

The Impact of Literary Festivals on Boosting Tourist Activity: The Case of Escritaria

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Abstract: The growing awareness towards literary tourism has given it a gradual popularity, strengthening its role in the tourist offer in Portugal. Aware of this fact, we discuss, in this paper, the main initiatives of literary festivals in the country in the city of Penafiel. Experiences, images, and texts are increasingly important to achieve tourist realities. And it is through literary festivals that they are enhanced. Although event tourism has an increasingly interdisciplinary approach, the analysis of the literary experience is still scarce. The main goal of this article is to understand the experience provided by the literary festival ESCRITARIA which took place in 2022, holding its 15th edition. Therefore, a thorough literature review was done, as well as an exploratory and quantitative investigation. In addition, a data collection was carried out with a questionnaire designed to be answered online by the national and international participants in Escritaria. To understand Escritaria as a literary event proposal, one surveyed a sample of national and foreign participants in the festival; since it took place during the event, it allowed one to gauge the importance of literary events as an enhancing offer of the tourist activity. Starting from the sociodemographic profile of the participants, this study aims to understand the forms of participation, involvement and satisfaction. The results of the analysis highlight the growing importance of this type of events and this one, in particular, a festival that has been building loyalty and expanding its audience, an audience of national and international scope. This festival not only increases the number of tourists/visitors, but also enhances the destination promotion and marketing activities.

Keywords: Event tourism, Literary Tourism, Literary event, Literary festivals, Escritaria, Penafiel

1. Introduction

Literary tourism has been asserting itself as a tourist offer in Portugal, developing an increasingly diversified range of proposals, from which we highlight the literary festivals. Literary festivals have emerged as an important research area in tourism studies and remain a mainstream research topic today due to the increasing number of festivals that attract potential tourists (Choo et al., 2016; Getz, 2010; Getz and Page, 2016).

Literary “festivals can be studied as a part of cultural or event tourism or a stand-alone ‘festival tourism’. They are a reason for travel for potential tourists who want (...) to see different places, to know distinct societies and cultures, and learn something new” (Tekeli, 2023, 43).

In fact, literary festivals as any festival have a significant effect on attracting tourists and as a result, provide some competitive advantages to destinations, such as diversifying tourism products, providing an opportunity for interaction and reconciliation between participants, increasing destination attractiveness and awareness, creating also a destination image and helping the destination branding (Compton & Lee, 2000; Dimmock & Tiyce, 2001; Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003; Grappi & Montanari, 2011; Gürsoy et al, 2004; Litvin & Fetter, 2006; Yolal et al, 2012; Yolal et al, 2016; Tekeli, 2023)

Due to the importance of festivals in the development or rejuvenation of tourist destinations, researchers and practitioners alike have been particularly interested in studying and understanding tourists' intention to attend and revisit festivals. (Osti et al., 2012).

Considering the literary experience in the city of Penafiel through Escritaria over the last 15 years, this paper will focus on how to use this festival as an integrative proposal of literary tourism in Penafiel as a tourist destination. In order to explore this, a survey was conducted based on a sample of 81 national and international tourists, who visited the city between 16-23 October 2022; They were questioned about the program of the event, the activities offered and the connection between the festival Penafiel as touristic destination.

This study is a first approach to analyze this festival, which started in 2007, having increased annually its number of participants.

2. Festivals and Literary Tourism

The term "festival" comes from the Latin word *festum* (Falassi, 1987), which we can translate as *feast* or *festival* and, according to the most valuable Portuguese dictionary Priberam (2023), a festival is "a great feast, a civic manifestation". In fact, there are many definitions of festival, formulated at different times and in different scientific subjects. However, it should be highlighted that nowadays, there is not commonly accepted and precise definition of festival. (Frey, 2000; Hunyadi et al, 2006), Arcodia and Whitford (2006) state that festivals are currently among the most dynamic elements related to leisure and tourism. Indeed, among the most frequently cited definition in publications on event studies, Getz (1994 - cited in Davies and Brown, 200, p.162) states that festivals are "themed, public celebrations...(that) celebrate something that has value to the community...were created specifically to give people something to share, to inform them, to foster community pride..." in another work, Getz (2005, p.21) gives a very short definition: "a festival is a themed public celebration". Festivals understood as celebrations are a means of enlivening the city and engaging residents and visitors in activities that celebrate the city's culture and create a sense of place (Derrett, 2003). Cultural events and festivals can enhance cultural tourism within destinations by adding depth and diversity (Csapó, 2012) due to their ability to create a festive and celebratory atmosphere and the creation of lively and convivial festivals that increase the attractiveness of the place, bringing residents and non-locals together (Chen et al., 2019). The European Travel Commission reported that "festivals and cultural events are seen as an important part of cultural tourism marketing. In other words, they form an additional reason for cultural tourists to visit a place. Moreover they can raise its popularity in the shortlist of places that tourists consider as attractive destinations- Festivals and events are both effective instruments which attract first time visitors as well as repeat visitors because of the differential advantage they can offer". (2005, p. 44). Richards (2021) states that destinations have been making deliberate use of cultural festivals as a means of stimulating cultural tourism for decades. Indeed, tourism destinations have been developing festivals and events as a core tourism product for over 20 years (Getz, 2001) and today, as a result, several places carefully develop their image as festival and event destinations (McKercher, 2006). Festivals are treated as an important element in promoting cities and regions, a tourism asset and product, attracting tourists and encouraging them to spend their money. As such, festivals have also become important tools in tourism management in the last couple of years, particularly in stimulating off-season tourism since off-season festivals attract visitors when hotel rooms are empty and therefore can help extend the tourist season (Felsenstein & Fleischer, 2003). They become an important element of restructuring and development of certain areas and cities.

3. Literary Festivals

If there is no single definition for the word festival, defining literary festivals is equally complicated (Robertson and Yeoman, 2014). They are usually understood as a subset of cultural festivals (Discoll, 2014,2015). Giorgi (2011, p.12) suggests that they "are about the celebration of the written word in readings, discussions or debates". They are often regular (perhaps annual), gatherings of writers and readers.

One can say that literary festivals are a distinctive literary tourism experience because they offer an interactive way to experience literature. In fact, they are "public events where literary works are read and discussed by authors, experts, publishers, critics" (Sapiro, 2016, p. 12) and the public attending these events. Their programs involve readings, debates, conferences, talks, book launches, awards, performances, and tours. Literary festivals offer many benefits from the perspective of the writer, the reader, and the community in which they take place, thus becoming an increasingly significant component of literary tourism. Weber (2018, p. 147) describes how they "celebrate excellence and diversity in writing, promote and distribute literary culture and introduce new readers to new writers and new tourists to new towns". Meanwhile, McGuckin states that "a literary festival can help to build goodwill and community spirit within a local community as it creates new partnerships and enhances social connectivity. Furthermore, the marketing and branding of a literary festival can play a role in creating a distinctive image as cultural and/ or tourism destination for a city or a region" (2022, p.60)

As a marketing tool for the place, such festivals may also contribute to the development of natural and cultural heritage trails, which provide a wider tourism experience for visitors.

Literary festivals have been proliferating on national territory, playing an increasingly decisive role in the growth and development of localities given that, according to Hughes (2000), festivals, particularly artistic ones, such as literary ones, emerged with the function of promoting and disseminating, different forms of art and cultures, to allow everyone to engage with the arts, mainly in localities where occasions are scarce. In

addition, they create the opportunity for enthusiasts to share common interests and, naturally, attract tourists, since, depending on their dimension, theme and media projection, festivals, as cultural events, have the power to attract people to certain places, thus constituting a supporting activity for the development of a locality or country.

Literary festivals, or writers' festivals, are different from most other festivals dedicated to the arts and attract a diverse segment of visitors, and this is also one of the reasons why they are already part of many cultural agendas across the country.

Nowadays, many of these festivals have become a necessary form of book promotion and a commercial product. Alongside traditional author panels, interviews, readings and book launches, the organizers of these events schedule a wide range of complementary events to attract tourists as much as the book lover (Johanson and Freeman, 2012). Each literary festival has its own characteristics and even the same festival can change from one year to the next, modified depending on the themes, the writers, and/or the festival organizers. To distinguish themselves from others, some festivals focus on certain themes. There are literary festivals dedicated solely to romance novels, crime novels, travel writing, LGBT literature, children's books, science fiction, and fantasy (Eng, 2015). According to Ommundsen's (2009) work, festival audiences are generous and grateful, for the opportunity to meet their cultural heroes as well as other like-minded participants, but they are also highly individualistic audiences, and bring to the event expectations and attitudes fostered through previous personal encounters with authors and books. Participants seek a collective and social experience, often accompanied by a mission of a more personal nature, focused on the writer (taking the form of an intense investment in personality), as well as personality, as an extension of their work. Thus, the holding of literary festivals has been integrated into a strategy of diversification, in order to reach new segments of demand. These cultural events are dynamic tourism "products" that attract both tourists and investment, hence the need to adjust them to current tourism strategies, which is in line with the results presented by the Tourism Barometer (2023, p. 13), where the importance of "stimulating non-seasonal visits, through cultural programming and actions, as well as the integration of cultural assets and traditions in the promotion of the destination, were the main measures proposed, on the cultural side".

However, it is important to stress that Prentice and Andersen (2003) noted that only a minority of festival attendees are tourists, even in the case of large events. In some places, however, tourists can constitute an important audience segment, with festivals offering a window into local cultures to visitors (Richards, 2007).

Previous research has highlighted that while most cultural events have a relatively minor impact on attracting tourists, festivals can have other important effects. As McKercher et al. (2006) stated, although festivals may not act as attractions, their value of existence, for a destination like Penafiel, may exceed their value of use as a product. The current research attempts to analyze the impact of the literary festival *Escritaria*, in terms of visitor experience, the cultural image of Penafiel, and/or behavioural intentions such as revisiting or recommending.

4. Literary Tourism

Although it is not easy to find a definition of literary tourism that covers all its forms and dimensions, one can say that it is undoubtedly related to cultural tourism, visiting certain places, guided by literature.

Literature not only creates the desire in people's perception to visit places, but also inspires people to visit places where the book may have been written, or inspired, and the homes and graves of deceased authors. These literary tourists are inspired by the writer. In fact, as Sardo (2008) states "knowing the lives of writers, discovering convulsions of their thoughts (...) makes us want to move from books to discovering the places where they moved, awakens the desire to explore those spaces that their stories immortalised" (Sardo, 2008, p. 82).

Based on this reasoning, literature is signposting the culture, the customs of a place, or even the cultural, or natural, heritage of unique places and, therefore, empowering movement and travel and taken as a resource, which is why literary texts have the ability to provoke action in the reader and to "add tourist value to a place, [made a literary place] which, in turn, gives rise to some kind of tourist practice" (Baleiro and Quinteiro, 2014, p. 12).

The tourist travels to literary places, convinced that these places only exist because the author of the books who stimulated his imagination and desire to travel was/is real. In this sense, narrative fiction is the propeller of the tourist/reader, contributing to shape not only the places, but also the way the tourist will feel and live

them, which allows us to talk about tourist experience and that Walter Hugo characterizes so well, when he refers to his "intention to use the book as a machine to make one feel" (Mãe, 2015, p. 11).

5. Research Methodology

Escritaria takes place in Penafiel, which is about 37 kilometres from Porto. It is an annual literary festival that takes place in mid-October over 8 days. The festival has become a significant and well-attended literary event, attracting around one hundred visitors who are therefore able to participate in various conferences, musical activities, performances, dance, poetry, guided tours, and much more. Escritaria plays a crucial role in enhancing Penafiel's image as a tourist destination, not only by promoting Portuguese writers, but also by extending the tourist season in the city of Penafiel and the surrounding region.

The methodology was firstly based on a bibliographic review, to provide contextualization and theoretical foundations of the literary festival concept, based on recent studies. Therefore, a quantitative and qualitative study was carried out to understand the role of the Penafiel literary festival in the dynamization of the city and the region.

The quantitative research method used questionnaires to collect data. The population of this study is visitors of Escritaria 2022. The sample size was 81 visitors, which is almost 50% according to the total number of festival attendees in 2022. Escritaria estimated that about 160 visitors visited the festival in 2022.

The questionnaire designed for the survey and implemented as a Google Forms form, is divided into 3 parts, with a total of 16 closed questions: the first part - sociodemographic characterization - identifies the visitor/tourist, regarding age, gender, professional activity, area of residence, in particular in which territorial context (national or international) and their living area in national territory; the second part - Escritaria literary festival in 2022 - assesses the main reason for their interest in the festival, as well as the means through which they became aware of the event. Finally, the third and last part - Loyalty and impact of the festival Escritaria in the tourism of the region - the visitor's loyalty along the 15 editions of the literary festival and a visit to the cultural facilities of the city and the surrounding region, as well as the evaluation of Escritaria in relation to other national literary festivals.

To obtain the perception of local entities, 2 interviews were conducted with representatives of the management of the Municipal Museum of Penafiel and the Municipal Public Library of Penafiel. However, to enrich the discussion, three more interviews were conducted with Certified Tourist Guides who promote the Romanesque Route and who have a daily contact with the destination and its tourism resources.

6. The Escritaria Literary Festival: Presentation and Analysis of Results

Aware of the advantages of literary festivals in the dissemination and promotion of tourist destinations, in Portugal, the map of literary festivals spread throughout the country and is now present in more than one third of Portuguese municipalities.

"Escritaria" was created in Penafiel in 2008. It has built up public loyalty over the 15 editions since then and, in 2017, received the Award for Best Municipal Cultural Programming, awarded by the Portuguese Society of Authors.

As a particularity, this festival is the celebration of a living writer's work, who integrates a large part of the activities presented to the public, and which, as Ommudsen (2004) states, enhances a literary experience, humanising it, by allowing contact with the spiritual guru. Moreover, as he adds, "the media extend the intimate public sphere of the literary festival, promoting participation and personal connections that are not limited by time or geography. Emotional engagement with literary festivals has found new forms of expression (Driscoll. 2015, p. 863)

In 2022, celebrating its 15th edition, Ana Luisa Amaral was the honoured writer and her work served as the motto for a week of literary programming throughout the city. The festival had about two hundred visitors (national and foreign).

In recent years (following the Covid 19 pandemics), Escritaria, as well as other literary festivals, expanded their reach by using online and digital formats to attract and engage their audiences: These include live online conferences, recorded and user-generated content in addition to face-to-face activities.

7. Individual Participants' Profile

Analyzing Table 1, at the global level, the sample consists mostly of female individuals (71.6%). Regarding age, it is important to point out that all selected respondents were 15 years old or older. According to the table under analysis, age was grouped into different categories, with the goal of obtaining homogeneous amplitude groups. The last group was aggregated because the remaining ones contained few observations. After this codification, we observed that the youngest and elderly represent the smallest number of respondents, that is, those whose age, in this classification, is between 15 and 24 years old and the ones between 65 and 69 years-old represent respectively 4,9 and 3.7% of the respondents. The most representative is the adult's group (45-54 years) with 39,5 % of respondents. 80.2% of these respondents are Portuguese citizens and only 19,8% are Spanish people, which is in line with what Prentice and Andersen (2003) noted, that only a minority of festival attendees are tourists. In addition, we can affirm that the Portuguese are mainly between the ages of of 45 and 54 and the Spanish mainly from the previous group (35 to 44 years old). It is important to point out that the group of 70 and more is more significant among Spanish visitors than among national.

Table 1: Individual Profile

Tourist Guides		Frequency	%
Gender	Female	58	71,6
	Male	23	19,8
Age	15-24	4	4,9
	25-34	5	6,2
	35-44	15	18,5
	45-54	32	39,5
	55-64	8	9,9
	65-69	3	3,7
	70 +	14	17,3
Nacionality	Portugal	65	80,2
	- Amarante	2	2,5
	- Braga	1	1,2
	- Felgueiras	2	2,5
	- Marco	2	2,5
	- P. Ferreira	4	4,9
	- Paredes	3	3,7
	- Penafiel	7	8,6
	- Porto	38	46,9
	- Valongo	4	4,9
	Spain	16	19,8
	Outros	2	0,02
	Total		81

Source: Own elaboration

As one can confirm in table 1, most Portuguese respondents live in Porto and Penafiel (46.9% and 8,6% respectively). The remaining respondents live mainly in the surrounding municipalities of Penafiel: Marco, Amarante, Felgueiras, Paredes, Paços de Ferreira except for Braga which is located a little further north and represents 1,2 % of the respondents.

It should also be noted that, according to the data in figure 1, 38% of our respondents work in Education and 5% in related areas such as Libraries (3%) and Literature (2%). In addition, 2% work in Tourism and 3% in Journalism and Communication.

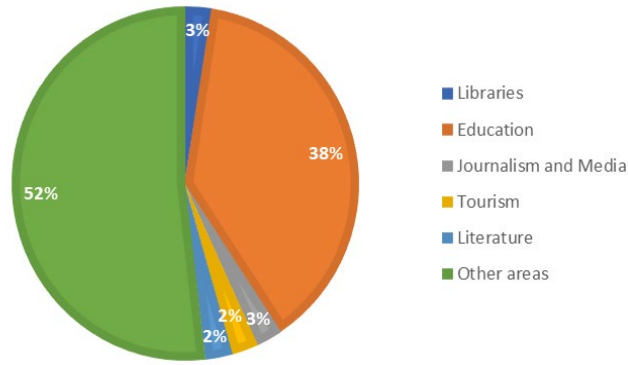


Figure 1: The Main Professional Activity. Source: Own Elaboration

This professional characterization is particularly interesting to understand the data in figure 2, which shows that most of the respondents refer cultural interest (47%) or personal interest (30%) to participate in Escritaria, in addition to 18% of the respondents expressing a professional interest in the festival.

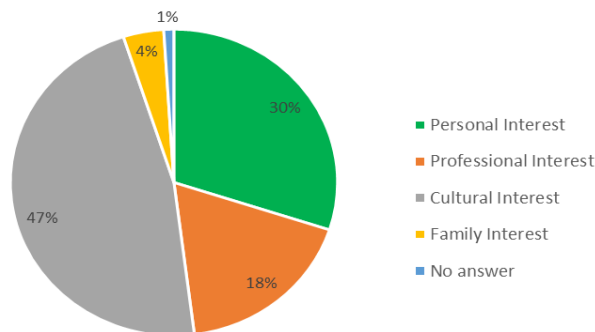


Figure 2: The Main Reason for Participating in Escritaria 2022. Source: Own Elaboration

8. Participants' Involvement: The Festival Experiences

Perhaps most important for the future marketing of literary festivals is to know the main interest' focuses of participants. Analysing now the event programme, the IPSS analysis shows that such interest differs significantly among participants. Although opinions are divided regarding the various activities, there is more or less consensus on the preference for conferences with the presence of the writer and for his presence in the city streets. However, participants working in education present the most eclectic selection, despite preferring the conferences attended by the writer (40%). It would be natural to expect that a significant proportion of journalists would focus on the interviews with the writer (17%), librarians would focus more on the exhibitions and people working in the field of literature would particularly appreciate the presence of the writer.

In fact, as found in literature review, according to Ommundsen's (2009) work, festival audiences are generous and grateful, since they enable personal encounters with authors and books.

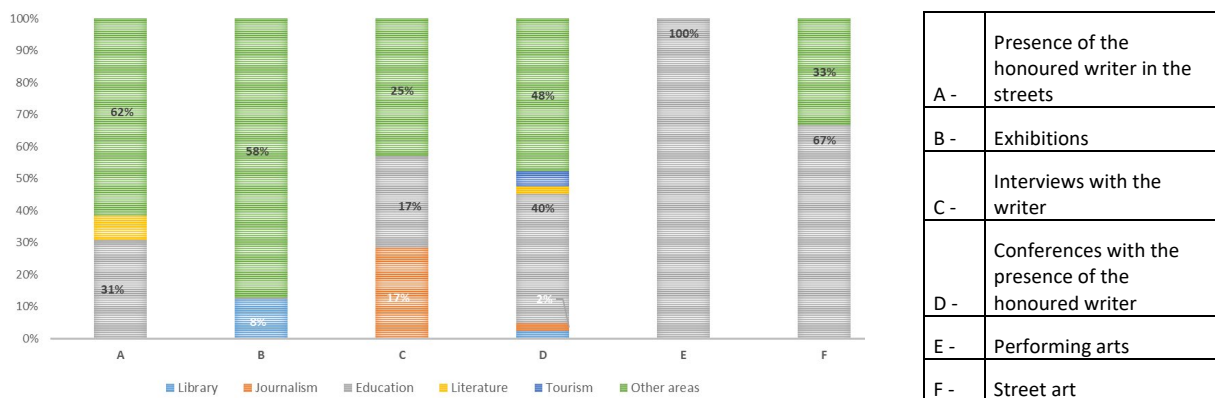


Figure 3: Literary Tourism Activities Preferred by Tourists/Visitors. Source: Own Elaboration

This variety of activities that make up the programme meant that, overall, 56% of respondents considered the programme of the 2022 edition very interesting and 42% considered it interesting. This finding is particularly important because 55% of the respondents already participated in several editions of this festival and 11% attended all of them (fig. 4).

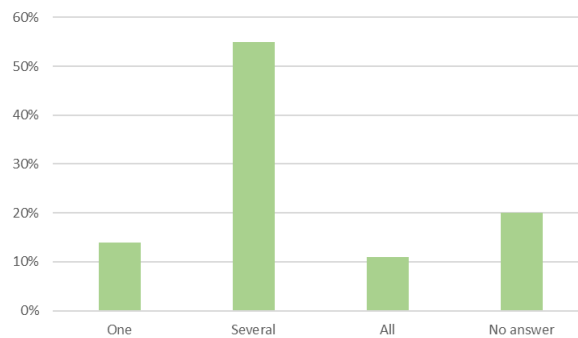


Figure 4: How Many Editions of the Festival Have Visitors/Tourists Attended. Source: Own Elaboration

9. The festival and its Impact on Local Tourism

Analyzing now the results obtained, regarding the relationship between participation in the literary festival and the demand for different tourist products at the destination, it is important to mention that, although cultural interest is the main motivation for the festival, it is curious that the visit to the cultural resources of the municipality is not very diversified, even for education professionals, who mostly visit the Municipal Museum of Penafiel (where part of the festival activities take place), the city, the Monastery of S. Salvador, the village of Quintandona and the Aveleda Wine Estate. These two are also part of journalism professionals' visits, while librarians and literature professionals mostly choose the Municipal Museum of Penafiel and the Aveleda Wine Estate (fig. 5).

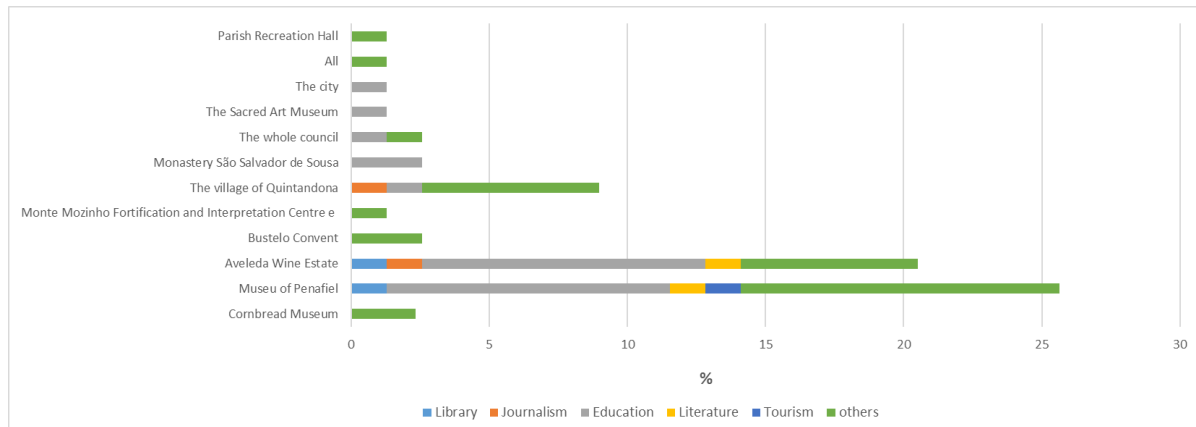


Figure 5: Different Sights Visited During the Escritaria, according to Professional Activity. Source: Own Elaboration

These cultural resources are probably one of the reasons why all respondents (regardless of their socio-economic activity) state that visiting the city of Penafiel is interesting enough at any time of the year, even if the festival changes location and 41% of education professionals state that they would visit it even in October. (The time of the event) (fig.6).

These conclusions confirm what was suggested in the literature review, since in this way it can be affirmed, as Hughes pointed out, that literary festivals play an important role in the growth and development of places, in addition to which, as McGuckin points out, "the marketing and branding of a literary festival can play a role in creating a distinctive image as a cultural and/or tourist destination for a city or region" (2022, p.60).

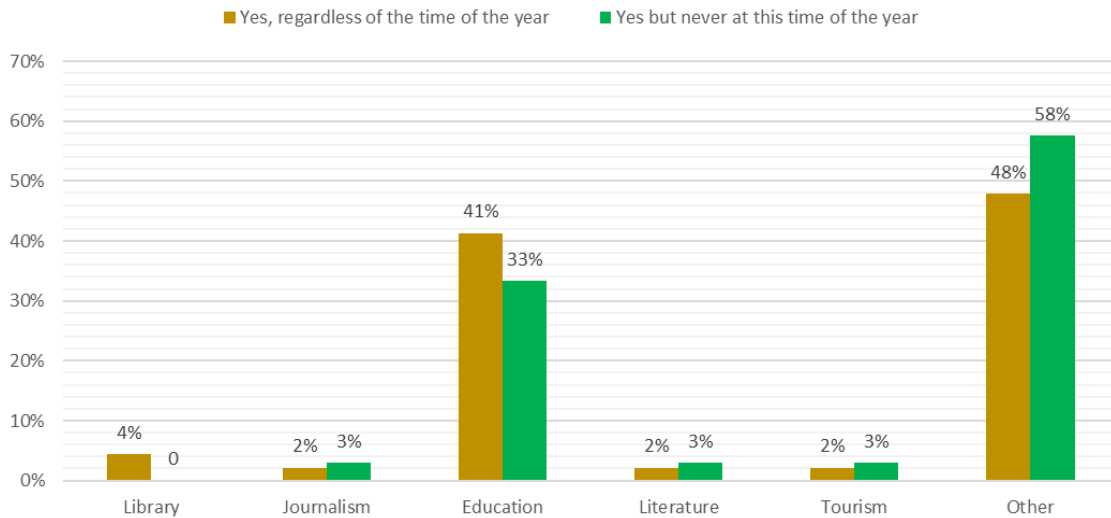


Figure 6: To Visit Penafiel Even if the Festival Escritaria was Held Elsewhere, According to Professional Activity. Source: Own Elaboration

Looking finally about the possibility to participate online, although we still find some resilient to virtual participation, it is now clear that most of the population understands the advantages of being able to build blended events, as 66% of respondents refer that this opportunity increases the scale of the event and 28% even refer that it allows to diversify the type of public. (fig. 7)

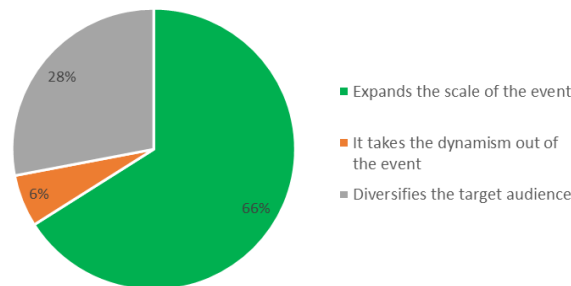


Figure 7: Online Participation. Source: Own Elaboration

To consolidate these results, people in charge of two of the most visited cultural facilities in Penafiel during Escritaria were questioned: the Municipal Museum and the Municipal Library, and also some Certified Tourist Guides who promote one of the products with the highest number of participants in the region: Rota do Românico. All of them unanimously affirmed that throughout these 15 years of the festival, Escritaria has attracted a faithful public of about 100 people, most of them from neighbouring municipalities of Penafiel, highlighting the public resident in Oporto. They also added that, although there is a greater affluence of public to their services and products during the week of the festival, a large part is due to participation in the activities taking place and not to spontaneous visits. The growth of the Spanish public is more related with the thermal tourism offered by the region and that allows tour operators to create a promotional package. Nevertheless, Escritaria is not the first reason for the Spanish to visit the city at this time, which allows us to affirm that the local impact of Escritaria is essentially during the festival. This finding allows us to question to what extent the festival adds tourist value to Penafiel, [made a literary place] i.e., it originates some kind of tourist practice as Baleiro and Quinteiro (2014) claim.

10. Conclusions

According to Jansen-Verbeke (1988), tourism product is everything that attracts tourists to a place and allows them to experience a particular tourist experience, i.e., the product is associated with monuments, culture, history, educational institutions, but also events, business, theme parks, infrastructure, The important role that cultural festivals play in attracting tourists to destinations has long been recognized. Analyzing the visitors who were interviewed at Escritaria, 32% visited at least one cultural facility during their stay, which is indicative of the festival's significant impact on the overall experience of Escritaria. Consistent with McKercher

et al. (2006), Escritaria as a literary event appears to be of much greater interest to visitors to the destination than the other motivations for visiting the destination in the first place, which is in line with Prentice and Andersen (2003). They noted that only a minority of festivals attendees are tourists.

Escritaria is held during October. The fact that it is an off-season festival should be enhanced by the destination because, as Felsenstein & Fleischer point out (2003), it attracts visitors when hotel rooms are empty and it can help extend the tourist season.

The limitations imposed by the Covid 19 Pandemic allowed the development of an online festival program whose success led to the design of a mixed program for the 2022 edition which, as mentioned by Ommudsen (2004), widened the visibility of the festival and widened the audience, however, aware of the importance of consolidating and widening the audience, a program of divulgation of the festival activities is now in execution, in particular by the region of Tâmega and Sousa Valley, through the libraries network, which allows one to expect a significant increase of visitors to the festival and the city of Penafiel in the next edition of 2023.

It is also important to highlight that, although it is a literary event, it attracts a diversified public in which the education professionals have a prominent place, since the festival's programming includes visits to schools throughout the municipality and promotes the involvement throughout the school year of the entire educational community, from pre-school to high school.

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