



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Cinecittà as a pillar of cultural entrepreneurship: From the golden age of Italian cinema to the sustainable development of Rome

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Abstract

Cinecittà, known as the "City of Cinema," is one of the world's most important film production centers and a fundamental factor in the cultural and economic development of Rome. This article examines the historical evolution of the site, from its founding in the 1930s to its current role on the international film stage. It analyzes changes in the studios and sets, as well as how Cinecittà is redefining itself to compete with other emblematic cultural and tourist landmarks in Rome, such as the Colosseum and the Roman Forum. Furthermore, the article explores its contribution to the local economy, its dynamics as a cultural tourism hub, and the prospects for its development through sustainable cultural entrepreneurship practices, aiming to transform it into a multifaceted center of entertainment and culture comparable to international models like Disneyland.

Keywords: Cinecittà; Cultural Entrepreneurship; Rome; Cultural Tourism; Local Development; Sustainable Utilization.

1 Introduction

Film tourism constitutes an emerging field that links the art of cinema with tourism development, creating new opportunities for destination promotion and local economic enhancement. As Manola (2024) argues, the cinematic experience is not limited to film screenings but evolves into a reciprocal relationship involving tourism and literature, influencing destination dynamics and the shaping of cultural routes. The showcasing of film locations enhances the image of a city or region, offering visitors a "lived" experience that blends art and culture (Manola & Kostaki, 2024).

Cinecittà, known as the "City of Cinema," stands as an iconic example of this interaction between cinema and cultural entrepreneurship. Its contribution to the development of the Italian film industry has been studied in comparison to other cinematic locations, such as Matera, which has also been developed as a film and cultural destination (Manola & Tsatambassoglou, 2021). At the same time, research into cultural practices within European contexts, such as Shakespeare's influence on Venetian literature and cultural routes (Manola, Kouni & Koltsikoglou, 2021), underscores the importance of cultural entrepreneurship in the cinema sector as well.

The historical trajectory of Cinecittà—from its founding in 1937 to its establishment as an international film production center—reflects how cultural infrastructure can be transformed into tools for sustainable development. Contemporary studies emphasize that the integration of cinema, literature, and tourism can offer innovative solutions for destination promotion (Maniou, Mitoula & Manola, 2024), making Cinecittà an exceptionally interesting case for analysis within the framework of cultural entrepreneurship.

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2 Cultural Entrepreneurship and Film Tourism

The concept of cultural entrepreneurship develops within a broad theoretical platform emphasizing the capacity of cultural resources to be converted into economic value through innovative practices (Dobrevá & Ivanov, 2020; Ratten, 2022; Hill et al., 2023; Pechlaner et al., 2020; Bürger & Volkmann, 2020). This approach highlights the importance of cultural identity, locality, and creative management as key factors for sustainable development. Simultaneously, the integration of digital technologies into tourism and creative industries, as noted by Felicetti et al. (2022), Varotsis (2022), Baggio & Del Chiappa (2012), and Nambisan et al. (2017), provides new tools for promoting and connecting cultural destinations, creating digital ecosystems (apps, marketplaces, immersive experiences).

In the field of film tourism, studies by Beeton (2014), Lopes et al. (2023), Pérez García et al. (2021), and Lavaredas et al. (2025) highlight how the promotion of landscapes and narratives through films influences travel decisions and contributes to sustainable local development. Moreover, research by Hill et al. (2024) and Elias et al. (2023) stresses the critical role of public policies and partnerships in the cultural sector, promoting clusters and funding schemes that facilitate entrepreneurship.

The technological dimension and sustainability become decisive factors in contemporary film tourism. Works such as those by Fazio et al. (2024), Rusch et al. (2022), and Tomczak & Stachowiak (2015) examine the application of virtual/augmented reality (VR/AR) technologies and digital cultural mapping, while studies by Ngoasong (2018) and ScienceDirect (2021) highlight the role of environmentally sensitive narratives in shaping modern tourism products.

The human dimension and entrepreneurial spirit of local communities constitute critical factors for the success of cultural initiatives. Montanes Del Rio & Medina Garrido (2023), Métze (2009), Lindkvist et al. (2013), and Gangi (2015) document how innovation and resilience among local entrepreneurs positively influence urban regeneration and social cohesion, particularly during periods of crisis or transformation.

In the Greek context, examples such as *Before Midnight* (2013) in Messinia demonstrate how a film can boost tourism flows—with increased arrivals at Kalamata Airport following the film's release. Papadaki (2024) analyzes eleven films shot in Greece from 1957 to 2023, from *The Boy on a Dolphin* to *Mamma Mia 3*, documenting visual mechanisms promoting Greek identity and increased visitation in areas such as Skopelos and Skiathos. The *Mamma Mia!* phenomenon notably led to approximately a 10% increase in bookings in 2009 according to local agencies.

Another Greek case study is the Thessaloniki Film Museum, which functions as a cultural entrepreneurship entity and an educational-tourism hub. Environmentally themed films such as the documentaries *Voice of the Aegean* and *The Digger* contribute to the promotion of natural landscapes and environmental awareness. Equally notable is the Animasyros Festival, which elevated Syros to an international animation center, extending the tourism season and combining culture with local development through workshops and international collaborations.

The synthesis of theory and practice demonstrates that film and cultural entrepreneurship serve as levers for local regeneration and strategic branding tools. By leveraging films, festivals, digital technologies, and sustainable practices, local communities can enhance their economies, promote their cultural and natural landmarks, and forge strong international identities.

Digital media, including film and the internet, are powerful tools for promoting a location's unique identity to attract tourists. This is accomplished through both digital marketing and educational initiatives. Consequently, digital technologies are increasingly vital for the education sector, particularly for training in cultural entrepreneurship.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) fundamentally improve education by making it more accessible, introducing innovative methods for teacher training, boosting knowledge retention, and encouraging collaboration. These technologies foster learner-centric approaches, create new teaching strategies, and accelerate the acquisition of knowledge. They also provide new ways to represent and share information, supporting educational activities through mobile devices [39-41], virtualization, artificial intelligence, and new learning platforms [42-46].

Specifically in entrepreneurship training, ICTs have proven highly effective. Mobile devices and other applications allow for flexible educational activities to take place anywhere. The use of AI, STEM, and robotics [47-50] enhances learning by making it more adaptable and innovative, while educational gaming makes the experience more engaging and enjoyable.

Additionally, integrating ICTs with psychological frameworks like metacognition, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence development [52-64] brings a new focus on mental capabilities into educational policies. This combination further enhances teaching practices and outcomes, especially in business and for the training of new cultural entrepreneurs.

3 Cinecittà Today: Technological Renaissance and Prospects for Sustainable Development

Since 2021, Cinecittà has entered a phase of significant renovation and modernization under the leadership of Nicola Maccanico, with funding from the European Recovery Fund. The modernization includes new state-of-the-art sound stages and innovative facilities, positioning it as an international center for audiovisual production and attracting major Hollywood productions (Maniou, Mitoula & Manola, 2024). At the same time, the integration of the Cinecittà REgeneration program promotes sustainable practices and environmental responsibility, aligning its operations with global trends toward net-zero emissions and environmental protection (Maniou, Mitoula & Tsatambassoglou, 2025).

Cinecittà emerges as an important cultural and tourist hub, with exhibitions, museums, and educational activities that enhance the cultural heritage and local identity of Rome (Maniou, 2024b). Additionally, the hosting of international events, such as the AVPSummit 2024, strengthens industrial collaboration and innovation in the audiovisual production sector (Maniou, Mitoula & Kostakis, 2024).

3.1 Financial Data

In 2023, Cinecittà S.p.A. recorded a notable improvement in its financial figures, confirming the success of its restructuring strategy and the strengthening of its commercial activities. Net profit reached €1.3 million, marking a return to profitability after a challenging period, while EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization) amounted to €3 million, reflecting improved operational efficiency (Cinecittà S.p.A., 2024).

The company succeeded in increasing revenue from industrial activities to over €46 million, representing a 20% rise compared to 2022. This positive performance is attributed both to enhanced production capacity and higher demand for services and products in the film and television sector. Overall, during the period 2021–2023, cumulative turnover from industrial activities exceeded €100 million, indicating a steady growth trajectory over time (Rai.it, 2024).

A significant initiative for strengthening financial stability was the increase in share capital, which bolstered the company's equity base and enabled investment in new infrastructure and technologies, further enhancing its competitiveness. The utilization rate of production facilities exceeded 70%, demonstrating efficient use of assets and increased demand from producers. Furthermore, the Art Department (technical support division) recorded a 16% revenue growth compared to 2022, highlighting enhanced specialization and its role as a critical supporting sector in production (Cinecittà.com, 2024).

Overall, these figures confirm that Cinecittà is on a path of sustained growth, proving its ability to respond to market challenges and capitalize on opportunities within the cultural and film production sectors.

Table 1 Comparative Financial Data (2022–2023)

Indicator	2022 (€)	2023 (€)	Change
Net Profit	954,000	1,300,000	+36%
Profit Before Tax	1,300,000	1,800,000	+38%
EBITDA	~2,500,000	~3,000,000	+20%
Turnover	39,000,000	46,000,000	+20%
Stage/Set Activities	34,500,000	40,400,000	+17%
Post-production	3,600,000	3,100,000	-14%
Cinecittà Si Mostra / MIAC	854,000	823,000	-4%
Institutes/Archives	2,400,000	2,600,000	+8%

Observations:

- Net profit increased by 36%, while total revenues rose by 20%.
- Stage and set activities remain the dominant segment, representing over 85% of total revenues.

4 Financial Structure and Performance of MIAC / Cinecittà Si Mostra

The financial analysis of the activities of MIAC – Museo Italiano dell’Audiovisivo e del Cinema and the exhibition program Cinecittà Si Mostra demonstrates that, although they constitute a small share of Cinecittà S.p.A.’s total turnover, they play a crucial role in reinforcing corporate identity (branding) and diversifying revenue streams (Cinecittà News, 2023; cultura.gov.it, 2023).

In 2023, total revenues from Cinecittà Si Mostra / MIAC amounted to approximately €823,000, showing a 4% decrease compared to 2022 (€854,000). With an average ticket price of €12, estimated visitation reached 68,600 visitors in 2023, compared to 71,200 in 2022. This slight decline is considered to result from adjustments in pricing policy and event programming, rather than from decreased public interest (Fazio et al., 2024; Lavaredas et al., 2025).

The distribution of Cinecittà S.p.A.’s total revenues confirms that the majority derives from stage and set activities (around 85%), followed by post-production services and archival/educational units. MIAC and the exhibitions function primarily as supporting yet strategic pillars, enhancing both the cultural visitor experience and the company’s international visibility (Hill et al., 2023).

Revenue distribution of Cinecittà S.p.A. by business segment (2023): Data from the company’s financial report (Cinecittà News, 2023; cultura.gov.it, 2023) indicate that stage and set activities dominate with about 85% of total revenues, while MIAC / Cinecittà Si Mostra contributes around 2%.

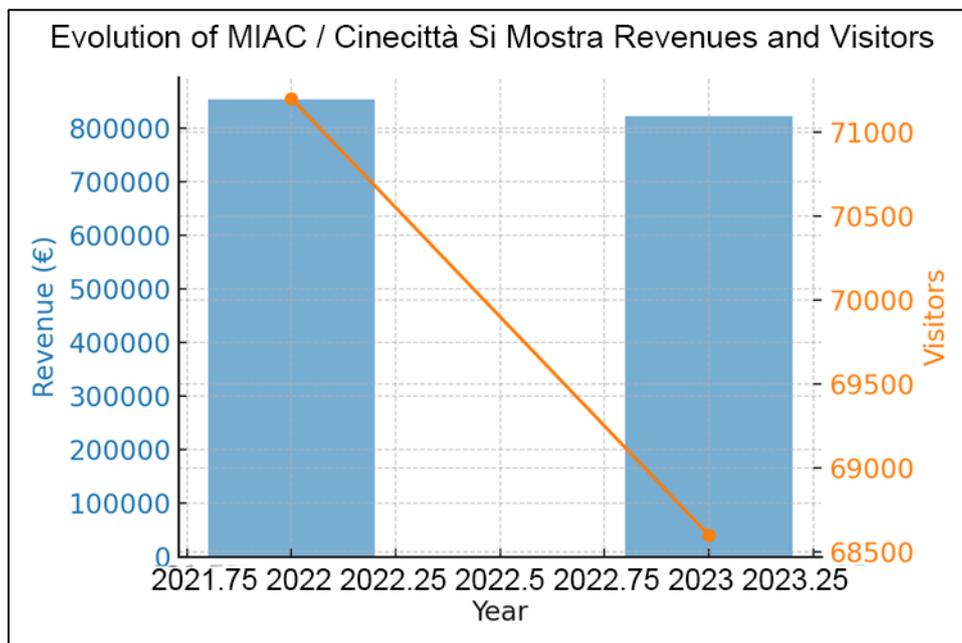


Figure 1 Evolution of MIAC / Cinecittà Si Mostra Revenues and Visitors (2022–2023)

Figure 1 Evolution of revenues and visitor numbers of MIAC / Cinecittà Si Mostra for the years 2022–2023. Revenue data are sourced from Cinecittà’s financial report (Cinecittà News, 2023; cultura.gov.it, 2023), while visitor estimates are calculated based on an average ticket price of €12. A slight decrease is observed in both revenues and visitor numbers in 2023, primarily due to pricing adjustments rather than a decline in interest.

4.1 Report on the Financial Situation of Cinecittà S.p.A. in Rome for 2024

During the fiscal year 2024, Cinecittà S.p.A., Rome’s historic film studio, recorded a significant decline in financial results. This downturn is mainly attributed to external factors affecting the global film industry and, consequently, the flow of productions to the studio.

A key factor in the deterioration of the financial situation was the Hollywood strikes, which led to delays and cancellations of international productions planned at Cinecittà. These developments resulted in reduced utilization of studio facilities and workforce, as well as corresponding declines in company revenues.

Despite these adverse conditions, Cinecittà’s management has designed and is implementing an ambitious five-year business plan for 2025–2029. This plan aims to renew and upgrade infrastructure, expand service offerings, and attract new international collaborations, with the goal of regaining profitability and reinforcing Cinecittà’s position as one of Europe’s premier film production hubs.

Management expresses optimism for a return to financial stability, relying on Cinecittà’s rich history and international reputation, as well as the broader revitalization of Italy’s film industry.

Table 2 Financial Figures 2024 (Screen Global Production, 2025)

Metric	Value (€ million)
Revenue	26.7
EBITDA	-3.3
Net Profit	-11.6
Equity	-4.3

Table 3 Strategic Plan Targets 2025–2029 (Cinecittà, 2025)

Metric	Projected Value (€ million)
Revenue	51.9
EBITDA	6.3
Net Profit	4.3
Equity	25.2

At the same time, the company has completed modernization and expansion projects, increasing capacity by 60% and attracting major international productions, including works by Mel Gibson and Roland Emmerich.

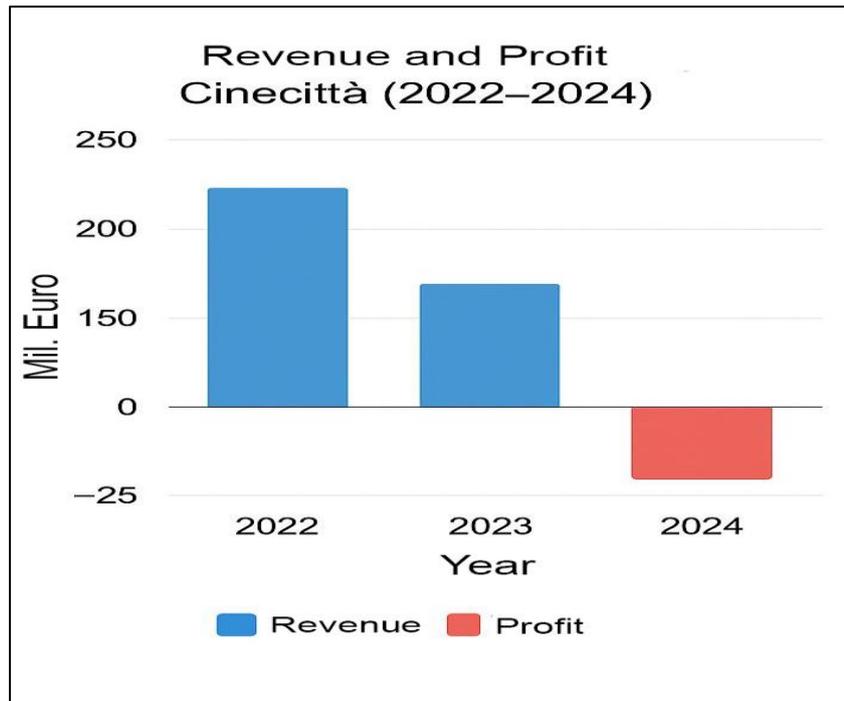


Figure 2 Cinecittà Revenue and Net Profit (2022-2024)

The second graph illustrates the evolution of Cinecittà’s revenue and net profit during the period 2022-2024. A clear decline in revenue is observed in 2023, followed by a further drop in 2024, when net profit turns into a loss. This trend is linked to external factors that affected international film production, such as the Hollywood strikes, which postponed or cancelled significant projects intended for the Rome studios (Screen Global Production, 2025). These data highlight the difficult financial situation the company’s management faced at the end of 2024.

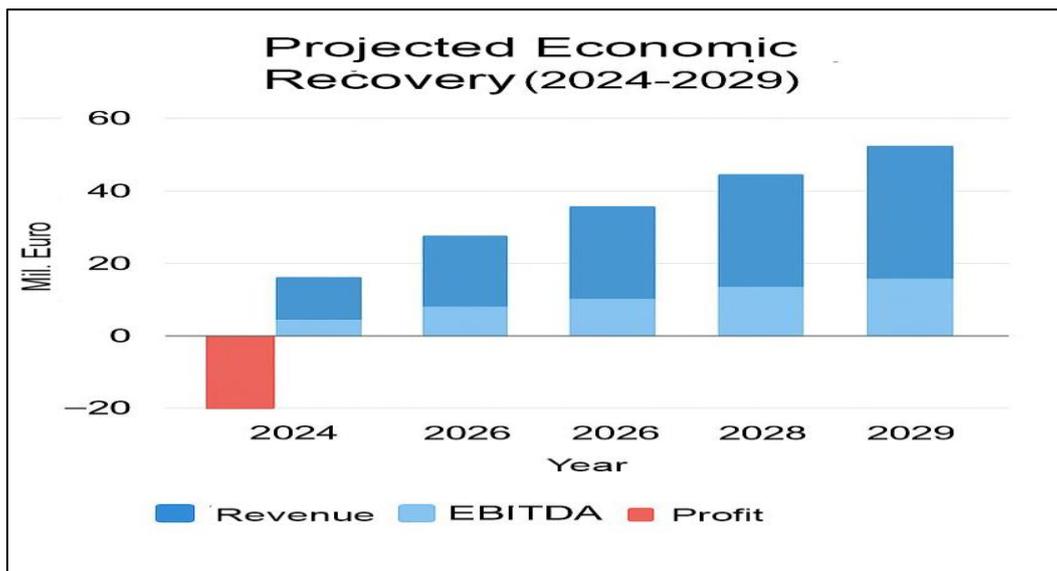


Figure 3 Projected Economic Recovery (2024-2029)

The third graph illustrates the projected economic recovery of Cinecittà during the period 2025-2029. According to the new industrial plan announced by the company, revenues are expected to double by 2029, with positive EBITDA and a gradual return to net profitability after 2025 (Cinecittà, 2025). These projections are based on the modernization of infrastructure, expansion of services, and the attraction of additional international productions, elements that strengthen Cinecittà’s strategic position in the European film production landscape.

5 Conclusions

Cinecittà today constitutes a living organism that uniquely combines its historical legacy with technological innovation. Through the continuous upgrading of its infrastructure and the adoption of practices promoting sustainability and social responsibility, it enhances its competitiveness and upgrades its international prestige, while simultaneously contributing to both local and national economies.

Its close connection with sustainable tourism and cultural entrepreneurship promotes a balance between economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental protection. With respect for its past and adaptation to contemporary challenges, Cinecittà continues to serve as a source of cultural inspiration, creating employment opportunities and maintaining the cultural identity of Italy, preserving its role as an indispensable asset to the film and tourism industries.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

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