions, also influencing audiences’ preferences (Allen & Lincoln, 2004;

Foster, Borgatti & Jones, 2011; Shrum, 1991). Festivals could also be conceived as gatekeepers themselves since they act as brokers between cultural production and different audiences (Sapiro, 2016; Schüßler & Sydow, 2015). For example, choices related to the selection of artists or the program's lineup contribute to determining which cultural products could obtain more visibility and have potential access to broader cultural markets (Johansson & Toraldo, 2017; Leenders, 2010). Similarly, participation in different festivals contributes to creating different levels of reputation that artists and cultural organizations could leverage to reduce consumers' uncertainty in evaluating the quality of their products (Hiller, 2016; Paleo & Wijnberg, 2006).

In line with the above, research on field-configuring events (FCEs) considers festivals among those events such as fairs, trade shows, and conferences, that contribute to the emergence, development, and consolidation of a cultural field (e.g., Childress, Rawlings & Moeran, 2017; Lampel & Meyer, 2008; Müller-Seitz & Schüßler, 2013). Indeed, FCEs have an impact on the internal dynamics of an industry as they influence social, symbolic, and cognitive dynamics among its members. For example, FCEs provide members of an industry with a platform for interaction and establishing ties, as they bring together in one location actors with diverse professional, organizational, and geographical backgrounds (Entwistle & Rocamora, 2011). A festival's temporal and spatial boundedness facilitates exchanges and face-to-face social interaction, thus helping "field members meet, converse, negotiate, explore joint actions, and develop projects" (Lampel & Meyer, 2008: 1028). Also, by selecting the participants to the event, FCEs contribute to defining the boundaries of an industry, discerning those who are considered legitimate members from those who are not (Anand & Watson, 2004; Lampel & Meyer, 2008). In this sense, FCEs present several rituals and ceremonial activities (gala dinners, award ceremonies, etc.) that assign a symbolic meaning to the event and set it apart from more regular activities in the field (Anand & Watson, 2004).

Festivals also contribute to defining evaluation criteria according to which different actors (producers, critics, artists, etc.) value cultural products, assigning funding and awards (Scott, 2010), which determine status and reputation of different actors within a field (Moeran & Pedersen, 2011). Moreover, research illustrates the key role of FCEs in defining accepted norms and standards of behavior, as they encourage the emergence among participants of shared cognitions around the nature, values, principles, and beliefs of the celebrated industry (Moeran & Pedersen, 2011; Richards & Jarman, 2021; Schüßler, Rüling & Wittneben, 2014). Among these shared cognitions, literature highlights the key role played by collective identity, which refers to a prototypical set of attributes, practices, and values that connect the members of the field (Pratt, 2003; Wry, Lounsbury & Glynn, 2011). Collective identity reflects the commonalities across the members of an industry and, thus, contributes to nourishing 'a sense of we' (Snow & Corrigall-Brown, 2015; Stigliani & Elsbach, 2018) and to the emergence of common expectations, shared standards of evaluation, and similar ways to adapt to the external environment (Navis & Glynn, 2010; Schüßler et al., 2014). The presence of a shared collective identity is essential to reach a certain cohesion of the field, based on the shared perceptions and feelings of a common cause that motivates the members to preserve the collectivity (Snow & Corrigall-Brown, 2015). Moreover, the role of collective identity is particularly relevant in emerging and niche fields, as it can reinforce and sustain field legitimacy before different key audiences and third parties (Gorbatai, Dioun & Lashley, 2021; Stigliani & Elsbach, 2018). Gaining legitimacy, in fact, is a necessary pivot point to support credibility, appropriateness, and eventually the survival of both the field and its members (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002).

However, a festival could have an impact not only on the collective identity shared by the members of a cultural industry, but also on its image, which represents how both members of the field and external actors perceive its identity. As highlighted by research on organizational identity, image mirrors the distinctive, central, and enduring features that distinguish a specific organization from others and has important effects on the behaviors of organizational members (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000). For example, an organization's image sustains how its members perceive organizational reputation and legitimacy before relevant stakeholders (for a review on the relationship between identity, image and reputation see Brown, Dacin, Pratt & Whetten, 2006). Moreover, when individuals have a positive image of their organization, they feel more motivated and committed to sustain it (e.g., Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Johnson & Chang, 2006; Orlikowsky, 2002). On the contrary, when they have a negative image, they experience low self-esteem and a lack of identification with the organization, eventually deciding to leave the organization or reducing their commitment (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Fuller et al. 2006).

This line of reasoning appears to also apply to the case of the image of a cultural industry. When members of a cultural industry have a positive image of their field, they may be more committed to take actions supporting the industry and more motivated to keep up with their artistic projects. Thus, exploring how a specific festival has an impact on the image of the celebrated cultural industry can offer a more nuanced understanding on how festivals in general affect the internal dynamics of a cultural industry. Whereas the focus on collective identity has contributed to understand how festivals represent a platform where industry members define and share the key constitutive elements of their field, considering the role of image offers a complementary perspective as it highlights how festivals affect what field members perceive about the identity of their cultural field.

3. Empirical setting and methodology

We adopted a case-based methodology, which is well suited to provide useful insights when investigating new research areas (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). We study the New Italian Dance Platform (hereafter, NID), as it is an example of a festival aimed at sustaining a cultural industry, such as contemporary dance, that is continuously striving to reach more resonance and visibility (Montanari, Scapolan, & Gianecchini, 2016). Indeed, while the 14 Italian opera houses with their ballet companies absorb the majority of the public funding dedicated to performing arts (*Fondo Unico per lo Spettacolo*), contemporary dance companies receive only around 5% of the total budget of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Activities, and Tourism (MIBACT). Thus, NID represents an interesting example to investigate the effects of a festival on the image of a cultural field.

NID is a biennial festival, established in 2012 as a result of the collaboration between Associazione Danza Esercizio e Promozione (an association of Italian actors dedicated to programming and promoting Italian dance) and MIBACT. Since its foundation, the main

Table 1
Data sources and their use in the analyses.

Data source	Type of data	Use in the analysis
Interviews	Semi-structured interviews with the general director of Aterballetto, the project manager of NID 2019, the director of Fondazione I Teatri, and a representative from MIBAC (4 interviews before the festival and 4 after the closing)	To familiarize with the event and the dance field and to understand their perception of the intended and achieved results of the event.
	In depth, semi-structured interviews with 5 directors of dance festivals, 2 directors of theaters, 3 dance companies' representatives, 1 director of a dance museum and 1 dance critic who also participated as author of a performance (12 interviews)	To investigate motivation to participate, level of satisfaction about the festival, and perceived impacts of the event on the dance field
	Direct observation conducted during the festival	To familiarize with the festival, see how and for what purposes professionals interacted with each other, and how general audience reacted to the shows. In the time spent at the festival, we took notes and compared our impressions.
Survey	Informal conversations with 10 attendees of dance shows. 107 questionnaires to participants (response rate 34%)	To investigate the perception of NID among not professional attendees To investigate motivation to attend, satisfaction of the festival, image of Italian contemporary dance, and professional opportunities emerged during the event
Documental data	Promotional materials and websites	To familiarize with the festival and the dance field

aim of NID has been to “promote Italian choreographic production, especially among international actors, providing visibility to Italian dance talents and developing collaborations between artists and operators” (www.spettacoloalvivo.beniculturali.it). NID provides different workers in the field (choreographers, journalists, organizers of other festivals, people working for theaters, etc.) with the opportunity to attend premieres of dance acts, interact with other professionals, and negotiate commercial agreements. NID also hosts seminars and workshops where professionals debate relevant issues such as changes in national laws, the potential impact of new technologies on choreography, or emergent trends in international markets. All dance acts are also open to members of the general public, who can buy regular tickets to attend the shows, which are usually held in the theaters of the host city.

NID is a touring festival as it takes place in a different location each time. Thus, every two years the festival is organized and managed by a new organizing committee, consisting of different actors such as local dance operators, theaters, and public authorities. The organizing committee has the responsibility to coordinate the event (e.g., organizing the program, selecting and assigning a location to the performances, managing the logistics and communication), while an artistic committee, composed of members of MIBACT and national and international dance experts, selects “the best dance companies and most exemplary performances on the Italian panorama, giving space to both established and emerging choreographers, in a rich four-day program” (www.nidplatform.it).

The fifth edition of NID took place in October 2019 in Reggio Emilia and was organized by ATER (Multidisciplinary Regional Circuit of performing arts), Fondazione Nazionale della Danza Aterballetto,³ Fondazione i Teatri di Reggio Emilia, in collaboration with Rete Anticorpi Reggio Emilia. The festival was supported by MIBACT, the region of Emilia-Romagna, and the Municipality of Reggio Emilia. The artistic committee of the 2019 edition selected 19 acts out of 204 proposals. Furthermore, it chose eight projects that were still in progress and looking for “an occasion to debut, a partner, or a co-producer” (NID 2019 call for participants). These projects were hosted in a dedicated section called Open Studios, where artists and companies had 20 min to present their acts. Besides the performances, NID 2019 hosted several round tables on different themes (e.g., urban dance, opportunities for collaboration with Canadian operators), a closing gala, a guided tour of Reggio Emilia, and an informal breakfast aimed at promoting encounters among different participants. In addition, the organizing committee introduced the presence of booths for dance companies and a pitching service to facilitate operators in finding collaboration opportunities.

Overall, 316 professionals attended the festival, and 5758 tickets were sold. More precisely, 213 participants were Italian, while the remaining 33% came from abroad (mainly from the United Kingdom and Canada, but also from Austria, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Spain, and Singapore). Participants were professionals working for cultural organizations (e.g., artistic directors of dance companies or theaters, directors of festivals, choreographers, and dancers), dance critics, journalists, and representatives of public institutions (e.g., MIBACT, municipal and regional authorities, British Council, Canadian Embassy).

3.1. Data collection and analysis

We combined data from different sources: interviews, documents (the NID website, promotional material, and the website of MIBACT), direct observation, and a survey administered to participants (see Table 1 for a summary of the data collected and its use in the analysis).

While documental data were used to familiarize with the event and gain insights into the contemporary dance field, direct observation allowed us to see how the events at the festival unfolded, how and for what purposes professionals interacted with each

³ Aterballetto is the foremost contemporary ballet company in Italy and one of the most renowned in Europe. It was founded by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia and the Region Emilia-Romagna in 1979 and over the years has played a key role in promoting contemporary dance aesthetics in Italy (Montanari & Scapolan, 2011).

Table 2
List of informants.

Interviewees	Professional Role	Age Range	Performing at NID 2019	Attended NID for the first time	Provenience
Interv. #1	Dance company communication manager	30s	Yes	No	Italy
Interv. #2	Dance company programming manager	40s	Yes	No	Italy
Interv. #3	Communication manager of a dance company	30s	Yes	No	Italy
Interv. #4	Dance dramaturg and writer	30s	Yes	Yes	Italy
Interv. #5	Festival Director	60s	No	No	France
Interv. #6	Festival Director	60s	No	No	Germany
Interv. #7	Festival Director	40s	No	No	Serbia
Interv. #8	Festival Co-director	30s	No	Yes	Canada
Interv. #9	Circuit Director	40s	No	No	Italy
Interv. #10	Festival Director	60s	No	Yes	Italy
Interv. #11	Festival Director	60s	No	No	Finland
Interv. #12	Dance curator	60s	No	No	Italy
Interv. #13	Organizer	40s	Yes	No	Italy
Interv. #14	Organizer	60s	Yes	No	Italy
Interv. #15	Organizer	40s	No	No	Italy
Interv. #16	MIBACT Representative	60s	No	No	Italy

other, and how the general audience reacted to the shows. In the time spent at the festival, we took notes and compared our impressions. The questionnaire was aimed at understanding the characteristics of the attending professionals and their perceived experience of the festival. More precisely, the survey addressed the following topics: motivation to attend NID 2019, satisfaction (about program content, information and facilities, staff behaviors, etc.), the image of NID and of the Italian contemporary dance field, and professional opportunities and collaborations that emerged during the festival. We sent the questionnaire in December 2019 to all 316 participants with a response rate of 34% ($N = 107$). The complete survey is reported in Annex 1.

Interviews represent our primary data source. Specifically, we conducted 16 interviews to collect varied viewpoints on the potential effects of the festival. More precisely, in March 2020 we interviewed 12 professionals who attended NID 2019. To choose the

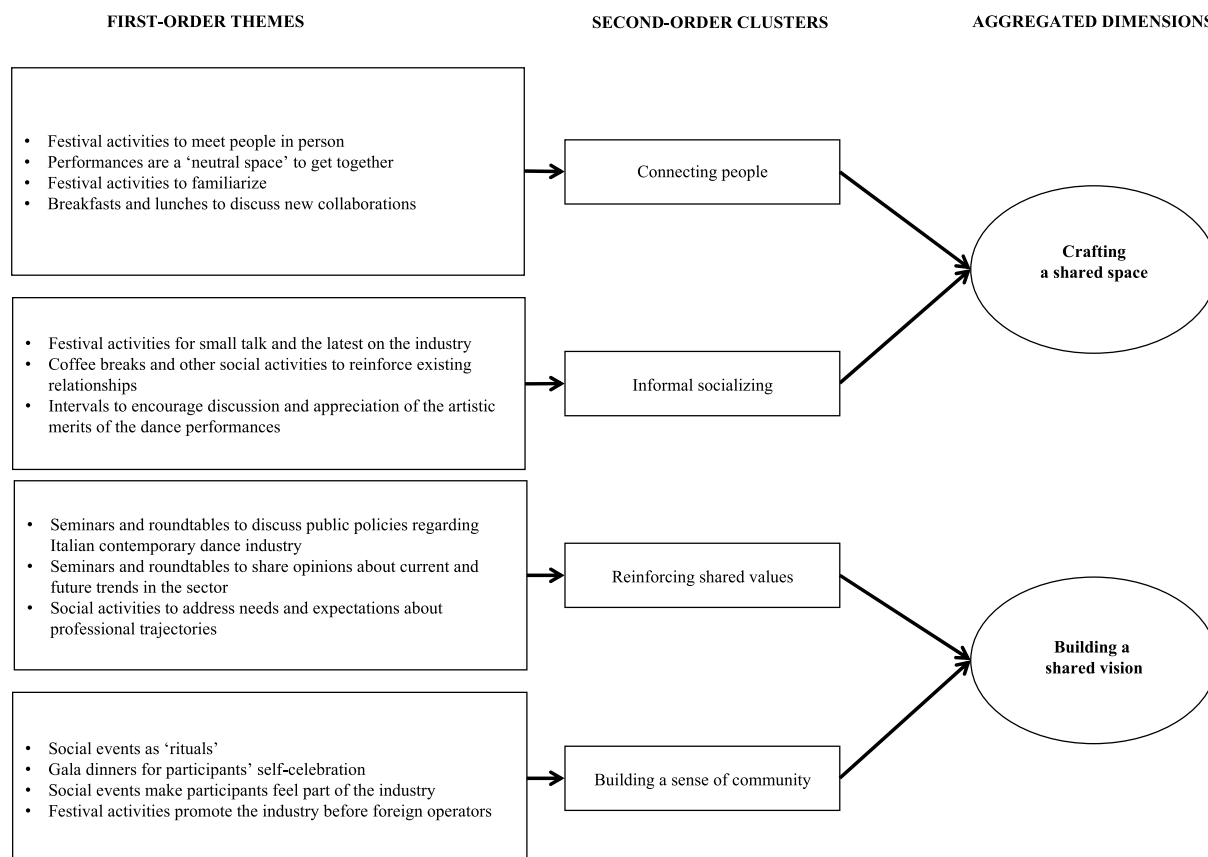


Fig.1. Data structure.

Table 3

Motivation to attend the festival and satisfaction of the festival per group.

	Respondents from this group on total	Motivation				Satisfaction						
		Place to be	Visibility	Business	Inspiration	Staff behavior	Availability of information	Accessibility of locations	Main program	Collateral Program	General Experience	Quality of the shows
Operators	51%	5,5	4,4	4,8	5,5	6,1	5,7	5,8	5,7	6,0	5,7	4,8
Dance company	27%	5,6	5,8	5,7	4,3	6,0	5,8	5,4	5,2	5,1	5,3	4,6
Press	7%	4,6	2,3	1,6	4,3	5,8	5,8	6,1	5,4	4,6	5,4	4,1
Public administration	7%	6,5	3,1	4,3	5,4	6,9	6,7	6,4	6,1	6,4	6,5	5,3
Independent artists	4%	5,3	3,5	3,3	3,8	5,8	5,8	5,7	4,5	3,5	5,5	3,8
Other professionals	3%	4,3	2,8	5,5	5,0	6,2	5,8	6,2	6,0	5,7	5,7	5,3
Average	–	5,3	3,7	4,2	4,7	6,1	5,9	5,9	5,5	5,2	5,7	4,7

Table 4
Correlations between variables.

	Staff Behavior	Availability of information	Space organization	Main Program organization	Collateral Program	Quality of the performance	General experience	Perceived image improvement
Staff Behavior	1							
Availability of information	0.756**	1						
Space organization	0.619**	0.591**	1					
Main Program organization	0.529**	0.530**	0.723**	1				
Collateral Program	0.350**	0.305**	0.516**	0.580**	1			
Quality of the performance	0.292**	0.189	0.399**	0.538**	0.357**	1		
General experience	0.566**	0.527**	0.622**	0.691**	0.604**	0.479**	1	
Perceived image improvement	0.153	0.099	0.184	0.258**	0.081	0.356**	0.311**	1

*P value = < 0.05.

** P value = < 0.01.

informants, we randomly selected a sample of 100 individuals from the database of attendees that the organizers provided to us. The sample reflected the diversity of profiles emerged from the survey in terms of jobs, experience of past editions of NID, gender, and provenience. We then selected a convenience sample (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016) of 50 professionals that were more easily accessible. We contacted them via email and, of all the informants we approached, 14 initially agreed to participate. We reached a final number of 12 professionals who fully collaborated, offering their time for the interview.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 min, were audio-recorded, and then transcribed. We asked interviewees about their professional backgrounds and their perception of NID. More precisely, we posed questions about the motivation to attend the festival, the level of satisfaction in terms of perceived quality of dance acts and other aspects of the festival (seminars, information and facilities, staff behaviors, etc.), and the main perceived impacts that the event generated within the Italian contemporary dance field.

In addition, we also interviewed twice (before the festival and few months after its closing) members of the organizing committee: namely, the general director of Aterballetto, the project manager of NID 2019, the director of Fondazione I Teatri, and a representative from MIBACT. While the interviews before the event were helpful to gain insights into the contemporary dance field and the festival, the interviews conducted after the event were focused on understanding interviewees' perceptions of the main results generated by the festival. In so doing, we asked for interviewees' feedback about the results of the survey, exchanging opinions about the potential effects of NID on attendees' perception of the image of the Italian contemporary dance field. Finally, we engaged in informal conversations with 10 attendees of dance shows who were approached just outside the premises of the theaters. These interviews were aimed at investigating the perception of NID among non-professional attendees. In particular, we asked their opinion about the performance they just attended, also trying to understand if they were a habitual audience of contemporary dance shows and if their perception of the Italian contemporary dance changed after the festival and why. Table 2 reports the complete list of interviewees.

We analyzed qualitative data conducting a line-by-line analysis of interview transcripts (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). More precisely, we coded any phrases, terms, or descriptions that related to interviewees' experience of the festival, comparing the emerged themes with the data obtained from other sources (observation notes, questionnaires, documents), looking for similarities and differences. In so doing, we identified 14 recurring first-order themes (see Fig. 1). Then, we looked at how these themes could be collapsed into higher-level conceptually distinct clusters, moving iteratively between the themes and the emerging patterns in our data until adequate second-order clusters emerged (Eisenhardt, 1989). More precisely, we grouped the 14 first-order themes into four clusters: *connecting people*, *informal socializing*, *building a sense of community*, and *reinforcing shared values*. The final step of the analysis involved organizing these clusters of themes into two aggregated dimensions that eventually reflected the mechanisms allowing the festival to generate a positive impact on the image of the field. The first dimension, *crafting a shared space*, reflects the role of the festival in creating a shared social space for the participants, while the second dimension, *building a shared vision*, emphasizes the role of the festival in building and consolidating a shared vision around Italian contemporary dance.

The use of multiple data collection methods allowed us to triangulate the data. In addition, having multiple researchers contributing to the data analysis and interpretation allowed us to independently read and code the transcripts, sharing and discussing impressions and interpretations of the preliminary results until we reached a common and strong understanding of the case.

4. Findings

In this section, we first report the results of our analysis of the survey to illustrate differences in the respondents and their experience of NID. Then, we introduce the analysis of the qualitative data.

Table 5
Crafting a shared space – additional quotes from the field.

Second-order clusters	First-order themes	Exemplar quotes
Connecting people	<i>Festival activities to meet people in person</i>	NID is a place for networking, for seeing people I was already in touch with (cit. Interv. #7)
	<i>Performances are a 'neutral space' to get-together</i>	We [artists] have the chance to attend the performances of other companies. We are neither on tour nor working, thus we are more relaxed. So, we are keen on getting in touch with colleagues who we already know or with foreign operators (cit. Interv. #2)
	<i>Festival activities to familiarize</i>	During the festival, there is an intense exchange of contacts. Of course, turning these contacts into actual contracts is no easy feat. It requires time, but meeting other people and exchanging emails is the first step (cit. Interv. #3)
	<i>Breakfasts and lunches to discuss new collaborations</i>	It was on that occasion [informal lunch] that I met a new choreographer and decided to invite him to the festival that I organize (cit. Interv. 10)
Informal socializing	<i>Festival activities for small talk and the latest on the industry</i>	During the breaks, we had the chance to talk about the latest works of certain choreographers, works that are still ongoing (cit. Interv. #9)
	<i>Coffee breaks and other social activities to reinforce existing relationships</i>	Operators like to go together for a coffee with friends and other colleagues between shows (cit. Interv. #3)
	<i>Intervals to encourage discussion and appreciation of the artistic merits of the dance performances</i>	The spontaneous encounters that you have during the breaks are very important to discuss the performances, what you liked and what you did not (cit. Interv. #4)

4.1. The analysis of the survey

Respondents perform different roles in the industry, including choreographers and managers of ballet companies, directors and employees of theaters, agents, representatives of festivals, and journalists (see Table 3). The majority (80%) were Italians. In particular, while all dance companies' representatives were from Italy, almost one-third of other operators were from other countries.

As illustrated in Table 3, respondents were mainly motivated to attend NID 2019 because they considered the event as a "place to be" (average = 5.3 on a 7-point scale), that allows to meet other professionals and build new relationships in the field (average = 5.6 on a 7-point scale), and where to be inspired (average = 4.7 on a 7-point scale). This latter motivating factor is particularly relevant for operators such as theater directors and managers or other festivals' directors (average = 5.5 on a 7-point scale), at the same time members of dance companies were mainly interested in increasing their visibility within the field (average = 5.8 on a 7-point scale) and exploiting business opportunities (average 5.7 on a 7-point scale).

Overall, participants show a high level of satisfaction for their general experience at NID 2019 (average = 5.7 on a 7-point scale). In particular, they appreciated the staff behaviors (average = 6.1), the availability of information (average = 5.7), the accessibility of the facilities (average = 5.7), and the organization of the program (average = 5.5). Attendees also appreciated the collateral program of social events such as the guided tour of the city and the informal breakfast with the operators, which took place during the festival (average satisfaction = 5.2 on a 7-point scale).

Analysis of questionnaires confirms the role of NID in favoring new collaborations. In fact, 45% of operators declared that they contacted at least one company during the event for a potential collaboration. Data also confirm that NID facilitates connections among attendees as 36% of respondents affirmed that they had the opportunity to meet new professionals during the event. In particular, attendees appreciated the dedicated stands for dance companies (average = 5.7), as they also provide a physical space where professionals can meet informally.

Finally, data from the survey suggest that NID is an event that can sustain the visibility of Italian contemporary dance (average = 5.6 on 7). Moreover, 45% of respondents declared that attending NID contributed to improving their perceived image of Italian contemporary dance (while 47% declared that their perception remained unchanged). More specifically, data reveal (see Table 4) that certain aspects of the event such as the quality of the performances ($\rho = 0.356, p < 0.01$), the main program organization ($\rho = 0.258, p < 0.01$), and the general experience of the festival ($\rho = 0.311, p < 0.01$), are significantly and positively correlated to an improved image of Italian contemporary dance.

These results suggest how these aspects in the festival experience are important for the attendees in improving the image of their field. Through the analysis of interviews we sought to understand the mechanisms that could explain how a festival could lead to such an improvement.

4.2. The impact of NID on the image of Italian contemporary dance

In line with the results of the survey, the analysis of the interviews confirmed that attendees seem to have an improved image when they are satisfied of their experience at the festival. The quality of the program is one of the elements that contributed to increasing professionals' satisfaction: "I am quite satisfied with how NID evolved over the years. The last one was s an exciting edition, the most robust, artistically speaking" (cit. Interv. #11). Consistently with the results from the survey, interviewees acknowledged the "high quality of the dance acts staged during the festival" (cit. Interv. #4) and the capability of the organizing committee to propose a vast and multifaceted panorama reflecting the current contemporary Italian dance scenario appropriately: "the 2019 edition reflected the diversity in the Italian choreographic scene, proposing a focus on Italian companies coming from different regions and less prominent

Table 6
Building a shared vision – additional quotes from the field.

Second-order clusters	First-order themes	Exemplar quotes
Reinforcing shared values	<i>Seminars and roundtables to discuss public policies regarding Italian contemporary dance industry</i>	The contemporary dance system, from new productions to residences and distribution, is difficult to fully understand. NID offers moments to talk, reflect, and understand this system (cit. Interv. #1)
	<i>Seminars and roundtables to share opinions about current and future trends in the sector</i> <i>Social activities to address needs and expectations about professional trajectories</i>	I was very pleased to attend the roundtable on urban dance. It was a useful moment to reflect on what is going on in that scene (cit. Interv. #10) [At dinner] we discussed the problems that you have when you are going to retire from being a dancer: how it is difficult to become a choreographer or find other professional paths (cit. Interv. #4)
Building a sense of community	<i>Social events as 'rituals'</i> <i>Gala dinners for participants' self-celebration</i>	These events are a liturgy to attend every edition (cit. Interv. #9) The gala dinner is a 'goliardic' moment where we have fun all together. We sort of celebrate the end of the festival and all the experienced good moments (cit. Interv. #3)
	<i>Social events make participants feel part of the industry</i>	Dancing at the final party with other colleagues really made me feel part of a community: people working in the Italian contemporary dance field (cit. Interv. #4)
	<i>Festival activities promote the industry before foreign operators</i>	We attended the breakfast with the foreign operators, which was organized on the last morning. It was really interesting as it gave us a chance to talk about our companies and receive feedback from people who do not work in Italy (cit. Interv. #3)

cities, where dance has less visibility...not the usual Rome and Florence" (cit. Interv. #5).

Moreover, all interviewees agreed that NID offered the opportunity to see different works, "some more developed, others still ongoing" (cit. Interv. #13), eventually being impressed by the vitality of the Italian dance industry: "This experience gave me the impression that the industry is abuzz: not only the 'usual suspects', but a lot of young artists working on interesting projects" (cit. Interv. #6).

The possibility to appreciate the multifaceted nature of Italian contemporary dance sustains the perception that NID plays a key role in supporting the field in "gaining recognition in a country [Italy] where the image of dance is usually related to opera and classic ballet" (cit. Interv. #2). Moreover, interviewees thought of NID as "an event that you cannot miss" (cit. Interv. #9), as it offers several professional opportunities: "three days of continuous interactions with other professionals, a lot of chances to start new collaborations" (cit. Interv. #3).

Besides confirming the role of the festival in improving the image of Italian contemporary dance, the analysis of the interviews reveals that NID contributed to this result by providing attending professionals with the opportunity to conduct two main groups of activities, *crafting a shared space* and *building a shared vision*. These activities play a key role in affecting the social and cognitive mechanisms through which attendees construe and share a defined image of Italian contemporary dance. Indeed, through these activities attendees collectively construct their image of Italian contemporary dance and then share it with other professionals during the festival. In the following paragraphs, we describe these groups of activities in detail.

4.3. *Crafting a shared space*

Crafting a shared space (see Table 5) includes all the activities that NID offers to attendees in order to create a sort of "public space where they could meet other participants, talk to them, and share experiences and thoughts" (cit. Interv. #14). To this end, a key role is played by all the activities aimed at sustaining the development and maintenance of social ties among participants. These activities could be clustered in two groups that emerged from the analysis: connecting people and informal socializing.

Connecting people relates to all those activities that NID offers to the professionals attending the festival in order to facilitate the development of new relationships (both artistic and business) among them. These activities include a wide array of events and occasions such as the pitching service and the dedicated booths for the dance companies. All interviewees agreed that these activities are key "to get in contact with professionals with whom [you] have no ties" (cit. Interv. #8). Indeed, they serve "to break the ice between people who do not know each other" (cit. Interv. #14), thus facilitating networking, which, in turn, is key to opening up new job opportunities and collaborations. To illustrate, a dance company's programming manager noted: "Today, relational work is fundamental in our field. Social relations and exchanges that could take place in these occasions [pitching events] represent a starting point for developing something else" (cit. Interv. #2). This is especially important for "less-known companies that can gain more visibility" (cit. Interv. #12). Similarly, interviewees mentioned Open Studios as an occasion that facilitates interactions between established actors and more peripheral ones: "they give the opportunity to know what emerging artists are working on" (cit. Interv. #7).

Even though the fast pace of the events scheduled during the festival does not leave much time for spontaneous interactions, interviewees expect that the next edition of NID will provide additional occasions for connecting with other operators: "I would suggest even more moments for connecting people, for example allocating time slots to one-to-one encounters between operators and companies. Twenty seconds are more than enough to exchange contact details and build a connection" (cit. Interv. #3).

Informal socializing relates to all "those convivial moments, where you can interact with others" (cit. Interv. #3), including dinners, social events, and even performances: "the funny fact is that the seats in the theaters were in alphabetical order, so we were always sitting next to the same operators, and we had the chance to talk before and after the shows" (cit. Interv. #12). All interviewees agree that informal socializing favors serendipitous encounters among participants, thus creating "the right environment to consolidate relationships" (cit. Interv. #1). Italian contemporary dance is a niche field where many professionals are already connected but they have rarely the chance to meet and exchange ideas beyond such events. Therefore, as a manager of dance company mentioned, "NID offers to the participants the only occasion to be all together with our colleagues in one place [...] it is the chance to talk with and receive tips also from foreign operators" (cit. Interv. #3). Informal socializing also helps people gather with colleagues and friends that otherwise would be difficult to meet: "For all of us, NID represents an occasion to meet colleagues, develop common ideas, and exchange opinions. You share far more in those three, four days than you could achieve in many months" (cit. Interv. #12).

In sum, crafting a shared space consists of a group of activities that individuals carry out during the festival and that contribute to the development of a positive image of Italian contemporary dance. Indeed, by being both facilitated in establishing ties with new contacts and strengthening already existing ones, attendees "spend three beautiful days in a positive environment" (cit. Interv. #14) and "leave the premises of the festival with the perception that the Italian contemporary dance is a cohesive field" (cit. Interv. #8), where individuals are open to collaboration and can get easily in contact with each other.

4.4. *Building a shared vision*

Building a shared vision includes all the activities that NID offers to attendees to build and consolidate a shared vision about the evaluation criteria and norms of behavior that are accepted within the Italian contemporary dance field (see Table 6). Thus, attendees refer to the festival as a "sort of institutional showcase" (cit. Interv. #4), in other words, an occasion where different actors meet and share different opinions and viewpoints about current trends and the future evolution of the Italian dance industry. These activities can be clustered into two groups: reinforcing shared values and building a sense of community.

Reinforcing shared values relates to all those activities that the festival offers to attendees to share with others their expectations

and opinions about the artistic trends of Italian contemporary dance: “NID provides a good overview of the Italian panorama, with its different styles and poetics. This is really helpful, especially for foreign operators as they can confront different ideas and perspectives” (cit. Interv. #3). These activities include events and occasions such as round tables, seminars, and performances. Concerning the latter, interviewees noted that the dance acts program is key to communicating the evaluation criteria that are “currently shared within the field” (cit. Interv. #11). In this sense, interviewees agreed that the festival “provides a choral recognition to the companies selected to perform” (cit. Interv. #9). As a result, attending the festival helps professionals to keep up with current and future artistic trends: “you see the selected performances and then you understand ‘where the wind blows’” (cit. Interv. #12).

Activities such as seminars and roundtables are particularly relevant for young actors, foreign operators, and professionals at their first edition, as they are key to helping them understand “how the Italian system works in terms of co-production, public funding, or artist residences” (cit. Interv. #4). In particular, informal talks after seminars and roundtables allow attendees to align to the standards of behaviors and values that are shared “in a particular historical moment within the field” (cit. Interv. #4). As the manager of a dance company suggested:

NID has become over the years a place where professionals can reflect on how the Italian system works; it is a sort of collective symposium where we talk and share our reflections about what is interesting and what is not, what could work from a business viewpoint and what doesn't (cit. Interv. #1).

Building a sense of community relates to all those activities that provide “the occasion to reinforce the feeling of working in the same field” (cit. Interv. #14). These activities include all the ritual behaviors and moments of celebration that make different individuals feel part of the same professional community. Examples include the distribution of branded gadgets to attendees (i.e., pens, mugs, and the shopper bag) and the celebration of the field during the Saturday night gala dinner where prizes and mentions are assigned. For example, as a festival director noted: “every day we went as first thing in the morning where the dance companies had their stands, we gathered there every day, at the same time, performing a sort of shared liturgy” (cit. Interv. #7).

These activities convey a symbolic representation of NID as a “ritual to attend, where you can reinforce your image, both as an artist and as an operator, and the image of Italian contemporary dance as well” (cit. Interv. #3). Ritual behaviors and celebration activities sustain positive emotions in participants and contribute to recognizing insiders of the field from outsiders: “I always feel good when strolling around the host city I spot people with the same NID shopper” (cit. Interv. #1). Moreover, the repetition of these ritual behaviors over time becomes a celebrative tradition of the community, elevating the image of Italian contemporary dance in the eyes of foreign operators. In this sense, the gala is key as: “it is always on Saturday night, at the end of the festival; in that occasion, everybody feels really free from job constraints and just wants to meet to celebrate with others” (cit. Interv. #3).

In sum, building a shared vision contributes to developing among participants a positive image of the Italian contemporary dance field. Indeed, by reinforcing shared values and building a sense of community, attendees become more aware of the internal dynamics of the field and develop a stronger sense of belonging to an attractive and vibrant cultural field, which is especially necessary for “a small dance system that is looking for an institutional profile” (cit. Interv. #4).

5. Discussion and conclusions

This study sheds new light on the impact that festivals generate on the celebrated cultural industry. Based on a case study drawing on multiple data sources, this paper highlights how festivals could improve the celebrated cultural industry's image as perceived by the professionals attending the event. In particular, findings sustain the idea that festivals sustain the image of the celebrated cultural industry by means of activities that the attending professionals conduct during the event. We sort these activities into two groups: *crafting a shared space* and *building a shared vision*. Findings suggest that these activities trigger the social and cognitive dynamics crucial for the attending professionals to construe and share a defined image of the cultural field they belong to.

Specifically, the first set of activities (i.e., crafting a shared space) highlights the social dynamics that promote interactions between different field members attending the event, allowing them to connect with each other and conduct informal socializing. In particular, social activities help attending professionals identify potential business partners, acquire information about them, and make initial contacts. Similarly, informal talks and the exchange of information are key in strengthening already existing relationships. As a result, crafting a shared space helps participants develop a positive image of their cultural field as it sustains in the attending professionals the perception of being embedded in a cohesive cultural field, in which it is easy to connect with other actors and develop relations. Such a perception supports the development of a sense of psychological safety, which helps individuals perceive supportive contextual conditions (Edmondson, 1999). When individuals perceive to operate within these conditions, they feel keen on proposing creative ideas without perceiving a risk of rejection or opportunism, thus feeding the ground for potential future collaborations (Kessel, Kratzer & Schultz, 2012; Parke, Seo, Hu, & Jin, 2021; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017).

The second set of activities (i.e., building a shared vision) fosters the cognitive dynamics leading to a common understanding around a field's values and expectations on its future trajectory, as well as to a common definition of standards of behaviors (see also Anand & Jones, 2008). In particular, building a shared vision allows the members of a field to share those constitutive aspects that are crucial to forging eventually the collective identity of the field, mirrored in the field image. Thus, building a shared vision promotes individual awareness of the values shared within a field, reinforcing a sense of belonging to the same professional community. When individuals perceive such a sense of belonging, they feel emotionally connected and committed to support other members of their cultural industry. As a result, building a shared vision helps participants develop a positive image of their cultural field as it sustains among them the perception of belonging to a professional community with which they share values, standards of behaviors, and expectations.

This study offers two main contributions. First, we contributed to expanding on festival research (Getz & Page, 2016; Quinn, 2009; Wilson et al., 2017), calling attention to the impacts that festivals generate on the image of the celebrated cultural industry. While previous studies have extensively considered the festivals' impact on local territories in economic, social, cultural, and environmental terms (e.g., Collins & Cooper, 2017; Delamere et al., 2001; Dwyer & Jago, 2019; >Wilmersdörffer & Schlicher, 2018 we highlighted the key role of festivals in sustaining a positive image the celebrated cultural industry among the attending professionals. More specifically, we showed how festivals can act as platforms of social and cognitive dynamics, by providing attending professionals with two sets of activities that help them improve the image of their field. Understanding how festivals help professionals develop a positive image of their cultural industry is important to broaden our comprehension of the role played by festivals in supporting the celebrated cultural industry. Besides sustaining the perceived legitimacy of the field before external actors, having a positive image helps attendees support their professional identity and contain the chronic uncertainty and precariousness usually experienced in cultural industries. (For similar considerations in other contexts, see Petriglieri, Ashford & Wrzesniewski, 2019) Furthermore, when professionals have a positive image of their industry, they feel more motivated in developing their artistic projects as well as sharing ideas and starting collaborations with other members of the field.

The second contribution relates to the literature on field-configuring events (e.g., Anand & Jones, 2008; Moeran & Pedersen, 2011). Specifically, this paper enhances our understanding of FCEs as crucial platforms that influence the image of the celebrated cultural field. While previous studies have so far enlightened how festivals represent occasions for field members to form a collective identity and connect to it (Martin, 2014; Gorbatai et al., 2021), we propose a complementary standpoint that delve into the subjective experience of field members attending a festival. Indeed, understanding how festivals sustain the image of a cultural industry contributes to a more fine-grained understanding of how attending professionals perceive their cultural field, and how such a perception affects their behaviors supporting their field.

This study has some limitations, which also point to avenues for further research. For example, we collected data immediately after the end of a festival. Thus, further longitudinal research would help understand if the impact of a festival on the image of a cultural industry has a long-term effect and how it evolves. In addition, our study considered only one edition of the investigated festival. Hence, it would be interesting to monitor how different editions of the same event can generate different impacts on the image of a cultural industry and which elements influence potential changes in the results. Another limitation relates to the characteristics of the selected festival. While we analyzed a biennial event celebrating a niche cultural field, it would be intriguing to analyze other contexts, such as festivals in more established cultural fields or in other national contexts. Finally, it would be interesting to adopt quantitative methodologies to analyze how different characteristics of the emerged activities generate different impacts on the image of the celebrated cultural industry.

Despite these limitations, this study also has several managerial implications for both festival organizers and policymakers. For example, our findings highlight specific activities that a festival should deploy to sustain the development of a positive image among attending professionals. In particular, the importance of sustaining social dynamics among a festival's participants and the need for dedicated spaces for discussion to foster social networking. Accordingly, festival managers could organize informal moments of interaction such as coffee breaks, social dinners, or tours of the host city. This could give professionals a chance to build or strengthen connections, so as to share ideas and expectations, and also set the stage for prospective collaborations. Still staying with festival managers, they may want to enrich festivals with symbolic and ritualistic activities that could help transform the festival into a ritual itself that professionals are eager to attend. Finally, the data show the aspects of a festival that contribute to a higher satisfaction and suggest how these elements become key aspects to sustain the image of the cultural field – which should encourage festivals organizers to offer a high-quality experience to attendants.

As far as policy-making implications are concerned, this study emphasizes the primary role of festivals in sustaining the celebrated cultural industry, suggesting festivals as strategic tools for sustaining the visibility and the development of small, niche cultural fields, which often struggle to attract relevant resources. In this sense, while policymakers usually conceive festivals as a driver to increase tourist flows or foster community cohesion, we have showed how they could leverage on festivals to expand the audience and engage new professionals that can start collaborating with other cultural producers. Last, the positive image emerging from festivals can also become a powerful driver to attract international professionals to the host territory, with potential benefits for both the celebrated cultural industry and local economy.

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Annex 1. The Survey

- Gender
- Age
- Provenience
- Education
- Job

- Did you know NID Platform before attending this edition?
- Was NID Platform 2019 your first edition?
 - 1 Please indicate the reason for your participation to NID Platform 2019 indicating your level of agreement (on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “I completely disagree” and 7 “I completely agree”) to the following statements:
 - Because NID is a place to be
 - To get visibility
 - For business/commercial reasons
 - To be inspired on future projects
 - Other (please specify)
 - 1 Please indicate how much you were satisfied during NID Platform 2019 indicating your level of satisfaction (on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “Not satisfied at all” and 7 “Extremely satisfied”) to the following elements:
 - Staff behavior
 - Availability of information (for example how to reach locations)
 - Organization of the space
 - Organization of the Main Program
 - Collateral program (British Breakfast, Promoters Breakfast, Canada & Quebec...)
 - Quality of the performances
 - General experience of NID 2019
 - 1 Please specify the three performances that you preferred the most
 - 2 Do you think that thanks to NID Platform 2019 your perception of Italian contemporary dance?
 - Improved
 - Worsted
 - Did not change
 - 1 Thanks to NID Platform 2019, did you discover any new trend in Italian contemporary dance)?

Yes or No

- 1 Please indicate your level of agreement (on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “I completely disagree” and 7 “I completely agree”) to the following statements:
 - NID Platform 2019 respected my expectations
 - NID Platform is a good business card for Italian contemporary dance
 - NID Platform gives more visibility to Italian contemporary dance
 - NID Platform allow an increase in the relationship in Italian contemporary dance
 - NID Platform provides a value added for Italian contemporary dance
 - 1 Thanks to NID 2019, how many new artists/operators have you contacted so far?
 - 2 During NID 2019, how many operators asked you to collaborate/to how many artists you asked to collaborate?
 - 3 (Only for company representatives) During or after NID, did you receive any proposals to collaborate? If yes how many?
 - 4 (Only for operators) During or after NID, did you make any proposal of collaboration to the artists? If yes, how many?
 - 5 After NID, how many collaborations/contracts have you concluded?
 - 6 If you used the “Desk” service, please indicate your level of satisfaction from 1 to 7 (1 means completely unsatisfied and 7 completely satisfied)
 - 7 Will you attend next edition of NID? If no, why?
 - 8 What would you improve in the next editions?

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