

3 The festival experience

Learning objectives

- **Understand** the multifaceted nature of the festival experience by analysing the perspectives of audiences, organisers, and host communities within contemporary cultural and tourism systems.
- **Analyze** festival-goers' motivations, decision-making processes, and patterns of cultural consumption, with particular reference to postmodern, experiential, and identity-driven participation.
- **Apply** sociological and motivational frameworks (including Maslow's hierarchy of needs and postmodern tourism theories) to interpret levels of audience involvement and cultural investment in festivals.
- **Evaluate** the organisational factors that contribute to festival success or failure, including strategic planning, leadership, marketing, community integration, and post-event assessment practices.
- **Assess** the socio-cultural and socio-economic impacts of festivals on host communities, distinguishing between positive and negative effects and considering residents' attitudes and tolerance thresholds.
- **Critically examine** the role of festivals within sustainable tourism development models, analysing how event policies can regulate flows, enhance destination competitiveness, and support long-term territorial sustainability.

The festival experience for the audience: festival-goers

Who is the audience of a festival? What is its decision-making process? Who influences its choices? When does it decide? Why does it not participate or stop participating? What benefits does it seek? Why should it return? How does it evaluate the experience? Marketing research on audiences is carried out precisely to answer these questions in order to harmonise the overall proposal of the initiative and the audiences that support it in various ways as effectively as possible. Among the methodologies for researching audiences, a first distinction can be made between quantitative and qualitative approaches.