

World cinema in the Spanish international festivals and movie theatres (2016- 2021)

*El world cinema en los festivales
internacionales y las salas de cine en
España (2016-2021)*

*World cinema em festivais internacionais
e salas de cinema em Espanha
(2016-2021)*

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In this study, we analyze the films in the world cinema category that have been screened at the two most important international film festivals in Spain: The San Sebastian International Film Festival, and the Valladolid International Film Week in the period of 2016-2021. It is also studied the output of these festivals in terms of screenings in the Spanish cinemas during the same period. The results show that nearly a third of the films at these two festivals belong to world cinema, and about a third of these films screened at the festivals have been shown in cinemas.

KEYWORDS: World cinema, transnational cinema, film festivals, film co-productions, Spanish movie theaters.

En este estudio se han analizado las películas de world cinema exhibidas en los dos festivales de cine internacionales más importantes de España: el Festival Internacional de Cine de San Sebastián y la Semana Internacional de Cine de Valladolid. Se ha buscado cuáles de ellas se han exhibido en salas de cine españolas durante el periodo 2016-2021. Los resultados muestran que cerca de un tercio de las películas de estos dos festivales son de world cinema, y que alrededor de un tercio de estas películas exhibidas en los festivales se exhiben también en salas de cine.

PALABRAS CLAVE: World cinema, cine transnacional, festivales de cine, coproducciones de cine, salas de cine españolas.

Neste estudo foram analisados os filmes de world cinema exibidos nos dois festivais internacionais mais importantes da Espanha: o Festival Internacional de Cinema de San Sebastián e a Semana Internacional de Cinema de Valladolid. Procurámos saber quais deles foram exibidos nos cinemas espanhóis durante o periodo 2016-2021. Os resultados mostram que cerca de um terço dos filmes destes dois festivais são de world cinema, e que cerca de um terço destes filmes exibidos nos festivais também são exibidos em salas de cinema.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: World cinema, cinema transnacional, festivais de cinema, coproduções cinematográficas, cinemas espanhóis.

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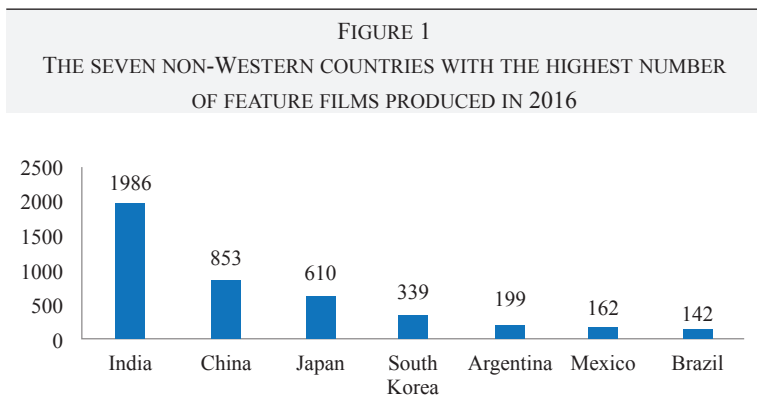
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INTRODUCTION

This research aims to analyze the relationship between international festivals and the films shown in cinemas in one European country: Spain. To this end, we have analyzed which world cinema films arrive at the two most important international festivals in Spain –San Sebastian International Film Festival (SSIFF) and the Valladolid International Film Week (Seminci, in Spanish)– and, among these films, which are finally shown in Spanish cinemas. We have studied some of their characteristics and what factors may have influenced their passage from festivals to commercial film screens. We consider this dynamism to be significant since the evolution of the concept of *world cinema* itself depends on it, and it is still the subject of academic analysis and debate.

According to data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS. Stat, 2022), most feature films made worldwide are produced outside the Western countries. The UIS. Stat covers the period 2011-2017. As Figure 1 shows, almost half of the feature films produced in 2016 (9 080 films worldwide) came from seven countries in Asia and Latin America (4 291 films).



Source: UIS. Stat (2022).

Box office reports show that a very small percentage of this large flow of capital and entertainment reaches international screens. This establishes an asymmetrical relationship with Hollywood products that enjoy a broad distribution privilege on the world's screens. In 2016, the United States produced 656 feature films, which places it third on the production list, behind India and China, with only 7.22 % of the total of 9 080 feature films produced that year (UIS. Stat, 2022).

It is important to recall that, paradoxically, not all films produced outside the West are considered world cinema. Beyond being confined to worldwide film productions, the term connotes some specific quality that has to be recognized by some international entity. The usual way for this global cinematic flow to become world cinema is to achieve international recognition by screening at European festivals. In this sense, traditionally, only a small percentage of films produced in non-Western countries achieve festival recognition and success and reach international audiences. As a result, sometimes films that are very popular with local audiences remain invisible to the rest of the world (López-Díez, 2023) because they are less likely to be recognized by A-list festivals than auteur films, which have a very different aesthetic from Hollywood. In other words, world cinema is a construction and a broad consensus, which is made, as Nagib (2020) notes, on its potential to be aesthetically antagonistic to US blockbusters.

In recent decades, world cinema has been the subject of numerous academic debates (see, for example, Chapman, 2003; Chaudhuri, 2005; Dennison & Lim, 2006; Deshpande & Mazaj, 2018; Durovicová & Newman, 2009; Elsaesser, 2009; Hill & Church Gibson, 2000; Martin-Jones, 2011; Nagib, 2011; Nagib et al., 2011). At the same time, mapping global film production is a complex task. The terrain is so vast and varied that any approach must necessarily be selective. In this sense, Nagib's (2011) argument points to realism as the intrinsic aesthetic quality of world cinema that sets it apart from Hollywood. However, the enormous wealth of emerging popular cinemas outside the West has also sought to relate to Hollywood in their respective labels (Bollywood, Nollywood or Hallyuwood are some examples). As various authors point out (Deshpande & Mazaj, 2018; Nagib, 2020; Stam, 2019), the term *world cinema* continues to revolve, by presence

or omission, around the gravitational axis of Hollywood. A recent study (López-Díez, 2023) observed that the term was more widely used in Web of Science than others proposed to replace it, such as *transnational cinema* or *global cinema*.

As Andrew (2004) noted, the term *world cinema* sought to map non-hegemonic world cinema. The concept came to replace other similar concepts that, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, fell into disuse, such as *Third World cinema*, *foreign art cinema*, or *Third Cinema* (Mazierska, 2020), which already in the 1990s showed theoretical difficulties to be applied to a vast and varied film production terrain beyond the cinema of the “militant collectives” that Solanas and Getino (1976) pointed out in their day.

In the era of globalization, and especially after the digital revolution and the rise of film consumption through streaming platforms (Parvulescu, 2020), the term *world cinema*, as Chaudhuri (2005) noted at the time, addresses “a huge multinational system consisting of television networks, new production and distribution technologies, and international co-productions” (p. 2). In this regard, according to Chaudhuri’s assessment, cinema:

Is no longer a separate art but part of the digital convergence with other media. Through these transnational processes of film production, financing and distribution, it increasingly makes sense to think in terms of “world cinema” (p. 2).

World cinema studies today not only address relations between world cinema and Hollywood, but –as Chaudhuri (2005), Chen and Chua (2015), and other researchers address– develop cinematic relations across nations and, sometimes, as is the case of cinema in diaspora and exile, even beyond national issues. To put it briefly, world cinema has to be constantly reread in the context of a broad network of transnational relations.

As it was mentioned, world cinema shows enough complexities to be mapped (Andrew, 2004). It is a continuously evolving network of cultural relations. Therefore, given the impossibility of considering the phenomenon in its totality, current studies have moved towards specific approaches to certain nodes of production and consumption.

A separate question, and the focus of this study, is an analysis of the arrival and consumption of world film industries at film festivals as sites of entry and spaces where the cultural criteria that determine the boundaries of world cinema are tacitly forged. From this perspective, a focus on festival dynamics approaches these events as legitimizing, as well as using Thornton's (2020) term, taste-making machinery. In a close reading of Bourdieu's (1984, 1993) texts on taste as an ideological category, Thornton studies how festival programmers can re-signify cinema through selection and approval strategies.

According to Cousins (quoted in Thornton, 2020), festival programmers "must think of themselves as storytellers and stylists" (p. 27), a claim Thornton extends to the requirements for the festival curatorship as "a form of storytelling as metatextual paradigm" (p. 27). World cinema, seen through this prism, is both the outcome and an output of festivals. This metatextual paradigm, formed by decisions –not free of ideologies, selection processes and orientation– facilitates festival outcomes in the form of the films that manage to be awarded, recognized and, consequently, distributed on cinema screens and subsequently in a wide network of consumption. Hence, as Thornton concludes, festivals are the constructors of public taste and the determinants of the connotations of world cinema.

Studying festival results is important for interpreting the possible factors that construct cinematic taste in a given place. This is especially significant when we consider how non-Western filmmakers adapt their future films in response to this taste and how European audiences access a selection of films as a sample of a different culture. The result is the creation of an imaginary communication network. A specific study of quantitative data on the arrival of films at festivals and their presence on cinema screens can show a possible node of this communication network.

Our intention in this study is to analyze the arrival of non-Western films in a European country and to observe the results in quantitative terms. Specifically, this article aims to examine the usual channels of this process of arrival on screens through an analysis of exhibition and consumption data. There is no doubt that film festivals play a crucial role in bringing Western audiences into contact with films from other geographies. In our case study, Spain has been considered as this point

of contact, in particular, through the two main Spanish film festivals: the San Sebastian International Film Festival (SSIFF) and the Valladolid International Film Week (Seminci).

THE SAN SEBASTIAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL AND THE VALLADOLID INTERNATIONAL FILM WEEK

After the Second World War, although Hollywood remained the commercial benchmark, film festivals began to manage the “quality of films” (Andrew, 2009). Magazines such as *Cahiers du Cinema* and *Sight and Sound* sanctioned this quality. At first, non-Western films did not make it to European festivals. However, after films such as *Rashomon* (Akira Kurosawa, 1950) or Satyajit Ray’s *Apu* trilogy (1955, 1956 and 1959) won awards at some European film festivals, non-Western films tried to conform to the standard of these events in order to compete in them (Berghahn, 2021; Mazaj & Deshpande, 2020). Japan has been one of the non-Western countries whose films have won top prizes at the Cannes, Venice, Berlin, SIFF and Seminci film festivals.

According to De Valck (2007), Bourdieu’s concept of “symbolic capital” can be applied to the understanding of festivals as sites of cultural legitimation and spaces of convergence between “culture, commerce, experimentation, entertainment, geopolitical interests, and funding on a global scale” (p. 16). Festivals are places of creation and renewal of spectators’ tastes and cinephilia practices, as well as places where value is ascribed and where singular auteurs and auteur films are discovered (De Valck, 2007). Moreover, as suggested by De Valck (2007, 2016) and other authors such as Elsaesser (2005) and Czach (2004), European festivals were originally conceived as spaces of response and deliberation with Hollywood cinema.

Festivals are not only physical spaces of interaction and cultural exchange but also places of generating counterweights in the historical balance of the confrontation between Europe and Hollywood cinema. In other words, world cinema is a construction, the result of processes and policies of selection, evaluation, and exhibition of films at festivals, originally European, in their long history of confrontation and fascination with Hollywood.

In Spain, film festivals appeared shortly after the Second World War as a consequence of a particular economic stability. The SSIFF was founded in 1953 and is one of the oldest film festivals in Spain. Since 1957, it has been a category A festival, according to the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF). This festival was conceived as a space where a certain freedom of expression could be exercised during the Franco dictatorship. This freedom, as the festival's website states, is maintained today in order to keep it as "a showcase for the most restless and innovative cinema of the moment" (San Sebastian International Film Festival [SSIFF], 2022, para. 3). In recent years, the festival has adopted a policy of reinforcing specific spaces for "non-hegemonic" film industries, among which its commitment to Latin American films stands out (SSIFF, 2022).

The Valladolid International Film Week (Seminci) was born from a modest proposal to improve the cultural life of the city of Valladolid in 1956 (González Lozano, 2013). It began as a cultural activity designed for Easter to attract tourists to the city, but over time, it took the form of a film festival with its own character (González Lozano, 2013). In 1963, it took the name Week of Religious Cinema and Human Values (*Semana de Cine Religioso y Valores Humanos*). It retained this title for barely a decade, only to change again, at the end of the dictatorship, in 1973, to its current name, Seminci, an abbreviation of the Spanish term of *Semana Internacional de Cine*, which, according to González Lozano (2013), "comes from the custom of using acronyms for telegrams" (p. 506). At the end of the 1970s, amid Spain's transition to democracy, the festival was consolidated as a space for the exhibition of films with artistic values. The international vocation of the Seminci over the years has made it one of the leading film festivals in Spain and a regular venue for the exhibition of world cinema films.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to investigate the pattern of access and consumption of world cinema in Spain as an example of a European country. We focus on Spain because of its proximity to our research centers. To this end, we pose the following research questions: 1) how

many of world cinema feature films were selected at the main Spanish world cinema festivals?; 2) how many of world cinema feature films that were selected at the main Spanish festivals were subsequently screened in Spanish cinemas?; 3) from which geographical areas of the world does this flow of world cinema feature films originate?; 4) what percentage of these feature films are co-productions?, and 5) what are the determining factors in the subsequent distribution of feature films on commercial screens?

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer these research questions, we have focused on a specific territorial and temporal scope. Firstly, we consider world cinema those films produced or co-produced by non-Western countries. Western countries are defined as those in Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. For the geographical categorization of the films by country and region, we have used the United Nations Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use (UN, 1999). Therefore, the reader will find South America instead of Latin America, or South Asia instead of the Middle East.

As for the geographical scope of the study, we have chosen Spain for technical reasons, such as its proximity, the accessibility of official data, and the importance of world cinema consumption in this country within Europe (Higson, 2021). The time frame has been five years, from 2016 to 2021, in which we have had access to official data from the Institute of Cinematography and Audiovisual Arts (*Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales*, ICAA for its Spanish abbreviation) of the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Sport. This has also allowed us to observe the influence of the context of the Covid-19 pandemic on the arrival and exhibition of world cinema in Spain.

In terms of festivals, we have chosen world cinema films screened at two international festivals: 1) the San Sebastian International Film Festival (SSIFF), which is the only Spanish festival in category A (Specialized Feature Film Competitive Festivals), according to FIAPF accreditation; and 2) the Valladolid International Film Week (Seminci), founded in 1956, which has a space traditionally dedicated to non-Western cinema.

The methodological process consisted of identifying the world cinema feature films that were screened at the chosen festivals and in the period under study, according to the data provided on the official websites of these festivals. We then analyzed which of these films were screened in Spanish cinemas, according to ICAA data.

Concerning our first two research questions, one issue that has arisen in the data collection for this study is how to compute the repetition of the same film in the two festivals studied. Thus, as we will argue later, four films are repeated in both festivals (see Results section). In this sense, we have chosen to include repetitions when we wanted to compare how many world cinema films have been included in each festival in a given year. However, in global terms, i.e., to calculate the total number of films screened at both festivals, we have excluded the four repeated films in order to facilitate the analysis of the different films that have reached Spanish cinemas each year.

RESULTS

World cinema feature films screened at SSIFF and Seminci between 2016 and 2021

As Figure 2 shows, in the period 2016-2021, almost one in three feature films screened at the chosen festivals belonged to world cinema (29.2 %). This percentage has ranged from almost 40 % (in 2020, SSIFF) to 21.1 % (in 2020, Seminci).

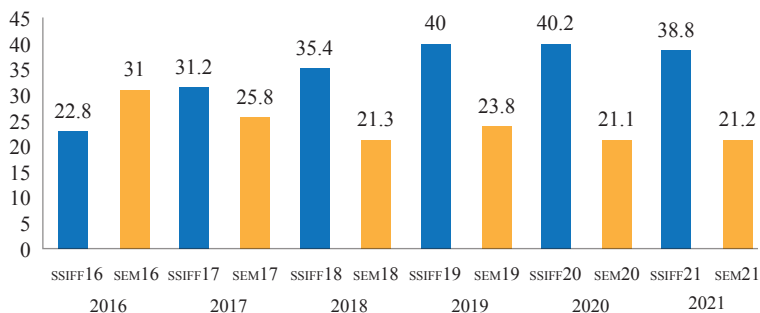
As Figure 2 shows, in general, in all the years studied, except 2016, the percentage of world cinema feature films screened out of the total number of feature films at the festivals was higher at SSIFF than at Seminci.

From festivals to cinema screens

In this section, we will provide the data referring to feature films screened in cinemas that were previously shown at one of the two festivals (SSIFF or Seminci).

If we try to compare the presence of world cinema at both festivals, of the 401 non-Western feature films screened at SSIFF and Seminci in the period 2016-2021, 145 feature films have been screened in Spanish

FIGURE 2
PERCENTAGE OF WORLD CINEMA FILMS SCREENED AT SSIFF
AND SEMINCI (2016-2021)



Source: The authors with data extracted from the SSIFF and Seminci programs (2016 to 2021).

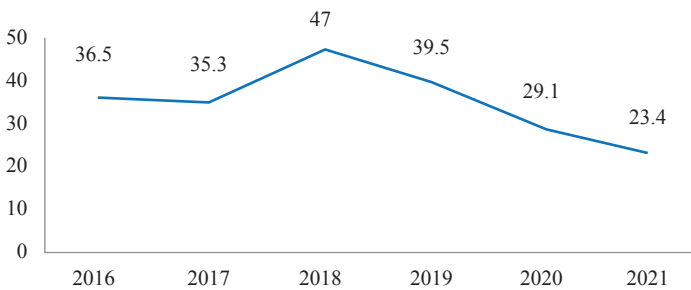
TABLE 1
WORLD CINEMA FEATURE FILMS IN SPANISH CINEMAS, PREVIOUSLY
SCREENED AT THE SSIFF OR SEMINCI FESTIVALS, IN 2016-2021

	Exhibited at festivals	Exhibited in movie theaters	Percentage
SSIFF16	32	13	40.6
SEM16	31	10	32.2
SSIFF17	39	18	46.1
SEM17	30	7	23.3
SSIFF18	44	23	52.2
SEM18	25	11	44
SSIFF19	49	22	44.8
SEM19	32	10	31.2
SSIFF20	37	12	32.4
SEM20	18	4	22.2
SSIFF21	40	11	27.5
SEM21	24	4	16.6
Total	401	145	36.1

Source: The authors with data extracted from the SSIFF and Seminci programs (2016 to 2021), and from ICAA (2022a).

cinemas. Only four theatrically screened films were at both festivals: *Air Pocket* (*La idea de un lago*, Mumenthaler, Switzerland and Argentina, 2016), *Yuli: The Carlos Acosta Story* (*Yuli*, Bollaín, Spain, Cuba, UK and Germany, 2018), *Mirai* (Hosoda, Japan, 2018) and *Sagu & Pagu: Büyük Define* (Bastürk, Turkey, 2017). Therefore, if we exclude these repeated films –either at both festivals or at the same festival, but in different years– the number of different films screened at SSIFF and Seminci is reduced to 397, and the number of different films screened in cinemas and festivals is reduced to 141 (35.5 %). The statistics shown in Figure 3 have been calculated using this data.

FIGURE 3
PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENT WORLD CINEMA FEATURE FILMS SCREENED
IN SPANISH CINEMAS, PREVIOUSLY SCREENED AT THE SSIFF OR SEMINCI
FESTIVALS, EACH YEAR



Source: The authors with data extracted from the SSIFF and Seminci programs (2016-2021).

Spanish market share of world cinema screenings

Table 2 shows the market share of feature films shown in national cinemas, which the Spanish Ministry of Culture compiled. It is important to note that this statistic shows the market share according to the following geographical divisions of ICAA publications: United States, Europe (including Spain), Ibero-America (Spanish or Portuguese-speaking countries of the American continent), and other countries (rest of the world). As the table shows, world cinema, understood

as the sum of feature films screened in Ibero-America and other countries, has a relatively low market share, especially in comparison with the Hollywood box office in Spain, which in the period of this study ranges from 53.49 % (2020, after the impact of Covid-19) to 73.73 % in 2019 (ICAA, 2022b).

TABLE 2
SPANISH MARKET SHARE OF IBERO-AMERICAN AND
OTHER COUNTRIES' FEATURE FILMS

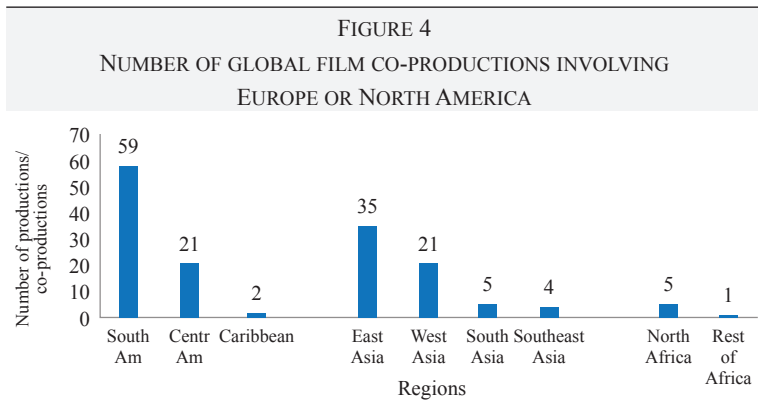
Year	Nationality	Films	%	% box office
2016	Ibero-American	48	2.86	0.1
	Other countries	138	8.22	1.12
2017	Ibero-American	56	3.1	0.11
	Other countries	190	10.52	1.6
2018	Ibero-American	58	2.98	0.27
	Other countries	194	9.96	2.86
2019	Ibero-American	36	1.96	0.1
	Other countries	220	11.99	1.41
2020	Ibero-American	40	2.37	0.35
	Other countries	188	11.15	5.89

Source: The authors with data extracted from ICAA (2022a).

A first reading of this data shows the specific character of world cinema on Spanish screens, which places it at the antipodes of popular Hollywood cinema. On the other hand, the lack of popularity of world cinema can be interpreted as a consequence of the fact that it is an auteur cinema belonging to high culture, distributed in small theaters, and aimed at a minority.

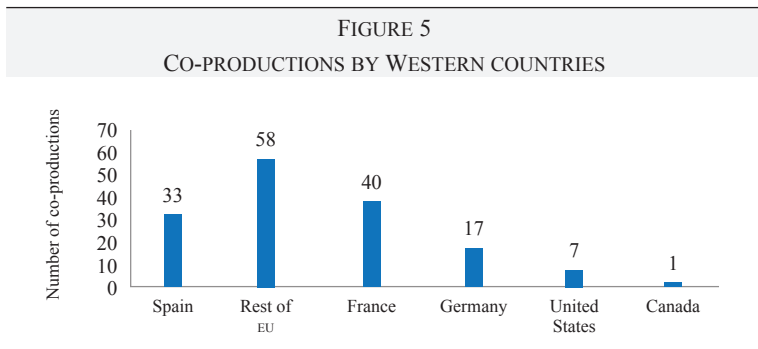
World cinema-producing countries

As Figure 4 shows, the region that produced or co-produced the highest percentage of films screened at the two festivals that were eventually shown theatrically was South America, with 59 films; followed by East Asia, with 35 films, and Central America and West Asia, both with 21 films. It should be noted that, in some cases, all the countries involved in the co-productions belonged to the same geographical region.



Source: The authors with data extracted from the SSIFF and Seminci programs (2016-2021) and from ICAA (2022a).

Figure 5 shows that European countries, including Spain, participated 91 times in world cinema co-productions that were shown in Spanish cinemas and previously screened at the aforementioned festivals. This figure also shows that the number of European co-productions in world cinema is much higher than that of North American co-productions, which only reach eight co-productions. Among the European participants, Spain participated in 33 films, and the rest of Europe in 58. France stands out with 40 co-productions.



Source: The authors with data extracted from the SSIFF and Seminci programs (2016-2021) and from ICAA (2022a).

Single-country productions

Among the films from South America, 15 were unique productions. Of these 15 films, eight were Argentine, four Chilean and three Brazilian. Argentina produced the largest number of feature films with a single producer (six). In Central America, six films were single productions, all of them from Mexico. In the case of East Asian films, 23 were single productions. Among these productions, 12 cases were Japanese, seven Chinese, and four South Korean productions. In the West Asian productions, there were five unique productions: two from Israel, two from Turkey and one from Lebanon, in addition to two South East Asian films (from Vietnam and Malaysia), and one South Asian film (from Iran). There was also a single production from North Africa (from Egypt). In summary, according to this data, more than a third (36.8 %) of the films screened at festivals that have gone on to theatrical release are from a single producing country.

Productions from two countries

In terms of South American co-productions between the two countries, the total number of films is 22. Argentina has the most productions (15 feature films), followed by Colombia with four, Chile with three, and Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay with one production each. Spain co-produced 14 of these 25 films, France participated in three, and Germany participated in one film. The rest were co-productions between two South American film production companies. In the case of Central America, there were eight co-productions between two producers: Mexico participated in seven, and Guatemala in one film. Spain co-produced five of these eight films, France co-produced two and Canada co-produced one.

In the case of Asian co-productions, East Asia stands out with six titles co-produced by two countries: five from Japan and one a Sino-Mongolian co-production. Of the five Japanese co-productions, four involved France, and one was co-produced with the UK. West Asia and South Asia registered four and three co-productions from two countries, respectively. In the case of West Asia, Israel co-produced three films, and Georgia co-produced one. In all three cases, the co-production was with European countries: France (Georgia and Israel), Germany, and

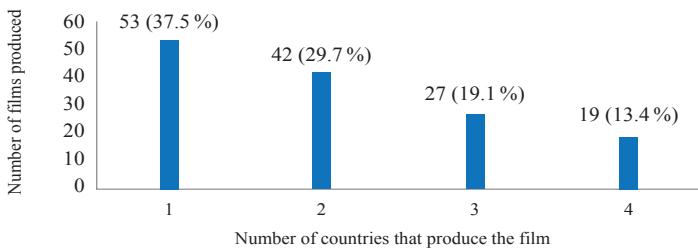
Italy. In South Asia, two films were co-produced with Iran and one with India. In all three cases, the films were co-produced with France.

In Africa, there were no co-productions between the two countries. Thus, almost a third of the films screened at festivals that have gone on to theatrical release (31.9 %) were co-productions between the two countries.

Productions from three, four or more countries

As can be seen in Figure 6, the largest number of films reaching theaters were productions from a single country, followed by those from two, three, and four or more countries.

FIGURE 6
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FILMS AND THE COUNTRIES
THAT PRODUCED THEM



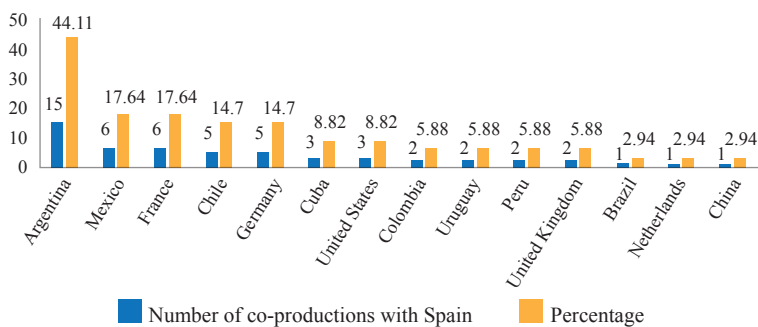
Source: The authors with data extracted from the SSIFF and Seminci programs (2016-2021) and from ICAA (2022a).

Co-productions with Spain

If we focus on Spain, we can see that the country with which Spain co-produces most is Argentina (44 % of Spanish co-productions of feature films at festivals), followed by Mexico and France (17.6 %). According to data from UIS. Stat (2022), from 2005 to 2017, Argentina occupied a privileged place in the co-production regime of fiction feature films with Spain. A historical context of this fact was studied by Elena (2011), who considered the 2000s as a “true golden age” of Argentine film releases in Spain, far above other South American cinemas (p. 4).

The boom of Argentine cinema in Spain in the 2000s was the cause of the growth of Spanish-Argentine co-productions, which, according to the same author's estimate, in the years 2000-2009 reached 131 titles, "which represents more than 44 % of total co-productions with Latin America in this decade" (p. 17). Figure 7 shows the still good health of Spanish-Argentine co-production in the period of this study (2016-2021), which demonstrates a continuation concerning the previous decade, studied by Elena.

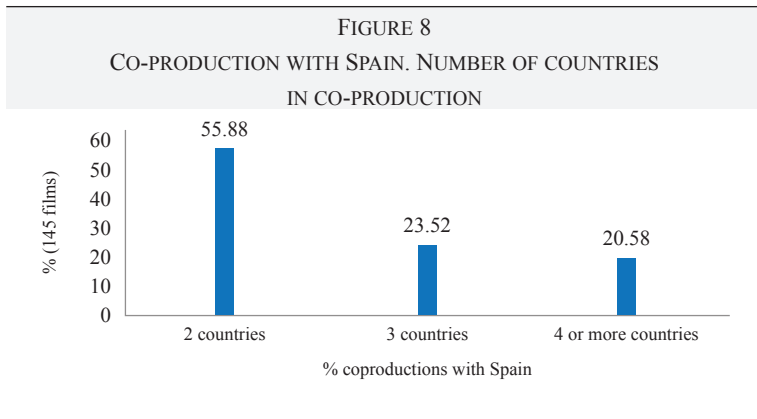
FIGURE 7
COUNTRIES WITH WHICH SPAIN CO-PRODUCES



Source: The authors with data extracted from the SSIFF and Seminci programs (2016-2021) and from ICAA (2022a).

In addition to Argentina, Elena's (2011) study also points to Spanish-Argentine co-productions occupying a place once occupied by Spanish-Mexican co-productions. Due to this historically consolidated relationship, it is not surprising that Mexico occupies a second place on the list of co-productions between 2016 and 2021 (as shown in Figure 7). In this regard, it is also worth noting the place occupied by France in Spanish co-productions, as shown in the UIS. Stat (2022), has always been present in the top 10 producer countries with Spain in the last decade. It has even occupied a first place during the 2011-2014 period, in close competition with Argentina.

In this regard, it is worth noting that, among these co-productions, as Figure 8 shows, more than half of Spanish co-productions were with a single country. A possible explanation could be related, as Bondebjerg (2016) argues, to the fact that transnational audiovisual co-productions, when involving more than two national production systems, can generate not only advantages but also disadvantages, as different “national ways of directing or different styles of acting” can collide (p. 5).



Source: The authors with data extracted from the SSIFF and Seminci programs (2016-2021) and from ICAA (2022a).

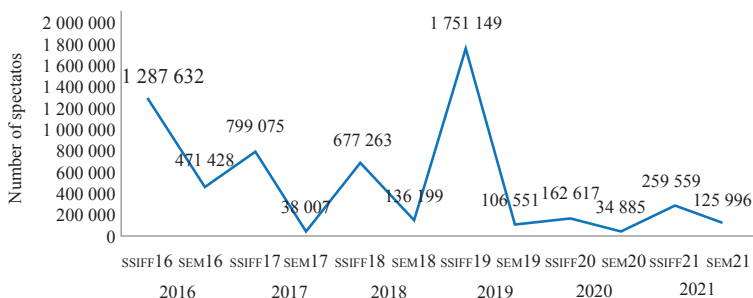
Number of spectators in cinemas

In terms of the box office results of world cinema feature films previously screened at festivals, as shown in Figure 9, SSIFF has shown greater success, especially in the years 2016 and 2019.

If we compare the number of spectators of world cinema films shown in theaters that were previously screened at the chosen festivals with the total number of spectators in Spanish cinemas in the same period, we observe that there was a strong increase in 2019, while in 2020, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of spectators decreased significantly (Figure 10).

The data in Figure 10 on the number of viewers shows some regularity (2020 and the pandemic context aside) with occasional disturbances. The disruptions, in the form of sudden rises in the two

FIGURE 9
NUMBER OF SPECTATORS OF WORLD CINEMA FILMS IN SPANISH CINEMAS,
PREVIOUSLY SCREENED AT SSIFF AND SEMINCI

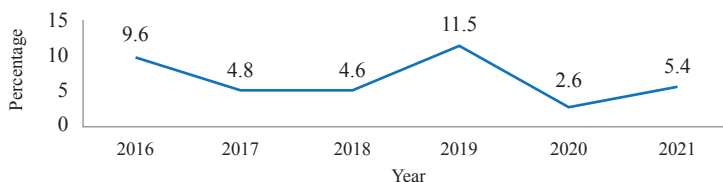


Source: The authors with data extracted from the SSIFF and Seminci programs (2016-2021) and from ICAA (2022a).

years 2016 and 2019, are due to two hugely popular world cinema feature films: *Parasite* (*Gisaengchung*, Joon-ho, South Korea, 2019), and *To Steal from a Thief* (*Cien años del perdón*, Carparsoro, Argentina/Spain, 2016), a Spanish-Argentine co-production, which surpasses the million-viewer mark and is positioned well above the average for world cinema in Spain (ICAA, 2022a). According to the statistics from the ICAA (2022a), the latter was the fourth most successful film (in the national category, or co-production between Spain and other countries) in the Spanish box office, following three other films: *A Monster Calls* (*Un monstruo viene a verme*, Bayona, Spain-United States, 2016) with over 4.5 million viewers; *Palm Trees in the Snow* (*Palmeras en la nieve*, González Molina, Spain, 2015), which surpasses 1.8 million viewers; and *A Stroke of Luck* (*Villaviciosa de al lado*, García Fernández-Velilla, Spain, 2016), with approximately 1.2 million viewers. If we focus only on world cinema, the change becomes significant again. Following *To Steal from a Thief*, the second and third highest-grossing world cinema releases are *The Distinguished Citizen* (*El ciudadano ilustre*, Cohn and Duprat, Spain-Argentina, 2016), with about 145 000 viewers, and *The Salesman* (*Forushande*, Farhadi, Iran-France, 2016), with about 125 000.

Regarding 2019, the Oscar-winning film *Parasite* can be considered the decisive element for the sudden rise in the Spanish box office that year. The movie recorded 1.3 million viewers in that year. As for the popularity of Spanish-Argentine co-productions, the pattern from 2016 repeats itself in 2019. In the second and third positions, after *Parasite*, are *Heroic Losers (La odisea de los giles)*, Borensztein, (2019) and the animated feature *Turu, the Wacky Hen (La gallina Turuleca)*, Monigote and Gondell, (2019), with over 155 000 and 133 000 viewers, respectively.

FIGURE 10
PERCENTAGE OF VIEWERS ATTENDING WORLD CINEMA FILMS RELATIVE
TO THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MOVIEGOERS IN SPAIN



Source: The authors with data from ICAA (2022a).

Duration of films and the most lucrative genres

The average duration of world cinema films exhibited in Spanish theaters (and previously screened at selected festivals) was 104.3 minutes, which is seven minutes longer than the average duration of all world cinema films screened at festivals (97 minutes), meaning between an hour and a half and an hour and forty-five minutes. This figure is significant because it suggests a possible relationship between the duration of films and their popularity at the Spanish box office.

Regarding the film genres of world cinema in Spain, it is necessary to first note the ambiguity and complexity of the term “genre” in cinema, with a long history of debate among various film theorists such as Altman (1999), Moine (2002), and Grant (2003, 2007). Therefore, we have chosen to analyze the film genres of world cinema films according to the genres assigned to them by the ICAA.

Thus, the two highest-grossing world cinema films mentioned earlier, *To Steal from a Thief* and *Parasite*, belong to the thriller/suspense genre. The second place is occupied by comedy and animation, mainly due to the popularity of two comedies, the Spanish-Argentine co-productions *Heroic Losers* and *The Distinguished Citizen*, as well as the animated feature *Turu, the Wacky Hen*. The third position is for dramas, with *The Salesman* (Iran/France, 2016) by Asghar Farhadi and *Roma* (Mexico, 2018) by Alfonso Cuarón. Sharing this position is the Japanese anime *Your Name (Kimi no na wa)*, Shinkai, 2016) and the animation *Bikes* (García, Spain/Argentina/China, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we have attempted to address several research questions that could shed some light on world cinema and the relationship between Spanish international film festivals and films exhibited in Spanish cinemas. Regarding the number of world cinema feature films screened at festivals, it is observed that approximately one-third of them (29.2 %) have been produced or co-produced by non-Western countries. As shown in Table 1, considering both festivals together, the year with the highest percentage of world cinema films was 2019. Meanwhile, we have not found studies with analogous figures referring to other European festivals with which to compare these results.

Our analysis shows that approximately one-third of the world cinema feature films screened at the selected festivals eventually made their way to Spanish cinemas. In this regard, the average percentage stands at 35.5 %. After being screened at festivals, the year with the highest number of films reached cinema screens was 2018, when almost half (47 %) of the world cinema feature films went through festivals to reach Spanish theaters. However, concerning the number of viewers, 2019 stands out, with the screening of *Parasite* being the most successful in Spanish theaters.

The results of our study show that the percentage of world cinema films is higher at the San Sebastian International Film Festival (SSIFF) than at the Valladolid International Film Week (Seminci). The data for the SSIFF are 10 % higher than those for Seminci for the entire study

period (Figure 2). The average is 34.2 % at the SSIFF, compared to 24 % at Seminci. Additionally, in each of the six years studied, world cinema films from the SSIFF have reached theaters in greater numbers than those from Seminci. One possible explanation could be that the SSIFF may have a more commercial aspect than Seminci. For example, the four world cinema films with the highest number of viewers in Spanish theaters during the period 2016-2021 (*Parasite*, *To Steal from a Thief*, *The Bar*, and *Heroic Losers*) were exhibited at the SSIFF, not at Seminci. The commercial aspect of the SSIFF can also be seen in the existence of the Donostia Awards, which recognize “the extraordinary contribution to the world of cinema by great figures that will forever remain in its history” (SSIFF, 2023, para. 1). This award typically goes to movie stars or filmmakers, usually from Hollywood or international commercial cinema.

Regarding the regions and countries whose films have been most exhibited in Spanish theaters after being previously screened at the SSIFF and/or Seminci, the data shows that South America is the region with the highest percentage. That is, 59 films in the studied period, represent 41.8 % of the total of 141 films screened in theaters and, previously, at SSIFF/Seminci. This is consistent with the relationship between Spain and some South American countries, which is oriented by common cultural aspects –such as the Spanish language– facilitating the distribution and consumption of films. This is reflected in Argentina being the country with the highest number of films exhibited in Spanish theaters and festivals. Thus, in the case of productions from a single producer or co-productions between two countries, Argentina ranks at the top of the list with 20 films.

Although the common language seems to play an important role, our results reveal that East Asia, with 35 films, is the second region with the highest number of films screened at the SSIFF/Seminci that ultimately reach Spanish theaters. This represents 24.8 % of the total world cinema feature films screened in theaters and SSIFF/Seminci. Within East Asia, Japanese films stand out. In productions from one or two countries, Japan is present in 17 of the total 31 films, followed at a considerable distance by China (five) and South Korea (four). Japan’s position could be explained by the traditional importance of

Japanese cinema within world cinema, pioneering in winning awards at European festivals (Elena, 1999). It is also consistent with data on Asian cinema and its exhibition in Spanish theaters in recent years (Das & López-Díez, 2022). France stands out among Western countries co-producing films with non-Western countries that reach Spanish theaters, co-producing 28.3 % of the total films exhibited in theaters and at the SSIFF and Seminci festivals (40 films in total), surpassing Spain (33 films, representing 23.4 % of the total).

As mentioned, the importance of Spain in this co-production regime can be explained by the common language and the relationship with South and Central America. However, a possible explanation for the importance of France in co-productions may be the historical role played by French critics and academics in defining world cinema. Additionally, France hosts the Cannes Film Festival, the most important European film event, and is the home country of influential magazines such as *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Positif*. However, this festival-co-production relationship is not observed in Germany and Italy, European countries where the other two most important festivals, the Berlinale and Venice, are held. During the studied period, Germany co-produced 17 films, while Italy co-produced only one. Meanwhile, Belgium co-produced eight films.

Furthermore, we consider the limited presence of Indian cinema, one of the largest film industries in the world, to be relevant; this is confirmed by other studies (Das & López-Díez, 2022). One possible reason for this absence may be the duration of Indian commercial films, which traditionally exceed three hours and currently average around two hours and 45 minutes. As argued earlier, the films screened at the SSIFF/Seminci that have made it to Spanish theaters have an average duration of around 1.5 hours. However, independent Indian films are gradually adapting to the duration of Western films, and many are approaching 90 or 120 minutes.

Lastly, we would like to highlight how the two most popular world cinema films in Spanish theaters, *To Steal from a Thief* and *Parasite*, represent a synthesis of the presence of world cinema on Spanish screens. On the one hand, they captured the attention of the Spanish audience after receiving multiple awards in the international

festival circuit, especially in the case of *Parasite*, after winning the Oscar. Officially classified as thrillers, the relative success of both films leads us to question to what extent the dramatic character of films from world cinema will be decisive for their presence on European screens. The conjunction of these two cases, albeit coincidental, points to an important finding of this study: the two most determining factors in the arrival and distribution of world cinema in Spain are, at least during the period of this study, recognition at festivals and Spanish-South American collaboration.

To better understand these data, we aimed to place them in the context of official statistics on the cinema exhibition market in Spain. In this regard, world cinema films obtained minimal revenue in the domestic market. In the same box office statistics, the position of American productions, which enjoy an average of around 60 % market share, demonstrates the Hollywood/world cinema binary quantitatively. It is thus noted that world cinema and Hollywood are at opposite ends, marking an antagonism that can be interpreted as a possible basis for theoretical debates about the definitions of world cinema mentioned in the introduction of this study.

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