



CATOLICA
ESCOLA DAS ARTES

PORTO

MARKET SEGMENTATION AND STRATEGIC COLLABORATION IN THE EVENT
INDUSTRY

MASTER'S DEGREE IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES MANAGEMENT

Mateo Cevallos Larriva

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Under the supervision of
Associate Professor Dr. Božidar Vlačić

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Resumo

Hoje em dia, os festivais de música tornaram-se espaços essenciais na economia criativa, não só como expressões artísticas, mas também como ferramentas de promoção cultural, revitalização do turismo e fortalecimento da identidade local. Esses eventos refletem como a cultura, o marketing e a economia se entrelaçam para gerar experiências significativas que impactam tanto as comunidades quanto as indústrias culturais em cada território.

Esta dissertação analisa como a segmentação de mercado e as colaborações estratégicas funcionam como pilares fundamentais na economia cultural contemporânea, usando os festivais equatorianos Roto Fest (Cuenca) e Upano Fest (Macas) como estudos de caso. Embora ambos os eventos sirvam como base empírica, o objetivo principal é aprofundar a compreensão de como os organizadores de festivais culturais desenvolvem estratégias de marketing que lhes permitem conectar artistas, marcas e públicos diversos por meio de experiências imersivas e memoráveis.

Num contexto marcado pela digitalização, concorrência regional e transformação dos hábitos de consumo cultural, a segmentação do público com base em variáveis demográficas, psicográficas e comportamentais é um fator crítico para o posicionamento e diferenciação dos eventos. Complementarmente, as colaborações estratégicas entre festivais, marcas e entidades culturais atuam como mecanismos essenciais para a sustentabilidade, cocriação de valor e consolidação da identidade da marca.

O estudo adota uma metodologia qualitativa, baseada em análise documental, análise de conteúdo e entrevistas, com o objetivo de identificar padrões, diferenças e melhores práticas transferíveis dentro da indústria dos eventos. Os resultados oferecem um quadro de referência aplicável à indústria de eventos culturais, destacando a importância da adaptabilidade, da colaboração interinstitucional e da gestão estratégica do público para garantir a relevância e a sustentabilidade dos festivais em ambientes cada vez mais globalizados e digitalizados.

Palavras-chave: *Indústria de eventos, Segmentação de mercado, Colaborações estratégicas, Marketing cultural, Festivais de música.*

Abstract

Today, music festivals have become essential spaces within the creative economy, not only as artistic expressions, but also as tools for cultural promotion, tourism revitalization, and strengthening local identity. These events reflect how culture, marketing, and economics intertwine to generate meaningful experiences that impact both communities and cultural industries in each territory.

This dissertation analyzes how market segmentation and strategic collaborations function as fundamental pillars within the contemporary cultural economy, using the Ecuadorian festivals Roto Fest (Cuenca) and Upano Fest (Macas) as case studies. Although both events serve as an empirical basis, the main objective is to deepen the understanding of how cultural festival organizers develop marketing strategies that allow them to connect artists, brands, and diverse audiences through immersive and memorable experiences.

In a context marked by digitalization, regional competition, and the transformation of cultural consumption habits, audience segmentation based on demographic, psychographic, and behavioral variables is a critical factor for the positioning and differentiation of events. Complementarily, strategic collaborations between festivals, brands, and cultural entities act as essential mechanisms for sustainability, co-creation of value, and consolidation of brand identity.

The study adopts a qualitative methodology, based on documentary analysis, content analysis, and interviews, with the aim of identifying patterns, differences, and transferable best practices within the event industry. The results offer a frame of reference applicable to the cultural events industry, highlighting the importance of adaptability, inter-institutional collaboration, and strategic audience management to ensure the relevance and sustainability of festivals in increasingly globalized and digitized environments.

Keywords: *Events industry, Market segmentation, Strategic collaborations, Cultural marketing, Music festivals.*

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1 Introduction

In today's cultural economy, music festivals have established themselves as powerful marketing platforms that connect artists, brands, and diverse audiences through immersive and memorable experiences. "An event could be defined as a planned and produced phenomenon with the purpose of creating unique and meaningful experiences for a group of people in situations outside of everyday life, related to multiple business objectives, mainly linked to the organization's marketing area." (Ubieta, 2023, p. 10)

These events serve as catalysts for cultural promotion, tourism growth by acting as economic drivers, and the strengthening of local identity, creating new spaces of belonging within a community. "The event can also be characterized as a language of communication, a marketing activity, public relations, or even an institutional marketing strategy for brand enhancement and idea implementation." (Silva, 2009, p. 12)

Audience segmentation and strategic collaboration in cultural events are essential to achieving competitive differentiation between them. For example, in an empirical study of segmentation in cultural festivals in South Africa the segmentation variables were divided into: *Geography*, which helps to identify where the audience comes from; *Demographics*, which is basically gender and age; psychographics, which is divided into personality and lifestyle; social class; behavioral segmentation, which divides society according to actions, such as user loyalty and attitudes toward offers; socio-economic factors and purpose of travel, which motivates the user to attend the event (Pissoort & Saayman, 2007). This helps maintain a long-term identity in an increasingly globalized and digitized market.

In this context, festivals in different geographical locations offer contrasting yet comparable cases that are useful for the development of this project. Roto Fest and Upano Fest demonstrate how event organizers adapt their marketing strategies to distinct cultural, economic, and technological environments. Roto Fest, created in 2006 in Cuenca, Ecuador, is positioned as a multidisciplinary cultural festival that integrates electronic music and rock, with a performing art to attract diverse audiences and foster creative exchange across different artistic fields. In contrast, Upano Fest, established in 2006 in Macas, Ecuador, primarily focuses on independent musical performances, complemented by experiences such as art galleries, talks and music

workshops always based in sustainability initiatives, attracting attendees from both local and international areas.

Both festivals have built strong brand identities; however, their sustained success largely depends on strategic partnerships with sponsors, media outlets, and cultural institutions, along with a deep analysis of their audiences. In the current marketing landscape, where influencer recommendations can have more persuasive power than traditional advertising, well-designed collaborations allow festivals not only to expand their reach but also to reinforce brand authenticity and co-create value with their stakeholders.

Despite the recognized importance of these strategies, there is a scarcity of comparative research that examines how different cultural events implement market segmentation and strategic collaboration in diverse contexts. This study proposes to fill this gap by posing the following central research question: *How do event organizers implement and embrace market segmentation and strategic collaboration to enhance event success?*

Answering this question involves identifying the underlying marketing logics and the mechanisms by which segmentation and collaboration drive audience engagement, sponsor alignment, and brand positioning. Through a comparative qualitative approach, this research focuses on analyzing patterns, differences, and effective strategies.

The outcome of this work is the development of a taxonomy of marketing practices that integrates the findings of both cases in a unified framework applicable to the event industry. This taxonomy will be presented as a set of propositions illustrating how segmentation variables (demographic, psychographic, and behavioral) interact with forms of strategic collaboration (sponsorship structures, influencer alliances, and co-branded experiences). The goal is to demonstrate how these alliances come together to enhance event performance in different sociocultural contexts. This contribution seeks to expand the academic literature on cultural event marketing and, in addition, to offer practical recommendations for professionals looking to adapt their strategies within the Ecuadorian cultural festivals.

The dissertation structure is as follows: Chapter 1 examines the literature intersecting strategic collaboration and marketing strategies segmentation in the musical festival events; Chapter 2 provides detail account of Research Methodology and Analytical Approach; and Chapter 3 Case portrays study analysis. The final section synthesizes the findings into the proposed taxonomy, highlighting the implications for both academic research and professional practice.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Evolution of the Events Industry and Its Strategic Role

In recent decades, cultural events have moved beyond being perceived solely as entertainment spaces to become strategic marketing platforms and drivers of economic and cultural development. Art festivals represent a meeting point where audiences, brands, and territories converge, creating stages that serve for the creation of memorable experiences and the generation of symbolic and economic value.

This shift is largely explained by the transition toward what (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) called the Experience Economy, a paradigm that positions experiences as the main source of competitive differentiation. From this perspective, the simple price-quality relationship is no longer enough to capture consumer attention; what truly matters is an organization's ability to design unique, authentic, and emotionally significant interactions that can retain the consumer, which holds great value for a festival. In music festivals, for example, this logic is evident: the artistic programming, set design, ambiance, and complementary activities, such as a gastronomic experience are articulated to transform the event into much more than just a musical performance; it becomes a brand experience. Participation in a festival thus turns into an act of co-creation, where the audience is not a passive recipient, but an active participant constantly engaged in the activity. The literature has shown an evolution from a purely operational focus centered on logistics and management, toward a more strategic framework. Music festivals and events serve as cultural metrics that allow us to evaluate how cities compete, cooperate, and build their symbolic positioning on the global stage. These cultural expressions drive identity creation, economic growth, and political articulation, while revealing the tensions inherent in current urban dynamics, especially those that arise between the local and the global, the authentic and the themed, and the inclusive and the exclusive. (Pisonero, 2025)

Today, data of all kinds can be obtained regarding contributions to tourism, the creative economy, and the positioning of cities and territories, providing a clear before-and-after perspective on the development of festivals. Festivals have come to play a central role in the construction of cultural identity, often functioning as instruments of cultural and tourism policy capable of repositioning a destination on the global map. They are thus becoming tools for territorial marketing and spaces for encounter between the local and the global.

Furthermore, festivals function as a complex ecosystem of cultural marketing where different entities interact: organizers, sponsors, cultural institutions, artists, and the public. Each of these agents contributes to the creation of a space where a dynamic is generated that increases the event's reach and builds social loyalty. The attendee's experience is not just the passive consumption of a concert or product, but consumption also generates multiple forms of participation, such as social media activity, brand interaction, culinary discovery, and sustainable practices, all of which enhance the event's appeal.

Therefore, it is essential to analyze how festivals adapt their market segmentation and strategic collaboration practices in different national contexts. This is precisely the core of this thesis, which, through the cases of Roto Fest and Upano Fest, seeks to identify similarities, differences, and best practices that are transferable to other scenarios of equal or greater scale.

Ultimately, the cultural events industry, including creative industries and entertainment agencies, has established itself as a strategic field where the experience economy, marketing innovation, and the construction of cultural identities converge. Understanding its evolution not only allows us to adequately gauge the current importance of festivals, but also lays the conceptual foundations for this research, which analyzes how market segmentation and strategic collaboration contribute to the success of festivals.

2.2 Experience economy

For generations, it has been important to analyze how organizations no longer compete solely on value for money, but seek to design memorable experiences. Music and art festivals become ideal settings for the co-creation of experiences, where attendees are not just passive recipients, but active agents who participate, share, and redefine the experience. The festival economy serves to boost the economy through festivals. This idea was established as a tool to attract tourism and develop the city's economy through the festival. (Arunchot & Punnoi, 2023)

Experiences in the field of events are mainly wrapped up in senses, emotions, immersion, and above all, the personalization of material or immaterial things. When you have an experience, whether good or bad, you create a very important concept, which is the “memory.”

“A memory is the experience that remains, so to speak, stored and encoded (let's say) “neuronally” and/or in some area of the brain. Later, when the subject “remembers” what happened

or what happened to them, those synaptic traces are somehow reactivated and then the subject, generally through images, mentally re-enacts the situation they experienced.” (Bassols, 2015, p. 12)

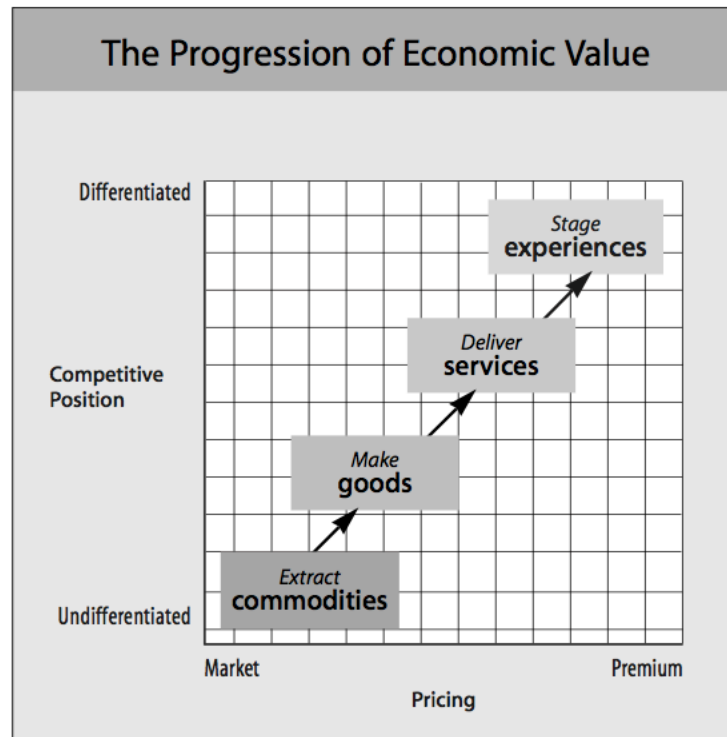


Image 1 - The Experience Economy graph "The Progression of Economic Value" by Pine and Gilmore Source: Pine, J. II – Gilmore, 1998, pp. 98.

As we can see in graph 1, the concept of Experience Economy is at the highest level and represents an evolution in how companies and events connect with their customers. There are two main axes: the vertical axis represents the competitive position of the product, ranging from undifferentiated to differentiated. This means that the higher it is, the more valuable the offer will be to the consumer. The horizontal axis represents price, ranging from market price, i.e., the lowest price on the market, to premium, which is the best there is.

Within this graph, there are four levels: The first is extracting the raw material, which is mainly the basis of the experience. Price is fundamental at this level, as this is what positions it in the market. Then comes the manufacturing of goods, which transforms the product and adds value that will later be rated by design, value, and quality. The third element is offering services, meaning

that the consumer chooses to have a product depending on customer service, which becomes a basic experience. At the end of this graph is the staging of experiences. This is where the consumer ends up paying for a high-value or premium product because the value is no longer found only in the product but in the experience created through all the previous steps.

This table is illustrated below using music festivals as an example:

- **Commodities:** At the most basic level, companies only sell products. For example, the recording of a song. The object is a physical or digital object.
- **Goods:** One step further, products become goods. For example, a music album. Now you have several songs on a disc, with a design and packaging, and the value increases.
- **Services:** Goods evolve into services. A concert allows the customer to listen to the artist live, at a specific time and place; it is an experience. But it is not complete.
- **Experiences:** This is the key point and the highest level of all. This is where a music festival comes in. The value is not only in the artists' music. It is the atmosphere, the community, the food, the artistic activities, the stages, and the feeling of belonging to a unique event. The customer does not buy a simple service, they buy a memorable and personal experience that generates emotions and memories.

Thus, festivals that design experiences (sensory, cultural, emotional) are the ones that manage to position themselves strategically and justify a higher economic value.

2.3 Brand Territory

Music festivals have been recognized as brand territories. These concepts hold that a festival is not just a temporary event, but a physical and symbolic space that encapsulates a set of values and associations that can be appropriated by external brands. From a territorial marketing perspective, festivals function as brand places where cultural and brand identity is built and experienced.

Festivals belong both to the physical space of the territory and to the symbolic space of ideas, symbols, and shared identity. They function as platforms where brands, audiences, and cultural elements come together to build collective meanings and project an emotional image of the host location.

This view is built on solid arguments based on key elements such as visual aesthetics, the type of music or any art, the values it represents (sustainability, community, and ideology), the

location, and the target audience. It is not just about the music, but also the atmosphere, the narrative, and the connection that the event creates with its attendees. The following table shows examples of festivals that have successfully defined themselves throughout time and established their brand territory.

Festival	Brand Territory	Key Elements
Coachella (Indio, California)	Influencer culture and glamour	Boho-chic aesthetics, art installations, exclusivity, massive social media presence, fashion. It has positioned itself as an event where personal branding and fashion are as important as the music.
Glastonbury Festival (Somerset, United Kingdom)	Authenticity, community, and activism	Long history and reputation, counterculture spirit, environmental and social activism, sense of a “temporary village,” focus on the experience and diversity of musical genres.
Tomorrowland (Boom, Belgium)	Fantasy and escapism from reality	Fairytale theme, elaborate scenery, creative stage names, pyrotechnics and visual effects, an immersive experience that transports attendees to a magical world.
Lollapalooza (Chicago, EE. UU.)	Gender diversity and urban modernity	Strong urban identity, alignment with pop and youth culture, mix of musical genres (rock, pop, electronic, hip-hop), sponsorship of lifestyle and technology brands.
Upano Fest (Macas, Ecuador)	Tradition, generational diversity, and community	A festival with 18 years of history, located in a Amazon of Ecuador. It attracts a family audience with a lineup that combines renowned international names and local artists. Its territory is based on Independent music, tradition and community connection.

Roto Fest (Cuenca, Ecuador)	Platform for Rock emerging talent and Electronic music	Focused on supporting national and international EDM artists and promoting the Ecuadorian Rock scene. Its brand territory focuses on being a cultural catalyst that gives visibility and connects youth with electronic music.
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Table 1. Brand Territory comparison

2.4 Audience segmentation

Audience segmentation is an essential strategy in the planning and execution of cultural and musical events, such as festivals, as it makes it possible to tailor the offer to the needs and expectations of different demographic groups. Segmenting the market consists of dividing consumers into groups with similar characteristics and behaviors, which makes it easier to design more effective and personalized marketing campaigns. Music festivals use this technique to identify audiences according to variables such as age, gender, geographical location and even specific cultural interests.

Worldwide, festivals have shown that correct segmentation can guarantee a greater return on investment and a more satisfying experience for attendees. For example, international events such as Coachella in the US or Glastonbury in the UK segment their audiences based on factors such as socio-economic status and musical preferences, offering everything from VIP tickets to cheaper general admission tickets - a strategy that not only guarantees high attendance, but also optimizes revenue.

First, it's very important to pay attention to the age factor. The festivals we're studying are aimed at young audiences because the artists who make up their posters are famous artists of the moment, well known among young people. Segmentation is very crucial, this is where the differences will be important in the different musical genres, Pop, Rock & Roll, Jazz, Blues, Indie and much more. In the last decade, the indie genre has developed a lot, which is an alternative or independent musical genre born in the 1980s in the United Kingdom and the United States to which artists who don't belong to any musical style belong, with a purely artistic and non-commercial vocation.

2.5 Strategic Collaboration

Conceptual definition and application

From a marketing perspective, strategic collaboration in the events industry, specifically music festivals, refers to how these events can collaborate with other entities to create greater brand visibility and enrich the festival experience, both in terms of design and marketing, as well as economically and in terms of resources, in pursuit of a common goal.

Successful alliances are based on mutual trust, commitment, and long-term value creation. Applied to the context of festivals, this means that effective collaborations are those in which both parties, the event and its partner, perceive tangible and intangible benefits. For example, sponsors gain brand visibility and an emotional association with the festival experience, while organizers receive financial support, logistical resources, or greater promotional exposure.

In order to carry out the mission and various objectives of a festival, it is essential to establish formal and informal collaborations with other national and international festivals, as well as with theaters, auditoriums, and professional schools that are active throughout the year. (Bonet & Schargorodsky, 2011) Other key factors to consider are local artists and professionals in the world of entertainment and music, as well as companies in the sector (artistic agents, record labels, logistics companies, among others). Finally, Relationships with policy makers who have influence in the cultural sphere, the media, and art critics. Working with stakeholders is an integral part of a festival director's job.

In cultural events such as music festivals, collaboration takes many forms. Corporate sponsorships provide financial support and brand association; institutional partnerships, often with local governments, universities, or ministries of culture, reinforce credibility and facilitate access to infrastructure or funding. Collaborations with the media amplify the festival's reach and legitimacy, while partnerships with local influencers and creators contribute to authenticity and digital engagement. These relationships form an interconnected network that sustains the festival both economically and symbolically.

Beyond sponsorship, collaboration also plays a creative and social role. Many festivals co-design experiences with their partners, such as sustainable activations with environmental organizations or art installations with local collectives. This practice reflects the concept of co-creation of value, in which participants contribute not only resources but also ideas and creative

content. Co-created initiatives strengthen community ties and allow festivals to embody values such as sustainability, inclusion, and cultural innovation. Strategic collaboration is also directly related to market segmentation. Each partnership responds to a specific audience profile or segment. For example, a collaboration with a technology brand may target a young, urban audience, while a partnership with local tourism entities may attract families or visitors interested in cultural experiences. Collaboration therefore functions both as a marketing strategy and a segmentation tool, helping festivals tailor their message to different audience groups.

In Ecuador, where the creative economy is still consolidating, these types of collaborations are essential for the sustainability of festivals. Limited access to private investment and institutional funding forces organizers to develop innovative partnerships that combine cultural, social, and commercial objectives. Ultimately, strategic collaboration represents the meeting point between marketing strategy, cultural identity, and community participation. It transforms festivals into collaborative ecosystems that generate shared value among all participants.

2.6 Promotion Strategies at Music Festivals

2.6.1 Promotion in the Event Marketing Mix

Promotion, one of the “four Ps” of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion), consists of the set of activities that an organization carries out to communicate the value of its offering to a target audience and persuade them to purchase it. In the context of events, promotion is a fundamental pillar that transcends simple advertising; it is the art of creating desire and expectation in the attendee long before the event begins. Its main objective is to generate brand awareness and interest in the event, much more than just a simple event poster.

If we compare cultural industries with traditional industries, we see that traditional industries offer consumer products that can focus on the tangible characteristics of the product (for example, the durability or resistance of an electrical appliance). However, if we analyze a cultural industry, such as the promotion of a music festival, we see that it is based on the sale of an intangible experience. The value lies in the atmosphere, community, safety, excitement, and memories that the event promises. Traditional industries tend to use more direct and functional communication, while cultural industries rely on narrative, emotional connection, and the construction of a lifestyle that the public desires.

A key aspect is that promotion directly reflects market segmentation decisions. The selection of media and messages is not random but rather responds to the profile of the audience that each festival seeks to attract. For example, communication aimed at urban youth tends to prioritize social media and influencers, while a festival with a more family-oriented audience may use traditional media such as radio or television. Thus, promotion becomes a mirror of the segmentation strategy and, at the same time, a mechanism for consolidating it. Therefore, promotion is equal to strategic communication plus the reflection of segmentation together with a space for collaboration.

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is essential at festivals, as advertising campaigns must maintain the same message across all media.

2.6.2 Promotion Tools at Festivals

The promotion of a music festival uses a set of tools and channels that are tailored to the audience and objectives of each event. These tools can be classified into two broad categories: digital media and traditional media, which currently often operate in convergence but above all create a more comprehensive and effective communication strategy.

Digital media: These channels are characterized by their interactivity, precise segmentation capabilities, and speed. Social media (such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok) have become a central promotional tool over the last decade and are the main vehicle for community building. They allow interaction with potential attendees and can generate conversations, create communities, and disseminate content in real time. In addition, festivals use official websites and e-newsletters as a hub of operations, providing detailed information about ticket sales, artists, and some of today's immersive brand experiences. The advantages of using digital media are the ability to measure audience interaction and loyalty through engagement metrics. Mobile apps offer personalized notifications, venue maps, and artist schedules, as well as the ability to display a digital ticket. Email, a fundamental basis of marketing, is used for loyalty building and sending exclusive information to subscribers. This is a long-term aid as it helps to maintain a database of attendees and subscribers. This allows campaigns to be adjusted based on user behavior, optimizing resources and improving results. Finally, collaboration with influencers and content creators has become a crucial strategy for reaching niche audiences in an authentic and credible way, as the information comes from a third party, not directly from the seller.



Image 2 - Roto Fest Social Media (Design, 2025)

Traditional media: Despite the digital boom, these media remain relevant, especially for broader and more diverse audiences in demographic terms, as they depend on certain factors, such as geographical, political, and social factors, not all of which are accessible via a smart device. Radio remains essential for advertising ticket sales, broadcasting jingles, and interviewing artists; it is an optimal medium for venues in the area where the festival is held. Television creates high-quality visual ads that generate great impact and reach. Magazines and urban signage complement the strategy by establishing a physical presence in people's daily lives, reinforcing brand recall. Outdoor advertising on billboards or urban signage helps reinforce the event's presence in public spaces. These media convey a message of solidity and formality that complements the immediacy of digital media.



Image 3 - Roto Fest Tradicional Promotion (RotoFest, Tradicional Promotion, 2020)

The most effective strategy is not to choose one medium over another, but to integrate them. Modern festivals use social media to promote a television advertisement, or a QR code on an urban billboard to redirect to an interactive website. This convergence creates a promotional experience and adapts to the media consumption habits of its different audience segments, allowing attendees to interact with the festival brand at multiple touchpoints, consistently strengthening the narrative.

2.6.3 Generation FOMO

The term FOMO comes from “Fear of Missing Out,” which is basically the fear or feeling of anxiety about missing something. FOMO, Fear of Missing Out, is what social media users call the shared feeling of not being able to stop checking social media in case they miss something. “Derived from screen addiction, it causes anxiety, social isolation, and depression, as well as other problems such as lack of concentration, sedentary lifestyles, and insomnia caused by damage to the brain's gray matter.” (Ocenda, 2024, p. 123)

Music festivals, like events in general, often use this strategy, such as selling out tickets within a specific period or involving influencers or big artists to attend the festival so that they can share their experience on social media and connect with people. The idea of selling a festival is to sell an experience, something to tell people about.

User-generated content is often essential for promoting the festival, as it provides invaluable help in spreading multimedia content. Festivals create new hashtags, challenges, or mini-events and promote them before the festival begins.

2.6.4 Experiential Marketing

The philosophy behind experiential marketing, therefore, is to go beyond the product, providing customers with certain experiences that allow them to remember the brand or product positively and associate it with that experience. In this way, the customer is placed at the center of the strategy, becoming involved with the brand and much more satisfied with it, causing the consumer to choose the brand because of the experiences associated with it.

In other words, experiential marketing is a strategy that seeks to create a lasting emotional connection between its audience and the brand by creating memorable experiences. Experiential marketing can be applied in various sectors, but it has found particularly fertile ground in music festivals. These events are, by nature, a multisensory experience. The music, lighting, atmosphere, food, and social interaction create an ideal setting for brands to integrate organically and meaningfully into the audience's experience.

An example of this strategy was evident at the Mad Cool Festival, where the Levi's brand did not limit itself to a normal clothing stand but set up a station offering personalized clothing, personalized patches, embroidery, and painting to create a different experience and, above all, an “Instagrammable” place. They created a space designed with the aesthetics of an art workshop, with clothes hanging up and the presence of influencers, and they created a unique interaction with the general public that created a unique social atmosphere.

3 Methodology

This dissertation adopted a qualitative approach, which allows for a deeper understanding of how cultural, economic, and social factors influence the implementation of marketing elements, as well as segmentation and strategic collaboration strategies in the context of Ecuadorian music festivals.

The study focused on two cases, Roto Fest and Upano Fest, both recognized as important cultural events within the Ecuadorian creative industry. Data collection was based on a triangulation between interviews and a detailed review of secondary sources. To obtain the

necessary information, a review was conducted of the festivals' websites and social media accounts, as well as press articles, published interviews, and institutional reports related to their organization and promotion. This review made it possible to classify the strategies observed into different categories such as branding, promotion, segmentation, and collaborations, thus ensuring comprehensive coverage of the topics analyzed.

A further analysis was also carried out of the content published by both festivals, covering promotional campaigns, visual identity elements, audience engagement initiatives, and collaborations with sponsors. This process made it possible to identify recurring patterns, different approaches, and the evolution of the marketing strategies applied by each festival over time.

The main objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the market segmentation and strategic collaboration strategies implemented at Ecuadorian music festivals. Rather than focusing exclusively on quantitative data, this approach allows us to explore the “how” and “why” of marketing decisions, considering the cultural, social, and economic contexts of each event.

The comparison between Roto Fest and Upano Fest facilitates the identification of common patterns and differentiated practices, highlighting how each festival adapts its marketing and collaboration strategies to its local environment. This methodological choice offers greater depth and interpretive flexibility, allowing for a nuanced analysis of the dynamics that influence the success and positioning of music festivals in Ecuador.

The research is based on documentary analysis. To obtain the necessary information, I thoroughly reviewed the festivals' websites and social media pages, as well as press articles and reports. This review allowed me to classify the strategies into categories such as branding, promotion, segmentation, and collaborations, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the topics.

This research also adopts the methodology proposed by Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013), which allows theory to be constructed from empirical data, which in this case were interviews conducted with festival organizers, through an inductive and systematic process.

"The Gioia Methodology is a qualitative approach to developing grounded theory that meets the standards of sustained rigor and reliability required by high-level journals. In particular, this methodology proceeds through three essential pillars: (a) developing a data structure; (b) constructing a model based on that structure; and (c) presenting the findings through a compelling narrative." (Magnani & Gioia, 2023, p. 1)

4 Analysis of the case studies

During the preparation of this dissertation, interviews were conducted with the organizers of large and medium-sized festivals, providing us with firsthand information. The first case study is the Rotofest festival, organized by Jaime Ulloa, an Ecuadorian festival that was originally held in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, but later expanded and is now held in two locations: Cuenca and the Yunguilla Valley. Following this, Daniel Noguera, organizer of the Upano Fest festival, which takes place in the city of Macas, Ecuador, was interviewed.

4.1 Roto Fest

4.1.1 Origin and evolution of Roto fest

The festival was created in 2006 by a group of friends studying tourism and design who wanted to offer a different entertainment alternative with a focus on tourism. The first attempt was organized at the Roto bar, located in Puente Roto, and then expanded into a festival format. The image and publicity of the festival have always been managed by one of the founders, graphic designer Jaime Ulloa, to maintain consistency and identity. The lack of initial experience and logistical problems marked the first editions, but perseverance helped to consolidate the event over time. The transition to Yunguilla in 2007 was a turning point, achieving unexpected success thanks to the atmosphere, word of mouth, and the use of forums and social networks (High Five). Eventually, due to access control and security issues, the festival migrated back to Cuenca and reoriented itself towards a more cultural and community-based approach.



Image 4 - Roto fest Logo (RotoFest, Facebook, 2022)

4.1.2 Musical identity, segmentation, and curation

Rotofest has varied between rock and electronic music depending on the evolution of the local scene and trends. The musical selection has prioritized the presence of the best national electronic artists, adding alternative rock and indie bands when the audience has demanded it.

The festival has evolved to focus not only on “trendy” artists, but also on building a solid brand independent of the lineup. Strict curation and a clear identity have allowed it to remain relevant and differentiate itself from other festivals, avoiding commercial genres such as reggaeton.

In terms of audience segmentation, it can be said that this has been done organically, observing the behavior and evolution of subcultures (ravers, hipsters, indie) and adapting the event to offer experiences to different audiences. The audience has mainly remained in the 17-35 age range, and social media and direct contact with attendees have been used to understand the reach and profile of the audience, with Machala and Guayaquil as cities of great influence in addition to Cuenca.



Image 5 - Roto Fest Line up (Cuenca, 2025)

4.1.3 Sponsorship, management, and institutional challenges

Financial sustainability has depended mainly on public funds and partnerships with brands, although cultural management in Ecuador is complex and dependent on state support. There have been ethical challenges in choosing sponsors, avoiding partnerships with companies that do not align with the festival's philosophy, such as mining companies.

Public tourism institutions have had budget constraints in these artistic areas and have provided little support, as have provincial tourism associations, limiting their participation to minimal publicity, which is seen as a missed opportunity to promote cultural tourism. In the private sector, there is a difference between what can and cannot be done, such as the use of alcohol in public spaces. Some festivals use alcoholic beverage brands to sponsor the festival, and if this is done in a private space, these brands can be used, but not in public spaces. Some changes in municipal regulations and the loss of key spaces, such as Parque de la Madre, a well-known space in the city of Cuenca, have hindered the continuity and growth of the fair and festival.



Image 6 - Roto Fest Sponsorships (Bermeo, 2024)

4.1.4 Experiences and value propositions

Since 2015, the Bazar fair has been incorporated, expanding the festival experience to diversify audiences and include gastronomy, art, and entrepreneurship. The rotation of venues between different cities, coupled with restrictive ordinances, has reduced the impact and continuity of the fair, but solutions have been sought in cooperation with the prefecture and other cantons.

The importance of these complementary experiences in building long-term audience loyalty is noteworthy, although changes in venue make consolidation difficult. This comparison with international festivals in Europe and Latin America shows that payment dynamics, use of public spaces, and curation vary according to context, but international learning serves as a reference for innovation in the city of Cuenca.

4.1.5 Challenges and vision for the future

The main challenge is to achieve municipal regulations that ensure stable distribution of funds to long-standing festivals, allowing for the festival's projection and stability each year, since cultural events that receive public funds do not have any kind of stability. Competitive funding models have been positive, but some public support has been reduced, such as the elimination of the Ministry of Culture, and the continuity of festivals, especially those with free admission, is at risk.

Roto Fest seeks to emphasize the importance of maintaining musical and cultural identity, avoiding the easy route of commercial genres to ensure audience numbers. This is used to maintain a specific target audience that remains loyal in the long term. The festival is committed to innovation, diversity of experiences, and inter-institutional and inter-festival collaboration as the way forward.

An interview was then conducted with the main organizer of Upano Fest, a festival in the city of Macas, Ecuador. This helps greatly to understand how a festival works in a different geographical location in the same country with a population of approximately 23,000 inhabitants and how they work to achieve an extensive audience segmentation ranging from 15 to 40 years old.

4.2 Upano Fest

4.2.1 Origin and evolution of Upano Fest

Upano Fest began in the city of Macas, in the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon, as an independent cultural initiative aimed at promoting alternative music and raising environmental awareness. From its earliest editions, the festival became a pioneering event, combining genres such as reggae, ska, punk, and hip hop with social and ecological discourse. Over time, the event has managed to sustain itself for more than 18 years, establishing itself as a benchmark in the region and projecting its reach on a national scale.



Image 7 - Upano Fest Logo (UpanoFest, 2025)

4.2.2 Musical identity and segmentation

The festival's identity is closely linked to youth counterculture, with a target audience traditionally between the ages of 15 and 45. However, in recent years, younger audiences have been added, including teenagers and preteens, motivated by artists with a strong digital presence. This diversification has led to adjustments in communication and segmentation, while maintaining a common denominator of an audience committed to creativity, diversity, and social values.



Image 8 - Upano Fest Line up (UpanoFest, Instagram, 2025)

4.2.3 Sponsorship, management, and institutional challenges

The sustainability of Upano Fest has required strategic alliances with public institutions, cultural organizations, and local businesses. Sponsorship comes mainly from entities required to invest in social responsibility or services associated with tourism, transportation, and connectivity. Despite the absence of large corporations, the festival has been able to capitalize on this support to ensure the logistics and professionalization of each edition. The institutional

challenge lies in ensuring financial continuity and building mechanisms that allow the festival to transcend its founders, consolidating itself as Amazonian cultural heritage.



Image 9 - Upano Fest Sponsorships (UpanoFest, Instagram, 2025)

4.2.4 Experiences and value propositions

Beyond music, the festival has integrated complementary experiences that expand its value proposition: food and craft fairs, educational talks on ecology, music clinics for emerging artists, book exchanges, and reforestation campaigns. These activities reinforce Upano Fest's positioning as a comprehensive community gathering space, where culture is linked to environmental education and social coexistence.

4.2.5 Challenges and vision for the future

Looking ahead, the festival faces challenges related to economic sustainability, adapting to new digital dynamics, and the need to systematically document its cultural and social impact. Reaching its 20th edition is a symbolic milestone, but the real challenge is to ensure that Upano Fest consolidates itself as an Amazonian cultural institution capable of transcending political, economic, and generational circumstances. In this sense, its vision is projected toward the consolidation of a cultural legacy that articulates music, identity, and environmental awareness for future generations.

4.3 Interview assessment using Gioia Method

Based on semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis of two Ecuadorian cultural festivals (Roto Fest and Upano Fest), participants' discourses were coded into three analytical levels:

- (A) first-order concepts
- (B) second-order themes
- (C) aggregate dimensions

This approach seeks to identify the mechanisms through which market segmentation and strategic collaborations contribute to the cultural sustainability of festivals.

Table 2. Table based in Gioia's Methodology

First-order terms	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
"We do not accept mining sponsors, we prefer to remain consistent with our identity."	Ethical consistency in the selection of collaborators	Authenticity and cultural legitimacy
"The festival does not seek mass appeal, we want an audience that understands the artistic proposal."	Focus on specific cultural audiences	Identity segmentation
"Social media is our main tool. We measure everything with digital metrics."	Strategic use of digital platforms	Communication innovation and technological adaptation
"We want the festival to be accessible to everyone, not just the elite."	Renewal of artistic proposal according to trends	Inclusion and community participation
"We combine rock and electronic music to maintain our essence but attract new generations."	Democratization of cultural access	Brand flexibility and sustainability
"The audience has changed; now whole families with children come."	Generational diversification of the audience	Expansion of demographic segmentation
"We collaborate with public institutions and small local businesses."	Creation of hybrid (public-private) partnerships	Sustainability through strategic collaboration
"The festival includes fairs, workshops, and gastronomy to attract different types of audiences."	Experiential diversification of the event	Co-creation of cultural value
"We want to better document what we do and strengthen the memory of the festival."	Professionalization and knowledge management	Institutional consolidation
"Our goal is for the festival to transcend generations and become cultural heritage."	Territorial projection and cultural legacy	Symbolic and territorial sustainability

The construction of the table using Gioia's methodology allowed for the systematic organization of the interviews, transforming the interviewees' discourse into theoretical categories

that explain the mechanisms of management and sustainability in Ecuadorian cultural festivals. The decision was made to structure the information into three levels: first-order concepts, which are fragments of the interviews conducted and are relevant to both festivals. Second-order themes, which are an interpretation of the theme addressed in a more general context, that is, the central themes of each phrase transcribed in the first order. Finally, we have the aggregate dimensions, which are the overall structure of the theme. This table responds to the objective of maintaining a balance between the empirical voice of the interviewees and the analytical interpretation of the researcher. In this way, the coding process became a tool for revealing patterns of meaning that are not obvious at first glance, allowing us to move from descriptions to a more abstract and generalizable understanding of segmentation, collaboration, and cultural legitimacy strategies.

The application of this methodology provided the necessary flexibility to capture the complexity of the phenomenon without imposing pre-existing categories, explaining how the organizers of Roto Fest and Upano Fest integrate their marketing and collaboration strategies to strengthen the sustainability of their events. In short, the construction of the table not only allowed for the rigorous organization of qualitative data but also served as a bridge between empirical evidence and the formulation of the theoretical model.

4.4 Roto Fest: Brand and Value Proposition

Brand

Roto Fest has established itself as one of the most iconic cultural and music festivals in southern Ecuador. Founded in 2006 in the city of Cuenca, this event was the brainchild of a group of young people who wanted to create an alternative space for music and cultural tourism. Over time, the festival has evolved from its early editions at the “Roto” bar to become a platform that combines electronic music, alternative rock, and contemporary art, also integrating the “Bazar” fair as a space for entrepreneurship, gastronomy, and local creativity.

The Roto Fest brand has been characterized by maintaining a consistent and authentic identity, focused on promoting independent culture, urban art, and artistic diversity. Under the direction of its founder and graphic designer Jaime Ulloa, the festival's visual image is distinguished by its alternative aesthetic and its ability to adapt to cultural changes without losing its essence. Beyond music, Roto Fest represents a philosophy: the celebration of freedom, innovation, and collective creativity. This identity has been reinforced by avoiding commercial trends and maintaining a musical curation focused on quality and authenticity. Unlike other events

that incorporate more mainstream genres such as reggaeton, Roto Fest has decided to preserve its cultural character, positioning itself as a festival that values artistic independence and a comprehensive cultural experience.

Value Proposition

Roto Fest's value proposition is based on its ability to offer a multidimensional cultural experience that transcends music. Its proposal integrates art, entrepreneurship, and sustainability, turning the festival into a meeting place for the community, artists, and local brands.

Since the incorporation of the Bazaar Fair in 2015, the festival has expanded its proposal to promote local talent, offering a stage where music, visual art, gastronomy, and design converge. This approach has attracted diverse audiences and strengthened the sense of belonging in the region. Roto Fest also stands out for its ethical commitment it has rejected collaborations with companies that do not align with its values, prioritizing partnerships with public and cultural institutions that share its vision of sustainable development and respect for art. In this sense, its value proposition combines authenticity, diversity, and social responsibility, positioning it as a benchmark for independent cultural management in Ecuador.

4.5 Upano Fest: Brand and Value Proposition

Brand

Upano Fest, founded in 2006 in the city of Macas, in the heart of the Ecuadorian Amazon, has established itself as a festival with a unique identity that blends music, culture, and environmental awareness. Since its inception, its goal has been to promote alternative music and create a space for artistic expression that promotes values such as sustainability and connection with nature. The Upano Fest brand is directly associated with its surroundings: the Upano River, a symbol of life and connection to the Amazon, becomes the visual and conceptual centerpiece of the festival. Its identity reflects the values of the region: respect for nature, cultural diversity, and local pride. With a history of more than eighteen editions, the festival has become a cultural benchmark in the Ecuadorian Amazon, recognized for its social and educational commitment. Visually and communicatively, the brand uses elements of Amazonian fauna and flora, combined with bright colors that represent energy and vitality. This aesthetic consistency reinforces its positioning as an authentic event committed to its territory.

Value Proposition

Upano Fest's value proposition is based on offering a sustainable and inclusive cultural experience, where music is combined with environmental education and community participation. Its strength lies in the integration of multiple dimensions: concerts, food and craft fairs, ecological talks, music clinics, and reforestation activities. This holistic approach makes the festival an agent of social change, promoting ecological awareness and local cultural development. In addition, Upano Fest stands out for its ability to segment and connect with intergenerational audiences, attracting everyone from 15-year-olds to adults over 40, through a musical offering that combines alternative genres with contemporary and influential proposals on social media.

In terms of partnerships, the festival has developed strategic collaborations with public institutions, local businesses, and socially responsible organizations, thus ensuring its sustainability and expansion. Overall, Upano Fest represents a model of a cultural festival committed to its environment, promoting creativity, sustainability, and Amazonian pride as central elements of its identity and value proposition.

5 Conclusions

This research analyzes how market segmentation and strategic collaborations are fundamental pillars in the management of cultural festivals within Ecuador's creative economy, using Roto Fest (Cuenca) and Upano Fest (Macas) as case studies. Using a qualitative approach, it was possible to identify patterns, differences, and transferable lessons on how cultural event organizers adapt their marketing strategies to local contexts with limited resources but high symbolic and social value.

First, the results show that both festivals understand the segmentation of their audience not only from a demographic perspective, but also from a psychographic and cultural one. Roto Fest is mainly aimed at young urbanites interested in electronic music, independent art, and alternative experiences, while Upano Fest maintains a more intergenerational profile, with a diverse audience that combines young people, families, and local audiences linked to values of sustainability and Amazonian belonging. This difference demonstrates that segmentation in cultural festivals should not be understood solely as a marketing tool, but as a way of building identity and community.

Secondly, research shows that strategic partnerships are essential for the sustainability of Ecuadorian festivals. Both Roto Fest and Upano Fest rely heavily on alliances with public

institutions, local media, and companies committed to social responsibility. However, their application varies: Roto Fest prioritizes the ethical and cultural coherence of its alliances, avoiding sponsors that contradict its values; while Upano Fest has been able to capitalize on its territorial context to generate alliances that reinforce its environmental message and social impact. In both cases, collaboration is not only a financial means, but also a symbolic strategy for positioning and cultural legitimacy.

A relevant finding is the growing importance of digitization and multiplatform communication. Social media, influencers, and the creation of audiovisual content have become the main channels for connecting with audiences, evaluating the reach of campaigns, and reinforcing brand image. Respondents agreed that the strategic use of digital platforms not only increases the visibility of the event but also strengthens the emotional connection with the audience and allows for more accurate measurement of the effectiveness of promotional strategies.

The study also confirms that experience continues to be the central focus of perceived value at festivals. Both events have incorporated complementary activities such as food fairs, urban art, workshops, and ecological initiatives that broaden their cultural reach and encourage active audience participation. These practices are in line with the logic of the experience economy, where the audience not only consumes but also co-creates and gives meaning to the event.

Finally, the results allow us to propose an integrative model between segmentation and strategic collaboration. In the Ecuadorian context, where economic resources are limited, the key to success lies not only in the size of the festival, but also in its ability to align brand identity, audience values, and institutional partnerships around a shared cultural purpose. This convergence generates symbolic value, strengthens sustainability, and contributes to the professionalization of the cultural events sector in the country.

In conclusion, Roto Fest and Upano Fest represent two distinct but complementary models of cultural management: the former focused on artistic independence and innovation; the latter on sustainability and territorial strengthening. Both demonstrate that the combination of creativity, brand consistency, intelligent segmentation, and genuine collaboration forms the basis for ensuring the relevance and permanence of cultural festivals in globalized environments. This research, therefore, contributes to the understanding of cultural marketing in Ecuador and offers practical tools for future event managers to strengthen their economic, social, and symbolic impact on the national creative ecosystem.

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7 Appendixes

Appendix A – Interview 1 (Translated from Spanish)

Roto Fest (Jaime Ulloa)

- 1. Could you tell me how you define your festival's target audience? For example, what aspects such as age, interests, lifestyle, or purchasing power do you take into consideration?**

Well, through the years the audience has been changing a bit. At the beginning, the festival had two days, one day for rock and another for electronic music. The rock day had bands such as Mantra, Los Zuchos del Vado, and Eboi from Quito, which was a very interesting band that mixed electronic and rock. Commercially it wasn't profitable, but as an event, it went very well. Later, when I analyzed what had happened, I realized that rock had lost space and electronic music was gaining it. Since then, the festival evolved and became mainly electronic. Our target audience has always been connected to that, people who love good music, both electronic and rock, but not necessarily the commercial kind. Over time, we've built a solid niche: the raver, the person who understands and enjoys electronic music deeply. We focus on those who appreciate quality music, not necessarily the mainstream sounds. They are people usually between their early twenties and forties, who identify with alternative culture, urban life, and artistic expression. However, RotoFest has always sought to be inclusive, we've worked to bring electronic music closer to everyone, not just to an elite. At first, electronic music in Ecuador was seen as something exclusive and elitist, but our idea with RotoFest was to make it accessible for all, inspired by movements like the Love Parade in Berlin, where techno is a people's expression. We wanted to bring that freedom to our context. So, our audience is diverse, open-minded, passionate about music and culture, and interested in alternative and innovative experiences.

- 2. In what ways have you noticed changes in your audience profile in recent years? And how have these changes influenced the way you design your strategies?**

There have been many changes. At first, electronic music was followed by a small, elite group. Later, as the genre became more popular, the audience diversified. Unfortunately, this massification also brought people who weren't necessarily there for the music, some came for other reasons, like the idea that festivals were places for freedom or even drug consumption, which distorted the essence a bit. Meanwhile, that elite audience who used to follow electronic music migrated to the indie rock scene. Around 2015, indie rock started growing strongly in Ecuador, with many new festivals and bands. The same people who used to be at electronic events moved to the hipster indie rock scene. This change made us rethink our strategy. We decided to bring back the "Rock Day" that we had at the very beginning of the festival. While other festivals started adding reggaeton or more commercial music to attract more people, we returned to our roots, rock and electronic. That was key. We reintroduced alternative rock and indie bands like Mateo Kingman, Le Telephone, and others.

By doing this, we refreshed our audience, widened it, and brought back that connection with new generations. Now, RotoFest attracts both electronic music fans and rock lovers, which has strengthened the brand. The change also reaffirmed our principle of not going into commercial genres just to gain more audience, our goal is to offer good music and cultural value.

3. Could you tell me more about the role that digital promotion (such as social media, influencers, or apps) plays compared to traditional promotion (radio, TV, press) in your overall strategy?

Social media today is the main tool we use. It gives us clear metrics, reach, and real interaction. We used to do surveys to measure the audience, but they are limited and intrusive during events. Now, the most effective way to measure and communicate is through digital platforms. I like to have direct contact with people too. I often go myself to sell tickets for the afterparty, talk to people, and get feedback about who they are, where they're from, and what they think. That helps us understand our audience better. We've found, for example, that after Cuenca, our main cities of influence are Machala and Guayaquil.

In terms of media, we used to combine radio and press, but in recent years, especially because of political restrictions and elections, it became complicated to promote publicly funded events through traditional media. The National Electoral Council limits what can be advertised during

election periods. That's why we focused even more on digital. This year, since there are no elections, we plan to go back to radio and combine it with digital strategies. But digital media, influencers, and apps are the main source of impact and communication now they surpass television and radio by far in reach and engagement.

4. How do you approach the challenge of keeping your communication message consistent across all the different channels you use?

We've always been clear that RotoFest's identity and message must stay coherent, it's not just about the music, it's about culture, art, and authenticity. The key is that our communication revolves around the brand more than around individual artists. Our strategy has been to make the brand stronger than the lineup. If the brand is solid, people will trust it regardless of who plays each year. This consistency has kept our message unified across social media, radio, and public communication: RotoFest is a space for quality music, culture, and creativity. When we communicate, we emphasize that we're a cultural festival, not a commercial party. That defines our tone in every channel, professional, artistic, and inclusive. Even when we bring international artists, we don't sell it as celebrity culture but as an artistic experience.

5. When you look at your promotional campaigns, what are the main indicators or signals that tell you whether they have been effective?

The most important indicator for us is the engagement we get on social media: interactions, reach, and audience response. That tells us directly whether the campaign connects with people. We also evaluate attendance, not only the number of people but also where they come from. For instance, we know Machala and Guayaquil are our next biggest sources of public after Cuenca. That data comes from both ticket sales and online engagement. Another key aspect is the feedback we get personally during and after the event. I like to interact with attendees to understand what they think. Sometimes this direct connection gives us insights that numbers don't show. Finally, the response from sponsors and institutions is another signal when they see that our campaigns are effective and that the brand remains strong, they continue supporting us.

6. Could you explain what you usually look for when selecting sponsors or strategic partners for the festival?

In Ecuador, cultural management is complex and depends heavily on public funds. Most of the time, our sponsors are public institutions such as the Ministry of Culture, local governments like the Prefecture or the Municipality of Cuenca, and the Casa de la Cultura. Ideally, we'd like to choose sponsors whose philosophy aligns with ours, but that's not always possible. The reality is that the cultural sector depends on state funding. However, there are cases where we must make ethical decisions. For example, if a mining company that we don't align with offered money, we would refuse, because it doesn't fit our festival's values. So, in general, we work with public entities that share our goal of promoting culture and protecting minority artistic expressions like rock and electronic music, which are not mainstream in Ecuador.

7. Could you share an example of a collaboration with a brand or partner that, in your opinion, created significant added value for both the festival and the audience?

The first collaboration that comes to mind is with Zhumir, which supported us in the early years. That partnership was key because it helped us take the festival to a higher level of production. It gave us credibility and allowed us to institutionalize the event. Later, we also collaborated with Sol y Agua in Yunguilla, which provided the space for several editions of the festival. At the beginning, it worked very well and helped the festival grow massively. However, over time, problems arose because the space wasn't ideal for controlling access, and many people would attend without paying. Even though that collaboration eventually ended, it was essential in the festival's history, it gave us visibility, attracted thousands of people, and positioned RotoFest as a national reference.

8. How would you describe the role of complementary experiences such as gastronomy, sustainability initiatives, art, or technology in shaping the overall value of your festival?

Those elements are crucial. Around 2015 we launched “Feria Bazar,” a fair within the festival that included gastronomy, art, and local products. It followed a global trend where festivals offer not just music but cultural and creative experiences. The fair brought diversification, new types of audiences came for the crafts, food, and artistic displays, and discovered the music too. It created an ecosystem of cultural exchange through products, experiences, and concerts. In 2017 and 2018, the fair reached its best moment, with more than a hundred exhibitors from all over Ecuador. It became a vital part of the festival’s value. Unfortunately, later changes in local regulations made it difficult to organize such fairs in Cuenca. We are now trying to move it to the Santa Isabel canton, where the rules are more flexible, and where it can connect better with rural and local cultural expressions. These complementary experiences enrich the festival and strengthen its long-term connection with people.

9. In your view, how does the audience’s experience during the festival influence their long-term connection or loyalty to the event?

The audience’s experience is everything. From the very beginning, the festival stood out because it offered not just music but a unique atmosphere, connection with nature, art, and freedom. That’s what made people fall in love with it. The first edition in Yunguilla, in 2007, was the turning point. It was the right place and the right moment, and people still remember that experience as something unforgettable. That emotional connection is what has kept the audience loyal. When we later moved the festival to Cuenca and added new experiences like the fair, we managed to maintain that bond. People go to RotoFest not only for the artists but for the overall experience, the vibe, the art, the diversity. That’s what creates loyalty and continuity through the years.

10. Looking ahead, what do you see as the main challenges festivals like yours will face in order to stay relevant in an increasingly competitive and digitalized market?

The main challenge is sustainability. Culturally, it’s very hard to maintain festivals without solid public funding. If the government withdraws support, many festivals simply disappear. Another challenge is the constant change in music trends and audience preferences. We’ve

learned that we must adapt, like when we brought back the Rock Stage and combined it with electronic music, but without losing our identity. Also, maintaining spaces is crucial. The loss of the Parque de la Madre in Cuenca, which was our best venue, hurt us a lot. Finding suitable public spaces is getting harder. Finally, staying relevant digitally is essential. We need to keep innovating in communication, content creation, and experiences. Festivals must keep evolving while preserving their essence offering culture, authenticity, and artistic quality in a digital era.

Appendix B – Interview 2 (Translated from Spanish)

Upano Fest (Daniel Noguera)

- 1. Could you tell me how you define your festival's target audience? For example, what aspects such as age, interests, lifestyle, or purchasing power do you take into consideration?**

The festival is basically about independent and alternative music. We mainly look for emblematic Ecuadorian bands, but we also give space to around five young local bands from Macas every year, those linked to reggae, ska, punk, or hip-hop, part of the urban cultures. Before, I thought our audience ranged between 15 and 45 years old, but now I realize that new generations have arrived. I always try to make the festival generational, to reach new audiences. For example, this year, when we brought the Mexican freestyler Azuki, many kids aged 10, 11, or 12 came with their parents. It was the first time I saw such emotions from such young audiences.

- 2. In what ways have you noticed changes in your audience profile in recent years? And how have these changes influenced the way you design your strategies?**

I've seen a generational change. People who used to attend 18 years ago now have families and different lives. That's why I try to reach younger audiences and adapt the lineup to current musical trends. For instance, bringing artists who are also influencers helps reach new publics. The impact of social media and platforms like TikTok has been key to attracting children and teenagers who follow these artists online.

3. Could you tell me more about the role that digital promotion (such as social media, influencers, or apps) plays compared to traditional promotion (radio, TV, press) in your overall strategy?

I've used everything from the beginning radio, TV, and local channels to promote the event, and those remain important. But with social media and platforms like TikTok, the festival has reached new audiences. TikTok especially helped us expand this year. Before, I thought my audience was on Facebook, people of my generation, but younger ones are on Instagram and TikTok. Now I use TikTok to share videos, run giveaways, and promote the festival with live shows and music. It's easier to engage people, and even possible to monetize.

4. How do you approach the challenge of keeping your communication message consistent across all the different channels you use?

I always try to keep the same message and visual identity that connects with our environmental focus. Whether it's through posters, social media, or radio spots, the communication always emphasizes caring for the Amazon, our rivers, and the idea of sustainability. The visuals are inspired by relevant local issues, like protecting jaguars or the activity of the Sangay volcano. That gives coherence and a clear identity to our message.

5. When you look at your promotional campaigns, what are the main indicators or signals that tell you whether they have been effective?

The metrics on social media help me evaluate campaigns reach, engagement, and the response to posts or videos. When I run ads, I focus on nearby cities like Riobamba, Cuenca, Ambato, and Puyo. The platforms show statistics about how the campaign performs. Also, the growth in attendance and online interactions are clear indicators of effectiveness.

6. Could you explain what you usually look for when selecting sponsors or strategic partners for the festival?

In Macas, there aren't large companies, so it's difficult to find sponsors. However, there are hydroelectric companies that must support cultural and educational projects as part of their social responsibility. I present proposals so they can associate with the festival in exchange for brand exposure. Thanks to this, we've managed to get resources for hotels, transport, and artists. Currently, I receive support from the National Fund for Festivals and from the Institute for the Promotion of the Arts, which helps with artist fees and stage production.

7. Could you share an example of a collaboration with a brand or partner that, in your opinion, created significant added value for both the festival and the audience?

A great collaboration was with an internet company that provided free Wi-Fi access during the whole festival. They also organized online games between band changes, creating an interactive experience for the audience. These kinds of alliances add value, not only helping logistically but also improving the audience's overall experience.

8. How would you describe the role of complementary experiences such as gastronomy, sustainability initiatives, art, or technology in shaping the overall value of your festival?

There are complementary experiences both before and during the festival. Before the event, we organize music clinics, talks, and showcases with local artists to help them grow professionally. During the festival, we include food and beverage fairs and interactive brand activations. We also have environmental campaigns and educational activities related to sustainability and music, like reforestation brigades and reading or recycling events.

9. In your view, how does the audience's experience during the festival influence their long-term connection or loyalty to the event?

The experience creates a deep emotional bond. Many people have grown up with the festival, it's part of their identity. Seeing new generations attend, sometimes with their parents, shows that the connection continues. The message about preserving the Amazon and promoting local culture strengthens loyalty because people feel they are part of a meaningful cause, not just a concert.

10. Looking ahead, what do you see as the main challenges festivals like yours will face in order to stay relevant in an increasingly competitive and digitalized market?

One main challenge is to keep innovating digitally, documenting the festival better, creating audiovisual content, and maintaining an online presence. We're now investing in camera systems and streaming to reach more people. Another challenge is sustainability, both ecological and financial. We want to reach our 20th anniversary, but maintaining the festival is hard without stable funding. My goal is to institutionalize it, maybe through local public policy, so it continues as a cultural legacy for Macas and Ecuador.