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MSc Marketing with Festival and Event Management

Masters Dissertation

SESSION 2024/25

TITLE

**BEYOND THE CONTRACT: EDINBURGH FESTIVAL
FRINGE PERFORMERS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS
WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

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Declaration

I declare that the work undertaken for this MSc Dissertation has been undertaken by myself and the final Dissertation produced by me. The work has not been submitted in part or in whole in regard to any other academic qualification.

Title of Dissertation:

Beyond the Contract: Edinburgh Festival Fringe Performers and their Relationships with Key Stakeholders

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Date: 28/04/25

Abstract

The research critically explores performers' relationships at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, particularly festival stakeholder connections relative to Fringe artists' campaigns. The study is introduced by critically examining the significance of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in the context of event-specific development. A comprehensive review of literature on the importance of festival stakeholders, the link between public relations and marketing and the perception of Edinburgh provided the context for this analysis. The research employs a qualitative methodology, conducting semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders of the Edinburgh Fringe and adopting an interpretivist research philosophy. The findings highlight the strategic use of power within the interconnected social structures that exist at the festival, the collective stakeholder objective in the enhancement of performers' artistic experience and the continued recognition of the value of performers participating at the Edinburgh Fringe. This study provides an illuminating view of stakeholder connections and their importance in a festival context. It supports stakeholder theory and social network analysis previously developed in this area and identifies its application in relation to shaping the campaigns of visiting companies. The results have important implications on festival longevity and the need for further analysis of connections for both researchers and festival stakeholders concerning core organisers that can significantly contribute to performers campaigns and elevate their arts and culture escapade.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The research focus of this dissertation is the relationships of visiting companies at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, with a specific focus on performer experiences and the support received from festival stakeholders in accomplishing rewarding media and marketing communications. Qualitative data collection is utilised to encourage conversations that achieve pivotal insights from performing artists and key Fringe stakeholders. These semi-structured interviews were used to illuminate Fringe relations and critically assess and explore visiting companies' connections and stakeholders' support efforts in the creation of fulfilling marketing campaigns.

This chapter aims to provide introductory information of the research opportunity with a focus on gaining a better understanding of the importance of festival stakeholders at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and its contribution to addressing the existing literature gap. The preface to the study area will be presented, followed by a detailed description of research aim and objectives. Moreover, this chapter will include a brief outline of the methodology. Finally, the last section will detail the chapter information and structure of the thesis.

1.2 Study Area

As the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society (2024) communicate the Edinburgh Fringe hosts the world's greatest platform for creative freedom. However, many visiting companies have motivations to go beyond the simple enjoyment of performing at the Edinburgh Fringe. Thus, performers are committed to effective strategy creation that enhances their campaign marketability (Batchelder et al., 2006, pp. 33–34). This promise to support artists throughout their Fringe runs resonates with many of the festival's stakeholders including venues, marketing specialists, public relations professionals and the Fringe Society, whom will be further explored for this research.

Festivals and events have experienced immense growth in recent decades in which organisers continue to develop event strategies that professionalise their management

approach to worldwide event destinations (Armbrecht et al., 2020a). Moreover, some authors reiterate Festivals Edinburgh's reliance on the city's tourism business outputs to provide annual support that hugely contributes to the growth of Edinburgh's major festivals (Hague, 2021) particularly the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Academics highlight the key events of Edinburgh that contribute to its tourism economy with the use of effective destination branding (Jago et al., 2003). The authors claim that a significant element in the relationship between special events and tourism exists with event imagery and media efforts transpiring to the destination, enhancing the visual brand of the destination. This relationship suggests one of the primary reasons for staging an event at a destination can strengthen the image of a place and improve awareness of a destination (Jago et al., 2003).

Nowadays, the ongoing success of Edinburgh's Festivals and the continuous development of Edinburgh's credible reputation as a festival city becomes dependent on The Festivals Forum (Festivals Edinburgh, 2022). Contributors of the forum define its purpose as a high-level commission affair in which Edinburgh Festivals stakeholders create and review strategic objectives in maintaining the success of each major festival in Edinburgh. Moreover, this curated strategy intends to nurture Edinburgh's position as a festival city by delivering cultural, social and economic benefits to the Scottish capital. In addition, the benefactors of the forum make a promise to encourage and support positive working relationships between the festivals and their stakeholders. The latter objective coincides with what Batt and Purchase (2004) emphasise in their theoretical foundations work on stakeholder theory. Four strategies of growth, development, maintenance and when all avenues are exhausted, abandonment are utilised by organisations who wish to reinforce their key stakeholder relationships. These strategies relate to managerial perceptions of stakeholders' abilities to support the festival or threaten its performance (Andersson & Getz, 2008a).

Stakeholder theory appears to play a crucial role in nourishing the link between the use of stakeholder power and its effect on festival success (Getz, 2002). Further academic stakeholder literature indicates "the development of a model placing festival organisers in the centre of a network of key stakeholders" (Getz et al., 2007). The authors emphasise the model's interconnected nature between festival actors which suggests some stakeholders perform differently when roles overlap. However, there

is limited literature that explores performing companies as key stakeholders and their ability to make use of network relations at a festival such as the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Therefore, it seems desirable to conduct more investigation in this subject area with a specific focus on visiting companies' perspectives towards stakeholder theories, their supporting networks and their application in campaign development.

Indeed, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society focus primarily on the open to all festival access that celebrates all performing arts in attendance and this obligation to look out for each other (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society & McCarthy, 2024) in the Fringe ecosystem. Moreover, some academics suggest that more research should be undertaken in relation to participants' support at the Edinburgh Fringe (Ashcroft, 2021). Hence, this study intends to aid further research and fill the evident gap in existing literature. However, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of what visiting companies' relationships exist at the Edinburgh Fringe and how these connections are exercised, it is worth considering not only the perspectives of the performers but those of the key festival stakeholders. By following this approach, it will identify whether the artists receive the desired campaign assistance and provide evidence for further discussion and theoretical development.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

Aim

The main focus of this research is to critically analyse the relationship between performing companies and key festival stakeholders at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Further analysis will address the support available from venues, the Fringe Society and public relations specialists regarding marketing and media communications at the performing arts festival.

Objectives

The objectives for this research are as follows:

- To review relevant literature in the areas of festival stakeholders, event marketing and public relations and the destination of Edinburgh as it pertains to enabling artist support at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

- To develop a research methodology that incorporates both stakeholders and performers perspectives in an effort to determine if there are any disconnects that hinder marketing campaign support
- To collect, present and thematically analyse primary data in relation to performers fulfilling Fringe runs at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe
- To draw conclusions and provide recommendations based on primary and secondary research for visiting companies and festival stakeholders involved at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

1.4 Justification for Aim and Objectives

Stakeholder theory suggests an organisation will function better and remain sustainable if the interests of all participating stakeholders are addressed (Van Niekerk & Getz, 2016). Van Niekerk and Getz (2019) further examine the extent to which mainstream theory can be employed in event-specific development and its influence on event management practice. Moreover, stakeholder interests are considered diverse in the festival network which can sway each power position. When power is understood to be imbalanced, particularly if incongruous stakeholder control is experienced, it can significantly affect stakeholder participation in a festival (Ralston et al., 2005). In addition, the misuse of stakeholder power and failure to utilise existing networks can impact the relationships between stakeholders, their outputs and the long-term viability of the entire festival.

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe consists of thousands of components. The coherent management in cooperation with stakeholders, aids the delivery of the curated arts festival platform and its “open to anyone” marketplace (McCarthy & Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2025). The Edinburgh Fringe provides a prime opportunity for visiting companies to increase their visibility, build their marketing campaign and form connections (Batchelder et al., 2006) that enhance their Fringe run. Therefore, it seems appropriate to use visiting companies at one of the largest performance arts festivals to further analyse, critically assess and seek their stakeholder relationships in theory and practice in regard to valuable communication efforts. As Jarman (2020, p.100) emphasises “network-based research has much to contribute to our

understanding of the nature and practice of Fringe festivals, both conceptually and also analytically”. Therefore, the aim and objectives outlined above are appropriate for the research purpose.

1.5 Methodology

In order to achieve the proposed research aim and objectives, interpretivism was employed as a suitable research philosophy to develop an understanding of research participants’ actions in the social world (Bell et al., 2022, p. 31). The selected research philosophy is being applied through further analysis of participants’ explanations. Research methods are applied as the primary data collection technique. Data collection was obtained in the form of semi-structured interviews with a selection of Edinburgh Festival Fringe stakeholders inclusive of artists, venue managers, public relations professionals and Fringe Society senior management. The qualitative method allowed for an in-depth understanding of the nature and character of festival stakeholders and the role of their relationship with performers in their lived Fringe experiences. This method satisfied the research aim and objectives and expedited further understanding of festival alliances.

1.6 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is split into five chapters and includes a review of existing literature that relates to the research study area, an outline of methodology and research methods utilised, a discussion on the study’s findings, and finally a conclusion with an exploration of the research subject area accompanied by further recommendations.

Chapter One: Introduction aims to introduce the chosen festival – the Edinburgh Festival Fringe – and the research area that requires further study. Background information about the festival and its location are provided to gain a better understanding of the festival, its stakeholders and the relationships that exist with visiting companies. Context is given to communications strategies. A research summary is presented that illustrates the overarching purpose of the study with a rationale of the chosen aim and objectives. The final section gives a brief overview of the research methods and philosophy employed for the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review examines relevant literature surrounding the significance of festival stakeholders, the collaborative networks that these stakeholders operate and their connections with a major performing arts festival like the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Moreover, the concept of marketing the arts is highlighted with the exploration of the role of public relations utilised as a marketing tool in communication strategies. The final section discusses the destination of Edinburgh and its cultural connotations in relation to the Edinburgh Fringe.

Chapter Three: Methodology provides an overview and explanation of the methods selected to aid this dissertation and complete the research study. First, the selected research philosophy is examined and applied to the conducting of research. Thereafter, the chapter discusses the qualitative approach implemented, detailing methods used to collect and analyse primary data. The quality of the research data is further addressed with ethical considerations emphasised. Finally, limitations of the study are underlined.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion presents findings and analysis of the interviews conducted with Edinburgh Festival Fringe visiting companies, Fringe Society managers, arts and culture PRs and Fringe venue management. The data collected during semi-structured interviews provided in-depth insight into visiting companies' relationships at the Edinburgh Fringe, allowing an enriched understanding of the nature of these relationships and their influence on performers' marketing and media campaigns.

Chapter Five: Conclusion accentuates the explorative opportunity of this study in the arts and culture industry with particular emphasis on visiting companies' perspectives. It draws conclusions from the collection of analysed literature and collected primary data. Finally, it provides recommendations for enhancing performer relationships at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and suggests future research that should be undertaken.

1.7 Conclusion

The outline of the five chapters aspires to offer the reader an understanding of the dissertation structure and draw attention to specific themes regarding visiting companies' relationships and their marketing campaigns at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. In addition, it presents the means used to ensure the research aim and objectives are met.

This chapter provided preliminary information about the study and clarified its focus. The evident research gap in visiting companies' relationships at the Edinburgh Fringe, is introduced and justification for its selection and relevance to the literature is underlined. The research aim and objectives were specified and the structure of the dissertation was defined. The next chapter offers a review of the literature in the areas of festival stakeholder theories, public relations in marketing the arts and the place of Edinburgh in relation to its visitors and festival attendees.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As a means of fulfilling one of the research objectives, this chapter explores relevant literature surrounding the research study. Firstly, festival stakeholder relationships are addressed in defining their crucial nature towards festival operations with significant dependency on their networks. This allows a discussion around the definitive lines visible between key festival stakeholders. Secondly, the focus will turn to an analysis of the marketing communications landscape. In addition, the importance of public relations as a marketing asset concerning Edinburgh Festival Fringe campaigns will be underlined. Finally, the host city of Edinburgh as a cultural destination will be discussed and analysed further.

2.2 Stakeholders' importance In Festivals

In the interest of festival operations, key organisers are required in the decision-making process from the concept origin. Festival stakeholders are recognised as the groups of people who are fundamental to the outcome and life cycle (Freeman, 2004) of an event. The principle of the stakeholder theory emphasises the importance of understanding and strategically managing stakeholders across multiple aspects (Van Niekerk & Getz, 2019) of a festival's performance. Furthermore, stakeholder theory suggests that an organisation will be more sustainable and function better if the influence of stakeholders is considered (Freeman; 2010, Freeman et al., 2004). Authors imply that stakeholder engagement is frequently seen as necessary in achieving the legal and acceptable festival's goals (Sharples et al., 2014). Festivals are defined as sacred periods for celebration (Falassi, 1987), giving expression to a specific place and encouraging the hypothesising nature that the place in question may be treated as a unifying concept (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013). This suggests that the people of Edinburgh and those who operate within one of the host destination's festivals, like the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, acquire a sense of belonging and consider themselves part of the cultural performance festivity. Moreover, stakeholder theory is appreciated as the festival's organisers utilise the Fringe's outcomes by understanding

the contributions, goals, and concerns of stakeholders who co-produce the festival (Sharples et al., 2014).

Indeed, festivals are coproduced by a collection of stakeholders where festival organisers facilitate the event's outcomes by interpreting stakeholders' offerings and aims (Sharples et al., 2014). In addition, authors emphasise the diverse interests that lie with festival stakeholders coupled with the various positions of power within the festival network and suggest these should be recognised and comprehended by actions (Freeman, 2010; Karlsen & Nordström, 2009). This implies that festival organisers must pursue beneficial stakeholder relationships that display strong collaborative efforts towards the overall production of festivals where each strategic objective can be attained fully (Sharples et al., 2014). It becomes increasingly important for festival organisers to discuss and interpret various perspectives and evaluate if the projected outcomes are achieved.

Moreover, it becomes evident that no festival exists without a given context for its operation or without any connections between itself as an event and the surrounding world. As Getz, Andersson and Larson (2007) emphasise in hypothetical terms, festivals are "players" within an environment where objectives and resources for the event are discussed among multiple stakeholders. These authors suggest that the festival operates in two-way interactions and forms relationships that benefit their endeavours within the event environment (Karlsen & Nordström, 2009). This form of communication materialises due to the festival's central position to objectives, implying significant economic, social and cultural outputs benefit its surrounding environment.

With further elaboration on stakeholder theory, Clarkson (1995) defines primary stakeholders as those who maintain direct investment in a festival organisation with secondary stakeholders possessing a public interest stake towards the same organisation. This implies that these stakeholders operate at the centre where surrounding networks become more dependent on them. In contrast, those stakeholders who wish to be immersed in engagement efforts towards the public are expressed as active (Ponsford and Williams, 2010). These authors continue emphasising their definition of passive stakeholders in that information is frequently required, occupying various media channels with precise outputs. Moreover, it

becomes clear that passive stakeholders are not fully involved in festival operations decision-making conversations but may be affected by the organisation's outcomes due to the indirect nature of their stakeholder relationship. Both authors suggest some stakeholder relationships are more important than others in a strategic business sense and can be applied with careful consideration towards the organisation and its connections that exist outside of the core management networks (Getz & Niekerk, 2019).

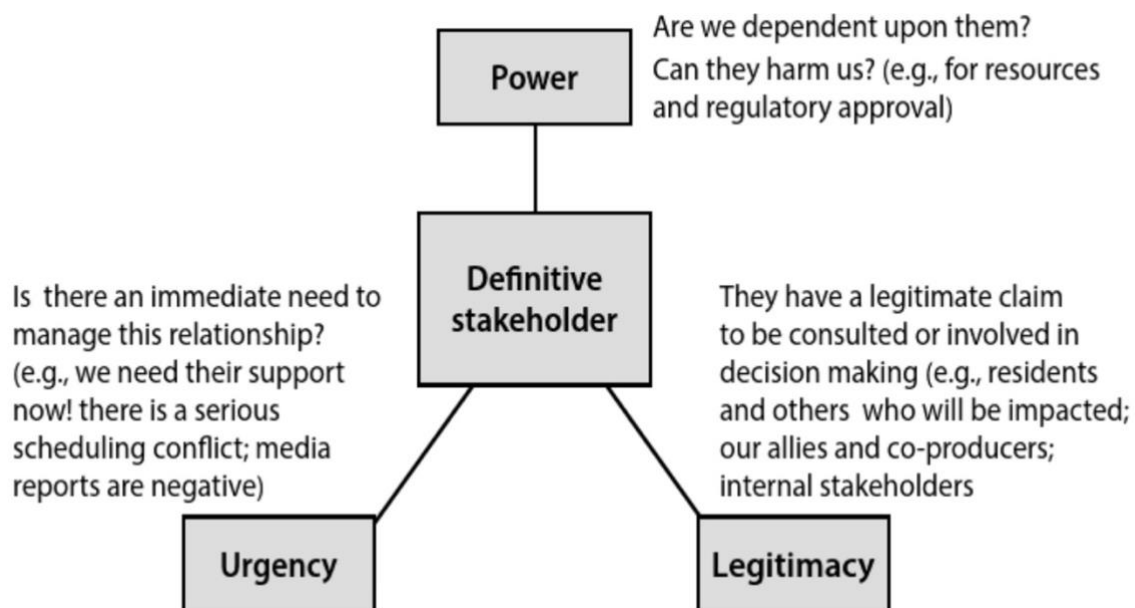


Figure 1 – The Saliency Model for Stakeholder Classification (Mitchell et al., 1997)

Source: Stakeholder typology: one, two or three attributes present from *Event Stakeholders: Theory and Methods for event management and tourism* by Getz and Niekerk (2019), p. 39

Mitchell et al (1997) illustrate a more desirable approach (Figure 1) in classifying stakeholders with their argument of organising each into three attributes that regulate a strong salience among festival stakeholders. This model further explains that with the combination of power, urgency and legitimacy, stakeholders are understood to be definitive in their networks. The author defines the first attribute of power as the method of controlling information and resources. This continues with an argument regarding the use of power having positive and negative outcomes and is open to interpretation from supporting stakeholders. The power can fall to the collective of stakeholders whereby their strategic discussion questions their reliance on duty to festival operations (Bowdin et al., 2023) and the capability of damaging the definitive operating

network. Moreover, French philosopher Michel Foucault stated that power cannot be concentrated in the hands of a single person, body or system (Kaldybekov et al., 2023). Foucault continues by underpinning their argument on stakeholder power by emphasising its omnipresent nature at each level of the social body, whereby stakeholder relationships should be perceived as a power agreement (Getz & Niekerk, 2019, p. 39) used by one or more persons for regulatory purposes.

Mitchell et al (1997) further imply their social science concepts by defining the second attribute of legitimacy. A stakeholder signifies legitimacy whilst managers may not believe certain groups are legitimate in the sense that their demands on the organisation are improper. Thus, they should provide these groups with legitimacy in terms of their capacity to influence the company's course of action. Articulating from a manager's perspective, legitimacy is understood as admissible resources and time spent on stakeholders (Phillips, 2003) without consideration towards their reasonable demands. The third attribute of the model is urgency, referring to the degree to which stakeholder requests are given immediate attention. This implies the positioning of stakeholders to stakeholder relationship management in terms of time sensitivity and critically defining the bases of urgency (Myllykangas et al., 2010).

In stakeholder literature, these authors are transparent in the examination of value creation that manifests in stakeholder relationships, although these exchanges must be treated as relational exchanges rather than direct transactional trades between an organisation and its stakeholders. Critical relationships consisting of a company and its stakeholders cannot be specified as simple transactional meetings (Freeman & Liedtka, 1997). Instead, stakeholder relations should include collaboration with an influence from relevant networks (Myllykangas et al., 2010). Larson (2009) suggests it can be hard to comprehend festival operations as a standalone enterprise as many actors are concerned with the project. In fact, communication of several initiatives that organise and promote the festival in diverse methods becomes more pertinent. This author continues to express the inter-organisational structure that assembles itself by actors operating in the same event space on practical festival interests. For instance, festival stakeholders of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, including performers, venue management, the Fringe Society and arts publicists, share a passion for succeeding at the Fringe Festival. As Larson (2009) suggests, each actor exists in this

interconnected festival network with the interaction between firms and organisations having a “favourable impact on innovation” (De Propris, 2002).

In addition, the authors argue the importance of social network analysis (SNA) in further investigating these social structures. With its application to festivals and event networks, it becomes appropriate to consider the potential contributions and uniqueness that SNA possesses (Jarman et al., 2014). This framework can be implemented to seize aspects of social relations, such as structure and form, whilst considering the internal and external perspectives of a network-connected community (Edwards, 2010). Several city destinations worldwide host a range of festivals and events where networks can be spotlighted with the use of social network analysis. Thus, destinations like Scotland’s capital, Edinburgh, plays host to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which contributes to festival economies, encouraging specific stakeholder groups to unite. Authors imply that SNA is utilised to recognise the festival’s social actors’ influence on each other with a decisive review of their influences (Christakis & Fowler, 2011; Jarman et al., 2014) and other powers that may not be evident.

Nevertheless, these academics recognise the importance of maintaining stakeholder relationships that benefit such festivals and events, yet the focus shifts to identifying stakeholders’ identities. As Morgan (1980) states, event management researchers frequently adopt metaphors to describe organisational structure. This implies that the use of a metaphor aids the approximation of a specific subject. As the process of relationship building is a fundamental asset in event networks, Larson (2008a) argues The “Political Market Square” metaphor intends to aid the analysis of relational interactions by use of their theoretical model in events networking. The model operates from a political perspective towards stakeholder relations. Getz (1991) emphasises its relevance to events as they are often exposed to political endeavours that unfold between actors in the interconnections. This suggests frequent competition is present among the invested parties as opposed to maintaining strategic planning and collaboration towards essential event matters. Larson (2002) proposes access, interaction and change dynamics as the three characteristics forming The Political Market Square. The author continues by highlighting the first concept of access as the perimeter of the event network. Open access exists but is tightly controlled depending

on the characteristics of the actor wishing to gain entry. Once access is gained to the Political Market Square (PSQ), actors gravitate towards each other depending on their interests, values and goals resonating with another actor (Larson, 2008). The second concept is introduced once some form of interaction is achieved. However, it is argued that actors with shared interests tend to cooperate. In contrast, actors that oppose these interests tend to utilise their power (Larson & Wikström, 2001). The third concept refers to the change of dynamics within the Market Square as a result of unexpected changes experienced by the actors and their network.

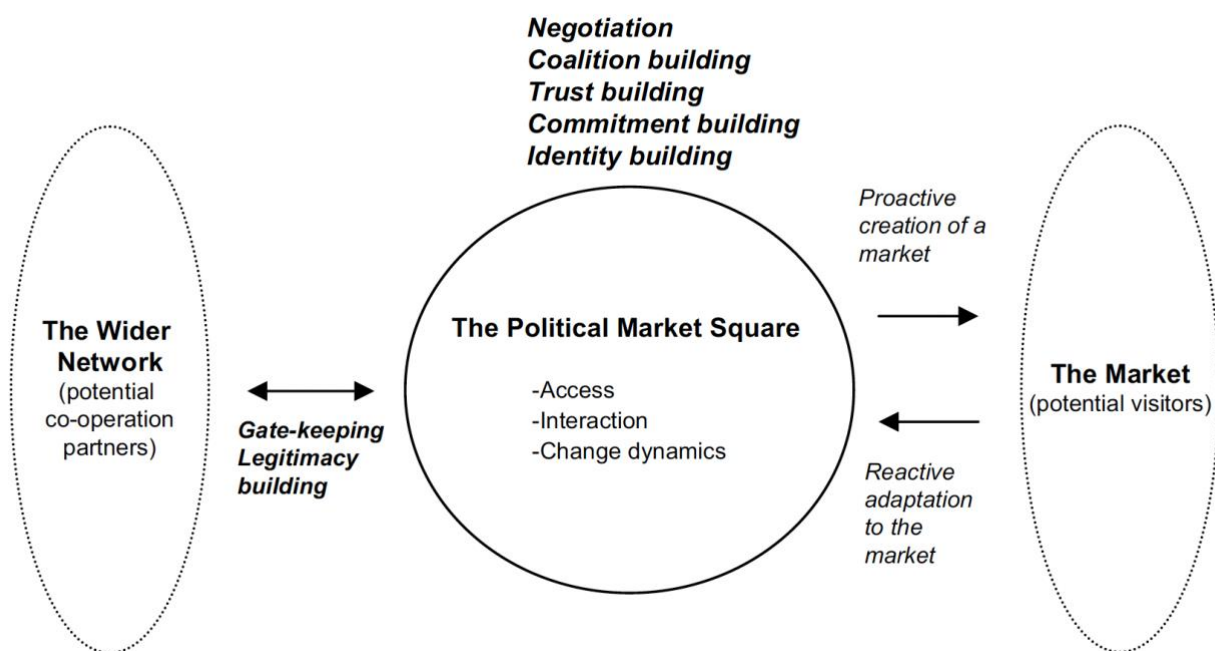


Figure 2 – The Political Market Square model (Larson, 2008)

Source: The concepts and the context of the Political Market Square model from *Joint event production in the jungle, the park, and the garden: Metaphors of event networks* by M. Larson, 2008, *Tourism Management*, p. 395

Figure 2 illustrates PSQ placed into the events network context in which three main concepts are utilised at the centre to categorise actors' interactions and dynamics among the system of interconnections, which contributes to gaining a clearer understanding of how an event is produced using a network of mutual connections. However, it should be noted that there are similarities between The Salience Model for Stakeholder Classification and The Political Market Square (Mitchel et al., 1997; Larson 2008) as the centre of each presents the opportunity for actors to input directly into crucial festival decision making. As illustrated, both concepts offer direct pathways to each network that align the organisation with its social system as evaluated by the

internal actors and external cooperation parties. This amplifies all areas of the organisation in the progression of generating value for all festival stakeholders. The following section will analyse a specific festival stakeholder in more detail as the role of public relations professionals can be considered an asset to marketing the arts at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

2.3 Public Relations: its role as a marketing tool at the Edinburgh Fringe

Marketing campaigns are designed to build relationships with consumers with the effective application of communication tools across media channels by promotion of delivering messages to the intended target audience (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019, pp. 420–421). On selection of the communication mix, the specific components that achieve campaign objectives are employed to determine the style in which messages are crafted. Jerfkins (1983) indicates public relations (PR) can sometimes be portrayed in a negative light as the use of the hostile discipline intends to gain a supportive understanding towards marketing campaigns. This author continues by defending the communication tool with an explanation of the power of public relations in enhancing information exchange assets of a marketing operation. The author implies in their argument that the process refers to individual clients and substantial organisations where PR seeks to grasp development opportunities with its practical application as a creative asset that holds an essential place within the marketing mix. As argued by Smith (2008), the implication of public relations factors in the marketing mix model becomes apparent. This is demonstrated by the measurement of targeted outputs distributed from the organisation wishing to engage in the public domain with a notable return of engagement from public audiences as a result of their communication efforts.

Moreover, some authors recognise the connection that exists between public relations and communication models. As Grunig and Hunt (1980) proposed their four models of public relations; press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical, academics imply facets of the PR models permit normative processes in facilitating public relations best practice (Grunig, 2013). The first PR model illustrates the desire of an organisation to seek attention in any given matter. Such an approach allows prominent festival stakeholders like the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, the festival venues and their performers to gain meaningful interest from their public

audiences in the search for personal campaign rewards. The second aspect of the model refers primarily to the production and distribution of in-house journalism in which strategic organisational information (Botan & Taylor, 2004) is communicated from the appointed public relations professional to the public in a one-way interaction. The clear benefit to this strategy is that it places current and exclusive information into the public domain once confirmed by the festival's stakeholders, which encourages the building of excitement towards the release of the latest festival news.

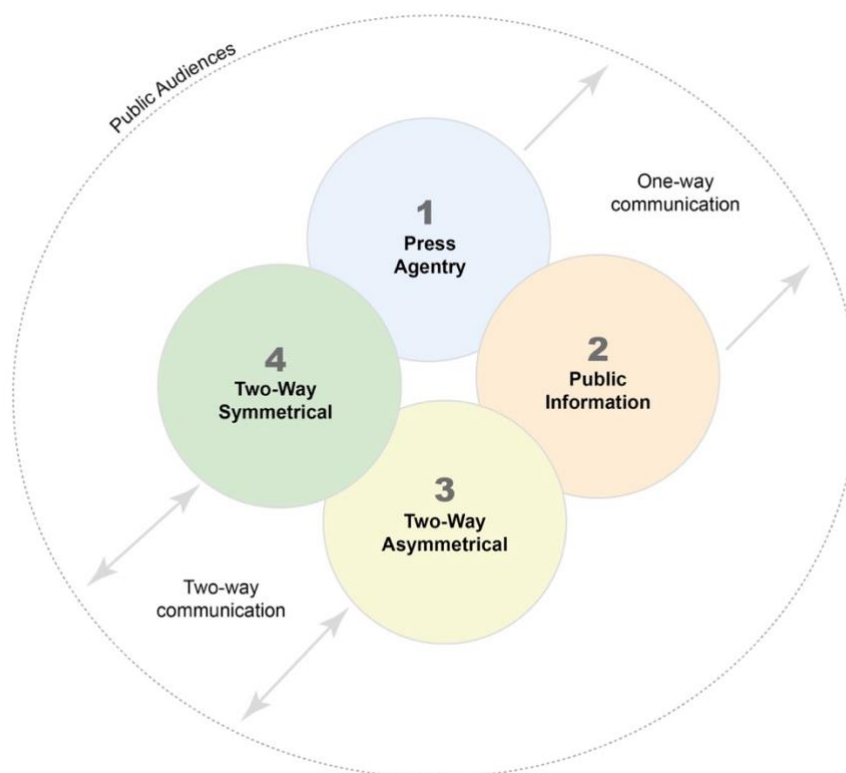


Figure 3 – The Four Models of Public Relations (Grunig and Hunt., 1984)

Source: Own Illustration, produced from *Managing public relations* (1980)

Grunig (2001) implies the third model of two-way asymmetrical concerns PRs in conducting research that determines how they persuade their public audiences to behave favourably towards their client's motive. In addition, public relations professionals prioritise earning a better understanding of emotional attachments. Reliability, honesty, and integrity are essential elements to cultivating interpersonal relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). In the eyes of a large-scale festival like the Edinburgh Fringe, this entails observing the link between festival venues and their

performers with their target audiences where the sole purpose exists to create and sustain those important connections (Setoutah et al., 2024).

Grunig (2001) suggests the fourth model of two-way symmetrical is exercised by public relations professionals by utilising research and discussion that spotlights behaviour change towards a campaign from both clients and their public audiences. In other words, it refers to the relationship that exists between an organisation and its main audiences, marked by mutual respect (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998) and economic, social, political and cultural benefits that concern both parties. Regardless of the two-way symmetry formulation, the core objective remains the same in achieving collaborative advocacy (Gower, 2006). With the application of the fourth model to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the two-way exchange of information from the organisation to the festival's audiences is designed to promote and broadcast the festival's entire programme, giving significant attention to its visiting companies in the hope that common interests are detected. Once fondness for themes and performance motives are established, the building of the relationship between the public audience and the performer begins to strengthen and enables the potential flourishing of a Fringe campaign.

However, this author implies in order to attain good practice of public relations, resulting in a possible alteration of a client's etiquette to deliver campaign results, the framework requires public relations professionals to be permanently engaged with the organisation's management body (Gower, 2006). This allows direct involvement in the communications decision-making process, suggesting the creation of the four PR models aids the promotion of the public relations field to a management level. Thus, the literature provides a valuable theoretical public relations framework that with application, can be utilised to enhance the marketing productivity of visiting companies and their corresponding venues. In addition, the Fringe Society provide the digital platform of Fringe Connect (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2024b), which serves as an online community and resource bank for artists and industry creatives. It is clear the platform bridges the gap between industry and creatives while also encouraging the building of key relationships at the Fringe Festival, which may advance visiting companies' careers. It is illustrated that one aspect of the platform encourages creatives to make initial connections with industry professionals and critics by

developing a conversation around their Fringe campaign and its key themes that resonate with specific agents.

Moreover, it becomes impossible to overestimate the significance of the festival on performers. It is evident media plays a vital role in generating value and exposure within a Fringe campaign (Fisher, 2012, p. 167) and the necessity of media coverage is apparent as it aids the marketing of performance arts to target audiences. Considering the creation of value at the festival that inspires support towards other artists and can distribute knowledge and information through networks that only manifest at the Fringe, it is evident the host destination can also benefit from widespread media coverage (Singh et al., 2023). As Getz (1997) argues the recognition of big events allows for rich publicity and destination promotion of the host city in a short period. The next section will specifically analyse the place of Edinburgh and how festival stakeholders and tourists experience the destination city as it concerns the production of adequate Fringe campaigns.

2.4 Is Edinburgh “weird”? The perception of Edinburgh

Festivals can attract multiple forms of tourism including those with a particular interest in the cultural aspects of a destination. Some tourists develop a fondness for the leisure function in tourism activities, in which socialisation and the experience of art forms are exercised (Prentice & Andersen, 2003). In Scotland, festivals are seen as an integral factor in the country’s civic repositioning strategy with many authors (Chacko and Schaffer 1993; Getz 1991; Grant and Paliwoda 1998; Rolfe 1992) recognising such performing arts festivals and similar arts culture events as tourism spectacles. However, it is understood that the experience of attending an Edinburgh-based festival is driven by multiple intentions. As authors, Prentice and Andersen (2003) imply festivals are often seen as opportunities to spend time with friends and as venues for meeting new individuals in which a strong emphasis on the aspect of socialising is deemed essential. Visitors have the desire to partake in Scottish cultural traditions and interact with artistic performance pieces that hold significance for them.

In addition, the popularity of merging festivals with sightseeing can be misinterpreted as a tendency towards the idea of aesthetic consumption. These authors suggest the

majority of people travelling to Edinburgh to attend festivals the city hosts are primarily experiences that provide aesthetic pleasure. These visitors arriving in Edinburgh display motivations where their experience of such an event in the festival city encompasses multiple senses. Festivals provide both visual stimulation and vibrant sounds that transcend mere aesthetic consumption. The authors emphasise that the aesthetic element lies in the festival's setting within the city of Edinburgh's historic landscape. Carlsen et al. (2007) identified the place of Edinburgh as occupying quite a prominent position in the city's social and economic foundations.

From a social perspective, festivals play a significant role in establishing a sense of place in which they can contribute substantially to the identity of a location. Successful festivals foster a strong sense of local identity while simultaneously appealing to global culture to attract participants and audiences from afar (Waterman, 1998). Moreover, festivals serve as a platform for local culture to connect with a worldwide audience. For instance, Edinburgh Festivals like the Fringe exemplify this dynamic. Furthermore, the festivals have generated economic advantages for both Edinburgh and the broader region of Scotland, facilitating a shift from an economy historically reliant on heavy industries to one increasingly focused on services and tourism (Harvie, 2003). These authors illustrate the various indicators suggested for assessing the social impacts of festivals, including participation rates, engagement with new audiences, urban regeneration, training and job opportunities. These social impacts exist due to the influence of the festival on the city's environment and infrastructure, as well as its appeal, effects on global solidarity and connected local communities, changes brought about by artistic activities, and the role of quality and innovation in supporting "Scotland's wealth of cultural talent" (Edinburgh Festivals, 2024). Thus, it is evident that arts festivals are fundamental to the identity of Edinburgh in that high quality outputs are essential requirements in maintaining distinctive artistic offerings (Carlsen et al., 2007).

In fact, these authors argue that the bigger the festival, the higher the chance of the event including amateur artists as more prominent festivals can accommodate programming from local groups and showcase local culture more effectively. For example, the Edinburgh International Festival and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe have played a significant role in fostering other performing arts events in Scotland and have

helped to create a “festival culture” in Edinburgh that encompasses various forms of cultural expression and participation (Harvie, 2003). Authors have argued that the cultural influence of a festival may extend beyond the boundaries of its programme and the works it showcases, impacting artistic expression in other areas. Nevertheless, it is often heard that festivals are labelled as “elitist” (Waterman, 1998) and by prioritising high culture, they alienate significant portions of the local community. Indeed, it has been suggested that hosting such an event may signify a small elite's motivations to advance its interests under the guise of community development (Carlsen et al., 2007; Harvie, 2003).

Bregoli and Del Chiappa (2013) highlight popular tourism destinations like the place of Edinburgh's festivals are viewed as networks of interconnected stakeholders, encompassing both public and private sectors. Thus, the experience offered at a destination is the primary product that travellers seek when they venture to destinations (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) making it crucial to establish a collaborative planning and strategy based on consensus, which in turn provides tourists with a distinctive, seamless, and unforgettable experience. As Hankinson (2007) emphasises the alignment and cooperation among stakeholders involved in the destination is crucial. The management towards the coordination of stakeholders is a key aspect of destination governance, deemed necessary for effective destination management. With such an approach the collaboration of stakeholders involved in a destination has been recognised as vital for the development of tourism in governing areas, where the importance lies as this is where various stakeholders are striving to reach shared objectives (Moscardo, 2011; Spyriadis et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the author Jamieson (2004) illustrates from its origin The Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) positioned itself outside the confines of the national identity of Scotland's capital, aligning itself with the evolving landscape of European cultural legacies. The cultural venture of the EIF was the first time in British history by which local government spent money and resources on arranging an international arts festival in a period of shortage and severity (Attala et al., 2012, p. 46). She emphasises the festival atmosphere embodied a refinement of pleasures and an enriching set of values along the popular streets of the city. Yet, for those who appreciated elite pleasures, the inaugural Edinburgh festivals offered sophistication and a counter to

the encroaching Americanized "culture industry" (Adorno, 2001), effectively solidifying connections with a more exclusive and enlightening European high culture.

However, Jamieson (2004b) highlights that Edinburgh's International Festival showcased much persistence and importance of European high culture in addition to a subtle reflection of the cultural preferences of Edinburgh's elite. In the evolving cultural environment of postwar Britain, it became clear that the festival space in Edinburgh was a contested territory in which various cultural expressions and representations competed for the attention of a fragmented and youthful audience. Yet, the solemnity of the official festival culture was soon confronted by the vibrant and playful "Edinburgh Festival Fringe." The author implies it is the Fringe Festival, rather than the International Festival, that continues to take over city spaces (Thomasson, 2022, pp. 84–85), permit street performances, and noticeably alter the city's ambience. It is noted that the city's connection to its festival identity has transitioned from a postwar focus on symbolic gestures of international unity to what has now become its most popular tourist attraction. The festivals of Edinburgh play a critical role in attracting global audiences to the host destination (Dinnie, 2010, p. 148), a fundamental asset to the marketing efforts of the city's attractions. As August approaches, the city's festivals reveal its bohemian and intellectual qualities through the changed rhythm of busy street life. The vibrant images of bustling streets highlight and celebrate the festival city as an appealing tourist destination, where the blend of ritual and consumerism has positioned Edinburgh as both a site and a focal point of consumption (Jamieson, 2004, p. 67). Creating a spectacle of the lively crowds imposes a specific perspective on the ever-changing spaces of the city (D. Bell & Haddour, 2000) and the intricately adorned individuals who navigate between performances and onlookers. This perspective can be characterised as a festival gaze, illustrating the humanised festival streets while hiding the commodified and tourist-driven aspect of Edinburgh's festivals.

Furthermore, Carlsen et al (2007) imply the essential need to clarify the extent of arts festivals and the significance of Edinburgh as a centre for such events. Yet, the debate on all art forms and arts festivals operating in Edinburgh continues as the economic climate is a major factor in its discussion. There are increasing concerns surfacing

towards vital festival elements including venue capacity, programming, and the quality of performances as these are not always guaranteed in an elite festival environment. Additionally, these authors suggest that arts festivals should consider the preferences of the audience alongside the requirements of performers and artists, drawing attention to the importance for festival stakeholders to comprehend the arts and the requirements of artists (Bartie, 2013, p. 6). Providing some level of financial assistance or subsidy for performers' costs, for example, accommodation, could encourage stronger loyalty to the festivals in Edinburgh and facilitate the return of performers annually. In addition, the significant interdependence between the arts and festivals is vastly recognised. The arts can shape modern culture with arts festivals holding a distinct role in determining the themes and narratives of the art presented to audiences. It becomes evident that it is essential to deepen the understanding of the connections and requirements of both arts and festival stakeholders in Edinburgh on top of how closely their objectives and aspirations align (Ashcroft, 2021).

2.5 Conclusion

This literature review has identified a variety of academic sources that will provide foundations for further exploration in the proposed research. It analysed stakeholder relationships, explaining their importance and their pivotal role in the festival sector. It was highlighted that certain stakeholder relationships hold greater significance than others from a strategic business perspective but can be leveraged with thoughtful consideration regarding the organisation and its connections beyond primary management networks. In addition, social network analysis is explored in recognition of festivals' social actors' influence. Drawing on network models from a political perspective, the PSQ model underlined three main concepts in the events network context that operate at its core in a process that categorises actors' interactions and dynamics among the network relationships. However, further research is required to investigate the interdependence of internal and external stakeholders within the events community. The question that perhaps most clearly arises from the reviewed literature is how critical stakeholder relationships are at festivals and whether the existing connections contribute to the success of Fringe campaigns. This chapter confirms the need for further research of public relations at arts festivals. The literature emphasised

that public relations must attain direct participation in the decision-making process to be most effective in the delivery of communication outputs, proposing the development of the four PR models to promote the public relations field to a managerial level.

Finally, this chapter highlights that festivals have taken on a significant role in the social and economic landscape of Edinburgh, to such an extent that it is now recognised as a top festival destination. The literature emphasises that strategic purpose is present in Edinburgh. This is demonstrated by a steady progression of operational advancement by an improvised series of localised reactions to specific event challenges. The focus of stakeholders has primarily been on economic advantages, while crucial aspects like cultural and social benefits have been neglected. This paper will not only intend to fill the evident gap in the academic literature but also provide recommendations for key stakeholders of the Edinburgh Fringe. With the intent to examine the presented issues, the next chapter will provide details of the methods used to fulfil the aim and objectives of this dissertation.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter includes an overview and justifications of the methods selected to support this dissertation and consequently meet the aim and objectives that are pivotal to the completion of the research. This project takes a primary approach to data collection with the use of semi-structured interviews with Edinburgh Festival Fringe stakeholders, including performers, prominent festival venue managers, management of the Fringe Society and arts public relations professionals. The philosophy of interpretivism and qualitative methods were selected as the most suitable approach to address the research question. Firstly, the philosophical perspective of the research methodology will be evaluated with an explanation of how the chosen philosophy relates to the applied methods in this study. Subsequently, the choice of qualitative research is introduced, accompanied by a detailed outline of the selected methods. Finally, the quality of the research data is analysed with a brief discussion of the ethical issues and research limitations.

3.2 Research Philosophy

There are four philosophical approaches in business research including positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 119). Adopting a specific research philosophy relates to the development of knowledge based on significant beliefs that correspond to the researcher's perspective of the world and its influence on practical research considerations. Commonly, in festival and event studies, positivism has guided the majority of objective reality research that has an impact on the social world (Getz, 2012, p. 359). In contrast, to achieve the intended research aim and objectives of this study, the research philosophy of interpretivism will be adopted. From an epistemological perspective, interpretivism requires the researcher's understanding of the distinctions among humans in their capacity as social participants who rely on beliefs that genuine actions can only be understood through subjective interpretation (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 116). By way of explanation, interpretivism informs that a complex social world exists and that there may be various methods to understand the full extent of connections. Therefore, this philosophy is considered a suitable approach to perceiving the social world through

analysis of research participants' behaviour and their corresponding explanations (Bell et al., 2022). Moreover, to expand on the selected philosophy it is beneficial to utilise the research paradigm. The concept enables further understanding of philosophical assumptions that guide business research.

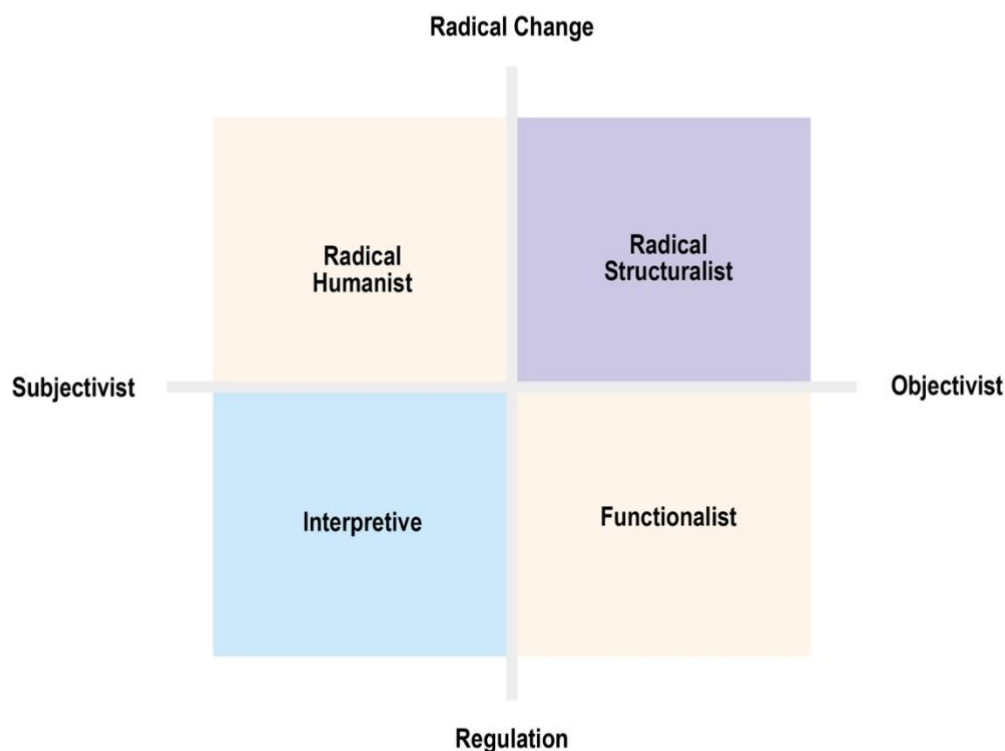


Figure 4 – Four Paradigms for the Analysis of Social Theory (Burrell and Morgan, 1982)
Source: Own illustration, reproduced from Saunders et al. (2009) *pg. 120*

A research paradigm refers to a cluster of beliefs that dictate the chosen discipline that will influence the study, assist in how the research will be facilitated and aid the understanding of the research's findings (Bryman, 2003; Kuhn, 1970). Burrell and Morgan (1979) illustrated the framework of the four social science paradigms (Figure 4) emphasised as a useful tool for the researcher to refine their view of society and its scientific aspects. The concept plays in favour of the researcher in that each paradigm produces distinct organisational analyses that assist in tackling organisation specific issues (Bell et al., 2022, p. 36).

In relation to the philosophical position, this research study falls into the interpretive paradigm. This implies that the study will aim to build an in-depth understanding of visiting companies' relationships at the Fringe, divulge the support available and apprehend the outcome of that assistance towards performers' overall campaign. Instead of focusing solely on rationality, the researcher's primary interest lies in uncovering irrationalities (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 121). Considering the research participants' instinctive opinions, the author will aim to make suggestions for the improvement of relationships with artists within the existing arts festival framework thus employing the approach of regulation as opposed to radical change.

Interpretivism was selected as the appropriate research philosophy as its inseparable nature with individuals and society contributed to adopting a qualitative research approach (O'Donoghue, 2018). Interpretivism is associated with subjective meanings and social phenomena, where a focus is placed on details of situations, the reality behind those details, and the meanings that motivate actions (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 119). In the case of this research study, the phenomenon materialising is the concept of performer relationships at the Edinburgh Fringe and the development of connections with festival stakeholders in building fruitful campaigns. The data collection technique frequently used for this purpose involves small samples and in-depth investigation of a qualitative standard. On the grounds of this reasoning, it can be argued that the qualitative technique of this study is an appropriate choice.

3.3 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research refers to a specific research strategy that primarily emphasises words and imagery as opposed to the quantitative approach concerning the quantification of data analysis (Bell et al., 2022). Data collection in qualitative research subsumes several diverse methods that include participant observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and the collection and analysis of visual material. According to De Sordi (2024), qualitative research aims to attain a thorough understanding of the behaviours and feelings of participants that will assist in the development of meaning to human subjectivity. The sample size for qualitative research is often small, ensuring the collection of rich data with the facilitation of extensive subject-orientated analysis (Bell et al., 2022, p. 397). However, the

researcher may not be able to draw specific conclusions due to the variable nature of each situation, thus it allows for composing valuable recommendations.

With careful consideration of qualitative research techniques, this author selected semi-structured interviews as the most appropriate strategy to achieve the aim of the research. The interviews intend to investigate the nature of both the performers' and key festival stakeholders' relationships at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the impact of those connections regarding artists' development (this will be discussed further in sections 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.3.3). In semi-structured interviews the participants are not required to follow an exact sequence of questions and can openly share their personal opinions. Each interview was audio recorded with receipt of each participant's consent, allowing for later thorough analysis of responses. The data collection achieved with this type of qualitative research is commonly unstandardised (Saunders et al., 2019), therefore the validity of the collected data is high. In preparation, a set of questions tailored to the research area topic was prepared beforehand with the completion of a pilot interview (see Appendix A). Although some interviewees might not have been asked the list of questions in order, essentially all participants were asked all main questions by the use of structuring to maintain the interview's purpose (Bell et al., 2022) of key research themes.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews with Edinburgh Fringe visiting companies

In order to achieve the objective of investigating visiting companies' perspectives at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, a handful of performers were identified in the early stages of the interview process. The selected visiting companies were recommendations given to the author as a result of collaborative festival work with an industry expert from one of the Big Four venues at the Fringe. The venue felt these performers would be most responsive to interview requests. The subsequent participants for the semi-structured interview were established through non-probability snowball sampling (Noy, 2008). Each visiting company was initially contacted via social media platforms and followed up with an email to provide more in-depth information on the interview request. After receiving a response to participate in the interview, a date and time were set for the interviews. These took place virtually on Microsoft Teams in early March 2025 with an emerging Scottish Theatre Company, a

stand-up comedian and another award-winning comic. The latter interview took place via telephone due to lack of availability to meet in person. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. As the example above highlights, the selected subjects were key stakeholders and performers of the past and present Edinburgh Fringe Festivals. Thus, the interviews with those vital performers provided the author with in-depth insights into significant data from campaign experiences.

In preparation, an outline of the questions addressing the relationships under investigation was prepared to assist the author with the interview process. However, before the official interviews took place, the questions were piloted with the help of a fellow MSc marketing student. The pilot questions referred to the specific festival stakeholder relationships the author wishes to probe further. The role of the piloting exercise ensured the interview guide created flow (Bell et al., 2022) and served as a valuable preparatory step to the full-scale study. Piloting aids identification of practical challenges and assists the author in refinement of the interview protocol (Majid et al., 2017). Examples of the questions can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. Those questions provided a general structure and were modified depending on the interviewee's position. The questions were further edited after completion of the first interview to ensure participants had no difficulty in understanding and responding to questions asked (Saunders et al., 2009).

All interview participants were provided with a participant information sheet and consent form (see Appendix C). The document contained further important information about the study, details on what is expected of the interviewee and data protection regulations. Each artist who participated in the research gave their written consent for the interview to be audio recorded and to use anonymised quotes in the study. In addition, interview participants received a PDF version of the performance arts trade union Equity's Guide to the Edinburgh Fringe (see Appendix D) to which some of the interview questions refer. The recorded data was then transcribed with the main themes identified. As Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011, p. 94) suggest semi-structured interviews enable the author access to subjective knowledge that is communicated in the interviewee's own words (Hennink et al., 2020). The collection of rich, in-depth data is facilitated by the process of actively asking topic-specific questions with engaged listening to responses.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews with Edinburgh Fringe Society Stakeholders

The general structure of interview questions for the conversation with a member of the Fringe Society's management was utilised and slightly altered to suit the participant's role and their connections to the Fringe festival (see Appendix D for changes). It enabled the author to assess the suitability of the questions and validate their format to enhance the effectiveness of the research. A few of the questions required additional guidance for the interviewee to understand fully what the author was asking and thus had to be changed. Adopting the qualitative approach allowed for the collection of detailed data where a small sample size was well-founded for the research study (Bell et al., 2022).

To obtain perspectives from the central non-profit organisation that supports the festival, the author contacted The Fringe Society via email to request interview participation from a member of management. Once policies were checked and approval for the interview was received, a date and time was set. The interview took place personally in early spring 2025 at the Society's Head Office. The author provided the interviewee with the participant information sheet, consent form and a copy of Equity's Guide to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe prior to the interview and allowed for any questions to be asked before the interview commenced. Similarly, as with the visiting companies' interviews, the author was using an interview guide (Appendix B) to ensure structure was maintained.

3.3.3 Semi-structured interview with Edinburgh Fringe Stakeholders

In an effort to obtain the objective of inspecting the connections that exist at the Edinburgh Fringe between visiting companies and key stakeholders, a select few public relations professionals (PRs) were pinpointed with interest for interview. The author possesses industry experience in which direct communications with PRs were conducted at previous festivals. In addition, the researcher leveraged their network to connect with individuals they had communicated with before in requesting interview participation. A total of five PR professionals were contacted early in the research process with three willing to participate.

These interviews took place over Microsoft Teams in early spring 2025. Each interview participant stemmed from an arts and culture publicity business or freelance professions. The successive participants for semi-structured interviews were selected using non-probability purposive sampling as each interviewee has extensive publicity knowledge (Foroudi & Dennis, 2023; Patton, 2002). The selected participants possess several years of experience at the Edinburgh Fringe that concerns the sculpting of artists' campaigns in addition to their daily contact with venues, the media and public audiences. The use of purposive sampling enables the researcher to choose interview participants who are confidently able to discuss and give insight into the study area (Saunders et al., 2019) of festival stakeholders which is under investigation. Due to participants' availability, each PR requested a copy of the questions before the interview to allow full preparation and to utilise the amount of time available for discussion with both the interviewer and interviewee. Naturally, those questions functioned merely as a framework to follow. Further prompting questions were posed to stimulate more detailed responses (Bell et al., 2022).

As emphasised above, another connection that is apparent at the Edinburgh Fringe is the relationship between venues and performers. In order to investigate the relationship, the author identified two of the Big Four venues that will benefit this research. These participants were identified through non-probability purposive sampling. The researcher based the selection process on the small sample required to fulfil one of this study's objectives with the interviewees chosen accordingly to ensure rich data is received in response to the research study area (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 321). These interviews were organised at the very start of the research process as the researcher had the opportunity to interview members of senior management from two of the Big Four venues. Each participant was contacted through email, and with quick acceptance the interviews took place in late February 2025 and early April 2025. As emphasised above, participants requested a copy of the interview questions prior (see Appendix B). The questions acted as interviewee guidance with the implementation of minor adjustments during the interview to promote deeper discussions on key themes. After the interviews, all audio files were transcribed and analysed further. The specifics regarding the data analysis procedure will be discussed in the next subsection.

Participant	Gender	Occupation
A	Female	Fringe Visiting Company & Performers
B	Female	Fringe Performer
C	Female	Fringe Visiting Company & Performer
D	Female	Fringe Venue Director
E	Male	Fringe Venue Marketing Manager
F	Male	Fringe Venue Marketing Communications Manager
G	Male	Fringe Society Manager
H	Female	Arts and Culture Public Relations Agency Specialist
I	Female	Fringe Venue Press Manager & Freelance PR (Arts and Culture)
J	Female	Arts and Culture Public Relations Professional

Figure 5 – Details of Interview Participants

Source: Own illustration

3.3.4 Data Analysis

The data gathered during interviews with Edinburgh Festival Fringe visiting companies, Fringe Society management, arts and culture PR professionals and venue managers were analysed to examine and evaluate the existing relationships that prevail at the festival that contribute to performers' campaigns. It is argued that if the author chooses to adopt a qualitative approach, it compels the researcher to recognise the situational framework of the phenomenon being observed, making it more difficult to discern between facts and opinions (Cooper & Schindler, 2013, p. 147). Social factors were considered to examine the sense of self-efficacy attached to festival stakeholders' responsibilities in encouraging influence on core organisers to improve resource outputs (Siegall & Gardner, 2000). Economic considerations were further explored to pinpoint the financial considerations that drive artist and venue investment decisions (Armbrecht, Lundberg, & Andersson, 2020) in addition to the assessment of the financial risks experienced across the ecosystem.

The analysis of data is continuous and persistent until the study completion (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Once the semi-structured interviews had concluded, the following analytical steps were taken. The audio recordings were uploaded to a secure hard drive that was only accessible by the researcher. Each audio file was transcribed and proofed within 48 hours of the interview. The next stage concerned data reduction in which the main themes were identified and coded. This process serves an important

function in recognising categories, which aids the author in elevating the data to a more abstract level (Ngulube, 2015). Employing themes to clarify the connections among various components of the data enables the development of the theoretical framework previously mentioned.

The researcher employed a deductive approach in which previously highlighted themes assisted the development of further similarities (Baran & Jones, 2019) relevant to the influence of central stakeholders in the festival structure. Furthermore, an interpretivist methodology informed repeat patterns by communication of socially constructed interactions (Bell et al., 2022). The meanings of these social actions were comprehended by further analysis of the social structures present at the Fringe. Figure 6 illustrates the orderly procedure of thematic analysis in the qualitative approach for this research.

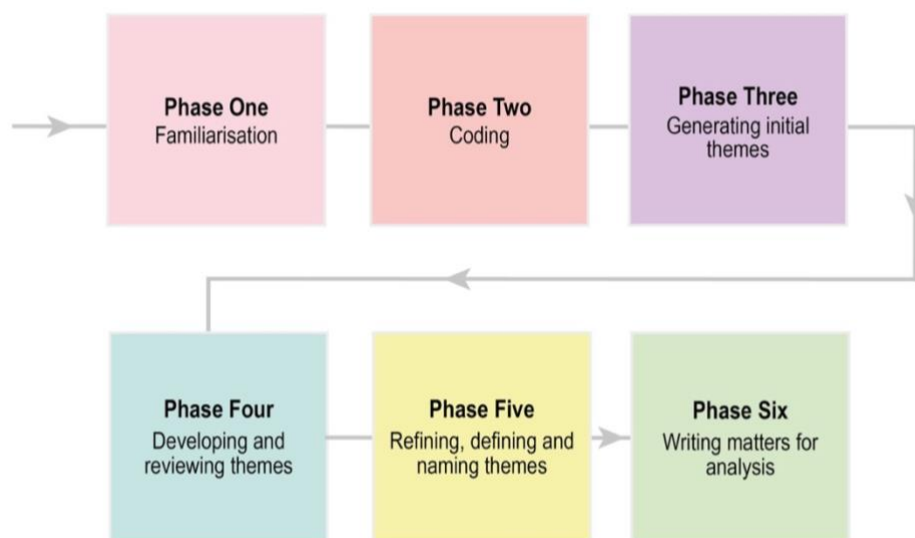


Figure 6 – The Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021)

Source: Own illustration, reproduced from Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide (2021)

3.5 Research Data Quality

Validity and reliability are specified as two characteristics utilised as good measurements during the research process. Validity refers to how well a study accurately assesses what the researcher intends to measure and reliability relates to the assessment of how much measurement is devoid of random or inconsistent errors

(Cooper & Schindler, 2013). However, these key criteria employed in establishing and assessing the quality of business research can be criticised and thus can be limited in application in research methodologies (Bell et al., 2022). Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggested a different approach in which they illustrate the importance of identifying methods that determine and evaluate the quality of qualitative research that offer alternatives to the traditional concepts of reliability and validity. They proposed trustworthiness and authenticity as the two substitute criteria for qualitative research evaluation, where these four additional criteria are exercised: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The listed criteria emphasise sceptics of the idea of present universal truths regarding the social world which researchers should uncover (Bell et al., 2022, p. 369). Therefore, the author applied the set of criteria throughout the research process and ensured that all the data gathered was presented and analysed to a high degree of trustworthiness and accuracy.

Both secondary and primary was examined with authenticity and truthfulness positioned at the forefront of the author's thoughts. Secondary data was cost effective due to its digital availability and proved beneficial in initial research by identifying further aspects for thematic development (Cowton, 1998). In addition, to enhance the reliability and transferability aspects of this study, a whole chapter was devoted to provide the details of the research methodology and methods used by the author. Moreover, it was acknowledged that addressing researcher bias is essential to guarantee conformability. Therefore, the researcher persists in the desire to be methodologically rigorous (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 214) to remain equitable during the interviews. For example, the questioning procedure to research participants avoided leading questions that led to persuasive responses. Furthermore, the data was recorded at a high standard and the researcher when conducting the interviews always remained professional by maintaining integrity and respect throughout the conversation.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles are present to assist researchers in minimising the ethical risks that can be exposed during a study. Many authors highlighted the significance of addressing ethical concerns throughout the research process (Bell et al., 2022;

Cooper & Schindler, 2013; Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, it was made certain that the research adhered to Edinburgh Napier University Code of Practice on Research Integrity. The author served as an ethically conscious and introspective researcher and ensured the fulfilment of the University Code of Practice during the entire research process.

As per the guiding principles of the University Code of Practice, the research was conducted with honesty, rigour, transparency, open communication, care, respect and accountability. All research participants were provided a participant information sheet defining the researcher, the aim of the research and all its procedures. In addition, further details on data protection were presented and clear statements that participants are not obliged to take part. All participants were asked to read the agreement and sign a consent form before any interview took place. On completion, each participant confirmed their understanding of the information provided and the research purpose. Each participant permitted audio recording and the use of anonymised quotes in publications. Finally, the data was gathered and will be stored, shared, retained and destroyed in strict conformity with the university Research Data Management policy and the Data Protection Act 2018.

3.7 Limitations

The notable limitation of the study is the small sample size. Three performers, three PRs, three heads of Fringe venues and a manager from the Fringe Society were selected for the study. The non-probability sampling used to select respondents, namely purposive and snowball sampling, are sometimes criticised. The purposive approach is well known as a judgemental sample where the researcher is intrigued by a select few respondents from a niche group which can prompt bias issues (Cooper & Schindler, 2013). The method of snowball sampling utilises the referral approach to attain contact with respondents who hold a high position in the hierarchy of the business and can be subject to bias if only Big Four venues are approached. Moreover, this limitation is useful for the purpose of this research as the snowball approach provides the opportunity to identify respondents vital to the study (Saunders et al., 2019).

Furthermore, there are drawbacks apparent in the selection of qualitative methodology for this study. Its dominant critiques include the major reliance on the researcher's unsystematic views of what is most important, the difficulties with replication of the study due to its unstructured nature and lack of transparency towards the researcher's selection of sample and the process involved to attain the researcher's conclusions (Bell et al., 2022, p. 376). However, the author addressed all those issues as previously discussed in subsection 3.5 and aimed to provide a detailed description of the methodology undertaken with transparency facilitated throughout. Finally, the authors' first attempt at undertaking a research study and relative lack of experience in qualitative research could also be considered as a limitation. Nonetheless, the author completed thorough reading to gain a better understanding of qualitative methodology. In addition, the author consistently reviewed and examined this approach throughout the process to allow substantial preparation for the collection of primary data.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented a detailed overview of the methods exercised to fulfil the aim and objectives of the research. It discussed the research paradigm regarding the selected research philosophy and justified the chosen primary data collection qualitative method. Finally, a descriptive analysis of the interview process with both Edinburgh Festival Fringe visiting companies and key stakeholders of the festival was provided as were the ethical issues and limitations concerning the research. Overall, the primary data in the form of semi-structured interviews with Edinburgh Fringe performers and festival stakeholders was gathered to support and encourage further discussion leading to in-depth thematic analysis. The detailed explanation of the research methodology in this chapter can assist in the replication of this study by other researchers. The following chapter presents the interpretation of the collected data by discussion and findings.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the interviews with the past and present performers of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the festival's stakeholders. This offered in-depth insights of the relationships that exist within the festival, the perceptions of the Fringe festival and their experiences. The philosophical position of this research served to emphasise high levels of validity based on recent Fringe experiences which helped to highlight the subjective motivating actions attached to stakeholder relationships. Through the collected primary data analysis a range of themes became apparent, some of which were previously discussed in the literature review. The main themes included festival accessibility, educational value of the festival experience, communities as collective action, stakeholder engagement in strategy generation and significant difficulties shared across the entire festival ecosystem. The analysis of visiting companies' perceptions of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe was pivotal to identify if the festival stakeholders' intent was fulfilled and to recognise ways in which artists' experiences could be improved for future festivals.

4.2 Edinburgh Festival Fringe Visiting Companies' Perspective: Findings and Discussion

4.2.1 The Principles of The Fringe Festival Experience

Interviews with Fringe Performers revealed details about some important elements that have come together to create the principles of the festival experience. Participant A, from a Scottish Theatre company, explained that a large majority of people, including performers, visitors and locals, congregate in Edinburgh in "a celebration of artists." These performers and their various art forms are considered vital contributors to the life cycle of the Edinburgh Fringe (Freeman, 2004). The festival lays the path to the creative platform in which artists from backgrounds rooted in various origins and festival aspirations, immerse themselves in a collective appreciation of all art forms (Appendix E, quote 1). For the artists, the words "Edinburgh Festival Fringe" refer to a constant state of chaos and the anxiety surrounding their campaign finances for the festival duration. Some performers can find comfort in their complex relationship with

the large-scale event (Appendix E, quote 2) that evolves into the finding of an arts sanctuary that represents everything that matters to a performer (Participant C, 2025). In other words, Fringe artists recognise the fundamental journey of understanding the value of the performing arts platform and the practice of ensuring all creatives are fully welcomed (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society & McCarthy, 2024), fostering a sense of community where all can thrive.

The festival inspires artists to showcase their art forms in which can be in two categories: the unfinished, “work in progress” material or the polished finished article of a show. Consequently, a rewarding Fringe run is attained with the use of a campaign strategy in the artist’s approach that goes beyond passive introspection but instead encourages the proactive definition of their core values as a creative, their purpose at the Edinburgh Fringe and their aspirations beyond the festival. As Sharples et al (2014) emphasise in the literature, engagement from artists is essential in accomplishing festival objectives in line with gaining social acceptance. Essentially, the Fringe is an opportunity to “understand where you sit in terms of what is socially acceptable and socially unacceptable” (Participant C, 2025). All three of the visiting companies from both genres of theatre and comedy, repeatedly underlined the importance of prior research and the significance of planning to easily navigate the festival once on site.

Some authors highlighted the context in which a festival takes place and its connections to the broader world are inseparable from its existence (Getz et al., 2007). Performers articulate that the Edinburgh Fringe serves as a platform for diverse work to be shared and celebrated. However, multiple approaches exist for achieving success where no single method is a marketable route. Participant B illustrated this fact and split participation at the festival into three categories:

“...there's three types of Edinburgh Fringe you could participate in as a comedian, so there's the one I mentioned of which is some people just go and they do the free fringe venues and they just love it. And for me they're the true sort of spirit of the fringe. [...] your second one is the comedians who go and [...] don't really do the club gigs and they have huge agents [...] and throw a lot of money at a show in Edinburgh to get a lot of attention [...] Then you have a huge group in the middle, which is what I've fallen into for the past two years, who are working under this sort of myth and

apprehension that if you go, invest a load of money and do well, the industry will notice you and [...] kick start your career [...] And that middle group is [...] the group that's losing the most money.” (Appendix E, quote 4)

Thus, it can be argued that the Edinburgh Festival operates by creating reciprocal exchanges to form artist relationships. This process becomes instrumental in ensuring career advancement is met (Karlsen & Nordström, 2009) and the basic rights of performers (Equity, 2025) are respected throughout.

4.2.2 Sense of Community at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

The performers recognised the prominence of the Edinburgh Fringe and the comprehension of its model to be a contributing factor to their festival success (Participant A, B & C, 2025). Furthermore, performers have drawn emphasis on the organic creation of artist networks. In stakeholder literature, authors openly explore how value is created through stakeholder relationships, emphasising that these interactions are ongoing as opposed to one-off favours (Freeman & Liedtka, 1997). Crucially, the significant connections between a visiting company and its performing venue are of great value to the integration of artists into communities. The performers explained that their sense of community stems from the support received from the venue that programs them. As Participant B explained in relation to their debut year, the importance to “feel supported by the place that you’re going to be performing in is quite soothing” (Appendix E, quote 5). The function of representing a particular place at the festival and fostering its notion to success can be seen as a comfort factor that unites artists and venues, according to Jaeger and Mykletun (2013).

It is demonstrated that the Edinburgh Fringe promotes the appreciation of tourism as a means for socialisation and artistic engagement (Prentice & Andersen, 2003) and contributes to the significant influx of visitors. The festival encapsulates this unique atmosphere where locals, performers and international audiences alike immerse themselves in the festival city. While the festival injects excessive amounts of cultural and economic vitality into Edinburgh, such festivals as the Fringe are facing logistical challenges in which the implementation of a shared approach to initiate action can create vital connections. These relationships are the dynamic interplay between

mutual benefit and periodic strain. A performer illustrated their experiences of the festival in which identity is woven into the city:

“It’s a collaborative approach. It’s like a bio. It’s not just about the performance or the venues, it’s about the restaurants, the bars, the pubs, the other tourist activities [...] it’s vital for the performers to respect the city that exists beyond the Fringe. And for the city beyond the Fringe to respect the performers [...] that’s what makes it stand apart [...] the best festivals in the world are the ones that are rooted in the local city [...] it’s got that identity that is infused with the city” (Appendix E, quote 6)

The symbiotic dynamic of mutual respect between performers and the festival environment generates positive outcomes for the host destination. The embedded support network facilitates different avenues of holistic well-being for the artists and stakeholders across the festival duration. Waterman (1998) expressed a similar viewpoint in their cultural politics of arts festivals research. High-performing festivals like the Edinburgh Fringe facilitate the construction of a salient local identity combined with the strategic incorporation of global cultural elements to attract a distinct range of art forms and spectators. From a social viewpoint, performers understand that festivals play a crucial role in place development, in which they offer considerable contributions to the identity of Edinburgh (Carlsen et al., 2007). As these performers from a Scottish theatre visiting company expressed:

“Edinburgh’s a very welcoming city [...] us Scots are delightful and welcoming and Scots are just happy to help each other out [...] it is very much engrained in Scottish culture as well to help other people, to be open to new things. Yeah, just to make a community [...] I think it’s something that the people of Edinburgh take pride in.” (Appendix E, quote 7)

Indeed, the people of Edinburgh hold a deep sense of pride in the Fringe in which the calendar event is integral to the city’s identity. Moreover, the festival’s performers, inclusive of all emerging and returning artists, often emphasise the unique ambience the arts event creates and the way familiar streets are transformed into bustling hubs of creativity (Jamieson, 2004). Each part of the community has a part to play in the Fringe experience of the performer and the festival stakeholder they are interacting with. It becomes difficult to theorise the place of Edinburgh and its interconnections until visiting the festival city. Participant C highlighted:

“...it’s not like any other venue that you might perform at. Or even any other festival that you might perform at, it’s a living and breathing thing and you need to be able to go, feel the different venues because even on the same street there’s different experiences...” (Appendix E, quote 23)

In addition, performers benefit from a collaborative framework where administrative responsibilities and empathetic guidance are comprehensively addressed (Participant B, 2025). Both performers and festival stakeholders understand this dynamic and the value of such a relationship. However, given the cultural landscape of Edinburgh, gaining a deeper understanding of its relationships with the arts and festival stakeholders in conjunction with the alignment of their aspirations at the festival becomes paramount (Ashcroft, 2021; Carlsen et al., 2007).

4.2.3 The Role of Educational Value at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

The performers recognised the connection between the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and its educational value (Participant A, 2025, Appendix E, quote 24). All interviewees underlined the importance of research prior to arrival in Edinburgh and their festival participation as a learning experience. As Batchelder et al. (2006) highlighted the festival’s performers look beyond mere enjoyment. Instead, they strive to increase their marketability and leverage the festival’s educational potential to enrich their creative skills and further their careers. However, Participant C communicated that:

“I don’t always get that impression. [...] There needs to be alignment of values between all artists and the PR, the artists and the venue.” (Appendix E, quote 8)

Indeed, there is a huge reliance on publicists to produce value and enhance exposure towards their artists’ Fringe campaigns (Fisher, 2012). The synergistic relationship between PRs and the diverse array of performing venues is crucial to the festival’s ecosystem. In addition, some venues favour “trendy artists” as publicity is guaranteed from a status perspective. Other emerging artists then begin to feel “ostracised” (Appendix E, quote 9). Moreover, in order to prevent arts community division, strong stakeholder salience becomes a necessity. Participant C illustrates the importance for

all festival stakeholders to combine efforts in providing access and equity from their experiences:

“...it feels like we're now dividing our arts community into different groups. That's all well and good, but then aren't we all working towards the greater goal of entertaining [...] and educating. [...] But on the right side of it when I find the right people that really do champion me and really do care [...] Some venues and some PRs [...] literally every single person is a cog in the machine...” (Appendix E, quote 9)

In stakeholder theory, authors Mitchell et al (1997) communicate that the aspect of power is initially defined by the control of information and resources. The subsequent argument posits that the exercise of power has both positive and negative effects, open to stakeholder interpretation. Additionally, power can be vested in the collective of stakeholders, leading to strategic discussions about their required involvement in operations (Bowden et al., 2023), including the programming of established and emerging artists.

Some authors agree that marketing campaigns are engineered to form connections with target audiences (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019) where public relations serve as a powerful tool for improving information exchange capabilities (Jerfkins, 1983). Thus, PR campaigns extend far beyond show promotion in a compressed timeframe. The process takes shape in gaining an in-depth understanding of the media landscape to build pitches that target journalists in addition to the constant push to connect with target audiences (Setoutah et al., 2024) in all media outputs. The award-winning writer and performer of Participant C, illustrated their standpoint on Fringe journalists and publicists:

“Sometimes it's somebody who just really wants to love it and will actually overlook anything that could be critiqued. [...] But ultimately, I think that's why I trust the fringe in general is that it's a crowd. It's a collective is what the fringe is. There's a reason why the crowds are there [...] people vote with their feet. People vote with their laughs. People will be attracted to a good marketing campaign, but they'll also be attracted in other ways [...] Fringe is the best way to find your tribe.” (Appendix E, quote 11)

It is understood that arts and culture are selective, in which an existing relationship with a PR is key to establishing communication and will most often result in securing

accredited press representatives for shows. In order to facilitate credible correspondence, there has to be a “trust relationship” present (Participant C, 2025) as publicists offer essential artist support and mediate between the press and the artist. This approach protects the artist's reputation and handles any negative fallout in-house. There is definite educational value in an artist's progression in PR practices from the basic level to a more sophisticated and targeted strategy (Smith, 2008).

In other words, the relationship between PR and performers is essential to ongoing reputation management for an artist and their performing venue and aims to encourage early reviews of the artist's work that can elevate their overall campaign. In addition, publicists enable constant contributions to artists' profile building (Appendix E, quote 10). As suggested above by the performer (Participant C), public relations can have negative and positive campaign effects but it is the collective action of finding connections with public audiences that can have the greatest influence on an artist's Fringe run (Gower, 2006; Grunig & Hunt, 1980; Gruing 2001). The next section will discuss in detail the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Stakeholders' perspectives on the definition of the transparency needed for strategic collaboration.

4.3 Edinburgh Festival Fringe Festival Stakeholders' Perspective: Findings and Discussion

4.3.1 Accessibility at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

The interviews with stakeholders of the Edinburgh Fringe revealed that economic accessibility is becoming detrimental to its operation. Each interviewee underlined the importance each key stakeholder plays in balancing the entire festival model. The absence of a crucial stakeholder prevents the functional Fringe ecosystem. In addition, it has been communicated that The Fringe Society have developed an “overarching power” in which they are described to take festival ownership as a “figurehead” by their positions of power (Sharples et al., 2014). The director from a well-established Fringe venue (Participant D) detailed that:

“...I think it's a really fragile ecosystem and at the moment we are struggling to balance to make that, it's kind of on a knife edge [...] and we've produced a document recently called *tipping point* where all of these factors are kind...

of out of control [...] and they're not, like they need to be working in harmony. Whereas with the Fringe Society trying to do more than its remit, it means that everything's going off balance" (Appendix E, quote 12)

Indeed, as discussed in the preceding section and the literature review, stakeholder importance underscores the distinct interests held by festival stakeholders and their varying positional power within the network (Freeman, 2010; Karlsen & Nordström, 2009; Sharples et al, 2014). Their shared comprehension of objectives and concerns relative to the Fringe should guide and inform actions equally accessible for all stakeholders to benefit from. A manager of The Fringe Society (Participant G) communicated their stance on stakeholder relationships:

"I think the importance of a kind of collaborative and cohesive festival on how artists are able to navigate it is really important. Everyone working together with the kind of *giving anyone a stage and everyone a seat* sort of mantra behind them, is really useful and makes what's quite a complicated festival just feel a bit more coherent and make a bit more sense to participants." (Appendix E, quote 13)

The Fringe Society functions as the charitable organising body for the festival. However, Participant G explains that the Society do not "hold ownership" of the event itself (Appendix E, quote 14). In addition, with the Fringe festival operating as a decentralised artistic marketplace, the misunderstanding among performers is apparent, which often stems from research before arriving in Edinburgh or the perceived lack of support in building their marketing and PR campaigns. This assumption only results in artists approaching the Fringe Society as the official operating body responsible for resolving the challenges they face in achieving festival exposure.

Moreover, a dependency arises on the festival organisers like the Fringe Society and the venues to pursue beneficial stakeholder relationships that facilitate collaboration efforts towards the overall festival delivery (Sharples et al, 2014). Each supporting stakeholder network plays that crucial role in guaranteeing the full accomplishment of supporting emerging artists through its utilisation at the arts marketplace. The Marketing and Communications Manager (Participant F) of another well-established venue expressed their worries about the barrier that prohibits the facilitation of nurturing the relationship with performers:

“The cultivation of new and emerging artists has become prohibitive for venues, [...] you want to cultivate relationships, you want to establish a repeat visit from successful performers but [...] it's very expensive to invest in emerging talents and the financial risk, the venues in particular in Edinburgh, undertake make it really difficult for them to find the money to invest in emerging talent. [...] If emerging talent appears that has funding coming from elsewhere [...] it's much easier for the venues to put their weight behind that.” (Appendix E, quote 15)

This indicates that there is a disconnect between the Fringe Society and the other stakeholders as regards to the overall goal of investment towards emerging talent that ventures to the Fringe. The reciprocal interactions pertaining to the festival's strategy for facilitating economic and cultural performer benefits (Karlsen & Nordström, 2009) are absent.

Furthermore, as Getz, Andersson and Larson (2007) illustrate in theoretical terms, the status of the Edinburgh Fringe and its performers as constituents of the ecosystem necessitates further discussion on access to funding, resource management and shared goals that prioritise the development of performers' campaigns. Supporting artists constitutes a major part of stakeholder responsibilities due to “a lot of people that actually care about the Fringe are doing everything they can to support the artists” (Appendix E, Participant D, quote 16). In essence, it is the primary stakeholders, notably the venues and the Fringe programmers, who are the principal contributors of ongoing investment (Clarkson, 1995) to the festival. There is clear recognition within the Fringe ecosystem that “without performers there's no venues and without venues there's no Fringe” (Appendix E, Participant E, quote 17).

In addition, eight out of ten festival stakeholders made it clear they perceived the Fringe Society as being of little help in obtaining artist support and general Fringe campaign assistance. All of the stakeholders expressed their severe concerns with funding and the severe expense (accommodation costs, staffing, publicity fees, paid campaigns, etc) presently attached to the Edinburgh Fringe. Consequently, this indicates that the decline in salient stakeholder collaboration is linked to a shift in perceived power (Bowdin et al., 2023; Mitchell et al., 1997) by the Fringe Society. This concentration of authority has resulted in stakeholder strategic input for performers'

investment being overshadowed, which compromises the festival's core operational framework.

The majority of interviewees explained that the Fringe is an exceptional launchpad for all forms of performance art that fosters a collaborative community dedicated to fully supporting its performers. However, the strategic pathway for stakeholders must not be decided by a single body. Instead, it requires a synergetic process that leverages stakeholder relationships to negotiate priorities and direction with the primary benefiting stakeholder (the artists) placed at the centre. This further aligns with French philosopher Michel Foucault's explanation that power must not reside exclusively with a single entity (Kaldybekov et al., 2023) and indicates that Edinburgh Fringe stakeholder relationships ought to serve as networks for defining power dynamics that facilitate best practices for their performers (Getz & Niekerk, 2019).

4.3.2 The Concept of Collaborative Strategy

In addition to Clarkson's (1995) stakeholder theory, the complex relationships that exist at the festival between the administrative body of the Fringe Society and its stakeholders are more nuanced than simple transactions. The interviews with festival stakeholders confirmed that regardless of stakeholders' positions of power, six out of seven interviewees strongly advocate for the involvement of relevant Fringe networks in combined efforts (Myllykangas et al., 2010) that aid every level of the festival's ecosystem. Research participants reported a variety of factors that influenced the accessibility and further maintenance of the Fringe. Participant E (Venue Marketing Manager) spoke of their concerns for the upcoming festival in August:

“...one of the main things is the whole kind of Fringe ecosystem and its effect. There's this umbrella and then you know loads of layers to the festival and I think each year things creep up such as accommodation and threats from other venues that might steal performers [...] cost of living [...] everything has gone up by 30% across the board.” (Appendix E, quote 18)

This interviewee explains their standpoint towards the barriers that arise in the preparation of the festival and throughout its duration. In addition, there is reference to the use of effective stakeholder engagement and the necessity of judicious allocation and prioritisation of resources that will adequately address the needs of all

relevant parties and participants of the Fringe. As emphasised in literature, communication of diverse initiatives that organise and develop the festival becomes increasingly important (Larson, 2009) as the interconnected structure formed by the “actors” in the Fringe festival event space must be driven by practical festival interests (De Propriis, 2002). Some respondents expressed a lack of transparency that indicates the limited communication between each of the festival’s social network structures and the majority agreed that the accessibility to artists’ development funding was allocated to resources that do not benefit the artists:

“the accessibility around the festival is an issue that is much bigger than the venues and the venues I think are quite often looked at to solve that problem, or that they're the arbiters and creators of that problem, but they're not because they actually take up the financial risks to put up non-bricks and mortar spaces that most venues operate in means again their artists investment [...] is suffering...(Participant F, quote 15)

“The talent is what’s keeping this festival going and that’s where the money needs to be invested, not into other things” (Appendix E, quote 18)

This is further evidence of the urgent need for a collective strategy in overcoming the barriers facing the Edinburgh Fringe. Moreover, the festival provides this remarkably unique platform which is distinct in its methods of artist promotion and scope of opportunity. The Fringe brings performers together who take substantial financial risks to produce incredible work, but the emphasis falls to the vital role of joining forces to generate additional support festival wide:

“It’s a very challenging year ahead [...] artists just need to work with companies that actually care about the Fringe and [...] try and invest whatever they can into artists...” (Appendix E, quote 19)

Interestingly, The Fringe Society expressed that:

“I think our biggest challenge is the financial. We receive very, very little public funding to actually deliver any of our services. [...] there’s a huge volume [of performers] but what I’d really like to be able to do with more money and more time is get out to all of the artists and be able to increase that number significantly” (Appendix E, quote 20)

This statement seems to be very much in line with what the other Fringe stakeholders stated with reference to the socio-economic situation and the challenges within the festival landscape. The crucial factor in addressing the difficulties faced depends on establishing connections in the social networks that encourage discussion around similar experiences. “Fringe has been around so long that there are so many people willing to talk about how it worked or didn’t work” (Appendix E, quote 14). This approach seems to reflect Larson’s (2008) Political Market Square metaphor which highlights the controlled open access of allowing stakeholders to connect naturally based on their shared interests and goals of the Fringe. Moreover, it spreads to the wider stakeholder network as Participant H illustrated:

“...the fringe every year like I said, gets bigger and fewer press cover the Fringe due to budget restrictions and cuts on the arts. [...] sadly it’s the same barriers every year.” (Appendix E, quote 21)

The presence of media has a significant impact on the festival's economy. Festival stakeholders are encouraged to recognise the influence the festival's social actors have on each other (Christakis & Fowler, 2011; Jarman et al., 2014). In addition, these public relations professionals who share the same goal of championing artists “can make a difference for a show and make an act feel like they haven’t been forgotten about in a big machine (Appendix E, quote 22). Indeed, the festival’s stakeholders are certainly involved in the preparation and delivery of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe where their main priority remains in fully supporting the calibre of talent. Despite this objective, many factors hinder these stakeholders from reaching their goals. Although the success of an artist’s Fringe campaign is not the responsibility of the venues, PRs and the Fringe Society, they can provide the right guidance and knowledge for the performers to fulfil their potential at the major arts festival.

4.4 Conclusion

Through further analysis of the interviews and the subsequent discussion of the findings, it became clear that festival stakeholder networks are not fully implemented by theories displayed in academic literature. Instead, it was demonstrated that potential interpretations were formed in attaining credibility as a prominent stakeholder within the festival’s social networks. Many participants, who as a collective share many

years of service at the festival, did express their severe concerns of the current fragile ecosystem that could result in severe damage if fresh approaches are not generated to balance the festival model. The primary research established that the motivations to “learn, develop and connect” (Appendix G, quote 25) with the Fringe community was one of the main elements to achieve successful campaigns. The feeling of validation and honesty within the arts community in addition to creative incentives to boost strategies, helped performers build confidence and become conscious of the industry difficulties.

This chapter presented findings from the interviews with Edinburgh Festival Fringe visiting companies and stakeholders of the festival. The analysis of the findings facilitated greater understanding of stakeholders’ relationships and their effectiveness in delivering unified strength to performers’ campaigns. The latter was verified through careful examination of Fringe stakeholders’ perceptions and personal experiences concerning the delivery of the festival. The final chapter will summarise the main findings of this dissertation and provide further recommendations based on both primary and secondary research.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This dissertation focused on analysing the relationships between visiting companies and festival stakeholders, particularly the venues and their contributions to fruitful campaigns at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The thorough analysis of subject related literature and application of qualitative methodology, supported by an interpretivist philosophy to primary data collection, allowed the attainment of research aim and objectives. The study intended to ascertain valuable insights of performers' experiences and gain an enhanced understanding of support received from Fringe stakeholders. To serve this purpose, qualitative data collection was utilised to illuminate Fringe relations. Both artists and festival stakeholders' perspectives were considered to determine not only the strategies adopted by visiting companies in campaign creation but also if marketing and publicity initiatives were supported by Fringe stakeholders. Such analysis consequently led to achieving the aim and objectives of the research.

The subject area of the Edinburgh Fringe was recognised as significant in holding extreme relevance for creative freedom in the arts marketplace (Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society & McCarthy, 2024). Festivals have undergone considerable expansion by attentive strategies in destination marketing, tourism, community engagement and stakeholder collaboration (Armbrecht et al., 2020; Festivals Edinburgh, 2022; Hague, 2021; Jago et al., 2003). The model development that places festival organisers at the centre of the network that incorporates the nourishing link concerning stakeholder power (Getz, 2002; Getz et al., 2007) and the limited research on Fringe relations from the artists' perspective, created the potential for this research study to fill the evident gap.

The chapters of this dissertation were crafted to satisfy each research objective. The first chapter introduced the stakeholder theories and their significance when applied to the Edinburgh Fringe. It also served as a starting point for further discussion in the literature. The review of literature focused on exploring stakeholder importance, publicity efforts and the place of Edinburgh regarding festival support networks. It became clear that stakeholder theory proposes that an establishment remains

sustainable if there is an active address of the concerns shared between all participating stakeholders (Van Niekerk & Getz, 2016). The diverse interests of festival stakeholders can shape power dynamics in which imbalance, notably where stakeholders perceive excessive control, can substantially impact their festival contributions (Ralston et al., 2005). Thus, the potential misuse of power and failure to utilise existing networks can impact stakeholder relationships and the long-term viability of the festival. The significance of their involvement at the Fringe constitutes a crucial research subject that requires deeper academic investigation.

Another research objective was satisfied by adoption of a qualitative research methodology and was guided by an interpretivist philosophy. This technique, employed by semi-structured interviews with eminent stakeholders, assisted in determining if visiting companies' campaigns were fully supported by Fringe stakeholders. The primary data collected was then presented and analysed in the findings and discussion section. In addition, the generalisability of the research findings provided in-depth knowledge about the existing Edinburgh Fringe relationships which could be applicable to similar festival networks found at large-scale events and contribute to further theory development.

The primary research established stakeholder relationships that exist at the Edinburgh Fringe loosely observe the academic theories, with a particular emphasis on power in stakeholder networks. It was found that festival stakeholders aim to build and deliver a combined strategy that facilitates the foundations for emerging artists to flourish throughout campaigns. This is attained by creating beneficial stakeholder relationships that leverage power in resource allocation, engagement with all audiences and the nurturing of connections beyond core management networks to foster festival communities (Freeman, 2010; Getz & Niekerk, 2019; Karlsen & Nordström, 2009; Sharples et al., 2014). The majority of interviewed stakeholders reported that the strategic decisions and management of resources, made by core festival organisers, were the main cause for the perceived fragility of accessibility among all festival actors.

On the whole, it was found that the visiting companies are recognised as the crucial stakeholders that ensure the festival remains operational. In addition, the recognition of value creation that manifests in festival stakeholder relationships must be

transparent as these exchanges are considered as relational dynamics as opposed to direct organisation transactions (Freeman & Liedtka, 1997; Myllykangas et al., 2010). It illustrated that stakeholder relations that enhance the position of performing artists at the Edinburgh Fringe do exist but must be leveraged thoughtfully in gaining access to all resources available. The research findings could therefore be useful for other arts festivals that aspire to nourish the calibre of talent. In relation to accessibility, the findings have highlighted the impact of budgetary constraints and the potential consequences for the Fringe.

5.2 Limitations

Research in the field of stakeholder importance (Van Niekerk & Getz, 2019) at large-scale festivals and destination marketing of Edinburgh are common topics of strategic conversations among organisers and managing bodies but theoretical applications require further representation in academic literature. In addition, public relations theories are apparent in academic materials but there is a lack of application to the arts industry. This dissertation attempted to fill said gap in existing studies and was also subject to various limitations. The selected methods and sample size could be improved by conducting research on a wider scale through inclusion of more stakeholders, government officials, council members and also utilising the case study approach. Such an approach could benefit in-depth research related to Fringe stakeholders.

Moreover, the use of semi-structured interviews to collect primary data was mostly attained but the structure of some questions encouraged discussions on topics that did not have study relevance. A lack of clarity on the wording of questions was also conveyed as some were seen to incorporate multiple themes instead of tackling one. The response rate of interviewees was relatively good but the interview requests were sent to participants at a similar time period as other calendar arts festivals. This limitation experienced by the author meant that the majority of interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams. Although this is a convenient means for the purpose, it limits the interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Bell et al., 2022) and perhaps does not allow festival stakeholders to reach a relaxed state to fully express

their viewpoints. However, due to time constraints of this project such methods were employed.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Festivals

The research demonstrated that the stakeholders of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe unite to deliver the festival and seek to manage artist expectations which were discussed at interview. However, the festival practices were not directly informed by academic theories but loosely followed them. The majority of interviewees expressed their concerns of festival accessibility in relation to funding and the spending power at the Fringe, in which this element could have significant impact on the performer's campaign. Indeed, many authors underlined the importance of alliance (Jaeger & Mykletun, 2013; Karlsen & Nordström, 2009; Sharples et al., 2014; Van Niekerk & Getz, 2019) to maximise artists opportunities to gain access to knowledge and resources free of charge. Currently, the visiting companies of Edinburgh Fringe face an anxious preparation period in which the "30% price increase" (Participant E, 2025) universally limits potential campaign success due to finances spent on other aspects such as accommodation. Therefore, in line with the festival's open to all mantra, workshops focusing on specific campaign aspects for example, basics of PR, could be offered by all Fringe stakeholders. It would allow each visiting company to learn new skills, connect with industry professionals and integrate artists into another festival network.

Finally, this research aimed to spotlight the performers and further emphasise the need for festival stakeholders to maintain artist relationships as these are key to performers' growth and encourages their return to Edinburgh Fringe. The festival becomes fundamental to any performer in unlocking the spirit of togetherness. Indeed, this should be carefully addressed to underscore the strategic steps required to preserve the influx of artistic talent but crucially, stakeholders must recognise the vital parts of the ecosystem and exactly how their actions can benefit performers. Key to the ongoing success of the performing arts is the enhanced support of artists without whom there would be no Fringe.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Pilot Interview Guide

The list below includes the questions applied during the pilot study in preparation for interviews with Edinburgh Festival Fringe Performers.

1. What comes to mind when the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is mentioned?

Supplementary question: Can I ask you to elaborate on these thoughts of the festival?

2. Before performing at the Fringe, working for a Fringe venue, working at The Fringe Society or becoming an arts media professional, what was your motivation to engage in the arts and cultural industry?
3. Professionals that operate within this field often refer to arts and culture as a 'learn as you go' type of industry, do you believe this is the case for performers when arriving at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?

Supplementary questions:

- Do you think this also applies to the host destination of Edinburgh?
 - Do the connotations of Edinburgh influence preparation methods if attending or working at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?
4. Since the Edinburgh Festival Fringe holds a vision of giving anyone a stage and everyone a seat, do you believe there is a strong focus placed on artist relationships with venues and PR agents that aids their development?
 5. How would you envisage performers development is achieved?
 6. As a performer, what role do festival stakeholders relationships, the Fringe society and media representatives play in delivering a successful Fringe run?
 7. Would you describe PR campaigns as a marketing asset to performers and if so please can you describe how you encourage or enable this?

Supplementary question:

- Once a venue is confirmed, show registration and promotion become a priority. Whilst digital and physical marketing outputs play a crucial role in this, some performers focus on interactions with public relations (PRs) agents. Would you agree with this statement?
8. As studied before this interview, some advice and information on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is shared via Equity's website. Are you a member of Equity, the entertainment and arts trade union?

Supplementary questions:

- As Equity highlights there are several cases where artists have been exploited when venturing to Edinburgh. Would you describe Edinburgh as a cultural hotspot that hold high expectation for artists?
 - Can you describe some difficulties you've faced as a performer or on behalf of a performer?
9. From your industry experiences, what does a fruitful press and marketing campaign involve at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe? Can you please expand on any difficulties you have experienced?
 10. As a performer, what role do personal interactions with venues, The Fringe Society and PRs, before and during the Fringe play in creating successful marketing campaigns?
 11. Do you rely on your network of Fringe contacts to aid your campaign if additional support is needed? If so, please could you describe who facilitates this assistance?
 12. As previously mentioned in question eight, Equity published a Guide to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Can you explain the support and advice you receive?
 13. Feedback is integral to every stakeholder at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It allows all supporting parties to review and plan for future successful campaigns. Can you tell me a time where you have asked for feedback?
 14. Looking forward to the Edinburgh Fringe 2025, out of your performing venue, The Fringe Society and your press and marketing team, where does your focus lie in terms of gaining support throughout?

Supplementary question: Are there any aspects that you are concerned about? If so, please can you describe these thoughts?

15. I would like to thank you for your time today, is there anything you would like to add that you feel we did not cover?

Appendix B – Interview Guides

The list below includes amended questions after the pilot study that served as a guide during interviews with Edinburgh Festival Fringe Performers and key stakeholders of the festival. Each of the stakeholder's guides was edited to suit the interview's participant.

Performer:

1. What comes to mind when the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is mentioned?

Supplementary question: Could you please elaborate on these thoughts of the festival?

2. Professionals that operate within this field often refer to arts and culture as a 'learn as you go' type of industry, do you believe this is the case for performers when arriving at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?
 - a. Could you please expand on why you think this?

Supplementary question: Do you think this also applies to the host destination of Edinburgh?

3. Since the Edinburgh Festival Fringe holds a vision of *giving anyone a stage and everyone a seat*, do you believe there is a strong focus placed on artist relationships with venues and agents that aids their development?
 - If so, please can you explain why you think there is a strong focus?
4. As a stand-up performer, what role do festival stakeholders relationships, the Fringe society and media representatives play in delivering successful Fringe run?
5. How would you envisage your development as a performer is achieved?
6. As a performer, what role do personal interactions with venues, The Fringe Society and PRs, before and during the Fringe play in creating a successful marketing campaign?
7. From your industry experiences, what does a fruitful press and marketing campaign involve at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?
 - a. Could you please expand on any difficulties you have experienced?
8. Would you describe PR campaigns as a marketing asset to performers?

Supplementary question:

- If so please can you describe how you benefit from this?

9. As a performer, do you rely on your network of Fringe contacts to aid your campaign if additional support is needed?

Supplementary question:

- Please could you describe who facilitates this assistance?

10. As provided before this interview, some advice and information on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is shared via Equity's website. Are you a member of Equity, the performing arts and entertainment trade union?

Supplementary questions:

- Why did you decide to become a member?
- Would you consider becoming a member? Are you aware of their guidelines for the Fringe?

11. As Equity highlights there are several cases where artists have been exploited when venturing to Edinburgh. Would you describe Edinburgh as a cultural hotspot that holds high expectation for artists?

Supplementary question:

- Could you please describe some difficulties you've faced as a performer?

12. Equity also published their Guide to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, as provided before this interview. Could you please explain the support and advice you receive when performing?

13. Feedback is integral to every stakeholder at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It allows all supporting parties to review and plan for future successful campaigns.

- a. Could you please tell me a time where you have asked for feedback?

14. Looking forward to the Edinburgh Fringe 2025, out of your performing venue, The Fringe Society and your press and marketing teams, where does your focus lie in terms of gaining support throughout?

Supplementary question: Are there any aspects that you are concerned about? If so, please can you describe these thoughts?

15. I would like to thank you for your time today, is there anything you would like to add that you feel we did not cover?

Festival Stakeholders: Fringe Venue Interview Guide

1. What comes to mind when the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is mentioned?
2. Professionals that operate within this field often refer to arts and culture as a 'learn as you go' type of industry, do you believe this is the case for performers when arriving at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?
 - a. Could you please expand on why you think this?

Supplementary question:

- Do you think this also applies to the host destination of Edinburgh?
3. Since the Edinburgh Festival Fringe holds a vision of *giving anyone a stage and everyone a seat*, do you believe there is a strong focus placed on artist relationships with venues that aids their development?
 - a. If so, please can you explain why you think there is a strong focus?
 4. How would you envisage performers' development is achieved?
 5. As the Head of Marketing of a Fringe venue, what role do festival stakeholders relationships, the Fringe society and PRs play in delivering a successful Fringe run?
 6. What role do personal interactions with visiting companies before and during the Fringe play in creating successful marketing campaigns?
 7. From your industry experiences, what does a fruitful press and marketing campaign involve at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?
 - a. Could you please expand on any difficulties you have experienced with artists?
 8. Would you describe PR campaigns as a marketing asset to performers?
 - a. If so, please can you describe how you encourage or enable this?
 9. As Head of Marketing Communications, do you rely on your network of Fringe contacts to aid visiting companies' campaigns if additional support is needed? If so, please could you describe who facilitates this assistance?

Supplementary question:

- Please could you describe who facilitates this assistance? Who do you reach out to most frequently?

10. As provided before this interview, some advice and information on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is shared via Equity's website. Are you aware of Equity, the performing arts and entertainment trade union?

Supplementary questions:

- Do you believe the union provides substantial support to performers?
- Would you encourage visiting companies to become members?

11. As Equity highlights there are several cases where artists have been exploited when venturing to Edinburgh. Would you describe Edinburgh as a cultural hotspot that holds high expectation for artists?

- Could you please describe some difficulties you've faced with performers?

12. Equity published their Guide to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, as provided before this interview. Could you please explain the support and advice you provide to visiting companies?

- After reading Equity's document, are there any similarities or differences between the advice they give to artists compared to the advice you give as a Fringe venue?

13. Feedback is integral to every stakeholder at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It allows all supporting parties to review and plan for future successful campaigns.

- a. Could you please tell me a time where you have provided feedback to artists?

14. Looking forward to the Edinburgh Fringe 2025, what support will you provide visiting companies to maintain a strong working relationship?

15. I would like to thank you for your time today, is there anything you would like to add that you feel we did not cover?

Festival Stakeholders: The Fringe Society Interview Guide

1. What comes to mind when the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is mentioned?

Supplementary question: Could you please elaborate on these thoughts of the festival?

2. Professionals that operate within this field often refer to arts and culture as a 'learn as you go' type of industry, do you believe this is the case for performers when arriving at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?
 - a. Could you please expand on why you think this?

Supplementary questions:

- Do you think this also applies to the host destination of Edinburgh?
3. Since the Edinburgh Festival Fringe holds a vision of giving anyone a stage and everyone a seat, do you believe there is a strong focus placed on artist relationships with PRs and venues that aid their development?
 - a. If so, please can you explain why you think there is a strong focus?
 4. How would you envisage performers' development is achieved?
 5. As a Manager of the Fringe Society, what role do you think festival stakeholders' relationships and public relations professionals play in delivering a successful Fringe run?
 6. What roles do personal interactions with visiting companies before and during the Fringe, play in creating successful marketing campaigns?
 7. From your industry experiences, what does a fruitful press and marketing campaign involve at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?
 - a. Could you please expand on any difficulties you have experienced with artists?
 8. Would you describe PR campaigns as a marketing asset to performers?
 - a. If so please can you describe how you encourage this?
 9. As a member of Senior Management at the Fringe Society, do you rely on your network of Fringe contacts to aid visiting companies' campaigns if additional support is needed?

Supplementary question

- Please could you describe who facilitates this assistance? Who do you reach out to most frequently?

10. As provided before this interview, some advice and information on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is shared via Equity's website. Are you aware of Equity, the performing arts and entertainment trade union?

Supplementary questions:

- Do you believe the union provides substantial support to creatives?
- After reading Equity's document, would you encourage visiting companies to become members?

11. As Equity highlights there are several cases where artists have been exploited when venturing to Edinburgh. Would you describe Edinburgh as a cultural hotspot that holds high expectation for artists?

Supplementary question:

- Could you please describe some difficulties you've faced with performers?

12. Equity also published their Guide to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, as provided before this interview. Could you please explain the support and advice you provide to artists?

- a. Are there any similarities or differences between their guide to the Fringe and the advice you give?

13. Feedback is integral to every stakeholder at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It allows all supporting parties to review and plan for future campaigns.

- a. Could you please tell me a time where you have provided feedback to artists?

14. Looking forward to the Edinburgh Fringe 2025, what support will you provide visiting companies to maintain a strong working relationship?

Supplementary question: Do you foresee any barriers that would hinder you from providing this support?

15. That is us at the end of our interview, I would like to thank you for your time today, is there anything you would like to add that you feel we did not cover?

Appendix C – Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET & CONSENT FORM



As a MSc Marketing with Festival and Event Management student at Edinburgh Napier University, I am inviting you to take part in an interview to discuss your views and experiences towards media communications at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The research study intends to critically analyse visiting companies' relationships at the world renowned performance arts festival. Please take the time to read the following information relating to your participation in this study.

Who is the researcher?

My name is Christy Tukalo and as previously mentioned I am a masters student at The Business School of Edinburgh Napier University. With an undergraduate in Product Design, I was keen to further my creative studies in the business sector and ventured back to academia to pursue a course in marketing with festival and event management. I have been fortunate to work at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe which influenced my specific research area. My contact email is 40688522@live.napier.ac.uk should you wish to discuss anything further. My supervisor for this research study is Dr David Jarman - d.jarman@napier.ac.uk

Why is such research being conducted?

Researchers have emphasised the importance of festival stakeholders relationships at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the support performers receive in achieving a successful Fringe run. This research study aims to develop an understanding of visiting companies' relationships with venues, The Fringe Society and media representatives in relation to rewarding marketing campaigns. This is why it is essential to gain insights from key festival stakeholders.

What will you do in the interview?

The interview will be conducted by the researcher of the study and will take place in a private room at a specific location or online meeting as arranged and agreed by both parties. The interview will last no longer than 40 minutes and with permission, the conversation will be audio recorded.

What else should I know?

To aid some of the interview questions, you will be provided with supporting information documents. You have the right to receive clearly communicated information from the researcher in advance to allow participants to study the information sheets and ask any questions. Participants are free from coercion of any kind and should not be pressured into the study. As a participant, you have the right to give your informed consent before proceeding with the interview. Should you wish to exit the interview at any point, it will be terminated immediately with any gathered data securely disposed of and destroyed. Whilst we aim to keep the interview confidential, if it is revealed that you or someone else is at risk of serious harm, I have a duty of care to tell someone and the authorities about this. The decision will be made with you.

What happens to the information and who has access?

The information gathered will be used for further research findings and analysis where participant's confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. A fictional name will be given with no identifying details used. Once transcribed, participants will receive a copy of the interview transcript to ensure participant approval of discussion topics at interview. Only the researcher will have access to the data collected, which will be securely stored on a personal password protected hard drive. The audio files and transcripts will be destroyed once the research study has concluded. The use of the research data adheres to the university's Research Data Management policy and the Data Protection Act 2018.

What happens next?

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you would still like to take part, please read and complete the consent form attached. Thank you for your time and consideration.

This data gathering exercise was granted ethical approval by Edinburgh Napier University Research Integrity Committee. If you have any questions or concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact either the Convenor or Deputy Convenor of The Business School Research Integrity Committee - j.mcmillan@napier.ac.uk or g.kerr@napier.ac.uk



Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

The Business School

Interview Consent Form

Visiting Companies' Relationships at the Edinburgh Festival
Fringe in relation to marketing/PR campaigns

- I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research study at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- I understand that I can exercise my right to exit the interview at any point and have my interview data removed and destroyed.
- I understand that the data collected from the interview will remain confidential.
- I understand that information which suggests a significant risk of harm to myself or another person cannot be kept confidential and a joint decision will be taken regarding who to report the situation to.
- I understand that I will be anonymised by use of a fictional name when interview responses are used in the research paper.
- I understand that I will receive a copy of the transcript from my interview and can exercise my right for specific responses not to be used within the research study.
- I understand that data collected will be kept in a secure location, only accessible by the researcher and on study conclusion the data will be destroyed.
- I consent to being a participant in the research study.
- I consent to the interview being audio recorded as part of the research study.

(PRINT NAME)

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Researcher Contact: Christy Tukalo - 40688522@live.napier.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr David Jarman - d.jarman@napier.ac.uk

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Appendix D – Supporting Documents for Interview

The guide below is taken from Equity, the performing arts and entertainment trade union, website that displays information on performing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (Equity, 2025). This information is utilised in shaping some of the interview questions.

EQUITY Advice & Support ▾ Campaigns & Policy ▾ Get Involved ▾ Membership ▾ About ▾ Q

Join

▸ Advice and support ▸ Know your rights ▸ Working at the Edinburgh Fringe - A Co...

Equity's Guide to the Edinburgh Festival and Fringe

Working at the Edinburgh Fringe – A Complete Guide

On this page

- ↓ What is the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?
- ↓ What are the different options for performing?
- ↓ Think about why you want to do Edinburgh
- ↓ Advice and information
- ↓ Don't get ripped off or put up with bad treatment

What is the Edinburgh Festival Fringe?

The Fringe is a festival which runs through most of August each year and is open to anyone to participate in. There is no overall body that curates and commissions the Fringe or decides which shows are suitable or allowed but the Edinburgh Fringe Society does produce resources to help and advise performers and producers as well as some oversight.

Some of the venues themselves will decide the sort of shows they wish to host but other than that there is very little either centralised control.

The 2023 Fringe went ahead in full with a similar number of shows as before the pandemic but overall ticket sales had not yet got back to the level of 2019. It's difficult to make direct comparisons because not all shows have tickets on sales as they are free to enter.

The 2024 Fringe was reported by the Fringe Society to have 3,746 registered shows with 2.6 million tickets issued.

What are the different options for performing?

There are a variety of options that are available including:

- Having a show put on by a producer.
- Performing in an established venue on a contract involving a ticket revenue split.
- Hiring a venue of whatever size and keeping ticket revenue.
- Booking a 'free' venue and collecting donations.
- Performing as part of a show produced by others.
- Street performing / busking.

Think about why you want to do Edinburgh

There are lots of reasons for doing a show at Edinburgh such as:

- To make money.
- To try out new material or hone skills.
- To get exposure for your work.
- To get a producer, manager or agent to further your career.
- To meet useful professional contacts.
- To see other work.
- To have fun.

Contact us

For info on drop-ins or to get support during or after the Fringe email scotland@equity.org.uk

scotland@equity.org.uk

Everything in Know your rights

- Your right to equal treatment
- Holiday pay
- Grievances and disciplinarys
- Making your own contract
- Comedian's charter
- Agents - What to check for when signing with an agent
- A guideline for student film engagements
- Working in Ireland
- Equity AI Toolkit
- Creating A Menopause Friendly Workplace: Employer's Resource
- Audio Info Hub
- Higher Education Intimacy Coordination & Direction Guidelines
- Commercials
- Medical Role-Play Best Practice Guide
- Professionally Made Professionally Paid
- Equity template letter for personal data erasure
- Working at the Edinburgh Fringe - A Complete Guide
- Devised Work and Your Rights

Advice and information

How to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe - What do you need to do and when?	+
What sorts of shows do performers put on and how much material is needed?	+
What should you consider when choosing a venue and establishing a performance space?	+
Other factors to consider	+
Accessibility and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe	+
Do you have to go for the whole event?	+
What to consider when choosing accommodation	+
How much does it cost to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe? How to budget	+
How to promote your show before you get there and when you're there	+
What else to do when you get there	+
Look out for Equity Events and meetings	+
When is the Edinburgh Fringe Festival?	+
When did the Edinburgh Fringe Festival start?	+
How does the Edinburgh Fringe Festival work?	+

Don't get ripped off or put up with bad treatment - Join Equity

There are always numerous stories of artists getting exploited when doing Edinburgh. Common scenarios are:

- Large promoters and agencies offering to take your show to Edinburgh and covering the costs such as venue hire, travel and accommodation. In return, if the show makes a loss, you will have to provide future gigs for that promoter for no fee until the shortfall is paid off. This could be quite significant and take quite a few gigs and time to pay off.
- Using a publicist through your agent / promoter. You may be paying them a large fee without any guarantee they'll do anything for you. There are good PRs out there so worth doing some research and getting recommendations from artists you trust.

Ultimately if we want to tackle the issues faced by performers at The Edinburgh Fringe we need every working comedian to [join their union](#). Together they can campaign against bad employers, rip-off accommodation and for better working conditions and pay for everyone.

Equity exists to bring together performers and allied creative workers to use their collective strength, in an industry where you can often feel that you have to fend for yourself. When our members come together they can create real change.

Equity membership [includes important benefits](#) like public liability insurance, accident insurance, backstage cover for your equipment and personal possessions, a whole range of free and reduced price legal services both at and outside work as well as advice and support from experienced officers and activists on contracts, payments and more besides.

It also covers any other areas of your practice as a performer, including things like DJing, compering, modelling, voiceover work, acting, walk-on parts, children's entertainment and much more besides.

[Join Equity](#)

› Personal data, performances, and GDPR

Comedians' Network

Be part of Equity's Comedians' Network

RELATED LINKS

- › [Fringe Society](#) 
- › [For accommodation](#) 
- › [PBH Free Fringe](#) 
- › [Laughing Horse](#) 

Appendix E – Transcription from Interviews with Edinburgh Fringe Performers and Festival Stakeholders

The table below presents parts of transcription (the quotes used in the findings and discussion chapter within broader context) from the interviews with Edinburgh Festival Fringe artists (Participant A, B & C) and key festival stakeholders (Participant D, E, F, G, H & I)

Quote Number	Question Number and Interviewee	Transcription
1	1 & Participant A	Yeah, just the Royal Mile in general. But what I love about it is like everybody floods to Edinburgh and it's just such a celebration of artists and all artists like from, you know, a middle-aged man who's having a life crisis and wants to do a one man show, to like professional funded opera dance company like everyone. Anything goes. There's definitely like a community, although it's on such a massive scale, it does also have a community feel to it. Like I've got people that I only ever see like every year at Fringe, but I know I'll see them every year at Fringe. It almost feels like familiar as well, like, coming back to each year...
2	1 & Participant C	It's my whole life. It's genuinely everything, everything that came from the best parts and the worst parts of my life was from Fringe. Like I could tell you my whole history with it, but I don't know if that's helpful or relevant. It's a really complicated relationship but I first came to the fringe in 2005 and I came up as a reviewer for a newspaper and it was the the first time I ever felt, anywhere felt like home, and it was the first time, I really haven't felt at home. I've come from an abusive family and they didn't accept who I was and I wanted to work in the arts for all my life. And then coming, coming here, it was like I'm in Edinburgh right now, felt like I'd found everything I'd been searching for.
3	13 & Participant C	Yeah. I mean, I think the whole point of fringe and any art is feedback because it's a conversation, especially when its live performance. So whether it's me, I can be on stage and telling the same jokes every day, I'm asking for feedback from the audience because I'm only defined as funny if they laugh. That's the type of feedback. So yeah, it's literally that's the whole point of fringe is to understand where you sit in terms of what is socially acceptable or socially unacceptable. And that's for me why we are comedians is that we tread the borders of around that circle of what is contained within acceptable, acceptability and what's outside of that. We are on the fringes, quite literally, and that's why people laugh is that we are titillating and questioning.
		I would say there's three types of Edinburgh Fringe you could participate in as a comedian, so there's the one I mentioned of which is some

4	3 & Participant B	people just go and they do the free fringe venues and they just love it. And for me they're the true sort of spirit of the fringe. They love being there, performing in a karaoke booth, which I did for two years. And you do a bucket collection at the end and they've used up all their annual leave and they just love it and they love performing. If you do a free fringe venue, you are not going to get any industry attention. I don't care what any of them say. You're not, right. Then your second one is the comedians who go, and they're usually, a particular type of comedian. They don't really do the club gigs and they have huge agents, huge producers, directors. They're usually unfortunately now as well, what's really common is paying a lot of writers that they don't credit too and throw a lot of money at a show in Edinburgh to get a lot of attention so that they can go on tour because that's all they do. Then you have a huge group in the middle, which is what I've fallen into for the past two years, who are working under this sort of myth and apprehension that if you go, invest a load of money and do well, the industry will notice you and you'll get to kick start your career because an agent will sign you or a producer from TV will see you or something will happen. And that middle group is really, really large and it's not. It maybe used to work like that, but it doesn't work like that anymore and it's the group that's losing the most money.
5	6 & Participant B	We prefer speaking to each other and getting information there. With media people I found, I always find the venues to be quite a good point of contact. Obviously I thought Gilded Balloon were great. In my debut year in particular, and I feel that that's really important for stand up because you do feel supported by the place that you're going to be performing in which is just quite soothing to know that. OK, yeah this is good. I've got someone who can help me if I, especially because I was doing everything on my own, like so many do, that was quite comforting.
6	2 & Participant C	Thank you. And the previous one about like the city, I wanted to mention that for me it's a huge, huge thing where it's a what's the right word? It's a collaborative approach. It's like a bio. It's not just about the performance or the venues, it's about the restaurants, the bars, the pubs, the other tourist activities and the fact that I feel it's vital for the performers to respect the city that exists beyond the fringe. And for the city beyond the fringe to respect the performers. And so being able to have that kind of connection with the venues and as in the restaurants and the institutions that exist beyond the fringe, I think for me that makes it. That, that's what makes it stand apart from any festival really is when the best festivals in the world are the ones that are rooted in the local city, so it's not just a pop-up if that makes sense, but it's actually got that kind of identity that is infused with the city and yeah, like the restaurants and stuff aren't ignoring the festival and the festival are not ignoring the restaurants, bars, and community groups. When that works well, it's the most beautiful synchronicity.
		In terms of like Edinburgh's learn as you go environment. I think, yeah, I think Edinburgh is just a very welcoming city and you know, us Scots are delightful and welcoming and Scots are just happy to help each other out. Like if someone stops in the street and looks a bit lost, you're going to be like you alright? And so I think it is very much ingrained in Scottish culture as well to help other people. To be open to

7	2 & Participant A	new things. Yeah, just to make a community and as much as all the locals are like, Oh my god, the Fringe is coming. Why is everyone taking a picture of this random sign? They're in my way. It's like, you know, it is quite exciting. As much like as much as people will like who live in Edinburgh will complain about it. They'd be raging if they were like, oh well, don't worry guys, we're going to move it to Glasgow instead. Everyone will be fuming so everyone as much as they have like a grumble about the buses and whatnot. I think it's something that the people in Edinburgh take pride in.
8	3 & Participant C	Second part of your question was about the venues and PR's you said do I believe that they are trying to help artists grow their career? So this is something that I've been questioning. I don't always get that impression. I have worked with different PR's. I've worked with a couple of different venues. I think that it depends on which PR, it depends on which venue and it depends on the artist. There needs to be an alignment of values between all the artists and the PR, the artists and the venue. It's not a yes or no answer to this one, and I've had relationships with PRs where it has been incredibly successful on paper, but on a personal level it was strained and that inhibits in some ways. But you know it depends on what you're trying to get out of it.
9	3 & Participant C	You can't insist that PRs and the journalists will be able to make your shows or view the shows. Yeah. So there's other ways of approaching it, but it has to be that trust relationship. Similarly with venues. I've had good experiences with venues and bad experiences with venues. Some venues are very, operate very in a very clique way in my experience. So there will be the trendy artists that get in or a certain type of artist that will be welcomed with open arms and will be championed. And there will be others that will be ostracised. And that is heartbreaking, because it feels like we're now dividing our arts community into different groups. That's all well and good, but then aren't we all working towards the greater goal and entertaining and informing and educating. And aren't we losing sight of that by doing that. The division, yeah, it's a fascinating thing that makes me feel very alone sometimes. But on the right side of it when I find the right people that really do champion me and really do care, then yes. The answer is yes. Some venues and some PRs and some producers and some agents and some flyerers. It's literally every single person is a cog in the machine and the artist as well is absolutely just one small part of that. The technicians, every single person, the front of house, the box office staff, everybody is a part of the audience experience and to make sure the audience is at the heart of everything you do, that's often I think, lost a bit along the way.
10	5 & Participant I	I think it is about one being a support for people who don't know press because media work in a very specific way, journalists work in a very specific way. They don't respond to, journalists are getting inundated with acts from all over the world. So a lot of the time journalists will choose to respond to people that they already know or they already have a relationship with. So if you're a brand new act coming in and you just start cold calling journalists or cold emailing journalists. It is very rare that that's going to get picked up for you. So I think PRs are there to act as a bit of a support and a bit of a buffer between the press and the act. Also if anything goes wrong, PRs are really important for trying to maintain a reputation for someone or like, build a profile for someone

		and not let someone come out with a statement. You know, if someone's accusing you, if an audience member's accusing your show of being inappropriate, a PR is really helpful to like draft a statement that's not going to get you even more negative coverage and trying to keep your name and also just as on a time point of view, I think PRs can really help acts because it takes a lot of admin work away from them of, you know, chasing journalists for reviews or pitching themselves for interviews, inviting journalists into the show that a PR can remove a lot of admin and let the artist focus on their show.
11	13 & Participant C	I've had wonderful reviews. I so far haven't had awful reviews but I think, I found it very useful to be able to, with some time and grounding, read the reviews and ask myself the question of what is, take what is useful and leave the rest. Like what here is the stuff I can work on. What here is stuff that I think is a them issue and actually it steers more towards. The pathway that I was going on anyway, so I think again that's another, that's another relationship that is even more ambiguous than some of the others, where it's directly one person's opinion about another person's art and creating art, writing about that person's art. Yeah, and some, but then even conversely, sometimes it's somebody who just really wants to love it and will actually overlook anything that could be critiqued. You know, it's all personal and it's wonderful. But ultimately, I think that's why I trust the fringe in general is that it's a crowd. It's a collective is what the fringe is. There's a reason why the crowds are there is that it's people vote with their feet. People vote with their laughs. People, people will be attracted to a good marketing campaign, but they'll also be attracted in other ways to somebody who's got integrity and is doing it for the right reasons. So Fringe is the best way to find your tribe.
12	5 & Participant D	Yeah, I think every working that that's where every stakeholder in the Fringe is key to making the whole thing balance. It's an ecosystem that without one part, you can't function. So like venues play their part in setting up the spaces. PRs play their part in making sure that people come to the shows. The Fringe Society play their part in making sure that people know where to find and buy tickets for the shows. Yeah. And I think it's a really fragile ecosystem and at the moment we are struggling to balance to make that it's kind of on a knife edge at the moment and we've kind of produced a document recently called tipping point where all of these factors are kind of out of control at the moment and they're not, like they need to be working in harmony. Whereas with the Fringe Society trying to do more than it's remit, it means that everything's going off balance. So they are actually setting themselves up in competition with us, so stuff that that is intrinsic to our model such as sponsorship and commercial sponsorship. Because we have bars, we need sponsorship to be able to subsidise costs.
13	5 & Participant G	Oh, hugely hugely important. I think I spend so much of my time chatting to festival stakeholders, whether that's venues or kind of long-standing producers or PRs or media. And I think the importance of a kind of collaborative and cohesive festival on how artists are able to navigate it is really important. Everyone working together with the kind of giving anyone a stage and everyone a seat sort of mantra behind them, is really useful and makes what's quite a complicated festival just feel a bit more coherent and make a bit more sense to participants.

14	11 & Participant G	But expectations are definitely the hardest thing. I think when things go wrong, it's usually when artists haven't understood the model of a particular venue, or a particular PR. Haven't read their contract properly and haven't spoken to other artists who've worked with those people. I think the crucial thing is about community and it's about finding other people who've done what you're trying to do. Fringe has been around so long that there are so many people willing to talk about how it worked or didn't work for them. So, I think that the kind of the exploitation is really hard because it does happen in some rare cases and it is pretty unpleasant when it does, but it's always about, it's always when an artist hasn't done their research that they get caught out or hasn't read the contract properly or hasn't come to us and gone, this doesn't feel quite right, what do you think? And it's hard for us to be a kind of impartial body in the middle of the festival, trying to support artists, having a hard time while also feeling to some like it's our festival, which it absolutely isn't. It absolutely is not ours, it is what it is. It is not a kind of owned thing. There's no artistic director. There's no kind of boss of the fringe. But I think for artists who don't understand the model and the different layers and the ecosystem, coming to see the Fringe Society feels like your kind of escalation, and your authority point, but that's not what we are or what we can be.
15	3 & Participant F	Yeah, I think. I worry sometimes that the sort of cultivation. The cultivation of new and emerging artists has become prohibitive for venues, so I think that's very much an expectation to yeah, you want to cultivate relationships, you want to establish a repeat visit from successful performers and stuff like that. But yeah I worry sometimes. It's very expensive to invest in emerging talents like and the financial risk, the venues in particular in Edinburgh, undertake make it really difficult for them to find the money to invest in emerging talent. And so I think if emerging talent appears that has funding coming from elsewhere, it's really easy, it's much easier for the venues to put their weight behind that and I think you see venues doing like the art award, the untapped awards and things like that where they're partnering with third parties to bring in the finance to help them help that emerging talent. But yeah, the accessibility around the festival is an issue that is much bigger than the venues and the venues I think are quite often looked at to solve that problem, or that they're the arbiters and creators of that problem, but they're not because they actually they take up the financial risks to put up non-bricks and mortar spaces that most venues operate in means again their artists investment I think is suffering at the moment.
16	14 & Participant D	...there's other initiatives that out of hand are doing the posters, they're talking about helping with print and their smaller poster printing this year, which will be great. I think a lot of people that actually care about the fringe are doing everything that they can to support artists. And we introduced a thing last year called, or two years ago called support the artist ticket, which is an extra £2 on tickets for people that can afford it and that money goes direct to the artist just to give them a bit more money in their pocket because we understand how challenging it is and the artist needs any money that they can to invest in their marketing of their show so that they can sell as many tickets as possible. So yeah, there's loads of different kind of schemes and opportunities that various

		companies involved in the fringe are promoting, and we're looking at doing additional marketing...
17	3 & Participant E	Yeah, I'd say it really depends venue to venue. For us, we are very kind of hands on with performers and we curate our programme so it's slightly different to other venues who I will not name. You know, it's kind of on a hire basis. So it's kind of first come first serve for slots, whereas for us it's a curated programme and we kind of go in with the we're an artist first company, so we do have kind of open door policies, we have art services teams, we have full press and marketing teams and there's always kind of contact between us and the visiting companies, which is something we kind of make sure that we keep doing every year even though it gets tougher with like staffing costs and whatnot. So yeah, for us it's really important. I think we realise that without performers there's no venues and without the venues there's kind of no fringe. So yeah, and everyone plays a part and it's one big ecosystem that you kind of feed into, but I think it depends venue to venue just how much kind of development support is given.
18	14 & Participant E	I touched on it there, but I think one of the main things is the like the whole kind of fringe ecosystem and it's kind of effect. There's this umbrella and then you know loads of layers to the festival and I think. Every year things creep up, such as accommodation such as, you know threats from other venues that they might steal your performers, whatever it might be, and it kind of puts, how do I say this? I think, you know, we're quite happy to go head-to-head with a venue if we really want a performer and you know. We will explain to that performer why we think it's best to come to us, because of the support levels that we give compared to them. And hope for the best. Things like accommodation, things like, just cost of living. There's a stat that really kind of blows my mind is that I think everything in the past, however many years you'd need to research this one because I can't remember the number of years so I don't want to be quoted on that one, but it's about 30% increase in price. I think it's maybe pre COVID till now so everything has gone up by 30% across the board. Staffing even more this year because of the National Insurance and all that jazz. But ticket prices have basically stayed the same so. Everything needs to, it's not moving at the same pace and I think that's a barrier that's there because you know it means that the ticket increment isn't the same or in line with inflation. Which means that the income split is not going to be as substantial for performers or venues. And as I said before, you know the performers and or the performers are kind of what keeps the venues going. And then you know, together we keep the Fringe going. So, without them and without these kind of bodies being compensated as fairly as everything else is, there's a bit of a barrier there, but I think that's part of the wider system and we're doing what we can to try and combat that, but it's tough, I would say. Yeah, I'd say there also is something to be said for I think the Fringe society and the venues. There needs to be a way where there's more of a collaboration where that funding kind of trickles down a bit more [...] The talent is what's keeping this festival going and that's where the money needs to be invested, not into other things that I won't mention. So yeah but I think that's something that can really be worked on, and it would probably take a

		few years to get it to a place that works but yeah, that's my perspective before I go into too much detail.
19	14 & Participant D	...creating bespoke products for the Fringe [...] but some of that money actually doing it and raising money for artists as well, because everything that we do without the artist, there's nothing. So anything that we can do to raise a bit of money for them, so that they have a good time at the venue and hopefully get a bit of an uplift at the end. That's our kind of aim and focus. So yeah, I think it's a really challenging year looking at this year especially with concerts going on. Oasis and you know, accommodation is through the roof. So it's a very challenging year ahead. But I think the people, you know, artists just need to work with companies that actually care about the fringe and, you know, try and invest whatever they can into artists because you know, a company like ours understands that without them we're nothing.
20	14 & Participant G	Yeah. I think our biggest challenge is the financial. We receive very, very little public funding to actually deliver any of our services. So, we have funding for some of our kind of artist grants so money that comes in and then is spent on artists, so Keep It Fringe, being a recent funding drive where we delivered lots of small grants to 180 shows coming this year. Made in Scotland, a kind of similar approach, there's money for delivering that project and money specifically that goes out to the artists and companies in grants. We have very little financial support for our kind of core service delivery. And I'd say that, we're always slightly over capacity, but never completely overwhelmed by need that we're not able to meet. I think my team deal with 25,000 incoming enquiries from artists every year. So, there's a huge volume so we're kind of at capacity, but what I'd really like to be able to do with more money and more time is get out to all of the artists and be able to increase that number significantly. There were probably 50,000 artists in town during the Fringe. We don't know for sure, but around 50,000 and we definitely don't connect with all of those. I think we only had four and a half thousand visits to Fringe Central last year and it was rammed and full. And as much as the space could take, and as much as the team could take but there's more we could do with cash.
21	14 & Participant H	I mean, I suppose the support is what we've covered. We'll be providing PR, but we'll also be providing strong levels of communication and making sure the artists were working know that we're there for them, know that we're excited about their shows, know that they can pick up the phone to any of the team and ask a question and that we just want to help and we want them to do well. And I think that we end up on the whole with strong working relationships with our artists. Any barriers? I mean the fringe every year like I said, gets bigger and fewer press cover the fringe due to budget restrictions and cuts on the arts. So I think sadly it's the same barriers of every year, more shows less press. So, it'll be about fighting through to make sure that our clients get the maximum level of exposure that they can.
22	14 & Participant I	I guess important that we're like a welcoming presence for them and that they feel that they can come and talk if they need support because it can very often be an embarrassing thing for them to have to come in and tell us that they haven't sold any tickets or that they've had a terrible review. They feel that they've failed a bit. So us being like welcoming and not judgmental and willing to help them and kind of engaging with

		them and not allowing them to feel like they're just being dismissed and that they're on their own, is really important because as soon as they feel not supported it means they could, you know, not come back to the venue next year or they're going to maybe go out and do something stupid and ruin a relationship with a journalist. So just kind of making sure we're like first point of contact for them for any press questions is really helpful that we're always there is about a sounding board even if we can't do full huge press campaigns for every individual artist, us being a kind of sounding board for people is important. And yeah, I guess it's just us trying our best to get people to cover shows that we really believe in or that we really think deserve a good audience in and little wins as well. Like the smallest things you can get. People can really make a difference for a show, and it can just make an act feel like they haven't been forgotten about in a big machine, which is always really helpful.
23	2 & Participant C	Yes, I think it is a learn as you go thing. I don't think that you can be taught it unless you do it. You can definitely be steered and given advice but everything I've learned at Edinburgh, I feel like I've learned from doing it and I know one of my having done it like I've sold out at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival for five different years, every single ticket. And I know that my way of doing that is not going to apply to everybody. Like there's different. There's different ways of doing it. And I don't think there's one pathway that can be sold as the route to success. And also how do we measure success? So you know there are different types of successes at the Edinburgh Fringe and it depends what's motivating you and what you're looking for and the clearest thing for me is to be able to measure success in all the possible ways, because then you're always going to be learning. But yeah, you have to do it. And as much as I would, the only, the main thing I would say to anyone who hasn't done the Edinburgh Fringe as a performer would be go and visit it many times before you even think about performing because you can't even theorise. It's not like any other venue that you might perform at. Or even any other festival that you might perform at, it's a living, breathing thing and you need to be able to go, feel the different venues, because even on the same street there's different experiences and different venues, and different shows will suit different venues and different marketing strategies will suit different people and different budgets.
		Learn as you go. Absolutely. I think last year for us was a bit of a baptism of fire. I think especially, more probably in terms of like admin side of things. That was definitely because we hadn't done it before. Yeah, but it's also like, I think, you know, when you get involved in this industry, you kind of find what you're interested in. So like, for example, *Sarah* you're more director. I was an actor. I'm now primarily a writer, but in order to make shows, you have to put on all these other hats that you've never, ever put on before, and nobody's holding your hand to do it like. There's not. I mean there is information out there, but it requires a lot of, kind of sit down and say, right, what do I need to do this month, that month. And yeah, there's, I don't know. You sometimes just feel lost and go, am I doing the right thing? Is this like, oh, I've never had to think about marketing before or I've never had to talk as a producer before or like I've never had to try and get money before like things like that. You're just like, I just want to write or I just want to direct. but you've got

24	2 & Participant A	lots, so many other jobs to do just to make to get to that point of doing the writing and directing part you want to. I think definitely. I think that kind of learning as you go phrase I feel like I have, like I'd heard of that before we decided to do fringe and I think it, I think it is accurate but also it definitely makes it feel quite daunting because you're a bit like, OK, we don't really know what we're doing, but we're committed to figuring it out and the information is there. We did find it, but I would hate for people to be put off because of that. Do you know what I mean? Because it is quite, it's like, oh my god, are we actually going to tackle doing this? Are we actually going to give it a try?
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