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The Sites and Sounds of Placemaking: Branding, Festivalization, and the Contemporary City

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Introduction

It has been twenty years since the call sounded for a better understanding of how urban culture is processed through a pervasive corporate logic, and festivals are yet another location for such research because they marry the "production of space" and the "production of symbols" (Zukin 1995: 23; see also see Lash and Urry 1994). As the entertainment industry replaces manufacturing in many U.S. cities, swapping steel mills and smokestacks for sports stadia and restaurant clusters, an increasing number of cities, regions, and countries, develop place branding to "reaffirm their identity/ies; attract and retain their share of cultural industries (and tourists); join the 'competitive city' race and contribute to the design and adaptation of the public realm" (Evans 2001: 14). Alongside entertainment districts and 'tourist bubbles,' mayors and other place marketers in recent years have embraced music festivals as a fast, temporary, and affordable way to promote the image of a city—a less expensive alternative to investing in costly and permanent cultural infrastructure (Hiller 2000). Studies on the Chicago Blues scene and Mardi Gras, for examples, note that music is a powerful tool for shaping cultural landscapes and placemaking (Grazian 2003: 208; Gotham 2007: 163–172). This marriage of music culture and urban placemaking has been a major avenue for commercialization to enter urban life. Carefully walking the line between crafting an attractive music experience for fans and being a place for showcasing corporate sponsorships is a high stakes game.

Adapting Häussermann and Seibel's term, 'Festivalization' (1993), we see this process—sometimes but not always an explicit and coordinated cultural policy—of fusing city branding with the post-industrial 'experience economy' as a potent blend of place-marketing and cultural consumption

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via accessible and resonant imagery and visceral encounters. And yet, as scholars might find high levels of corporate imagery being smuggled into the symbolic production of urban place, we follow classic work on reception of cultural goods (Liebes and Katz 1990; Shively 1992) to detail the extent to which branded imagery actually impacts the lived experiences of those who use these festivalized spaces. We do so by interviewing both festival producers and organizers, and then going one step further to show just how much U.S. festival goers pay notice.

Our findings contrast with two areas of recent research. On the one hand there are studies on European festivals in The Hague and Rotterdam that indicate the links between festivals and municipalities were *weak* (Van Aalst and van Melik 2011) and that corporate branding is largely accepted at European arts and sporting events (Rowley and Williams 2008). Meanwhile, research on American countercultural festivals like the 'Vans Warped Tour' demonstrates that corporate branding can undermine the 'authenticity' of festivals (Dowd et al. 2004). Unlike both these threads, our research finds not only a pervasiveness of corporate branding, but also the relative acceptance of it. We suspect that this tolerance is strongly influenced by the strong ties these three festivals have to their specific locales—differently, in the cases of Austin, Nashville, and Newport—harmonizing corporate branding and the festival landscape with few negative consequences.

To unpack this issue of urban symbolic placemaking and place-attachment—which Milligan defines as "an individual's experiences within and in relation to a specific site, or 'expectations'" (1998: 3)—we will compare music festivals in three U.S. cities: Austin's South By Southwest Music Festival, Rhode Island's Newport Folk Festival, and Nashville's Country Music Association Music Festival. In so doing, this article provides a comparison of experiences to illuminate the potency of placemaking and cultural consumption (see Greenberg 2009; Silver *et al* 2010; Verlegh 2010).

Background and Methods

A mixed-methods approach expands upon qualitative data from a larger study on music festivals (Author 2015) with quantitative analysis. The first method is intensive participant observation conducted by the study's first author. This means that the "I" in the ethnographic sections refers to him. The second methodological approach included over 100 longer, semi-structured interviews with key players (organizers, members of the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Bureaus, musicians, local music venues owners,

Table 1: Sample sizes for each concert site, and its breakdown between locals and visitors

	Nashville	Newport	Austin
Visitors	59	22	30
Locals	13	20	11
Total	72	42	41

label executives, members of city government, etc.) almost entirely by the first author.

And third, we conducted over 200 surveys of festivalgoers to gauge music consumption habits, and their perceptions of the city and corporate sponsorship at work around them. The primary author and four undergraduate and graduate research assistants collected data at all three festivals, and this study's second author provided all the data analysis and description. Each survey is coded and recorded in Microsoft Excel, and the analysis is conducted in Stata 12. Here we only used surveys from the out of town *visitors* because locals might have more complicated symbolic stocktaking and, therefore, the sample sizes for Austin, Newport and Nashville are 30, 22, and 59, respectively (see Table 1). Because of the small sample sizes, we aim to provide *descriptive* bivariate analysis to match the interview and participant-observation data, across the three locations.

Table 2 provides basic socio-demographic information on these festivalgoers. Across festival sites, the average festivalgoer is white, between age 18 and 40, and has a college degree, or some college experience.

Although much more data was collected for the larger project, we focused on questions regarding place-making and branding for this article.

The Three Festivals

The following three subsections illustrate key issues of place-making by highlighting pivotal moments in the history of the festivals, matched with brief ethnographic descriptions and interview data with significant festival stakeholders as they negotiate and, at times, struggle against the commercialization of their events. This qualitative data will then be linked with descriptive survey data in the next section.

Austin's South by Southwest

South by Southwest (SXSW) music festival is a four-day event, founded in part by members of the city's alternative weekly newspaper, and targets mostly indie rock industry professionals and some music fans.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for each site; broken down between locals and visitors

	Nashville		Newport		Austin	
	Locals	Visitors	Locals	Visitors	Locals	Visitors
Age						
18-29	0.53	0.32	0.35	0.18	0.81	0.31
30-39	0.38	0.53	–	0.27	–	0.31
40-49	–	0.14	0.25	0.13	0.09	0.20
50-59	0.07	0.02	0.15	0.31	0.09	0.10
60-65	0.13	–	0.15	0.09	–	0.03
65 and over	–	–	0.10	–	–	0.03
Race						
White	0.69	0.88	1	1	0.72	0.93
African-American	0.31	0.12	–	–	0.27	–
Hispanic			–	–	–	–
Other			–	–	–	0.06
Education						
Less than high school	–	–	–	0.04	0.09	0.04
High school degree/GED	0.07	0.03	0.20	0.09	0.09	0.09
Some college	0.84	0.52	0.25	0.27	0.36	0.27
College degree	–	0.44	0.40	0.27	0.27	0.27
Graduate or professional degree	0.07	–	0.15	0.32	0.18	0.32
Income						
Less than 25,000	0.15	0.03	0.10	0.09	0.54	0.09
25,000-49,999	0.54	0.45	0.25	0.09	0.27	0.09
50,000-74,999	0.23	0.44	0.30	0.09	0.09	0.09
75,000-94,999	–	–	0.10	0.13	0.09	0.13
95,000 and above	0.08	0.07	0.25	0.45	–	0.45
n	13	59	20	22	11	29

Note: Due to rounding, columns may not add up to 1.00.

In an interview, a SXSW executive said, "we wanted to bring the music industry from LA and New York to Austin, while still giving Austin a chance to see some great music." Bands apply to participate, and labels submit showcases of several bands. Originally a core feature of the festival was to get recording contracts for participating bands, although that has diminished in recent years. The festival's epicenter is a downtown area with dozens of bars and music venues, a few hotels, and a Convention Center. Because of this entertainment district, a local musician approached city council and suggested Austin be dubbed the 'Live Music Capital of the World,' which became the official slogan in 1991. An economic-impact report showed that SXSW's three festivals combined (music as well as the film and technology events) pumped $168 million into the economy in 2011, and over $190 million in 2012 (Loftsgaarden 2012). In 2012, there were almost 2,300 bands, 104 stages, and almost 19,000 conference participants. South By is, according to the Austin *American-Statesman*, the city's trademark (Beach 2008), matching its more unofficial 'Keep Austin Weird' ethos.

Fieldnote #1

I head to the Convention Center—festooned with logos for Verizon, Miller Lite, IFC, Yaris—and attend three 'business of music' panels. I tour the complex afterward, passing the 'Verizon Phone Charging Station,' 'Dell Computers Lounge,' and another area sponsored and furnished by IKEA.

Stepping out into the hot Texas air I am instantly bombarded by other, less official sponsors, imagery, and sounds. Music rumbles across an empty lot as a band plays on a makeshift stage across the street. I walk by an Energizer Bunny thumping down the sidewalk posing for pictures, and by the music venues along Red River Street using their parking lots for temporary stages. Music rushes through makeshift fences different ads on unofficial banners. In just a few blocks I hear ten different bands, some official, others unofficial. One participant—21-year-old a self described "low ranking intern for a major label"—told me, "music is coming out of every other doorway down here, and I can just pop in, check it out for a while, drink some free beer, and move on."

Branding details the visual landscape during SXSW. When interviewing an A&R man from a small record label, he spoke of the festival's changes and his description immediately turned to the rise of corporate sponsorship. He noticed some marketing in the 1990s, but the "big corporations spending a lot of money" marked his more recent experiences; even his taxi receipt and hotel keycards had advertisements for new albums on them. One record promoter expressed a similarly qualified unease. Despite recognizing the need for corporate "buy-in," and her own participation in the industry at large, she told me she thinks "Austin and South By need to be careful [of] the increasingly obnoxious level of branding."

Prepared to ask a SXSW executive to comment on the development of festival branding over the years, he actually brought it up himself in an interview. He said the major sponsors were still "necessary but new territory" as the music industry comes under increasing economic pressures. He stated that, "nine times out of ten the sponsors come to us because, right now, we're an attractive property." But he was also keen to talk about keeping control over their own brand relationships since the continued success of the festival has led to dozens of unofficial events and, as a result, a wide array of

additional imagery is imprinted on the city. He described this as "guerilla marketing." He sighs a bit, and continues: "It's a shame because it gives the impression that we are overly corporate and overly branded, really, but I'm not sure that there's anything we can do." At the same time, the festival has become one of the city's most visible trademarks itself, intertwining with their official and unofficial mottos.

In creating a unique event, major corporations are eager to sponsor official and unofficial events. The producer of one of these 'guerilla' events said in an interview: "Our sponsors could be a beverage sponsor, a book company with a new book, a messenger bag company. We will tell them: give us X amount of dollars and we will highlight your company, or give out information virally, through the mail, or at the event. And a lot of these companies think that it's great because they don't get this kind of chance to get involved and reach people." The host of another unofficial event (one that was sued by SXSW for including the festival's brand in their promotional materials) said in an interview that "power drinks, beer, radio stations, local promotional companies, smaller magazines all want to be affiliated with cool events," adding, "our free beer isn't free for us and hanging up their [corporate] banner helps pay our bills." He went on to say how he feels bad about how commercialized the event is in general, but on the other hand, "[SXSW] doesn't own the city, and they don't have a right to tell me what kinds of banners I can hang on the side of a venue I rent." SXSW is, in this way, a victim of its own success.

The Newport Folk Festival

Once the summer outpost for Gilded Age families like the Vanderbilts and Astors, Newport holds the finest collection of mansions and colonial homes in all New England. In the middle of the last century, civic groups capitalized on this heritage along with special events like the Jazz and Folk Festivals to position itself as a prime tourist destination (Evans 1997). Riding a mid-century boom of interest in the genre, the Newport Folk Festival began in 1959 by George Wein as a companion to the jazz festival that started two years earlier. Pete and Toshi Seeger established the Newport Folk Foundation in the festival's third year as an attempt to buffer it from commercialization through earmarking profits for maintenance, workshops, and folk music research grants. Contrasting with its resort-for-the-wealthy image, the events brought a countercultural and Civil Rights ethos to Newport (Wein 2004: 321–3). In the early festivals, fans mobbed

Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, and personal interactions between stars and fans were important to the experience with hours-long workshops on playing the dulcimer and autoharp, and panels on folk music. When people rioted at the jazz festival in 1971 promoters cancelled concerts and the city council refused to renew the festivals' licenses. When they started up again in 1985, the festivals moved from downtown Newport two miles to Fort Adams State Park, and have not stopped since. Newport festivals had a combined direct impact of over $3.7 million, and a 2012 economic-impact report found the festivals to have an over $5 million overall impact (Advantage Marketing Information 2013).

Fieldnote #2

It doesn't take long to confirm that the festival is sponsored by the coffee and doughnut behemoth, Dunkin' Donuts (based in nearby Canton, Massachusetts). I pull into the parking lot, designated as the 'Coolatta Lot' and walk from the 'Turbo Ice Lot' to the entrance. A banner reads: 'Dunkin' Donuts Newport Folk Festival.'

I catch Amos Lee, a genre-blending artist, playing a solo set on the Main Stage. I realize that the size of the stage corresponded to a broadening definition of 'folk' music: The bigger acts, the wider the audience appeal, the bigger the stage. Framed by amplifiers and signage, the massive stage dwarfs him. I back up to take in the construction: Over the speakers on either side hangs a 'DD' sign. Few views block pink, orange and brown colors. In front is a photographer pit, and then twenty rows of VIP seating. To the right of the stage are food stands, with long lines curling outward.

I observe it all from under a tent with a sign that reads, "Shade Tent Courtesy of Dunkin' Donuts." When I ask about the corporate sponsors, an audience member agrees with many of those I spoke with, saying she liked Ben & Jerry's better, because it is a better match to the overall feel of the event. Her husband adds, "I guess Dunkin' Donuts is more local as compared to [Ben & Jerry's home state] Vermont, and I wouldn't mind it so much if it weren't on every single thing I look at," punctuating 'every' 'single' and 'thing' pointing to signs in his visual field.

The background of the folk festival's corporate ties took a circuitous path. Founder George Wein explains in his autobiography that, after being uninvited from Newport, RI, KOOL cigarettes came into the picture when he needed a corporate sponsor and how the existence of a competitor's name being 'Newport' led him to dropping the city's name from his New York Newport Jazz Festival (2003: 447–449). In a roundabout way, this commercialization helped sustain the festivals until their return to the city in the early 80s. Wein then developed a for-profit enterprise, Festival Productions, Inc. without, he notes, any complaints from the folk community. Nestlé was the first sponsor, then Ben & Jerry's ice cream, then Apple & Eve fruit juices and in 2007, Dunkin' Donuts. Reminiscences of early festivals may highlight close connections between artists and fans, but today the interactions hew toward selling albums, and the spaces at Fort Adams are oriented for it. In a way, the festival brands facilitate connections and interactions more *actively* than at SXSW. In addition to the iced coffees on a hot summer day, a Gibson guitar-sponsored open-mic tent offers a connection between the consumption of a product and a key experience of the event's historical legacy as a place for everyday folk festivalgoers to interact. The attendee briefly becomes a performer on a nice guitar and listeners get to hear something unique.

The festival's ties to commercialism were, in fact, in flux when research first began. An organizational shift occurred: in 2007 Festival Network LLC bought the Newport brand from Wein and aggressively pursued Dunkin Donuts' corporate sponsorship. As research progressed, the festival's funding structure changed again. Festival Network LLC fell into financial trouble in 2008, and Wein and a new board of directors returned, establishing the Newport Festivals Foundation, a 501(c)(3). This new nonprofit status led to a dramatically different visual landscape: corporate brands were reduced and the most visible logo and branding was of the festival itself. When speaking with attendees, a sentiment was echoed repeatedly: "it now feels more authentic, true to the folk spirit." The ethnographic revisit was vital for an understanding of how the organizational shift affected the symbolic landscape. With no 'marquee-level' sponsorship, the branding of the festival itself replaced the pervasive pink, brown, and orange signage.

Nashville's Country Music Association (CMA) Music Festival

The country music industry has had a long presence in Nashville. In the 1950s David Cobb, a DJ at the local station, WSM, and early

co-host of the Grand Ole Opry casually stated, "the sounds you are hearing on WSM radio were coming from 'Music City U.S.A.'" and the name stuck (Havighurst 2007; see also Peterson 1997). The industry initially produced an annual event for country music DJs, but when fans realized the convention was a way to meet stars and get free food and drinks, organizers developed a fan-centered festival in 1972. A CMA executive spoke in an interview about the complaints attendees had when the festival moved from the State Fairgrounds to downtown Nashville in 2001—because it lost its 'family reunion' ambiance—but now people seem contented with the 'country comes to the city' atmosphere. The CMA reports that the festival itself grew from generating a $10 million impact in 1999 to $30 million in 2011 (Oermann 2011).

Fieldnote #3

At the Country Music Association's 'CMA Kickoff Parade,' crowds packed the sidewalks of Broadway near the Cumberland River and around the city's famed honkytonks, the historic Ryman Auditorium, and the bright new museums, concert halls, and sports stadia. Starting at 3pm, I see a series of six or seven floats pulled by tractors, a few pickup trucks, a racecar, and a few convertibles with celebrities in the backseats, and a high school marching band.

Once the parade is over I visit the 'Chevy Block Party.' In the shadow of the hockey arena, the musicians' lyrics and their sponsoring corporate brand are explicitly signaled out. A pop-country duo, Big & Rich, perform under a Chevrolet banner reading "Save a Horse—Drive a Truck," that echoes their current radio hit, "Save a Horse (Ride a Cowboy)." Well I don't give a dang about nothing / I'm singing and Bling- Blinging/ While the girls are drinking long necks down!/ And I wouldn't trade ol' Leroy or my Chevrolet for your Escalade or your freak parade/I'm the only John Wayne left in this town." During the song, someone distributes Chevy t-shirts to the crowd.

The fusing of Big & Rich's cowboy imagery and Chevy trucks isn't the only symbolic processing at work. In the broader setting, 'Music City U.S.A.' is the official slogan of the Convention and Visitors Bureau. One of the top people in the CVB spoke of the "huge embrace" in an interview. He said

that they worked hard on a strategic plan to "own" the Music City brand and "deliver it" through the CMA Fest. The making of Music City—as in the actual work of Nashville's music industry and its professionals—occurs one mile west of Lower Broad, in a nexus of businesses called Music Row. The muted office buildings occupied by the publishing houses, radio stations, record label offices, and recording studios contrast with the bustle of those old honkytonks. Musing over this spatial disconnect and the experiential side of the music branding, the CVB executive asked rhetorically, "but how does a visitor really *touch* it?" His answer was, of course, in the festival's ability to ground "Music City," so that, in his words "at every point that you touch a visitor you remind him that you're in a city that is a creative hub, that a tremendous amount of music comes out of here." And indeed, the Lower Broad area is flush with music-related activity. Its honkytonks do not surpass Austin's entertainment districts in number, but when added to the other cultural institutions and municipal resources (e.g., parks, LP Stadium, convention center), they form an impressive entertainment nexus.

In interviews, CMA festivalgoers seemed uniformly nonplussed by corporate sponsors and indicated that country songs like Toby Keith's hit "Red Solo Cup" (which led to people strolling down Lower Broad wearing necklaces made of Solo cups), Blake Shelton's "Kiss My Country Ass" (which includes lyrics like "Well, I love turkey calls, overalls, Wrangler jeans/smoke nothin' but Marlboro Reds"), and Jason Aldean's "Big Green Tractor" easily intermix country themes with commercialism. Product placement in lyrics is almost as common as Hank Williams name-checks and evocations of simple, small-town living. Representative of many of those I spoke with on these matters, one interviewee explained, "Well, that's just the air I breathe, I guess. I don't pay no notice." On Lower Broad, when asked about what they noticed at the festival, most folks would eagerly talk about the musicians and their fellow audience members, whom they described as "earthy" and "down home" people. When asked to discuss corporate imagery, few responded directly, preferring to echo the ethos of "country living."

Citing the festival's corporate ties, a CMA executive talked about how sponsorships defer costs for the festivalgoer. In an interview he boasted the "good fortune" of being attractive to corporate America because the event is "very safe, it's very family-friendly, it's very wholesome. It fits the imagery for a lot of corporations . . . "He described how the CMA was an early adopter of corporate sponsorship, making pitches to Wrangler, Crisco, Chevy, and the like—all heavily outlined in the fieldnote—to advertise to country fans since 1988.

To compare the three events, there are some clear similarities and differences. Certainly organizers and city stakeholders for each event were cognizant of the issues that branding creates. Newport has to contend with its old image of folk anti-corporate authenticity, while (until recently) still needing a marquee brand like Dunkin' Donuts to provide the economic resources needed for producing such an undertaking. Meanwhile, the CMA Fest shirked any authentic 'down home' or 'family reunion' country atmosphere and, in its move to downtown Nashville, embraced corporate branding, as festival organizers eagerly recruit corporate sponsorships to thematize any and all event activities. Perhaps SXSW is the most interesting of the three. SXSW is an ultra-hip festival but also a music industry convention, which means that organizers walk a razor's edge between indie credibility and commercial viability. Its hip culture only attracts greater attention from outsider groups and, its use of a dispersed area of downtown Austin offers alternative events the chance to capitalize upon the official proceedings and, in so doing, add guerilla marketing to the festival's visual landscape.

These three subsections introduced each city's crafted place character, be it the historical and elite resort ethos of Newport, Nashville's 'Music City U.S.A.' brand, or Austin's official 'Live Music Capital of the World' and unofficial 'Keep Austin Weird' brands. Although there is an easy embrace between music culture and local culture in Nashville and Austin, Newport is the locale with the most strained history between the two, leading to greater concern among city stakeholders.

But are the concerns over branding warranted across all cases? How do different groups of festivalgoers perceive these three festivalized landscapes? We should know what the participants think.

Festivalgoers' Perspectives on Branding and Place Attachment

The above ethnographic data reaffirms the dominance of corporate imagery in these settings. The corporatized placemaking that those like Zukin identified in the 1990s has blossomed into a clear strategy for city's place-identity, paving the way for commercial marketing into public sphere via culture. We now see how branding seeps from the visual to the aural, from the name on the tickets to the experiences.

While Mommaas writes that brands, as tied to locations, allow for the continual and collective recognition and identification of place (2002: 34), when a cultural event like a festival is mapped over by corporate brands, the festival producers, corporate marketing executives, performers,

the surrounding cultural communities, and the festivalgoers themselves, have a stake in knowing how these images shape participants' perspectives on the event and the locale. And so, to see placemaking from all angles, we now need to know how such recognition and identification play out for the festivalgoers themselves.

Matching Descriptive Survey Data of Festivalgoers with Qualitative Data

To move to how the symbolic landscape is perceived by participants we turn to survey data collected at all three sites, concentrating on questions regarding the relationship between music, place, and branding. Although much more data was collected, we focus here on the *number of times festivalgoers attended the festivals* and their *level of participation in music in their lives*, to then compare those measures with participants' perceptions of the festivals and their cities.

For *number of times visited* we generated a categorical variable for how often respondents visited the festival: those who attended the festival once, one to three times, and more than three times. We measured *brand awareness* by asking festivalgoers "Have you noticed corporate sponsors at [this festival]? If so, what are your impressions?" and then categorized their responses as positive, negative or no impression. For *degree of music participation* we used questions about purchasing music, playing an instrument, or writing about or producing music, and then created a measure of music participation for labeling respondents as having no (= 0), low (= 1), medium (= 2), and high (= 3) levels of participation in the music genre. We compared this data to see if brand awareness varied across different levels of music engagement and across the festivals. And last, we measure respondents' *location awareness*, by their response to the phrase: "When I think of Austin/Newport/Nashville, I think of SXSW/Folk Festival/CMA Fest."

We can now turn to bivariate analysis of each site with respect to brand and location awareness, as well as degree of music participation. First, Table 3 provides a univariate analysis of the number of times a festivalgoer attended that festival. From this we see that SXSW had the most festivalgoers who attended more than three times (which makes sense for an industry event), 50% of respondents were attending Newport for the first time, and a higher rate of one to three festivals attended for the CMA Fest (see Table 3). There is some assumption that repeated participation correlates to greater awareness of a particular festival.

Table 3: Distribution (in percentages) of Out-of-Town Respondents in Three Locations by Number of Times Visited

	Number of times visited		
	First time	2-3 times	> 3 times
Austin	41.46	17.07	41.46
Newport	50	22.73	27.27
Nashville	35	41.67	23.33

Table 4: Distribution of Out-of-Town Respondents' Brand Awareness by Number of Times Visited

		No impressions	Positive impressions	Negative impressions
Austin	First time	–	76.47	23.53
	2-3 times	–	71.43	28.57
	> 3 times	40	40	20
Newport	First time	–	92.31	7.69
	2-3 times	–	60	40
	> 3 times	–	50	50
Nashville	First time	75	25	–
	2-3 times	79.17	20.83	–
	> 3 times	71.43	28.57	–

Table 5: Brand Awareness and Sponsor Impressions of Out-of-Town Respondents by Level of Music Participation

		No impressions	Positive impressions	Negative impressions
Austin	No participation	–	–	–
	Low	66.67	33.33	–
	Medium	100	–	–
	High	21.05	78.95	–
Newport	No participation	16.67	66.67	16.67
	Low	14.29	85.71	–
	Medium	11.11	77.78	11.11
	High	–	–	–
Nashville	No participation	75	16.67	8.33
	Low	44.74	31.58	23.68
	Medium	75	–	25
	High	–	–	–

Table 4 shows nuances across cases. In Austin and Newport, first time attendees report more positive brand and sponsor impressions than those who attended more than once. In Nashville, more than 70% of attendees in all three categories (i.e., first time, two to three times, more than three times) declare having no impressions of sponsors or brand awareness.

Table 5 illustrates how festivalgoers' degree of music participation relates to their brand awareness and sponsor impressions. Because

SXSW's respondents were likely to be in, or aspiring to be in, the music industry (indicated by their comparatively higher participation in music), overwhelmingly positive impressions of corporate imagery in the results are unsurprising here, too: those who have a high level of music participation have almost 2.5 times more positive brand awareness and sponsor impressions than those who disclose having low levels of music participation, and no SXSW respondents claim negative brand awareness and sponsor impressions. However, respondents in Newport and Nashville respond low levels of brand awareness as well, supporting the evidence presented in the ethnographic fieldnotes. In Newport almost 15% of those who report low music participation have no brand awareness and sponsor impressions, whereas 85% declare positive impressions. Almost 10% of those who report medium levels of participation have negative or no impressions, respectively, compared to almost 80% who declare having positive impressions. In Nashville, 75% of those who report no participation in country music also report having no brand awareness or sponsor impressions, compared to almost 15% and 10% of the participants who disclose having positive and negative brand awareness or sponsor impressions, respectively. Only 25% of those who claim medium level of participation in the music genre have negative impressions, compared with almost 30% who report positive impressions.

Next, we investigated how brand awareness and location awareness were related. In all three locations, 85%, 70%, and 75% of the respondents that held positive brand impressions agreed with the above phrase for their respective festivals (e.g., "When I think of Nashville, I think of the CMA Fest"). Such high levels of agreement show that respondents positively linked the festivals with their cities, contributing to their place identity. (A similar question asked if the respondent agreed with the statement "The festival is good for the city," to which *no one* disagreed across all three sites—although 22% of Newport festivalgoers responded "don't know.") At the same time, participants in general have few concerns over festival sponsorship, and seem to agree that the identity of place and festivals are undisturbed by sponsorship. We compared this finding with an additional question asking respondents if they would agree with the statement, "I would like the festival more if it was in New York or Los Angeles," on a Likert scale (see Table 6).

In all three locations, then, participants almost disagree completely with a phrase regarding moving the festival's location. In addition, Table 6 shows that attendees are more likely to disagree with the statement the more they attended the festivals.

Table 6: Distribution (in percentages) of Out-of-Town Visitors' Preference for Another Location for the Festival by Years of Attendance across Three Festival Locations

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
Austin	First year	29.41	52.94	–		17.65
	2-3 years	71.43	28.57	–	–	–
	> 3 years	40	60	–	–	–
Newport	First year	15.38	76.92	7.69	–	–
	2-3 years	40	60	–	–	–
	> 3 years	50	50	–	–	–
Nashville	First year	52.38	47.62	–	–	–
	2-3 years	60	36	4	–	–
	> 3 years	71.43	28.57	–	–	–

Table 7: Distribution (in percentages) of Out-of-Town Respondents' Brand Awareness/Impressions by Location Awareness

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Austin	No impressions	–	42.86	42.86	14.29
	Positive impressions	–	15	60	25
	Negative impressions	–	50	50	–
Newport	No impressions	33.33	33.33	33.33	–
	Positive impressions	–	29.41	58.82	11.76
	Negative impressions	–	50	–	50
Nashville	No impressions	–	15.62	81.25	3.12
	Positive impressions	–	42.86	57.14	–
	Negative impressions	–	33.33	66.67	–

Taken in sequence, Tables 5, 7 and 6 develop a clearer understanding of the relationship between festivals, brands and their locales. We see a clear influence of repeated participation on the overall attachment of the festivals with their cities. However, as we discussed above, depending on the local culture, the festival/city link holds different outcomes on people's brand awareness.There were some important differences across the festivals that can be gleaned from connecting the qualitative and quantitative data and comparing across cases. For example, first-time attendees to the Newport Folk Festival in 2007—questioned at the height of the Dunkin' Donuts branding—had a better impression of brands and sponsors than those who attended the festival previously; in interviews this latter group was more likely to talk about how the festival "used to be," and to express disappointment over increasing commercialization. At the same time, they seemed to know that a folk festival's corporate branding is as unavoidable as it is paradoxical. Perhaps Newport festivalgoers have the strongest negative

impressions of branding, due to a folk-music inspired anti-establishment ethos and a desire for the "folk authenticity" interviewees in 2010 described.

Conversely, the more festivalgoers went to SXSW, the more likely they were to have a positive impression of corporate branding. Despite the "hipness" of such an "indie" event, South By attendees are likely to be working in the music industry itself or, as is more often the case, hoping to find a career there. This connection for participants was, as interview data indicates, a major concern for producers of both the official and unofficial events. While attendees griped in open-ended interviews, when it came to answering survey questions, respondents showed clear acceptance of the imagery.

The country-music festivalgoers in Nashville were altogether different than those in either Newport or Austin. To explain the more than 70% of those surveyed stating no impressions of sponsors or brand awareness, regardless of how many times they had attended the festival, a reasonable hypothesis that can be drawn from the ethnographic and interview data is that branding is 'baked in the cake' for that music genre—from the paired branding of bands and corporate logos in festival activities down to the very lyrics of country songs themselves. As such, interviewees with CMA festivalgoers, when prompted, expressed little concern over Chevy and Wrangler imagery, matching the findings of the survey data.

Because SXSW participants have higher levels of commitment and participation in the music industry, we were eager to compare results across all three locations by respondents who reported having "high participation" in the music (i.e., respondents who bought music, but also played an instrument, worked in the industry, wrote about music, etc.) with those who had little participation (i.e., respondents who went to the festival, but bought little music over the previous year). Expectedly, a greater percentage of people surveyed at SXSW participated in a wider range of music activities than those at the other two locations, explaining their even greater positive impressions of corporate imagery: attendees with high levels of music participation reported positive brand awareness and sponsor impressions more than two and a half times those who had lower levels of music participation. In fact, no SXSW respondents declared negative brand awareness or sponsor impressions, counter to the festival's seemingly anti-establishment and hip reputation and the city's overarching 'Keep Austin Weird' spirit. Teasing out this dynamic led to some solid differences between SXSW participants and the festivalgoers at the other two locations.

How closely do attendees perceive the tie between festivals and their locations or, as referred to here, their *place character*? This certainly was a major concern in interviews with city stakeholders and festival organizers, detailed earlier. For one more example, another of South By's founders, Louis Black, emphasized the link between the festival and the city's territorial branding:

> If we tried to do this anywhere else it wouldn't work. You go to Park City, Utah, the week before or after Sundance [Film Festival] and you would never know that this was a town that had a film festival because there is nothing there about it. You go to Austin any day of the year and it is exactly the same as SXSW—it's just not as intense. . . . There is more programming of films in this town and better music in this town than almost anywhere else on a regular basis. And it's accessible and affordable (*Austin Daze* 2006).

Black's point about Sundance could be applied to Newport too, although he would have a harder time making these claims about Nashville.

One could approach the issue of the connection between these festivals and their locations in the minds of the attendees with a similar skepticism as to the topic of corporate branding: If most festivalgoers either did not notice or did not mind how corporations imprinted themselves onto the visual map, would they actually have strong feelings about the relationship between festivals and their locations? The survey determined this through an initial question on the respondent preference for the festival to stay where it was, and then followed up later in the survey by asking whether the respondent would like the festival better if it were in New York or Los Angeles. The first question elicited a predominately positive response, whereas the second received an overwhelmingly negative response. People like the festivals, and they like their placedness. For mayors, city managers, and organizers, these festivals are their city's "signature event," and survey respondents at all three locales certainly echoed Louis Black's feelings of a strong connection between place and event. All three festivals were positively linked with the hosting cities in the minds of those surveyed, all three contributed to the identity of the place, and repeated participation strengthened the attachment between festivals and their cities.

In each of these sites we see how, in different ways, corporate brands come to stand alongside the branding of place: Newport in 2007 is dominated by a primary brand that overtakes the place name itself and

clashes with the anti-establishment ethos of folk music; Austin has a battery of corporate imagery happily broadcast by organizers who must contend with the over-branding of unofficial festival events; and in Nashville there are family-friendly branding ties with different events, including those that burrow deep into the scene itself, down to the lyrics themselves. With a recent move to 501(c)(3) nonprofit status Newport's symbolic future is in the midst of a transformation to lessen corporate imagery, whereas both Austin and Nashville's festivals show few signs of veering from their paths.

Conclusions: Music in its Place

In an interview, Newport's festival producer expressed astonishment that the onetime resented festivals have now, with their success, "become part of their [city's] identity." As companies once shaped life in industrialized cities, from the street plan to social interactions to the social geography (Kornblum 1974; Mumford 1966), corporate imagery in the post-industrial age is now embedded seamlessly into experiences of places today via, among other avenues, music festivals. As festivals become "signature events" for urban stakeholders, paying close attention to how—and how effectively—corporations participate in festivalized placemaking allows us to identify and assess the avenues of corporate branding's symbolic intrusion via urban music events.

A street-level perspective provides a sense of the intrusion of corporate culture into place, humming with a variety of melodies, demonstrating an abundance of corporate branding attached directly to music-themed experiences—from Wrangler to Dunkin' Donuts to the Energizer bunny. And interview data shows that festival organizers and city stakeholders cautiously embrace brands and work to develop relationships with corporations. Yet, the data from festivalgoer surveys shows that these sponsorships do not stoke negative feelings across locales. In fact, our data illustrates a bond, or place attachment, between festival and city amongst festivalgoers, but a decided lack of awareness of corporate sponsorship. Strong place identity appears to trump corporate branding.

As mentioned at the outset: There are a many factors at work in and around music festivals, but in highlighting people's understandings of visual and aural experiences from multiple perspectives indicates a tightly bound symbolic knot of festivals, place, and brands. Further research should tease out more issues than those we have identified here.

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