



MUSIC AS A CULTURAL ATTRACTION IN LORCA

The *Fortaleza Sound* Festival

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| KEYWORDS | ABSTRACT |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>Music Tourism</i> | <i>Tourism in the Region of Murcia has traditionally focused on promoting the sun-and-beach segment to attract visitors. However, the resulting overcrowding and the product's decline have prompted the search for new alternatives. This article</i> |
| <i>Social Networks</i> | <i>examines the integration of the creative and cultural industries into local development strategies in the city of Lorca, with a particular focus on the role of festivals in enhancing tourism promotion. Adopting a qualitative methodology, the study combines a literature review with semi-structured interviews conducted with managers and representatives from the music sector. The findings suggest that the Fortaleza Sound festival has facilitated the alignment of strategic local needs with solutions for Lorca's economic development. Its positioning during the inaugural edition has laid the groundwork for future digital marketing strategies.</i> |
| <i>Music Festivals</i> | |
| <i>Music Digital Marketing</i> | |
| <i>Murcia Region</i> | |
| <i>Musical City</i> | |
| <i>Instagram</i> | |

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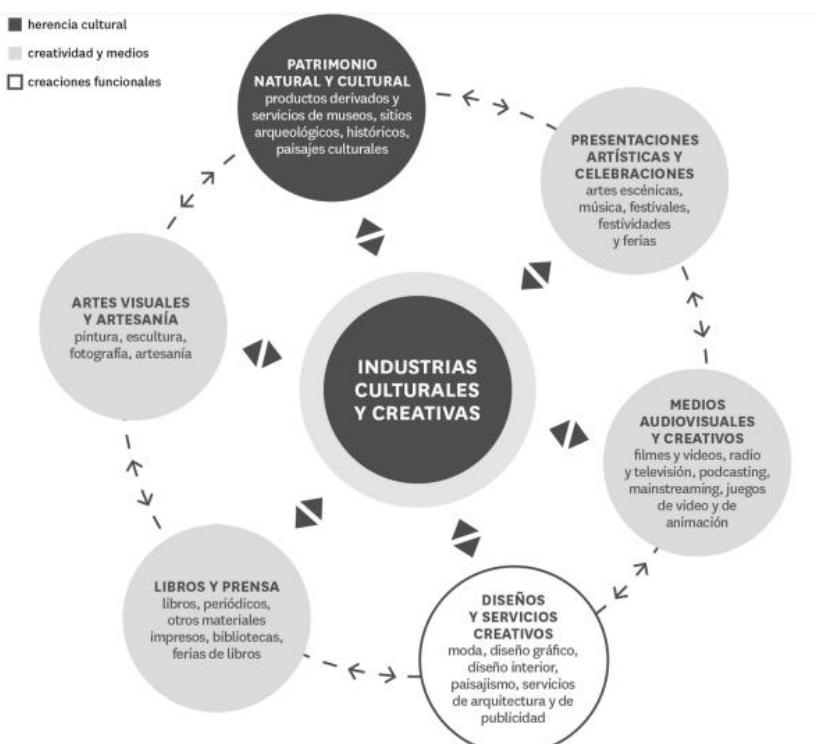
1. Introduction

The tourism sector in Spain has historically centred its strategy on promoting sun-and-beach tourism as the principal draw for international visitors. However, the saturation and gradual decline of this model have prompted the exploration of alternative approaches (Cànoves Valiente *et al.*, 2016). Within this context, a different tourist profile has emerged, one that seeks alternative experiences which redefine the way holidays are enjoyed. This new type of visitor values more diversified options, including gastronomic, cultural, and musical experiences, reflecting a growing demand for more enriching and personalised forms of tourism (Calderón Fajardo, 2023).

In recent decades, the tourism sector has experienced significant growth, driven by an ever-evolving society that has fostered new trends and innovative forms of tourism consumption. Within this context, music festivals, defined by Wagner (2007) as “a series of festive or special events, with at least three programmes, prepared for an audience, organised periodically, with a clear start and end date, and whose main objectives are mediated by community values and experience”, have emerged as an effective strategy for drawing thousands of visitors to a single destination, generating significant economic impact for host communities (Mantecón Izquierdo, 2017).

UNESCO, in turn, classifies festivals as a sub-type of event within the creative economy, proposing a framework comprising six sectors, grouped into three overarching categories: cultural heritage, creativity and media, and functional creations. Within this framework, music festivals fall into the second group, “creativity and media”, specifically under subgroup 4, which encompasses artistic performances and celebrations, as shown in Figure 1. This form of heritage is conveyed through artistic performances and celebrations of various kinds. Events are specifically designed to disseminate visual arts and crafts using audiovisual and digital media, with the aim of offering innovative designs and services. Governance structures are tasked with identifying and supporting these processes within their territories, in order to promote culture as a public good and foster its economic and sustainable development through creative means.

Figure 1. Sectors of cultural and creative activity.



Source: Rodríguez Oliva, 2023.

These festive cultural events are becoming increasingly common across various regions and have proven to be a profitable source of tourism revenue. According to recent data, major music festivals in Spain now attract more than five million attendees annually, generating an economic impact exceeding 400 million euros (INE, 2024). At present, there are approximately 1,200 music festivals held throughout Spain, highlighting the growing significance of such events as drivers of tourism and catalysts for local economic development.

The scale of this impact is such that, in many destinations, the timing of these festivals coincides with peak hotel occupancy. This phenomenon draws substantial numbers of visitors, particularly young people, who regard these events as a primary form of tourism and leisure (López Llobet and Bosch Corbera, 2012). The capacity of festivals to attract large crowds positions them as key engines of local economic activity, benefiting not only the accommodation sector but also a wide range of industries linked to tourism and entertainment. As Devesa Fernández (2019, p. 7) notes, "it generates both economic repercussions, thanks to its ability to attract tourists, and social, cultural or environmental impacts".

1.1. The Role of the Music Industry in Cultural Promotion

The cultural or creative industry refers to sectors that generate goods and services based on knowledge, creativity, and talent, which possess significant potential for job and wealth creation through the use of intellectual property (Howkins, 2001). The concept of the culture industry emerged in the 1990s to describe the process by which cultural products are mass-marketed and distributed, thereby becoming integrated into the logic of the market and consumption, which influences both their production and content (Hesmondhalgh, 2002).

One possible definition states that "a cultural industry exists when cultural goods and services are produced, reproduced, preserved, and transmitted according to industrial and commercial criteria; that is to say, in series and applying an economic strategy, rather than pursuing a cultural development purpose" (UNESCO, 1982, cited in Mastrini, 2016, p. 145).

In this context, Negus (1999) introduces the concept of the music industry within the cultural industry, defining it as follows: "The music industry is organised into a number of sectors involved in the production, manufacture, distribution, and promotion of sound recordings, music videos, and related multimedia products" (Negus, 1999, p. 27).

Ramos Ahijado & Botella Nicolás (2017) emphasises the contribution of music as a resource for tourism promotion, stating that "music is the most unique type of cultural heritage, which motivates tourist trips, as many travellers play an important role in their itineraries".

Today, the music industry is capitalising on the advantages provided by digital networks and technologies, not only due to the low costs associated with storage, distribution, and marketing, but also because of these platforms' ability to reach massive and diverse audiences on a global scale (Leyshon, 2001). In this context, the music industry has adapted its business models and adopted innovative strategies based on telecommunications and the Internet, utilising social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to expand its presence in digital markets.

These platforms enable artists and producers to interact directly with consumers, generate viral content, and establish real-time promotional campaigns, thereby amplifying the reach and success of their products. This process of digitisation and globalisation has profoundly transformed the industry, marking a significant turning point by opening up new monetisation opportunities and redefining the role of traditional intermediaries.

For this reason, the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions highlighted the "need to incorporate culture as a strategic element in national and international development policies" (Rodríguez Oliva, 2023, p. 7).

2. Objectives and Methodology.

The objectives set out within the framework of this research aim to provide an understanding of the key aspects of the study. They include the following general and specific objectives:

- To understand the integration of creativity and cultural industries at the heart of the development plan at the local level in the city of Lorca.
- To demonstrate the influence of the celebration of a large-scale festival on the improvement of tourism in a destination.
 - To investigate the existence of festivals as a cultural offering in the Region of Murcia.
 - To identify the demographic and behavioural profile of tourists attending music festivals in the Region of Murcia.
 - To study the organisation of the *Fortaleza Sound* festival held in the city of Lorca and its contribution to tourism.
 - To examine the digital strategies implemented to promote the *Fortaleza Sound* festival.
 - To evaluate the socio-demographic variables of the attendees of the *Fortaleza Sound* festival and their relationship with the marketing strategy implemented.

To achieve the objectives set out in this study, a methodology based on a literature review was employed, complemented by the application of theoretical and practical models for the analysis of social media content. A qualitative research approach was selected to collect detailed and in-depth information on the phenomenon under investigation. The research is structured in two distinct phases: theoretical and practical.

During the theoretical phase, a review of the existing literature concerning the role of music festivals as tools for promoting tourism was conducted. The practical phase involves a case study of the city of Lorca, which, following its post-earthquake reconstruction in 2011, has emerged in 2024 as a musical hub. It is now recognised for hosting one of the most successful festivals in the Region of Murcia, according to data from the Institute of Tourism of the Region of Murcia (ITREM, 2024).

Firstly, a literature review was conducted on the role of music festivals as tools for promoting tourism in emerging destinations. For this purpose, academic bibliographical sources, reports from official bodies, and previous case studies were consulted. This phase provided a conceptual framework for analysing the *Fortaleza Sound* festival.

As part of the primary data collection, a semi-structured interview was carried out with Carlos Caro, the management team leader of the *Fortaleza Sound* festival, to obtain first-hand information on key aspects of its organisation, the security strategies implemented, and the tourism promotion initiatives developed. The interview was designed to address three main areas:

- Event organisation: Logistical processes, team structure, and challenges encountered during the planning and execution of the festival were explored.
- Tourism promotion: Marketing strategies and collaboration with local and regional institutions were explored, as well as specific actions that have boosted the festival's projection at the regional and national level.

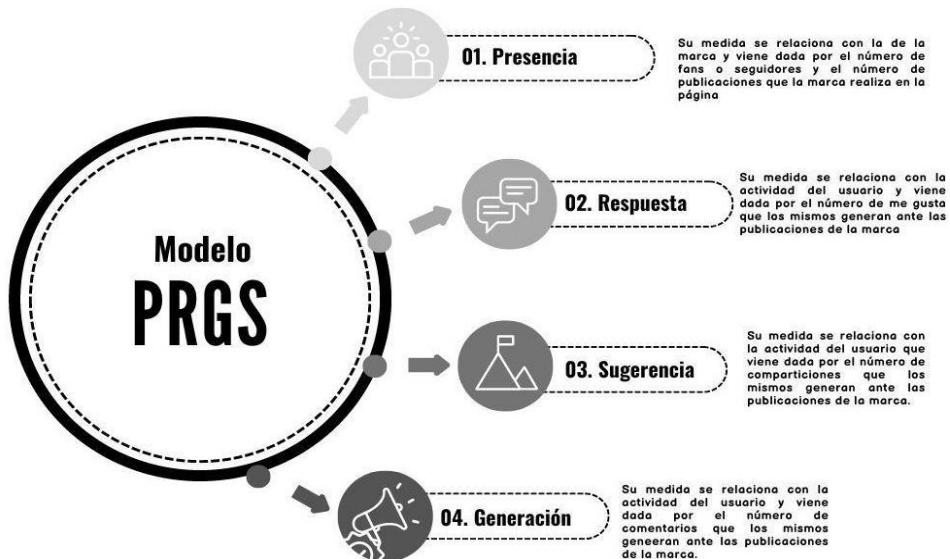
To collect the required data, the websites of institutions in the Region of Murcia related to music festivals were reviewed to identify and define content variables for subsequent analysis of social media.

Subsequently, all Instagram posts on the *Fortaleza Sound* festival profile were analysed from its inception in October 2023 until September 2024. The purpose of this analysis was to evaluate, from a marketing perspective, whether the destination is promoting the territory through a *music city* image, while simultaneously fostering the local music culture.

Finally, a triangulation of data obtained from the interview, the literature review, and reports from the Institute of Tourism of the Region of Murcia (ITREM) was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. This combination of sources facilitated a comprehensive and critical understanding of the dynamics surrounding the festival and its impact on the region. In this regard, social media has become an essential tool for promoting festivals and ensuring that the festival audience remains continually informed. Attendees at music festivals not only participate to enjoy the performances of artists and bands, but also engage actively through the social platforms linked to the event (Bernad Conde and Nogales Bocío, 2019).

For the analysis of social networks, the PRGS model, developed by IAB Research and cited in the work of Giraldo Cardona and Martínez (2017), was employed to evaluate a brand's activity on social media throughout 2024, based on four variables: presence, response, generation, and suggestion.

Figure 2. PRGS model



Source: Authors elaboration based on the article by Giraldo Cardona and Martínez, 2017.

For the analysis of the variables defined for each social network under study, Table 1 presents the methodology for calculating these variables, alongside the inclusion of new metrics, frequency of publication, and content description, based on the work of Feitosa et al. (2020). This approach enables a deeper understanding of how social networks can contribute to the positioning of the festival and the promotion of tourism within the destination.

Table 1. PRGS model variables analysed for *Fortaleza Sound's* Instagram social network.

| BRAND | Presence | Fans | | P=nº post |
|-------|------------|----------------|-------|-----------------------|
| | | Post | Reply | |
| USER | | | Likes | R= Likes/no. fans |
| | Generation | Comments | | G= Comments/ no. fans |
| | Suggestion | Shared content | | S= share / no. fans |

FREQUENCY OF PUBLICATION

DESCRIPTION OF CONTENT

Source: Authors elaboration based on the article by Giraldo Cardona and Martínez (2017) and Feitosa *et al.* (2020).

3. Music Tourism in Spain

Tourism is the main source of income in Spain. Strategic tourism products have traditionally focused on sun and beach offerings; however, over time, other approaches have been developed to maintain Spain as a major international attraction. This market segmentation has been based on cultural heritage, combined with wine, gastronomy, and music experiences, among many other options. These developments respond to new consumer trends favouring personalised, unique experiences that inspire a sense of authenticity and belonging to a group or community (Binkhorst, 2008).

Within the broader category of Spanish cultural tourism, various musical manifestations are linked to monumental heritage, such as paintings, altarpieces, and sculptures, and more broadly, intangible cultural tourism associated with music (Vázquez Casielles, 2002).

The choice of a tourist site to visit may be influenced by recommendations from relatives, friends, or social networks. In this context, influencer endorsements highlight personal experiences such as attending concerts, sampling typical dishes or visiting secluded beaches at sunset. Such tourists are known as experiential tourists, as they seek to enjoy leisure, culture, and entertainment while travelling, provided the experience is unique and memorable (Martínez Suárez, 2020).

Following the pandemic, Spain has seen a significant increase in tourist numbers across all market segments in 2023. The Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) reports over 80 million tourists in 2023, reflecting a rapid recovery to pre-pandemic levels.

According to the World Economic Forum Report (WEF Annual Report, 2023), the key aspects a tourist destination must offer to remain competitive and attract economic investment primarily include providing a conducive environment for business, while ensuring safety, hygiene, health, respect for workers' rights and duties, and fostering technological innovation. Additionally, policies and conditions for travel and tourism should prioritise logistics, pricing, and environmental sustainability. Consequently, transport infrastructures, such as air, land and port, as well as tourism services, must be competitive. Finally, natural resources complement these essential requirements by catering to the demand for products and services related to natural, cultural, and business travel assets.

The International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR), held annually in Madrid, introduced the monographic section FITUR Festivals during its 2018 edition. This initiative aims to foster new tourist networks and explore business opportunities within the live music sector. Accordingly, FITUR promotes not only the organisation of festivals but also the tourist destinations that host them. For the 2019 edition of the international fair, the focus shifted towards festivalisation, culminating in an eclectic music festival held in one of its pavilions under the slogan *FITUR IS MUSIC* (Alberdi, 2019).

Prat (2014) states that individuals attend festivals not only to consume a specific type of music but also to connect with a group of people who share similar interests, thereby fostering relationships on cultural, social, and human levels. Various authors identify four types of experiences sought by attendees during their leisure time through music. These correspond to the need for entertainment, an educational interest, the opportunity to escape everyday life, and an engagement with a captivating aesthetic, whether through the programme offered, the venue, or other distinctive features (Sotos Díaz et al., 2015).

Turespaña, a public entity, "is connected with the Ministry of Industry and Tourism through the Secretariat of State for Tourism and is responsible for the promotion of Spain as a tourist destination worldwide" (2024). Accordingly, it distributes and supports information on tourism sector initiatives aimed at promoting destinations through their diverse range of products and services. According to this official portal, the nine most representative festivals are listed in Table 2. The tourist route through these festivals begins in Villarrobledo, Castilla-La Mancha, and passes through Barcelona, Bilbao, Madrid, Benicàssim, Nerja, and Burgos. From April until the end of summer, visitors can enjoy various experiences and musical styles for periods ranging from three to six days.

The origins of these cultural festivals trace back to 1994 with an international gathering of music and multimedia art in Barcelona, designed primarily to promote creativity and technology. The event is structured into day and night formats: daytime activities resemble a professional fair focused on knowledge exchange and talent scouting, while concerts by national and international artists take place during the evenings. In 1995, two additional events were held in Benicàssim, offering cultural activities such as concerts by prominent artists representing indie, pop, reggae, alternative, and electronic music genres.

The following year saw the inception of a festival in Villarrobledo featuring alternative, rock, and hip-hop music. This three-day spring event provides attendees with the opportunity to enjoy multiple concerts while camping alongside friends at the foot of the stage in the province of Albacete. This format has since become a trend, exemplified by the *Bilbao BBK Live* festival, where the camping area is located on Mount Arraiz, and attendees traverse a path to Mount Kobetas to access the concert venues.

In summary, these mass gatherings offer opportunities to experience culture, music, and the natural environment, be it the sea, mountains, or the city centres of charming historic cities.

In terms of attendance, *Arenal Sound* has attracted approximately 300,000 people during its six days in the town of Nerja and its surroundings, with concerts held on Burriana Beach. This is followed by *Primavera Sound* in Barcelona and other major festivals such as *Viñarock*, *Mad Cool*, *FIB* in Benicàssim, and the Madrid edition of *Primavera Sound*, which recorded 150,000 attendees.

Other notable festivals, though not specifically mentioned by Turespaña, include the *O Son Do Camiño* Festival held at O Monte do Gozo in Santiago de Compostela (Galicia) with 134,000 attendees; *Resurrection Fest* in Viveiro (Galicia) with 132,580 attendees; *Sónar* in Barcelona with 120,000 attendees; and the *Cruilla* Festival in Barcelona with a smaller, yet significant, attendance of 76,000.

These figures provide insight into the economic impact generated by these events, the potential to attract new markets, and their role in promoting seasonality by introducing emerging destinations (Estrada et al., 2015). Consequently, the celebration of over 400 festivals annually presents a considerable opportunity for Spain's tourism and events industry.

Table 2. Relevant festivals held in Spain and referenced by Turespaña

| Name | Venue | Date | Days | AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY | Type of music | Format | Participants | First edition |
|--|---------------|------------|--------|----------------------|---|--|--------------|---------------|
| Viñarock | Villarrobledo | April/ May | 3 days | Castilla - La Mancha | alternative music, rock and hip-hop | Experience camping with your friends at the foot of the stage that has been set up in (Albacete, Spain). | 240,000 | 1996 |
| Primavera Sound | Barcelona | June | 3 days | Catalonia | pop, rock, electronic and underground music | Parc del Forum in Barcelona. Due to its great success, the following weekend it will also be held in the City of Rock in Arganda del Rey (Madrid). | 243,000 | 2001 |
| Sónar. Barcelona International Festival of Advance d Music and Multimeddia Art | Barcelona | June | 3 days | Catalonia | electronic and experimental music | It combines music, creativity and technology in a unique format that includes both daytime and night-time events. "Sónar by Day" (Montjuic) offers concerts, DJ sessions, audiovisual projections in all formats, a media library, a professional fair, conferences, exhibitions and an area for the search for new talents. The Sónar by Night (Fira de Barcelona) hosts the great national and international electronic music artists, simultaneously with disc jockeys and video jockeys. | 120,000 | 1994 |
| Bilbao BBK Live | Bilbao | July | 3 days | Basque Country | pop, rock and indie music | Thousands of people convene together in the open air, camping, and enjoying the concerts. On Mount Arraiz, the camping area, a path leads down to Mount Kobetas, the concert area. | 110,000 | 2006 |
| Mad Cool Festival | Madrid | July | 3 days | Community of Madrid | a festival of leisure and culture, an encounter with artistic expression. | It used to be held at IFEMA Madrid but due to heavy logistics, it has been changing its venue. In 2025 it is planned to be held in Villaverde. It offers a complete range of leisure activities and also includes other artistic aspects such as fashion, cinema, gastronomy and photography. | 202,731 | 2016 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|--------|------------------------|--|---|--------|------|
| Benicàssi m | Benicàsim | July/ August | 3 days | Valencian Community | rock, indie, pop, alternative and electronic music | Concerts on the beach | 180,00 | 1995 |
| International Festival (FIB) | | | | | | | 0 | |
| Rototom Sunsplash | Benicàsim | August | 6 days | Valencian Community | reggae music | Music, entertainment, and cultural activities. | 211,00 | 1995 |
| 0 | | | | | | | | |
| Arenal Sound | Burriana Beach (Nerja, Málaga) | July/ August | 6 days | Community of Andalusia | independent music macro-festival | Wide variety of musicians from genres including pop, rock, indie, electronic, and reggaeton. | 300,00 | 2010 |
| 0 | | | | | | | | |
| Sonoramar Ribera | Aranda de Duero (Burgos) | August | 5 days | Castilla León | indie music | Concerts scattered throughout the streets of the city bringing together multiple artists who invite us to enjoy the best of indie, pop, rock, rap, and alternative music. | 145,00 | 1998 |
| 0 | | | | | | | | |

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data available on the Turespaña website (2024) and the Federation of Music in Spain.

Cities aiming to boost their economic development often look to music tourism as a way to promote themselves as hubs of urban heritage. According to Mantecón Izquierdo (2017), these cities share significant cultural heritage related to music. He refers to them as music cities, characterised by strong promotional engagement from both institutions and their communities, which fosters collaborative strategies to strengthen the music ecosystem and attract investment.

Mantecón further argues that, for a city to become a recognised musical reference point, it must satisfy four key requirements (see Figure 3). These include the preservation of its musical traditions and local folklore; the availability of suitable infrastructure and logistics to host concerts; robust media support and promotional activities to distribute music; and, importantly, institutional and financial backing from governmental bodies and private sponsors capable of supporting the local music industry.

Figure 3. Requirements to become a music city.



Source: Authors elaboration based on data from Mantencón Izquierdo, 2017.

The Creative Cities Network is a UNESCO initiative launched in 2004 aimed at fostering cultural innovation and the sustainability of cities. Through international cooperation, 350 cities have the opportunity to collaborate and participate in global projects, thereby safeguarding their cultural diversity. Notably, 19 of these cities have distinguished themselves through their musical contributions as part of their cultural initiatives.

UNESCO defines a Creative City as “a city that places creativity and cultural industries at the centre of its local development plan and actively cooperates internationally”. It can therefore be argued that music cities form a subset of this international collaboration framework, more specifically oriented towards music as a cultural and local development strategy.

Figure 4. Relevant aspects pursued by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.



Source: Authors elaboration based on data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, 2024.

At present, the Region of Murcia offers a diverse annual programme of festivals featuring a variety of musical styles, including indie, reggaeton, trap, electronic, jazz, flamenco, rock, pop, and traditional music. The cities hosting these cultural events include Caravaca de la Cruz, Cartagena, La Unión, Lorca, Los Alcázares, Mula, Murcia, San Javier, La Manga del Mar Menor, Torre Pacheco, and Yecla (Turismo Región de Murcia, 2024).

4. Tourism Promotion through the *Fortaleza Sound* Festival in Lorca (Region of Murcia)

4.1. Lorca as a New Music City

Cultural heritage, in its interrelation with tourism and urban development, has become a fundamental pillar for the economic and social revitalisation of historic cities. This is exemplified by Lorca, one of the most significant heritage sites in the Region of Murcia, an autonomous community in Spain. This relationship has gained particular relevance following the devastating earthquake of 11 May 2011 (Benito Oterino et al., 2012). The impact of this natural disaster not only severely damaged its historical and architectural heritage but also revealed structural weaknesses in the city's tourism planning and management. According to Troitiño Torralba (2015), Lorca's recovery demands an extraordinary effort to restore its heritage while simultaneously integrating it into a comprehensive urban revitalisation strategy that positions tourism as a key economic driver.

Lorca has been the focus of various tourism revitalisation and excellence initiatives, such as the Lorca Tourism Product (2006–2011), which aimed to enhance its cultural appeal and improve the quality of its tourism services (Cebrián Abellán, 2015). However, these efforts were undermined by the economic crisis, which exposed weaknesses in public management, characterised by a lack of profitable projects and an overabundance of tourism brands without effective coordination. Consequently, a restructuring process took place, impacting consortia and public companies dedicated to tourism and significantly diminishing the city's promotional capacity (Cebrián Abellán, 2015).

In this regard, authors such as Cebrián Abellán (2015) and Carlos Caro, director of the *Fortaleza Sound* festival (2024), highlight both heritage restoration and effective integration into the tourist circuit as essential to enhancing Lorca's competitiveness as a destination. Furthermore, this approach aligns with recent objectives in tourism demand, including increasing visitor numbers, improving accommodation quality, and leveraging cultural initiatives to revitalise the urban fabric (Cebrián Abellán, 2016).

Within this context, Caro (2024) contends that Lorca represents an optimal location for organising a music festival, despite certain challenges, such as a limited accommodation supply. The city possesses several characteristics that make it strategically suited to host an event of this scale. Firstly, Lorca is the regional capital, with a population of approximately 100,000 inhabitants, and is surrounded, within a 30 km radius, by several towns with populations ranging from 20,000 to 40,000, many of which have limited cultural offerings.

In terms of institutional support, both local and regional administrations were favourably disposed towards the festival in Lorca, which facilitated its implementation.

A key factor underpinning the project's viability was Lorca's urban infrastructure. The city centre boasts several squares located less than 100 metres apart, enabling the installation of multiple stages for the event. Additionally, the main venue, the *Huerto de la Rueda*, situated just a ten-minute walk from these squares, provides a route through one of the city's most attractive areas, Las Alamedas. Furthermore, the proximity of IFELOR to the *Huerto de la Rueda* allowed for the establishment of an accommodation area within an enclosed and air-conditioned space, which is a feature of considerable importance for summer events in southern Spain and one that no other festival in the region currently offers (Caro, 2024).

Thus, cultural initiatives such as the creation of the *Fortaleza Sound* festival play a vital role in revitalising tourism in the city.

4.1.1. Creation of the Fortaleza Sound Festival.

The *Fortaleza Sound* festival emerged as an innovative initiative to revitalise the cultural and tourist offerings of Lorca, a city which, following the cancellation of the *Espirelia* festival more than a decade ago, had experienced a notable cultural void in the Guadalentín region. The festival's creation aims not only to boost tourism but also to promote an inclusive and sustainable strategy involving the entire city.

In terms of demographic impact, Lorca, with a population of approximately 100,000 inhabitants, is strategically located within a metropolitan area, generating substantial demand potential for large-scale cultural events.

The festival is distinguished by its focus on inclusivity. According to Caro, *Fortaleza Sound* is one of the most inclusive festivals in Spain, having implemented a range of accessibility measures to enable the participation of people with functional diversity, a sector often overlooked in many large-scale cultural events. These measures include adapted access routes, raised platforms at the main stages, and the presence of specialised assistants to provide support.

In terms of infrastructure, the festival benefits from a privileged setting. Unlike many music events held on tarmac venues lacking climatic comfort, *Fortaleza Sound* takes place predominantly in a wooded area, providing a natural environment of shade and freshness, features that are highly appreciated by attendees, according to surveys conducted by the organising entity. The central venue, known as *Huerto de la Rueda*, is situated just a ten-minute walk from the city's main squares, facilitating pedestrian mobility and connecting festival-goers to various free activities distributed throughout public spaces. This urban *street festival* approach has led to comparisons with the *Sonorama* festival in Aranda de Duero, although *Fortaleza Sound* is still at an early stage of development (ITREM, 2024).

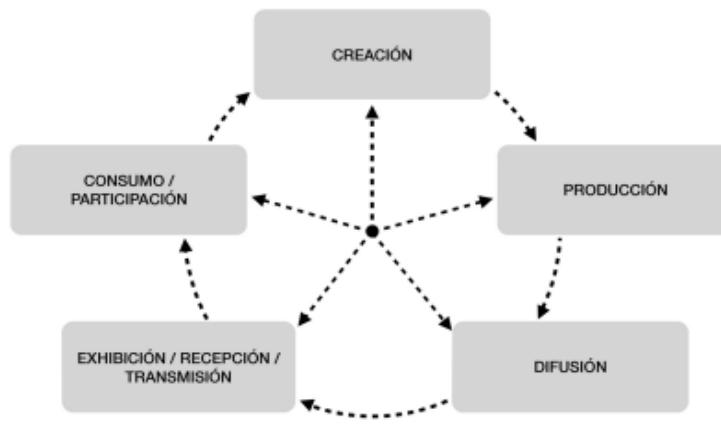
In addition, the festival has innovatively addressed the city's limited accommodation supply by establishing a glamping area adjacent to the main festival site. This facility can accommodate up to 2,000 people within an enclosed, air-conditioned space, which is an essential feature for events held during the summer months in southern Spain. This solution provides a comfortable and appealing accommodation alternative, which also contributes to the event's sustainability by reducing the need for long-distance travel.

Regarding programming, *Fortaleza Sound* extends beyond a single weekend of music to a month-long cultural programme that includes film screenings, literary presentations, photographic exhibitions, and gastronomic routes. This comprehensive approach attracts a diverse audience and broadens the economic benefits to other sectors of the local economy, such as hospitality and retail (Caro, 2024).

In its inaugural edition, *Fortaleza Sound* attracted over 15,000 attendees and generated an estimated economic impact of approximately €1.5 million for the local economy, according to data provided by the Lorca Department of Culture and Tourism (2024). These indicators suggest that the festival possesses significant growth potential and, with the implementation of an effective strategy, could become a leading cultural event in the region.

4.2. Marketing Strategy for the Fortaleza Sound Website

UNESCO outlines a framework explaining the economic transformation of heritage through the creation of activities, goods, and services. This framework identifies five key steps to be followed when developing a cultural plan, as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Flow of economic transformation.

Source: Rodríguez Oliva, 2023.

In the case of *Fortaleza Sound*, once the festival is created and produced, the transmission phase begins through its official website. The *Fortaleza Sound* festival website serves as a crucial component of the event's marketing strategy, playing a decisive role in audience acquisition, brand development, and revenue generation. Given the growing competition within the music festival sector and the increasing importance of the digital environment in consumer decision-making, the optimisation and effectiveness of the website are essential to ensuring the festival's long-term success and sustainability.

Table 3. Analysis of the *Fortaleza Sound* website.

| Aspecto | Análisis |
|--|---|
| Diseño y Usabilidad | Diseño atractivo, pero navegación confusa. |
| Contenido Informativo | Información esencial disponible, pero falta contenido adicional. |
| Optimización para Móviles | Adaptación básica a móviles, pero funcionalidades incómodas. |
| Estrategia de Marketing Digital | Buena integración de redes sociales, pero falta interacción directa. |
| Llamadas a la Acción (CTA) | CTAs presentes, pero no destacan lo suficiente. |
| Experiencia del Usuario (UX) | Experiencia mejorable en personalización y elementos interactivos. |
| SEO y Visibilidad | Optimización SEO insuficiente, limitando la visibilidad en motores de búsqueda. |

Source: Authors elaboration from <https://fortalezasound.com/>, 2025.

The analysis of the website revealed both strengths and areas for improvement across several key performance aspects.

Regarding design and usability, the site features a visually appealing layout; however, users encounter difficulties due to confusing navigation, which adversely affects ease of use. Concerning informational content, while essential details are provided, the absence of additional enriching content limits the overall user experience.

Mobile optimisation is basic, allowing for visual adaptation, but the site's functionalities are cumbersome when accessed via smartphones or tablets, negatively impacting the mobile experience.

With respect to the digital marketing strategy, although there is effective integration of social media platforms, the lack of direct interaction with users may constrain the strategy's reach. Calls to action (CTAs) are present but suffer from limited visibility, resulting in insufficient capture of user attention.

In terms of user experience (UX), there remains scope for enhancement, particularly in content personalisation and the inclusion of interactive elements to enrich user engagement.

Finally, the site's search engine optimisation (SEO) is inadequate, reducing its visibility in search results and, consequently, its ability to attract organic traffic.

4.3. Advertising Campaigns Carried out by Fortaleza Sound

The design and execution of the advertising campaigns for *Fortaleza Sound* were based on a multi-channel strategy, with particular emphasis on social networks and traditional media. The digital platforms employed for promotion included Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, with Instagram emerging as the most effective tool for engaging the festival's target demographic. Through these networks, segmented campaigns were implemented, focusing primarily on the festival's geographical area of influence, the Region of Murcia, and the Community of Madrid, both of which generated a favourable audience response.

Regarding influencer collaboration, the inaugural edition of the festival featured two content creators with local and regional reach. Although their impact was limited, their participation helped generate visibility within a specific audience segment. This has been identified as an area for improvement in future editions, with the objective of expanding collaboration to influencers with broader reach in order to maximise event exposure.

Additionally, the festival's promotion extended to traditional media and platforms with broad audiences. Advertisements were placed on Spotify and in local and regional outlets such as *La Verdad*, *C'mon Murcia*, *Grupo La Actualidad*, *La Placeta de Lorca*, and *La Guía Go*. In terms of physical visibility, the Murcia tram was utilised as an advertising medium for one month, alongside a bus in Lorca from Easter until the festival date. Furthermore, billboards were erected throughout the region during the month preceding the event, complemented by posters displayed in cities across the Region of Murcia and towns in Almería.

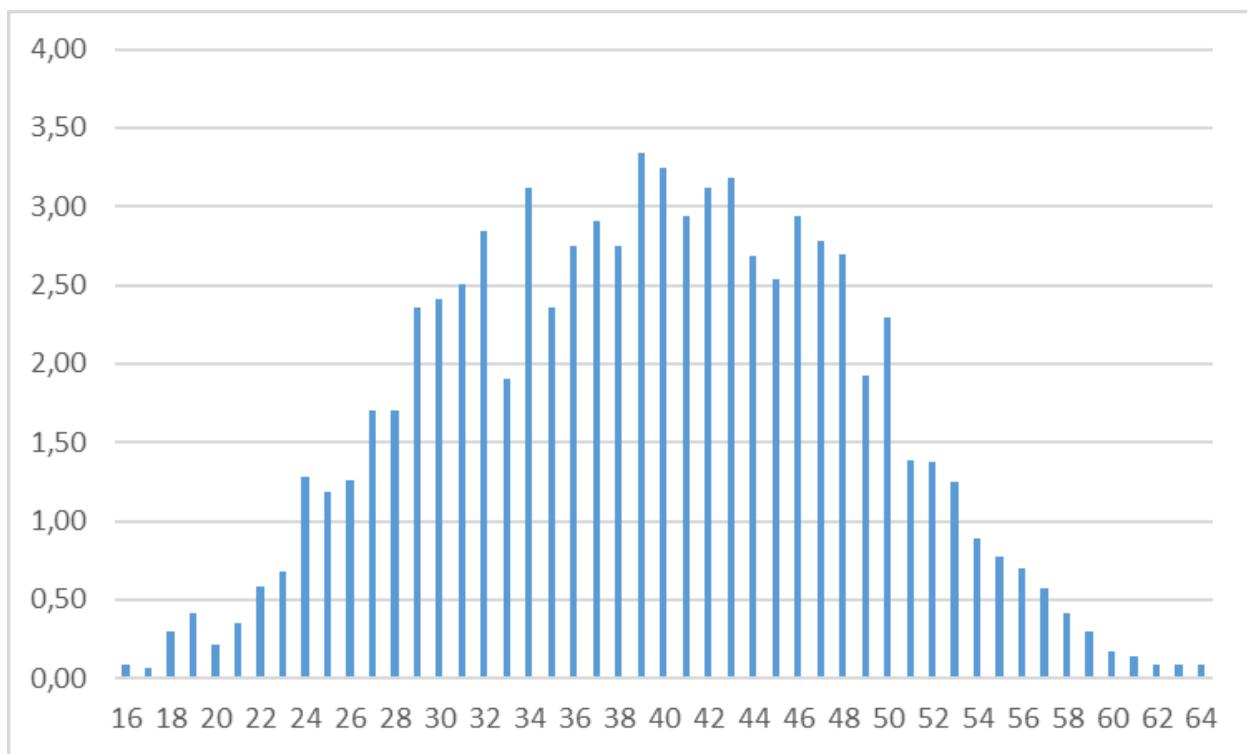
A major element of the promotional strategy involved organising launch parties in key cities including Madrid, Granada, and Murcia, which attracted hundreds of attendees and generated significant anticipation. The festival also featured at FITUR, where an official presentation was made, followed by a mini-festival at the Estrella de Levante Tasting Room, during which the final line-up was announced.

4.4. Profile of the Attendees

4.4.1. Age

Based on the data presented in Figure 6, the profile of event attendees reveals a diverse age distribution, with a notable concentration of individuals aged 30–44, comprising approximately 43% of the total audience. The most prominent ages within this group are 34 years (3.12%), 39 years (3.34%), 40 years (3.24%) and 43 years (3.18%), indicating that the festival primarily attracts a middle-aged adult demographic. Conversely, participation among younger attendees under 25 years is relatively low, with percentages in the 16 to 22 age brackets all falling below 1%.

Furthermore, a significant proportion of the data (22.14%) corresponds to unidentified ages, suggesting a need to enhance data collection methods to enable more precise audience segmentation. This information is vital for refining marketing strategies and tailoring event content to better reflect the preferences of dominant demographic groups.

Figure 6. Percentage of attendees by age.

Source: Authors elaboration based on data from *Fortaleza Sound*, 2025.

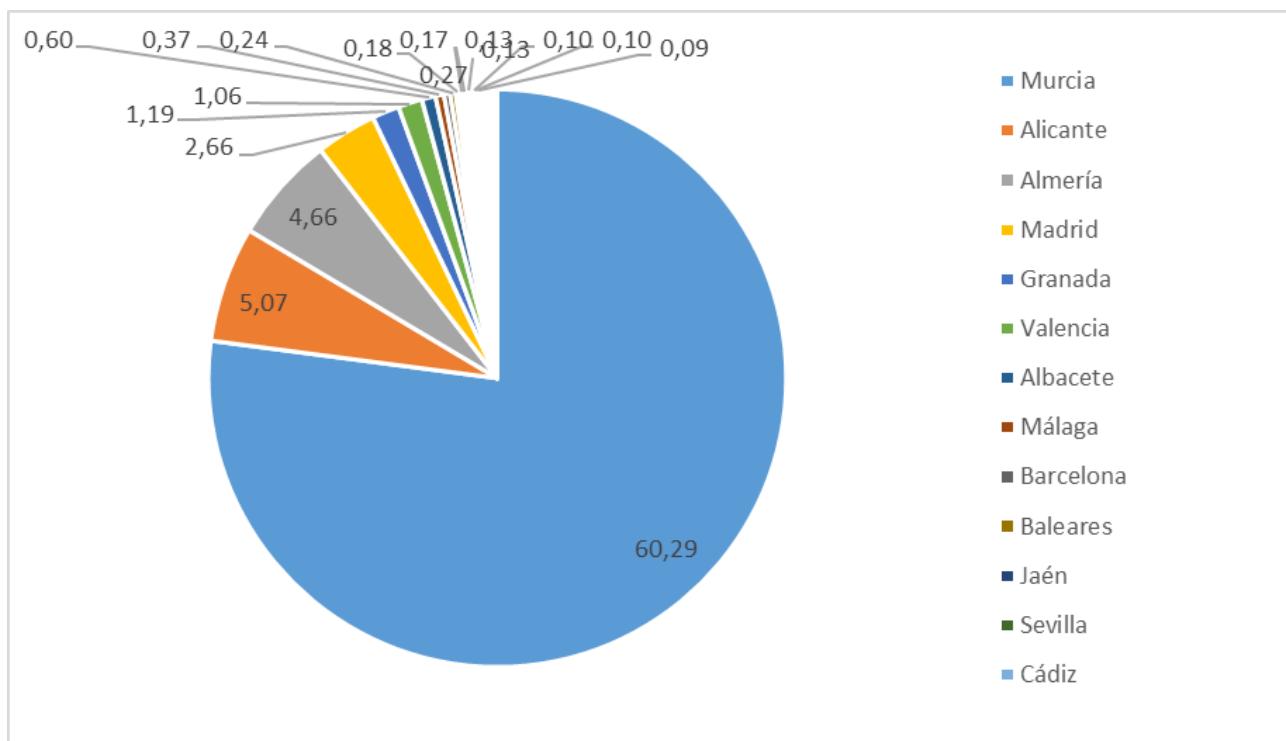
4.4.2. Province

According to data provided by the *Fortaleza Sound* festival organisers, as illustrated in Figure 7, the majority of attendees originate from the Region of Murcia, accounting for 60.29% of the total, which underscores a strong local audience concentration. Among neighbouring provinces, Alicante is prominent with 5.07%, followed by Almería at 4.66%, indicating a significant influx from geographically proximate areas. Madrid contributes 2.66%, reflecting a notable flow from the capital, while provinces such as Granada (1.19%), Valencia (1.06%) and Albacete (0.60%) also provide smaller yet significant shares of attendees.

Other provinces with lower turnouts include Málaga (0.37%), Barcelona (0.27%) and the Balearic Islands (0.24%). The remaining provinces contribute minimal attendance, with percentages ranging from 0.01% to 0.18%, as seen in Jaén (0.18%), Seville (0.17%) and Cádiz (0.13%).

Finally, a modest international presence is evident, with attendees from the Rhône department in France (0.04%) and the Italian province of Perugia (0.01%), reflecting a small but noteworthy foreign representation.

Figure 7. Percentage of attendees by provinces.



Source: Authors elaboration based on data from *Fortaleza Sound*, 2025.

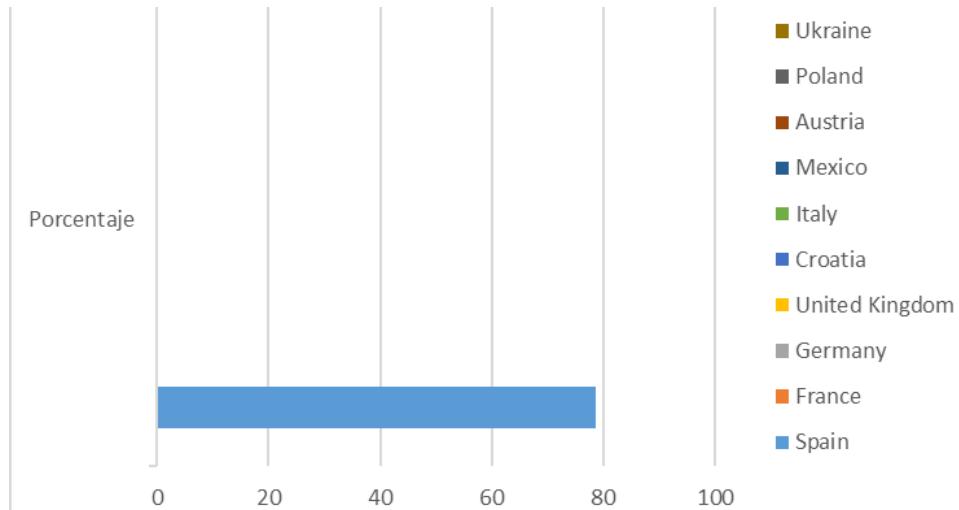
4.4.3. Countries

Based on data regarding the international origin of event attendees, Spain clearly dominates the geographical profile, with 78.67% of attendees originating from the country, indicating that the festival primarily appeals to a national audience.

Among international visitors, France accounts for 0.04%, representing the foreign country with the highest participation. This is followed by Germany and the United Kingdom, each contributing 0.03%, suggesting moderate interest from neighbouring European countries. Other European nations, including Croatia, Italy, Austria, Poland, and Ukraine, each register a minimal presence of 0.01%, reflecting a low but diverse international influx.

There is also a marginal participation from Mexico, similarly accounting for 0.01% of attendees, illustrating the event's limited yet global reach.

This profile characterises the festival as having a clear local and national focus while successfully attracting a modest international audience, predominantly from Western Europe.

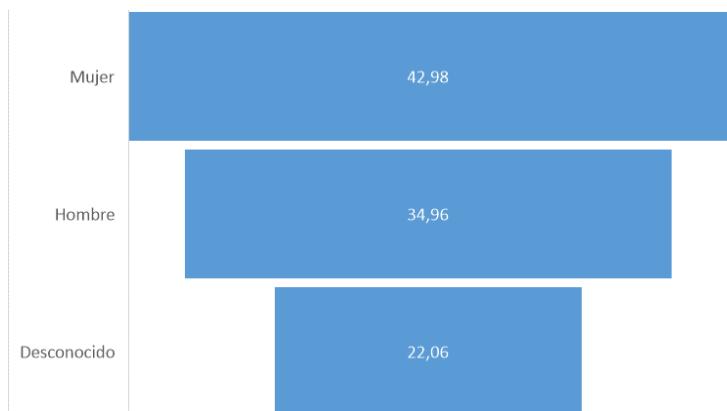
Figure 8. Percentage of attendees by country.

Source: Authors elaboration based on *Fortaleza Sound* data, 2025.

4.4.4. Gender

Considering gender, women constitute the majority of attendees, representing 42.98% of the total audience, which suggests a female predominance at the festival. Men account for 34.96%, indicating substantial male participation, though notably lower than that of women. However, 22.06% of attendees did not disclose their gender, resulting in a significant data gap that may affect a detailed gender-based analysis of the audience.

This distribution reflects a relatively balanced gender composition, yet underscores the need to enhance data collection in future editions to obtain a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the festival's gender profile.

Figure 9. Percentage of attendees by gender.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from *Fortaleza Sound*, 2025.

4.5. Analysis of *Fortaleza Sound's* Presence on Instagram

The *Fortaleza Sound* festival's Instagram activity between 2023 and 2024 was analysed, focusing on variables such as the number of posts, follower count, posting frequency, and a brief description of content types.

It is important to note that, according to the most recent report by IAB Spain (2024) on social media usage in Spain, WhatsApp is the platform with the highest number of users, followed by YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Accordingly, Instagram was selected as the primary platform for analysis in this study. This decision was further supported by the statement of the *Fortaleza Sound* director, who affirmed that "the social network that has worked best for them is Instagram".

A table was compiled outlining various metrics from the festival's Instagram profile, some of which are presented below as examples, to draw precise and informed conclusions.

Table 4. Quantitative analysis of Instagram 2024.

| Fecha publicación | Post | Comentarios | Engagement Me gustas | Engagement Comentarios |
|-----------------------|--|--|----------------------|------------------------|
| 19 de octubre de 2023 | TRANQUI 😊 Todo lo que va a pasar...va a ser por tu bien... 😊 #fortalezasound 🌟 #sientevibravive | Vídeo pidiendo ayuda con un astronauta en el espacio | 125 | 20 |
| 20 de octubre de 2023 | SIENTE ✨ VIBRA ✨ VIVE #fortalezasound ✨ #verano2024 🌟 | Vídeo astronauta y cartel | 80 | 12 |
| 20 de octubre de 2023 | 🌟POR FIN!!! Aquí tenéis la primera fecha que tenéis que marcar por vuestro bien: LA PRESENTACIÓN OFICIAL DE FORTALEZA SOUND 🎶🎶🎶 El 3 de NOVIEMBRE en Lorca, allí desvelaremos los primeros artistas, sorpresas... Oh sí!!! Arrancamos fuerte!!! ✨ ✨ ✨ #fortalezasound #goodvibes #sientevibravive #lorca #verano2024 | Vídeo presentación oficial 2 de noviembre | 435 | 7 |

Source: Authors elaboration based on @fortalezasound Instagram, 2025.

- Profile name: fortalezasound
- Date analysed: 23 October 2023 to 24 September 2024.
- Followers: 6,804
- Likes: 41,936
- Comments: 10,363
- Language: Spanish.

The analysis has identified several key variables that allow a better understanding of the festival's digital presence and strategy on this platform. The main findings are detailed below:

- Number of publications: The festival has made a total of 284 publications during the period under study. This includes both static publications (images and graphics) and videos. Reels were not counted.
- Number of followers: Throughout 2023-2024, the *Fortaleza Sound* festival account has reached 6804 followers, showing a remarkable growth since the beginning of the festival.
- Interactions: 41,936 likes and 10,363 comments were recorded, suggesting a high level of interaction and engagement by followers with the content posted. All content on the account is in Spanish, which points to a communication strategy aimed primarily at the Spanish-speaking audience.
- Frequency of publications: An average frequency of 24 publications per month has been observed. This regularity in publications reflects a constant effort to maintain interest and interaction with its audience.
- Brief description of the content: The content is mainly focused on the promotion of the artists participating in the festival, ticket sales, attendees' experiences and promotions related to sponsors. Posts use keywords such as "live music", "festival", "Lorca", "sold out", "unique experience" and "confirmed artists", indicating a strong focus on promoting the event, enhancing the attendee experience, and generating anticipation around the artist line-up. Publications related to the organisation and logistics of the event are also detected, as well as messages of sustainability, raffles, and support for local culture.

In short, the analysis of the festival's Instagram profile reveals strong performance in terms of brand identity and content strategy, while also identifying areas for improvement. Regarding brand identity, the profile maintains a clear and coherent visual style that aligns with the spirit of

the festival. This consistency enhances event recognition and contributes to the cultivation of a digital community.

The content published includes a variety of formats, such as performance photographs, artist videos, and interactive posts, which helps to sustain audience engagement. In terms of interaction and engagement, the profile demonstrates a moderate level of user activity, as reflected in the number of likes, comments, and shares.

The use of Instagram Stories is effective for keeping followers informed through ephemeral content; however, it is recommended to increase the frequency of posts and introduce more exclusive material to strengthen the connection with the audience. While promotions and offers related to ticket sales and festival activities are regularly featured, their presentation could be improved through the use of more visually striking graphics to better capture attention.

Finally, the profile demonstrates appropriate use of hashtags to enhance content visibility.

Table 5. Qualitative analysis of Instagram 2024.

| INSTAGRAM | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Aspecto | Descripción | Observación |
| Identidad de marca | El perfil presenta una identidad visual clara y coherente que refleja el espíritu del festival. | La consistencia en la identidad de marca contribuye al reconocimiento efectivo y a la creación de comunidad. |
| Tipo de contenido | Incluye fotos de actuaciones, videos de artistas, anuncios sobre el festival y publicaciones interactivas. | La diversidad del contenido mantiene el interés, pero se podría incluir más contenido detrás de cámaras. |
| Interacción y compromiso | Genera un nivel moderado de interacción, con un número razonable de "me gusta", comentarios y compartidos. | Se podría fomentar más la participación mediante llamadas a la acción efectivas y respuestas más rápidas. |
| Uso de historias de Instagram | Utiliza historias para compartir actualizaciones y contenido efímero, manteniendo a la audiencia comprometida. | Aumentar la frecuencia de historias y contenido exclusivo podría mejorar la conexión con la audiencia. |
| Promociones y sorteos | Anuncia regularmente ventas de entradas y promociones relacionadas con el festival. | Las promociones son efectivas, pero podrían presentarse de manera más atractiva con gráficos llamativos. |
| Uso de hashtags | Utiliza hashtags relevantes para aumentar la visibilidad del contenido. | Incorporar un hashtag oficial del festival podría agrupar contenido generado por usuarios y facilitar búsquedas. |
| Ánalisis demográfico | La audiencia objetivo es predominantemente joven, interesada en música y festivales. | Adaptar el contenido a las preferencias de este grupo demográfico podría aumentar la relevancia y el compromiso. |

Source: Authors elaboration based on @fortalezasound Instagram, 2025.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

Fortaleza Sound functions not only as a musical event but also as a platform for promoting tourism in the city of Lorca. As Ramos (2017) suggests, music serves as an effective tool for tourism promotion, motivating individuals to travel to new destinations, which is an assertion clearly exemplified by this festival. Tourists attending *Fortaleza Sound* are offered the opportunity to explore the city and its surroundings, experience local gastronomy, and engage with a diverse cultural programme. This aligns with the growing trend among contemporary consumers who seek unique and meaningful experiences (Martínez Suárez, 2020).

The incorporation of glamping (luxury camping) within the festival grounds adds significant value to the event, distinguishing it from larger festivals such as *Viña Rock* or *Bilbao BBK Live*, which typically offer more basic camping facilities. This type of accommodation enhances the overall experience by providing greater comfort, thereby attracting a more discerning audience seeking exclusivity. Such segmentation of the audience and diversification of the offering strengthen *Fortaleza Sound*'s potential to position itself not only as a musical attraction but also as a holistic leisure and lifestyle experience.

The festival's promotion and marketing have been notably enhanced by digital technologies, echoing the observations of Leyshon (2001) regarding the transformation of the music industry. Social media platforms, streaming services, and digital marketing strategies have played a central role in publicising the event both nationally and internationally. These tools facilitate global audience engagement and contribute to positioning Lorca as a cultural destination. Moreover, they enable the organisers to extend the festival's reach and generate both economic and cultural benefits for the city and the wider region.

Moreover, as Rodríguez Oliva (2023) asserts, the integration of culture as a strategic component of development policies is essential for fostering local growth. *Fortaleza Sound* contributes to this objective by positioning Lorca as a cultural and tourist reference point, generating income and promoting economic development through cultural tourism. The festival not only responds to the entertainment expectations of attendees but also strengthens the city's cultural identity and its presence within the national festival landscape.

The principal conclusions of this study highlight that music festivals such as *Fortaleza Sound* have become an established component of the cultural offering in the Region of Murcia. These events not only attract tourists but also contribute to the cultural and economic revitalisation of the region, helping to diversify its tourism offering beyond the traditional sun-and-beach model. The demographic profile of festival-goers has also proven to be diverse, encompassing both young people and adults from varied backgrounds. This audience demonstrates a growing interest in cultural and musical experiences, suggesting a shift in tourist preferences towards forms of travel that offer not only entertainment but also meaningful cultural engagement with the destination.

The organisation of *Fortaleza Sound* has been instrumental to its success, with particular emphasis on the collaboration between the City Council, local businesses, and event organisers. This synergy has facilitated not only efficient logistical planning but also the effective promotion of Lorca as an emerging cultural destination, especially in the context of its post-earthquake reconstruction.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that digital strategies have played a key role in the festival's promotion. Instagram, in particular, has served as the primary platform for reaching a broader audience, enhancing the festival's visibility and attracting both national and international tourists. This reflects broader trends in music tourism, in which a strong online presence is increasingly essential.

Lastly, the evaluation of attendees' socio-demographic variables indicates that the festival's marketing strategy has been effectively tailored to appeal to various audience segments. This includes the provision of personalised experiences and targeted communication, both of which have contributed to higher levels of customer satisfaction and strengthened loyalty to the festival and the city of Lorca.

Finally, the celebration of the *Fortaleza Sound* festival has enabled the integration of diverse competencies at the local level to address the logistical and organisational demands of hosting a large-scale musical event. In this context, creative solutions have proven essential for promoting the city of Lorca as a cultural and musical destination, particularly within the national sphere. The attendance of both national and international audiences reflects a growing alignment with the evolving demands of experience-seeking consumers within the music industry, thereby presenting Lorca and its surroundings with a valuable economic and promotional opportunity.

Moreover, the combination of digital and physical advertising initiatives has played a key role in consolidating the positioning of *Fortaleza Sound* during its inaugural edition. These efforts have laid a solid foundation for the development of more expansive future strategies and collaborative ventures of greater scope.

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