

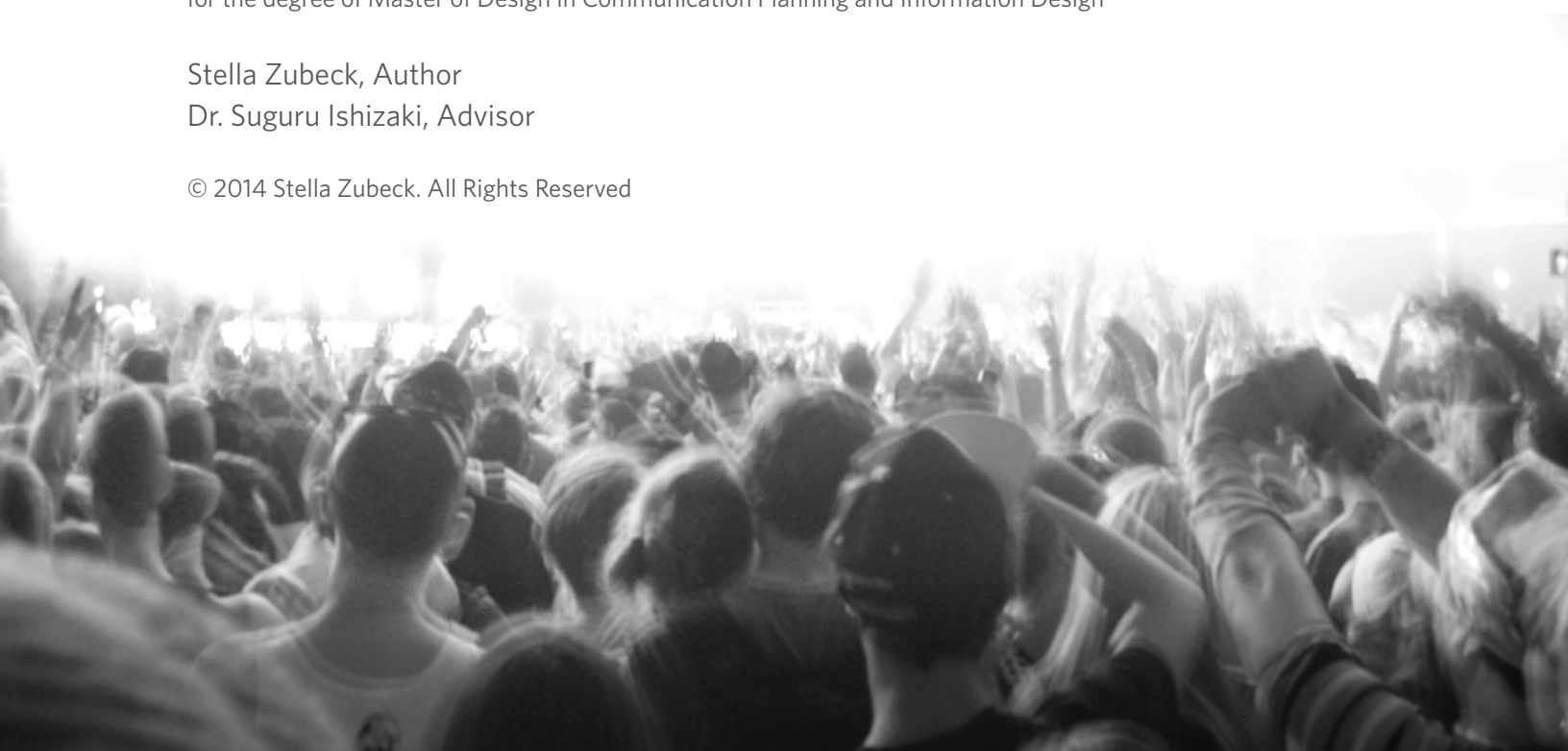
NOT FADE AWAY

enriching music festival audience experience

a thesis submitted to the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University
for the degree of Master of Design in Communication Planning and Information Design

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**"I DON'T THINK PEOPLE ARE LOOKING
FOR THE MEANING OF LIFE SO MUCH
AS THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING ALIVE."**

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

**“FESTIVALS BRING ME BACK TO MYSELF,
IF THAT MAKES SENSE. I ALWAYS HAVE
A BETTER IDEA OF WHO I REALLY AM
AFTER A FESTIVAL.”**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

**"EVEN BEFORE WE LOOKED AT IT,
IT HIT US. WE WANTED IT TO BE FAR.
SO YOU SURRENDER. SO YOU CAN'T
LEAVE YOUR HOUSE AND SEE A
COUPLE BANDS AND BE BACK HOME
THAT NIGHT.**

**WE WANT YOU TO GO OUT THERE,
GET TIRED, AND CURSE THE SHOW
BY SUNDAY AFTERNOON.**

**THAT SUNSET, AND THAT WHOLE
FEELING OF COACHELLA HITS YOU."**

PAUL TOLLETT

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Abstract

The modern music festival is a site of interaction between up to hundreds of thousands of people, artists, vendors, musicians and technologies. Audiences travel thousands of miles and invest huge amounts of time, energy and money to attend them. Despite the increasing commercial demand for music festivals and the budding recognition of their social value to festivalgoers, human-centered design methods have not been applied to explore ways to increase the value of music festival experiences for audiences.

The purpose of this project was twofold. First, I planned to develop a nuanced human-centered understanding of music festival audience experience. Based on that understanding, I then planned to design a solution that enhances meaningful, positive experiences for festivalgoers, especially during the periods of anticipation before and reflection after events.

By combining insights pulled from research in music psychology, positive psychology and current neuroscience on happiness with qualitative data gathered from my own human-centered design research methods, I developed several robust conceptual models for the complex realities of audience experience at music festivals. Based those models, I then developed a web-based platform called *Neverfade* that acts both as a music festival history archive and a virtual space where individuals can curate, save and share their own music festival experiences.

**“I felt something that I hadn’t really felt before,
and I’ve been chasing it ever since.”**

study participant (Packer & Ballantyne 2011)

Introduction

As any music festival fan knows, music festivals are intense. They’re loud, crowded, chaotic, and more often than not, mentally and physically exhausting. Willfully inserting yourself into a crowd tens or even hundreds of thousands deep takes a little bravery, a lot of patience, a general trust in other people and an openness—a willingness to go with the flow. However, as festival fans also know, the energy of a great music festival—that life-affirming electricity when thousands of people come together in a space with music—is something that at its best, defies explanation.

The afterglow of a good music festival experience can last for weeks, months, or even years. Music festival experiences often come to be the stuff of legend in people’s lives, the memorable moments written deeply into personal histories. Given this, music festival fans will endure what can seem like a daunting array of environmental, physical, financial and logistical obstacles in pursuit of something intangible; a shared musical and social experience. Audiences travel thousands of miles and invest extraordinary amounts of time, energy and money to attend music festivals, and sometimes structure their lives around them.

Cities, organizations, businesses and music communities are watching as the value of and demand for music festivals increases. According to Time Magazine in November of 2011, “Music festivals are a rare bright spot in the struggling music industry” (Grose 2011), and a survey commissioned by media agency Target Media indicated that “44% of respondents considered going to a festival the most exciting thing they’ve ever done” (Roberts 2009).

Similarly, a study published in *Psychology of Music* in 2011 found that research participants “reported feeling more positive about themselves, others and life in general as a result of attending a music festival” and felt that “the music festival experience was not only meaningful in itself, but gave meaning to the rest of their lives” (Packer & Ballantyne 2011).

The goal of this project

My goal in this project was twofold. I hoped to develop a nuanced understanding of music festival audience experience and then design a tool or system that enhanced meaningful, positive and engaging experiences. This tool would support music festival audiences and communities, especially during the periods before and after events, which I suspected were important to festivalgoers and was confirmed by my research. I also hoped to abstract music festival experience into conceptual models that could be used to develop support systems built for the complex realities of music festival experience.

A novel opportunity area for design

Music festival experience is a novel space for design intervention. Despite the increasing commercial demand for music festivals and the budding recognition of their social value to festivalgoers, human-centered design methods have not been applied to explore ways to increase the value of music festival experiences for audiences.

There are no widely supported conceptual models that communicate the nature of music festival audience experience, and there are few if any well-designed support systems for the activities and behaviors of music festival fans, despite how festivalgoers number in the many hundreds of thousands, or more likely millions, across the United States and abroad. Few music festival production companies have the resources or financial incentive to provide substantial support to pre- and post-event experience beyond a message board or enthusiastic social media campaign.

Increasing value for promoters, communities and audiences

From the industry perspective, in the age of infinitely shareable and reproducible digital music, music festivals provide promoters, sponsors and artists with a finite and irreproducible commodity to sell—and thus command increasing value as the recorded music industry continues to struggle to adjust to the changes wrought by streaming media and the democratization of access to music.

For the music festival promoter, the audience is the end user and comprises the body of major investors in an event. Aside from financial metrics and sponsorships, much of the success of a festival is judged on the quality of the audience's experience. An actively engaged audience given a positive festival experience will buy tickets in the future, invest time and energy in an event, and ultimately self-promote, which often leads to the sponsorships and ticket sales necessary to ensure the longevity of a festival.

Most importantly, even after the festival itself has ended, the experience lives on in the minds of festivalgoers. A music festival experience often spans a much longer period of time than the dates of the event itself, given the long periods of anticipation and planning involved in attending them and reflection on the event afterward.

An active music festivalgoer is happier on average, feels connected and supported by a community of like-minded people, and is actively engaged with music and his or her social network.

Both the music festival industry and the communities that host events will benefit from a better understanding of the value and complexity of audience experience. The increasing economic demand for festivals and the recognition of their social value calls for further exploration of how design for music festival experience, both online and offline, can increase positive impacts on the many thousands of people who attend them.

Major research findings

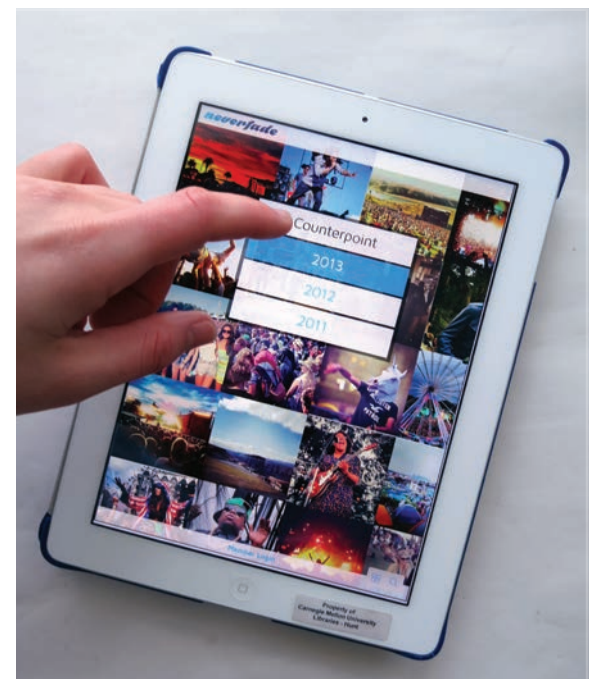
Here are some of the major research findings on which I based my final design solution, *Neverfade*. All of these festival fan interests and behaviors are worth supporting because of their contribution to the lasting quality and richness of music festival experience.

- Festivalgoers have great stories to share and want to share them.
- Festivalgoers enjoy hearing other people's music festival stories and seeing festivals through other people's eyes.
- Festivalgoers actively seek and collect media (photos, videos, etc.) after the events they attend and regularly review content from events they've attended and even ones they haven't.
- Music festival experiences often help people better understand themselves as individuals.
- Music festival experiences can have lasting positive impacts on people's self-perceptions, life outlook and acceptance of others.

Neverfade: a festival experience-centered design solution

Neverfade is a web and cloud-based digital service and music festival history archive that provides a virtual space for the huge community of music festival fans to tell their stories, keep memories alive and celebrate adventures and experiences through audience-sourced multimedia, story and experience sharing.

Neverfade supports music festival fans and enriches their experiences by encouraging them to reflect on their own personal festival history and maintain connections with peer groups while celebrating the scale and unique energy of each event. It's a platform for people to connect with, explore and rediscover themselves, other people, and the communities that surround the events they attend. Check out the section called 'Final Design' for more detail about how *Neverfade* works to support festivalgoers.



neverfade

Search Festivals

Member Login





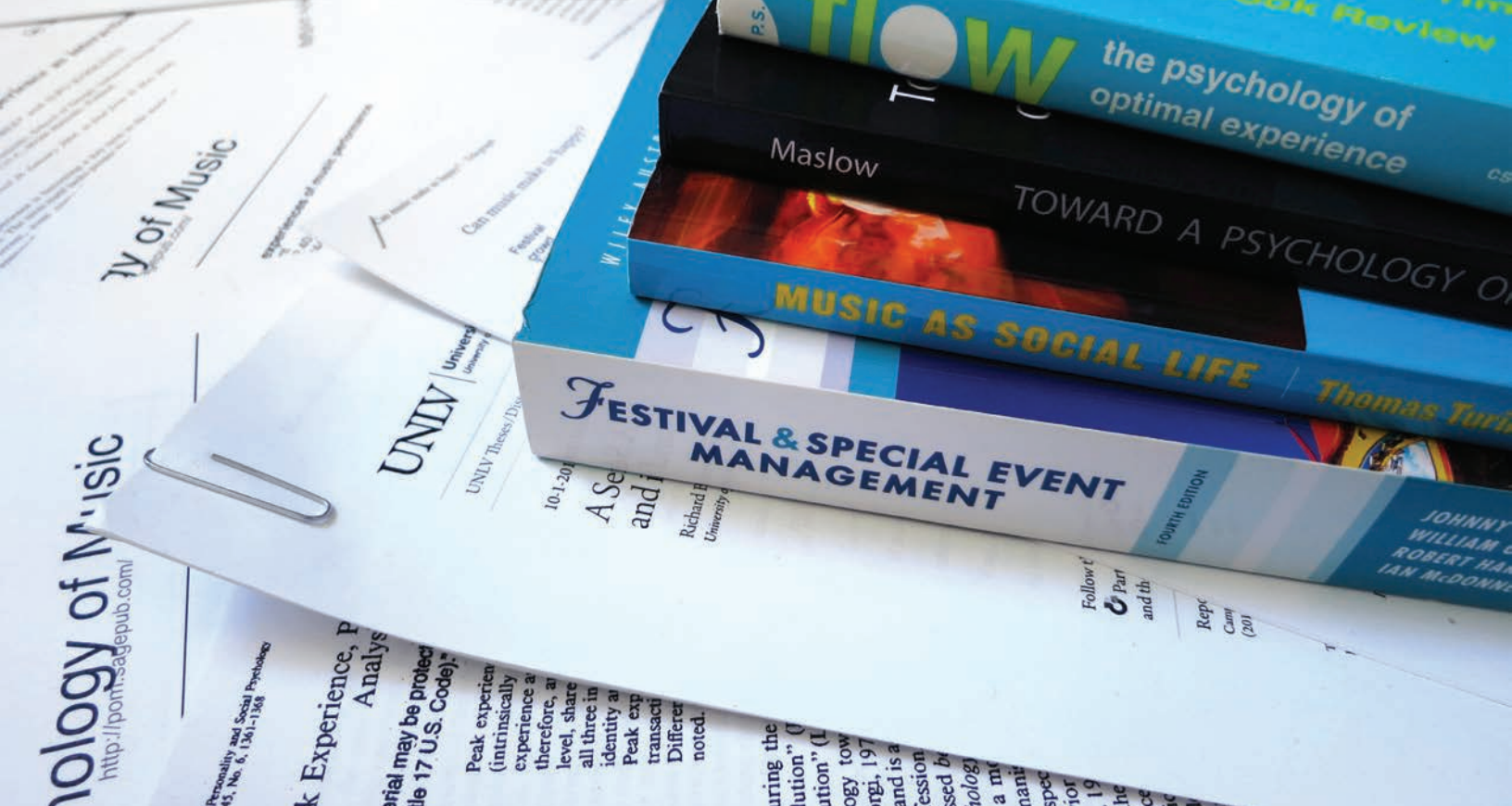
neverfade

Counterpoint 2013

Sasquith Bound!

Counterpoint 2013

Member Login



Literature Review

Relevant literature and research

I started my design process by hunting for insights and information relevant to the mission of improving music festival experiences for audiences. To educate myself beyond a native curiosity in the subject, I read as much as I could about the state of live events in the music industry and actively followed as many music festival blogs, communities, news articles and social media pages as I could, and continued to monitor them throughout the project. I focused on event reviews and social media interactions, seeking insight from every source I could find. I kept alert for patterns in how music festival experiences were discussed and critiqued.

I also reviewed research on quality of life and travel, including why people go on vacations and why the positive feelings after vacations don't actually last very long (unlike music festivals), persuasive design for behavior change (such as motivators, triggers, etc.) and co-experience, thinking that these areas could shed additional light on the essences of music festival experiences,

such as why they're uniquely positioned to matter to people and how to design a useful support system that people might actually be inclined to use.

Based on my suspicion that music festivals often host peak experiences for audiences and as experiences, are closely tied to the search for happiness, self-actualization and personal identity, I also read several books on peak experience, positive psychology, and research research on the neuroscience of happiness.

While not directly related to music festival experience, these readings solidified my suspicion that music festival experiences at their best are deeply rewarding, and even in some cases therapeutic, which was later confirmed by my research.

Major findings from literature review

This literature review combined with my own research to substantiate several ideas. Firstly, [I learned that these huge musical and human events can be powerful catalysts for personal development and happiness on the individual level](#). It quickly became clear that this project was going to be about supporting individual people during large synergistic outbursts of simultaneous positive feeling.

Secondly, when enriching music festivals for audiences, support for the social, human element was of equal importance to the musical experience. The stories shared by festivalgoers in the music festival experience survey echoed many of the theories I learned in my literature review. For more detail, check out the section on the music festival experience survey and the Appendix.

The psychology of music festival experience

Scientifically speaking, it's a well established fact that music is good for people and for their brains. But what about the experience of immersion into a musical and festival community? While the cognitive, emotional, psychological and cultural benefits of exposure to and participation in music, such as playing, dancing, listening, etc., are well documented and thoroughly researched,

I found little research on music festivals, whether for market analysis or scientific purposes. One study I found was published in 2011; “The impact of music festival attendance on young people’s psychological and social well-being” in the journal *Psychology of Music*.

This study provided both qualitative and quantitative data in support of the benefits of music festival attendance. While the research was focused on young people in their teens through early 20s, and the impact of these events might be magnified for younger individuals, I posit that positive effects of festival experience would be similar across age ranges. The study focused on four facets of a music festival experience: the music experience, the festival experience, the social experience, and the separation experience—each of which contribute to the unique appeal of attending a music festival.

As for the ‘festival’ element of the experience, the article emphasized the long time span of a music festival experience, which anyone who has ever bought tickets for an event months or almost a year beforehand would find familiar. Packer and Ballantyne learned that the music festival

“experience was seen to start weeks, even months before the festival commenced. The anticipation and preparation contributed to a gradual build-up of excitement, and when the festival was over the cycle started again, with anticipation of the next festival” (Packer & Ballantyne 2011).

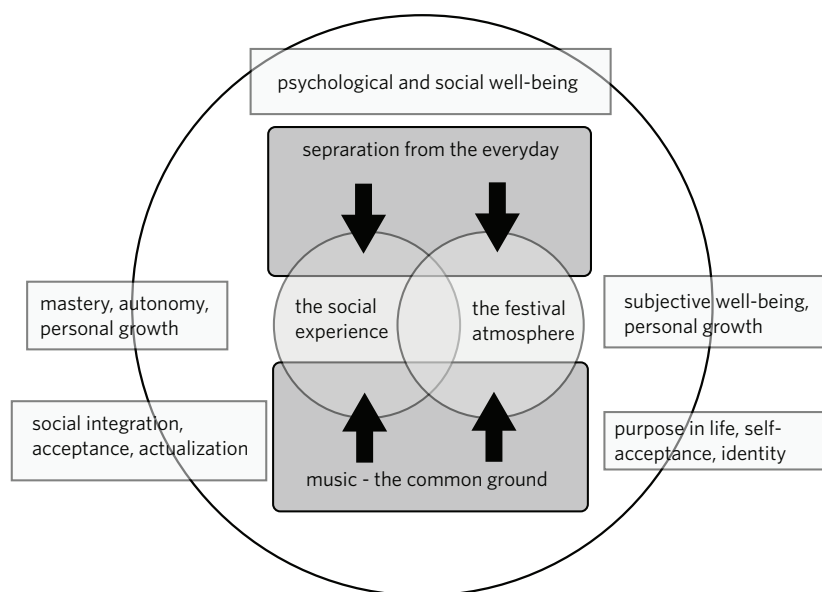
The authors also learned that people enjoyed music festivals so much that they “were continually drawn back to repeat the experience” and that for many festivalgoers, music festivals were more than just a good time, and “don’t just contribute to ‘a transitory state of subjective well-being’ but also become ‘part of the way a person defines themselves’” (Packer & Ballantyne 2011).

So how do music festivals achieve this positive impact on so many people? The main reason is what Packer and Ballantyne refer to as the ‘separation experience’. It’s this separation, or distance from the structures of daily life, that provides individuals with the

necessary space to re-evaluate and develop themselves. My later research confirmed this as well, and my model of music festival experience incorporates this idea. The power of the separation experience is the crucial break it provides from the habits of daily life. Packer and Ballantyne write that by

“providing a new social context that was removed from the expectations and routines of everyday life, [music festivals] allowed participants to reflect and re-evaluate their own self-understanding and self-acceptance” (Packer & Ballantyne 2011).

The authors of the study developed a conceptual model for music festival experience, which emphasizes the four facets of the experience and their positive impacts on individuals.



Packer and Ballantyne’s model of festival experience, Packer & Ballantyne 2011

It’s clear that music festivals provide audiences with a necessary space to step away from themselves and their lives. Also similar to my survey results, this study found that many research participants would endorse statements such as “I feel happier with myself as a person” and “I feel I have grown/developed as a person” (Packer & Ballantyne 2011) after a music festival. Music festivals can provide many people with a crucial space for self-development and exploration they wouldn’t have otherwise. As

the article concludes, “for some participants the music festival experience was not only meaningful in itself, but gave meaning to the rest of their lives” (Packer & Ballantyne 2011). Not bad.

In summary, more often than not, heading off to a music festival and getting away from everyday life and its routines is good for people and their lives.

Csikszentmihaly and flow

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s exploration of flow states in *Flow* emphasizes the degree to which optimal experiences must be actively curated and require work. Any music festival experience is fairly energy intensive for festivalgoers, and requires a significant investment of mental and physical energy.

The concept of flow relates to the degree to which audiences have to learn how to curate their own optimal ‘experience of self’ at a festival. This can include overcoming challenges like learning how to navigate a specific festival, planning and logistics, and even learning how to enjoy music in a crowded or unusual environment. A crucial unspoken element of great music festival experience is the learned ability to manage individual expectations, mood and energy. Without control over these, a festival experience can quickly deteriorate into an ordeal. The experience of joining a throng of people is what each individual chooses to make of it. It’s up to each festivalgoer what to focus on, whether positive or negative. This learned ability to shift focus takes some investment of energy, maybe even some work.

Flow also explores the social elements required for great experiences, suggesting that friendship is crucial to self-identity and development. Similar to Packer and Ballantyne’s work on music festival experience, Csikszentmihaly emphasizes that it’s during time spent with friends that an individual’s true self emerges. Friendship provides a safe space for new kinds of social or individual growth, and it’s with “friends that we can most clearly experience the freedom of the self and learn who we really are.” (Csikszentmihaly 1990). He also emphasizes that a

“true friend is someone we can occasionally be crazy with, someone who does not expect us to be always true to form. It is someone who shares our goal of self-realization” (Csikszentmihaly 1990).

Read in the context of music festival experience, this further supported my idea that my final design needed to support the bonding between festivalgoers and their friends. While Csikszentmihaly also mentions the how music, as organized auditory information, when attentively focused on, can induce flow experiences, for this project I chose to focus on designing to support a festivalgoer’s social circles, which is crucial for the active creation and curation of great music festival experiences.

Maslow and peak experience

Abraham Maslow’s analysis of peak experience in *Toward A Psychology of Being* meshed well with the descriptions of great experiences at music festivals I later collected in my survey. Many of the passages in the book directly echoed the sentiments I saw in the survey responses on music festival experience, suggesting that my suspicion that music festivals were often capable of being peak experiences was accurate.

The vast majority of my survey respondents described feeling more positive, confident, inspired, open and accepting of others after a good music festival experience. These descriptions are highly consistent with Maslow’s description of the healthiest states of being and cognition, the highest moments of which are considered peaks.

After a peak experience, a person will feel that “life in general is worthwhile, even if it is usually drab, pedestrian, painful or ungratifying, since beauty, excitement, honesty, play, goodness truth and meaningfulness have been demonstrated to him to exist.” (Maslow 1962). A music festival could be considered a space in which many people may simultaneously share a peak life experience. For otherwise healthy humans, achieving peak

experience is a worthy cause worth pursuing, as these experiences come to color our interpretation of the rest of our lives.

Maslow also describes the attributes of a highly actualized person and the characteristics of the cognitive processes he sees as the state of highest psychological health for humans. People in their healthiest mental state are highly tolerant, accepting, amused and open to new experiences. Highly actualized, confident people possess a childlike giddiness and willingness, even an internal drive to play. These sound strikingly similar to the things survey respondents repeatedly mentioned about their changes in perception and outlook after a good music festival experience.

Maslow's characterization of the highly actualized self directly echoed the high number of my survey respondents who reported 'wanting to be a better person' or the desire to 'share the positivity' after a good music festival experience. Maslow writes that after a peak experience, very

"often this feeling of gratitude is expressed or leads to an all-embracing love for everybody and everything, to a perception of the world as beautiful, and good, often to an impulse to do something good for the world, an eagerness to repay, even a sense of obligation" (Maslow 1962).

If a music festival experience can inspire people to do something good for the world, that's worth supporting too. This realization led me to begin considering how to design a platform for reflection that can supplement this feeling.

The neuroscience of music and happiness

Music festivals also provide audiences with a unique opportunity to re-wire their brains in ways that can help them to better process positive experiences and simply to feel good. Music itself is easily shared, and provides coherence to huge social events. But what is it about a music festival that makes people so happy? In an article about how music makes people happier, Dr. Paul Robertson writes that

“Wellbeing—a healthy sense of oneself, and pleasure in oneself—comes when your internal identity is broadly congruent with that which you find outside. ... I believe this is a profound model of healthiness, and so it’s not surprising that we would seek out shared experience that matches our own internal aesthetic” (Horan 2006).

Music festival audiences have no choice but to experience a shared aesthetic when they insert themselves into crowds of people who ideally, are also enjoying themselves. Robertson continues, writing that

“we all want to have good things inside ourselves: happiness, resilience, love, confidence, and so forth. ... It’s really important to have positive experiences of these things that we want to grow, and then really help them sink in, because if we don’t help them sink in, they don’t become neural structure very effectively” (Horan 2006).

Our brains aren’t particularly good at processing positive experiences. Humans actually have to work to install and strengthen the neural structures that allow us to understand positive experiences. Robertson writes that “We learn immediately from pain ... [but] the brain is relatively poor at turning positive experiences into emotional learning neural structure” (Horan 2006). This suggests why music festivals are so impactful for people over the long term and was supported by my survey data.

We benefit from having the time to learn from positive experiences. In addition to music being good for the brain by synching our neurons and releasing endorphins, it’s clear that having positive experiences with other people at music festivals can be a beneficial neural learning experience for everyone.

This literature review strengthened my conclusions that music festival experiences can provide moments of learning and growth as real, beneficial and impactful as any life offers, and that lasting happiness is built on learning to recognize happiness as it comes in the flow of life experience.



To start my design process with a thorough understanding of what I felt I knew versus what I needed to learn, I worked through several brainstorming activities. I considered my knowledge gaps surrounding music festival experience—such as what didn't I understand, about people, their music festival needs and wants, and the events themselves? I thought of as many things as I could, and then sorted them by music festival timeframe—noting whether they were associated with experience before a festival, during an event, or the aftermath.

Exploration 16

The Music Festival Experience Survey

I also intended the survey to explore what mattered to people about their festival experiences in more depth, so I provided a few open-answer questions to which people could respond at any length they chose. To get my survey into the hands of festivalgoers, I posted a link on several music festival interest Facebook pages.

Within a day, it had been re-shared by strangers across the United States. After a week, it had received responses from 40 different states across the US and seven different countries in total. In the end I received 330 enthusiastic responses and a handful of curious and excited emails asking what the research was about, and even a few that were just to express a shared love for music festivals.

[illegible][illegible]

Exploration 17

The unfiltered content of people's music festival stories painted a vivid portrait of music festivals as a deeply human and often messy but restorative experience. The chance to read what people so willingly shared was energizing and inspiring, and I want to thank everyone who responded!

These were my first lessons—that maybe music festival experiences were sometimes about more than just having a good time, and people who go to music festivals not only have great stories and an infectious energy, but often a lot of remarkable insight to share—and most importantly, nowhere good to share it. I felt as though I'd opened a floodgate overdue to be opened, given fans seemed to have a need to share these stories and had nowhere to tell them.

A few quotes from festivalgoers

Survey respondents were excited to share their stories. Here are a handful of quotes from the survey responses. For more of these quotes and stories, check out the Appendix.

"My first festival experience changed my life forever. I felt more like myself than I ever had before."

"My tent was ruined one weekend, and my neighbors offered to let me sleep in theirs. I remember waking up in the middle of the night, in a tent, packed shoulder-to-shoulder with people I didn't even know. Nobody minded, and it was one of the first times I really understood what 'Family' meant."

"I remember feeling the happiest I've ever been as an adult."

"One of the first things I noticed as I got a bit older: I don't like society, I like community. Festivals are community. I think it took going to festivals to realize the difference."

"I came to realize that there was a subset of the population out there that experienced life in a beautiful way and that I could be a part of it."

"I have definitely felt more connected to the zeitgeist. Plus you accumulate stories that end up making up the content of your life."

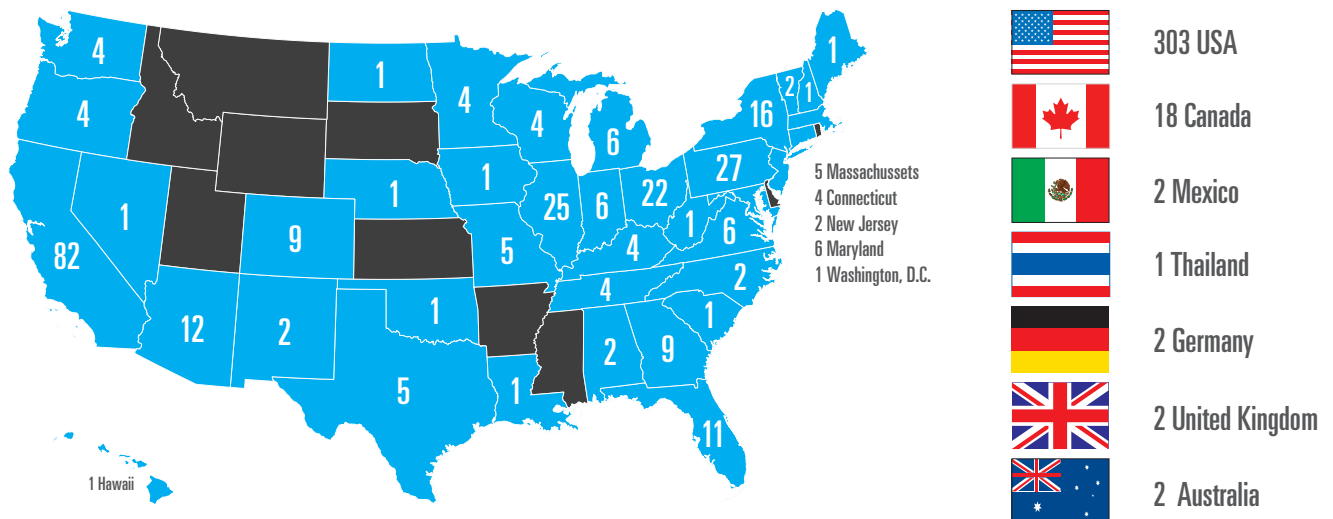
"I realized that happiness is much more important than money."

"At one point in my life I was a stiff, serious, predictable guy. After being introduced to the festival life and the people who attend, I learned embrace the chaos that is a music festival. It's taught me to embrace new experiences, yet remain responsible."

Survey population demographics

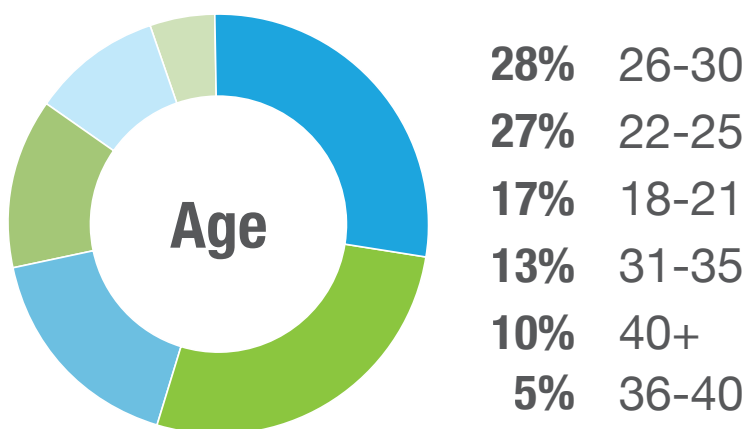
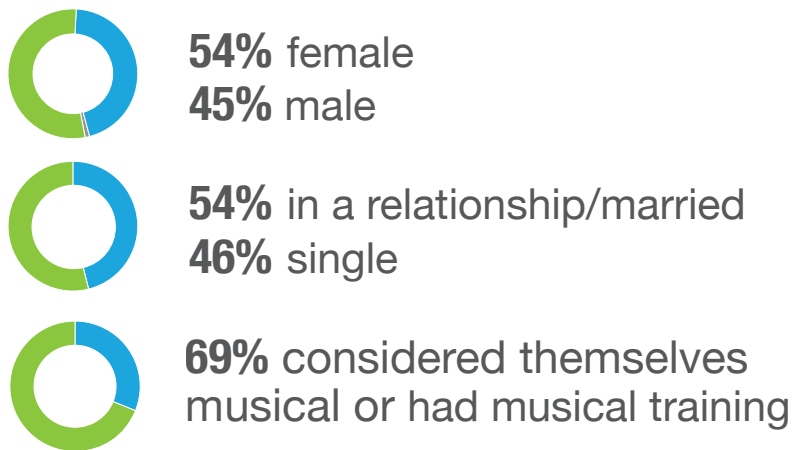
Locations

The 330 survey respondents came from 40 states across the United States, and six countries abroad including Canada, Mexico Germany, the UK, Australia and Thailand.

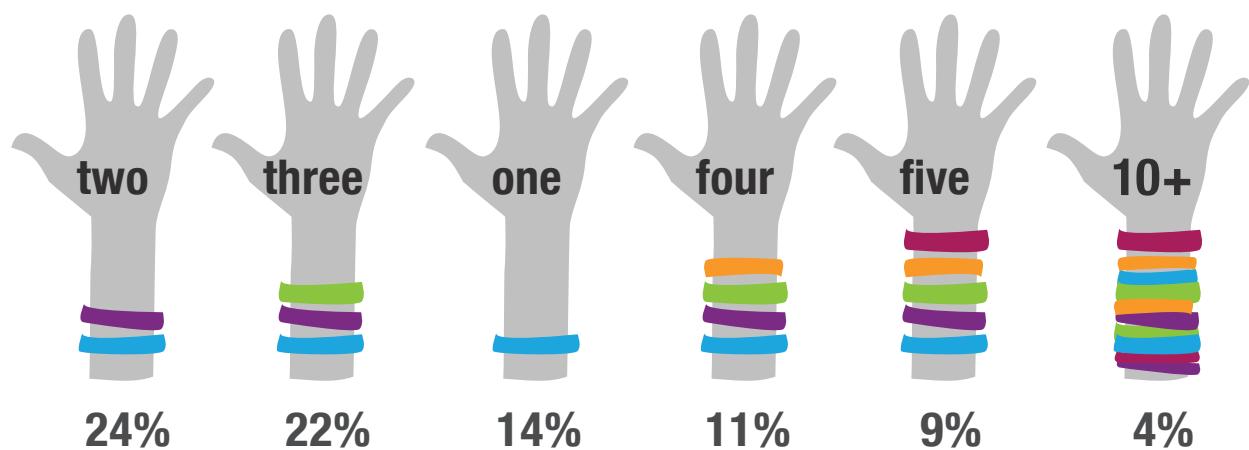


Locations and numbers of survey respondents

Age, gender and marital status of survey respondents



Number of festivals respondents had attended in the last year



Survey responses by the numbers

98% of survey respondents planned to attend more music festivals in the future

96% had experienced music festival 'afterglow' or felt more positive or optimistic in general after a festival

96% liked to meet new people at music festivals

94% seek out new experiences at music festivals

94% want to hear new music they've never heard before

84% had experienced 'festival comedown' or a reluctance to return to the 'real' world after a festival

84% wanted other people to know they attend music festivals and feel proud that they do

83% would like hear different genres of music they don't usually hear at large festivals

75% discussed events beforehand on social media or message boards

57% attend festivals with a small group of friends, 25% with a large group of friends, 13% with a close friend and 5% go alone

Analyzing and synthesizing survey results

To synthesize the large amount of qualitative data I'd received, including longer narratives in open-answer format, I read the responses to each question and affinitized them by recurring themes or content.

Then to quantify the results, I identified the five or six most frequently repeated subjects, coded and counted them.

Question	No. responses	Internal	External	Other
How do you feel about attending more music festivals in the future?	100	98%	0%	2%

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051	2052	2053	2054	2055	2056	2057	2058	2059	2060	2061	2062	2063	2064	2065	2066	2067	2068	2069	2070	2071	2072	2073	2074	2075	2076	2077	2078	2079	2080	2081	2082	2083	2084	2085	2086	2087	2088	2089	2090	2091	2092	2093	2094	2095	2096	2097	2098	2099	2100
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The first festival experience

So what usually brings people to their first music festival?

By and large, it's close friends, families and their stories that convince people to go to music festivals for the first time. Of the responses to this question, 55% of respondents mentioned music being the initial draw, 36% mentioned their close friends and family members convincing them to go (and of course the stories they heard from them). 28% mentioned the desire to have the experience of a music festival, 13% mentioned logistical concerns (such as having enough money for tickets and the time to travel, etc.), and 8% mentioned the desire to travel.

Other than good friends and family, it's stories that convince people to attend their first music festival. The band most frequently mentioned that drew people to attend their first festival was Radiohead, while the second most frequently mentioned was the Grateful Dead. Convenience, such as the accessibility and affordability of the event, was also a major factor.

Life impacts and changes in outlook

Do people feel differently about life, or feel that their outlook has changed in any way after attending music festivals?

76% of respondents mentioned a long-lasting positive change in their outlook or life after attending a music festival. 13% reported no change in outlook, and 11% reported a positive change, but not a lasting one. 5% of the responses mentioned being more inspired in general after a music festival, especially to make more art or play more music. Just 1% of respondents mentioned negative experiences. Some individuals described unpleasant or negative music festival experiences that paradoxically resulted in a net positive impact on their life.

From this survey data I realized that there seemed to be two main ways that people's perceptions shift after a good music festival experience. Attendees' perceptions of themselves after music festival experiences change for the better, as does their perception of other people. A few people even mentioned overcoming intense personal issues, life crises or coming out of depression, quitting their jobs or changing their careers after a positive music festival experience.

Frequently reported shifts in self-perception after a music festival:

I know myself better after a music festival
I am a happier / kinder person after a festival
I am more confident / less fearful / less worried
I am energized / inspired
I want to be a better person
I appreciate the little things in life more
I am inspired to listen to / play more music

Frequently reported shifts in perception of other people or life in general after a music festival:

I am more open / more social / more friendly after a music festival
I am less judgmental of other people
I have more faith in humanity and other people
I am more bonded with my partner / family / friends
I take the positivity I feel after a festival and try to apply it in my daily life

A few negative scenarios were mentioned, including a general disappointment and frustration with re-entry to daily life, questioning of reality, and feeling down about society as a whole—but no other significant negative effects were mentioned.

Growing up and moving on

Were survey participants planning to stop attending music festivals at some point in the future?

75% of those surveyed responded to this question with a resounding “No!”. “Not until my body fails me” was actually a common sentiment. Only 5% asserted that yes, they definitely plan to stop attending music festivals at some point in the future. Starting a family and age-related discomforts were the main reasons cited, but quite a few people mentioned having a desire to bring their current (or future) children to music festivals. Naturally, a few people mentioned the inevitability of their tastes and interests shifting away from festival experience, and a few people mentioned the novelty of the festival experience wearing off over time.

Common music festival experience problems and pain points

The common negative experiences music festivalgoers mentioned centered around themes of crowd logistics and behavior issues, such as unpleasant lines, crowding, and rude, aggressive or inappropriate festivalgoer behavior. Safety and security was another major concern, with many people citing concerns about theft and aggressive security staff at events. The cost of tickets and food at music festivals was one of the biggest gripes everyone shared, in addition to the personal creature comfort issues of festival venues failing to provide adequate shade, water, and places to rest.

On the personal side, many people mentioned anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, and the sensory overload of music festival experiences.

It's clear that music festivals can benefit from promoting good audience etiquette through a developing a strong sense of community and personal investment in the experience of an event.

Music festival expert interviews

After processing the data I received from the music festival survey and identifying strong trends, it was time to explore some of the areas I'd learned about in more depth. I conducted six hour-long interviews with individuals I consider music festival experts, meaning people who have been to many music festivals, are enthusiastic, active music festival attendees or who have been attending music festivals for many years.

I used these in-depth conversations to test some of my initial hypotheses and gather expert opinion on subjects like the following: festival community, the continuity and between different music festivals, the 'before' and 'after' activities of music festival experiences, the sharing and use of media and memories collected during festivals, and of course, exploring the ongoing relationship between being a festivalgoer and daily life.

Music festival expert insights

On sharing music festival experiences

One subject I focused on in the interviews was finding out what sorts of rituals people engage in after a music festival and how and why they share their music festival experiences.

All my interviewees expressed a strong desire to share music festival experiences for personal reasons, and were highly motivated to seek media and content related to their own experiences. Everyone I spoke with actively tried to share their own experiences, photos and media, and were also genuinely interested in what other people share. The strong desire to share information and media about music festival experiences in my survey indicated this as well.

There are a few services and online communities working to unify festival experience by collecting images, fan-sourced media, posting to Facebook pages and groups or by blogging about festivals. Audiences can explore events through hashtagged photos and video snippets on apps, but the space is still open for innovation.

Why try to share a music festival experience?

I asked my experts why they share experiences and also explored whether there were any particular benefits or drawbacks to sharing them. A crucial distinction that emerged in conversation with festival experts was between the desire to share experiences for personal reasons versus socially-motivated sharing. Sharing content to a personal social network, for instance, was about reflecting on and sharing meaningful experiences and connecting with other people.

The music festival experts suggested that sharing music festival content to wider networks or public online spaces was usually about educating others or else was an attempt to recreate a festival experience for people who weren't there. They might share content in an effort to explain why they were excited about the event or why it mattered so much to them. Any attempt to share

the feeling of being at a festival seemed worthwhile, though most agreed that sharing on social media did little to approximate the actual experience.

Music festival experts agreed that words and pictures, and even individual video clips rarely capture the true nature of a music festival. One expert mentioned how professional videos of music festivals are 'totally clinical' and fail to capture much of the experience at all.

Music festivals through other people's eyes

Interestingly, nearly everyone I spoke with was interested in hearing about other people's music festival experiences, whether or not they were also in attendance at the specific event. Among expert fans, there was a common understanding of why these experiences are important and the eagerness to share them, and a happy openness to hearing them from others. This eagerness signifies a deep understanding between people, given that even if festival experiences are not the same, they instantly provide an intensely common ground.

There is also a desire to 'see the festival' through the eyes of others, as everyone's experience is deeply personal and unique, but of course is still centered around the same basic activities and musical performances.

Major findings about music festival experience sharing

Festival fans are deeply sympathetic to the excitement other fans feel. Sharing music festival experiences is about two things:

Personal satisfaction: sharing the meaning of the individual experience, a personal expression of a strong feeling of excitement and enjoyment

Social sharing: sharing knowledge and information, whether for fun or to develop a common ground or understanding

Other lessons from festival experts

Here are some other things I learned from my music festival experts.

Music festival strategy and expertise is real. There is a body of information and knowledge you need in order to make the most of each festival. Each event presents audiences with unique challenges and opportunities. This knowledge is only developed over time and with experience. It develops in parallel with personal knowledge about how to manage music festival experiences, especially when camping or surviving a multiple-day event.

Long-term festival fans develop a sense for the wisdom, behavior and knowledge of crowds. Subjects such as self-policing, learning how to operate 'together' with many people in a space and function as a crowd were mentioned frequently. For instance, long-term festival fans develop a nuanced understanding of things like how to move efficiently in lines, not cramming in to small spaces, blocking traffic and avoiding mob moments.

Most every expert I spoke with liked live streams of music festivals but for different reasons. Some considered it good marketing for events, while others thought of live streams as an important way to share the festival experience with a wider audience.

The festival expert interviews helped me realize there was work to be done in increasing return on audience investment in events. I decided that any solution I developed should help promoters and audiences to better understand the experiences they create together. I also realized the importance of helping people celebrate the significance of their own personal music festival experience history, as these events matter, and really do impact people's lives.

Initial opportunity areas for design

Based on the results of my survey and expert interviews, I identified several initial opportunity areas. These aligned roughly to the phases of pre-festival, during-festival and post-festival experience.

the 'after the festival' positive feeling: finding a way to help leverage, express, harness or share it for the benefit of individual festivalgoers and non-festivalgoers alike, including local communities, event promoters and artists

supporting learning, self-development and self-exploration at festivals: examining the relationship between 'everyday' self versus the 'festival self' and the aspirational, future self

the festival community and music festival history: sharing experiences, memories, and recording what often goes unrecorded and forgotten at large events

encouraging novel, serendipitous or unexpected experience: supporting the experience of unusual, out-of-the-ordinary or vibrant life experiences

community without borders: tribalism, nomadism, or visually expressing membership in a larger, geographically diverse community

music festival experiences over a lifetime: supporting music festival families, children and aging festival audiences



Generation

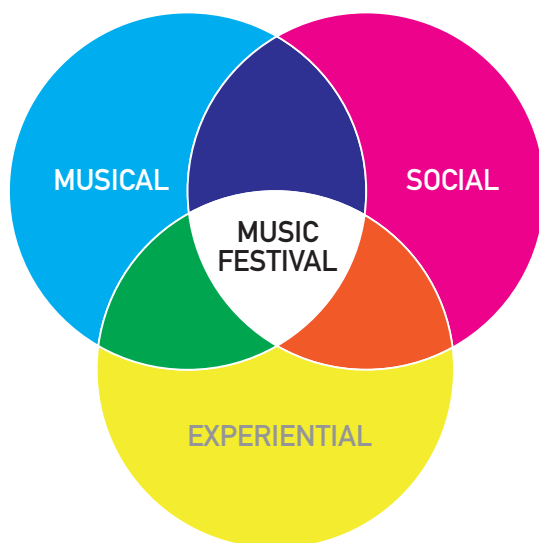
A few models of music festival experience

As a way to synthesize my research findings and communicate them more quickly to a wider audience and in a visual way, I developed several models for music festival audience experience. Several of these models provided the conceptual models on which I structured the interactions and experiences built in to my design solution, *Neverfade*.

Model 1

What is a music festival experience?

A music festival as experienced by audiences is a union of three experiential elements: the musical, the social and the experiential. Each of these elements contributes equally to the total emotional affect and quality of audience experience.



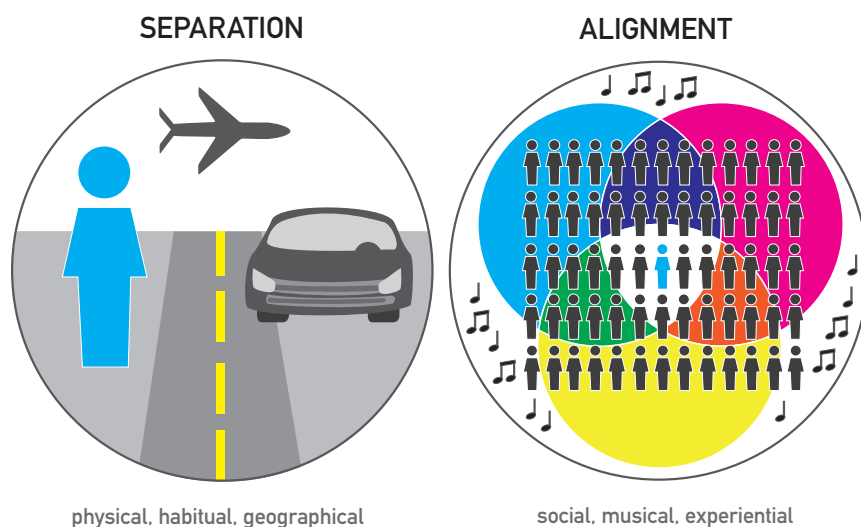
The elements of music festival experience

Model 2

The daily life state (routine) vs. the music festival state (displacement and alignment)

In our daily lives, music is primarily experienced alone and through digital devices. Our daily experiences and social contexts are often routine and highly structured.

A music festival affords audiences crucial space of displacement from the everyday where they have the opportunity to sync with others through a larger, shared experience. The primary syncing agent is music, and the secondary syncing agent is the venue or location.



The music festival state: separation and alignment

Music, as both a virtual boundary maker and dissolver, provides the common thread that can unite people and different social groups within the space of a music festival. The physical and mental separation from daily routine provides a space for learning about the self, one's social network, other people, music and festivals.

Model 3

Music festival audience experience as three levels of interpersonal interaction and learning

For the festivalgoer, music festival experience consists of three levels of intense interpersonal interaction and the learning that accompanies each.



The three levels of music festival experience

Each attendee gains self-knowledge in the context of a new environment. This may occur by having to rely on his or herself in new or unexpected ways or discovering new facets of self at a festival. This is the space of personal discovery in which festivalgoers can explore, uncover or strengthen parts of their identity, personalities, or even priorities in life.

The social group of friends and acquaintances with which a festivalgoer travels and coexists during the festival experience comprises a second level of music festival interaction. The sum of these interactions are crucial to defining the quality of music festival audience experience and can range anywhere across the emotional spectrum from deep group bonding to interpersonal conflict.

Lastly, the festivalgoer inevitably interacts with the larger festival community, through which they are rapidly exposed to large numbers of new people in unusual environmental and social contexts.

Model 4

The music festival activity cycle; personal investment and benefit

Each music festival experience is comprised of a cycle of activities with four distinct phases. Festivalgoers must invest heavily in events before experiencing them and receiving any benefit from participating.

Phase one of the activity cycle requires festivalgoers to collect information and to budget money and vacation time.

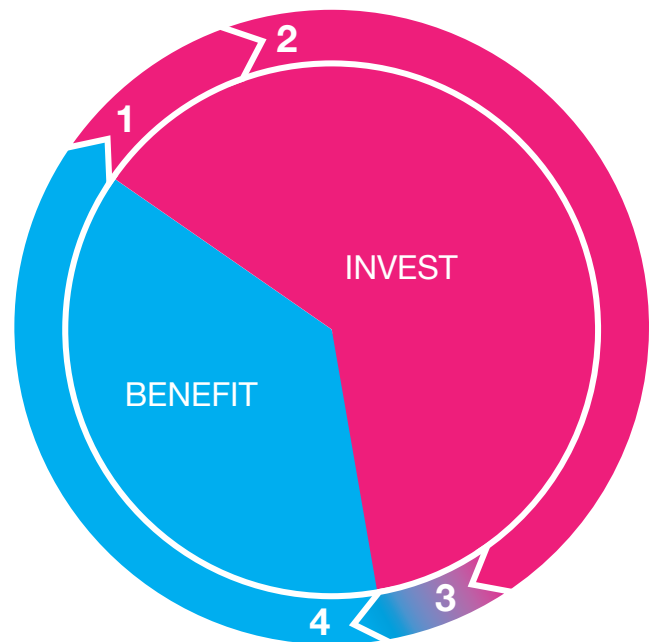
After buying tickets or deciding to attend an event the festivalgoer enters phase two, the anticipation phase, which often begins months, even years before an event. In this phase, festivalgoers enter a frenzy of activity and communication. They may reach out to friends across geographic borders and start discussions around planning, music, lineups, traveling and any other logistical coordination required in order to get to the event. Many connections between people are rekindled and strengthened during this phase.

Phase three, or the experience of the event itself, is actually much shorter than the anticipation and reflection phases and usually only lasts a few days to a week.

Then in phase four, after the event, festivalgoers will discuss the event and share content about the experience for weeks or months, and may attempt to re-live the experience through stories or reviewing media. Festivalgoers will often revisit past content as part of a repeating cycle of anticipation for many years after an event.

Unlike the tangible, quantifiable investments made in the first two phases, the post-event benefits are mostly intangible (emotional memories, personal experiences, stories, etc.).

The four phases of the music festival activity cycle



1 Collect	2 Anticipate	3 Experience	4 Reflect
information money time	communicate coordinate travel plan	social musical experiential	discuss re-live share

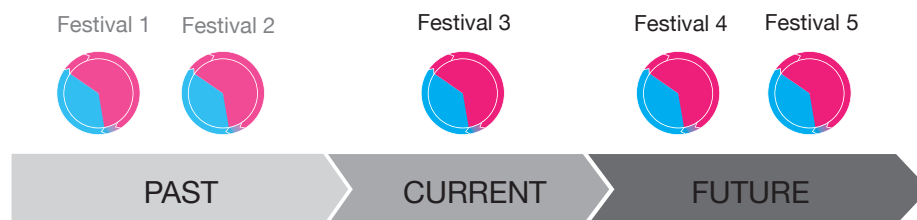
Every festivalgoer, no matter their age or experience level, will progress through these four phases of music festival experience for every event they attend.

Model 5

Music festivals as a continuum of experiences over many years

Most active festivalgoers attend more than one event per year, and many are interested in continuing to attend them in the future, even as they continue to move into new phases of their lives.

Music festivals then can be considered not only individually as a cycle of phases of activity, but a repeating event in festivalgoers lives.



Festival experiences over many years

Based on these models, I drew several design scenarios for concepts that might support the three levels of sharing and reflection around music festivals: personal, small or close social group and the larger festival community. I also sketched some ways that one service could connect disparate music festival experiences. Lastly, I looked at how a service might support basic festival needs and activities for festival-goers through an online community that encourages active participation.

Testing six design concept scenarios

To move my design process from models to designs I could build and test, I developed six detailed scenarios of use for different design concepts that might support each of these models in different ways.

Each concept was based on the three-tier circle of music festival interaction model and was intended to support one or more of

the music festival activity phases. Each concept had a stated goal, whether to improve social bonding, save memories, or otherwise enhance the festival experience.

Using storyboards, I developed a concept testing survey to speed-date each idea with festivalgoers. I primed survey participants by explaining that I was testing several design concepts for components of a new online music festival fan service that would help enrich music festival experiences before, during and after events, and explained that the survey was not about the technical feasibility of the ideas, but rather to explore exactly what respondents would and wouldn't like to use and why.

Each of my questions was about a different feature that could be part of a service that would do the following for music festival fans:

support basic music festival audience needs

support sharing of memories and reflection on experiences

I asked survey participants if they would enjoy using each concept, and also if they thought they might actually use each idea, and provided an open-answer text field for them to submit any other thoughts and feedback.

A total of 46 festivalgoers provided their feedback and insights on each concept. Reactions to most of the concepts were positive (well over 50% of respondents would use all of them), but some recieved a significantly stronger positive reaction than others.

The tone of the responses was generally one of excitement at the idea of new services designed specifically to support festival fan experience, as there are few, if any such services available currently. Survey respondents also enthusiastically volunteered insightful comments on each idea I presented and helped point out possible privacy and real-world use concerns for each concept.

Design concept testing results

Concept: Ask a music festival expert [79% would use]

Goal: make planning for a festival easier, sharing of expertise

Jon wants to attend a new music festival. In addition to reading the festival's website, he checks out the festival page on iwasthere.

The page shows basic facts and the history of the event, as well as a gallery of photos and videos from iwasthere members.

The upcoming year has a feature, but there are also links to the past years of the festival.

Jon submits a question about the weather in March at the venue using the 'Ask an Expert' feature.

A couple days later Jon gets an email from iwasthere with a message from the music festival expert that answers his question.

He checks out their music festival resume and sees that the person who answered him has been to the festival four times.

Jon buys tickets to the event.

Concept: Featured memory [78% would use]

Goal: encourage reflection and sharing

The home page of the music festival site features one member's personal festival experience story on a rotating weekly basis.

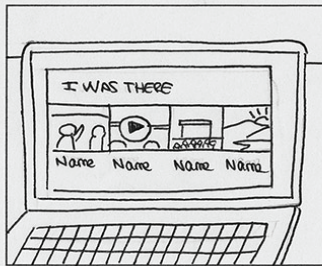
The feature includes a photo of the member, the name and year of the festival and a story of their choosing about the festival. It can include photos and media from the event.

The featured story includes links to the member's personal festival profile page, a link to the event home page, and to the specific year of the festival.

Other members can comment, add photos or share media in response to the story.

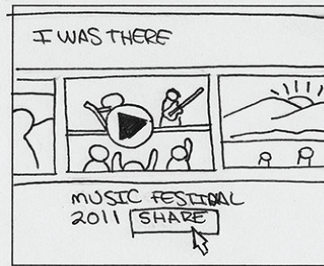
Concept: Music festival memory feed [82% would use]

Goal: share experiences, connect different music festivals



The public view of the iwasthere home page features a continually updating feed of images and videos from various music festivals that were saved and publicly shared by site members. It can be filtered to show random events or the most recent uploads.

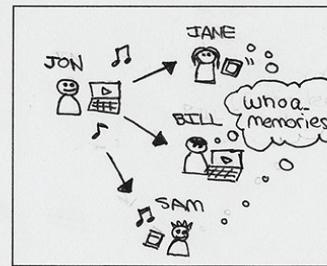
Each media item also shows the name of the member who shared it, the name of the music festival and the year of the festival and can be easily shared with other members.



Jon sees a great video that he'd never seen before from a festival he attended three years ago on the home page.

He decides he needs to share the video with his friends.

After Jon logs in to the site, the feed changes to just show Jon's own personal media and memories from the festivals he's attended.



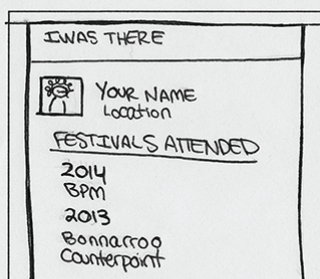
Jon shares the video from the festival with the crew of people he was with at the festival three years ago.

The video is shared to the page for that year of the festival in his profile.

Everyone in Jon's crew is notified that Jon shared the video.

Concept: Music festival resume [68% would use]

Goal: sharing festival expertise, making music festival pride visible



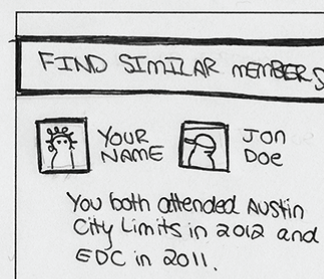
Each member of the site would be able to build their music festival resume.

It would show a full list of every music festival you've attended, by year, including a list of festivals you plan to attend. As you attend new ones, they are added.

Another section would show the music festivals you hope to attend in the future; a festival wish list.



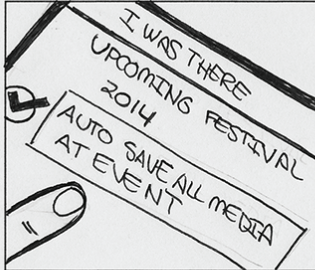
When interacting with other members or festival-goers on the service, you can always check out their music festival resume.



You could also compare your music festival resume with other members or the site, or search for people who have attended past festivals or want to attend the same festivals as you do in the future.

Concept: Easily saving a personal experience [63% would use]

Goal: save memories, encourage personal reflection



Jon joined iwasthere and set up a personal account profile. Before attending a festival, he sets his account to auto-save all the media he creates during the weekend of the event.



While at the festival, he takes a picture of a live art installation. The iwasthere service notices he took a photo and asks him to categorize it as one of four choices: OMG, LOL, WUT, or NO. He chooses OMG because he really liked the art. The photo is automatically saved to his iwasthere account under the name and year of the event.

Later he writes a note to himself to make sure he can remember a great quote. He categorizes it as LOL.



Later that night, Jon quickly looks at his iwasthere account. For that day of the festival, he saved three OMG moments, five LOLs, no WUT moments, and one NO.

He can review the moments and decide what, if any of the moments he wants to share on social media or on the iwasthere site later or right away if he's impatient to post them.

Concept: Easily saving a group experience [51% would use]

Goal: save memories, enhance social group bonding



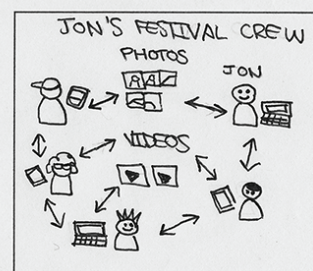
Jon joined iwasthere and set up a personal account. He's also part of a private crew profile for the event that includes all his close friends at the event, and even a few who weren't able to make it.

Before attending the festival, he sets his account to auto-save all the media he creates during the weekend of the event and to automatically share it with the crew profile.



The photos he takes during the festival that day are saved to his personal account and also viewable by everyone in the crew's group.

He meets someone new during the weekend and adds them to his crew profile.



After the festival, everyone in Jon's crew can review each others photos and videos from the festival.

Here are a few thoughts survey respondents shared in response to these concepts.

"I love seeing an event for other people's perspective."

"It would make me feel as if I'm discovering a new adventure with strangers I was meant to meet."

"Certain moments and sets I want to relive and have access to for years to come."

"Message boards are for dinosaurs."

"...it would make me feel nostalgic, happy, excited, and maybe slightly jealous."

Concept validation and final directions: A place for sharing and preserving festival experience stories that emphasizes privacy and control over content

This round of testing strengthened my sense of the opportunity area for design in the space of music festival experience, and confirmed the extent to which festivalgoers have a real need for additional socially-focused support systems. It also further validated my assumption that festivalgoers not only enjoy looking at music festival media galleries (and looking for themselves and their friends in them) and find media viewing to be a crucial part of their experience, but face real challenges in finding personally relevant festival content.

Privacy around public sharing of experiences or personal content was a common concern, as was the difficulty of getting 'unfiltered' information on events when deciding to buy tickets. Any solution I designed would also need to be highly personalizable to support the diverse personalities and tastes of festivalgoers.

Sketching initial ideas

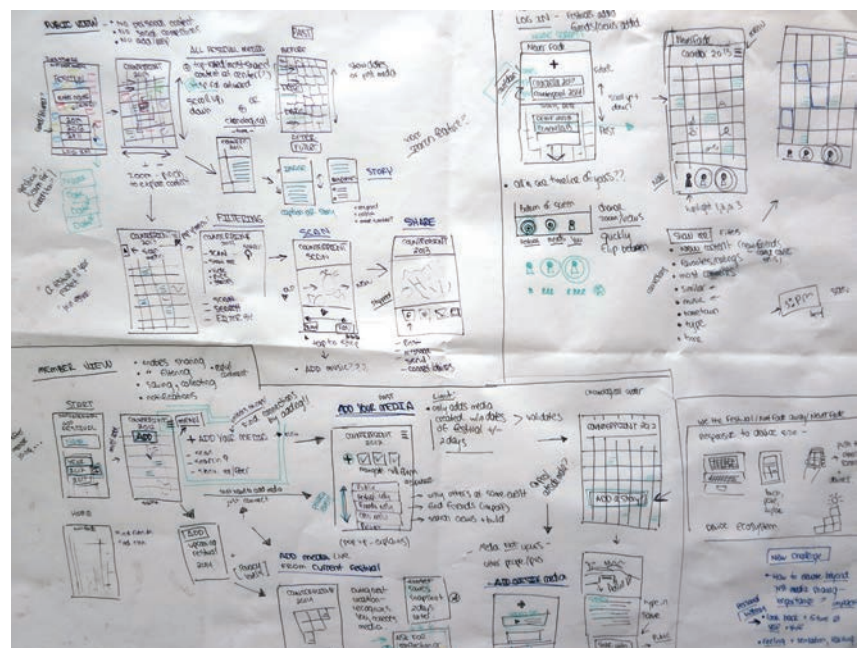
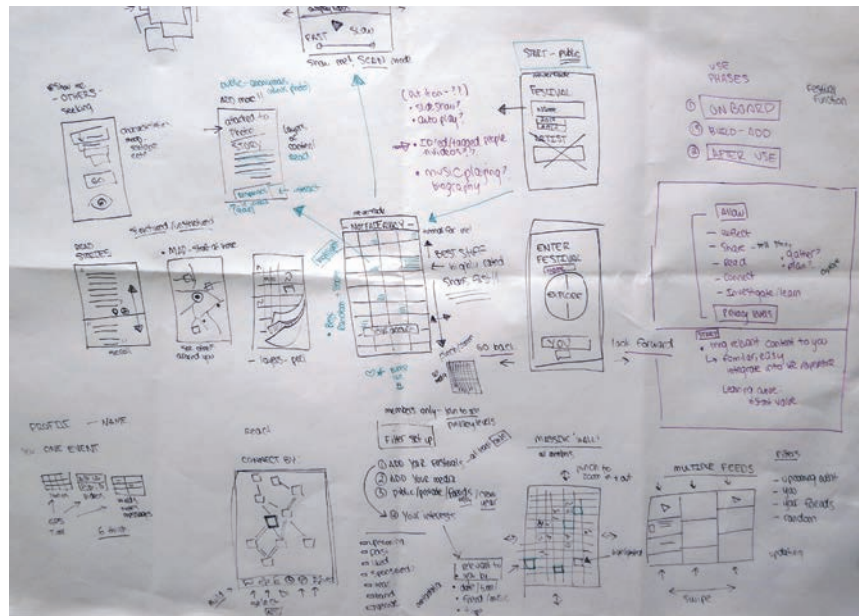
Based on the feedback I received on my concepts, the understanding of the levels of interaction at events and the phases of the music festival activity cycle, I was ready to start crafting my final design solution. I chose to build out a system based on the two most popular concepts I'd tested; the music festival 'memory feed' and the 'featured memory'. These concepts were also the two I felt the majority of people were most likely to use on a regular basis and directly supported the festival media sharing routines I had explored in depth with festival experts.

I started by sketching various interaction flows through a system that could help people explore events and manage their own experiences and collected memories.

My system incorporated several levels of 'zoom' for viewing and curating festival experiences. Festivalgoers using the system could 'zoom in' to view individual perspectives on an event and also 'zoom out' to view everything shared by everyone that was present. The solution also incorporated several levels of flexible, easy privacy control, because festivalgoers need a safe way to share their stories.

I sketched these ideas into a series of rough wireframes that could allow festivalgoers to share access information at public and private, member-only access levels.

First sketches of the *Neverfade* system





neverfade

Final Design

Neverfade; a virtual place for festival fans to share their experiences, reflect and connect

What is Neverfade?

Neverfade is a web and cloud-based digital service and music festival history archive that provides a virtual home for the huge community of music festival fans. It's a place where festival fans can tell their stories, keep great memories alive and celebrate their adventures and experiences through audience-sourced multimedia, story and experience sharing.

Neverfade is designed to support music festival fans and enriches their experiences by actively encouraging them to reflect on their own personal festival history by saving and sharing their stories. It also helps maintain the sense of connection between what can be geographically distant peer groups while also celebrating the large scale and unique energy of each event, as no two music festivals are the same.

Neverfade is a tool built with the understanding that music festival experiences last much longer than the few days spent at any single event, and how for many fans, music festivals are part of a lifestyle that can span years or even decades.

Neverfade is an experience design solution that connects festivalgoers with their past, present and future experiences. It helps maintain connections between friends, new and old, and gives fans the opportunity to see through other people's eyes. As one survey respondent wrote, *Neverfade* is about making festivalgoers able to feel 'as if they were discovering new adventures with strangers they were meant to meet'.

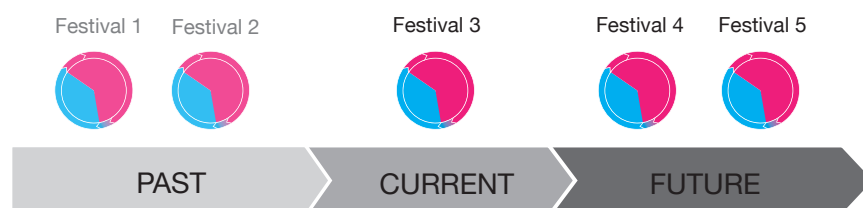
Ultimately, *Neverfade* is about keeping the festival feeling alive in the minds of festivalgoers and their friends, no matter where they are, or how many months or even years have passed since an event.

Neverfade interaction models

Here are the two conceptual models for optimum music festival experience on which *Neverfade* was built.

Model 1

Support the full spectrum of music festival experience; anticipation, current events and past festivals



Supporting music festival experiences past, current, and future

Model 2

Connect people with themselves, their social group and the festival community



Neverfade interaction model, three levels of connection and communication

How is Neverfade different from other products or online services?

Unlike social media, message boards, festival apps, blogs or other kinds of media galleries, *Neverfade* puts unfiltered festival experience content created by individual fans first. There is no appointed event curator or content on the app that is not created by or provided by members, and only content that was created within the dates of each festival and within a set distance of the venue can be uploaded (which is facilitated by date metadata and GPS tagging). This prevents users from uploading of other kinds of content. The community and richness of the experience of using *Neverfade* is built as users volunteer their media and share their stories.

Neverfade is a highly visual platform that supports multi-modal communication and memory saving, as users can write, share images or videos. The platform also creates and maintains a sense of history and community around the shared experience of each event and a continuity between festival experiences for members.

Neverfade allows users to view their own collected content, other people's, or everything uploaded to a 'full festival view' at once, and to filter through it in meaningful, interesting ways.

Who is Neverfade for?

Neverfade supports both new and long-term music festivalgoers of all ages and the festivalgoing community as a whole. Public and members-only access levels (which include private, friends-only, crew-only or public sharing and viewing options) maintain privacy while facilitating information sharing.

How does using Neverfade benefit fans?

Neverfade adds new dimension and perspective to individual experiences by allowing people to discover new content tailored to their individual interests. *Neverfade* connects fans with like-minded people who have shared the same or similar experiences and promotes interest in learning about each music festival's unique culture and community.

By providing festivalgoers with a place to share their stories and media (such as photos, videos or anything they wish) in a safe place, *Neverfade* encourages positive experiences through the sense of participation in a larger community that spans geographic boundaries.

How might Neverfade also benefit promoters?

In addition to being a strong potential platform for event branding and connecting with fans, *Neverfade* can increase ticket sales by helping festivalgoers decide to purchase tickets by giving them information and a sense of the unique festival experience provided by each event. Given that festivalgoers often decide to go to new events based on stories they've heard from close friends and family, *Neverfade* could act as a powerful crowd-sourced marketing tool for events.

Neverfade can also maintain festival communities and promote meaningful interactions between festivalgoers and good behavior, which can improve the audience experience as well.

Neverfade feature list

- **Touch and zoom:** Touchable, scrollable and zoom-able content display that works across devices and platforms
- **Member login:** Separate public and member-only access levels for privacy and control over content
- **Story view:** Story and comment view paired with media
- **Filter menu:** Many filters available to help users discover personally relevant content (such as searching and filtering media by new additions uploaded since last visit, date or time, GPS-tagged or nearby to user, lineup schedule, media type)
- **Archive:** An archive for past and current media
- **Upload:** Data is automatically collected from devices or pulled from storage by referencing event date metadata
- **Share:** Facilitates easy sharing to other social networks, devices or email
- **Scan:** Optional variable-speed, auto-playing slideshow

Neverfade design principles

Memory: promote self-identity development by supporting vivid emotional memory recall of important life events and experiences

Control: transparent, clear controls at core of user experience

Privacy: a safe place to share content and stories

Easy: access to information and data storage

Relevance: content must be customizable and filterable

Inclusion: encourage feeling of contribution to larger community, pride in participation in music festivals as a lifestyle

Support: discovery, serendipity, fun

Three personas and the Neverfade prototype

I prototyped screen interactions for three flows that three unique festivalgoer personas might use. These included

exploring the public view of a music festival to learn about an event, saving an experience by adding a story to a photograph, and filtering through older, archived content to rediscover and see a past experience in a new way.

I loaded the prototypes on an iPad to demonstrate how *Neverfade* worked and informally tested it with fellow designers and guests who attended the CMU Design Masters Thesis poster session. Feedback from the informal testing and presentation was overwhelmingly positive. People found the system effective at demonstrating the feel of a large music festival with a human touch through the addition of personal stories.



Chris, age 18

New festivalgoer

Needs: unfiltered information, inspiration, access to festival expertise

Quote: *"I have questions about festivals that the website can't answer. If I don't know anyone who went before, it's hard to get answers."*

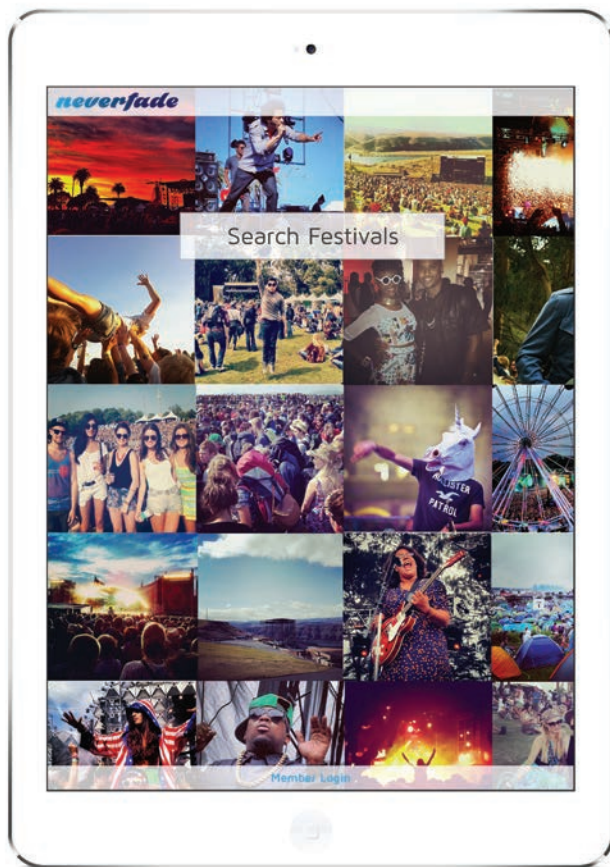
Scenario 1: New user, public access viewing mode

Meet Chris. Chris just finished his first year of college and wants to go to a music festival near his new city. He's read a lot about the festival on blogs and follows it on social media, but still isn't sure if he should shell out the cash to go. The tickets are pretty expensive.

He checks out the festival on Neverfade. He searches for the most recent year, where he can see all the photos and media that were collected and shared by the audience on one huge display. He can zoom in and out and can even filter the display to just show videos, photos, or stories. He also checks out some of the galleries from previous years. He can also press play to quickly scan through the photos to see them all in a slideshow.

He reads a few stories by members about the festival last year. After reading some of the stories firsthand, he's sold on going. He forwards a couple videos from last year to his friend.

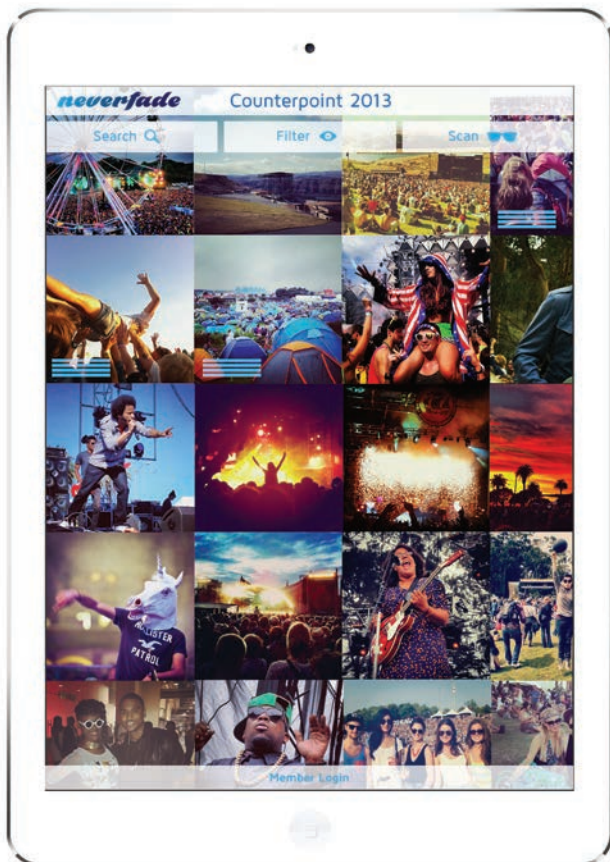
Scenario 1: Exploring a new festival, viewing a story, scan view and sharing to other networks



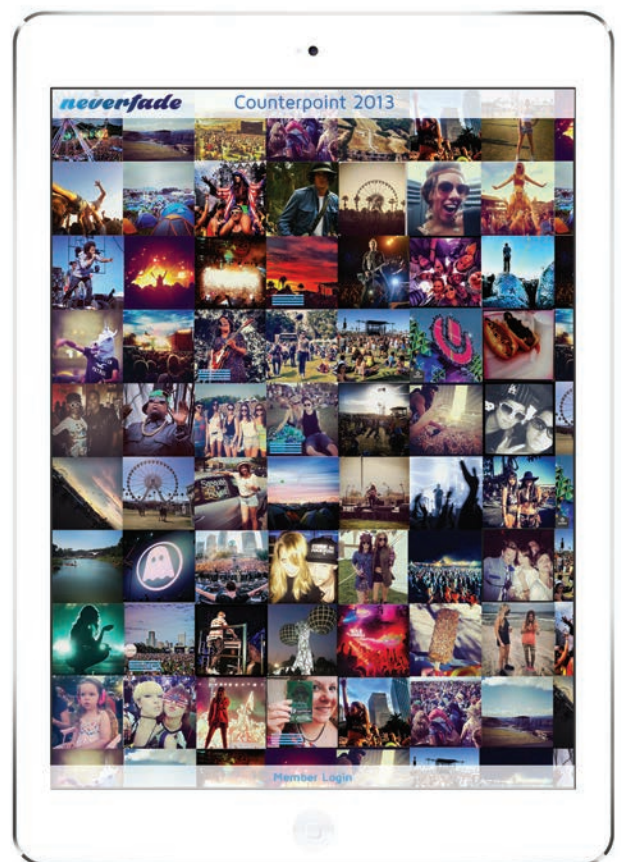
public view: home page search function



searching for a particular festival



zoomed-in festival view with stories

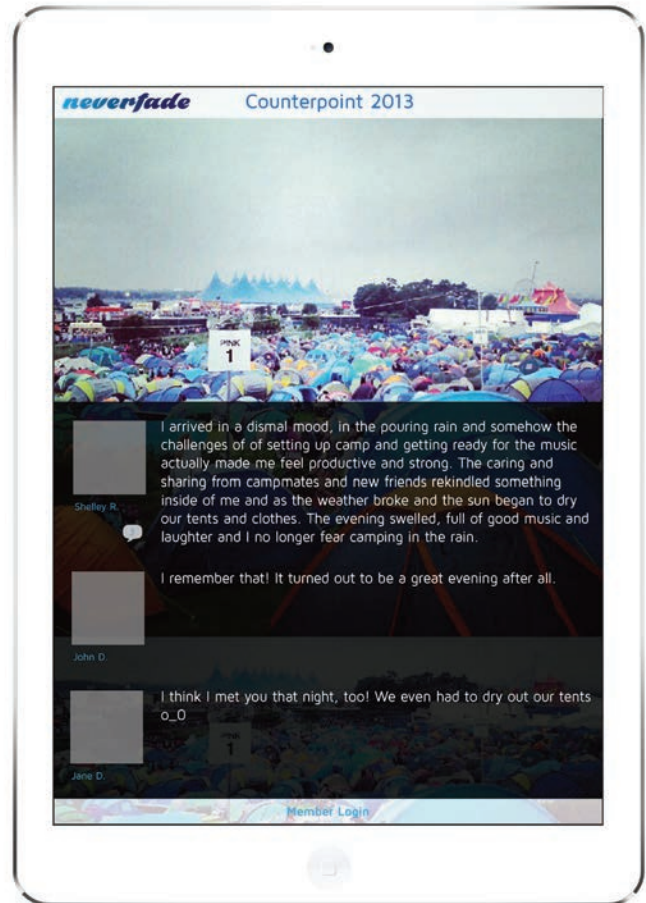


zoomed out festival view

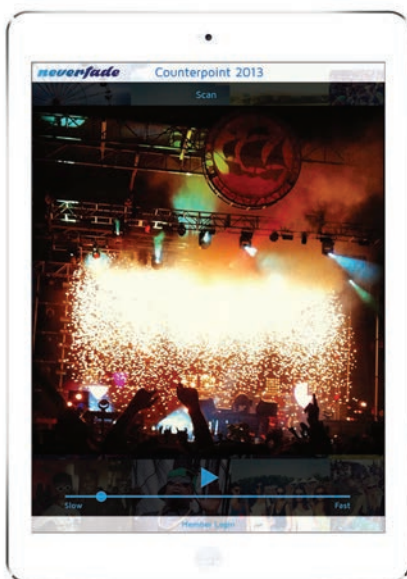
Scenario 1: Exploring a new festival, viewing a story, scan view and sharing to other networks



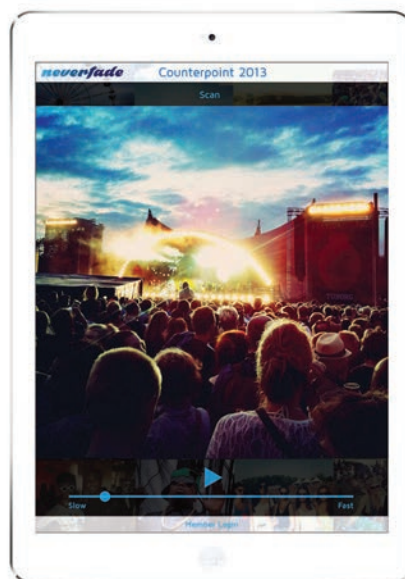
story view



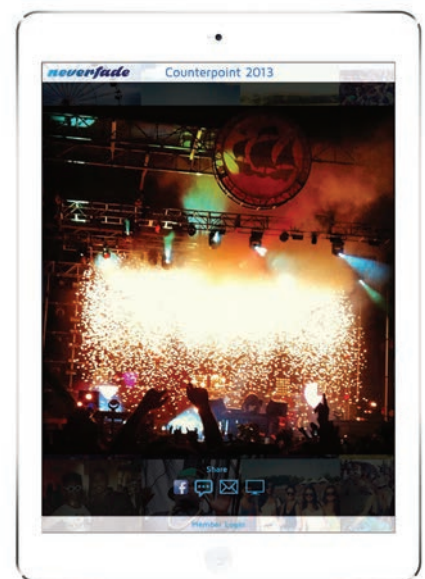
story view with comments



scan view with playback
speed control slider



scan view



share content to other networks



Jenna, age 26

Average festivalgoer

Attends 1-3 festivals each year

Needs: a place to save and collect memories, add new people, share with close friends

Quote: *"It would make me feel as if I'm discovering a new adventure with strangers I was meant to meet."*

Scenario 2: Average user, member access viewing mode

Meet Jenna. Over the last couple years she has been going to more and more music festivals, and now tries to make it to three or four every year. She loves chronicling her friend's adventures, but doesn't like how her photos get lost on Instagram and Facebook so quickly. She recently attended a festival for a second time, and she took a lot of photos.

She joins Neverfade as a member. Neverfade helps her quickly upload two years worth of her music festival media to each year of the festival on her account. The system knows to only add media created on the dates of the festival (and the days before and afterward, which helps capture the journey there).

She chooses to share all her photos with her close friends on Neverfade, and also shares a few favorites publicly with the full festival community. She adds one of her new festival friends to her crew account so they can see all her photos too.

She then adds a story about one epic afternoon to one of her favorite photos. Telling the story right after the festival helps her remember the story better. Right after she posts the story someone else who was there responds to her story, sharing the sentiment.

Scenario 2: Upload new media, share and add story



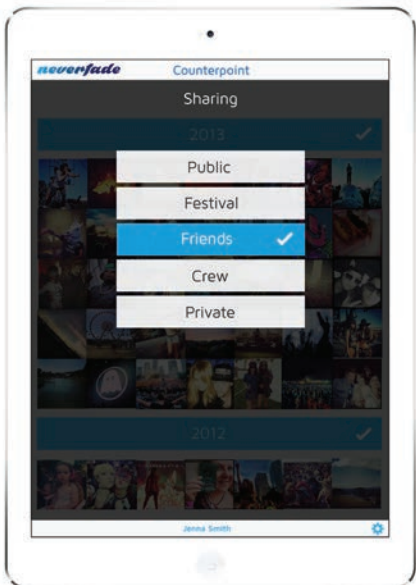
selecting two years at once



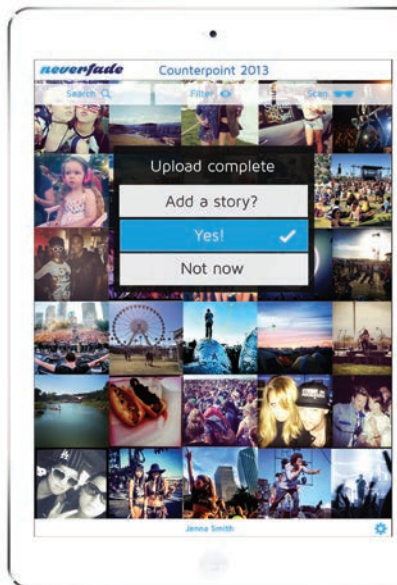
adding media for two festivals



uploading new media



friends-only sharing



choosing to add a story



adding a story



story added



Jerry, age 37

Expert festivalgoer

Needs: an archive for memories, new ways to explore and rediscover past experiences, high personalization

Quote: *"I'd need to filter out what I don't care to see. I want to see rap and metal, not hugging and tears."*

Scenario 3: Expert user

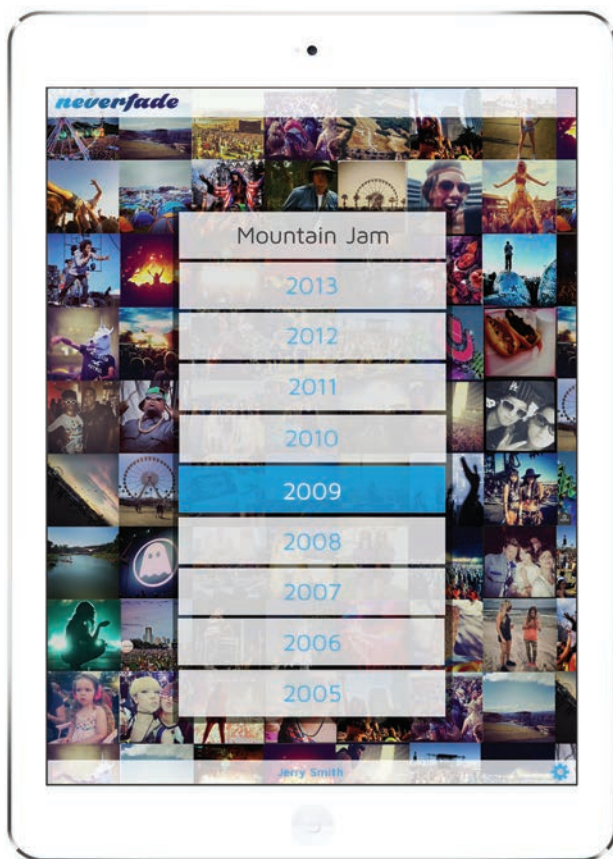
Meet Jerry. Jerry has been going to music festivals since basically, well...forever. He still goes to as many as he can every year, but he can't make it to as many as he used to. He's noticed that after a few years, his memories from each event start to blur together. He's proud of having been to so many festivals and knowing so much awesome music, but sometimes has a hard time remembering exactly which of his friends were with him at which event.

Jerry doesn't take a lot of photos and already added the few photos he has taken at festivals to Neverfade. Most of the photos on his account were shared with him by his friends.

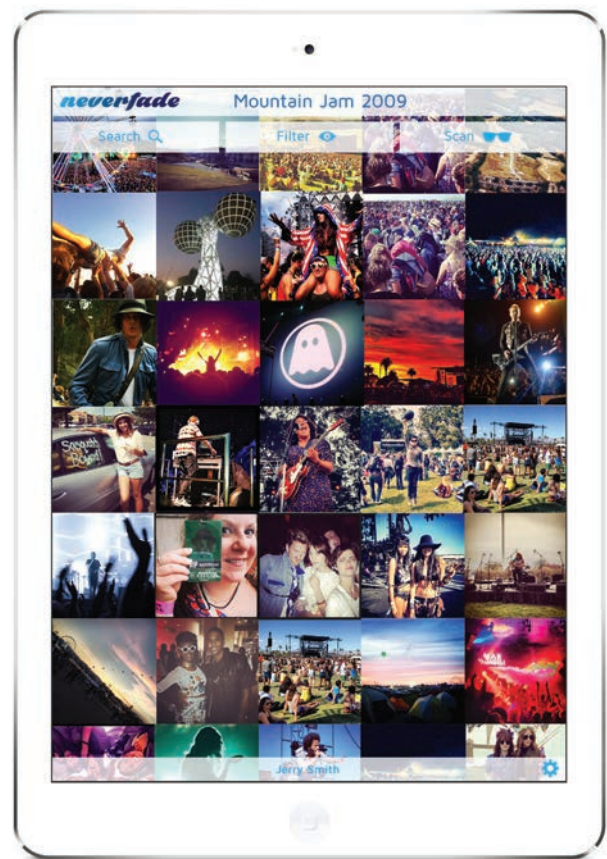
Jerry decides to look back at a festival he attended five years ago. He checks out the public view of the festival and also his friends' photos and videos from the event. He has Neverfade show him all the new media that was posted since his last visit by using the filter for new content.

Neverfade highlights some photos that he'd never seen before. He notices that he's in the background of one of the photos that were posted by filtering for new photos that were shared in locations near where he was during the festival. He also sees an old friend who he hasn't talked to for a few months. He shares the photo with his friend.

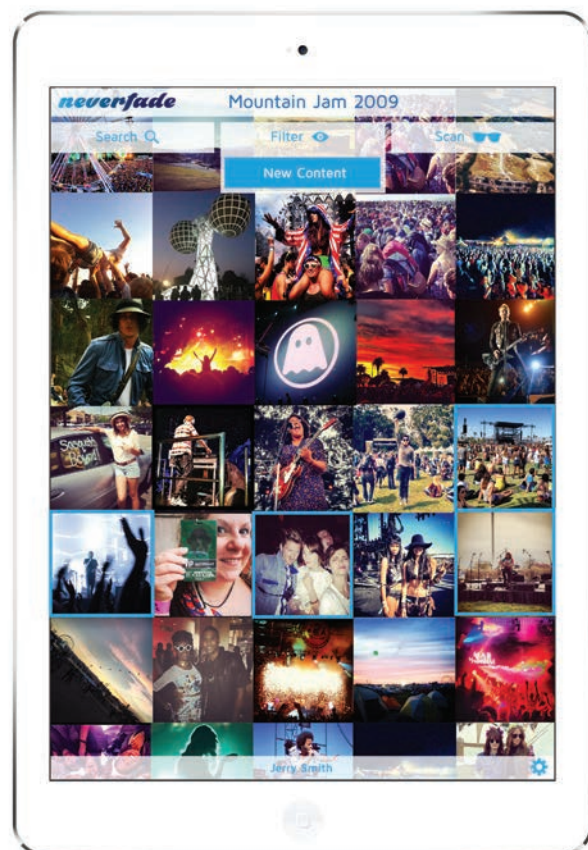
Scenario 3: Searching older festival media for new content



searching archived content



viewing an older festival



new content filter highlights new uploads



sharing content with a friend

Counterpoint 2013

neverfade

Search

Filter

Scan

Upload complete

Add a story?

Yes!

Not now

Jenna Smith

neverfade

Counterpoint 2013



Shelley R.

3

I arrived in a dismal mood, in the pouring rain and somehow the challenges of setting up camp and getting ready for the music actually made me feel productive and strong. The caring and sharing from campmates and new friends rekindled something inside of me and as the weather broke and the sun began to dry our tents and clothes. The evening swelled, full of good music and laughter and I no longer fear camping in the rain.

Member Login



neverfade

Mountain Jam 2009

Search

Filter

Scan 

New Content



Jerry Smith



Conclusion

Neverfade is one example of a system or service that could be built using the models of music festival audience experience developed in this project. By applying the kinds of human-centered insights design research methods can provide, I was able to propose new ways of conceptualizing music festival audience experiences and then to develop a promising new support system that responds to the desire to share stories, eagerly anticipate and reflect on events, days, months or even years later.

Given the importance of seeking and reviewing media and the sharing of stories in music festival experience, both as a form of social expression and component of personal identity development, *Neverfade* provides a unique platform for users to reflect on the past and to anticipate new experiences. The system allows users to interact however they find most valuable, whether by exploring events, communicating with other festivalgoers, collecting and organizing personal memories or sharing with friends.

The experience of using *Neverfade* is intended to be fun and allow people to easily rekindle potent moments of festival 'afterglow' by making multimedia and stories come alive. More than just a photo gallery or video platform, it is a repository for personal and music festival history. As a system, it counteracts many of the painpoints inflicted on festivalgoers by current social media

structures by making festival-interest content their own (not controlled by media outlets), easily accessible (or kept private), located in one virtual place instead of on different festival pages, and by associating content with each year or instance of each event. It also makes past years and memories available without unnecessary searching or effort.

Developing the required technology infrastructure for the *Neverfade* system was not in the scope of this project, including the types of media identification and sorting algorithms required to drive the content filters. Additional filters would be required to reduce the kinds of festival-media noise that would be generated as hundreds, or even thousands of people took the same or extremely similar pictures during performances, for instance. In terms of experience design, however, the next steps for *Neverfade* would include several rounds of iteration and refinement of the visual and interaction design on the initial feature set and formal user testing of working prototypes.

There are some promising additional features that would require development for future versions of the system, including exploration of how to incorporate event branding in to the platform as a potential pathway for monetization and stronger tie-in to the unique experience of each event.

For future development

Explore event and festival branding potential, making *Neverfade* a virtual experience platform for large events

Integration of streaming music players, user profiles and internal messaging service

Build in other design concepts (such as tools for easily saving experiences in real-time during events, festival resumes, etc).

The *Neverfade* experience could also be used to facilitate memory-saving for other kinds of personally significant large events for which people anticipate, plan and travel. Events that could benefit from using the *Neverfade* platform include film festivals, sporting events like marathons or tailgating parties, or other smaller events, such as family reunions, fairs or living history weekends.



Epilogue

As I began planning this project many months ago, I was excited to explore whatever it is that makes a music festival a music festival, beyond the presence of people, sound, musicians and a venue. What was it about music festival experiences that made them so vivid and so unlike anything else many people have ever experienced? Was it possible to begin to characterize that feeling in the air at a good festival? How can a music festival experience really make a person feel so good for so long, and how might design be deployed to enhance that feeling?

I began by asking questions like this:

Isn't it odd that we have to build spaces like music festivals, free ourselves from our usual environments and surround ourselves with art and music to finally feel like we get to 'be ourselves'?

Then I realized that maybe this interpretation was backwards.

Maybe the current state of daily life in many modern societies is more of an artificial construct than the open, creative, closely-knit and self-reliant temporary communities that many people experience for the first time at a music festival.

Awe, wonder and childlike glee is the norm at a music festival, as is a radical openness to interaction and new experiences. These are the qualities present in fully-actualized, psychologically

healthy humans; humans that feel empowered and in control of their reactions to the world.

It occurred to me that our festival experiences might be more true to human nature than the highly structured, busy lives so many of us work so hard to achieve. Maybe we need the space a festival affords to learn to better respond to our individual realities—and to be reminded that how we choose to interpret our lives is completely within our control.

Seen this way, the novelty and experiences people seek at music festivals can be about much more than just having fun but also about the self-education our modern cultural infrastructures sometimes fail to provide. Music festivals can act as a training ground, a place to discover better versions of ourselves.

We learn quickly when we have to adapt to new situations, and as Maslow suggested, healthy, fully actualized individuals respond better to the unexpected and rise to challenges with more creativity, spontaneity and equanimity.

Maybe it's just as important that we give ourselves the opportunity to escape our routines and experience wildly different, spontaneous and chaotic situations simply to learn how those feel. And if those situations exist for no reason other than the chance to celebrate a shared love of music, all the better.

Maybe the more we experiment and the farther away from the norm we get to push ourselves, the better we learn to cope with those moments when our daily experience of 'normal' unexpectedly goes off-script. Maybe escapism and celebration sometimes serve us better than our daily routines by bringing us closer to our true selves and to others, and actually teach us how to recognize the moments of happiness we seek.

If we must manufacture spaces to experience serendipity and where music can come alive, so be it.

And if we come out happier and better people for it, rock on.

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Appendix

Music Festival Experience Survey questions

Do you consider yourself a musical person, or have you had any musical training?

What is the farthest have you traveled for a music festival? (One way, not roundtrip.) Would you be willing to travel even farther than you have (to date) for a music festival?

How many music festivals have you attended in the last year? (Total.) Do you plan to attend more music festivals in the future?

Please share a little about what inspired you to attend your first music festival.

How would you feel about going to a music festival by yourself?

What is most exciting about attending a music festival to you?

Would you enjoy earning tiered benefits or perks from attending a festival multiple times? What would you like to earn?

Do you like to meet new people at music festivals?

Do you seek out new experiences at music festivals?

How do you feel about hearing unfamiliar music at festivals? Do you want to hear more unfamiliar music, or less?

How would you feel about hearing musical genres you wouldn't usually hear at a large-scale music festival?

Before a music festival, do you participate in discussions about the event on festival-related message boards, social media, online communities, or through chatting online?

Have you ever actively participated in building or throwing a music festival, or would you like to do so in the future?

Have you ever experienced 'festival comedown', depression, or any reluctance to return to the 'real' world after a festival?

Have you ever felt differently about life in general, or felt your outlook had changed after returning home from a music festival experience?

Have you ever experienced music festival 'afterglow' or felt more positive or optimistic in general after a festival?

Do you usually take photos, videos, or recordings during music festivals?

If you do take photos or recordings, do you try to share them with others during the festival, or afterward using social media?

Do you want other people to know about music festivals you've attended or feel any pride in having attended any festivals?

If possible, briefly describe what you remember most vividly about one of your music festival experiences.

Music festival experiences as shared by fans

I'm sharing some of these quotes and stories from the music festival experience survey because they were not only a lot of fun to read, but illustrate the glow and energy of music festival experiences in a way that no research report could ever do.

"I remember being completely in the moment. No worries of the past or future."

"It was the purest, most intensely blissful and powerful experience I'd ever had. I didn't know I could feel that way."

"Through all the festivals I have attended I have learned that I can be quite self-reliant, that I can meet new people more easily than I thought..."

"I felt a freedom and optimism that I had never experienced before, which improved my attitude toward life in general."

"Going to festivals has reminded me what I value in life and what I want to work towards in my professional life."

"I feel like Bonnaroo actually changed my life. I wish I had gone earlier."

"...it's incredible to know that other people have experienced the same. I honestly feel as though I've figured out what I want to do with my life after a festival."

"...but somehow even with all these things I'm complaining about, I still had one of the best festival experiences yet. I travel with a large group of friends, like 40 people almost between all the people I know really well, and we always have an amazing time no matter what because we love the music so much. I had a life changing time at this festival. I really feel like I had a break through with my life. Like I know my purpose almost, I definitely know I want to go to music festivals for the rest of my life, and I'm going to tell everyone I know that they should experience one."

"YES YES YES! After Bonnaroo 2013 I felt so happy in general. It made me a better person. It opened my eyes to all the beautiful things people have to offer in this world. I am forever changed."

"After this summer, I realized that we can make every day a paradise. The positivity and expression experienced at festivals can be experienced every day if we allow it."

"I had always been a person to worry about what others think of me, what I was wearing, how I acted, but after the very first day of my first festival I had an epiphany. I looked around at all the open minded people around me who were proud of who they are and where they are going in life. I now am one of those people and I hope to inspire others to be themselves and let go of the external things around them."

"It is there where I truly feel at peace, as I am surrounded by not only a beautiful location, but beautiful music, friends, people and vibes. It's the highlight of my year each and every single year."

"After almost every festival I have attended, I have come home with a different perspective and a lighter load on my shoulders, even if I need a week-long nap before returning to the real world."

"Made me realize that there truly are some wonderfully kind people out in the world, they just don't speak up as often as the jerks. But get them all in one place and it's amazing."

"After my first festival, I learned how I felt at my happiest, free-est state of mind."

"Coming back to the "real" world was awful, but made me realize what makes me happy in life. With that, I am now able to seek what makes me happy and am able to make others happy."

"Festivals break down so many barriers people assume are needed in every day life."

"Been doing this for years, all I will say is I wear wristbands until they fall off."

"I have found a greater hope for humanity, with the 'tribal happiness group feeling' as opposed to the "Barbie and Ken nuclear family possession checklist" most sign on for. I found a lot more like-minded people. That in itself has been very uplifting and given me hope."

"The atmosphere and music cultivated by environments like these encourage people to drop the facade and connect with each other and their surroundings in a real way that unfortunately doesn't happen often in our day-to-day lives."

"Music festivals and the community have changed my life. I instantly feel a sense of peace and love during them. On my return I want everyone around me to feel that too. I have noticed how much more in tune I am with myself and my surroundings after festivals. My friends have also told me how much happier I seem, and it might sound stupid, but you will never know this feeling until you experience that love with such a huge number of strangers."

"I arrived to an event in a dismal mood, in the pouring rain and somehow the challenges of setting up camp and getting ready for the music actually made me feel productive and strong. The

caring and sharing from camp mates and new friends rekindled something inside of me and as the weather broke, the sun began to dry our tents and clothes. The evening swelled, full of good music and laughter, and I no longer fear camping in the rain."

"After going to several music festivals I've gotten a lot better at meeting new people and have become more open to social situations where I don't know everyone."

"If anything, I feel that my experiences at music festivals have reinforced my ideas and education about music and the collective consciousness. It was one thing for me to study music from an anthropological perspective, but to go to festivals and actually witness hundreds or thousands of people enjoying an art form together (and what I would argue is the most moving art form), that's very powerful. My sense of wonder and validation gets stronger with each festival I attend."

"...and those miscellaneous moments where you realize the music festival atmosphere is home for you -- standing in the sunlight, surrounded by amazing people you don't know, all rocking out to the same beautiful music. Everyone is on a whole different plane of existence, separate from the 'real world' of everyday life, and I love that."

"The first time I went to Bonnaroo, walking in the venue was so surreal. It was like nothing I've ever done before and I knew I was going to love it."

"My then 4 year old daughter said her first bad word, "shit", after falling over backwards in the mud when her feet got stuck."

"Dancing in the cold mud and rain to some of the songs that I've been listening to for over a decade, singing, and screaming out every single word with my best friend. Thousands of people were singing and screaming the lyrics back at the band along with us."

"The feeling that life is still full of new experiences and new adventures, and that those things are out there at all."

"When I came home, everything changed. The outlook of where I wanted to be in my life had changed. I don't know exactly how to explain it. It really showed me that there are caring and open-minded people in the world. I started talking to more strangers, making more friends, and giving everyone a chance. The small stuff didn't bother me anymore. It's not that I was a bad person before I went, but I was a better person when I came back."

"I talk a lot about "that moment", the one where everything is perfect and right with the world...the moment you hold on to and think about months later when you're in a stupid meeting and need to remember something incredible. Florence + the Machine delivered that moment on Day 1. Their whole set was just so good. Florence Welch is such a commanding presence - all vocal power and flowing gown. I was so excited to hear 'Cosmic Love' and 'Heartlines'. But, the moment came at the end of the set, when they closed with 'Shake it Out' and 'Dog Days are Over'. At the beginning of 'Dog Days', she indicated that it was a tradition and the plinky beginning of the song started. She started to hop up and down. The whole crowd started to hop up and down. It built and built and built until the song seemingly erupted out of the anticipation. That was the moment - being in that crowd clap-clap clapping while singing along like a fool and bopping around like crazy. It felt like being enveloped in joy."

"I realized I was in love with my boyfriend at Avicii's set Ultra 2011. The stage was lit up with pink and purple lights and the crowd was so positive and happy. When I looked at him we knew it was something special."

"Music had changed my life, but festival-going has truly opened my eyes to the world, and I feel happiness right now that I haven't felt since I was a child."

"After my first music festival my life outlook substantially changed and I made some serious changes in my life including a career change after that experience."

"I can recall at the last music festival I attended looking across the Long Island sound with a friend of mine, and realizing that some moments in life can't be captured in any way other than through

experience. I said to my friend, "this is why I don't take too many pictures. Things like this, a camera could never fully capture."

"...the whole experience is like an initiation into another world, one of your own creation, and you can make it anything you want it to be."

"I was pregnant with my daughter in 1992 at the last Music Alley on my due date (Music Alley was also the place I attended my first fest), my mother was there and my dad was working security. I took my daughter to Nelson Ledges for her 13th birthday. This was her first festival. She loved it. This past year we spent her 21st birthday at the Ledges. It was a full circle in so many ways. Magical."

"I know every year I have that good weekend to look forward to, so everything else will be ok."

"Yes every time... I now feel the 9-to-5 live-to-work so you can afford to die comfortably is BULL. Enjoy life, every second of it."

"I have learned so much about being accepting of others, and of myself as well. At music festivals I never feel the need to be self-conscious or embarrassed. I dance my butt off though I know people are watching. I wear whatever I want no matter how silly it might be. And I talk to whomever I want. It's the most opening experience and has made me into a happier, kinder person."

Music Festival Experience Survey infographic

MFUX

INTRODUCTION

In October 2013, as part of a masters thesis project, I conducted a design research survey to explore audience experiences at music festivals. The survey received hundreds of enthusiastic responses from across the United States and abroad.

The survey was intended as a way to learn about music festival fan behaviors and how they feel about their experiences.

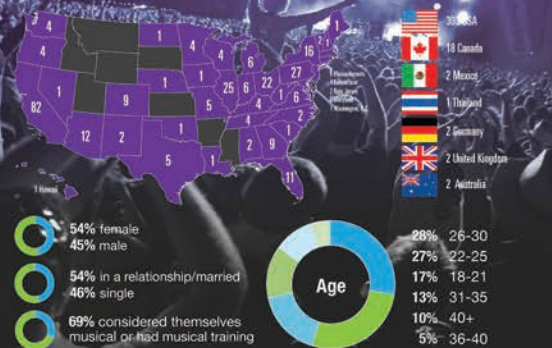
By the end, 330 people from 40 states and seven different countries had shared their thoughts and experiences. Some of the stories that couldn't fit on an infographic were incredible.

Here's some of what I learned.

Stella Zubeck
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music festival user experience

SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS



THE NUMBERS

98% planned to attend more music festivals in the future

96% had experienced 'afterglow' from a music festival or felt more positive or optimistic in general after a festival

84% had experienced a post-festival 'comedown' or reluctance to return to the real world after a music festival

84% wanted other people to know they attend music festivals and feel pride in attending them

76% mentioned a long-term positive change in their outlook after attending a music festival

75% did not plan to stop attending music festivals at any point in the future

96% like to meet new people at festivals

94% seek out new experiences at festivals

94% want to hear music they've never heard before

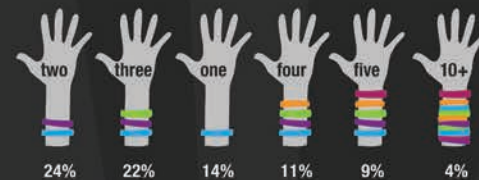
83% would like to hear unusual or new genres of music at festivals

MUSIC FESTIVAL FAN HABITS

What's the farthest you've traveled for a music festival?



How many music festivals have you attended in the last year?



I usually attend music festivals...



What (other than music) brings people to their first festival?



The most frequently mentioned bands were Radiohead and the Grateful Dead.

Frequently reported shifts in self-perception after a music festival

I know myself better after a music festival
 I am a happier / better / kinder person after a festival
 I am more energized / confident / less fearful / less worried
 I appreciate the little things in life more
 I am inspired to listen to / play more music

Frequently reported shifts in perceptions of other people after a festival

I am more open / more social / more friendly after a music festival
 I have more faith in humanity / other people
 I am more bonded with my partner / family / friends
 I take the positivity I feel and try to apply it in my daily life

Final thesis presentation poster

research process

Literature Review Topics

positive psychology, self-actualization
flow states, peak experience
the neuroscience of happiness
music psychology
travel, tourism, quality of life research
festival and special event management
music festival news, reviews, blogs, social media

The Music Festival Experience Survey
330 respondents from 40 states, 7 countries

Music Festival Expert Interviews
5 interviews, 60 minutes each

Music Festival Experience Models

The music festival as a union of three experiential elements: the musical, the social and the experiential
The daily life state vs. the music festival state: routines vs. separation and re-alignment

Three levels of interpersonal interaction and learning: individual, social and larger community

The music festival activity cycle: collect, anticipate, experience, reflect

Music festivals as a continuum of experiences over many years

initial concepts

Support three circles of information and media sharing and reflection: personal, social group, and the festival community

Unite multiple music festival experiences with one service
Support basic festival needs and activities for festivalgoers with a community that encourages participation

testing six design concept scenarios

I speed-dated six scenarios illustrating design concepts, each based on a music festival activity phase

46 respondents surveyed

Act as a music festival expert [73% approved]



Facilitate memory [78% approved]



Music festival memory feed [82% approved]



Music festival resume [68% approved]



Easily saving a personal experience [63% approved]



Easily saving a group experience [51% approved]



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festival of design
spring 2014

NOT FADE AWAY

enriching music festival audience experience

introduction

The modern music festival is a site of interaction between up to hundreds of thousands of people, artists, vendors, musicians and technologies. Audiences travel thousands of miles and invest huge amounts of time, energy and money to attend them.

My goal in this project was to develop a nuanced understanding of audience experience and then design a solution that enhances meaningful, positive and engaging experiences for music festival audiences and communities - especially during the time before and after events.

problem statement & research findings

Despite the numbers and dedication of music festival fans, many of their behaviors, interests and activities go unsupported.

For instance:

- festivalgoers have great stories to share - and want to share them
- festivalgoers enjoy reading other people's stories from music festivals and seeing how other people experienced events they attended
- festivalgoers actively seek and collect media (artifacts) from the events they attend
- music festival experiences often help people define and understand themselves as individuals, and can have lasting positive impacts on self-perception and life outlook

solution: a place to share, reflect & connect

support the full spectrum of music festival experience; present, past and future

the music festival activity cycle model



neverfade activity model: connecting past and present



connect people with themselves, their social group and the festival community

the music festival experience model: three levels of interaction and learning



the neverfade interaction model: support for three levels of information sharing



three festivalgoer personas



what is neverfade?

Neverfade is a web and cloud-based digital service and music festival history archive that provides a place for the huge community of music festival fans to tell their stories, keep great memories alive and celebrate their adventures and experiences through audience-sourced multimedia, story and experience sharing.

Neverfade supports music festival fans and enriches their experience by actively encouraging them to reflect on their own personal festival history and maintain connections with peer groups while celebrating the scale and unique energy of each event.

how is neverfade different?

Unlike social media, message boards, blogs or other kinds of media galleries, neverfade creates and maintains a sense of history and community around the shared experience of each event and a continuity between festival experiences for members.

who is neverfade for?

Neverfade supports both new and long-term music festivalgoers of all ages, and the festivalgoing community as a whole.

how does it benefit fans?

- adds new dimension and perspective to individual experiences
- connects fans with like-minded people who have shared the same or similar experiences
- promotes interest in learning about each music festival's unique culture and community
- gives fans a place to share their stories and media (photos, videos, anything they wish) in a safe place
- encourages positive experiences through sense of inclusion in a community that spans geographic boundaries

neverfade



event view with menu, stories



story view



automatically add media



customizable filters

features

- touchable, zoomable display
- public and member-only access levels for privacy and control
- story and comment view
- filters for relevant content (new, time, nearby, artist, type, etc.)
- archive for past and current media
- data automatically collected from devices, pulled from cloud storage
- easy sharing to other social networks
- quick scan slideshow

design principles

Memory: promote development of self-identity by supporting emotional memory recall
Privacy: a safe place to share
Easy: access and storage, no loss of positive past states
Inclusion: encourage feeling of contribution to larger community, pride in participation
Support: discovery, serendipity, fun

testing

Current
Feedback from informal testing on iPad prototypes has been positive

Planned
Get additional user feedback on three use scenarios

next steps

Thesis Project
Further refine and test prototype
Videosketch
Develop Thesis book

neverfade
Streaming music service integration
Build user profiles and internal messaging service
Explore event branding potential