

Festivals: an emerging hub of the global creative industries, or a reaction against globalisation?

Recent decades have seen increasing attention focussed on the creative industries by economists and management scholars (Hirsch, 2000; Caves, 2000; Jones *et al.* 2015). Business historians, too, have made detailed investigations of sectors such as fashion (Blaszczyk and Pouillard, 2018), film (Bakker, 2008); music (Gourvish and Tennent, 2010) and publishing (Cox and Mowatt, 2014). Such studies have shown how these economic sectors evolved, and have highlighted the distinctive business practices that often pervaded these industries. Festivals constitute one such form of business activity which is common to many creative sectors, yet which has (to my knowledge) not been subject to detailed historical investigation. This paper argues that a business of festivals has much to teach us about the evolution of the creative economy, and maps out a research agenda.

There are (at least) two distinct lines of enquiry for a business history of festivals to pursue. The first is to trace the history of festivals as business enterprises in their own right. Events such as the Hay festival of literature and arts, or South-by-Southwest have expanded rapidly since their origins in the late 1980s, and now constitute global brands in their own right (Hay Festival Cartagena will be taking place just prior to the 2019 meeting of the BHC). In sectors such as music and publishing, festivals that were once seen as peripheral to the industry (or even explicitly anti-capitalist in their ethos), have now become a much more central feature of the business model. What has this meant for the firms that manage these events?

A second line of enquiry is to investigate festivals in terms of their economic function within creative industries more widely. In this sense we can think about festivals as temporary industry clusters, which coalesce in different global cities at pre-arranged points in the calendar. Whether we are talking about film festivals moving from Cannes to Berlin to Toronto, or fashion shows from London to Milan to New York, the festival format seems to combine the agglomeration benefits of local concentration with close interaction with different international markets.

Festivals, then, present valuable case studies for the business historian interested in how creative businesses have sought to reconcile the trends towards globalisation with the need to maintain face-to-face relationships at a local level.

Peter Miskell, University of Reading

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