

Methodological proposal for analyzing the promotional communication in music festivals

Propuesta metodológica para el análisis de la comunicación promocional en festivales musicales

Proposta metodológica para a análise da comunicação promocional em festivais de música

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ABSTRACT | The article aims to present a methodological design for the study of music festivals that allows the analysis of the online and offline strategies, as well as their previous stage and development. Thus, it aims to overcome the spatio-temporal limitations of previous studies, analyzing the physical and digital space. From a communicational-advertising perspective, the research approaches the Mexican case based on the premise that music festivals establish strategic alliances with sponsoring brands that, beyond the commercial criteria that unite them, jointly create, from different channels, an experience in the attendees, which generates a physical, symbolic, and digital footprint. The objective of the research is then to know how festivals and brands concretize their interactions through the levels in which the festival occurs, considering that the generation of the experience begins prior to the culmination of the event. Likewise, this article presents a synthesis of the main findings of each stage of a research conducted, under this methodological proposal, in Mexican festivals between 2018 and 2020. The paper concludes by highlighting the importance of digital platforms for the festivals' communication strategy, both in the pre-pandemic and pandemic stages, and the centrality of the physical space as the stage for the advertising discourse that expresses the relationship between music festivals and their sponsors.

KEYWORDS: music festivals; digital communication; advertising; methodological proposal; promotional communication.

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RESUMEN | *El artículo busca presentar un diseño metodológico para el estudio de festivales musicales que permita analizar los planos en línea y offline, así como su etapa previa y desarrollo. Así, pretende superar las limitantes espacio-temporales de estudios previos, analizando el espacio físico y el digital. Desde una perspectiva comunicacional-publicitaria, la investigación aborda el caso mexicano partiendo de la premisa de que los festivales musicales establecen alianzas estratégicas con marcas patrocinadoras que, más allá de los criterios comerciales que las unen crean conjuntamente, desde distintos canales, una experiencia en los asistentes que genera una huella física, simbólica y digital. El objetivo de la investigación es entonces conocer cómo los festivales y las marcas concretan sus interacciones a través de los planos en los que se desarrolla el festival, considerando que la generación de la experiencia comienza antes de la culminación del evento. Asimismo, el texto entrega una síntesis de los principales hallazgos de cada etapa de una investigación realizada, bajo esta propuesta metodológica, en festivales mexicanos entre 2018 y 2020. El trabajo concluye destacando la importancia de las plataformas digitales para la estrategia de comunicación de los festivales, tanto en la etapa pre-pandemia como en la de pandemia, y la centralidad del espacio físico como escenario del discurso publicitario que expresa la relación entre los festivales musicales y sus patrocinadores.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *festivales musicales; comunicación digital; publicidad; propuesta metodológica; comunicación promocional.*

RESUMO | *O artigo procura apresentar um desenho metodológico para o estudo dos festivais de música que permita analisar os planos online e offline, bem como a sua fase prévia e desenvolvimento. Assim, pretende superar as limitações espaço-temporais de estudos anteriores, analisando o espaço físico e digital. A partir de uma perspectiva comunicacional-publicitária, a pesquisa aborda o caso mexicano com base na premissa de que os festivais de música estabelecem alianças estratégicas com marcas patrocinadoras que, além dos critérios comerciais que as unem, criam conjuntamente, por meio de diferentes canais, uma experiência em que os participantes, que gera uma pegada física, simbólica e digital. O objetivo da pesquisa é então descobrir como os festivais e marcas especificam suas interações através dos planos em que o festival acontece, considerando que a geração da experiência começa antes do final do evento. Da mesma forma, o texto oferece uma síntese das principais conclusões de cada etapa de uma investigação feita, sob esta proposta metodológica, nos festivais mexicanos entre 2018 e 2020. O trabalho conclui destacando a importância das plataformas digitais para a estratégia de comunicação dos festivais, tanto na fase pré-pandêmica quanto na pandêmica, e a centralidade do espaço físico como cenário do discurso publicitário que expressa a relação entre os festivais de música e seus patrocinadores.*

PALAVRAS CHAVE: *festivais de música; comunicação digital; publicidade; proposta metodológica; comunicação promocional.*

INTRODUCTION

Music festivals are a highly valued experience for consumers and brands. At the same time, they are a commercial product, a space for interaction around music and an opportunity to deploy advertising discourses and content. According to Bonet (2011), music festivals can be defined as public events that offer an intensive artistic program, are identified with a specific name, are held periodically with a minimum program of six live concerts, two days or more than 12 hours a day, and have been held for at least three editions. The author clarifies that festivals are not part of patron saint festivals, award ceremonies or closed events by invitation.

Such events occur in a territory that Bonet (2011) understands not only as a physical space, but also as a place of symbolic social and cultural interaction, which conditions the reality and potentiality of the artistic event. It can therefore be said that the territory is the space in which experiences are generated, attendees are involved, and interactions take place among them and with the spaces that make up the festival as a whole: stages, activities, services, stands, promotional media, among others. In this regard, and for the purposes of this research, the territory comprises not only the physical space but also the virtual one, as it is, on the one hand, a place where attendees begin to generate symbolic interactions, prior to the beginning of the festival, as well as during and after. On the other hand, the territory is also a space for interaction between the festival and its sponsors and commercial allies, which leads to think of it as a space that allows to generate experiences between brands and consumers.

The digital space is becoming increasingly important to create an experience that complements the physical one. Given these circumstances, festivals have been modifying their dynamics to adapt to the new expectations and demands of audiences. Roselló and Celaya (2016) point out that “some festivals are making way for diverse experiences in which [the participation] of an audience or community is essential” (p. 126), rendering the implementation of new dynamics ever constant. This translates into artists’ rotation, the creation of commercial alliances between sponsors and organizers, as well as promotional strategies. Regarding the latter, and given the changes previously mentioned, festivals have turned the digital environment into their great ally to communicate with their audiences and promote the festival’s image because, as Aaker (1991) points out, promotional communication is key to create notoriety, contribute to stimulate opinions, and reinforce the image to customers and (in this case) existing audiences.

The significance of festivals as an integral experience suitable for the deployment of discourses, not only visual and sonorous but also of an advertising nature, invites us to reflect on the relationship between these events and the sponsoring

brands. Therefore, the research on the Mexican case we present here -with focus on its methodology- has as a general objective to know how festivals and brands materialize their interactions through the levels in which the festivals are developed. This objective is based on the notion that the festival constitutes an extended experience that starts even before the beginning of the event, takes shape during its development, and can be prolonged through its memory.

Based on the research objective, the methodological proposal starts from a perspective that, according to the previous review of the study of music festivals, focuses on aspects that had been scarcely analyzed in previous studies, such as the link between offline and online and the analysis of before and after the event. With these purposes in mind, this paper seeks to present a methodological design to study music festivals, applied to the Mexican case, to provide an original methodology that overcomes certain limitations identified, incorporating views and perspectives not implemented in previous studies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Among other things, the organization of a festival is conditioned to the forging of commercial alliances with brands of products or services interested in generating some kind of contact with the attending public. The latter must be, in general, part of the target group to which the brand is directed. Thus, both parties receive some kind of benefit: the festival obtains a source of funding and the brands connect emotionally with people. In this way, music (in this case the music festival) becomes a useful tool for brands for three main reasons, according to Sánchez-Olmos (2018). The first has to do with generating value through the creation of entertainment content with which the consumer-audience identifies culturally and emotionally, transferring the fan phenomenon of the music festival towards the brand, which derives in committed followers in exchange for a sense of exclusivity. The second is related to the association that some brands make with the artists who perform at these festivals, as representatives or ambassadors, so that fans also feel identified with them and consider them as fun or cool as their favorite bands and artists. The last reason, according to Sánchez-Olmos (2018) is that, through music, brands manage to infiltrate in a faster way among their consumers. However, as the author points out, it cannot be assured that brands produce the emotional contact between the music and the audience; rather, they “merely facilitate that experience in the hope that the concertgoer will draw a positive image of the brand compared to competing products” (Sánchez-Olmos, 2018, p. 310).

Like festivals, brands are increasingly emphasizing digital communication with their audiences to create transmedia experiences that result in a better emotional

connection with them and with the products and services they sell. Likewise, the large amount of user data collected and analyzed through the use of digital channels in their promotional strategies “makes it easier to generate actionable insights thanks to the greater knowledge of consumers and their relationship with brands” (Castelló, 2014, p. 5).

Nowadays, festivals are an important link in the business model of the music industry: they not only allow to recognize music scenes (Wainszelbaum, n.d.), to contrast mainstream with indie or alternative, or to gather massive audiences that are not only defined by what they listen to; festivals are also recognized by the brands present and by the lifestyles linked to them.

Similar to other cultural products, music festivals evolve not only in the face of adverse circumstances such as COVID-19, but also in the face of constant technological innovation and the incorporation of platforms and formats from other forms of entertainment or communication needs (“Seis tendencias...”, 2022). Streaming is among the options offered by festivals, as well as the incorporation of popular platforms in youth culture such as Twitch and video games such as Fornite, to broaden the experience from technological convergence. Thus, the relationship between brands and festivals continues to evolve towards multi-experience formats to satisfy increasingly demanding consumers; although music will remain the main experience, the trend points towards the design of festivals that include a culinary, cinematographic, workshops, or sports offer. Therefore, the festival is no longer a place for listening and socializing, but a multi-experience format in which commercial brands will have a growing place.

State of the art on the methodologies implemented in the study of music festivals

Traditionally, the study of festivals applies some approaches and methodologies aimed mainly at the study of the offline environment, though from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic others have emerged that study the online environment, as it is the space to which festivals migrated (CastroMartínez et al., 2020; Pérez-Ordoñez et al., 2021). In a literature review by Wilson and colleagues (2017), the authors report that research on music festivals has focused on understanding the motivations for their organization, funding and attendance, the analysis of the relationship between festivals and local environments, their economic and sociocultural impact, and their management in general; they highlight that there is an unexplored field in the analysis of the implementation processes of this type of events. Other authors have approached the subject from the segmentation of attendees (Cardoso et al., 2019; Fouce, 2009; Pérez Gálvez et al., 2021), and some

on the study of their image and advertising (Cardoso et al., 2019; Mallasén García, 2016; Merino-Arribas & Arjona Martín, 2016).

As for segmentation, the methodologies proposed for the analysis of festivals generally include collecting data in the offline environment, through the knowledge of the perceptions and motivations of the attending public. Fouce (2009) studies the audience categories, as well as the organizational, financial, and content modifications of Spanish festivals through a documentary review, considering the festival as a cultural experience. In turn, Pérez Gálvez and colleagues (2021) analyze the segmentation of jazz festival audiences through the design of a survey that explores the knowledge of jazz genres, as well as the attendees' motivations and satisfaction levels.

Among the studies focused on image and advertising, the methodologies used include interviews and surveys, mostly accompanied by documentary information. Mallasén García (2016) conducted an ethnographic work that involved interviews to opinion leaders, surveys to attendees of the Primavera Sound Festival in Barcelona and extraction of information from journalistic stories. The study aims to observe the festival's corporate and advertising communication to analyze its impact and advertising reach. Cardoso and colleagues (2019), meanwhile, study the image of the Vodafone de Paredes Festival and its link with Coura in Portugal, the event's venue, as a tourist destination. Through a quantitative study (survey), the researchers explore the attendees' profile, as well as their perceptions of the festival's image concluding that the festival is constituted as a driver of the tourist destination. From another perspective, Merino-Arribas and Arjona Martín (2016) conduct a descriptive study of Spanish advertisements and their impact on festivals through a documentary analysis that compares journalistic articles on the awards obtained between Spanish festivals and international festivals. The study confirms a high presence of Spanish advertising spots in the Ibero-American scenario to increase the influence of Spanish festivals and concludes that the majority of advertising production is dominated by international groups that articulate stories that transform brands into ideals of high socio-cultural value.

Regarding the methodologies used to study the online environment, it can be observed that the studies are still incipient and are the result of the redesign that the festivals had to undertake as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis. For example, through a content analysis, Castro-Martínez and colleagues (2020) study the digital environment by examining the digital channels of eight online festivals born from the pandemic, using a comparative study of the festivals' characteristics, communication tools, and messages disseminated in their websites and social networks. Pérez Ordoñez and collaborators (2021) conduct a case study to analyze

the management and public relations initiatives of the post-pandemic Bilbao BBK Live festival through a content analysis of the news published on its website and Instagram advertising campaigns; all this, by reviewing the types of publication, links, use of images, language, type of language, and other elements, such as the use of hashtags.

As can be noticed, the methodological proposals around the study of music festivals have focused on the collection of data mainly from the offline environment through surveys, interviews, ethnography and documentary research, all conducted during the development or culmination of the events, limiting the analysis of the festival to obtaining the result (the event) and not to its previous or subsequent process.

This explains the interest in giving a twist to the methodologies traditionally used. As a result of the reflection on the importance of festivals, not only as generators of message and symbolic communication, but also as actors that relate commercially and communicatively with their sponsoring brands, this research aims to understand how the interactions between festivals and brands are materialized through the different levels in which the festival takes place, understanding that it is a link that comes from the organization of the event and that generates an experience, as well as a physical, symbolic and digital impression on the attendees. To this end, we needed to develop a methodological design that would allow us to analyze the case of Mexican music festivals, overcoming the limitations found in other studies and incorporating complementary views and perspectives.

METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology is based on the following guidelines: 1) an analysis of the online and offline environment, as part of the festival's ecosystem; 2) an analysis that covers a broader temporality, i.e., that goes beyond the moment of its celebration and recovers the before, since this type of event begins with the active presence of the festival-brand through promotional strategies; 3) the study of festivals from the perspective of promotional and advertising communication in their relationship with the sponsoring brands that take part in the event, and 4) an analysis of the promotional communication strategies implemented by the festival-brands and the sponsoring brands in the face of the suspension of live events due to COVID-19.

We applied the proposal for the analysis of festivals to the Mexican case; however, it can be replicated in different territories and even for different types of events. Based on a mixed approach, the initial methodological proposal consisted

of three stages, which included the collection of physical and digital data. Each stage implies a temporality that allows us to recognize the different moments in which the festival develops. Although the first phase does not follow such dynamics, its implementation was essential to achieve the following stages, since it allowed locating all the existing festivals at that time through a mapping. The second stage contemplated the promotion campaign prior to the celebration of the event through digital media, while the third stage involved on-site data collection during the execution of the selected festivals. However, given the COVID-19 health contingency, we decided to design an additional analysis stage that would allow us to ascertain the festivals' reactions and communication strategies in the face of the closure of mass events derived from the pandemic, so that, finally, the methodological proposal is developed in four stages (table 1).

The first stage was aimed at mapping all the music festivals existing at that time (2018). To this end, we conducted a digital search of those that met the characteristics of Bonet's (2011) definition. This stage included a content analysis to recognize the festivals' characteristics, their presence on digital platforms, the musical genres that characterize them, as well as commercial alliances with sponsoring brands and other sectors according to the dimensions of analysis outlined in table 2.

The second stage sought to analyze the contents of the publications made on the different festivals' official websites, as well as their Facebook and Twitter accounts, to identify the digital presence of the sponsoring brands within the festivals and the type of promotional messages used. The three music genres with greater presence according to the results of the first stage were recovered to make a selection of a sample of 11 festivals that had websites in force during 2018, as well as official Facebook and Twitter profiles for the Mexican editions (in the case of international festivals).

Stage	Temporality
First	Timeless: mapping festivals across the country based on their digital presence (2018).
Second	30 days prior to the development of the selected festivals (in its 2018 edition) .
Third	During the celebration of four of the festivals (2019).
Fourth	Analysis of the promotional communication of each festival in view of the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 (2020).

Table 1. Methodological model by stages

Source: Own elaboration.

Analysis dimension	
Location	State of Mexico where the festival is held
Types of spaces	Public spaces Private spaces Ecclesiastical spaces Mixed spaces
Presence in digital platforms	Website Facebook Twitter Spotify Instagram YouTube
Musical genres	Jazz/blues Mixed Thematic Electronic/dance Rock/metal Classical Folk/regional Indie/alternative Trova Other
Types of sponsoring brands	Communication media Leisure and entertainment Culture Alcoholic beverages and breweries Educational institutions Digital platforms Professional services Non-profit organizations Tourism Transportation Telecommunications

Table 2. Analysis dimensions of the first stage

Source: Own elaboration.

Thus, we obtained the sample of festivals that was conformed as follows:

- Electronic: EDC, Holi Dance of Colours, Wish outdoor.
- Mixed: Vive Latino, Pal Norte, Corona Capital, Hellow Festival, Pulso GNP.
- Rock/Metal: Corona Hell and Heaven, Cosquin Rock Mexico, Tecate Knotfest.

By observing digital channels, we retrieved the publications on Facebook and Twitter made 30 days prior to each festival and during its duration, in their 2018 edition. The above, considering Roselló and Celaya (2016), who in their analysis of social networks in festivals state that:

Publications are generally intensified around pre-festival campaigns, e.g., for booking tickets and packs, during the weeks prior to the festival by announcing activities and deals, during the festival itself by informing about upcoming activities and sharing interesting events and quotes from presentations or lectures (p. 108).

The dimensions of analysis used to assess the promotional strategies and their relationship with the sponsoring brands were the type of messages shared, the target audiences, the digital formats used, as well as the composition of the architecture of the websites and Facebook and Twitter pages.

The third stage explored, in greater depth, the relationships established by the festivals with the brands and their audiences in the physical and digital spaces in which they operate during the event, since it is at this stage that the previous agreements between the parties are executed, thus developing and culminating the commercial relationship between the different actors for each festival edition. The physical space also includes the presence of other types of commercial relationships that are not necessarily recognized as sponsors, and therefore deserve specific attention. The festival space or territory also includes the practices of accompaniment of and with the public at the digital level, so, as previously mentioned, these were also analyzed. Due to the large number of festivals held in Mexico each year, data collection focused only on four of the festivals analyzed during the second stage and took place between April and May 2019. The selected festivals were Vive Latino, Corona Capital, Holi Dance of Colours, and Pulso GNP. The dimensions of analysis of this stage involve observations in both levels (physical and digital), as well as interviews with attendees.

Analysis dimensions	Websites	Facebook	Twitter
Type of message	Shared information. Publics with which it is associated.	Messages Publics with which it is associated.	Messages Publics with which it is associated.
Digital elements	Formats Hyperlinking	Formats Mentions Hyperlinking	Formats Mentions Hyperlinking
Architecture	Tabs Information disposition.	Cover image Profile image	Cover image Profile image

Table 3. Analysis dimensions of the second stage

Source: Own elaboration.

Level	Analysis dimension	
Physical	Territory	Stage disposition Brands presence Brands disposition
	Type of stands	Store Recreational Leisure Exclusive Traditional Others
	Attendees' brand presence perspective	Experience Brand recognition
Digital	Mobile application architecture	Information Services Brand presence

Table 4. Analysis dimensions of the third stage

Source: Own elaboration.

Although the fourth stage was not originally contemplated in the study, the outbreak of the health emergency and the annulment of massive events was of great interest for the study. This implied a methodological twist for the research, since we had to adapt to the new circumstances and learn how the festivals reacted to the closure of face-to-face activities that affected the development of their different editions for 2020. In this fourth and final stage, we conducted an analysis of the promotional communication strategies deployed by the 11 festivals selected in the second stage, reviewing how they handled communication with their audiences in this atypical situation, through three different temporalities: days before the announcement of the pandemic (pre-pandemic), immediately after the pandemic, and during the pandemic.

RESULTS

The methodology allowed us to obtain results that clearly illustrate the different moments through which a music festival develops. First, the first stage mapping allowed recognizing the existence of 167 festivals, distributed in 84% of the states of the Mexican territory, with public spaces (60%) having the largest presence, followed by private ones (27.4%) and, finally, ecclesiastical spaces (5.9%). Of all the festivals analyzed in the 2018 edition, 88% have a presence on Facebook, 72% have official websites, 60% have Spotify accounts, and 52% have Twitter profiles, which reflects the significance of digital media as a communication channel between the brand-festival and its audiences. The musical genres with the greatest presence in Mexican festivals are those that combine different types of music, and also those focused on

jazz/blues. They are followed by thematic festivals: rock/metal, electronic/dance music and, finally, classical music. Regarding the festival sponsoring brands, there were 533 different brands advertised on the posters and official advertising of the events. The sectors with the highest brand presence are the media (13%), followed by those related to leisure and entertainment (9%), government (7%), professional services (6%), and alcohol and beer (6%). Thus, the mapping of the first stage of the research allowed us to know the general behavior of festivals in terms of venues, most common musical genres, their location within the national territory, and the type of sponsoring brands. These data would lead the way to design the variables to be monitored in the following stages in accordance with the proposed methodology.

The second stage of the research (2018), consisting of the review of the digital features of the 11 selected festivals, found that the main form of communication they have is through their own websites, followed by the official Facebook pages, while Twitter proved to be a platform with low use between the festival-brands and their audiences. The analysis identified five types of messages made during the 30 days prior to the event: informative, sales, audience segmentation, advertising, and hyperlinking. Regarding informative messages, communication focused on providing basic information about the festivals –e.g., dates, venue, guest artists, and ticket sales– using resources such as posters, programs, artist-specific publications, and maps that provide more specific information about the territory where the event will take place (stage layout, beverage outlets, and sponsors’ stands), as well as other services that seek to complement the experience of the audiences attending the festival, such as hydration areas, restrooms, medical services, among others.

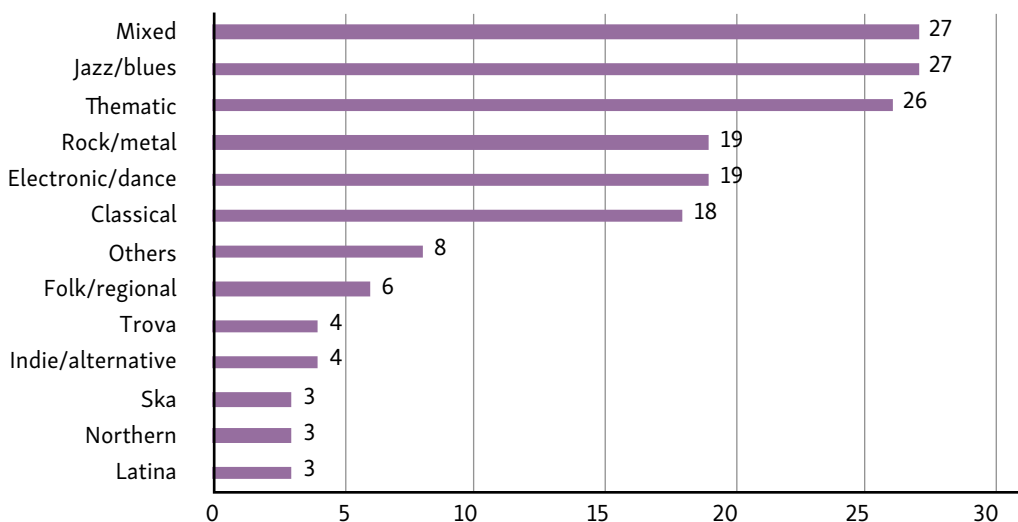


Figure 1. Music genres of music festivals with a digital presence during 2018

Source: Own elaboration.

On the other hand, we found that the sales messages seek to materialize purchase intentions for different services or products (inside and outside the festival territory) and that they are mainly focused on ticket sales; however, digital platforms were also used to offer products allusive to the festival, such as souvenirs and other products launched in alliances with clothing, footwear, and accessory stores. Within the audience segmentation messages, we identified the offering of products and services to audiences with specific needs or interests. The main type of segmentation messages refers to the offer of exclusive or preferential services, which usually include spaces and facilities with a preferential view, as well as access to food stands and exclusive restroom services. Other segmented publications are those aimed at parents, which advertised discounts for children's admission, or free admission, depending on the festival. Some festivals produced messages about services aimed specifically at their foreign audiences (national and international), such as transportation services (air, ground, private, or collective), as well as alliances with certain hotel groups offering discounted lodging packages. Advertising messages respond to the promotion of sponsoring brands and others with which the brand-festival builds alliances. The presence of sponsors is a constant in the festivals' websites, with greater or lesser relevance; they also resort to the use of Facebook cover pages, as well as to incentives to win products or services within the festivals. Finally, we found that hyperlinked messages seek to make users redirect to other platforms or services allusive to the festival. In this regard, mobile applications are the most used complementary experience element for the festival by allowing faster access to basic information and real-time updates. Other hyperlinks included Spotify playlists, the use of newsletters and mentions referring to other accounts, mainly those of the sponsoring brands, as well as those of the participating artists.

As previously mentioned in the methodological section, for the third stage of the research, we simultaneously monitored the interactions of the brand-festival with its public, both in the physical territory on the day of the event and in its digital environment through the analysis of its socio-digital networks and the festival's mobile applications. The ethnography on the physical level made it possible to confirm the importance of the distribution of spaces for the visibility of the main sponsors, who had a presence on stages, rest points and aisles; the same happened with the brand-festival, which placed its slogans and logos in high-visibility spaces. The stands for sponsors served as recreational spaces, where each brand designed its activation strategies in different ways. The stands included games and activities for attendees to win prizes, take pictures, create candy mixes, parties or events within the festivals, as well as a museum about the history of a beer brand.

This type of activities encourages participants to live experiences of coexistence with commercial brands through a low and subtle advertising exposure because, through this type of strategies, sponsoring brands also collect data from users to subsequently undertake direct marketing actions that facilitate the promotion of their products. There are brands that due to legal issues (such as the prohibition of cigarette advertisements) or financial issues (low budget to have a prominent presence within the festival territory) found in the physical space the possibility of creating points of sale and promotion of their products and services. The creation of premium experiences for a certain segment of the public could be observed through the presence of sponsors who offered exclusive services and experiences for those clients who were consumers of their brands, such as rest areas, preferential views, gourmet food, among others. On the other hand, we also detected the presence of stands offering shaded rest areas and power charging connections, which, in a highly digitalized and interactive world, tend to be crowded places. The presence of traditional stands was lower and was practically confined to products and services offered mainly by municipal governments and civil associations, the latter focusing on direct marketing strategies to collect information for their databases, develop strategies to raise awareness of social issues, and carry out fundraising activities.

In terms of the audience, it is very diverse, with different interests, backgrounds and ways of living the festival experience. Through on-site interviews we were able to determine that the experience of the festival and the exposure to the marketing actions of the festival brands and the sponsor brands is not the same. When invited to reflect on their presence at the event, some attendees did not even notice the presence of the stands or were not interested in participating in them. On the contrary, some of them take advantage of the time when there are no performances by their favorite artists to participate in the brands' activations. Although others participate in the dynamics, they do not remember the name of the brands or the stands they were at.

The presence of the sponsoring brands and the festival-brand is not limited exclusively to the event's physical territory, as they also implement this type of dynamics online. The festival relies on its digital platforms to guide and inform its attendees and mobile applications are its main channel. In these applications it is also possible to find the sponsors, their activations, and the spaces they will occupy in the festival territory. On the other hand, the socio-digital networks were spaces for advertising sponsors, the experience of attendance by the public appealing to emotionality, and live broadcasts of the presentations of some artists. The coexistence between online and offline was also visible in the sponsors, who encouraged the use of hashtags in their stands to tag attendees' publications. Likewise, the use of influencers who narrated the experience of attending and

having privileged places of some of the sponsors or special attendances such as meet and greets allowed to observe that the practices and experiences offered by the festival go beyond the territory and disrupt its temporalities, to involve a diversity of possibilities to be explored by users.

In the fourth and last stage, with the advent of the pandemic, the dynamics previously described changed, leaving now only the online space to maintain the brand-festival positioning (mainly) and to continue creating experiences. Given the problem of not being able to carry out massive events, festivals adapted their promotion strategies, as most of the industries, to the digital environment. Some of them, which were able to be held in the weeks prior to the closure of mass events, based their communication strategies on thanking attendees and recalling the special moments of the festivals. However, most of them had to announce their postponement because they were scheduled during the strongest period of the lockdown and this is when it was observed that their digital content, in general, reported a period of inactivity, after which a change was observed in their information strategies towards a communication of nostalgia, through content focused on the remembrance of past editions, as well as the adaptation of lucrative formats towards streaming events and merchandising sales. The complexity of the situation generated by the pandemic also led festival brands to design some social responsibility strategies to encourage fans to be safe and stay at home. Only two festivals used fundraising strategies to support the health sector and independent musicians and artists who, under these conditions, saw their main livelihoods at risk.

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis shows the main forms of interaction between festivals and brands, as well as the strategies to convey their message. The step-by-step methodology allowed us understanding festivals in their communicative relationship with brands. The study offers several important contributions for the Mexican case. The first one, derived from the first stage, consists of showing the large number and diversity of festivals held in the country and the presence of commercial brands belonging to different industries and services. The second stage allows us to understand the importance of digital platforms in the communication strategy of the brand-festival and brand-sponsor, with the official website in the first instance and the Facebook fan page as the main channels of digital communication of these actors. These resources were mainly used for informative and marketing purposes and, to a lesser extent, as spaces for the construction of a narrative related to the experience or for its recording during the festivals. In this regard, mobile

applications are a more useful tool for managing the experience and connecting with the festival in real time. The third stage, from the ethnography implemented, shows the dependence of festivals on the use of physical space as a showcase for sponsors. The stand is a classic for brand presence and the main argument for advertisers' visibility.

The festivals analyzed sought the coexistence between online and offline with the sponsoring brands through hashtags or other dynamic articulations supported on both levels. While it is true that it is not yet possible to see a more elaborate design of the festival's digital experience, nor a full articulation between online and offline, it is possible to credit the role of the networks as an informative vehicle and as a functional complement to the festival in its commercial and advertising levels.

Due to the anchoring of festivals in their physical-spatial dimension, the pandemic's outbreak disrupts the business model and the long-tested format for generating the experience, tipping the balance to the digital level, a resource from which to manage the situation. Digital is then the scenario for information campaigns, nostalgic communication and testing alternative business models—resulting from the absence of face-to-face events—, such as streaming and merchandising sales. Thus, social networks show their strategic role, not only as a complement to offline, but also as a lifeline. As for the methodological model, this is an effort to overcome the limitations of the study of music festivals, as it proposes to emancipate itself from the spatio-temporal boundaries of other models and the predictable approaches recorded in the state of the art. It addresses the moments of the festival's life cycle through a route by stages, examining it in its previous phase and in its development as a comprehensive experience. The study also shows the importance of analyzing the festival as a two-dimensional object of study, where the physical and the digital coexist, overlap and complement each other, requiring a methodology that can connect with such nature. The model presented also showed its flexibility and capacity for adaptation, because when faced with the problem of an additional variable such as COVID-19, which dramatically altered the festivals' offer and its consumption, it could be widened to incorporate an event as disruptive as it was unexpected. On the other hand, the soundness of the instruments designed for the collection and systematization of the data in each of the stages made up for the difficulties presented during the research due to the lack of economic resources available to face a research that lasted practically three years.

If the recovery of objects of study related to the music field is still scarce in the communication field, the methodologies for its analysis are even scarcer. Future research lines that could be developed from this experience would include, in the

first place, designing a methodology that includes the aftermath of the festival to understand the interaction of the different actors in the entirety of its temporal dimensions (before, during, and after the festival). It would also be important to incorporate the organizers' and brands' testimonies to get a broader view of how promotional communication strategies and the generation of experiences with their audiences are built from both fronts, because although they were originally contemplated within the methodological design, the difficulty and reluctance to contact them led us to make the decision not to consider them. A future line of research would also be the inclusion of exponential technologies (artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual reality, Internet of things, among others) not only by brands and festivals in the promotion and generation of experiences but also by us to incorporate them into the methodological design and analysis of the phenomenon under study.

This methodology contributes to redefine the music festival as a complex object of study, which requires a diversity of data and analysis levels to be understood. It also provides a tool that can be extrapolated to other types of events, with different post-COVID situations and different physical spaces. It also illustrates the importance of studying the coexistence between the digital and the physical as part of an indissoluble whole that requires methodologies capable of moving between one territory and the other. If the recovery of musical objects of study is scarce in the communication field, the methodologies for their analysis are even scarcer, hence the relevance of this work.

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