

THE ART OF PARTNERSHIPS IN THE FESTIVAL FIELD

Claire Delhom
Master's Thesis
Arts Management
Sibelius Academy
University of the Arts Helsinki
Spring 2019



ABSTRACT

Thesis

Title The art of partnerships in the festival field	Number of pages 104
Author Claire Delhom	Semester Spring 2019
Degree programme Arts Management	
Abstract <p>This qualitative research explores the evolution from sponsorship towards more collaborative partnerships in the festival context. It provides insights on the specificities of the relationship between festival organisations and their business partners.</p> <p>The primary data consists of seven in-depth semi-structured interviews with experts from the festival field, festival managers and business partners. The analysis focuses on the content of the interviews and identifies the main aspects of the new phenomenon.</p> <p>The research reveals that the nature of the relationship between a festival and its partners has evolved towards a more co-creative model characterised by a continuous interactivity, a shared purpose and the co-creation of value. The implementation of this approach requires from festival organisations to re-think their partnership strategies. This thesis offers suggestions to set the path towards successful collaborative partnerships.</p>	
Keywords Partnerships; Festival Management; Value co-creation; Relationship; Strategy	
Additional information	

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Despite the current economic and political issues, festivals are increasingly popular in Europe and worldwide. Throughout Europe, festival managers actively create new concepts, gathering the audience together with arts professionals, artists and businesses, such as Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the largest art festival in Europe, has seen audience numbers growing, selling 1,8M tickets in 2010 (Edinburgh Fringe Festival Society, 2011) and 2,8M in 2018 (Edinburgh Fringe Festival webpage, 2018). Comparatively, the popularity of the largest finnish festivals has been stable for about ten years. For example, Helsinki Festival (Finland's largest arts festival) gathered 212, 836 visitors in 2017 for 271, 896 in 2010 (Finland Festivals webpage, 2018).

As far as Ancient Greece, the artists have been relying on public (state) and private (donors) support to finance their works (Pick, 1988). Nowadays in European countries, the funding of arts is often part of the government policy. Understanding the need for more support in the arts sector, some countries have set up laws providing financial or economical advantages to companies or individuals supporting the arts (*Encouraging private investment in the cultural sector*, European Parliament, 2011). In France, the Loi Aillagon (2003) modifies the French Tax Regulations to support companies providing extra help to arts organisations through patronage or partnership (Legifrance, 2003). French corporations are entitled to different tax deductions depending on the amount and kind of support. The law aims at relieving the unsteady financial situation of cultural organisations by giving them the resources to seek for different sources of income. However, these laws vary between countries and the European Union has not yet been able to create a general guidance regarding relationships between support providers and art organisations. In Finland, there is no policy encouraging business sponsorship (*Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends*, 2018).

Lately, as a consequence of the poor economical situation in Europe, companies are forced to reduce their expenses. The situation calls for a reevaluation of the strategic thinking of festival organisations, in order to bring new solution to continue their evolution in the current context and to secure income from alternative sources (Wood, 2000).

We are also witnessing a transformation in the traditional approach of partnership between festivals and corporations. From a simple exchange of visibility versus money, which we will call transactional sponsorship, we are entering a more complex system in which both entities work together on a project which unifies their values, purposes and objectives. We will call this system a relational partnership (Ikävalko, 2004). The field is looking to renew the sponsorship approach towards a model which would create mutual benefit and maximise positive outcomes for both sides (“What makes a good sponsorship?”, *Journal of Sponsorship*, 2009), in order to retrieve a win-win-win (partner-festival-audiences) situation. Ideally, both sides wish to expand their customer base and their visibility to a greater audience.

The sponsorship system of the festivals has many other reasons to evolve. Those reasons are the everyday-life reality of the cultural field and cannot be put aside: the decrease of state support, the disregard of individuals for traditional marketing operations, the increase of festivals’ commercialisation and competition, and the increase of festival production costs.

Hence the development of more collaborative partnerships, also called relational partnerships (Ikävalko, 2004). Professionals of the festival field consider partnerships as the support (in-kind or financial) of a private company to a specific event, which goes beyond a simple exchange of money-marketing service (personal communication, 2017). A partnership aims at bringing to the event an added content directly created through a collaborative action between the festival and its partner. For example, Flow Festival (Helsinki, Finland) curated part of its programme together with the University of the Arts (2016).

The festival's audience benefits this project by getting the opportunity to learn more about arts and discover new works. The festival organisation itself increases its popularity at different levels by supporting the actions of young artists. On the other hand, the university can increase its popularity and raise awareness amongst Flow Festival-goers. The artists whose works are exhibited during the festival through this co-created project can hope for an exposure rate of up to 75 000 people over a three-days event.

One can question the reasons for which Flow Festival engages in such a project, since their event is fully sold-out or what they actually gain from it. It is important to underline here that festivals are very short-term events on a 365 days period; their main marketing challenge is to constantly remind the community of their presence. Collaborative partnerships are used to leave a long-term print on people's mind, in order to deepen their roots as a recurring, popular event inside a certain community segments.

Often, this project has a positive impact on the festival's core audience, but also seeks to expand its reach towards the distant circles.

As a consequence of the development of relational partnerships, we need to:

- Reinvent the partnership strategy of the festival
- Clarify the role of partners in the new context

1.2. Problem formulation

Despite the fact that an evolution from transactional to more collaborative relationships has been witnessed in the field in Europe, many studies still tend to consider sponsorship as a marketing tool (Yngfalk, 2013). However, some current research considers that it carries its own specificities and is the result of a mix of various aspects of the organisational structure of an organisation (Ryan & Fahy, 2012). Besides, the specificities of collaborative endeavours between partner and festival have not yet been completely researched (Luonila, 2016).

The emerging approach of the partnership relationship is based on people and

long-term mindset, around which the co-created projects revolve, adding a value to both organisations. This approach is a result of the natural evolution of the partner/festival relationship and has not yet been studied by researchers, who tend to focus more on the marketing benefits gained by festivals through sponsorship (Yngfalk, 2013).

The current state of sponsorship in the field of cultural events, and more precisely in festivals, is debated but research lacks. According to Cornwell & Maignan (1998, p.2) who reviewed previous research on sponsorship, the focus has been on defining the concept, understanding the managerial aspects, assessing the results, the strategic use, and the ethical considerations. However, the studies focusing on the strategic use mainly concerns sponsorship and fail to take into account the new partnership approach (Olkkonen, 2006), Moreover, Olkkonen (2006) mentions the abundance of empirical literature related to the implementation of sponsorship (“manual type”), and regrets the lack of theories related to it. Walliser also explains that

“Globally, it appears that no major breakthrough has been achieved regarding the differentiation of sponsorship from other communication and promotional techniques. Definitions vary from country to country and from researcher to researcher”
(Walliser, 2003, p.15)

The natural outcomes of the evolution also have been neglected: the relational approach calls for a redefinition of the role of partners and of their implication into the organisation’s strategic decisions.

Moreover, value co-creation studies undertaken so far focus on the customer-festival relationship, with the customer seen as a co-producer of the festival’s experience (see Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), and fails to see other opportunities of value co-creation, such as in the frame of a partner-festival relationship.

The new phenomenon studied in this research also calls for a redefinition of the terms used when talking about an agreement for private businesses

giving support to a festival. In the last forty years, research has used the term “sponsorship” to define it. The term “sponsor” comes for the Latin word *sponsor, spondeo* (Le Gaffiot Dictionary, 1934) which stands for a guarantor, endorsement entity. The idea of the guarantor exploiting the potential of the endorsed organisation is in that case non-existent: sponsors are here to support the organisation in need. In this thesis, I will refer to the new agreement with the term “partnership” related to the term “partner” which comes from the Latin word *partito*, meaning sharing out, dividing up (Le Gaffiot Dictionary, 1934). The term partnership relates therefore more to a collaborative act, a process of resources sharing, based on a relationship. The orientation of the model has shifts from a one-way process to a two-way dynamic.

Sponsorships and their profitability are increasingly being re-examined by both sides. This research will use specific contributions from the sponsorship literature to provide a new angle on the understanding of partnerships in the festival context.

1.3. Aim of the study

The purpose of this research is to understand the evolution from sponsorship to partnership in the festival context, resulting into value co-creation.

The aim of the study is to make sense of the specificities of the relationship model by defining how experts consider this phenomenon. Eventually, I wish for this thesis to provide corporations and festivals new highlights on a promising partnership approach.

To understand the ongoing trend in business partnership discourse, this study sets the question: How does the festival field benefit from adopting a relational approach as part of their partnership strategy?

The following research questions are used as support questions to guide the study:

- *What are the reasons for adopting a relational approach in festival management?*
- *How to define and co-create value in partnerships in a festival context?*
- *What is the nature of partners' involvement in the relational approach of partnerships in the festival field?*

The choice of the topic is motivated by a personal interest for establishing meaningful and innovative partnerships between a festival organisation and its partners. Because of the difficult situation of festival organisations in Europe, it is more than ever time to face the issue and offer solutions, no matter how imperfect they might be. On many aspects, and as festivals “are seen as a major source of income and tourism at local and national levels” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organisation [UNESCO], 2009), they are the ideal ground to face the current unstable economy.

My personal interest for partnerships is born from a professional experience as the assistant of the partnerships manager of a French film festival. I was also able to observe the partnership strategy of many festival organisations I had the opportunity to work for. Working on a partnership project from a partner's point of view also contributed, as I realised that corporations themselves were embedded in a difficult situation. Despite this fact, I could feel their wish for a deeper involvement in their partnership projects. Those experiences have contributed to raising my personal interest in the matter. Ultimately, I wish to encourage corporations and festivals to work together in order to stimulate both sides evolution possibilities.

1.4. Research Approach

The thesis is a qualitative exploratory research based on a theoretical framework and in-depth semi-structured experts interviews. The theoretical framework reviews various concepts and theories related to sponsorship, marketing, stakeholders. Additionally, it also reviews concepts connected to management and strategy.

This research focuses on partnerships in the festival context in Europe. It concerns more specifically arts festivals that are in many cases produced by non-for-profit organisations and therefore need resources from varied sources.

The arts management field will benefit from this study as it establishes the various possible outcomes of the a new way of doing partnerships, both for the partners and the festival organisation.

1.5. Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists altogether of 6 chapters, complemented by a list of references and appendices.

The first chapter provides the necessary background information for readers to understand the researched topic, as well as the aim of the research and a brief introduction of the methodology.

The second chapter introduces key theories and concepts related to sponsorship and partnership. The first part reviews the existing literature on sponsorship and the evolution of the theories. In the second part, theories related to the evolution towards more collaborative partnerships are presented. The last part of this theoretical framework studies the link between the relational approach and the value co-creation process.

The research methodology is introduced in the third chapter. Here, I justify my choice to use a qualitative research, and give information about the interviews conducted with experts in order to gain knowledge on the topic. The data collection and analysis process are detailed and critical reflections are also highlighted.

The fourth chapter represents the empirical part of the thesis, presenting the analysis and findings from the data collected through the interviews. This chapter is divided in four parts; its structure was established from the overlapping themes identified when discussing with the interviewees.

Finally, the research findings, conclusions of the study and directions for further studies are presented in chapters five and six.

This thesis ends with a list of references and appendices.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This theoretical chapter gathers the background theories and information which will support the analysis of the expert interviews. It introduces specific aspects of relevant fields of research from marketing (e.g. relational exchange, relationship marketing), and management (e.g. corporate social responsibility, stakeholder, sponsorship policy).

The first part explores contributions from sponsorship literature which are beneficial to bring a new light on the understanding of partnerships in the festival field. It includes a review of the definitions of sponsorship and an assessment of the evolution of the sponsorship thinking, followed by considerations on sponsors as stakeholders in the festival context.

The evolution from transactional sponsorship to relational partnership is introduced in the second part of the theoretical chapter. This review includes a detailed analysis of the most accurate theory to study our research question, McNicholas' research. Next, the theoretical approach from current literature is used to review key reasons for the evolution and the consequences on the role of partners. Finally, this second part ends by assessing the development from transactional sponsorship to relational partnership.

The last part of this chapter consider the connection between the relational approach and the value co-creation phenomenon. As the social dynamics between a partner and a festival are at heart of this research, the implications on their relationship are also discussed. Finally, this literature review will study the consequences of the relational approach on the festival management.

2.1. Contributions from sponsorship literature

Previous research on sponsorship is abundant; various aspects of the sponsorship deal have been studied since its growth in the 1980's, mainly

focusing on sponsorship as part of an organisation's communication strategy (Walliser, 2003, p.9). When tackling cultural sponsorship, the main research topics are related to business management and fail to consider cultural organisations as a specific kind of business. In previous research, sponsorship is mainly considered as a resource for marketing purposes, leaving aside any possibility for a two-ways relational exchange. Most of the research available offer a handbook for creating and implementing sponsorship deals, such as the Sponsorship's seeker toolkit by Skildum-Reid & Grey (2014).

In Finland, the largest study on business-cultural organisation relationship with a neutral point of view was undertaken by Minna Ikävalko, as a doctoral research, in 2004.

2.1.1. Definitions of sponsorship

In her research, Ikävalko (2004) draws a clear picture of previous sponsorship definitions. Sorting out nine different definitions, the author mentions the objectives of the agreement and the kind of contribution. Objectives are, for example, "to achieve commercial objectives", "commercial advantage", "to support corporate objectives" or again to "increase image and awareness" (Ikävalko, 2004, p.51). Contribution is either mentioned as a financial or in-kind support, when not stated as "not specified". This enables us to understand the way sponsorship was mainly seen before 2000: as a one-way commercial act.

Table 1

Elements of sponsorship in various sponsorship definitions

Author(s)/ Year	Objectives of sponsorship	Sponsor	Sponsored	Contribution
Meenaghan (1983)	To achieve commercial objectives	Commercial organisation	Not specified	Money or in kind
Grönkvist (1985)	Not specified. Combined with PR activities	Company	Organisation or individual	Service
Gardner & Shuman (1987)	To support corporate or marketing objectives	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified; defined as investment
Abratt et al (1987)	Promotion strategy	Not specified	Association, team or individual	Not specified; some aid
Oetker (1988)	Specific marketing communication purposes	Not specified	Event, team or group	Not specified
Sleight (1989)	For commercial advantage	Not specified	Individual, event or organisation	Funds, resources or services
Javalgi et al. (1994)	To support corporate objectives	Not specified	Individual or joint, event	Not specified
Wragg (1994)	To derive a tangible benefit	Not specified	An activity or an event	Not specified; support
d'Astous & Bitz (1995)	To increase image and awareness	A firm	Individual, group or organisation	Financial support
Cornwell & Maignan (1998)	Marketing activities	Not specified	Not specified	A fee

Source: Ikävälko, *Pas de deux of art and business*, 2004, p. 51

Due to a lack of consensus between countries and fields, the concept of “sponsorship” does not have any clear definition before 1996 (Walliser, 2003, p.8). Already in the 1980’s, sponsorship was considered as a unique topic, differentiated from philanthropy or patronage and was understood as part of the communication strategy of an organisation (Walliser, 2003, p.9). The first studies on sponsorship and definition of the term can be found in the sports events field (e.g. Armstrong, 1988) such as Parker (1991, p.23) who defines sponsorship as a “communication medium”. From 1990, a few studies regarding arts sponsorship have been conducted, such as the one written by Everding (1990), a German opera director.

So far, research has considered sponsorship as part of the marketing toolkit of an organisation, linked to the idea that its first objective is to develop brand image and increase brand awareness (Gwinner, 1997). After 2000, we remark that the concept of sponsorship takes its independence and is not solely connected to marketing purposes. Despite that fact the definition of sponsorship offered by the UK Art and Business Company is clearly in line with Gwinner’s idea:

“The payment of money by a business to an arts organisation for the purpose of promoting the business name, products or services. Sponsorship is part of a business’s general promotional expenditure. It can include an element of corporate or social responsibility.”
(Art and Business, 2003, p.1)

The promotion of brand image and brand awareness through sponsorship can be considered as one of the main “categories” of sponsorship understanding. From 2000 onwards, we observe an evolution of this understanding: Getz, Andersson and Larson (2007) consider that “sponsors contribute various kinds of resources in exchange for using the festival as a marketing tool”. Their point of view still considers sponsorship solely as a way to promote a brand, although it is now stated by researchers that money is not the one and only kind of resource which can be provided by the sponsor to the sponsored party.

Sponsorship is now longer solely monetary-based.

Olkkonen & Tuominen (2006, p.65) go even further and define cultural sponsorship as “a co-operative, long-term and mutually beneficial business relationship between two business actors – the sponsors and the sponsored”. The agreement here is focusing on the relationship in which resources from both sides can meet and benefit each other.

2.1.2. Sponsorship from a one-way to a two-ways marketing tool

Ikävalko (2004) restores Wolton’s theory from 1988. Wolton justifies companies’ support to the arts by three categories of reasons: sociological objectives, broad objectives and specific objectives.

The sociological objectives relate to corporations’ image-building in the society. Wolton associates those to companies with a negative or aloof image, or to companies that the community links to incidents that have impacted their lives (e.g. petrol companies, banks) (Wolton, as cited in Ikävalko, 2004).

The broad objectives are divided into three larger categories: enhancing the company’s image and knowledge of its activities; developing awareness among a community; and showing corporate responsibility. Finally, some companies even have specific objectives, depending on their situation, e.g. influencing a target market, improving internal communication (Wolton, as cited in Ikävalko, 2004).

Most common broad objectives nowadays are related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the development of awareness among a community in which the sponsor operates. Companies want to be involved in the lives of the communities and wish to use the festival as a media to reach the community with a new message. According to Laing & Frost (2010), CSR is used by companies who want “demonstrable, socially desirable results for their sponsorships”. CSR is nowadays a must-used term and trend in all fields when talking about sponsorship. It is defined by the European Commission on corporate social responsibility (2011) as “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society”. In a world where image can make a business prosper or crash, companies have understood the need to take part into the

improvement of the lives of the communities they are operating in (“What makes a good sponsorship?”, *Journal of Sponsorship*, 2009). According to Frost, Mair & Laing, (in Yeoman, Robertson, McMahon-Beattie, Backer & Smith, 2014, p.122) this leads to outcomes that “are not merely in the financial realm, but also social and environmental” .

The relationship marketing theory has taken a big part in previous research regarding the implementation of sponsorship as a marketing tool. Described by Morgan & Hunt (1994) as referring “to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges”, this form of marketing is supposed to develop long-term win-win B2C or B2B relationships. Underlining the importance of relational exchanges, Morgan and Hunt step away from Wolton by including the idea of a two-way process. Based on the relationship marketing theory and in a context of mutual value-creation and cross-fertilisation of ideas, Ryan and Fahy (2003) develop the idea of a total relationship marketing applicable to the arts sponsorship model. In their case study of the sponsorship deal between Galway Arts Festival (Ireland) and Nortel Networks, the authors analyse the growing of the partnership process, with the development of mutual value directly related to each entity’s objectives. According to Ryan & Fahy (2003, p.37), a good example of mutual value creation is

“the case when NN was working closely with GAF on developing its financial management systems, which enabled GAF to become more managerially confident and increase its ability to develop the festival. This in turn positively impacted on the sponsorship itself [...] increasing the value added to both organisations.”

The total relationship marketing concept can be understood as the current branch of the relationship marketing research field, which enables to connect the theory with the current settings of the marketing field.

Whereas the original idea of the theory is based on marketing activities bringing a flourishing win-win relationship, the concept developed by Ryan & Fahy (2003) adds the possibility of the emergence of added value. Through the

development of this theory, the authors underline the evolution from a one-way sponsorship to a two-ways partnership approach.

From Wolton (1988) to Ryan & Fahy (2003), sponsorship is still seen as a commercial act including marketing activities, part of the communication strategy of an organisation. However, previous research now considers the act as a two-ways process including many parameters such as the nature of the relationship or the influence of internal and external forces. As McNicholas puts it:

. “The movement towards a business and marketing focus in the arts, and shifts in business such as the growth in Corporate Social Responsibility and Triple Bottom Line considerations and a change in the postmodern world and consumers, have led to some interesting paradigm shifts in arts and business relationships, such as the development of more two-way interactive relationships and arts and business partnership ventures of various kinds.”

(McNicholas, 2004, p.57)

2.1.3. *Sponsors as stakeholders*

Related to management, stakeholders theories have been flourishing since the first definition of the term “stakeholder” developed by Freeman in the 1980’s. Freeman thinks of a stakeholder as “any group or individual that can affect or be affected by the realisation of an organisation’s purpose.” (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, de Colle, 2010, p.26). He identifies primary and secondary stakeholders. Sponsors (partners) are considered as primary, along with suppliers, employees, customers and communities. This theory joins Reid & Arcodia’s argument (2002) which defines primary stakeholders as the ones on which the event’s viability relies. In comparison, Getz et al. (2010) believe that the sponsors are an integral part of the festival’s network.

The stakeholder theory developed by Freeman et al. is closely related to strategic management. It connects the process of value creation to a two-way

work between the organisation and its stakeholders. This theory is the first one mentioning the existence of a link between stakeholders (and thus, partners) and value creation.

“Capitalism is a system of social cooperation – a system of how we work together to create value for each other” (Freeman et al., 2010)

In the book *Stakeholder theory, the state of the art* by Freeman et al., Davis (2010, p.236) questions the legitimacy given to stakeholders and suggests that their opinion deserves consideration due to their special relationship with the festival. On the other hand, the book reports that Polansky, Suchard & Scott in 1999 argue that “firms should use stakeholder theory to integrate a wider set of relationships into a model of marketing interactions, resulting in more options for the firm and thus greater opportunities to create value” (Freeman et al., 2010, p.155).

However, Freeman et al (2010, p.9) underline that “it does imply that the interests of these groups are joint and that to create value, one must focus on how value gets created for each and every stakeholder”.

According to the main theories integrating sponsors as stakeholders, the relationship between the stakeholder and the organisation enables the start of the value co-creation process, supposing that both parties are interested in joint work. Therefore, those theories show once more that a monetary sponsorship deal provides only limited possibilities to create value.

As seen in this chapter, previous research has established several definition of sponsorships, mostly considered as a marketing tool. In the meantime, the festival field has evolved, following the natural evolution flow of our societies and leading to economic and social fluctuation. Yngfalk (2013, p.1163) explains that “the notion that value is co-created by market actors’ interactions is a fundamental concept within contemporary marketing research and practice.”

2.2. From sponsorship to partnership

In her research on arts sponsorships in Australia, McNicholas (2004) distinguishes three types of shifts. In the first case, sponsorship is seen as a business tool. This first “shift” can be linked to the idea of promoting a brand image promoted by Gwinner (1997, p.13) and echoes Wolton’s theory according to which the sociological objectives of image-building are related to business matters. In the second case, sponsorship, considered as a relationship, is a marketing deal between two entities. This phase can be clearly identified to sponsorship as a two-ways relationship promoted by Cornwell & Maignan (1998).

If the first two cases are similar to the traditional way of thinking arts sponsorship, the last shift considers it as a partnership. McNicholas underlines here the importance of merging core values. The basis of the agreement is both organisations’ missions, vision and values.

Table 2

The three approaches to arts sponsorship

Approach	1	2	3
Activity	Patronage	Marketing	Partnership
Focus	Giving	A deal	Image/brand
Basis	Donation	Business transaction	Mission and values

Source: Arts, Culture and Business: a relationship transformation, a nascent field, McNicholas, 2004, p. 59

McNicholas considers partnership as the ultimate level of agreement existing between arts and business. She also underlines that sponsorship “implies a transaction rather than a partnership” and explains that according to the level of the agreement, a different term should be used (2004, p.61). The evolution of the definition of sponsorship consideration is clearly identified by McNicholas; however, these eras can be considered more as a continuum than separate. Previous eras add to most recent ones. Following her idea, there is a clear differentiation made between sponsorship and partnership. However not

necessarily impossible to combine, the two terms relate to two different ways of thinking a supporting-supported parties relationship.

McNicholas' analysis of various types of corporate support to the arts brings us to the definition of an arts and business partnership by du Cros & Jolliffe (2014, p.12). The authors define the partnership as "more intermeshed, two-way, mutually involved and mutually affecting". Today's sponsorship can be considered as a mix of marketing, relationship, and partnership. From previous research, we can distinguish two types of business and festival cooperation: transactional sponsorship and relational partnership (McNicholas, 2004; Ryan & Fahy, 2003).

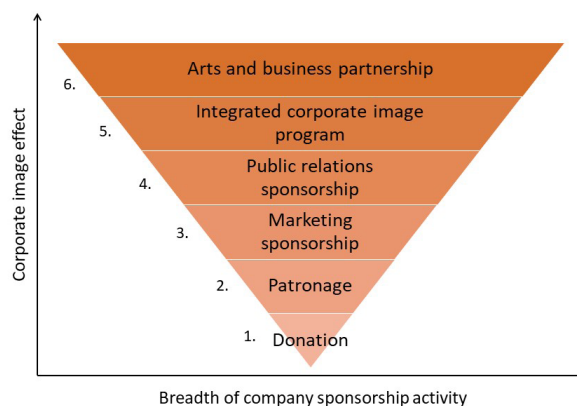


Figure 1. Image building and sponsorship
Source: Arts, Culture and Business: a relationship transformation, a nascent field, McNicholas, 2004, p. 59

According to the figure above, McNicholas argues that the type of relationship has a different level of impact on the corporate image among the targeted audiences. For example, a collaborative partnership between arts and business (6) will bring the strongest impact, whereas the impact of a project undertaken with transactional approach (3) is not that high. The chart also presents the breadth of a company's sponsorship activities, showing that a company engaging into arts sponsoring is the highest level of sponsorship activity. That said, it implies that it is also the most difficult level to build, as it requires a larger amount of resources.

2.2.1. *Keys reasons for developing a new approach*

The aloof exchange of visibility versus money is no longer relevant. In 2006, Farrelly et al (p.1023) explain that we should be “approaching sponsorship value in a more proactive and reciprocal way, with both parties collaboratively seeking activation opportunities and evolving as a part of “a natural process of advancement””.

In 2012, Lee & Goldblatt identify the current and future impacts of the economic recession on the festival field. This study is the first one to draw a clear picture of what is expected to happen in this field in the upcoming years. Far from being defeatist, the authors identify the future challenges and suggest strategies in order to overcome them. The state of mind is that everyone has to survive but time is not to survival, but to development (Lee & Goldblatt, 2012, p.138). In the current situation, successful sponsorship deals are critical in order to give the cultural organisation some space for development. Lee and Goldblatt (2012) argue that the decrease of corporate sponsorship is the main reason for the current struggles. To inspire a positive response to the critical situation, they encourage organisations to increase their marketing efforts and diversify their sponsor base (Lee & Goldblatt, 2012, p.143).

Jones (2012, p.9) believes that large events have failed to show that they are of wide public interest and work for improving the life of the communities. The author criticises the economical value given to sports events and to festivals, and calls for a return to the original idea of those gatherings, closer to being an emblem of their “host region and culture”. The development of cultural products and a connection with leisure and entertainment has also led to an increase competition between festivals, therefore requiring from the organisations a more original approach to stand out from their competitors (Australian Business Arts Foundation, 2001).

One more reason for developing a new approach is the lack of strategy related to the development of marketing events, such as sponsorship happenings, underlined by Crowther (2011). As “marketing events have longevity beyond

the actual event, seeking to propel the message to wider audiences and stakeholders through media and word of mouth.”, it is important to implement a strategy that will answer all the challenges related to the creation of such an event.

McNicholas and other researchers acknowledge the influential powers of external environment in the sponsorship approaches by both cultural organisations and companies. McNicholas (2004) assesses the development of a new approach in the field in Australia around 2000.

In 2001, a large study was conducted in Australia regarding the strategic direction of corporate sponsorships and the implications for the arts. This study explains that the costs of maintaining sponsorship are rising and that “many sponsors are investing in fewer, more focused, longer-term sponsorships” (Australian Business Arts Foundation, 2001). Because sponsors seek for fewer agreements and the relationship with them is from the beginning more personal, a step towards a more collaborative model is easily taken by both entities.

The Australian research explains that businesses are seeking for more in-depth connection with the targeted customers which brings them to re-think their sponsorship approach.

McNicholas (2004) explains that the use of sponsorship from business side has switch from promotional tool to corporate image building.

All in all, the circumstances leading to the evolution towards more collaborative and two-ways partnership relationships are both external and internal to the festival field. Managers should therefore question not only their understanding and adaptability towards the environment they are evolving in, but also seek for the changes required in their own functioning structure.

2.2.2. *Partnership as an exchange relationship*

According to the study of Getz et al. (2010), festivals do not consider sponsors as primary stakeholders, despite the fact that Freeman et al identifies them as such. The local authority (in case of city festivals) or the audience (private events) are considered as major (Freeman et al., 2010, p.42). On second line come the media, the artists and venues. Therefore, the level of dependence to each category of stakeholder varies from festival to another.

In the current popular model of sponsorship, the role and influential power of sponsors still varies a lot and fails to be fully acknowledged. As all stakeholders, partners have a certain influence on the strategic management process and the establishment of a strategic direction. From the start, research encourage a dynamic relationship between a firm and its stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2010). Despite those recommendations, Presenza & Iocca (2012) show in their analysis of the field practices that the relationship frequency of the festival with their stakeholders is not very high until a few weeks before the event. Festivals should work on options to increase the frequency of the exchanges with their stakeholders, resulting in increasing partners' trust and decreasing their feeling of being used only for their monetary input (Presenza & Iocca, 2012). Thus, the festival field has only been recently taking this advice into account, starting to co-create value with its audience, one of its primary stakeholders (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). The co-creation process should be systematised and opened-up as a model for relationship with other stakeholders, particularly with the ones providing resources for the event's development: partners (see also Olkkonen, 2006; Ryan and Fahy, 2012; Luonila, 2016).

Ferguson (2013) explains that various aspects of the relationship (trust, power and commitment) play a definite role in creating value. Daellenbach et al. (as cited in Ferguson, 2013, p.132) consider sponsorship as an exchange relationship, in which the social aspect of the relationship is considered as important as the assets it creates. In her case study of the Storsjöyran festival, Larson (2001) sets the relationship marketing theory in interaction with her

political market square theory (PSQ). Born from Hellgren and Sternberg (1995) project-network theory, Larson's PSQ understand festivals as based on interaction between actors, naturally involving conflicts. The projects are temporally limited with changing dynamics, enabling partial reconstruction from a project to another (Larson, 2001, p.120). For Larson, the actors work together despite the fact that their interest differs. Using different marketing strategies based on interests and a work-together mindset means more possibilities to reach new targets.

On the same direction, Ryan & Fahy (2012, p.1145) call for "acknowledgement of the singular role that the inter-organisational relationship between sponsor and property can have on sponsorship success." However, it is important to understand that even if the partnership project is based on the work of two individuals, the partnership itself links two organisations, beyond the level of individuals' personal commitment.

2.2.3. Towards a relational approach on partnerships

The point of view adopted in this thesis towards the new approach and its operating model is directly related to Day's statement (2008, p.107):

"the core principle of sponsorship is that it should be a partnership, an arrangement of mutual benefit. This tenet should certainly hold true for the sponsor and the sponsored party, but also for the participants, spectators and everyone else affected by the sponsorship."

Day (2008) explains that a good sponsorship must be cost efficient for both sides and lead to mutual benefit and maximisation of positive effects for all individuals somehow connected to the agreement. She also underlines the need for adjustment and continuous communication in a long-term relationship as both sides will have move on and updated their objectives.

The relational approach on partnerships is based on the idea that the partner becomes a co-producer, and that joint work of both entities leads to the co-creation of value for all stakeholders. An interviewee in Luonilas' article on

sponsorship uses for the first time the term “co-creators” to talk about partners (2016, p.268).

In their relationship and network approach of sponsorship network management theory, Ryan & Fahy (2012) believe innovation in a festival organisation would benefit from joint knowledge in order to create a joint added value. In this approach, the authors (2012, p.1145) consider sponsorship as an interaction in which a “unique opportunity arises in relationships between sponsors and sponsorees to generate new resources and capabilities through interaction”. The interaction is said to bring new resources and capabilities that benefit both organisations. The relationship is then the platform to reach that result.

2.3. Relational approach leads to value co-creation

2.3.1. Value co-creation

The relational partnership approach goes together with a focus on a value-creating system in which different economic actors work together to co-create value (Normann & Ramirez, 1993). Researchers such like Freeman (2010), Lund (2010) or Vargo & Lusch (2004) argue that value is co-created by stakeholders interaction and common integration of resources. The Service-Dominant Logic (Yngfalk, 2013) argues that value co-creation is directly influenced by a given context including the integration of skills, knowledge, and level of commitment to the collaboration. Research findings confirm the possibility for stakeholders, thus partners, to take part into value co-creation processes. Lund is one of the first to conduct, in 2010, a study about value-creation possibilities through sponsorship of a cultural organisation. Following a relational approach, he states that

“sponsorship has moved from a passive donor and recipient relationships to longer term partnerships, where value is co-created and the success is a consequence of efficient knowledge sharing.” (Lund, 2010, p.114)

According to Lund, a value-creation system is ingrained in each partnership relationship, and this system brings tangible and intangible benefits. The intangible benefits listed by Lund are : access to new markets, specialised skills, different marketing investments and possible connections to new sponsors (Lund, 2010, p.115). However, this list is not exhaustive, and value is perceived differently according to the person assessing it. Moreover, value cannot generally be associated to a specific happening, and can happen at any point of the relationship or of the production of the project (Farrelly, Quester & Burton, 2006, p.1017).

Co-created value can be here defined as any tangible or intangible asset born from the collaboration of organisations engaged in a two-way interactive relationship (see also Lund, 2010). The content created through a partnership project is one of the tangible benefits of the co-created value, meaning that it brings concrete results such as number of attendees or social media activation. On the other hand, each project and relationship also generates intangible value, more difficult to calculate. Intangible value can be considered as any benefit (short or long-term) having a positive consequence on one or more entities included in the relationship (e.g. partner, festival, audience, participants) (see also Farrelly, Quester & Burton, 2006).

All activities take place into the relationship, also called social system, which is integrated as part of a collective social context; the norms established by the stakeholders of the system influence the value-creation process (Edvardsson, Tronvoll & Gruber, 2011). Since part of the value is intangible and based on a relationship, researchers have added a new aspect to the return on investment (ROI) : Return on relationships (ROR), a concept developed by Gummesson regarding the customer relationship marketing. Gummesson (2004, p.141) describes ROR as “the long-term net financial outcome caused by the establishment and maintenance of individual customer relationships”. Applied to the festival field, this financial outcome is therefore caused by the establishment and maintenance of a sponsor-sponsored relationship.

Both the social exchange theory and the idea of return of relationships emphasise the idea that value comes from a relationship, and is therefore co-created by the efforts put on nurturing the relationship. Compared to a monetary-based approach in which value derives from a monetary transaction and can be clearly evaluated, the value deriving from a relational approach is based on people and therefore cannot be easily evaluated (intangible value).

According to previous literature, social exchanges determine the value deriving from the activities (Ferguson, 2013), which brings together both ideas that co-created value is born from social exchanges or from activities. The central points of Ferguson’s social exchange theory, and hence of the value creation process, are trust, commitment and power. Those components are influenced by the expectations, experiences, motivations and perception of each sides (Ferguson, 2013).

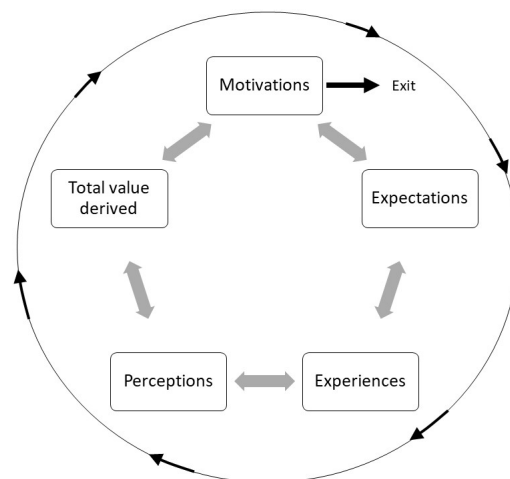


Figure 2. How value is derived from the partnership relationship
 Source: Understanding value from arts sponsorship: a social exchange theory perspective, Ferguson, 2013, p.143.

Practically, value is co-created by producing activities which follow the main orientation of the relationship, established by joining both sides values and objectives (Ferguson, 2013). Objectives and value may differ, but the direction should be the same in order for the message of each activity to be coherent with the one sent by each organisation.

The value of co-created projects can be evaluated based on the change of image of the company engaged in the project. Image enhancement plays a double role in the value co-creation process, as it takes place in the immediate time frame in which is conducted the co-produced activity but also on a longer term, when the result of this enhancement (intangible results) finally reaches the company (see also Farrelly, Quester & Burton, 2006).

2.3.2. *Consequences on partner-festival relationship*

From that point onwards arise ethical questions regarding the status and influential role of partners. Previous research has thoroughly explored the various stakeholders management strategies (Savage et al, 2001; Eriksson & Kushner, 1999; Reid & Arcodia, 2002, Getz & Andersson, 2008). Getz & Andersson (2007) are the first one to examine those theories in the festival context. In an article written together with Larson, they classify festivals' external stakeholders (2007) as:

- Facilitators - providing resources and support
- Regulators - public bodies
- Co-producers - other organisations and individuals participating
- Allies & collaborators - professional associations

With a switch towards more collaborative partnerships, partners status changes from simple facilitators to co-producers.

Freeman (2010, p.281-284) presents six principles of cooperation between an organisation and its primary stakeholders, thus partners. Freeman aims for those principles to “build a framework for our value creation and trade that infuses ethics at the foundations, respects the complexity of human beings, fosters innovation, ...” (2010, p.281). Those principles link the relational approach with stakeholders and value creation opportunities and enlightens us on the implications of the relational approach on partner-festival relationships. With the *principle of stakeholder cooperation*, Freeman discusses the social nature of value creation. He argues that value is created in a specific context and influenced by the contributors to the relationship. “Value, any value, is a

social phenomenon. We must be creative in a context, with the help of others and with others who value what we create”. He explains further that the social nature of businesses “puts the focus on human relationships and the shared sense-making that create value” (2010, p.282).

In a second principle, the *principle of stakeholder engagement*, he claims that involving stakeholders into a business activity is key to enhance the value creation process. Further, in the *principle of stakeholder responsibility*, he explains that morality is crucial in the process, and that businesses should take responsibilities for their actions.

In the *principle of complexity*, Freeman argues that “individuals are socially situated and their values are connected to their social context”. Thus, the social dynamics between individuals are a key factor of the success of a relationship leading to value creation.

Continuous creation is also one of the principle theorised by Freeman. He explains that working with other collaborators enhances the development of an organisation. Finally, the last principle of *emergent competition*, does not bring any important value to our case.

Freeman’s theory helps us to build a framework to understand the implications of the relational approach on the relationship between a partner and a festival. We can resume the implications to the following: a complexity of human-based relationship and potential for a long-term creation process if stakeholders engage themselves with responsibility. Both organisations depend on each other’s resources, which encourage commitment, bring more trust and openness to the relationship (Lund, 2010).

Finally, Ryan & Fahy (2012, p.1144) summarise that

“the long-term nature of relationships, as well as the degree of interdependence that can result over time, meant that a shift away from a transactional view of sponsorship was seen as important to help safeguard against the challenges faced by firms at this time”.

2.3.3. *Implications of the relational approach*

In the new approach to partnership, the background of the festival and its internal actors (staff, board) has a stronger importance than before. Both entities are ready to engage more deeply in a relationship if they feel the commitment from each other's. Success, failures or financial difficulties can influence the relationship with the partner. For this reason, it is important for both parts to keep an open relationship.

Lund (2010, p.119) underlines the fact that before entering the creation of a partnership based on relational approach, it is mandatory to perform more background work than previously: all organisations, whichever side they are in, must identify their audience segment(s) and target groups. Those demographics will be the main base to construct a strategy and convince corporations during a sales pitch.

To summarise, the new logic of partnership discussed in this thesis follows McNicholas' idea that a successful partnership is based on four factors (2004, p.63): a *strategy* matching of core ideas of each entity (mission, vision, core values), a *two-way interactive relationship* linked with a good communication, a *longevity of commitment* in order to create customised projects, and *creativity and customisation* of the activities which reinforces commitment and interaction.

The new approach on partnerships can be considered as what McNicholas calls a "dynamic complex adaptive relationship system" (2004, p.64), influenced by external factors such as stakeholders, environment and trends. Fostering innovation, enabling the creation of added content and value to an event, this new approach is subject to constant change, requiring constant readjustment of the overall strategy in which it is embedded. As festivals are characterised as project-based activities, a constant work on partnerships can take up quite a lot of resources. McNicholas' theory does not offer any answer to cope with the specificities of the festival field and we can question the certainty of it being beneficial.

By leading to more value-based partnerships built on artistic content, the relational approach results in more impactful projects. Alexander (2009, p.348) explains that partnership “has the ability to elevate a corporate brand above the advertising noise that exists in the consumer environment and connect the corporate brand to an event or entity with which a group of consumers identify.”

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter presents the method used to gather data for the study, as well as the reasons for selecting this method. As a follow-up, the data collection and data analysis methods will be introduced. Finally, the research process is critically discussed and limits are given.

3.1. Qualitative research

A suitable research method enables the researcher to gain information to answer the main research question of the study. According to Silverman

“If you are concerned with exploring people’s life histories or everyday behaviour, then qualitative methods may be favoured”
(Silverman, 2001, p.25)

As the research question of this study aims to understand the development from transactional sponsorship to relational partnership, meaning a social phenomena, I choose to make this study a qualitative one.

Learning from strangers is a powerful handbook about conducting qualitative studies, published by Robert Weiss in 1994. This book served as a base for the construction of the methodology used in this research, and is acknowledged by the Harvard Education Review (1994) as “a useful and informative beginner-level book for anyone interested in the basics of how to conduct qualitative research”.

Many different definitions of qualitative study are available. Despite slight differences, they all emphasise that the method is used to study a phenomena, and underline the importance of an interpretive approach when analysing the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Van Maanen, 1979). Silverman (2000) introduces four categories of qualitative research types, based on Gubrium & Holstein (as cited in Silverman, 2000) ideas: naturalism, ethnomethodology, emotionalism and postmodernism. On the other hand, I feel more connected with Gephart (2004, p.457), who offers an interpretive approach : “the goal of

interpretive research is to understand the actual production of meanings and concepts used by social actors in real settings”.

By opting for an interpretive perspective, I wish to emphasise the importance of two aspects of this research: the analysis of current trends and the understanding of a phenomena in a specific social context (Gephart, 2004).

Once the decision is made to research the topic following a qualitative frame, various sub-methods are available for researcher to gather and analysis data (Silverman, 2000). In this thesis, gathering data means gathering practical information, opinions and documents which will serve as a base for studying the evolution of the partnership approach towards a new dominant logic, leading to the co-creation of value and content.

3.2. Qualitative interview study

As the aim is to assess and evaluate the development between two approaches of partnership, field and practical information are the most reliable sources of knowledge concerning this topic. Accordingly, the interview research method was chosen, as it is a “more efficient and concentrated method of gathering data” (Bogner, 2009, p.2). According to Myers (2009, p.121) “interviews allow us to gather rich data from people in various roles and situations.”

Semi-structured interviews are considered by Bogner (2009, p.31) as “open interview based on a topic guide” and “should be based on general topics but avoid closed questions and a prefixed guideline”. A interview guide was established, containing topics, main questions related to topics, and underlying goals of what to learn. As I realised I also have a lot of assumptions on the topic, I decided to include them in the interview guide, in order to have the mean to control them. The interview topics stayed the same for all interviews, but questions varied based on the respondent.

Weiss (1994, p.3) suggests that “interviews that sacrifice uniformity of questioning to achieve fuller development of information are properly called

qualitative, and a study based on such interviews, a qualitative interview study”. Following this idea, a qualitative interview study will enable the researcher to learn as much as he can about a specific topic, while developing a multiple perspective frame and leaving space for a holistic description of the topic (Weiss, 1994, p.9). Qualitative interviewing aims to bring the researcher from “studying concrete realities” to “rendering a conceptual understanding of them” (Charmaz, *Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis* in Holstein & Gubrium, 2002).

When constructing the methodology, case studies were for a long time the chosen methodology. However, they would have reduced the study to a detailed observation of a few specific partnerships projects and using qualitative interview as main methodology makes it possible to draw a bigger picture of the opinion of field’s experts on the topic.

The way of making qualitative interview study does not differ from any other research method, as it includes steps such as deciding on the interview sample, collect data, and finally analyse it (Weiss, 1994, p.14). However, qualitative interview itself differs from other interview type as the respondents are considered as able to bring a new understanding to the research problem (Warren, 2002). According to Rubin & Rubin (1995), mains questions should be guiding the interview, supported by follow-up questions. Warren (2002) also underlines the importance for the researcher to stay attentive, in order to identify the various meanings of the answers.

3.2.1. *Experts as informants*

Weiss argues that in the case we wish to study the development of a certain field, the best way is to “interview people who are especially knowledgeable or experienced” but also to include “as respondents people who view our topic from different perspectives or know about different aspects of it” (Weiss, 1994, p.17). For this reason, the study was oriented towards experts interviews. The term *expert* is here used as referring to people who are, for a specific

reason, considered as such in the festival field, via their professional situation or their knowledge. According to Bogner (2009, p.18), “who is identified as expert and who not depends on the researcher’s judgement”. In this thesis, the researcher’s judgement was developed based on a detailed review of the main organisations structuring the festival field in the studied social context. In order to decide who was an expert or who was not, I first reviewed the individuals undertaking actions towards making collaborative partnerships. Those individuals are festival managers, producers, brand managers. Added to those, I also reviewed individuals collaborating with or supporting festivals in their development. From those, I decide that experts are people whose knowledge is valuable in the sense that it will encourage festival organisations to move forward adopting a more relational approach to partnerships.

Experts interview research method, developed since 1990’s, is described by Bogner (2009, p.17) as a “method of qualitative empirical research, designed to explore expert knowledge”. He distinguishes three types of expert interviews. The first one, called exploratory, is made to “give the researcher a clearer idea of the problem” under investigation. The second type, systematising interview, is made to learn about knowledge exclusively owned by the respondent. Finally, theory generating interview’s aim is to build theories out the interpretation of the respondent’s answer (Bogner, 2009, p.46).

Throughout the discussions with experts, I wish to assess the evolution from partnership as a marketing exchange to partnership as a collaboration leading to co-created value and content. From Bogner’s theories, I was able to draw my own research interview type, a mix of an exploratory and systematising interview. From a researcher’s point of view, it seems that all interviews are exploratory, as getting “a clearer idea of the problem” is exactly the aim of a qualitative study. This approach can be complemented with Gephart’s (2004) interpretive approach suggested earlier, as he emphasises the importance of a defined social context. Therefore, this thesis is considered as a qualitative interview study with an interpretive approach.

To summarise, this mix type appeared to be the best choice because the interviews were used to explore a relatively new topic, and because respondents themselves were used as a side-approach to a database otherwise hard to reach. Moreover, as many details of sponsorship deals are confidential and access to those documents is prohibited, those interviews were intended to work as a work-around to gain knowledge of those facts.

Expert interviews were conducted with managers from different fields. Bogner (2009) suggest that managers should be confronted with powerful questions already at the opening of the interview. He also underlines that the researcher must be ready for the interview to shift into a discussion (Bogner, 2009, p.208). It is actually what I am aiming at when interviewing experts: creating a discussion. As a positive result, I expected to raise questions into the interviewees' minds.

Bogner (2009, p.19) believes that

“in scientific research an individual is addressed as an expert because the researcher assumes – for whatever reason – that she or he has knowledge, which she or he may not necessarily possess alone, but which is not accessible to anybody in the field of action under study.”

Following his I decided to narrow down my interview sample even more, and to interview people who have knowledge which should be spread out in the festival field. Around this idea, the aim of the research is also to create a handbook of knowledge about co-created partnerships projects, which can be used as an introduction to whomever wishes to undertake such projects. Thanks to a broad range of interviewees, this research is able to build a solid informational review of the current most effective way of building durable partnerships. In order to provide a broader understanding of the phenomenon, I also decided, in addition to experts from Finland, to interview other international experts with a significant knowledge and experience on the topic.

Many of the interviewees in this study are considered in their field as opinion leaders. Therefore, those interviews also give the researcher the opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of the topic straight to opinion leaders.

Moreover, interviewing opinion leaders also provide this study a stronger informational base, as opinion leaders are also representants of the field and the general opinion on a certain topic.

To summarise, this thesis follows Gläser and Laudel's idea that

“we define “experts” as people who possess special knowledge of a social phenomenon which the interviewer is interested in, and expert interviews as a specific method for collecting data about this social phenomenon.”

(Gläser & Laudel, *On interviewing “good” and “bad” experts* in Bogner's *Interviewing experts*, 2009, p.117)

3.3. Data collection

The data collected in this study comes from three main sources: festival organisations, private corporations in a partnership relationship with a festival, and organisations which are working closely on developing the festival field.

The primary data consist of seven semi-structured interviews conducted in since 2013. The interviews, all recorded and conducted face to face in Helsinki and Espoo, apart from one, which was conducted by email. The length of the interviews last from 45 to 80 minutes. Interviewees were selected based on their position as experts of the festival field, on their availability and eagerness to participate to the study. The interview were divided in three themes:

- The partner-festival relationship
- The partnership strategy
- The involvement of the partner in the festival's strategy

Table 3

Summary of the Research Data (primary)

Interviewee	Title	Organisation	Field	Country
Expert 1	Project Manager	Pink Eminence	Festival field expert	Finland
Expert 2	Executive Director	Finland Festivals	Festival field expert	Finland
Expert 3	CEO	Sponsorointi & Tapahtumama- kkinointi ry	Festival field expert	Finland
Festival Manager 1	Managing Director	Edinburgh Fringe	Festival	United Kingdom
Festival Manager 2	Manager	World Village Festival / Fingo ry	Festival	Finland
Festival Manager 3	Managing Director	Premiers Plans European First Film Festival	Festival	France
Business Partner 1	Brand Manager	International FMCG Company	Partner	Nordics

An additional data consisting of the researcher's review of partnerships projects is used to put in light and analyse the interviews, and serves as a support to the research topic. Secondary data also consist of other various documents related to partnership and sponsorship deals in festivals. This data was gathered and analysed with the authorisation of the author(s) and serves as a working base for the researcher to assess the current state of partnerships.

Table 4

Summary of Research Data (Secondary)

Type of Data	Details on the Data	Time Period
Field observations	World Village Festival, Flow Festival, Helsinki International Film Festival, Savonlinna Opera Festival, Espoo Ciné Film Festival, Premiers Plans European First Film Festival,	2009 - 2018
Documents	Partnerships, financial and strategy reports of festivals, web pages of the festivals, partnership brochures of World Village Festival, Espoo Ciné, Premiers Plans,	2010-2019
Official Documents	Press releases, statistics and studies by Finland Festivals; strategy and policy documents by Finnish and French legislation	2010 - 2019
Press articles	About partnership projects	2013-2018

3.4. Data analysis

To facilitate the analysis process, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data was analysed through the coding-categorisation-thematisation process. The first step was to develop codes to separate units of relevant parts of the data. The data was then sorted out via a categorisation process, meaning identifying similarities and differences within the codes.

This process enables to identify key themes within the categories. The themes provide an understanding of all the aspects of the phenomenon described in the theoretical framework part, meaning a evolution from transactional sponsorship to relational partnership, leading to the development of value co-creation processes.

The analysis would focus on the content of the interview, leaving aside other approaches. This choice was made in correlation with the research problem, as the researcher wishes to understand a social phenomena (Gläser & Laudel, *On interviewing “good” and “bad” experts in Bogner’s Interviewing experts*, 2009). Moreover, choosing another kind of analysis approach would not benefit the study, as the respondent were chosen for their professional background and not for their personality.

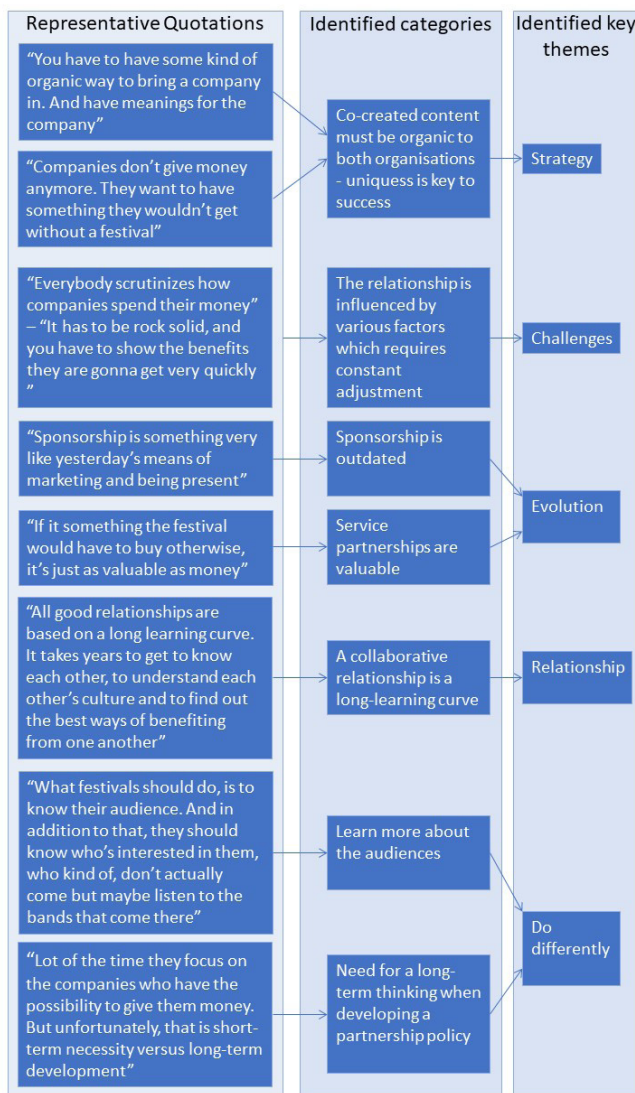


Figure 3.
Examples of the categorisation of research data

3.5. Critical reflections on the research process

The research process gains validity thanks to the use of the triangulation method. The triangulation idea is used by Stake (1995) to study the research question from different angles and types of data, and was adapted to the data analysis. Indeed, I decided to interview experts from different fields and countries, therefore providing various perspective on the researched phenomenon.

However, only seven interviews were conducted, which can question the reliability of the study. Have I had the opportunity, I believe further interviews might have developed the findings of the study. On the other hand, most of the interviewees in this study share the same opinion on key themes, and it is therefore unlikely that further interviews of experts would have drastically changed the main empirical findings. Rather, it would have brought some nuances to it.

Further, the interviews were conducted over the course of five years, which means that my interpretation of the experts' words has evolved over time and therefore the uniformity of the analysis of the empirical data can be questioned.

On the question of objectivity, Holstein & Gubrium (as cited in Silverman 2000) argue that interviews can lead to misunderstanding and that the person should present clear questions and ideas in order to avoid those as much as possible.

Indeed, a qualitative study is based on words, which can be misinterpreted, mischosen, or badly translated. Many language issues can arise from the whole research process. When choosing to conduct face-to-face interviews, it was a risk to take that respondents would have less occasions to change the use of a certain word, whereas by email, editing answers is really easy. Moreover, English was neither the researcher's neither the interview respondents' mother tongue. On the positive side, using English created a bridge between the respondents and the researcher.

A strong interference of the social context is also to underline. The study was conducted in a specific social context, festivals, and a strong influence of this context leads to more subjective statements. My choice of interviewing experts from different countries was also motivated by the possibility to deal with the question of transferability of the research topic. Transferability refers to the applicability potential of the main findings can to other contexts.

I also believe that my own biased point of view on the studied topic can influence the interpretation of the collected data. I have taken this fact into account when developing the research methodology in order to face credibility challenges.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the fact that this study does not constitute in any case an exhaustive study of the relational partnership approach in the festival field.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings obtained through the analysis of the expert interviews.

Each sub-chapter presents an aspect of the phenomenon. The first sub-chapter discusses experts' comments on the external and internal factors influencing the new phenomenon. The second sub-chapter puts in relation the value co-creation process with the relational approach and discuss the viability of the transactional approach. The third sub-chapter introduces the specificities of the social dynamics of the phenomenon. Finally, the strategy required to create a partnership relationship built to capture value co-creation is reviewed in details in the last part of the analysis.

4.1. Influential factors on value co-creation

All experts interviewed provided important viewpoints regarding external (outside the festival field) and internal (inside the festival field) factors influencing the success of a partnership project. Below are first presented external factors and their potential influence on partnerships. Secondly are presented internal factors.

4.1.1. The big bad world

In the 20th century, a new aspect of culture, linked to entertainment, appears in the well-off society. Nowadays, we observe a phenomenon where culture is not as the center of today's modern societies but still "makes the societies stronger" (Festival Manager 1). As Festival Manager 1 explains: "when business goes bad and the oil money and jobs linked to it begins to disappear, people turn to culture". Clearly, the societal context has a major influence on the importance given to culture, and therefore to businesses' keenness onto cooperating with arts and cultural organisations.

With the difficult economic context, corporations tend to become the “big evil”, and they also face a lack of monetary resources, which means that “everybody scrutinises how they spend their money”, explains Expert 1.

“In London, after the financial crash, financial institutions couldn’t allow anymore those big sponsorships because everyone hated them. What they needed more was to regain trust.” - Festival Manager 1

The economical and societal context influences the sponsors’ needs, and the focus of the partnership project. The lack of cash and the context also allows for less risk-taking, meaning that companies need to be presented with “rock solid” ideas, “showing the benefits they will get very quickly” (Expert 1). Business Partner 1 reminds that “when you do something, it means you cut something else from your plan”.

Those factors can threaten the establishment of a healthy, dynamic relationship between the partner and the festival. In this context, festivals need to understand the importance of being innovative and have the capacity to assess and answer the problems of their partners. This also requires a more personal relationship, far from seeing sponsor as simple facilitator (Getz, Andersson & Larson, 2007).

“There is a need, corporations, institutions, other organisations: they have a problem and they need to solve it.” - Expert 1

According to Expert 1, firms often do not have the resources to co-create content, seen as too big of a project. Many interviewees also discuss the current issue that “there still exists a lot of partners that maybe cannot see their objectives that clearly themselves either” (Festival Manager 2). Expert 1 adds that “any kind of concept, anything they don’t realise they need, is very difficult to sell”.

Festival Manager 2 explains that the lack of resources from both sides influences the quality of the festival-partner relationship: “of course the lack of resources make the routine and how it really goes in a bit different way”. The lack of resources concerns both business and festival field.

4.1.2. *How about us?*

All interviewees pointed out the urgent need for a change of mindset also from the festival side. Expert 2 emphasises for example that festivals have always been considered as project-based enterprises, and should make themselves recognised as institutions.

“Festival used to be treated as some kind of nice projects, but for example Savonlinna Opera Festival is not really a project. It’s not going to go away. [...]

So, in a way, it is an institution, and it should be treated as such.”

- Expert 2

Festival Manager 3 explains that it is all about educating public and private bodies, explaining them the specificities of the festival field. Festival Manager 2 is also of the same opinion, stating that “there is still a lot of work to do on that”, referring to festivals being considered as project-based entities. From the business angle, Business Partner 1 agrees and points out that festival managers should first educate their circles and the people they are reaching out to about what festivals are all about and that

“Companies are not event specialists. [...] Do not assume people know much about the events or organising them. Assume they don’t know anything.”

- Business Partner 1

Expert 2 also underlines that festival managers are “the most optimistic and dynamic people I had ever met” - but that they should be more ambitious and go out more. “They are a bit incapable, in terms of goals, of what they want to achieve [...] plenty of festivals should be more ambitious”, he says. Expert 1 also underlines that “festivals have the mindset of doing things they way they have always been done”.

The festival field is in continuous evolution. Festivals need to be present and active also in the international scene, but the “lack of resources” makes them

“do the same every year” (Expert 2) and stay on a safe zone, draining all the benefits and ending up with a model which is no longer successful. Business Partner 1 thinks that this happens “because it’s the easy way. Nobody has enough time, so when one has been doing this for many years and know exactly what it costs, it’s easy to do it again. [...] But it is not a good explanation”.

This also concerns the audience renewal: each festival should focus on creating content to attract new audiences, as audience development is a key requirement of a successful event.

Expert 2 points out that doing visibility sponsorship (note of the author: transactional sponsorship) is not professional and that “there is a danger it will actually destroy the image of the festival.”. However, he also acknowledges that the actual context is difficult to work with and festivals need cash income. Business Partner 1 agrees by underlying the lack of credibility of sponsorship deals.

“You get a bit of money, and for small festivals, it’s a big amount of money, you can do something with it. But it doesn’t look very good, it doesn’t look very professional.” - Expert 2

The festival field has evolved and simple transactional sponsorship is outdated: using only this model do not promote the actors of the field as professionals as they are not following up on the new trends and on-going approaches in their field.

“If you don’t go out, if you don’t meet people, if you don’t see what’s going on in other parts of the world, they don’t really have an idea of what to do together with others. “ - Expert 2

The relational approach on partnership is the solution, but threatens the lack of immediate monetary input, which leads us to another critical point underlined by Experts 1 and 2. According to both, most festivals are too focused on short-term monetary relief and should adopt a more global and long-term mindset, which requires taking risks. Expert 2 states that “because they need money,

definitely. If you have money, you can have one more concert. But there is no value”. Festival Manager 1 is also of the opinion that despite how challenging it is, events need to think more long-term, “lot of the time they focus on the companies who have the possibility to give them money. But unfortunately, that is short-term necessity versus long-term development”, he says.

The experts acknowledge that the relational approach is the best approach on partnerships and currently the only way to create value. Unfortunately, it seems that in the current context festivals are more focused on their desperate need for monetary input than on long-term development. They lack to see how adopting a more relational approach combined with long-term mindset would benefit them just how they lack to see the importance of in-kind partnerships.

“Festivals are so desperate for money than they overlook the opportunity”

- Festival Manager 1

Festival Manager 1 emphasises that “in-kind partnerships are usually more powerful on long-term” and that festivals should “use the resources they are offered to create something really strong” with its partners. Experts 1 and 2 are of the same opinion than Festival Manager 1, with Expert 1 stating that “if it’s something that the festival would have to buy otherwise, it’s just as valuable as money”.

As a conclusion, some interviewees point out that festivals should take more risks and seek for long-term development based on an interactive relationship with their partners. However, we have to underline that this approach would threaten the short-term survival of the event as they also need monetary input. Therefore, transactional and relational approaches should be combined into a healthy, long-term oriented partnership policy.

4.2. Relational approach to partnerships : the way to value co-creation

Whether it is the experts interviewed in this thesis or the latest research on partnerships, all have established that a partner-festival relationship simply

based on a monetary transaction does not bring any value to the event's stakeholders.

4.2.1. Co-create together to be meaningful

We have already acknowledged that festivals really need to take into account and adapt to the context in which they are evolving. Expert 1 states that in the current situation, the only way to success is to

“have a viable interface between the company and the festival. You need to create something together in order to be anyway meaningful”

- Expert 1

By “create together” and “viable interface” we understand that there is a need for a common space where both parties are equal and can work together. The relationship is this interface, where both parties meet, giving space to co-creation.

But what is really this “something meaningful”? All the terms related to the outcomes of the partnerships, such as “value” or “assets” or “interface” are not really concrete, which does not help to understand the impact a successfully produced partnership project can have on both short and long-term. Something meaningful is a new item, value or asset, added to the festival identity and which reaches your primary stakeholders: the target audiences or/and the performers. Festival Manager 1 reminds us that

“Always always always, your primary focus has to be the audience, and the performers. They should always be your primary focus, never the board, nore the sponsors”- Festival Manager 1

“Something meaningful” benefits and enriches the experience of the primary stakeholders.

Business Partner 1 believes that a partnership is about “coming with different backgrounds but having a similar goal that you are trying to work towards together”. However, it seems that the accomplishment of individual objectives (proper to one organisation) still prevail over the creation and accomplishment of shared objectives. According to Festival Manager 2, common objectives are used only in a restricted amount of cases. Both entities therefore work together to satisfy individual objectives. Festival Manager 2 also admits the limit of individual objectives in partnership process, “of course we have objectives, some we do together, but there is still quite much work to do on that”, she says. Business Partner 1 argues that shared objectives are not a necessity, but that both parties should have a similar direction. She believes that “you can take different roads to reach the same destination”.

Should a strategy, or common vision, be created for each partnership relationship? Are shared objectives a key to value co-creation in partnerships in the festival field?

4.2.2. On the viability of the transactional approach

The role of transactional approach in the current context was discussed with each interviewee. This section summarises their views on strictly monetary-based partnership relationship and its viability nowadays and in the future. Business Partner 1, Expert 3 and all festival managers still believe the approach is still suitable in specific cases. However, Expert 1 and 2 underline the limits of this approach.

“It’s absolutely getting more collaborative. The logo is not enough anymore, and it’s totally okay”, says Expert 3. Contrary to other interviewees, he still thinks that “it’s wrong to say it’s a wrong kind of sponsorship, but it all comes down to the kind of target you have”, meaning that both transactional sponsorship and relational partnership are valid approaches, depending on each individual case. However, he states that a simple exchanging of money-visibility is done only when “someone needs money and the other needs exposure” which means

that there is no long-term value in it.

Expert 3 states that a simple monetary-based transaction is suitable if the partner and festival have identified their need as a simple exposure-cash input. Festival Manager 2 believes that people “do not get really any value out of it [doing transactional relationship]” but also underlines the need for festivals to “pay the bills” and connects this approach to a sales work. Festival Manager 2 gives an example of simple exposure-money partnership bringing cash to the festival

“We sell spaces in the festival magazine, for our screens”

- Festival Manager 2

Understandably, the relational approach has not decreased the validity of the transactional one. However, all interviewees acknowledge that sponsorship does not bring any value to any entity and feeds only short-term needs. On the other hand, the relational approach is more long-term and value-focused and follows the direction of the brands. The validity of the transactional approach should also be questioned by underlying the fact that a company’s exposure does not have a strong impact of the audiences. Trends have shown that audiences connect nowadays more to brands via brand experience (Harris, 2017; Fransen, 2013; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2013). Therefore, even if transactional approach can be sometimes still be valid, it is not enough to have a strong impact on targeted stakeholders.

Expert 1 states that sponsorship is “something very like yesterday’s means of marketing and being present” and Business Partner 1 that “it is a bit outdated. It sounds very one-dimensional”. Expert 2 adds that doing solely sponsorship does not look professional. Following Expert 1’s opinion, we can agree that the transactional approach, or sponsorship, is still part of the marketing field when on the other hand, a more relational approach makes a clear distinction between partnerships and marketing. Partnerships can however be used to serve marketing purposes but cannot be as themselves part of a marketing strategy.

All in all, we can conclude that transactional approach can still be used in the festival context, but that it does not have the value that relational approach can offer. Exposure does not reach primary targets on the deeper level, and does not provide an experience. It also has no connection with the brand's purpose. Festival Manager 2 explains very well the problem faced by the challenge of making partnerships: it is time-consuming, compared to purchasing advert spaces from big medias.

“Suddenly, if you do a cultural sponsorship [partnership], you sit at 2-5 meetings, you need to think about strategies, get involved in a lot of not-so-clear processes, so it takes a lot of more for people, more than making an advertisement. Because everybody is running like crazy these days, so why do it?”

- Festival Manager 2

The original assumption of this research is that sponsorship was not a valid concept anymore, and that partnership is the rightful approach. However, throughout the discussions with the experts, we understand that we cannot consider the phenomenon as a switch but more an evolution towards an approach more suitable to the current context.

4.2.3. *The way to value co-creation*

So far, we have understood that even though a simple transactional relationship can still be purposeful in certain cases, a relational approach to partnerships is the only way to bring co-created value that will benefit both the festival and its partner. Business Partner 1 links co-create value with brand identities and purposes. She reminds that “if you treat your partners only as a source of money, you have already started the relationship in the wrong way”.

The following drawings by Expert 1 represents both approaches putting the focus on the primary stakeholders: the audience.

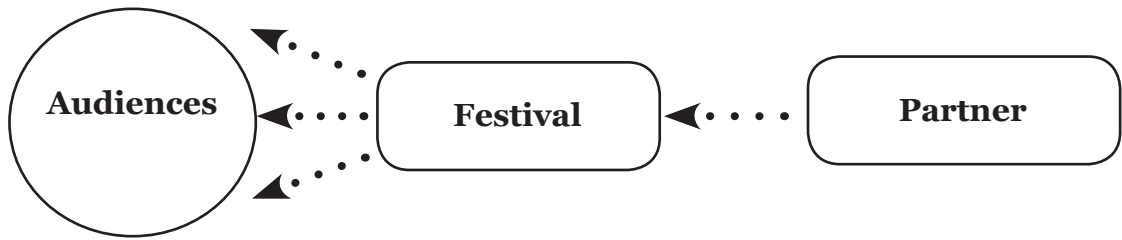


Figure 4. «Money goes from the company to the festival, and it stops there, or just very little things go out» - Expert 1

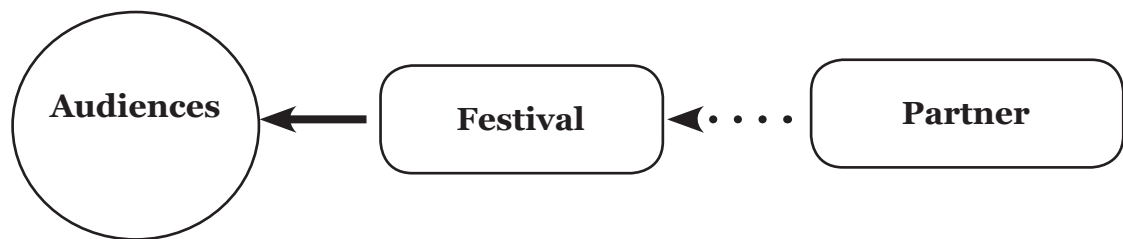


Figure 5. «Now, it should be that the company's message, the most engaging, reaches everybody in the audience in a sort of organic way, because it just cannot be commercial anymore» - Expert 1

According to the first drawing, a transactional approach uses the festival as a media and the partners' message does not reach the audience in an impactful way. On the other hand, in the second drawing, the message sent to the audience is a joint work co-created from both identities and its content is organic to the relationship. This more organic way to reach out to the audiences represents a short-term that benefit both sides tend to put aside: it enables a corporation to stand out from its competitors in a strong and durable way. The impact on the audiences resulting from co-created content is way more personal and unique, which means that even if a competitor starts doing partnership with another festival, the content, outcomes and impact will still differ. The competitive advantage brought by partnerships is a very good selling point to potential partners.

For that reason, Festival Manager 3 underlines the importance of having

multiple dimensions of festival content (artistic, social, cultural, educational etc.). He argues that it is the way to dialogue with potential partners. Premiers Plans European First Film Festival is well-known for its various content adapted for each audience segments, loyal or not. It hosts for example numerous workshops for children of all ages, adults, cinema young professionals, etc.

“All the artistic, cultural, educational and social fields explored by the festival can make sense to companies which are today seeking for a strong and unique image, differentiating from competition”

Festival Manager 3

According to Festival Manager 2, “it is not about the organisation but about the people in the process, which is very important”. Human interaction is what brings value to the relationship. Therefore, we can state that co-created value is relationship based. A relationship being constant learning, it requires time and resources to really know the person you are working with. In this matter, the co-creation process is key, as exchanging ideas, building common objectives and creating innovation together nurtures the relationship. An interactive relationship starts a co-creation process which brings innovation, leading to value.

4.3. Social dynamics of value co-creation

Ferguson’s social exchange theory (2013) focuses on how the actual relationship and interaction between entities creates value. According to her, social exchanges determine the value. For this reason, the analysis of the experts’ interviews was here done with an angle related to the partner-festival relationship and its specificities. In this subchapter, we explore the social dynamics inherent to value co-creation.

4.3.1. *“It’s always about people”*

“It is not about the organisation but about the people in the process”

- Festival Manager 2

Previously underlining the importance of human interaction in partnerships, Festival Manager 2 argues that a relationship is based on a exchange of ideas and on trust. She is also the only one emphasising the importance of creativity in the relationship process. However, as in any relationship trust between two parties takes time to develop.

Expert 1 argues that

“All good relationships are based on a long-learning curve. It takes years to get to know each other, to understand each other’s culture and to find out the best ways of benefiting from one another. I think it goes with the festival genre as well. It takes time and has to do with the people, it requires people who are committed for the cooperation”.

It is therefore difficult to evaluate the potential benefits of a relationship over such a long process.

From the start, interviewees have agreed that a good relationship is about people, which means that the people committed to the partnership are more likely to understand the characteristics inherent to each case. Indeed, For example, the consistency of the relationship between Helsingin Sanomat (Finland’s main newspaper) and Helsinki Festival is, according to Expert 1, a great example of what can be achieved together on the long-term in terms of setting up a strategy and steps. Thanks to a long time working together, the two entities have reach the point of climax where the benefits of their joint work show more and more strongly and benefit a larger circle of audiences every year. In short, it takes years to find the optimum level of the relationship, by getting to know the people you work with and the organisations’ cultures, as well as find the best ways for collaboration.

We understand here that personal commitment is key to a successful relationship. Of course, Expert 3 reminds us that it varies according to people, but that co-created content is key because

“If they are putting efforts themselves, personal efforts, they are way much happier about the cooperation, compared to the situation where they just have to wait for the results and do nothing by themselves.” - Expert 3

More than people, it is about shared values which are used, according to Festival Manager 2, as a base for dialogue. Business Partner 1 also emphasises the importance of a similar purpose. However, as we already mentioned in the subchapter regarding co-creation as a way to be meaningful, Festival Manager 2 states that individual objectives still prevail. We notice here the paradox of a festival field which is willing to change its approach but is not ready to take complete risks, with an approach “about people” where still prevail individual objectives.

We asked each interviewee to define what would be a good partner-festival relationship. Expert 2 states the uniqueness of the value created “a good relationship is when both sides feel that they get something they wouldn’t get without the other” whereas Expert 3 believes that a relationship is successful “when the partner is active, demanding and creative, and uses the agreement between both parties at his best”. The point of view of Festival Manager 1 is close to Expert 3’s, and should be used as a red line to build festival’s partnership policy:

“The ideal relationship is where you become really important to the business because you are solving their problem and helping them in an incredibly valuable way, whatever that might be. Instead of you going to beg them every year, it’s the other way around, where the business is keen into signing up a long-term contract. That’s when they understand the significance of your partnership for their future.”

Festival Manager 1

Business Partner 1 believes that a good relationship “starts with a genuine passion for something similar, so that both parties see the value the other one can bring”.

The social dynamics between people are a key element of the success of a partnership, but this can easily be threatened if one of the actors leave the company. There is then an inherent threat in each relationship, which is why there always should be more than one person on each side to take part in the projects.

4.3.2. Status of the partners

As more collaborative, in-depth and content driven partnerships are on the rise (and it is a good thing!) it is legitimate to wonder what is really nowadays the status of partners. What influential powers do they have? To which extent are their ideas taken into account? Should they have a place as members of the board?

At World Village Festival, partners are considered as “part of the team” (Festival Manager 2). They can suggest content but at the end, the festival has the final word and decision-making power. Festival Manager 3 reminds us that partners are not just funders but considered as actors and contributors of the festival project. At Premiers Plans, partners co-create content for the core programme of the event, which means that the content renewal circle is high, and avoid the risk of staying in the same model forever. Festival Manager 3 thinks that some limits and guidelines should be set for the contribution process: “contributors does not mean decision-makers”. To limit the contributors’ influence while not limiting the development of the festival-partner relationship, he explains that the co-construction of joint actions take into account both entities constraints, wishes and objectives. Therefore, in this relationship, the status of the partners is recognised as main stakeholders of the festivals, and joint actions and objectives are built using both sides individual objectives.

The question of partners as board members is the only point where all interviewed experts expressed very diverse opinions. Festival Manager 3, just like Expert 2, believes that the event should stay independent. Partners are collaborators who are involved by offering their expertise, competences, sharing ambition and interests with the event. He underlines the importance of the co-construction co-evaluation process, which is a good way for partners to be able to offer concrete improvement suggestions to the festival. On the other hand, Expert 1 believes that a diverse board is a strong board, and that the capacities of the board and its members should be fully exploited. On the same level, Business Partner 1 argues that this is a possibility only in case of matching core values and mission.

For Festival Manager 1, it is not so much for the influential power aspect of the partners, but for the the social one. He believes a board should be independent but suggests that events could consider putting together a development board, which includes key partners and can suggest improvement for the event but do not hold any decision-making power.

“Some festivals also put people on the board so that their sponsorship is guaranteed. But then you are showing them you are relying on them. And then you’ll end up focusing on pleasing them” - Festival Manager 1

Festival Manager 1 describes as an “unhealthy relationship” a situation in which festivals take partners on the board because it is “kind of an unwritten rule, “if you’re on the board then your company should sponsor us”” and summarises the debate by stating that

“Board members have to be concerned primarily with the health of the festival. If you are a sponsor, you should be concerned primarily with the strength of the partnership and when those two things become blurred, it ends awkwardly.” - Festival Manager 1

For example, Savonlinna Opera Festival currently has a board in which are sitting many main partners inc. the Chairman of Nokia’s board, the Head of

Communications and Corporate Responsibility at Finnair, or still the Chairman of KPMG Finland's board (Savonlinna Opera Festival website, 2018).

Festival Manager 2 believes that that if partners are part of the board it should be because of a strong relationship, not for their partner title. For Expert 2, being part of the board is only for individuals who are ready to bring their expertise and skills, that can have added value and participate in improving the festival. However, he also states that the board, whether or not it includes the partners, should not have a word to say about the artistic matters, not to threaten the artistic integrity.

Festival Manager 3 and Expert 2 argue that the competencies of business-oriented people are very valuable for festival to grow and understand the context in which they evolve, and that managers should take advantage of that. Being surrounded by business people has a potential positive impact.

“Quite often business people are very professional people in terms of building strategies, or think about future”

- Expert 2

Expert 1 believes that partners can potentially have a role in the strategy of the event if the relationship has been fruitful for a very long time.

4.3.3. Festival positioning towards partnerships

From our discussions with the experts, we can clearly identify that there is a wish to go towards more value-driven partnerships but that the risk-taking is still a crucial factor influencing the process. Business Partner 1 explains for example that partnerships are better because they integrate a brand's identity and purpose. According to Expert 1, festivals and partners are missing an interface for the development of the relationship.

Premiers Plans has been building partnerships following the relational approach since its very beginning, 25 years ago. At Premiers Plans, they “keep

the orientations of the festival as the engine of any dialogue and project built with the partners” (Festival Manager 3). According to Festival Manager 3’s words, the missing interface should be built by putting the festival’s dimensions at the heart of any social exchange between any of the project’s stakeholders (partners, audience etc.).

Both Festival Manager 3 and Expert 1 underline the necessity to establish a general partnership policy and a strategy for each project conducted with a partner. At Premiers Plans, each partnership has “common values that we share, ensure consistency and offer a representative range of, by working together” (Festival Manager 3).

At Premiers Plans, the questions related to partnership policy are asked and answered on the same level of importance than the ones related to the event’s own objectives and vision. The questions are equally important to the event’s own objectives, which shows that the relationship developed with each partner is of primary importance for the event’s, and the workers consider it as a investment worth resources. However, we need to remind here that in this festival, the content co-created with partners becomes part of the core programme of each edition. On the other hand, the model used by World Village Festival is still about “try to get partnerships through sales work. [...] We have similar kind of packages which we adjust a according to the partner” (Festival Manager 2), justified by a lack of resources.

Interrogated about the “lack of resources”, Festival Manager 1 says that

“for a lot of small festivals money and own time are two big problems. They don’t have the luxury of building long lasting slow burning relationships. They need money and they need it now. When they are very small there are not attractive enough to get money. Lot of the time they focus on the companies who have the possibility to give them money. “

Festival Manager 1

At the end, it is just a question of where the festival put its priorities. Since the beginning, Premiers Plans’ priority has been to work together with

their partners, audience and others stakeholders in building the festival. Relationships are of primary importance.

Social dynamics have a key role in the evolution of a relationship, which means that the strategy required for a more value-driven approach to partnerships must take people into account, and step away from the money perspective. Strategy should also focus on giving value to the relationship from early stages onwards by co-creating it together, merging both brands, not just putting them side by side. People are the main influencers of the success, which presents many challenges as nowadays' world is used to be able to calculate benefits immediately and put numbers on it.

4.4. Strategic-thinking for value co-creation

In this chapter we analyse experts' views on how festivals should adjust their partnership policy and guidelines for it to correspond to the new phenomenon of collaborative partnerships. According to Expert 1, strategy should be based on a strong involvement and co-creation.

“You have to plan it. What do you want to achieve, what are your goals and what can you offer for the sponsor. So it's like with everything, you need to have a strategy and set the steps” - Expert 1

4.4.1. Investigate your brand

All interviewees agree that more background work both on internal and external aspects is required by the new approach, as it is more strongly related to brand's identities than before. Even if each festival already has a more or less clear idea of its brand and story, Expert 1 underlines the need for reevaluating it according to the new environment. The strategy renewal process includes rethinking long-term goals and direction of the event, and re-assessing its assets (Expert 2). Festival Manager 2 also underlines the importance of evaluating the event's assets that can be turned into selling points. She also believes that you need to have your objectives ready before contacting a potential partner.

This joins Expert 1's opinion that partners should be presented with something meaningful to be convincing and that objectives should be clear. Expert 2 also encourages to have a clear general vision for partnership policy, as well as clear objectives for each partnership.

On the other hand, Festival Manager 3 explains that strategies should not include "pre-defined and calibrated operating model and objectives, but rather a continuous availability of the team and a structured market research based on measured needs". Indeed, if the festival's individual objectives are brought forward, the potential partner might feel like they are just being prospected because they can serve some objectives, which therefore diminishes the idea of collaborative partnership. As a reminder, Expert 1 stated that to be meaningful, a partnership should be co-created together. Partnerships are based on people and human interaction, so things cannot be too clearly defined compared to when sponsorship was prevailing. Following the idea of Festival Manager 3, shared objectives should prevail over individual ones. At Premiers Plans, the partnership policy is regularly re-evaluated the same way that the overall strategy of the event is. Their partnership strategy-thinking process is presented below.

- For which needs, resources and objectives are the partners needed for?
- What type of entities and companies? How are we compatible and what are our common values?
- How to tell about and spread out common values, objectives and actions?
- How would the project be perceived by our stakeholders?
- What can our partner ask from us? What can we give him and allow him?
- How to establish a co-construction relationship with partners?

Figure 6. Partnership strategy-thinking process at Premiers Plans European First Film Festival

Source: Premiers Plans European First Film Festival, 2013

As we observe from the figure, the interactivity and collaborative aspects of a partnership are at the forefront in the strategy-making process. Experts

underline the need to investigate the festival brand's identity, strengths, but also its vision for the future, and its resources. The idea is that the more you know your brand and you can play with it, the more professional and convincing you will be. Business Partner 1 explains that festival should really work on "having an identity, know their audiences, what they are trying to do, their purpose".

Demographics are of key importance when it comes to co-create content that will actually have an impact on the targeted audiences. Expert 1 underlines that festivals do not analyse those demographics as much as they should, and therefore fail to create just the right content. Indeed, even if a festival manages to convince a corporation that a certain idea has some potential, there is still a need to co-create this idea a suitable way so that it reaches the targets. Festival Manager 3 agrees, explaining that the multiplicity of content at the festival attracts different audience segments, which attracts different kinds of partners. In its strategy, Premiers Plans gathers resources to give the team the possibility to work on developing partnerships, which goes hand in hand with developing audiences.

Business Partner 1 explains that "on my side of the table it really matters to know who attend, because it is part of a plan "do I want to reach this audience". Interest-based audience targeting and segmentation is really becoming a big thing."

Festivals should continuously inspect in detail the habits, lifestyle and behavior of their audience segments in order to convince companies. Business Partner 1 explains that festivals should know what people truly care about the event, in order to reach more people than just the ones physically attending the festival. She also says that companies usually search for mass reach, and festivals are offering usually quite small segments. It is about convincing them that quality sometimes overcome quantity, and showing that the purposes of both sides are similar. For that reason, it is of key importance that the festival is aware of its own identity and direction.

According to Expert 1, festivals also should "know who is interested in them. Who do not actually come but maybe listen to the bands that come there, for

example”, claiming that “those demographics are interesting to companies as well”.

Finally, Festival Manager 1 emphasises the importance of creating a “portfolio of interesting properties” for a festival brand, which can be used to attract and convince partners.

“Forming strategic partnerships with businesses is important. Part of the challenge at Edinburgh Fringe is that we do not own the product, the performers do. So we could not sell the traditional way and had to find other properties and ways to do it.” - Festival Manager 1

Properties are all aspects or items that characterises an event and makes it unique, be it concert halls, own productions, content dimensions etc. The value of each of those properties must be assessed to be able to “know the kind of organisations we want to work with and find them” (Festival Manager 1). Alongside, Festival Manager 1 argues that it is important to know which fields you want to cooperate with, aligning with your needs and vision. Following this idea, Expert 1 proposes that to create more collaborative partnerships, events should think about what kind of content they can create with some help, and that only they can provide and to which specific audience segments.

4.4.2. A more global and long-term mindset

All experts agree that the difficult environment festivals are involved in makes it challenging to adopt a long-term perspective, but that it is a requirement to succeed in partnerships, combined with adopting a more global mindset and being more open-minded regarding partnerships involving no money.

“The target is to have a good blend with brands, with the right holders, specialists” - Expert 2

According to Expert 2, festivals should think of partnerships in a more global way, and create a network of partners with a good blend, resulting in making

the festival brand stronger. Once we have investigated the brand, the next important step is a careful and detailed background work on companies and their economic environment, which is done to select the right partners with the objective of creating a coherent group of partners, before contacting the ones fitting the event's direction, values and vision. As Business Partner 1 puts it, "it could be the most popular festival in Finland, if it doesn't match with the brand, I would skip it."

It is therefore of importance to identify the trends, needs and issues of the companies you are interested in. Expert 1 also underlines that the evaluation process of a company is key to approaching them in a suitable way. Festivals should be able to know the common points with the potential partner, and "need to show they want exactly this brand to be there" because of matching values and directions.

For example, Festival Manager 1 says that festivals should work on assessing potential partners' current and future marketing needs to know if they rather need help to spread out their visual identity or a new product.

Expert 2 argues the "biggest mistake from the artistic side is that usually, they are not interesting in the company, they just want to have the money" and that background work is required to find a good match for your brand. Business Partner 1 adds that

"Do not make it sound like you are on a money collecting round."

Festival Manager 3 also adds that "the construction of a network of private partners is rather complex and requires a strategy specific to approaching the private sector" and that

"When an organisation relies so heavily on companies, it is required to know its environment, operating model, culture, and of course its activity, products and customers" - Festival Manager 3

Therefore, festivals have to adopt a strategy-thinking on the long-term, as well

as a strategy adapted to businesses. A strategy adapted to businesses is also about evaluating what companies need to know before considering partnering with your organisation.

Both Festival Manager 1 and Expert 3 also encourage a more long-term thinking, and it is good to remind that Expert 1 explained that it takes years to find the optimum relationship with a partner. Even though he agrees that long-term thinking is what brings most benefits, Expert 3 underlines that it is also the most difficult strategy to build.

“My target is to get long-term beneficial cooperation with the sponsors. [...] But it is always the same discussion: how to convert those benefits in money?” - Expert 3

Festival Manager 1 emphasises that putting resources on partnerships is a long-term pay-off and that festivals should step away from focusing on money matters when thinking about partnerships. He explains that when a company brings added value to the festival that nourish the event’s identity, the company will be most likely to engage on the long-term.

“Rather than taking their money and put a logo, we designed with them [a partner] the streets furnishing. There was a lot of rubbish so they employed people to clean the trashes and got them a special uniform. They were more responsible than us for the look of the high street. We would have gotten more money if we would have taken only the money, but the moment they wanted to invest to clean the streets, I knew it would be long-term” - Festival Manager 1

People have to understand that money is not always a challenge as “if you make this work, it is actually going to draw in a lot more partners” (Festival Manager 1)

“If you are able to work with even a small technology partner, you will be able to get a profile for your project and affect their business in a positive way” - Festival Manager 1

Expert 1 also argues that partnerships not involving money are just as valuable as money input, as they provide resources that festival would have to buy otherwise and enables the corporation to access new targets. Service partnerships should therefore be treated with the same care than any other partnership projects. Festival Manager 2 believes that festivals should see larger and also consider other benefits brought by partnerships, as well as focus on working with companies that can help them expand their audience.

4.4.3. "One partner = one ambition = one project = one action" - Festival Manager 3

Festival Manager 2 explains that they rarely meet their smaller partners and might meet the key partners '2-5 times a year', emphasising that people are busy and resources are limited. In that context, people do not feel personally committed to the partnership relationship. A more interactive and personal approach would be required to build a more long-term fruitful strategic partnership policy. All the interviewed experts emphasise that meetings should happen on a regular base as it develops trust and mutual understanding as well as helps finding the right angle for the project. Festival Manager 3 calls to built a policy around "one partner = one ambition = one project = one action", emphasising here the fact that each relationship is unique and has its own resources and actions according to its own direction. Premiers Plans has made a strategic choice of giving its employees the resources to work on developing meaningful partnerships, with 2 persons working year-round on that aspect.

Expert 1 explains that the current context calls for more organic partnership projects, therefore bringing more value to both entities.

"You have to have some kind of organic way to bring a company in. And have meanings for the company" - Expert 1

Organic content is specific to a single festival-partner relationship, and therefore unique, and is drawn from the event's and brand's own identity and purposes. Expert 1 adds that creating content is challenging for co-creation as companies do not have the resources for that, but suggests that "creating something in the rayon of content, that is organic to it and that reaches a lot of people" is the solution. Built around the core content of the event, so around its very own identity, this organic project benefits from the coverage and the proven popularity of the content among specific audience segments.

Expert 1 thinks that festivals "should think about the content they need to create" and built their partnership approach according to it. Festival Manager 3 agrees, stating that the artistic work (content) should be the axis of each action undertaken within the scope of a partnership project. Expert 1 explained earlier that co-creation should be done together to be meaningful, and we add here that the co-creation should be built around artistic content, that already has an impact on the target audiences, to benefit from this impact.

Festival Manager 1 also explains that festivals "usually have a deeper relationship with their customers than companies". Indeed, the product developed by festivals provides an experience, and therefore has a stronger impact and identity than a market product. Festival Manager 1 therefore explains that partnerships are the right occasion to bring audiences to experience the brand, as this is a way more effective approach than simple marketing or advertising. The last few years have proven that brand experience is the way to reach out to customers. Customers feel the need to connect with a product that has a story, a personality, that is more human, and festivals offer this opportunity, as their product is already all about that.

Festival Manager 2's opinion about how to have an impact on customers is that we should "give festival goers some kind of positive WOW surprises, and it doesn't have to be festival content in its traditional way", which means that originality and risk-taking are keys.

Alongside, Festival Manager 1 explains that partnership projects are successful when targeted audiences get to know the identity of a brand, giving the example

that “I was at this wine festival in Vancouver and this old man said a great thing, he said: “you know what is interesting in that great wine, is that it is not just about the process, it is about the place. The more I understand about the place where the wine is made, the best wine is gonna be”, and that is the point”.

Expert 1 underlines that “planning should always be done in cooperation” in order to use both sides resources at their best. Ideally, shared objectives, established via what Festival Manager 3 calls “a principal of co-construction and co-evaluation with common values”, should prevail and the value co-created from it should then feed each entity’s individual objectives. Festival Manager 3 underlines the importance of “ensuring consistency of shared values and decline those together in a common action”. When individual objectives prevail, partners are actually working side by side, whereas shared objectives with joint work allows them to reach wider audience segments.

5. DISCUSSION

The following chapter presents theoretical implications, the challenges of evaluating partnerships and ends with a model of recommendations for the implementation of more collaborative partnerships, simplified in order to be implementable by managers.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This sub-chapter discusses two theories by McNicholas (2004) & Lund (2010), which will help us draw our own model for value co-creation with partners in festival context.

McNicholas (2004, p.63) theory about building successful partnerships give some key highlights on a successful value co-creation process in collaborative partnerships. The key factors are here presented and discussed with the collected empirical data.

1- *“Strategic match of core values, image and target audiences, and sometimes key goals - that is, a synergy of parts of their mission statements”*

The empirical data of the thesis matches with McNicholas statement, especially in the following points:

- Need for a common direction/purpose
- Compatible brand values and image

2- *“The development of two-way, interactive relationships; effective communication and compatibility between the parties on the personal and operational level, as well as in vision”*

The interviews conducted with the experts brought to our attention that both sides expect a deep and personal commitment to the partnership relationship. A direct and dynamic approach helps to create trust with a potential partner, as it shows a genuine interest for the company. From the discussions, we also understand that effective communication also means constant wish to develop

the relationship and use of common resources.

3- *“Longevity of commitment: a building of relationships and associations over time; this convey sincerity and authenticity, and enables the development of customised approaches and activities through development of security in the relationship “*

Experts have stated that a partner-festival relationship is a long-learning curve which will reach its optimum point after a few years of working together. Trust, openness and honesty are key points of a long-term commitment. Moreover, long-term gives both side the chance to co-create content which increasingly matches with their principles and therefore have more value. However, it is worth highlighting that both sides are continuously influenced by the changes in the environment they evolve in, which might threaten the development of the relationship.

4 - *“Creativity and customisation”* are key factors for success. Having something organic (unique) relying on the content of the event gives more weight and impact to a co-created project. There is an evolution from commercial (can be done with anyone) to more organic partnership projects that are integrated by festivals as a part of their main identity, therefore increasing credibility, impact and legitimacy. A bit of partner + built around the content of the event = organic partnership project.

According to McNicholas’ theory compared with the empirical data, we can emphasises the following factors as key of value co-creation:

- A long-term relationship brings more customised projects
- Need to develop a common purpose
- Relationship must be based on matching values or mission, and meet both sides individual objectives

Lund also draws a first model of development of more collaborative partnership programs in his case study of the sponsorship system of the Royal Swedish Opera

(Lund, 2010, p.119-123). His goal is to understand how value is co-created in interaction with sponsors, and he sets four relationship stages. Naturally, this model is adaptable to year-round, established cultural organisations and is not fitted for partnership strategy in festival field, but it gives us a framework to adapt it to the festival context.

During a first stage, the organisation re-assesses its strengths and weaknesses, and looks into potential matching partners' type in terms of image association. They also perform a detailed audience segmentation and profiling study. All of this information is used when approaching potential partner.

The empirical data has highlighted the lack of awareness in festivals of their own brands and audience segments. Lund suggests here tools to help us built festivals as legitimate entities, stepping away from being considered as project-based organisations.

In a second time, when discussing with potential partners, both sides explore each others' resources and combine knowledge in order to highlight potential values. Lund presents the partner identification phase from a very transactional point of view, with terms mentioned such as "sales presentation" or "marketing and sales". We miss here the human dimension emphasised as crucial by the interviewees.

The third stage is about optimising the relationship: both sides work jointly, establish shared objectives, involve other staff members. This increases trust and openness. The organisation also works as a group with all its sponsors, bringing to higher impact thanks to larger resources available for use. This phase is the most crucial phase of the relationship, as the co-creation process should start from the very first steps of the relationship.

The fourth stage is about evaluating the partnership. They proceed to shared evaluation discussions as well as individuals ones, and have an open discussion about successes and drawbacks. Both sides research the achievement of their

individual objectives and report to the other. The collected empirical data has established the current issues of a lack of suitable measurement and evaluation tools to provide the required report to partners. Lund offers here some hints on the way to proceed, even though those are applicable only in specific cases, and the evaluation process should be like the rest of the partnership: customised to both sides' identities and needs.

Effective and continuous relationship is one of the key for success of the new model of partnership. Many triggers, both internal and external, frequently threaten the balance of the relationship between the partner and the organisation. This leads to the necessity to comprehend and work with any upcoming structural, environmental, financial or managerial changes that might occur in the close circle of the agreement. For example, the arrival of a new board member, the dismissal of the partnership responsible, the financial difficulties of the sponsor or a bad weather can all be triggers of possible difficulties. However, it is important to see these changes as a positive outcome, in the way that it enables a natural redefinition of the relationship which might otherwise have been postponed or forgotten.

5.2. Challenges of measurement and evaluation

One of the challenges of more collaborative and in-depth partnerships is that their benefits are difficult to measure. Festival Manager 2 explains that “you cannot always measure how much you pay or how much you get in return”.

Lately, the pressure for measurement has increased because of the competitiveness between the events. Expert 3 points out that “companies do not give money without having a very precise target of what they would like to get back”. Already before engaging in a partnership, the potential partner needs to be able to identify the potential benefits and justify its engagement internally. However, the value created through those projects is a lot more intangible than before, thus more difficult to evaluate.

Corporations also do not have the knowledge about finding and forging

sustainable cultural partnerships. As Business Partner 1 said, we cannot assume companies to be familiar with the festival field.

“These measures involve an assessment not only of business benefits but also of the broader impact of sponsored events” - Australian study (2001)

The study conducted in Australia in 2001 underlines that it is difficult to put a monetary value on the gain in brand image. Moreover, the multiple end recipients (audiences, wider circles...) also complicate the evaluation process.

“Some customers are doing a lot of tactical investment and calculate “I buy this product for X€ and the return is how many orders I will get”. But it does not work that way here and this is something you have to understand”

- Expert 3

Studying consumers behaviors or, as Expert 3 suggests, looking at the change of atmosphere around a brand are ways to cope with that challenge, but those solutions are very abstract. Expert 1 suggests that festivals should research and analyse the changes of brand image within the targeted segments. Business Partner 1 explains that the evaluation of a partnership can be done first through clinical results such as the amount of people reached, number of newspaper articles, shares on digital media. Then, it comes to understanding the profile of the people attending and receiving the message.

Expert 2 even adds that because partnerships are so much about people, part of the results is unpredictable: “If everything goes well, you can end up having results that you didn’t know would happen in the first place. You never know what happens when you get people to work together.”

The challenge of evaluation and measurement of collaborative partnerships is still a current issue of the festival management field. However, the experts interviewed in this thesis have all underlined the importance of educating the public and stakeholders about what is really a festival. They argue that the specificities of the festival field are not well known of the society. Perhaps

the lack of legitimacy of the festivals amongst companies or individuals is the first challenge to overcome in order to build more sustainable partnerships with businesses. Indeed, with the knowledge of what characterises festivals and what are their specificities people will be competent to build the required measurement and evaluation tools fitting to the organisation model.

5.3. Managerial recommendations

With the aim of providing festival managers concrete tools to implement a strategy of value co-creation with partners, I have established a figure presenting the main findings of the literature and empirical field. This figure is inspired from Lund's own model (Lund, 2010, p. 120).

The following recommendations are built according to discussions with interviewed experts and with various other professionals from the field.

Stage 1: Investigate your brand

This research has established the necessity for festivals to rethink their entire strategy and approach to potential partners. Internally, the first step is to create a business case for a festival project. For that purpose, managers should research:

- Festival's brand and identity
- Audience segments (attending and non-attending) and profiles (what do they like, how do they live, why do they attend), geographical reach
- Current environment (e.g. economic and social context, trends)

At the end, the business case should be presenting something unique, that does not exist anywhere else or could not be replaced by any other name.

Stage 1 - Investigating your brand

Tips:

- Adopt a long-term mindset (short term monetary relief versus long-term development)
- Identify what makes your concept unique

Questions guide:

- What is the core content and the elements of your event?
- What are the elements organic to your event?
- Who are your audiences, why do they attend and what connects them with you?
- What do people share when talking about you?
- What are the new consumption trends on the marketing for your audience segments?

Stage 2: Partnership strategy setting

The different stages of setting-up a partnership strategy are the profiling of potential partners' types, strategy building and background work on identified prospects. Festivals should be focusing on building a partnership policy based on common direction and purpose which are inspiring the undertaken actions with partners. Moreover, thinking globally by putting together a coherent group of partners will also help convincing potential partners, as it shows you have been establishing a clear strategy and conduct lines for your organisation.

Stage 2 - Partnership strategy setting

Tips:

- Best time of the year to prospect depends on the organisation type (large businesses, start-ups, cities...)
- Think more globally, larger plan

Questions guide:

- For which needs, resources & objectives are partners needed?
- Which types of entities & companies?
- How are you compatible and what are your common values?
- What can the partners ask you? What can you give them and allow them?
- How to establish a co-construction process with the partners?

Stage 3: Propection

Propection phase includes building a business case for your event. Managers should also remember that potential partners do not have the knowledge about creating sustainable partnerships. Festivals should be able to present them with the project's predicted outcomes, the benefits of their involvement, as well as explain how the success of the event and the partnership will be measured.

Example of business case:

Project's predicted outcomes

- Short-term: number of attendees, cultural and economic impact
- Long-term: increased knowledge of the local culture, increased tourism, economic impact

Benefits of partners' involvement

- Gain of brand image in [audience segment] thanks to [what makes you unique]
- Social media share [what is shared about you and how you will connect it to your partner]

Measurement tools

- Clinical measurement: number of attendees, surveys, media coverage
- Intangible results: changes in brand awareness

Experts interviewed remind managers that they cannot assume people to know

about event and specificities of the festival field, and that they should be first educated in order to get familiar with it. Some of specificities of the field are:

- Time and location: short-term event but year-round activity
- Unique artistic content brought to audiences via experience process
- Deep connection with its audience segments as they provide them with a complete experience of things they like
- Micro audience segments

Festivals should use a direct and dynamic approach showing genuine interest for the company's activities and problematics. The approach will be effective if the audience segments and business case are correctly introduced. Remember that reaching the right audience segment is what matters most to companies.

Stage 3 - Prospection

Tips:

- Don't assume people know anything about festivals and its specificities
- Human interaction comes first, customise your approach
- Reaching the right audience is what matters most to the company

Questions guide:

- What are the event's predicted short & long-term outcomes (1-5 years)?
- When does this company make its marketing budget? When should you contact them?
- How would the project be perceived by your stakeholders?
- How would you benefit from each other?

Stage 4: Developing the relationship

A common direction and purpose is to be created together with the partner based on each entity's values, therefore ensuring consistency for both sides. A partnership is a long-learning curve; it takes years to develop the relationship so that it gives its maximum benefits and impact. The identity of both brands, together with shared values and objectives, should serve as a base to build a working interface between both. The co-creation process starts already at

early stage of the relationship.

The first step is to put in common knowledge, skills and resources to develop an operational and personal compatibility. Then comes the optimisation of the relationship, which goes through the set-up of a common direction and purpose and other joint actions. Once the base of the relationship has been established, the partnership project can be built, always with the artistic content of the event at heart, and taking into account that the primary focus is the audience and the performers, not the partners.

Stage 4 - Developing the relationship

Tips:

- Continuous contact, not just when you need money
- In-kind partnerships are as valuable as money
- Adapt the relationship to the context

Questions guide:

- How to tell about and spread out common values objectives and actions?
- What are the first steps to develop the relationship?

Stage 5 & 6 : Evaluation of the event and of the partnership

As we have discussed, the challenges of collaborative partnerships lies into the fact that it gives mostly intangible results and that in the current context, potential partners are asking for a guarantee of benefits. On the long-term, developing and updating evaluation and measurement tools is a key factor of capturing value of the partnerships.

Clinical results on the event are of key importance (e.g. number of attendees, media coverage) especially because they are used as a solid base to convince stakeholders. Researching brand image development, evaluating the success of objectives or the impact of the created content on the audiences are also ways to assess an event.

In order to built an accurate evaluation of the partnership, clinical results are

provided by both sides (e.g. sales increase, some activation) . Moreover, the evaluation should be done in the same line than the rest of the partnership, meaning through open discussions between both organisations. Both ROR (return on relationship) and ROI (return on investment) angles should be looked at. The advancement of the common purpose, the synergy between both organisations or the drawbacks and success are elements contributing to the evaluation of a partnership.

Stage 5 - Evaluation of the event

Tips:

- Short-term & long-term perspective
- ROI & ROR

Questions guide (stage 5):

- How do each partnership help your individual objectives and purpose?
- How are the results compared to your predicted outcomes? What are the influencing factors?

Questions guide (stage 6):

- Have common values been spread out?
- Have you reached targeted segments?
- Have you advanced on your common objectives?
- How has the partnership been perceived?
- What are the successes and drawbacks?

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to find an answer to the following question:
How does the festival field benefit from adopting a relational approach as part of their partnership strategy?

Supporting questions were :

What are the reasons for adopting a relational approach?

How to define and co-create value?

What is the nature of partners' involvement?

This concluding chapter presents the main findings of this research by answering those questions in relation with the theoretical literature.

6.1. What is really co-created value?

Research and empirical analysis has established that value is co-created by the common action undertaken by the participants of a partnership project. The process through which value is co-created in a partnership relationship can be compared to the life of a tree. The roots (people) create a trunk (relationship) through joint work (pooling of resources, needs, vision etc.). Each branch of the tree represents an activity co-produced in the frame of the relationship. When the branch (content) grows, leaves (value) start to appear. For a while, leaves remain on the branch and nourish it: this is tangible value, straight from the content. Along time, leaves start to fall down at the bottom of the tree, going back to the ground, just where the roots keep nourishing the trunk: intangible value goes back to the roots (people). The longer the relationship is in time, the stronger and bigger the trunk gets. In order to keep feeding the trunk to make it stronger, the roots (people) reinvest the resources and benefits they received when the leaves fell down to nourish them.

Therefore, value is co-created by the commitment and efforts each entity will put in developing the partnership relationship.

Research on recent marketing trends has established that audiences connect with a brand through brand experience (Harris, 2017; Fransen, 2013; Zarantonello & Schmitt (2013)). Regarding that matter, Expert 1 explains that, at the end, any value created through partnerships or sponsorship is related to brand image. We understand here that the outcome of partnership and sponsorship are the same: brand image, and that only the way through which we get to impact the brand image has changed (from exposure to experience). Brand image may explain the fact that partnership is always linked to marketing.

Throughout the analysis of the discussions with the interviewees, we have established key elements leading to the co-creation of value in partnerships:

- **Long-term mindset:** to be taken into account when building a strategy, it will take time to get to know each other
- **Strategy:** inseparable from a long-term thinking and the creation of shared objectives
- **Shared objectives/purpose:** result on a joint work in which the relationship is on the foreground
- **Organic content,** built around the artistic themes of the event
- **Interactive relationship,** to be nurtured on the long-term and based on human interaction
- **Experience level:** thanks to shared knowledge and resources, we create partnership projects in line with current trends of brand consumption, meaning giving the audience the possibility to experience the brand

Therefore, co-created value can be defined as the continuous result of a long-term process through which a partner and a festival work jointly to provide an organic added value to the audiences' experience of the festival, built around the artistic content of the event.

During this process, both sides resources, identities and vision are aligned into a common orientation and narrowed down to one project. The actions undertaken in the frame of that project are satellites of the event's dimensions, securing the first touch points between the content created and the audiences.

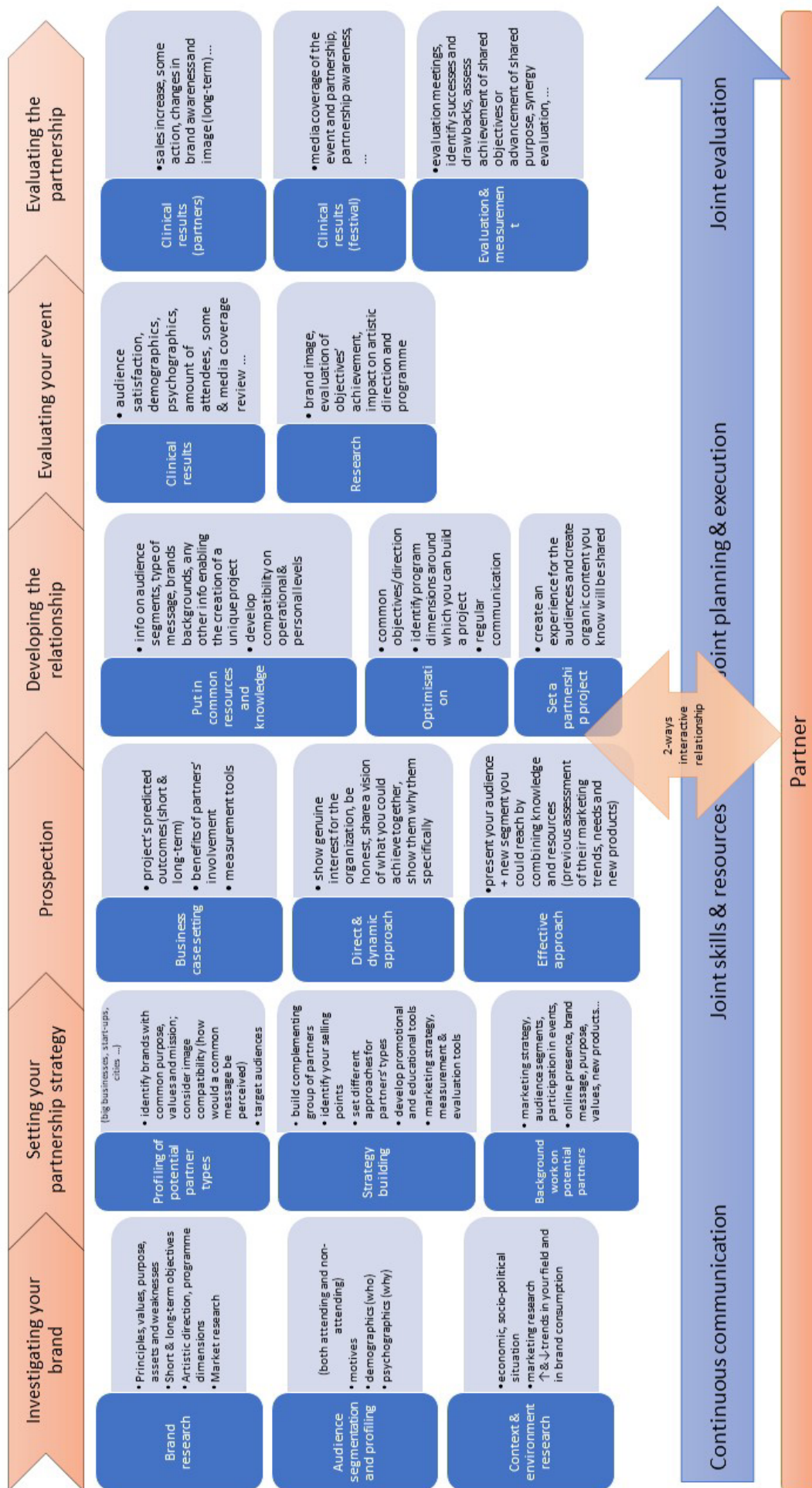


Figure 7. Value co-creation in partnerships in festival context

The actions are organic to the relationship which reinforces the impact on the targets. Moreover, they happen on the experience level, thus securing a complete bond and touch points with the audiences.

Festival Manager 3 is the only interviewee to give a clear definition of the co-creation process: “co-creation means understanding the issues of your partners, mediation between all entities and most importantly, creating a common project based on the synthetisation of joint work”.

The Sounds of Energy project organised by Fortum and Savonlinna Opera Festival (Finland) in 2014 is a good example of joining knowledge, resources and goals resulting in the co-creation of benefits for all. Fortum invited young classical music professionals to visit Savonlinna Opera Festival and perform in front of the festival’s larger audience circles, Savonlinna locals. This project gave a chance to the performers to network with fellow musicians, present their work abroad to audiences and music professionals. One of the aims of the project was to support interaction among the music students from different countries. On the other side of the table, both the partner and the festival got the opportunity to create impactful content for their larger audiences.

The project’s name was found by putting together both brand’s strong identities: Sounds of Energy, related to both music and energy. Fortum’s main wish in this project was to develop their image within the communities they are active in. Therefore, they required that the applicants would come from the cities in which the company held its operations. As they were aware of the importance of social media coverage during the event, they expected the applicants to be active in social media and be willing to share their thoughts on various media platforms during the trip. To present the sound of energy, the group visited the Fortum Imatra Power Plant and attended the rapid show. This was to help them prepare their performances in Savonlinna.

The collaborative relationship here meant that both entities combined together their identities and resources and became complementary, which made this

project organic to the partnership. They decided of a common direction, respecting both sides individual's objectives. Co-creation was a keyword throughout the entire process. As a result, tangible and intangible value was co-created by both entities.

The chart on the next page represents the different stages of the Sounds of Energy project and the benefits for all stakeholders.

Savonlinna Opera Festival		Fortum Oy		Audiences		Participants	
Stage 1	Planning	Fortum & S.O.F created the concept & selection criterias together. All classical musicians from the company's operating countries could apply.					
	Results	International & Domestic media coverage	Brand image: active actor in the communities lives				
		Good reputation amongst future classical music professionals	Brand awareness				
Stage 2	Planning	Participants visited Fortum's power plant and rapids in Imatra on their way to Savonlinna					
	Results		Present their activities and values			Inspiration for the performances and activities in Savonlinna	
			Increase positive image / raise awareness			Get to discuss and network with other musicians	
Stage 3	Planning	The participants got to attend two shows, one opera & one concert. They met with the main singer of the opera and were able to get professional insights					
	Results	International publicity from third parties (participants)	Increased positive image abroad			Learning opportunity from professionals	
						Feeling special	
Stage 4	Planning	Outdoor group activities to challenge participants to create together around sounds of energy theme. Activities were e.g. singing a Finnish folk serenade to a vendor on the marketplace + make a composition based on energy sounds					
	Results	Event goes beyond the walls	Promotion material (video)		People on the marketplace enjoyed pop-up performances	Discover Finnish culture and folk history	
		Gives opportunity to young professionals	Seen as a corporation engaged in the communities' lives		Feeling of ownership of the festival	Creation of music piece with other participants increases teamwork knowledge	
						Learn to compose in short time and around a theme	
Stage 4	Planning	Some participants performed into the Morning Opening audience in a café (traditional, free public events, high popularity)					
	Results	High popularity so good visibility guaranteed	High popularity so good visibility guaranteed		Free event	Chance to perform	
		Festival beyond the walls.	Media coverage & marketing materials			Opportunity to network	
		→ Increased local brand image	On-location visibility			Media coverage	
			Brand image: active actor in the communities lives				

Figure 8. Detailing of Sounds of Energy project

Source: Project Report, 2014

6.2. Limitations and further research

This thesis attempts to report on the opportunities for value co-creation in the frame of collaborative partnerships in the festival field.

The natural continuation to the topic would be to implement the guidelines mentioned as main findings and study the practicalities of that process by using case study methodology. The festival management field would also benefit from in-depth individual research on the entities at heart: partners and festival organisations.

The findings of this study are based on a limited number of expert interviews, and therefore do not constitute a holistic research. A further study of the main findings put into perspective with partnership strategies in effect in other countries such as the United States would be beneficial for the overall understanding of the phenomenon. The approach on partnerships in force in the United States is clearly different from the one in Europe as the support system for the arts and culture relies on a drastically different model. It would be interesting to study the aspects of partnership in the US and the possibility to adapt them to the European frame.

Moreover, the field would benefit from a theoretical framework uniting three elements together: the relational approach, the value co-creation and the specificities of festival organisations.

6.3. Concluding remarks

Throughout this research, it was demonstrated that several reasons justify the adoption of a more relational approach to partnerships in the festival context. According to the studied empirical and theoretical data, such an approach enhances the development of festivals and makes them benefiting from larger resources and skills. It gives them the possibility, for example, to reach new audience segments or provide added experiences to the current audiences.

Moreover, whereas the analysis of the empirical data has established that the use of transactional approach is not to be banished but used in very specific cases, both theoretical and empirical research has demonstrated that the relational approach connects both brands identities together and therefore enables the creation of a more in-depth content linked to core vision, mission and values of both entities.

The nature of the relationship between a festival and its partners is characterised by a continuous interactivity, a shared purpose and resources. In the frame of the relational approach, partners are involved in the festivals as co-producers, which highlights the collaborative side of their relationship. With the creation of content built around the festival's artistic dimensions and emanating from the blend of two identities together, partners are involved as co-creators of the festival experience. A good example of long-term installed collaboration built around artistic content is the Night of the Arts, held in Helsinki every August. Helsinki Festival (sponsored) and Helsingin Sanomat (partner) both actively organise, promote and develop the event. This event also give the possibility to the individuals to register their own small happening as part of the main event and therefore co-create its content.

With less and less money involved and more and more resources needed, no wonder partnerships are still seen as a big risk. Making partnerships is more challenging than before and requires a complete renewal of the organisation's strategy. However, the result is so much stronger and organic that festivals have to face reality and understand the long-term potential instead of resisting to adapting to the new context. As one of the interviewee summarises, "it's always a question of resources". And festivals focus too much on the lack of resources. A few actions can be undertaken by festival managers to reduce the risks felt by companies tempted to invest in partnership. Moreover, managers should be able to take the risk to tell their partners that a transactional approach does not reach audiences anymore and that the partnership approach should be renewed to match current trends.

Despite that it is linked to brand image, partnership cannot be anymore a part of marketing, but both departments work together to provide an added experience to the audiences satisfying the shared direction established with the festival's partner.

Partnership projects are strong and successful when the targeted audiences get to learn more about the identity of the brand with storytelling participating in reinforcing the connection between a brand and people.

In the future, we can hope that managers will success in giving the festival field some legitimacy and convince businesses of the benefits of working with them. The collaborative partnership model could even be develop at a larger scale with the creation of multiple parties partnerships (e.g. one festival and multiple partners working on the same project, or two festivals working together with one partner). This would be a suitable way to cope with a challenging external environment and encourage businesses into partnering with festival organisations.

Expert 1 also presents a very interesting point of view on the potential of collaborative enterprises in the future:

“The ideal with festivals and cultural institutions would be that they receive money to create content, whichever that might be. That would be just a source of funds for doing what they do.”

This perspective of festival organisations providing creative content to their partners is certainly appealing (as long as the artistic dimension is preserved) and we can only hope that festivals will continue their expansion towards that future. We expect that the field will succeed into building a future in which festivals are considered as legit business entities and in which the cultural content they present is recognised for its value and impactful results.

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8. APPENDIX

8.1. Appendix 1: Interview questions template

Introductory questions:

- You are the [position] of [organisation]. How long have you been in this position?
- Can you give me a brief overview of what you do in your job? What are your main tasks?
- Related to those tasks, what are yourself wishing to achieve in your job?
- How do you, personally, understand the word “partnership” in a festival context?
- Could you give me a defining of what you think is a “good” partnership relationship?
- Do you have a specific project that comes to mind which would be a good example of the focus on this research?

PART I. Partnership strategy

To festival organisers:

- How was the partnership strategy when you started working at [organisation]? (*Aim: assess if a shift happened or not*)
- How would you describe your partnership strategy nowadays? (*Aim: gain knowledge of the current model used by the organisation*)
- At what point of the development of the partnership project do you determine your organisation’s objectives? (*Aim: know if before or after determining common objectives*)
- Have you been engaged in more collaborative partnerships? By collaborative, I mean that you have co-created a project which links both organisations and their field of activity.

YES : What do you think you have to gain/loose in using collaborative partnerships?

NO : Any specific reasons which make you feel like you do not wish to engage in such partnerships and stay focused on a more marketing exchange?

- How do you measure the results of each partnership deal? (*Aim: find out the tools festivals have to evaluate the partnership*)
- How do you handle the content created with your partners? It is part of the core program offered by the festival, or is it a side program? (*aim: learn more about the importance given to the content created with a sponsor*)

To other organisations (Pink Eminence, Finland Festival):

- According to you, how are partnerships deals done in the festival field right now ?
- Do you think it is a good way ? If not, do you think should change ?
- Cultural organisations complains that sponsors do not give them more support, but keep using the same approach. Corporations say they don't have money but that they still wish to support festival somehow. What do you feel about that ?
- Is there in Finland any law which regulates/limits sponsorships to cultural organisations ?

To sponsor :

- What's your company partnership strategy in the cultural field ?
- How do you measure the results of each partnership deal? (*Aim: find out the tools festivals have to evaluate the partnership*)
- At what point of the development of the partnership project do you determine your organisation's objectives? (*Aim: know if before or after determining common objectives*)
- Have you been engaged in more collaborative partnerships? By collaborative, I mean that you have co-created a project which links both organisations and their field of activity.
- What do you think you have to gain/lose in using collaborative partnerships?

PART II. Partnership relationships

To festival's organisation

- Could you describe your relationship with your partners in general?
- Are you trying to build a special relationship with each partner you have?

- What is the oldest partner you have?
- How has the deal evolve over time? (*aim: make the respondent assess the evolution of a deal*)
- *To festivals which use collaborative model:* how was it to convince your partners to do things differently?

To other organisations (Pink Eminence, Finland Festivals)

- Do you have an opinion why festivals tend to stay on a more monetary based sponsorship, event though they do not bring any added value to their organisations ?
- Have you ever discussed this issue with festival organisers ? If so, what was their feeling out of it ?
- Could you come up with keywords to describe what would be according to you an ideal partner-organisation relationship ?
- About co-created content ?

To sponsors

- What is the oldest festival partner you have?
- How has the deal evolve over time? (*aim: make the respondent assess the evolution of a deal*)
- Could you describe me the process of co-creating a partnership project with the festival? (*aim: find out initiators*)
- What is the festival you are working the closest with ? How was your first project with this organisation? (*aim: was it a monetary or collaborative deal*)
- Could you describe your relationship with this festival?
- What is your role in the partnership relationship?

PART III. The involvement of the sponsor in the festival's organisation decision-making process

To festival organisations

- How often do you meet with your partners?
- Do you think this partnership would continue if you/your sponsor's collaborator would not be in the professional position you are now?
- Are your partners taking part into strategic decisions of your organisations ?
- Can your partners influence the artistic orientation ?
- Can your partners influence your overall strategy ?
- Do you consider your partners are external consultants ?

To other organisations (Pink Eminence, Finland Festivals)

- In the case of a collaborative partnership, do you think partners should have a word to say in the decision-making of the festival ?

To sponsor

- How do you see your place in the decision-making process of the festival you are supporting?
- Would you like to engage in a year-around project with the festival ?