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EXPLORING CREATIVE PLACEMAKING OF AMERICANA OUTDOOR MUSIC
FESTIVALS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

by
Tyler J. Spencer
May 2024

Accepted by:
Dr. Elizabeth D. Baldwin, Committee Chair
Dr. H. Charles Chancellor
Dr. Bruce Whisler

ABSTRACT

Large outdoor music festivals have been a part of the American experience since the 1930s and are creative gatherings, economic engines, and vehicles of place attachment. This research draws on theoretical constructs of Creative Placemaking, the Biophilia Hypothesis, and Musicophilia to understand outcomes of outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States from the perspective of the managers/organizers of these events. Interview data was collected from managers/organizers representing fifteen outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States. The data was organized into nine thematic categories, and these were distilled into five key themes associated with the outcomes of these events. The five themes are 1) Using the celebration of regional traditions to cultivate community, 2) Influencing decisions through our connection to place and from our values of a sustainable environment, 3) Understanding the analysis of positive economic benefits of these events on the local economy, 4) Challenges faced in these outdoor music festivals are related to uncertain aspects of the festival; financial costs that fluctuate, variable weather conditions, and capacity concerns that vary depending on weather & artists popularity, and 5) Feelings of connectedness to place among a community of people that provides a shared familiarity among individuals. These and the nine thematic categories are explored and discussed with reference to participants interview comments. A figure is provided in order to illustrate why managers/organizers perspectives specifically were chosen, and to guide further research in this area, enabling future managers/organizers, attendees, as well as performers to take advantage of the potential of these events to impact positively on the myriad facets that these events touch.

DEDICATION

For Seth, my truest friend, and fellow seeker of knowledge, who has always been there to remind me of my worth. I dedicate this thesis to him with love and appreciation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Betty Baldwin, whose expertise, guidance, and unwavering support have been invaluable throughout this process.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to the other members of my committee, Charles Chancellor and Bruce Whisler, whose insights, feedback, and constructive criticism have been instrumental in shaping the direction and focus of this thesis. In particular, Charles Chancellors' contribution to event management and interview development and Bruce Whislers' expertise on music production and live music events.

I am also deeply grateful to the individuals who generously participated in the interviews and email responses for this research. Their valuable insights and contributions vastly expanded the depth and scope of this study and gave life to the topic from an insider's vantage point. Managing these events and festivals has deep meaning for them and from their perspective, the festivalgoers. The authentic experiences shared provide a window into this world where nature and art meet.

My sincere thanks to my fellow graduate students and colleagues, whose encouragement and friendship made this journey more rewarding and enjoyable than I could have ever imagined.

I am grateful to my family and friends for their unwavering love, encouragement, and patience as I pursued this degree.

Finally, I would like to thank all the authors whose work I have cited in this thesis, whose knowledge and research have inspired and informed my own work.

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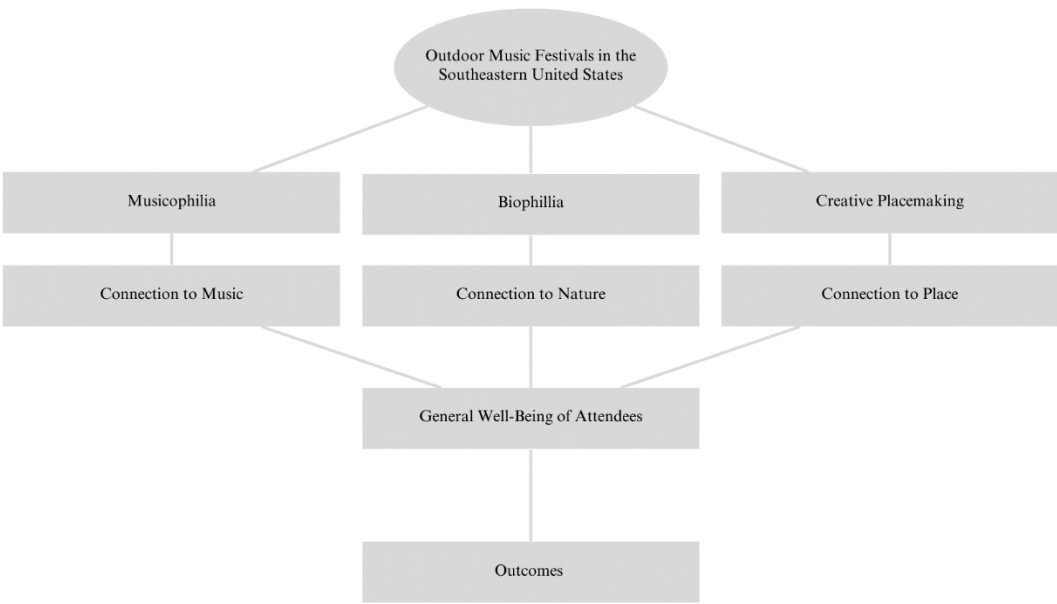
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The nexus of musicians, communities, individuals, and natural environments within outdoor music festivals creates a domino effect of significant economic and social implications for locations throughout the United States. Music festivals are an important cultural phenomenon, the importance of which only becomes more apparent as research suggests that engaging with music in a festival setting has the ability to contribute to feeling a sense of community through the binding of group members into a larger culture and providing an opportunity for individuals to engage in social activities (Frith, 1996; Gibson & Connell, 2005). Furthermore, music festivals offer opportunities for participants to engage in “identity work”, where they are allowed to define, develop, or reflect on understanding themselves, and develop new expressions of self-identity (Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Matheson, 2005; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

This research utilizes a conceptual framework grounded in Creative Placemaking, Biophilic design, and Musicophilia to examine outdoor music festivals within the Southeastern United States, with a specific emphasis on the genre of Americana music. Americana music is generally defined as music that combines elements from early-America’s musical origins, such as country, rock, folk, bluegrass, gospel, and blues (Dutton, 2006). The focused criteria allows for the in-depth exploration and understanding of the constitution of these festivals. Additionally, this research will use the following three threads to develop an understanding of outcomes.

Figure 1. Musicophilia, Biophilia, & Creative Placemaking



Many music festivals take place in an outdoor setting, and the place, the music, and the scene are all part of the experience. Some of the most popular new outdoor music festivals are Coachella, Lollapalooza, and Bonnaroo. These three started in the 1990s and early 2000s and have contributed to the recent growth of multi-day music festivals across the globe. The largest by far, Lollapalooza, started in 1991 as a traveling event, but eventually landed in its current home, Grant Park in Chicago, and now sees over 400,000 people for the four-day event (Daly, 2023). These well-known larger festivals are rooted in the tradition of outdoor music festivals and are pioneers. Most are still active today and include a variety of artists and festivals around the country (Coachella, n.d.; O'Shea, 2022).

Americana music is a genre that has deep roots, connecting to, not only the musical heritage of the United States, but the cultural heritage as well. Encompassing a wide range of musical styles that reflect upon America's diverse traditions and influences, Americana music

can be found throughout the entirety of American history. As integral as this genre is to the culture of America, Americana is a genre that has proven to be quite difficult to categorize. Cleaves (Dutton, 2006) defines the complexity of Americana by outlining several categories within the genre. From singers and songwriters with folk-country backgrounds to rock acts with strong storytelling elements, Americana encompasses an extremely widespread array of musical styles and influences. Zimmerman (2019) describes Americana as “a style that’s so broad and yet so special and significant... It’s like trying to describe what it’s like being in love. Or the color yellow. Or that feeling in both head and heart when you sense that you have realized your dreams and there’s no turning back.”

Zimmerman (2019) further explores this challenge of defining Americana in his book “Americana Music: Voices, Visionaries, and Pioneers of an Honest Sound” where he emphasizes its wide range and multidimensional structure. Americana serves as an umbrella term that encompasses rock and roll, country, folk, R&B/Soul, gospel, blues, bluegrass, jazz, among other styles but primarily these listed. Drawing on America’s early settler and immigrants, Zimmerman mentions how Americana traces its origins to diverse musical traditions from the backwoods of Kentucky to the rural reaches of Texas, Tennessee, and the Carolinas. This type of historical perspective provides an emphasis on the previously mentioned “deep roots” that Americana has in the American culture and its evolution through place and time.

Interestingly, Harper and Cotton (2015) position Americana as a distinct genre that emerged in the 1990s, and note that it wasn’t until 2010 that the Grammy Awards recognized Americana as a distinct category. Despite this newly formed definition of the genre, Americana has deep roots that extend well beyond the recent recognition that it has received. Americana music serves as a reflection of America's cultural heritage and musical diversity. Therefore, while

the formal recognition of Americana may be relatively recent, its spirit has been ingrained in American musical traditions since the inception of the nation.

In the 1960s the Barns at Wolf Trap on 100 acres just outside Washington DC began hosting concerts outdoors at a barn type stage. The Barns at Wolf Trap were and continue to be an experience rooted in place and a weaving together of music and nature, and became a National Park in 2002. Woodstock and the Grateful Dead captured the attention of the nation with large outdoor music festivals. 500,000 attended Woodstock as a one-time many day event in 1969 and is a major part of the American story. The Grateful Dead, moving across the country, returning to the same places for many days, followed by many generations of people, laid the groundwork for the moving festival atmosphere seen later in the band Phish, who performed many two-day music festivals, with between 15,000 to 135,000 attendees for Air Force Base venues. The band, the place, or the music type can drive outdoor music festival experiences. The National Folk Festival that started in the 1930s and the Newport Jazz and Heritage Festival in Newport, RI at Fort Adams State Park in the 1950s are two of the important pioneers of the focus on place and music type.

The National Folk Festival started in the mid-1930s while the country was working its way out of the Great Depression. New Deal efforts to alleviate poverty, put the country to work, and build infrastructure were efforts that many citizens learn about in school, because of the crucial need to re-build a nation. Arts and music festivals are less known New Deal efforts that were employed as a means to support traditional arts and music to breathe life into small cities and towns. The National Folk Festival started the concept of the workshop, and demonstrations of arts and included people of all races as performers and artisans (Wallace, 2002). Since its inception, it has been produced by the National Council for Traditional Arts (NCTA), and they

still practice their unique approach of choosing a city from applicants, and producing a free (to the festivalgoers) multi-day folk festival for three years in order to create an investment and tradition in a new place before moving on to another applicant. In the early years it took place in a new location each year, or every other year. Since 1971 The National Folk Festival it has stayed in locations for many years. In 1971 it took place at Wolf Trap, and this partnership lasted twelve years. Since then, most cities have had the Folk Festival for three years. In the early two decades performers were not paid but the folk revival of the 50s and 60s, as evidenced by the Newport Jazz Festival, created a new vision for the National Folk Festival that included paying musicians (Wallace, 2002).

Called “Hallowed Ground” by Dereck Trucks (noted as one of the 100 greatest guitarist of all time by Rolling Stone), the Newport Jazz and Heritage Festival from the late 1950s are still going strong today, rooted in place and music and considered the start of the creative placemaking relationship between an outdoor place and an annual music festival. This festival was the prototype for the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival (Jazz Fest) which began in 1970, and the developer of the festival noted that it could be only held in New Orleans. Jazz Fest is a four-day festival with a maximum of 12,000 festival goers per day. Shortly after Jazz Fest began the Telluride Bluegrass Festival began in 1973 as an extension of a celebration in Telluride related to its mining roots and promotes a celebration of place and music in the town park.

In 1988 after the death of Merle Watson, the Grammy award-winning flat-picking guitarist from Deep Gap, NC, the Merle Watson Memorial Festival was created on the campus of Wilkes Community College, in his honor by his father, Doc Watson, also a world-renowned musician. The festival, now called MerleFest, has twelve stages, over 100 acts and takes place over four days, and has 80,000 festival goers. It is also notably alcohol free, touting itself as a

family festival and considered the largest folk festival in the US. It has a focus on new and young musicians, with workshops and contests where musicians who have garnered significant popularity locally and within the genre, like Chris Thile and Nickel Creek, as well as the international sensation that many Americana music enjoyers will know, the Kruger Brothers got their start. Artisans are also included on the festival grounds that include local crafts and demonstrations to a wide array of offerings. Local groups including scouts in the area provide food and transportation to parking areas (MerleFest, n.d.).

Within this trend, Americana music festivals, like MerleFest represents a distinct subcategory (Turner & Hodges, 2015). The Americana music genre combines elements from diverse American origins, such as country, rock, folk, bluegrass, gospel, and blues, resulting in a distinctive sound characterized by its roots-oriented nature (Dutton, 2006). Americana music festivals are especially prevalent in the Southeastern United States. Typically lasting around two to five days, these festivals are typically held outdoors and in rural regions during the early spring to late fall seasons (Turner & Hodges, 2015).

The Southeastern United States, with its diverse cultural heritage and natural beauty, offers a unique backdrop for outdoor events. Researchers like Newman (1999) have explored the ways in which regional characteristics, like Southern hospitality, have shaped community dynamics. This distinctive trait creates an environment where attendees of outdoor music festivals experience a sense of belonging and interconnectedness, contributing to the broader notion of community building. Additionally, the lush landscapes of the Southeast paired with this characteristic of Southern hospitality have the ability to shape and mold community dynamics during outdoor music festivals. The sprawling forests, rolling hills, and meandering rivers that

the Southeast United States is known for, serve as more than just a backdrop for these festivals; they become active participants in the festival narrative.

While existing literature provides some valuable information on Biophilia, Musicophilia, and community building concepts like Creative Placemaking, there is a gap in the literature in terms of the interplay between these areas and how they can collectively contribute to positive outcomes and overall well-being in humans.

Biophilic Design

The biophilia hypothesis (Wilson, 1994) asserts that humans instinctually crave nature, and that exposure to the natural element's nature provides can positively influence general well-being, including the ability to form deeper connections to nature and social groups (Kellert et. al., 2011). Venue and festival designers can tap into this potential through incorporating biophilic components into outdoor music festivals through open green spaces, natural materials, and a focus on more organic and vernacular designs (Gunnarsson & Hedblom, 2023).

Biophilic design has become increasingly important for built environment in the music industry. Venues that incorporate more naturalistic elements into their design are able to garner just as much popularity, if not more in some cases, in terms of attendance and notoriety (Browning, Ryan, & Clancy, 2014). One primary example of this is Red Rocks, located in Denver, Colorado. Due to geologic uplifts, two massive sedimentary rocks appear to have emerged out of nowhere from the ground and the venue stage and seating are nestled right in between them, making for astonishing acoustics and a breathtaking view (Red Rocks Online, n.d.). Similarly, Wolf Trap Amphitheater is another example of a venue that has integrated nature into the essence of its structure through using natural materials, open green spaces, and maintaining the surrounding tree line that acts as a backdrop for the venue (Wolf Trap, n.d.).

Iconic spaces like Red Rocks and Wolf Trap have proven to be profound examples of Biophilic design, where the environment is not merely the setting of the venue, but a fundamental part of the overall experience. These venues, constructed in a primarily natural setting, intentionally utilize this natural beauty to their advantage by weaving it into the fabric of the performance structure itself. The incorporation of nature's beauty transcends the typical concert experience, thus tapping into the core principles of Biophilia. The decision of those who constructed these venues to merge performance spaces with natural elements goes beyond mere aesthetics, as proven by the resounding and long-lasting attendance of these venues; it points directly to the Biophilia hypothesis, acknowledging the inherent human affinity for the natural world. Attendees who are encapsulated and surrounded by the sights and sounds of these venues, not only gain the opportunity to witness musical performances, but also engage in a multisensory nature-focused experience that taps into this Biophilic connection shared between humans and nature. This intermingling of venue and environment in places like Red Rocks and Wolf Trap serve as a testament to the pure potential that Biophilic design holds in the realm of outdoor music festivals and live music experiences in general (Kellert, 2018; Tabb, 2021; Xue et al., 2019).

Musicophilia

There are a plethora of studies on the benefits music has on human's well-being as well as the enormous effects to human's emotions and mental health. With Americana music's unique roots in folk, blues, and country traditions, the potential therapeutic abilities these events may hold in terms of improving the well-being of attendees is an intriguing concept. The soulful melodies, and narrative nature of Americana music's lyrics may be a contributing factor to attendee's emotional release and connection.

Shepherd & Sigg (2015) posit in, “Music Preference, Social Identity, and Self-Esteem,” that membership in social groups serve to enhance and maintain self-esteem, and this can be applied to better our understanding of why attendees of Americana music festivals may experience more feelings of connectedness. After all, it’s safe to assume that almost every attendee will have some level of interest in Americana music as a genre, and as Shepherd & Sigg (2015), “Music Preference, Social Identity, and Self-Esteem,” states “membership to social groups serves to enhance and maintain self-esteem... and so a relationship between music preference and self-esteem is expected...”

In fact, over the past twenty years, there has been an exceptional increase in music, science, and health research investigating the potential contribution of the arts, or music in particular, to the general well-being and health of participants (Blood & Zatorre, 2001; Dillon, 2006; Lipe, 2002; Staricoff, 2004). These health benefits are not limited by age either, they extend across an entire lifespan (Cohen, Bailey & Nilsson, 2002). Existing research documents the developmental and quality of life outcomes in childhood (Baney, 1999), adolescence (Laiho, 2004) and senior adulthood (Hays & Minichiello, 2005). Additionally, research has shown positive effects on resilience within not only individuals, but communities as well (Dillon, 2006), illustrating that the effects music has on the health, and general well-being of human’s is not something to be taken lightly (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

Creative Placemaking

This research is primarily grounded in Creative Placemaking. In terms of community development, Zitcer (2020) provides a comprehensive and interesting perspective on Creative Placemaking, describing that it is not a mere addition to revitalization efforts but a deliberate

integration of arts and culture. As Zitcer states in 'Making Up Creative Placemaking', Creative Placemaking involves placing arts at the table alongside land-use, transportation, economic development, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety strategies. This type of approach signifies a profound connection between artistic endeavors and the multifaceted aspects of community revitalization, emphasizing the role of artists and arts organizations in shaping vibrant and sustainable communities.

Creative Placemaking is situated in the literature of place, but with a primary focus on the arts as well as an active orientation. In much of the placemaking literature the meaning of place is situated at the nexus of three forces: Biophysical attributes, social and cultural meanings, and social and political processes (Cheng et al., 2024). Although Cheng et al. focused on place from a political context and working to understand multi-value orientations of natural resources, their work highlights the complex relationships and layers of meaning that make up the human-nature connection related to place. Creative placemaking operates in the overlap of all three, but with an emphasis on creativity and the arts. Creative placemaking is an activity of placemaking rather than the effect of forces that exist externally. By drawing on the arts and music, Creative Placemaking in the realm of Americana music festivals serves as a bridge between the theoretical constructs of place and the tangible, lived experiences and feelings of community and cultural belongingness.

Creative Placemaking in the context of this research delves into the transformative power of arts and culture, instilling a distinctive "soul" to the land where outdoor Americana music festivals take place. The concept of soul can extend beyond the musical genre to encapsulate the essence and character that define a place. Creative Placemaking position the arts as fundamental components of community development. By integrating arts and culture into the landscape,

Creative Placemaking fosters a unique sense of identity and purpose as well as a connection to the grounds in which these festivals occur. Through this notion, festivals become more than temporary events; they become the conduit through which one can connect with the spirit of a place (Kellert, 2005). As artists and organizers shape the festival spaces, they create vibrant and warm communities that allow the artistic and environmental elements that define these outdoor gatherings to thrive.

Many music festivals in the United States consistently occur on the same grounds from which they originated. Even one of the largest music festivals in the country, Bonnaroo, attracting nearly 100,000 attendees annually, has consistently chosen Manchester, Tennessee, as its venue since its establishment in 2002 (Lunsford & Leyva, 2023). While Bonnaroo stands out as one of the most notable examples, many other major festivals share a similar sentiment, as evidenced by the examples listed below:

- Electric Forest (2011 - Ongoing), Double JJ Resort (Rothbury, Michigan). (Electric Forest. n.d.)
- Firefly Music Festival (2012- Ongoing), The Woodlands of Dover Motor Speedway (Dover, Delaware). (Firefly. n.d.).
- Lockn' Festival (2013 - 2021), Oak Ridge Farm (Arrington, Virginia). (Lockn'. n.d.).
- Newport Folk Festival (1959- Ongoing), Fort Adams State Park (Newport, Rhode Island). (Newport Folk. n.d.).
- Newport Jazz Festival (1954- Ongoing), Fort Adams State Park (Newport, Rhode Island). (Newport Jazz, n.d.).
- Sasquatch! Music Festival (2002 - 2018), The Gorge Amphitheatre (George, Washington). (Sasquatch!. n.d.).

The annual reoccurrence of music festivals in the same location raises intriguing questions about the intentional connection and cultivation of a place. The commitment to a specific venue each year suggests a deliberate effort to transform the space into more than a setting for a musical performance. It draws attention to the distinct relationship between a music festival and its surroundings; a strategy rooted in Creative Placemaking. Secondly, by returning

to the same location year after year these festivals actively engage in a dialog with the environment that enables a sense of continuity and community attachment and pride. Through this characteristic, the festival becomes more than a temporary stage; it becomes an integral part of the event's identity. This provides the potential to leave lasting effects on the local community and its cultural landscape, as well as its artists and regular attendees. In this vein, the deliberate choice of location also hints at a deeper connection between the festival, its artists and attendees, and the host community, demonstrating how Creative Placemaking extends beyond the physical boundaries of the events themselves.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed illustrates the diverse and intricate nature of outdoor Americana music festivals while drawing appropriate attention to the role they play in community building through Creative Placemaking, as well as the benefits of biophilic and musicophilic attributes that shape these events.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to explore the phenomenon of outdoor music festivals from the perspective of experts and managers in the field, specifically Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States. Utilizing research interviews with experts, this research aims to identify the perceived benefits and challenges associated with these events, and perception of their contribution to creative placemaking, nature, music, and culture as evidenced by experience.

Moreover, this research seeks to position itself within the broader field of discussion on place-based events by examining the role that Creative Placemaking has within outdoor music festivals. Creative Placemaking, as described by Zitcer (2020), goes beyond the frequently implemented, traditional revitalization strategies by making a conscious effort to include arts and

culture into the community development strategy. In doing so, the act of placing arts alongside community development topics like land-use, transportation, and economic development strategies, Creative Placemaking can transform spaces into bubbling, living landscapes with a nearly sentient sense of identity. In the context of outdoor music festivals, Creative Placemaking ensures a mark is left on the soul of the festival grounds, due to the unique ability of these events to foster a connection deeper than your bones between attendees, artist, and the natural environment that they take place within. Through this lens, these festivals become far more than a temporary event; they become the spark that sets off a chain reaction for community building and cultural expression, snowballing the level of significance and impact that place has within the festival experience.

Research Questions

This research seeks to explore the perceived effect of outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States by experts managing such festivals. Specifically, I will examine:

- What are the social benefits among attendees of these festivals as perceived by managers/organizers?
- What examples of elements of creative placemaking are supported by these festivals?
- What role, if any, does environmental conservation play in these festivals?
- What are the perceived experiential outcomes associated with these festivals?

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

Rationale

The Southeastern United States, the focal point of this research, hosts a limited number of Americana music festivals. The detailed understanding of how the many layers of place, community, music, nature, and other elements work together to put on a music festival are important to understand in depth. So too are the stories of festivals in a place, what has worked, what has failed, and how do managers know? In order to understand the constitution of outdoor Americana music festivals (Packer, 2018), in depth interviews and email surveys with in-depth open-ended questions will allow for the understanding from the narrative of experts in these systems.

Secondly, a core focus of this research centers on discovering the social benefits on participants, artists, and local communities within the context of outdoor music festivals. This research takes a closer look into how these festivals interconnect participants, artists, and local communities, forming a dynamic system of community building. The exploratory nature of the research and understanding how this particular think works in particular settings is complex and interviews with managers and experts is a way to understand the complexity and richness of this interconnected community building, outcomes and lessons learned.

Additionally, the primary mode of data collection involves interviews with professionals and festival managers who have been intimately involved in these events. The qualitative nature of these interviews aligns with the complex insights sought after in the research questions. By identifying patterns and similarities in participant's responses, an incredibly important mode of

drawing meaningful conclusions, is inherently qualitative and would be challenging to extract through a quantitative lens.

Research Design

This research follows a critical realist approach, noting the importance of both real and perceived influences on the systems and outcomes. Critical realism “brings together the physical world with the interaction, feelings and values as interacting in social life and mutually influencing one another” (Maxwell, 2011). In order to do this, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and data / information on festivals were requested from the interviewees. Transcript analysis and coding will be employed to explore the social benefits of Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States and outcomes associated with them, especially outcomes pointing to human well-being.

Moreover, this research draws on phenomenological perspective to explore the lived experiences of managers and organizers within the realm of outdoor Americana music festivals. The philosophical framework of phenomenology’s primary goal is to capture the subjective interpretation of phenomena, allowing a focusing of the lens on how individuals perceive and make sense of their lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Through the conducting of in-depth interviews with festival managers and organizers, this research aims to get a closer look at the narratives surrounding outdoor music festivals, and most notably, uncovering the intricate connections that lie at the crossroads of music, nature, and community. These interviews play a crucial role in understanding, through a phenomenological lens, the connection to intangible notions of “place”, as well as the emotional connections to music, culture, and community. These notions are quite difficult to measure without the aforementioned methods of approach, but by uncovering and examining the lived experiences of individuals who are intimately involved in

outdoor festival planning and execution, this research seeks to provide a well-rounded understanding of some of the primary dynamics at play, as well as the potential implications for attendee's general well-being. Although the focus of phenomenology is perception and an invariant essence of the experience, the critical realist overarching framework will allow for the inclusion of factors that fall outside of the invariant essence (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participants

The study consisted of interviews or email responses to questions from managers and organizers of outdoor Americana music festivals. The managers and organizers interviewed were based on a willingness to participate after email solicitation and consent following the Institutional Review Board approval. The selection of managers and organizers for interviews was based on their expressed willingness to participate following an email invitation. Interviewees were selected based on their experience in managing and organizing these events, knowledge of the potential benefits, or their unique perspectives from a leadership role in these events.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews via Zoom, as well as written responses to an emailed survey were the primary methods of data collection. Six were semi-structured interviewed conducted via Zoom, while nine were written responses sent via email. These interviews and written responses provided a flexible framework that allowed participants to share their experiences and thoughts freely while ensuring that key topics of interest are addressed. The questions asked revolved around the benefits of outdoor Americana music festivals in regard to creative placemaking, connection to nature, and community-centered responses.

To develop a sample of participants, those who have direct experiences within the context of managing and organizing Americana music festivals were chosen. This includes festival organizers and managers of outdoor music festivals with a focus on the inclusion of the Americana genre. By selecting participants with varied experiences in a leadership role within the context of outdoor Americana music festivals, this research aims to capture a wide spectrum of insights and develop a deep understanding of the perceived relationships within and around these festivals. For example, most of the interviewees were the head organizer or founder of these festivals. They orchestrate and delegate tasks to teams that include every aspect of these festivals. Another participant was a parks director for Alexander County, NC who oversees and works with a multitude of festivals that are held in the county. Additionally, another participant is a former head organizer of a popular festival, and while this will be the first year not working with this festival, they have 10+ years of festival managing and organizing experience.

The interview questions were carefully crafted to address key ideas related to the Creative Placemaking, Biophilic Design, and Musicophilic effects of Americana music festivals. These questions involve primarily broad inquiries that allowed participants the freedom to express themselves and tell stories from experiences they have gained over their tenure in this field. Questions on the script, if chosen, were open and solicited an in-depth response that helped to explore a deeper facet of the festival experience and the role of nature and music in fostering community connections as well as general well-being.

Interview Script

1. BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

- a. Could you please provide a brief introduction about yourself, your role, and your experience related to these events?
- b. How long have you been working in this field, and what made you want to get started?

2. FESTIVAL ORGANIZATION / PLANNING

- a. Can you describe the process of organizing an outdoor Americana music festival? What are some of the primary, or most prevalent considerations and challenges?
 - b. How do you select the festival location? (Or if the festival takes place at the same location annually) How was this location selected at the inception of this annual event?
 - c. Are there specific criteria or factors that influence your decision?
 - d. What role does nature play in the selection of festival venues, and how is it integrated into the overall festival experience?
3. BENEFITS OF COMBINING NATURE AND MUSIC
 - a. In your opinion, what are the potential benefits of combining music and outdoor environments for attendees? Do you believe it has an impact on their well-being?
 - b. Have you observed any specific effects on the human body, mind, or emotions that are unique to outdoor music events?
 - c. Can you provide any personal anecdotes or stories that highlight the positive impact of nature and music on outdoor music festival attendees?
4. ECONOMIC IMPACT IN LOCAL ECONOMY
 - a. How do outdoor Americana music festivals contribute to the local economy in which they are held? Are there any specific examples or figures you can share?
 - b. To what extent would you say these festivals attract tourists or visitors from outside the local area? Additionally, how does this impact local businesses and the overall economy?
5. CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION
 - a. What challenges do outdoor music festivals face in terms of environmental impact or sustainability?
 - b. Are there any measures in place to mitigate negative environmental effects or promote sustainability during these events?
6. PATTERNS AND OBSERVATIONS
 - a. Based on your experience, are there any patterns you have noticed among outdoor music festivals in terms of their impact on the human body, mind, or local economy?
 - b. Are there any specific factors that consistently contribute to the success of these festivals?
7. FESTIVAL ATMOSPHERE AND COMMUNITY
 - a. How would you describe the atmosphere and sense of community at these festivals?
 - b. Have you observed any unique aspects of community building or social interaction among attendees?
 - c. Do you think the combination of nature and music fosters a sense of connection or belonging among festival attendees?
8. ARTISTIC EXPRESSION / CULTURAL PRESERVATION
 - a. In your opinion, how do outdoor Americana music festivals contribute to the preservation/celebration of local and regional music traditions?
 - b. Are there any efforts to showcase local artists, craftspeople, or cultural heritage at these festivals?
 - c. Have you witnessed any collaborations or partnerships between outdoor Americana music festivals and local organizations, charities, or non-profits?
 - d. How do these collaborations contribute to the festival experience and the local community?

9. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BENEFITS

- a. Have you come across any research or evidence regarding the beneficial impacts in terms of health and well-being of outdoor music festivals?
- b. Can you provide examples or personal experiences of attendees who have reported positive effects on their mental and/or physical well-being?

10. INNOVATION AT FESTIVALS

- a. Have you noticed any recent trends or innovations in outdoor Americana music festivals?
- b. How do these trends impact the festival experience or their benefits?

11. CONCLUSION

- a. Is there any additional information or insights you would like to share about the subject of outdoor Americana music festivals and their impacts on human body, mind, and emotions or the local economy in which these events take place?

12. CLOSING REMARKS:

Thank you so much for your time! If you have any further questions or would like to receive a summary of the research findings, please feel free to contact me using the provided information and I would be more than happy to share it with you.

Data Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded, primarily conducted through the use of Zoom, allowing for clear and thorough data capturing. This allowed for a deep analysis of the narratives brought forth by the participants and enrich the conveying of emotions that lie within these narratives. A number of interviews were also submitted in the form of written responses, accepted via email. Moreover, ethical considerations were taken with great caution throughout the data collection and analysis process. The anonymity and privacy of participants were preserved, and participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any point with absolutely no negative consequences.

Coding of the data, the process to organize and categorize data to identify patterns, themes, and core concepts employed two methods of coding: deductive coding and inductive coding. Deductive coding, also known as priori coding, involves the application of pre-existing theories or frameworks to guide the coding process (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). This allows researchers to have a preexisting structure to then build off of as the data is analyzed. Inductive

coding, also known as data-driven coding or grounded theory coding, involves the development of codes directly from the data without preconceived categories or theories (Boyatzis, 1998). This method allows researchers to approach the data with an open mind, allowing patterns and themes to arise organically from the data itself. The utilization of both coding methods will enable the data to be analyzed much more comprehensively than either method could accomplish alone, allowing for both confirmatory and exploratory aspects of the research (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

The coding process utilized in this research involved identifying an important moment and associating it with the appropriate encoding prior to beginning the process of interpretation. An acceptable code is one that is able to capture the intricacy and depth of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998). Utilizing this method of coding, the data is organized and allows for the patterns and themes to be developed far more easily. In addition to this inductive approach, a template approach was also utilized where codes were established before data was collected as a means of organization to aid in the interpretation process. (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Following the collection of data from interviews with fifteen managers and organizers of outdoor music festivals, interview transcripts were entered and categorized into a document where a comprehensive process of data coding and theme identification commenced. This included first, pulling data from the already specified deductive coding from the transcripts and compiling them into a separate, categorized document titled “Themes – Categorized.” Then came the process of identifying thematic categories that arose from the data collection process through inductive coding. This was done through the utilization of a matrix comprised of potential themes and systematically determining which thematic categories occurred frequently enough to be considered for the inductive coding process.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

This chapter presents the data collected through semi-structured interviews with fifteen managers and organizers of outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States. This chapter's objective is to explore the findings related to the social benefits, examples of Creative Placemaking, the role of environmental conservation, and the outcomes associated with these festivals, as perceived by managers and organizers of these events, outlined by the research questions.

Originally, data was collected exclusively through Zoom or phone call, but some participants noted that, given their busy schedule, it would be more accommodating to answer the questions via written responses over the course of a week. In response to this, I provided them with the questions I was prepared to ask them during our interview and allowed them to respond at their own pace.

Six interviews were conducted over Zoom or through phone call, while nine were received through written responses via email (Figure 2). The list of questions prepared was extensive, so out of respect for the time of the participants, the list was reduced after noting how long the verbal conversations would last for. Additionally, emails where participants answered 90% to 100% of the questions, most of the time in great length, some participants were concerned with the number of questions, so I highlighted at least one question from each subsection of the questionnaire in order to maintain the ability to address each facet of the study. As for the range of the interviews conducted via Zoom or phone call, they lasted from under thirty minutes to two hours in length.

Figure 2. Festival Demographics

Response Type	Name of Festival	Location	Date of Last Festival
Phone/Zoom Interview	Brevard Summer Institute and Festival	Brevard, NC	June-August 2023
	EnoFest	Durham, NC	July 1 & 4, 2023
	John Coltrane International Jazz and Blues Festival	High Point, NC	September 2-3, 2023
	MerleFest	Wilkesboro, NC	April 25-28, 2024
	New River Blues Festival	Grassy Creek, NC	September 4, 2023
	TuckFest	Charlotte, NC	April 19-21, 2024
Written Response	Duck Jazz Festival	Duck, NC	October 7-8, 2023
	Earl Scruggs Music Festival	Shelby, NC	September 1-3, 2023
	Groove Jam	Greensboro, NC	September 23, 2023
	Happy Valley Fiddlers Convention	Lenoir, NC	September 1-3, 2023
	Mira Music Festival	West End, NC	September 30, 2023
	Ol' Front Porch Music Festival	Oriental, NC	October 7, 2023
	Alexander County Parks (Host of many different festivals)	Alexander County, NC	May 4, 2024
	Willow Oak Park Bluegrass Festival	Roxboro, NC	June 15-17, 2023
	Reevestock Music Festival	Elkin, NC	August 4-5, 2023

The findings are organized into thematic categories that were developed deductively and inductively from the data, examining the intersection of Creative Placemaking, Biophilic Design,

and Musicophilia within the context of Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States. The following categories were determined including both deductive and inductive codes:

- *Community Engagement Efforts*
- *Environmental Initiatives & Sustainability*
- *Fostering a Sense of Community*
- *Economic Benefit*
- *Preservation & Celebration of Local & Regional Traditions*
- *Benefits of Experiencing Music in an Outdoor Setting*
- *Nature's Involvement in Venue Selection*
- *Challenges & Adaptations*
- *Connection to Place*

This chapter explores these categories, making use of and referencing the narratives and experiences of managers and organizers. Utilizing their insights and perspectives, we are able to garner a much deeper understanding of these events. These categories are used to develop analytic themes in Chapter 4.

Community Engagement Efforts

Community engagement developed as a central theme among participants and demonstrated festivals' efforts to connect with attendees on a deeper level, which not only included local residents, but also visitors from much farther away. This connection is facilitated through a multitude of approaches, including the showcasing of local talent, partnering with community organizations, as well as implementing and fostering a welcoming atmosphere. When discussing the role of community engagement at these festivals, organizers and participants provided these insights:

"We purposely book local artists – even amateur groups – and offer a village market for local craftspeople."

"Over 60 non-profit groups and civic organizations participate at [our festival] each year...count on [our festival] as their most impactful fundraiser each year."

"Festivals allow a sort of mental reset...It kind of forces you to be in the moment—be where you are—and be with the folks you are with."

"[we prioritize] community involvement and strategic planning"

"People [think of this festival as] a home. They see it as a homespun local event... a triangle wide community celebration."

These responses highlight the commitment these festivals' have in creating a platform for local expression and participation. This showcases the inherent intertwining of music festivals with community fabric.

Environmental Initiatives and Sustainability

The question of how outdoor music festivals implement environmental initiatives and sustainability is tricky and difficult to navigate for one in a management, or organizer's position. When a human steps into nature, there is always *some* level of effect. When hosting an event in a natural setting, bringing hundreds, thousands, or even greater numbers of humans into an area for outdoor recreation, the level of effects grow substantially, so managing these events to allow for appropriate levels of effect are imperative. In "Carrying Capacity as 'Informed Judgement': The Values of Science and the Science of Values," Manning and Lawson (2002) speak at length on the assertion that managers and organizers are required to make a subjective judgment call on what the maximum acceptable level of effects to the grounds that a festival is being held are, the quality of the visitor experience, as well as the indicators and standards of quality that should guide outdoor recreation management. Said best by Manning (2011), "This... requires some element of management judgment, but this judgment should be as 'informed' as possible".

Environmental effects were acknowledged by many interviewees and seemed to be a topic that comes up frequently for them when orchestrating these events. Many gave examples of ways that this issue had already been addressed, for example one participant stated:

“We have our festivals in areas that do not cause negative environmental effects or at the least a minimum.”

Implying that this issue had already been faced, and is now being addressed by holding these events in places where effect is limited. Similarly, another participant mentioned:

"This is an incredibly difficult topic for the festival world... Both festivals that I work with are doing their best, but it's not enough."

In the same vein, another participant went on to note how they try their best, but effects are hard to avoid when bringing so many people together in a natural setting:

“...they may walk in places that disturb the natural habitat, the plants and flowers and animals. That could certainly happen. We try not to have that, and people are generally pretty good... but I'm sure... that does happen sometimes.”

Clearly, efforts are being made here to reduce the levels of environmental effects. While some are putting plans into action to make advancements toward this goal, others have pondered on this issue extensively and provided other solutions that could be taken to reduce their levels of environmental effect, for example:

“What is needed are guidelines for best practices and resources. Helping festivals understand how to manage environmental impacts in any small, inexpensive way would

be a first step... producing a festival is expensive and risky, spending extra money on some of these initiatives is difficult—as bad as that sounds, it’s a reality.”

“All festivals need to work on their footprint... but in particular [ours], there is often... a struggle between use and abuse, between accessibility and overuse.”

And yet another went on to describe how when an event comes to a close, there is not a single piece of trash left on the ground due to the fact that attendees self-organize a trash sweep to ensure nothing is left behind. Repeatedly, reducing environmental effects was highlighted as the core principle for these managers and organizers. Throughout the interviews conducted, it was clear that there is a strong commitment to protecting and respecting the natural settings where these events take place. Not only because they respect the environment, but because many of the attendees are locals and live in the areas surrounding these events. They respect these environments because these events take place at their home.

In fact, trash was a hot topic when discussing this issue with the participants. When interviewees were asked about what environmental initiatives their festivals participate in, these were some responses:

“Active recycling and considering offering a 'fill your water bottle' station.”

“We separate out trash and recycling.”

“[in the context of trash/garbage/recycling initiatives]... It’s an expensive piece of the pie to do it right.”

“We...are always very aggressive about addressing those sorts of issues.”

“Whenever you bring 2,000 people together, you create trash... We have recycling bins.”

“Respecting the environment is at the forefront of festival planning. We make sure that we have ample trash and recycling receptacles... and we use messaging about leaving no trace during our stage announcements”

“We're creating a lot of trash. There's no question about that. We take whatever's put in the recycling bins and put that into our larger receptacles that get collected by the city.”

Nearly every participant that brought up this issue noted how there are ongoing efforts to address it through recycling or the utilization of “green” based products. These responses put on display the continuing efforts and challenges faced by festival managers and organizers in implementing environmental sustainability practices.

Fostering a Sense of Community

Fostering a sense of community developed as a fundamental characteristic of outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States. Through the interactions and shared experiences of managers and organizers, it is evident that relationships are frequently cultivated during these events that extend beyond the festival grounds. These connections, extending from friendships to professional collaborations, contribute significantly to the appeal of the festival community. Moreover, through disconnecting, feelings of belonging and connectedness are brought out in ways that we do not often experience in a world that is more connected than ever.

Friendships & Relationships

Amongst the volunteers and attendees of these festivals lies the formation of new friendships, often developing long-lasting bonds during their time together. As several participants noted on the subject of friendships being created:

"People camp out and new friendships are formed."

"Life-long friends are made at our festival around mutual appreciation for the outdoors and music heritage."

"People who arrive as strangers leave as friends and actually attend future festivals together."

"Yes—strangers becoming friends, neighbors getting to know one another"

While others highlighted the collaborative connections and relationships that can arise from these events:

"We've seen a lot of young performers create bands or meet other young performers at our festival."

"Everything from people getting new jobs and starting new personal relationships to new musical collaborations etc."

The festival community not only serves as a catalyst for interpersonal relationships, but professional opportunities as well.

It was also revealed that oftentimes these relationships go beyond friendship and develop into long-lasting romantic relationships as well, with one participant noting:

"We've got... just off the top of my head 6, 8, 10 couples that met at the festival... it's really easy to find those kinds of stories."

This participant also noted they met their long-term partner at a festival, who they later ended up marrying, further solidifying the notion that these events truly have an ability to bring individuals

together to forge enduring and meaningful connections in a way that you rarely see in many other social settings.

Belonging & Connectedness

Participants emphasized the ability of outdoor Americana music festivals to foster a profound sense of belonging and connection among attendees. In a world where digital interconnectedness is so prevalent and wide-reaching, genuine personal engagement is often overlooked or absent. These festivals provide a space for individuals to be present and genuinely engage with others, with one participant detailing:

"[Festivals foster] a sense of belonging. People are the most 'connected' that they have ever been in history, but also the most disconnected on a personal level. Festivals...kind of force you to be in the moment—be where you are—and be with the folks you are with."

In essence, the sense of community interwoven in the fibers of these events goes well beyond mere entertainment. It is a social experience that fosters connections, relationships, and feelings of belongingness.

Broader Notion of Community

While the preceding sections delved into very specific interpersonal relationships and connections created during these events, it is just as necessary to recognize the broader, overarching sense of community felt by many of the participants that may not be as specific. Some interviewees stated the following when discussing this broader notion of community:

"It's a way to... be a part of vibrant community."

"It has become something people look forward to experiencing annually. A sense of community... A feeling of communal accomplishment."

"They are outdoors and are part of a community. They are listening to their favorite music."

"It's a close-knit setting that is translated through the sense of community fostered amongst festival attendees."

"Community is a necessary element in putting on an event."

"Being outdoors with live music in a community that strives for connection provides the perfect platform for attendees to share common interests."

This inclusion of quotes referencing the broader notion of community, despite their general nature, holds a significant value within the context of this study. These quotes provide valuable insights into the shared identity cultivated within the festival setting. By acknowledging the sentiment of “being a part of a community,” participants are emphasizing the role these events hold as inclusive spaces, fostering a sense of belonging to a much larger collective, as opposed to an individual narrative.

Economic Benefits

Outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States have a significant economic benefit, both in terms of boosting the local economy and serving as fundraisers for various initiatives. The data collected highlighted these two primary facets in which these events effect the local economy.

Boosting the Local Economy

One of the key findings is the ability of these events to attract attendees from outside the immediate vicinity, resulting in a boost to the local economy. Many participants emphasized that

the influx of visitors who patronize local businesses, including vendors, gas stations, hotels, and restaurants has a significant contribution. As one organizer noted:

"They bring folks outside of our county/communities who spend money in our county by supporting our local vendors."

This sentiment was echoed by another participant who highlighted:

"Local economy is generally impacted positively. Especially if local businesses embrace the event and do something to encourage visitors to patronize their businesses."

The geographical reach of these festivals extends well beyond local borders, with many attendees traveling from neighboring regions, other states, and in quite a few cases, other countries. When asked specifically about the reach of these festivals, these were some of the responses:

"A third of the attendees come from those 3 counties [that surround the festival]. Another half of the rest came for day trippers from a larger, you know, maybe hour plus drive, and the rest of them are from out of state & out of country."

"We attract folks from the region, probably 2–3-hour radius."

"We have people come all the way from Mexico and Alaska—sometimes even Japan."

Visitors on this scale not only introduce revenue into the local economy, but also promote cultural exchange and tourism.

Fundraising

In addition to their economic significance, many of these festivals also serve as fundraisers for various charitable causes and community initiatives. For example, one festival

was established with the purpose of raising funds for campus beautification at a community college. Similarly, local non-profits, youth groups, and religious organizations often participate in these festivals, selling food and beverages to raise money for their respective causes. As one organizer succinctly put it:

"[Our festival] is a fundraiser and food drive but also a FUNraiser."

Overall, the economic benefit of outdoor Americana music festivals reaches well beyond entertainment as there are a multitude of benefits for the local community. By attracting visitors from far and wide, as well as serving as platforms for fundraising and philanthropy, these events play an important role in terms of their effect on the local economy and community in the Southeastern United States.

Preservation & Celebration of Local & Regional Traditions

In the preserving and celebrating of local and regional traditions, outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States play a pivotal role as this region is rooted in the rich cultural heritage of the Appalachians. One of the hallmark features of these festivals is the emphasis on traditional music genres such as Folk and Bluegrass. Styles of music that are deeply entangled with the culture of the region. As one organizer highlighted:

"One of the festivals that I run has a particular type of music—Old Time and Bluegrass. We feel having this type of music in the area it is held is keeping with early Appalachian music and heritage."

Similarly, another participant noted:

“It’s how you teach festival patrons about the rich regional culture... Having local musicians and heritage non-profits participate in the festival... is important.”

The showcasing of traditional musical forms serve as a means of preserving and passing down these musical traditions to future generations.

Beyond music, Americana festivals also serve as forums for promoting traditional folkways and artisanal practices, including food preparation, cultivation, and crafts. One participant noted:

“Americana has got these traditional folk roots... and traditional folk ways, food preparation, food cultivation, backyard chickens... traditional pastimes. When you can make people aware of the difficulty of the art that goes into things, or of the craft that goes into it, I think you increase their appreciation of the thing.”

By making a point to highlight the artistry and skill involved in traditional practices, festivals attain the ability to deepen attendees’ appreciation for the cultural heritage that coincides with these traditions.

Benefits of Experiencing Music in an Outdoor Setting

For many festival goers, these events serve as a temporary escape from the pressures of daily life. This notion highlights how outdoor music festivals can provide therapeutic benefits in providing a refuge from the chaos of urban life. As one participant voiced,

“Festivals allow a sort of mental reset.”

Another participant echoed this sentiment, stating,

“It’s a way to get away from the grit and grind.”

This combination of nature and music elicits a profound sense of calm and relaxation in attendees. Participants highlighted the inherent connection between enjoying music and the outdoors, noting that both activities possess healing qualities. As several participants stated:

“Enjoying nature and enjoying music are two similar traits of human nature. They seem to be very related in the way that they are healing to humans.”

“I think a beautiful day just puts people in a good mood...”

“People at festivals are happy... Listening to music has health benefits, such as calming anxiety. Sometimes music moves people emotionally, making them laugh, cry, or think critically about a message that the music conveys.”

“I think we underestimate the power of sunlight, fresh air, and wildlife and when paired with live arts, it manifests a euphoric sense of being and camaraderie that can’t be replicated anywhere else.”

This interplay between the two variables of music and nature not only enhances the festival experience but also contributes to attendees overall general well-being. Moreover, the emotional effect of experiencing live music in an outdoor setting cannot be overstated. Experiencing music in an outdoor setting provides mental rejuvenation, emotional improvements, as well as a deep connection with nature.

Nature’s Involvement in Venue Selection

Many of the managers and organizers expressed the importance of incorporating natural surroundings into the overall festival experience. For example, some interviewees expressed:

“I think nature plays a big role in the aesthetics of our festival”

“We light the big trees behind the stage to accent them at night. Our fans love that effect, and I think it’s because people enjoy the relaxing effect of being outside in nature.”

“Natural surroundings at our event add to the overall feel of the festival.”

“Nothing is more fun and gratifying than being outdoors under the night sky, listening to music with like-minded people”

Furthermore, the outdoor, open-air environment enables a sense of freedom among attendees, encouraging social interaction and exploration. As one participant noted:

“Being outdoors allows folks to come and go to the various venues around the village... Our goal is to build community, and that’s easier in an outdoor venue.”

Unlike indoor venues, outdoor festivals offer a distinct sense of place that is much more difficult to replicate in an indoor venue. As one participant observed:

“[Indoor] festivals in shopping malls and convention centers... the wrapping is interchangeable. You could take the same festival from the Charlotte Convention Center and put it in the Miami Dade County Convention Center... Whereas most of the outdoor festivals have this ‘place’.”

It’s evident that incorporating natural elements and surroundings into the venue selection process enhances the overall atmosphere and experience of these events, from the aesthetic benefits to providing a sense of place that’s hard to obtain elsewhere.

Challenges Often Faced in Festival Management and Organization

There are various challenges associated with managing and organizing outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States, calling for strategic adaptations to ensure a successful execution of these events. While there are of course, an unimaginable number of challenges associated with these events, the primary challenges that arose from the data collected were financial constraints, environmental uncertainties, and capacity limitations, each requiring meticulous planning to deal with properly.

Financial Challenges

Financial considerations developed as the most predominant concern for festival managers and organizers, particularly in the absence of venue ownership. As one interviewee noted:

“If you don’t own [a venue], you must find a site suitable for your event and try to negotiate a price that will allow you to pay the bills.”

Additionally, rising costs and limited resources pose challenges, especially for events reliant on non-alcohol-based fundraising. For example, one interviewee highlighted

“Challenges include rising costs and limited resources, as we are a fundraiser that does not sell alcohol.”

While financial challenges were one of the predominant challenges associated with these events, I must also note that many of these events are free to attend. In other words, many of these events require funding from grants and donations.

Environmental Challenges

Because these events take place in an outdoor setting, this of course means they are at the mercy of the weather, requiring managers and organizers to implement safety plans to mitigate the risks associated with this challenge. Weather related disruptions pose a significant challenge, with managers and organizers have to navigate the unpredictability of conditions such as rain, wind, and heat. Despite preparing "rain plans" and shelter options for artists and attendees, the uncertainty of weather conditions remains as a constant concern. One participant stated:

"[The] biggest challenge is the uncertainty of weather conditions for an outdoor event."

Moreover, the potential interference of more severe weather conditions, such as hurricanes or tropical storms, necessitates careful planning and risk management strategies.

Capacity Challenges

Managers and organizers must assess several capacity variables, including seating capacity, parking capacity, and local traffic capacity. Despite efforts to implement traffic control measures, addressing the volume of cars and ensuring public safety remain ongoing challenges. One participant stated:

"Traffic is... a concern—there is only one way in and one way out of town and when you have 7,000 people in town on one weekend, there will be traffic impacts."

In summary, navigating financial constraints, environmental uncertainties, and capacity limitations is a daunting task for organizers of outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States. By proactively addressing these challenges and proactively seeking solutions, organizers can ensure the success of their events while maintaining the safety and satisfaction of attendees.

Connection to Place

The connection to the physical setting developed as a significant aspect of outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States. Participants consistently emphasize the overwhelming attachment to the festival grounds and the feelings associated with their familiarity with the location.

The initial attraction of the festival's site is often due to the picturesque natural surroundings and characteristics that are associated with their charm and character. Typically, managers and organizers express a deep appreciation for the beauty of the venue, particularly when it is located near a river or in a scenic landscape. As one participant reflects:

“It’s a beautiful piece of property there on the river, and moving it to a different location just wouldn’t feel right.”

Furthermore, the connection to place extends beyond mere aesthetics. At many of the festival grounds there is a sense of history and heritage that is ingrained into the location itself, providing a clear and recognizable identity. Moving the event to a different location is perceived as damaging to the core essence of the event, resulting in a loss of the unique character and vibe that define the festival. As one organizer states:

“If it were to be moved somewhere else, it definitely would... be a different feel... There’s definitely a soul to [the grounds].”

This familiarity contributes to the festival's overall appeal and reinforces its role as a cultural landmark within the community.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This research examined the crossroads of music, nature, and community in the context of outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States from the perspectives of managers and organizers of these events. This examination was done through the use of three methodologies, Musicophilia, Biophilia, and Creative Placemaking, corresponding respectively to the three facets of these events previously introduced. In doing so we were able to focus questions related to these three facets and narrow down exactly what outcomes are generated from these events. By examining this intersection, we were able to observe the key themes as well as benefits and challenges that are associated with these events.

As shown in Figure 3, nine thematic categories were discovered through this study. The left-most column specifies whether the thematic category was inductive or deductive, as previously expanded upon in this paper. Upon further analysis of the findings, several of these thematic categories were found to have some similarities and overlap, thus leading to their placement into a more specified “Theme” or analytic coding. Throughout this discussion section, rather than discussing each of the thematic categories, the primary themes will be discussed instead for the reasons previously mentioned.

Figure 3. Thematic Categories & Themes

D/I	Thematic Category	Theme
D	Community Engagement	Using the Celebration of Regional Traditions to Cultivate Community
D	Sense of Community	
D	Preservation & Celebration of Local & Regional Traditions	
I	Environmental Initiatives & Sustainability	The Influencing of Decisions Through Our Connection to Place and From Our Values of a Sustainable Environment
D	Nature's Involvement in Venue Selection	
I	Benefits of Experiencing Music in an Outdoor Setting	
D	Economic Benefits of these Events on the Community in Which They Take Place	Understanding the Analysis of Positive Economic Benefits of These Events on the Local Economy
I	Challenges Often Faced in Festival Management and Organization	Challenges Faces in These Outdoor Music Festivals Are Related to Uncertain Aspects of the Festival; Financial Costs That Fluctuate, Variable Weather Conditions, and Capacity Concerns That Vary Depending on Weather & Artists Popularity
D	Feelings of Connectedness to Place	Feelings of Connectedness to Place Among a Community of People That Provides a Shared Familiarity Among Individuals

In this study, we identified several key themes that developed from the interview data collected from managers and organizers of outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States including community engagement, environmental sustainability, and

economic benefit, which stand out as interrelated components that contribute to the overall success of these festivals.

First, community engagement developed as a central theme, as highlighted by the efforts of the festival managers/organizers to provide an environment that fosters connections and relationships among attendees, showcase local talent, and the partnering with community organizations. This sense of community not only enhances the festival experience for everyone involved, but it also strengthens social bonds and promotes a sense of belonging.

Second, environmental sustainability efforts developed as a primary consideration for festival management and organization. The interviews conducted revealed a recognition of the environmental effects associated with hosting these events outdoors, as well as the various efforts managers/organizers are implementing to mitigate these effects. However, challenges still persist, especially when trying to balance the demands of these festivals with the goal of celebrating and respecting the environment, highlighting a clear need for ongoing innovation and advocacy in this area.

Third, the economic benefit of these festivals developed as a tertiary central theme, and a significant driver of the local economy of these festivals. These events attract visitors from outside the immediate vicinity, oftentimes from quite far away, and in doing so, these festivals stimulate economic activity, support local businesses, and generate revenue for community initiatives and fundraisers. Because many of these festivals serve as charity fundraisers, this further magnifies their positive contributions to the local economy of these festivals. However, financial constraints and resource limitations also pose as significant challenges for managers/organizers, requiring some significant and strategic planning in terms of resources, sponsorships, and grant allocations to ensure the sustainability of these events.

In exploring the crossroads of these themes, it was evident that community engagement, environmental sustainability, and economic benefit are deeply intertwined aspects of outdoor Americana music festivals. By utilizing approaches that prioritize social, environmental, and economic considerations, organizers can maximize the potential for positive outcomes of these events while also addressing the challenges that naturally come with the management and organization of these events.

Limitations

While providing valuable insights, this research is subject to several limitations that warrant consideration. Namely, this research focuses on the perspectives of managers/organizers of outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States. This approach offers a deep understanding from the management/organizer perspective, but may not fully capture the range of experiences from all of those directly involved in these events, such as the attendees as well as the performers. Therefore, the insights derived paint an accurate picture from the managers/organizer's viewpoints, but may overlook the nuances and experiences that are crucial to a more complete understanding of the festival's social benefits.

Furthermore, the study's findings are based on self-reported experiences and perceptions of the interviewees which may include bias. For example, participants may have felt inclined to portray their festivals in a more favorable light. Additionally, personal experiences could have also had influence on their responses, affecting the overall objectivity of the data.

It should also be acknowledged that while the interpretative nature of qualitative research provides understanding of more complex social phenomena, there is a level of subjectivity that is introduced in the analysis of the data. The thematic categories developed from the data reflect the researcher's interpretations which are influenced by their own theoretical perspectives and

methodological decisions. Acknowledging these limitations is paramount in garnering a comprehensive understanding and contextualization of the conclusions of this research.

Future Research

We observed the experiences through the lens of managers/organizers, but future research could be conducted from the perspective directly from the other two essential components: Attendees, and Performers. Analyzing the experiences from the perspective of those who are performing or those who are attending could add valuable insights, and reinforce the outcomes that emerged through this research.

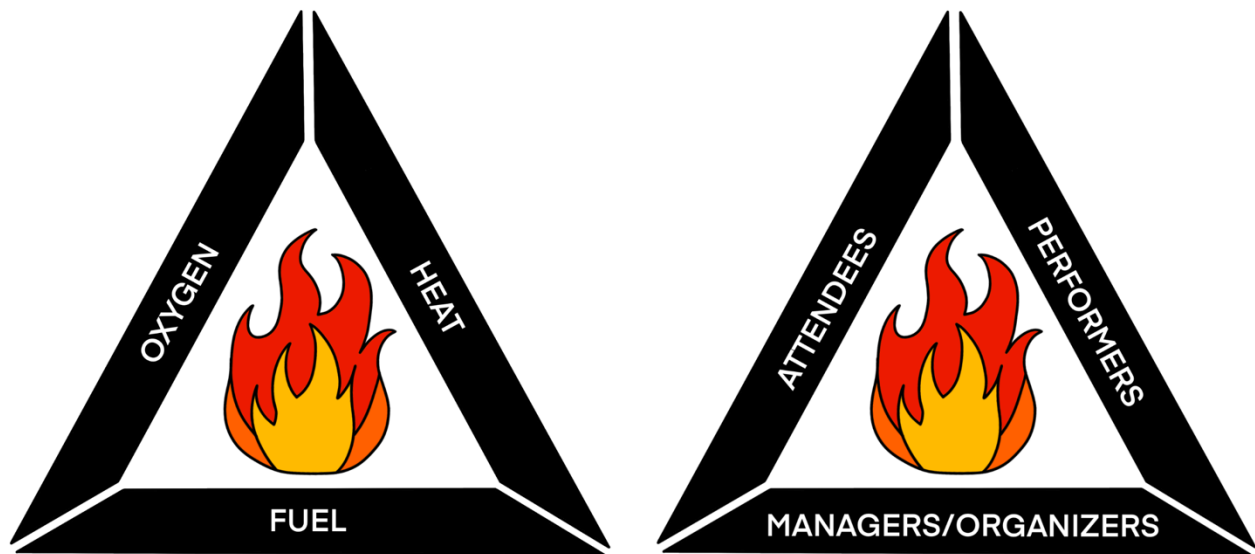
Additionally, future research should continue to explore the dynamic relationships between the themes that developed, identifying opportunities for collaboration to enhance the overall benefit and positive outcomes of outdoor music festivals in the Southeastern United States. Researchers can contribute to the continued evolution and innovation of these culturally significant events by adopting approaches from other fields like sustainable tourism, environmental science, or economics.

Conclusion

Most are familiar with the three ingredients that are essential in creating fire: Oxygen, Heat, and Fuel (Figure 4). Without all three of these components, fire is impossible to occur. I like to use this example to demonstrate the three essential components of music festivals: Attendees, Performers, and Managers/Organizers. You cannot have a music festival if you are lacking even one of these components. In some cases, one group may take on the role of another. For example, there may be a festival that is organized/managed by the performers, but this does not mean that these events are lacking one of these essential components; it simply means that

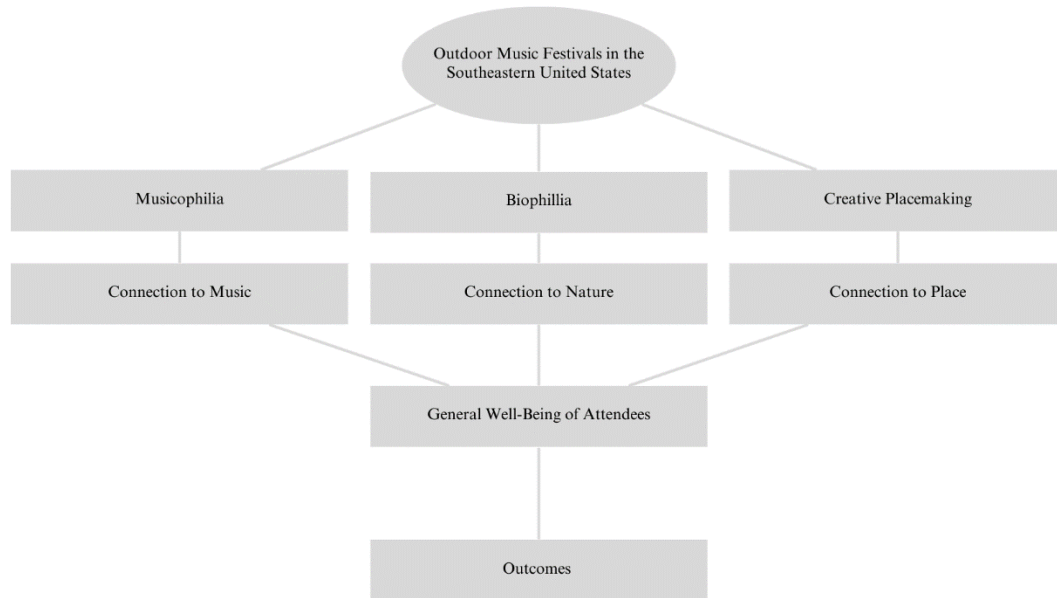
while the two components are being led by the same group of people, the two components still inherently exist.

Figure 4. Essential Components of Music Festivals



This thesis has not only shed light on the social benefits of outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States but also underscored the crucial role as hubs of unity, conservation, and tradition. Through the lens of Musicophilia, Biophilia, and Creative Placemaking, this research examined the nexus of music, nature, and community, developing and expanding upon the relationship these elements share as well as their contribution to the essence of place and the human experience (Figure 5). While perceptions, told through the narratives of managers/organizers, have provided invaluable insights, the perspectives of attendees and performers promise to add further depth to our understanding of the outcomes of these events.

Figure 5. Musicophilia, Biophilia, & Creative Placemaking



The exploration of these additional perspectives, alongside a continued examination of the nexus between community, environment, and economy, could prove to be beneficial in broadening the dialogue on the role these festivals have in shaping societal narratives and landscapes. Operational elements from this work are that the strength of these festivals are in the nexus, not in the separate parts, but understanding each part takes its own unique effort. Connection to place come from traditions and stories of place. The music and connection to the music can grow this connection as well as grow support for loved and new artists. Communicating these stories and traditions, along with collecting stories from participants will support this element. The place itself can be examined through both our connection to it and conservation efforts. Festivals can continue to adapt to changes and innovation in sustainability measures by staying connected to the expertise that exists in the vast experience of festival managers.

APPENDIX

Email Script

Hello, my name is Tyler Spencer, and I'm a graduate student at Clemson University. I am emailing you because I am conducting a study on outdoor music festivals in the Southeastern United States and would like to ask you a few questions. The questions will only take a few minutes, but can vary depending on your responses. The information you provide will only be used in the study. If interested, would it be okay to schedule a time for us to meet via zoom? (the use of audio is required, but video is optional based on your comfortability)

Verbal Script

I am conducting research about outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States, and I am interested in your experiences as an expert in this field. The purpose of this research is to explore the phenomenon of outdoor music festivals from the perspective of experts and managers in the field, specifically Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States. Utilizing research interviews with experts, this research aims to identify the perceived benefits and challenges associated with these events, and perception and evidence of their contribution to creative placemaking and the potential connection to nature, music, and culture as evidenced by experience.

Your participation will involve one informal interview that will last between twenty to forty minutes. This research has no known risks. This research will benefit the academic community because it helps us to understand how outdoor Americana music festivals in the Southeastern United States could be utilized in new and unique ways to help those may need it.

Please know that I will do everything I can to protect your privacy. Your identity or personal information will not be disclosed in any publication that may result from the study.

Notes that are taken during the interview will be stored in a secure location.

Would it be alright if I video recorded our interview? Saying no to video recording will have no effect on the interview.

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