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EVIDENCE BRIEF
NOVEMBER 2026

EVIDENCE BRIEF · INDUSTRY EVENTS AND MARKETS

Festivals Crown Their Fields

How do festivals configure cultural fields?

Cannes accredited more than 25,000 industry guests from 123 countries in 2010, and festivals decide which films, books and artists the world notices. Studies of the Busan festival, the international festival system, documentary forums, the Booker Prize and art biennials show how festivals configure cultural fields.

By Eventamin · How we work 12 November 2026

South Korea, France, UK, Nordic countries, Worldwide

5 studies

film festivals | cultural industries | Busan International Film Festival | Cannes | Booker Prize | biennials | festival accreditation | documentary film market | creative industries | festival circuit

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KEY FINDING

Festivals configure cultural fields through selection, prizes, accreditation and their place in the calendar: Busan grew together with Korean cinema, the Booker Prize defined a category, and accreditation ranks festivals. They rarely repeat the same artists, but every festival favors its own country and region.

Five studies, 2008–2017

Key findings

- **Busan grew with Korean cinema.** Between 1996 and 2012, the Busan International Film Festival grew from 224 to 11,519 invited guests, while Korean films' share of their home market rose from 23.1 percent in 1996 to 63.8 percent in 2006[1].
- **Festivals co-evolve with their industry.** The festival was not the only reason for Korean cinema's success; it added a project market, a film market and an academy as the industry grew[1].
- **Accreditation ranks festivals.** The international federation of film producers accredited 49 festivals, 12 of them on its top tier, and its accreditation works as a stamp of quality and prestige[2].
- **Prizes create categories.** The Booker Prize configured contemporary English-language fiction by championing post-colonial literature[3].
- **Festivals favor home, not repeats.** At four major biennials, 85 percent of artists took part in only one edition, but every event favored artists from its own country and region[4].

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FOR THE MARKET

Market outcomes

What the studies mean for each part of the industry.

Organisers & associations	A festival's influence rests on selection, juries and prizes, and grows with markets and training programs that serve its industry; reputation attracts the best work, which raises reputation further. Positioning in the calendar decides which professionals come.
Venues & destinations	Festivals and their host cities grow together: Busan's demand for screens led to a dedicated cinema center. A festival that anchors a national industry also anchors the city's cultural brand.
Investors & advisers	Festival selection and prizes act as quality signals for distribution and financing; a place in an official selection almost guarantees distribution in major markets.

Festivals at the heart of cultural industries

Cultural industries meet at festivals. In 2010, Cannes accredited 25,369 industry guests from 123 countries, among them 4,338 distributors and 4,479 producers; its film market showed 876 films, and 3,767 journalists from 88 countries covered the festival[1]. A place in the official selection almost guarantees distribution in France, most of Europe and North America[1].

Studies of festivals in film, documentary, literature and the arts show how such events shape whole fields.

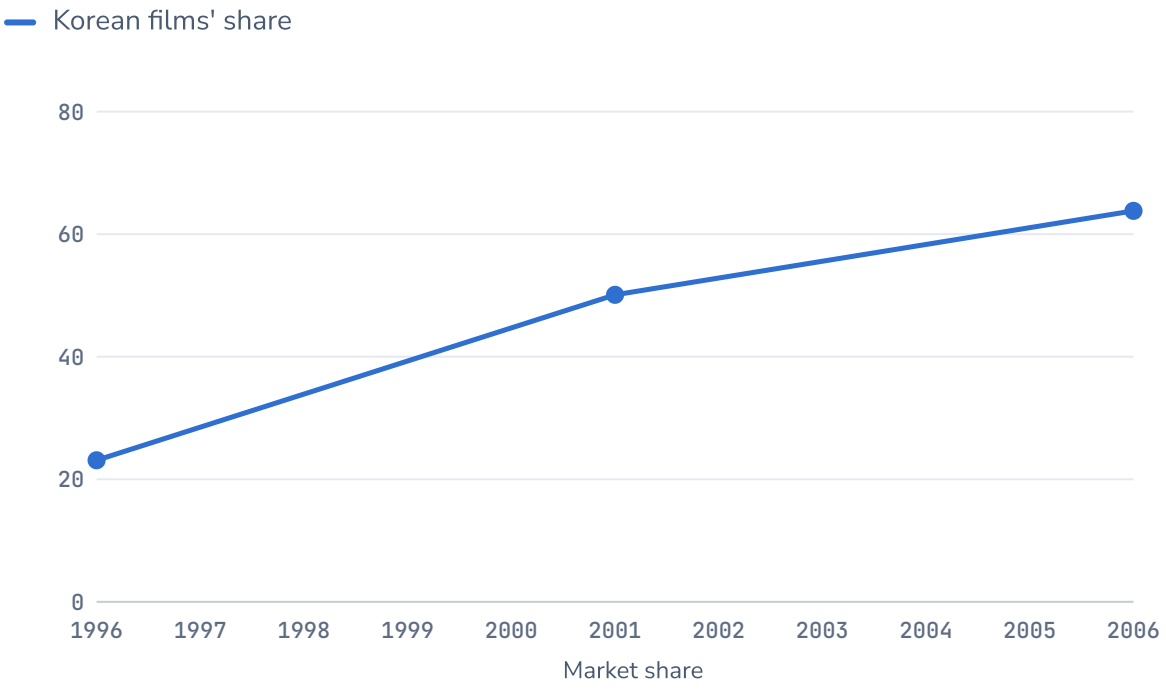
Busan and Korean cinema

The Busan International Film Festival grew together with Korean cinema. Founded in 1996, it expanded from 169 films and 224 invited guests to 304 films and 11,519 invited guests in 2012[1]. Over the same period, Korean films took a growing share of their home market, from 23.1 percent in 1996 to 50.1 percent in 2001 and 63.8 percent in 2006[1].

The festival was not the only cause. Festival and industry grew in parallel, and many of the festival's additions, from a project market and a film market to a film academy and master classes, responded to the industry's growth[1]. The relationship extended to the city: screen shortages at the festival led to the Busan Cinema Center[1].

Market share of Korean films in South Korea in selected years from 1996 to 2006

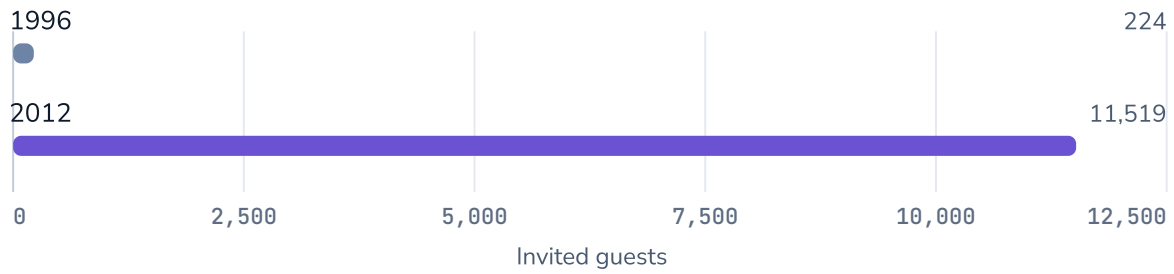
Share of the domestic film market.



Source: Bossa (Concordia University), citing Korean film industry data · Release date: 2013 · Region: South Korea · Period: 1996 to 2006

Number of invited guests at the Busan International Film Festival in 1996 and 2012

Number of invited guests.



Source: Bossa (Concordia University), citing festival statistics · Release date: 2013 · Region: South Korea (Busan)

Accreditation, juries and reputation

The film festival field has its own ranking system. The international federation of film producers, FIAPF, accredited 49 festivals, among them 12 competitive festivals on its top tier, such as Berlin, Cannes and Venice, and 26 specialized competitive festivals[2]. Its accreditation sets standards for international selection and juries, press facilities and support for local industry, and works as a stamp of quality and prestige; only one U.S. festival held it[2].

Reputation reinforces itself. A strong reputation attracts the best films and premieres and well-known filmmakers, which raise the festival's reputation further[2]. Festivals compete to recruit jurors, who are often former winners[2].

Prizes and categories

Prizes can define what counts in a field. The Booker Prize configured contemporary English-language fiction by championing post-colonial literature as a distinct category[3]. Its organizers stirred controversy to back the award's claim to innovation[3].

The documentary circuit

Festivals also organize the trade around them. Documentary professionals follow a core circuit of the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, Sheffield Doc/Fest and Hot Docs in Toronto, with the Nordisk Forum as a regional node[5]. The forums compete for decision-makers through their calendar and the range of projects they show, from IDFA's 50 projects from 30 countries to the Nordisk Forum's mostly Nordic financiers[5].

Digital formats help but do not replace the forum. An online panel did in four hours what used to take two days, but without the dynamic discussion of a meeting, and professionals preferred the first contact in person[5].

FORUM	SCALE	PROFILE
IDFA, Amsterdam	Around 50 projects from 30 countries, 400 professionals[5]	Named by all interviewees; late November[5]
Sheffield Doc/Fest	64 projects from 20 countries, 210 professionals[5]	Nearly half of professionals from the UK; early June[5]
Hot Docs, Toronto (2011)	27 projects from 12 countries[5]	Canada and the U.S. more than 60 percent of decision-makers[5]
Nordisk Forum (2010)	42 decision-makers, 12 international[5]	More than 70 percent Nordic; late September[5]

Diversity and home advantage

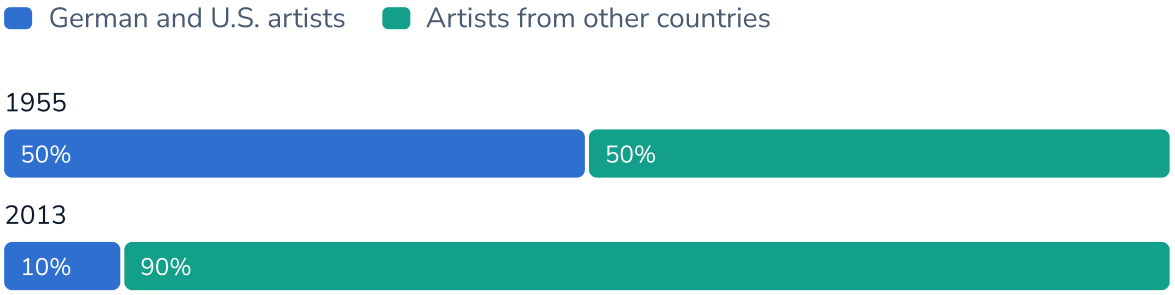
Global arts events rarely invite the same artists twice. Across 12 biennials and festivals in visual arts, theater and dance and new media, around 40,000 entries showed that 85 percent of biennial artists took part in only one edition, and around 94 percent of plays at four theater festivals were performed only once[4].

Every event favored its own country and region. At documenta in Kassel, German and U.S. artists made up around half of the participants in 1955 and around 10

percent in 2013, as the exhibition became more international, yet Germany still had the largest share over its history[4].

Share of German and U.S. artists at documenta in 1955 and 2013

Approximate share of participating artists.



Source: Morgner · Release date: 2017 · Region: Germany (Kassel) · Data: exhibition catalogues

Notes on the data

The figures are based on five studies published between 2008 and 2017: a master's thesis on the Busan festival built on secondary sources, a doctoral thesis on 25 accredited film festivals, a master's thesis with nine interviews at a documentary forum, an archival study of the Booker Prize available to Eventamin as an abstract, and a comparison of around 40,000 entries from 12 arts events[1–5]. Market share figures for Korean films are cited from industry sources in the Busan study and show correlation, not cause. Shares at documenta are approximate.

Sources

● Study ○ Industry source

1 Bossa, R. (2013). The Busan International Film Festival as a Field-Configuring Event: How a festival redefined Korea's film culture both locally and globally [Master's thesis]. *Concordia University*. First-hand

2 Nadavulakere, S. S. (2008). International Film Festivals as Field-Configuring Events [Doctoral thesis]. *City University London*. First-hand

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3 Anand, N., & Jones, B. C. (2008). Tournament Rituals, Category Dynamics, and Field Configuration: The Case of the Booker Prize [Journal article]. *Journal of Management Studies, 45(6), 1036–1060*. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2008.00782.x First-hand

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5 Vilhjálmsdóttir, L. (2011). A documentary film festival circuit and film festivals as field-configuring events, adapting to digitalization (title page epigraph from an interviewee: "... to get together and to really talk about strategies,") [Master's thesis]. *Bifröst University*. First-hand

The evidence

●●●●● 5 studies

SAMPLE

Five studies: a history of the Busan festival, a thesis on 25 accredited film festivals, nine interviews at a documentary forum, an archival study of the Booker Prize and around 40,000 entries from 12 arts events

YEARS

2008–2017

METHOD

Historical and archival case studies, regression on festival data, interviews and observation, a quantitative comparison of biennials and festivals



About Eventamin

Eventamin reads the peer-reviewed research on events, exhibitions and hospitality, sets it against industry data and states what it means for the market. Every brief is published by Eventamin as an organisation: its sources, method and corrections are open.

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