

# Contemporary Film Festivals in Japan: Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia

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## Introduction

The subject for this paper is Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia (SSFF&Asia), held annually in Tokyo. It celebrated its 15th edition in 2013. The festival is one of the largest short film festivals in Asia, and is the oldest of nine known, functioning short film festivals in Japan (as of 2013.08.07). This research began in 2011 with interviews with festival committee members and by attending and observing the festival in that year and the next two years. It follows the 2012 report on four other Japanese film festivals that were part of a research project funded by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Centre at Gakushuin University (MacGregor & Niskanen, 2013).

Short film festivals come and go with startling frequency and there are only a handful that can sustain themselves over time. Why does this happen? Certainly, there is no shortage of films — nowadays, thanks to smartphones and inexpensive editing software, films can be made by anyone. But, while films are the core of any festival, large or small, there is more to organizing one than simply gathering some films. Issues of finance, manpower, and venue cannot be ignored. In this paper, I will examine these and other factors as they relate to Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia's (SSFF&Asia) success. To do so, I will use a list of eight strategies for success formulated by Alex Fischer in his study of the sustainability of film festivals (2013):

1. building cooperative alliances
2. getting the timing right
3. getting the location right
4. having an identifiable function
5. developing legitimizing affiliations
6. offering participation-based incentives
7. exercising resource control
8. gaining approval of a sanctioning organization

These strategies are part of a larger scheme for film festival management in Fischer's model called the Open System Paradigm. The eight strategies are key to the final "re-energisation" phase of the system, and necessary for a film festival's sustainability (Fischer, 2013, p. 41). According to him, at least some of the above strategies must be in place in order to "promote stable resource importation" (p. 43). Resources include a number of things: manpower, money, publicity, films, and participation. When one of these is compromised or absent anywhere in the film festival cycle, problems occur. The key is to be able to anticipate, avoid, and address such problems. In Fischer's study, he identifies the necessary resources that film festivals need. They are useful for this research to assess the operating structure and the success of SSFF&Asia.

The outline of the paper is as follows: I will begin with an overview of SSFF&Asia, its history, and features. Next, I will outline the eight strategies listed above, explain what they mean, and how they relate to this festival. Finally, I will discuss the findings to assess SSFF&Asia's current stability and the outlook for its future.

## **Overview of SSFF&Asia**

Tetsuya Bessho, a well-known actor and entertainer in Japan and somewhat lesser-known in the U.S. as an actor, founded the festival. His inspiration for the

festival came from a chance viewing of American short films in Los Angeles in the early 1990s that deeply impressed him. Up to then, short films in Japan referred to experimental works called *tanpen eiga*, and were mostly unknown or misunderstood. As most Japanese did not have access to such good quality mainstream short films as these American shorts, including him, he decided to introduce them to Japan. He also hoped that Japanese filmmakers would see these films as models and start to make high-quality entertaining short films themselves. With the help of two co-founders, and supporters that included director George Lucas and the American Film Institute (AFI), he was able to bring a small program of 33 American shorts from the U.S. to Tokyo (which later toured to Naha) in a festival called American Short Shorts in 1999. The festival, which included a competition, continued in this way for another two years, with the addition of an international program and an expanded tour that included Singapore in 2001. In 2002, the festival became Short Shorts Film Festival (SSFF), and Japanese shorts were screened for the first time along with American and international films. By 2003, the festival was gaining ground with 1,300 submissions to the competition sections and featured a 5-city tour across Japan.

With the support of then Tokyo mayor Shintaro Ishihara, the Tokyo Metropolitan government agreed to sponsor an Asian short film competition in the interest of developing cultural ties with and increasing the number of tourists from Asian countries. It was first held as a separate event and was part of the Tokyo International Film Festival in 2004, but joined SSFF in 2005. A special film event was created for the World Expo in Aichi prefecture in the same year, while national and international tours flourished. The festival was growing and attracting more Japanese and international films, with more than 2,000 competition submissions. In 2005, the festival received Academy Award accreditation.

2008 was a big year as two new venues were added, and a record 192

Japanese films were submitted, thanks to the addition of more screening opportunities for Japanese films. The Stop! Global Warming competition, supported by the Ministry of the Environment, was also launched. 2010 was even bigger, with the addition of the Let's Travel! Project, supported by the Japan Tourist agency, a branch of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transportation and Tourism. Nearly 300 Japanese films were submitted among more than 4,000 films. In just over 10 years, the festival had made enormous leaps in terms of size and scope. By 2011, the year of my intensive research of the festival, there were 19 film programs and 4 special events (seminars, panel discussions), and national and international tours.

With the above introductory material as background, I will now introduce Fischer's eight strategies for a successful film festival by presenting each one in turn, and explaining how it is implemented and the observable results.

## **Eight strategies for success**

### *1. Building cooperative alliances*

In a cooperative alliance between two different individuals or groups, there is reciprocal benefit for both parties. SSFF&Asia has built alliances in at least two ways: first, with the American film industry; and second, with the Omotesando Keyakikai (Omotesando Merchants' Association). The fact that Tetsuya Bessho was the main festival founder cannot be overlooked: according to festival director Seigo Tono, "Everybody knows Tetsuya from television and they trust him.... [and] he is such a good businessman" (Fischer, 2005). Therefore, the festival owes a lot to him for his name value, both in Japan and in the American film industries, and for his business skills (he is the owner and CEO of two entertainment companies). In both cases, he was and continues to be a key figure representing the festival.

The early festivals depended on a number of people and organizations

for American films, including George Lucas, the American Film Institute, and the University of California. In return, the films got exposure in Japan for the first time, and provided a sampling of what the American short film market had to offer. Likewise, though it happened only once, Short Shorts Festival went to Hollywood in 2002 and screened a program of international and Japanese films (Short Shorts Film Festival Archive 2002). These years did not result in enduring relationships with the American contacts, but at the time were crucial.

The second important alliance is with the Omotesando Merchants' Association. They were key to securing the venue in Harajuku and later, the one in Omotesando. The Association is a very powerful organization that carefully screens applications from any outside organizations who wish to hold an event in the area. For the first edition in 1999, Tetsuya Bessho approached them and after a long negotiation process, was granted permission to hold the first Shortshorts festival there. This was a boon for the festival, since the Association booked the event into their calendar as an annual event thereafter, and it has been held there ever since. They also granted permission for the festival to mount flags to the street poles for publicity purposes, which is a rarity there. And, they allowed the festival to distribute posters and flyers to shops. In return, the festival brings people to the area for a full week in June, upwards of 6,000 in 2011, particularly young people in their 20s and 30s (Committee for Short Shorts/Committee for Short Shorts Asia, 2011, p. 28), and this additional traffic helps stimulate the local economy. As additional thanks to their hosts, festival volunteers do a street cleanup during the festival. And finally, to court the Association's good favour, festival organizers make personal visits to association members and send thank-you gifts each year. Maintaining good relations with the Association is key to venue security.

## *2. Getting the timing right*

The festival has always occurred in June, though the exact dates vary from year to year. Once again, Tetsuya Bessho, film festival director, considered several things in choosing this timing. First, it does not conflict with other large film festivals in Japan. Second, it does not conflict with other festivals on the international short film festival calendar — for example, Clermont-Ferrand (France) is in February, Tampere (Finland) is in March, Cannes (France) is in May, Asiana Film Festival (Korea), is in November, and Busan Short Film Festival (Korea) is in May. This schedule makes it possible for filmmakers to enter their film in any of the above competitions and also enter it in SSFF&Asia. Besides, June is a temperate time in Tokyo, which may encourage people to attend.

Though the dates in June are not fixed, the festival generally runs for a full week with a weekend on either end, and the opening gala falling on a Thursday. Including two weekends helps maximise spectator participation, which is good for the festival and good for the area. The other key point to festival timing is that it meets the Merchants' Association's approval: June was agreeable to them from the beginning, so that settled it.

### *3. Getting the location right*

Once again, Bessho was integral to the location decision, which he believed was a trend-setting place for young people (Fischer, 2005). Therefore, it is not surprising that more than 60% of the audience is in their 20s and 30s (Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia Official Report 2011, p. 28). Besides, it is known as a fashionable area with many upscale stores, making it a popular area with tourists and Tokyo residents in all age groups. Furthermore, there is easy train and subway access to the area. All of the above make the location a good choice.

### *4. Having an identifiable function*

The original function, as has been explained, was to introduce American short

films to Japan for the purposes of creating a positive impression about short films among Japanese audiences, of creating a mainstream short film culture in Japan, and of encouraging Japanese short filmmakers to follow these models in their own filmmaking (Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia 2013, p. 6). The festival has since grown to become the largest (Visual Voice) and among the "best" in the myriad of highly rated short film festivals in Asia (ifilmfest.), attracting more than 5,000 submissions from around the world (2013). To achieve all of the above, the organizers were very careful in how they mounted the early programs. Using the word "American" in their festival title alone created a positive image for Japanese, since the US and things American were considered positive throughout the 1990s, particularly for film, thanks to the popularity and availability of American feature films in Japan. Besides that, the first three editions featured the short films of well-known American directors such as George Lucas, Martin Scorsese, and Tim Burton. They also screened Academy Award winning and nominated films (a practice which continues today with the Academy Shorts program). The name value of all of the above gave credibility to the festival. Furthermore, besides them being good films, these examples showed that making short films is often the way feature filmmakers get their start. Finally, they used only the term "short" (シヨート) from the start in order to show people that these films were different from the *tanpen eiga* they had known.

When the festival became Short Shorts Film Festival and later Short Shorts Film Festival and Asia, it created a new image for itself. The festival became international in scope, with programming from Japan and the rest of the world. Since Short Shorts Film Festival Asia joined Short Shorts Festival in 2004, the shift has been to a focus on Asia. Examples of programs that reflect this include the Korean Music Shorts, and a Japan-Korea tourism program. There are also international tours (to Mexico since 2005 and Malaysia since 2010). Besides that, each year there is at least one program of films from a



single country outside Asia: for example, in 2011 it was Italy, and in 2013, it was Croatia.

A second important function of the festival is of course to support young filmmakers, in particular Japanese filmmakers, and help them get a start on their careers. For many filmmakers of every nationality, without film festivals, they would have no chance at a filmmaking career. To support the development of their craft, the festival organizes seminars by filmmakers and guests. It gives special support to Japanese filmmakers by organizing a Japan competition, a program of out-of-competition Japanese films (NEO Japan), and other programs open only to Japanese filmmakers.

##### *5. Developing legitimizing affiliations*

As Fischer describes it, "a legitimizing affiliation consists of a film festival's partnership or connection with another organisation, business or individual, which gives the film festival a level of credibility that in turn positively influences the motivation of other potential participants" (2013, p. 58). Such affiliations can include organisers, organisations, patrons/official guests, boards of directors, and sponsors. The ones relevant to SSFF&Asia, organisers, patrons, and sponsors will be discussed below.

Tetsuya Bessho, film festival founder and original organiser, is no doubt a credible festival affiliation. He is perceived as a trusted and authoritative figure in Japan to festival participants, supporters, and sponsors. It was thanks to his status in the business, entertainment, and social sectors of the country that the festival got its start. While he is no longer directly involved with festival planning, he has maintained an active interest over the years, and is called upon to seek new sponsors when necessary and do other tasks that require a person of his stature. Furthermore, he is involved as owner and CEO of both the festival production company and one of the festival theatres, the latter of which contributes to festival income. And, in 2011, he became the Japan

Tourism Agency's (JTA, a government body) Visit Japan Ambassador, linking him with the festival's tourism competition that began with the support of JTA in 2009 (Japan Tourism Agency, 2011). Therefore, Bessho's connection can be understood to benefit the festival on many levels.

The key festival patron is George Lucas, who has supported the festival since its inception. He appeared at the official inauguration in 1999, and since then has provided a letter of greeting for the festival program each year. More recently, he was a big contributor to a festival charity auction in 2011 (Committee for Short Shorts/Committee for Short Shorts Asia, 2011, pp. 2-3).

Festival sponsors make up just over 50% of festival funding, and are therefore vital to the event's livelihood. Sponsors and the programs they support come and go, so new sponsors are constantly being sought after. Even so, there is a core group that has been with the festival since 2003: ANA, Tokyo Film Centre School of Arts, J-Wave radio station, and Lucasfilm Ltd. Besides them, the festival receives a discount on the rental fee for its venues from its owners MORI Building and Visual Voice, making them important sources of financial support. Furthermore, government bodies provide 30% of the funding, and include the Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, who sponsor two special competitions. Most significant is the support from Tokyo Metropolitan Government. With an interest in invigorating the local economy, it has co-sponsored the entire Short Shorts Film Festival Asia since it began in 2004 (Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia 2011, p. 7). Thus, the three affiliations described above, the founding organiser, the key patron, and the sponsors and supporters that are vital to the festival's survival and future success are in place and functioning.

#### *6. Offering participation-based incentives*

Filmmakers have several incentives to participate. Though there are other short film festivals in Japan, SSFF&A has global recognition that it is *the* film

festival in this country dedicated to short films of all genres and the largest in Asia (Visual Voice). Therefore, there is region-based incentive to participate. Besides, submitting a film is fairly easy: entries need only have been made within two years of the festival dates. For Japanese filmmakers, there are categories that accept only Japanese films, and is especially good motivation to apply.

As short filmmakers are generally independent, attending a film festival is a good opportunity to see the work of others and meet others in the field. For residents of Japan, it is cost-effective to participate in SSFF&Asia since their travel expenses to the festival are minimal. Filmmakers in competition from abroad have similar motivation to attend, as their transportation to Tokyo and hotel expenses are covered by the festival. As Peranson puts it, "the best way for festivals to work to attract the films they want is with, no doubt, cold hard cash" (2009, p. 32). To that end, each of the Grand Prix winners in the three competition categories receive cash awards and are eligible for several other prizes as well. In 2011, for example, SSFF&Asia gave out 21 awards, 10 of which were cash prizes of up to 600,000 yen.

The recognition gained by filmmakers has a positive backwash for the festival too, since it can say it was because a certain film played at their festival that it got a distribution deal, or that it launched a filmmaker's career, as has happened in the past (SSFF&Asia winners Ken Ochiai, Hiroyuki Nakao, and Satoshi Yamaguchi became well-known feature filmmakers). So while filmmakers benefit, so does the festival with the positive PR they gain. And if the festival gives awards, its name will appear in the filmmaker's biodata at other film festivals and in filmmaker databases, which is additional PR directly hitting the target market: filmmakers and film-goers.

Entering a festival with Academy Awards accreditation is also certainly motivation to participate. Among one of 63 short film festivals in the

world to have such accreditation, SSFF&Asia is the only short film festival in Asia to have this status, apart from the Hiroshima International Animation Festival, which screens only animated shorts (see <[http://www.oscars.org/awards/academyawards/rules/86/pdf/86aa\\_shorts\\_festival\\_list.pdf](http://www.oscars.org/awards/academyawards/rules/86/pdf/86aa_shorts_festival_list.pdf)> for a list of qualifying festivals for the 86th Academy Awards in 2014).

Audiences too gain incentive to attend on several levels, one of which is from the festival location. Although the two main venues in Tokyo are not proper theatres, they are located in trendy parts of the city that may be appealing. Since both are upscale fashionable shopping malls, the festival derives from them a sense of their surrounding glamour too. A participant should be much more willing to go to venues such as these than to a shabby rundown hall. Since they are in popular retail and dining areas, there are things to do in addition to watching the films. Another audience perk is the free festival program, which is a slick, fully bilingual souvenir of 100 + pages. It used to be sold, but in recent years, it has been distributed free of charge in return for completing an audience survey and a ballot for the Audience Award.

### *7. Exercising resource control*

This strategy refers to the way film festivals control the flow of films into the festival, from the submission process to exhibition (Fischer, 2013, p. 76). It also refers to the types of relationships that festivals build with certain filmmakers, such as offering them a guaranteed slot in the lineup, or offering funding in return for exclusive premiere rights. SSFF&Asia appears to do none of the above. The only requirement for competition submission is that the work be a Japanese premier made within two years of the festival. Therefore, there is not the competition with another festival that exists among some (i.e., Toronto, Rotterdam, and Cannes), which require films to be world premieres (Quandt, 2009, p. 59). However, this can also work against the festival, since with few restrictions, it is likely to get a flood of submissions of varying quality. In 2013,

for example, over 5,000 films were submitted, a five-fold increase from 10 years before. Besides this relaxed submission process, the festival invites a small number of filmmakers to screen their works. However, the festival committee does not appear to play favorites with any particular director as some festivals do (i.e. Cannes; Sundance).

SSFF&Asia keeps expanding year by year, adding programs and competitions, (19 programs, 180 films in 2011, with some programs broken down into sections). Having so many choices may make it difficult for spectators to navigate the festival, and although there are two screenings of each program, one is at a theatre in Yokohama, a distance away from Tokyo. But that is the way of most film festivals: the more programs the better, it seems. However, unlike feature film festivals where audiences can handpick the individual films they will see, short fests, by their nature, bundle several films from different genres (i.e., fiction, documentary, animation, CG) into 90-minute programs. Spectators thus have to take all or nothing, making program selection more challenging.

#### *8. Gaining the approval of a sanctioning organization*

Accreditation by outside organizations can be a big boost for film festivals, putting them "on the map," so to speak and may make them the preferred choices for filmmakers and also perhaps for filmgoers who anticipate a higher quality of programming. Accreditation offers a degree of prestige that appeals not only to filmmakers and audiences, but also, very importantly, to sponsors. Particularly in Japan, status is extremely important, and is used as a leveraging tool in all walks of life.

SSFF&Asia received Academy Award accreditation in 2005, meaning that its Grand Prix winner would be eligible for nomination for an Oscar award in the short film categories of the following year's competition. Being nominated and winning an award would be a big achievement for both the filmmaker and

also for the festival. To date, no film from SSFF&Asia has been nominated, but film festival organizers remain hopeful. It has been director Tono's long-felt wish for a Japanese Grand Prix filmmaker to win an Academy award (Fischer, 2005; Schilling, 2013). The festival's accreditation certainly gave SSFF&Asia global exposure, as the number of entries after receiving it doubled, then tripled what they had been before (Schilling, 2013).

In the final section, which follows, I will assess SSFF&Asia's implementation of Fischers' eight strategies and make some recommendations in light of the findings.

## Discussion

Beginning with the first strategy, the dependence on the Omotesando Merchants' Association cannot be underestimated, as they are the key to securing the venues and guaranteeing the timing. The Yokohama theatre is also important, as it is billed as the "national tour" site. In recent years, interest from other cities in Japan has waned, so this location keeps the domestic tour concept alive.

The festival no longer needs the support of the US film industry that it did in the beginning. According to the festival director, "Now, our festival has a high reputation, so we can collect short films from all around the world on our own" (email correspondence, Seigo Tono, 2013.08.08). Thanks to national and international tours in the past, the booth they have at the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival market, and many one-off and regular guest programs provided through national (i.e. Nagoya, Unifrance) and international (Taiwan and Korea film festivals, and country spotlights such as Italy) contacts, they get all the variety they need.

Second, as for the timing of the festival, who knows if June is the best? This timing seems as good as any for the reasons discussed earlier — no competing

film festivals in Japan or abroad, it fits into the Merchants' Association calendar, it runs over two weekends, and it is a temperate season.

Next, the high pedestrian traffic zones, the high retail and entertainment features of the areas surrounding the Tokyo venues, and their easy access are the main reasons why these locations are right. The disadvantage is that the two main venues are not proper theatres equipped for film exhibition (only the third satellite Tokyo venue and the Yokohama venues are). This problem is not unique to SSFF&Asia, as there are only a few that do (i. e., Sapporo International Short Film Festival and Image Forum Film Festival). This lack of proper event facilities reflects a weakness in the entertainment and cultural infrastructure of Japan, and is not likely to change for some time, if ever. In the meantime, these types of events have to make do with what is available.

Fourth, the main functions of SSFF&Asia — to acquaint and entertain Japanese audiences with short films from all over the globe, and to support short film filmmakers, and Japanese filmmakers in particular, have already been discussed. A third area that has not yet been addressed is the organization of the festival. While it is not very clear, SSFF&Asia, is in fact, composed of two festivals: Short Shorts Film Festival (SSFF) and Short Shorts Film Festival Asia (SSFFA). They originally ran as separate events in 2004 when SSFFA was established. Thereafter, the festivals have been run together and called Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia. For sponsorship reasons, it is necessary and desirable to maintain a distinction between the two, but that distinction is unclear at best. The only ways to identify that they are separate festivals is by the program: it is designed as a split volume, with one half for SSFF and the other for SSFFA indicated by one half being upside down from the other. Second, the names of the festivals are generally printed on the program covers, and third, the greetings in both halves mention the names of the two festivals. If

it is as important as it appears for programming and funding, the fact that there are two festivals needs to be made much clearer.

The fifth strategy concerns the development of legitimizing affiliations. The affiliations that result from sponsorship deserve close scrutinisation as they result in an imbalance of funding sources. The fallout of this imbalance affects the festival budget in at least two ways: its programming and its allocations for PR and advertising. Another area of affiliation weakness concerns the festival patron and his current status.

First, with regard to funding sources, Fischer's research shows that according to several film festival directors, it is advisable that "the event's financial base is evenly distributed in thirds between three distinct funding sources: government grants, private sponsorship and earned income, e.g., ticket sales" (Fischer, 2009, p. 97). He goes on to explain that with such a balance, any loss of support from one contribution source can be more easily offset by the others until funding can be restored (*ibid*, p. 97). At present, SSFF&Asia's funding sources are sponsor-heavy with 67% from sponsors (15% of which is from Pacific Voice), 30% from public funding (government grants), and 3% from box office returns.

The danger of the above mix is that if an important sponsor drops out, it may be difficult to recoup the loss in time for the festival without making some sudden changes. However, because SSFF&Asia has several sponsors (five, including Pacific Voice in 2011), the loss of one could potentially be recovered by the other. In any case, the sponsor heavy weighting is something that the festival committee might consider.

More serious is the low box office returns. Something is wrong in the festival structure to have them figure so minimally. At least one reason for this may be that the PR and advertising are low priority items in the festival budget. In fact, the festival has almost no PR budget according to festival PR/Web



manager Miwako Kikuchi (personal communication, July 14, 2011). What little they have is used to hire a PR company to issue press releases and distribute flyers to the media. Apart from the festival website, posters, and flyers, any other advertising is free. For example, Tetsuya Bessho promotes the festival on his J-Wave morning radio program in the weeks leading up to the event. This station is one of four media partners and supporters listed in the 2011 program. The other three include a free English weekly magazine (Metropolis), a free Japanese biweekly newspaper (Tokyo Headline), and a cinema website (Cinemacafe.net), all of which provided minimal coverage, mostly before the festival, in 2011. Other free advertising includes the festival flags along the streets of the two main venues, and activity on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Besides these, an email or phone call can sometimes secure participation by some other media organizations who provide coverage during the festival, not before like the four official media sources above, when publicity really counts.

Although the venues are located in high pedestrian traffic areas, the festival attracts very few walk-ins. According to the PR manager, people plan to attend in advance. She thinks that short films are still not well known among the general public in Japan (even in 2011), and as a result, it is mostly cinephiles that attend.

Given the above, the festival could do well to allow for a PR and advertising budget and more vigorously promote it. If they did, it may help improve the funding source imbalance discussed above so that box office receipts figured more strongly in the mix. Having said that, however, based on this research, many other film festivals in Japan are in the same position with minimal or no dedicated PR/advertising budgets (i.e., Image Forum Festival; Sapporo International Short Film Festival).

The third weakness concerns the festival patron, George Lucas. Although he was a big name director when the festival began in 1999, he has

dropped out of the spotlight since his last Star Wars film in 2005. Though the main festival attendees (who are in their 20s and 30s) likely still know who he is, they may not recognize him as the big name he once was. In fact, he has pretty much retired from big feature filmmaking and in 2012 sold his film company Lucasfilm Ltd. (bio.True Story). This company is on the sponsor/supporter list, but may disappear as a result of the sale, which might affect festival funding, something that festival organizers might well consider.

The sixth strategy focuses on incentives for participants. As outlined earlier, the incentives for filmmakers, filmgoers, and sponsors are numerous. First, with regard to filmmakers, Chris Gore (2009, pp. 33-36) has compiled a list of 10 factors filmmakers should consider before entering their film in a festival. Taking these into account, and the incentives for filmmakers to participate in SSFF&Asia discussed earlier, the number of compelling reasons a filmmaker should participate in SSFF&Asia is great, starting with being able to submit a film without a fee, which for some festivals can be very high, or heavy submission regulations. Once their films are accepted, the incentives range from funding support for their trip to competing for a cash or other award, to participating in a world-class festival with name value and the chance to be nominated for an Academy Award, to combining a paid vacation to a country they may have not visited before to having an opportunity to meet and talk with other filmmakers and people from the industry. Meeting people and making contacts are important benefits of attending a festival that are not easily achievable outside the festival setting.

Thanks to the festival travel support, 40-50 filmmakers from abroad generally attend. Similarly, though Japanese filmmakers receive no funding for their trip, many come at their own expense. When the filmmakers come, they participate in the Q&As following the screenings, so that there is a good chance that at least one person, whether it is an actor, producer, or director

representing the film is on hand. Therefore, filmmaker participation is good for the festival on several levels. First, their presence shows that the festival is interested in films on an artistic level, not just as a commodity. Second, it is good for filmmakers since they can talk about their films and their craft in front of an audience. Also, if they win an award, they can attend the awards ceremony and be photographed for future publicity, something that may gratify the sponsor too. And finally, it is good for the audience, since they can learn about the films directly from the artists and talk with them between screenings. Audiences can further benefit from coming to the festival by combining film watching with shopping and dining in a trendy part of Tokyo.

Corporate sponsors and government supporters have incentive to participate in a world-class event such as SSFF&Asia in order to fulfill a "cultural support" mandate or a goodwill mission by doing so. Many companies have a budget to support the arts, and if approached by the right person in the right way, and if it matches the organization's needs, it may agree to sponsor or support it. In return for a financial or in-kind contribution, at the very least, they get their names on the sponsor page of the program, which all participants receive, and have their names announced during the introductions to the screenings and printed on large displays at the venues, all of which result in a form of advertising.

The seventh strategy of exercising resource control is difficult to assess — are there too many programs? Are there too many submissions? Recall that there were 19 programs in the 2011 edition and over 5,000 submissions for the 2013 edition.

A large number of submissions cannot be a bad thing, since it increases the chance that the committee will be able to select and screen good films. Likewise, having many programs cannot be a bad thing either if the variety attracts more people, cinephiles and non-cinephiles alike. Furthermore, festivals

with multiple programs seem to be the norm, at least for mid- to large festivals. And finally, having lots of programs can sometimes be a financial buffer: if the funding for one program disappears, there are still many other programs to take up the slack. The bottom line is that if the organizing committee feels it can handle the volume of submissions and manage the work of organizing and scheduling all the programs, then there cannot be a serious problem.

The work that the festival has done to gain Academy Award accreditation, the eighth and final strategy, is a definite boost — it effectively brought SSFF&Asia to the attention of filmmakers around the world. It helped attract more submissions, and it gave the festival a positive endorsement that is used on many levels of appeal: to filmmakers, sponsors, supporters, participants, and filmgoers. How could they do better?

## **Concluding Remarks**

All things considered, with regard to the eight strategies discussed in this paper, SSFF&Asia can certainly be considered a successful world-class festival, with its varied programming, its global appeal, the alliances it has cultivated, and its incentive offerings on many levels. And it all began from bringing a handful of short films from the U.S. to a country that did not even have a mainstream short film culture. Though it cannot be given all the credit, SSFF&Asia contributed to the development of a short film industry in Japan, by introducing short films as an entertainment medium.

In order to be able to continue to introduce new films and new ways of filmmaking to Japan, the Committee would do well to review some areas for future sustainability and success, including its balance of funding sources, and its PR and advertising efforts.

Film festivals create a special experience: a festival edition happens only once; most of the films that are screened disappear when the festival is

over, and there is no chance that the same group of participants will gather together again. For SSFF&Asia, the festival experience is especially valuable with its multiple programming, impressive filmmaker and guest participation, nurturing of young Japanese talent, forward thinking (i.e. its 3D competition), and culture building (i.e., international tours, international programs). With continued careful management and a constant view to the future, SSFF&Asia is sure to continue to flourish.

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# 日本における現代映画祭: ショートショート フィルムフェスティバル & アジア

Laura MacGregor

本研究では、東京で毎年開催されているショートショート フィルムフェスティバル&アジア (SSFF&Asia) を取り上げる。本研究を含む一連の研究は、2011年に映画祭の開催委員に対するインタビューと実際の映画祭の観察によって始まった。SSFF&Asiaは数々の研究が行われている映画祭のひとつであり、本研究は2012年度の日本の他の四つの映画祭の報告(詳細はMacGregor & Niskanen, 2013)に続くものとなる。これらの研究は、学習院大学外国語教育研究センター研究プロジェクトとして行われた。

本研究では、SSFF & Asiaの将来性をAlex Fischer (2013)のモデルを用いて分析する。Fischerのモデルでは、映画祭の開催場所と時期、役割、映画の供給源、参加などの要素によって分析が行われる。分析の結果、SSFF&Asiaは安定した開催地、緊密な開催委員会、数多くの出品などの強みや長所があるが、財源基盤、宣伝方法、広報構造などの面を強化する必要があることが明らかになった。