Conceptualising Basic Film Festival Operation:

An Open System Paradigm

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by

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Abstract

The contemporary proliferation of film festivals is the subject of a range of theoretical and practical studies. Yet, currently proposed models are either overly-pragmatic or overly-theorised. To date, there is very little information that explores or seeks to understand those properties representative of basic film festival operation.

Sources required for effective research present subjective and limited accounts of festival functionality; the term *film festival* itself has no official definition; and the language used to discuss film festivals is often ambiguous and metaphorical.

This study proposes that aspects primary to film festival operation be identified and logically linked through established system-based theories. Researchers are then able to establish a foundational comprehension of film festivals and overcome areas that are currently nebulous and detrimental to the field of study.

This thesis advocates a four-phase model of basic film festival operation - the Open System Model (OSM) - that employs established theoretical foundations to designate resource importation as the primary phase of functional festival operation. Subsequent phases involve resource transformation, output, and environmental re-energisation. The determining role of entropy and the necessity for a continual extraction of resources from the environment to assuage its effects are also identified. Eight importation-based strategies designed to increase the likelihood of resource acquisition are posited: *co-operative alliances*, *date placement*, *geographic location*, *identifiable function*, *legitimising affiliations*, *participation-based incentives, resource control* and *sanctioning organisations.* OSM is then used to examine specific open system conditions through five original case studies of extant film festivals: Denver International Film Festival, Insect Fear Film Festival, the Shoot Out, Haydenfilms Online Film Festival and Gold Coast Film Fantastic.

OSM is deduced to be an effective and logical means of systematically analysing film festival operation and to be capable of providing the foundational comprehension currently lacking in film festival studies.

Statement of Authorship

This thesis is submitted to Bond University in fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy. This thesis represents my own work and contains no material which has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at this University or any other institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

.....

Alex Fischer, December 2009.

for Gringo, Berry, Lindy & the cricket

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