



The Nature and Role of Tacit Knowledge in Independent Music Festivals

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**The Nature and Role of Tacit Knowledge in
Independent Music Festivals**

Jane Tattersall

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Sheffield
Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration**

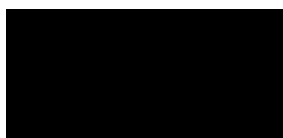
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Abstract

This thesis examines how tacit knowledge is understood, experienced and valued by practitioners in the independent music festival sector and how it contributes to individual expertise and organisational capability. Tacit knowledge is described as difficult to articulate, intuitive, skills and knowledge gained through experience and extended practice (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2001; van Houten, 2023). Drawing on knowledge-based organisation theory (e.g. Barney, 1991; Nonaka, 1995; 2000) the study explores the types of knowledge that underpin festival planning and delivery, the extent to which practitioners recognise the tacit dimensions of their knowledge (Polanyi, 1967; Collins, 2010; Nonaka & von Krogh, 2009) and the organisation environments that impact its development and transfer.

Semi-structured interviews with independent music festival practitioners were analysed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) to demonstrate that experiential knowledge, mainly developed through immersive practice, plays a far more critical role in festival organisation and delivery than is acknowledged in the existing festival and events literature. Whilst tacit knowledge is discussed more widely in organisation theory as a valuable organisational resource (Yang & Farn, 2009), literature on festivals and events has primarily focused on operational, economic, societal and environmental aspects. Therefore, this study addresses an underrepresented research area about the value of tacit knowledge in the context of independent music festivals and is applicable to the wider events sector. The findings indicate that the complex and uncertain operating environment of independent music festivals, combined with their characteristic annual event business model, amplifies their reliance on tacit, intuitive forms of expertise. Unlike many traditional businesses, independent music festivals typically operate with a small core team that draws on contractors and temporary staff to build and deliver the event. This 'pulsating' nature of festival organisations (Stadler, 2021) brings discrete challenges, highlighting their susceptibility to operational discontinuity, and the value of experiential, tacit knowledge as fundamental to intuitive decision-making and problem-solving.

This study advances understanding of tacit and experiential knowledge by clarifying the boundaries of authentic tacit knowledge and identifying experiential knowledge-in-action, an intuitive, enacted and embodied form of expertise, central to independent music festival practice. It also introduces the Experiential Knowledge Value and Risks model, which highlights the organisational and personal significance of experiential knowledge and the vulnerabilities associated with its loss or lack of recognition. From a practical perspective, this study provides practitioners with frameworks and activities to identify and nurture experiential knowledge, providing opportunities to strengthen learning cultures, enhance continuity and support motivation and wellbeing, including for temporary staff. These contributions demonstrate that experiential knowledge is both a strategic resource and human asset, with an important role to play in the long-term sustainability of independent music festivals.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured over six chapters, as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction: This chapter has sets out the research context, value proposition and the research aims. It introduces independent music festivals as the focus on the study, the researcher's personal research and outlines the methodological approach.

Chapter 2: Literature Review critically evaluates relevant literature. It begins by positioning the study through an organisational development lens, before examining knowledge as an organisational resource. It introduces dimensions of knowledge including explicit and tacit dimensions and examines ambiguity in the literature about the nature of tacit knowledge. The chapter continues with an exploration of experience design and presents key theoretical perspectives for understanding tacit knowledge, experiential learning and social exchanges. The chapter concludes by considering learning environments and cultures that enable or inhibit gaining and sharing tacit knowledge.

Chapter 3: Methodology details the researcher's philosophical stance and qualitative research design, using semi structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis. It introduces the research participants, outlines the process of data collection, sampling and analytical procedures and closes with ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis is structured by theme around four key areas: Knowledge required for the complexities of the sector and creating festival experiences; the nature of tacit knowledge; the value of experiential knowledge to festival organisations and individuals and factors influencing tacit knowledge gain and transfer. Each theme includes a discussion integrating participant insights with relevant theory.

Chapter 5: Practical Implications and Recommendations: Synthesises the main findings and proposes a reframing of tacit knowledge for more practical application

in the independent music festival sector. The chapter presents a reimagined conceptualisation of experiential knowing-in-action and introduces a practical, research informed workshop to support reflexive practice, and situate experiential knowledge on the strategic agenda.

Chapter 6: Summary of the Thesis: Draws together the key learning points of the thesis and its contribution to knowledge and practice. The chapter also acknowledges limitations of the study and makes recommendations for further study.

1.2 Value Proposition for the Research

UK independent music festivals operate in a highly competitive environment (Stadler, Fullagar & Reid, 2014a; Wickham, Donnelly & French, 2021), where they compete with commercial festival operators such as Live Nation, Superstruct Entertainment and AEG (Mintel, 2016; Lawson, 2024). They also compete with not for profit and public sector events, and festivals (Getz & Andersson, 2010), where regional, national and international destinations compete to host small to large scale events to enhance their reputation and tourism capacity (Richards, 2014). In this landscape therefore, maximising opportunities for sustainable competitive advantage, to safeguard a festival's future is strategically crucial.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, festivals and events were already vulnerable to financial risks such as 'unforeseen costs, lower than expected revenue, a general decline in economic circumstances and disposable income and cash flow problems' (Van der Wagen and White 2010, p. 101). However, the pandemic revealed further challenges, with fluctuating attendee rates and supply chain issues (Lorincz, Formadi & Ernszt, 2023), in an environment that remained uncertain and with lingering low profitability (Anderton, 2021). In response to these conditions, most independent music festivals appear to adopt a differentiation competition strategy (Porter 1998), offering evermore creative, targeted and personalised experiences to attract discerning attendees (Berridge 2015). In reality, they have little option but to follow this strategy as pursuing a low-cost strategy requires economies of scale that are

difficult to achieve for annual events (Henderson, 2011). However, events and festival organisations have been criticised in the literature for a lack of strategic planning or poor financial management, identified as a source of festival decline or failure (Getz, 2002; Raj, 2003; Newbold, 2019). In the contemporary environment, the sector is recovering from post Brexit and pandemic staff shortages but experiencing broader shifts in working cultures such as an increase in hybrid, flexible and remote working practices (Skeith, 2024).

Knowledge has been recognised in the literature as a valuable organisational resource (Chuang et al., 2016; Grant, 2016; Paliszkiewicz & Paliszkiewicz, 2020; Singh et al., 2007) and some authors view tacit knowledge as more valuable than any other tangible asset (Yang & Farn, 2009). The literature on festivals and events has explored economic, cultural and operational aspects and impacts. However, there has been comparatively limited focus the types of knowledge most relevant and valuable in festival settings from an organisational or personal perspective. These factors call for attention on the human dimension of festival delivery, particularly the knowledge and capabilities that enable practitioners to respond to their environmental conditions (Johnson, Whittington, Angwin, Regner & Scholes, 2014). Therefore, this thesis addresses a gap in the literature, by examining how festival practitioners perceive tacit knowledge and the extent to which it is recognised, nurtured and shared as a valuable resource, within the unique context of creating festival experiences. It also deepens theoretical insight by clarifying ambiguities in the literature between authentic tacit knowledge and other forms of unspoken knowledge and information, and by conceptualising experiential knowing-in-action as an intuitive, enacted and embodied capability that underpins effective festival practice. It also presents the Experiential Value and Risks model, which illustrates the individual and organisational benefits of appreciating experiential knowledge as well as the possible consequences when it is insufficiently recognised or retained. From a practical perspective, the study offers guidance to independent music festival leaders and practitioners to develop efficiency and continuity, avoid costly repetition of mistakes and improve staff motivation and wellbeing, through experiential knowledge growth and recognition.

1.3 Research Background: Independent Music Festivals

Festivals take place in almost all known cultures (Tonga Uriarte et al. 2019) to celebrate almost every aspect of life, from food, culture, music, politics, places, agriculture to calendar events. They aim to create memorable and enriching experiences for attendees and have a ‘crucial and efficient role’ in connecting communities and individuals (Skeith, 2024, p. 3). Furthermore, music events and festivals are an important aspect of social culture, creating opportunities for artists and for audiences to share a passion for music and experiences (Getz, 2002; Skeith, 2024). The Association for Independent Festivals (AIF) considers music festivals to be independent if the owners’ share of the global market is less than five percent (aif.org, 2016). In 2025, The AIF represents over 150 independent festival promoters (aif.org.uk, 2025), with a combined total capacity (number of tickets for sale) passing the one million milestone in 2024 (Paine, 2025).

Table 1 provides a breakdown of type and capacities (number of tickets available) of festivals in the UK in 2021, which indicates that the majority of festivals are small, with less than five thousand tickets. The festivals in this study range in capacities from ten and thirty-five thousand.

Category	Number	Percentage
Micro multi-day greenfield music festival (below 5,000 capacity)	778	80%
Small multi-day greenfield music festival (5,000-10,000 capacity)	75	8%
Medium multi-day greenfield music festival (10,000-30,000 capacity)	80	8%
Large multi-day greenfield music festival (30,000+ capacity)	22	2%
Other (metropolitan and urban-based festivals, over 5,000 capacity)	20	2%

Table 1. Market Breakdown of UK Festivals in 2021

Since these data were published in 2021 and due to measures imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, independent, public and commercial live events and festivals faced critical disruption and financial losses from the significant numbers of postponements and cancellations (Boden and Shipway 2024).

By July 2021, more than half the UK festivals were cancelled and even after the industry reopened in July 2022, the economic crisis, rising supply chain costs, cautious audiences and staff shortages posed significant threats to recovery (AIF, 2023; Mintel, 2024; Davies, 2023). The More Than Music Report (betternotstop.com, 2024) cited just 570 UK music festivals operating in 2024 (they reported 975 in 2021). However, despite an announcement by the AIF in August 2024 that without government intervention over 100 festivals would be lost due to ongoing unpredictable and rising costs, a full revival of attendance post-COVID-19 was reported. The UK economic value of events increased by 27% compared to 2019 (Mintel, 2024) and the overall events industry contribution to the UK economy in 2024 was stated as £61.653bn, with music events (including festivals) contributing £6.6bn (Skeith, 2024).

1.4 Personal Research Interest

This study originated from a curiosity about intuitive knowing and how it seemed to guide decision making and problem solving in some organisations. Working as an events management educator at university enabled the researcher to glimpse some of the complexity and culture of independent music festivals, through arranging volunteer opportunities for students. Several students reported long working hours and experiencing a steep learning curve, but their excitement and passion were clear, and they consistently enthused about how much they had learned ‘on the job’, alongside their studies. Therefore, studying the flow of knowledge within festival organisations, its role in creating festival experiences and opportunities for new entrants to the festival sector to gain more if it, was an appealing journey to embark upon.

1.5 Research Aim and Objectives

The principal aim of this research is to understand how tacit knowledge is perceived by those working in independent music festivals, if and how it emerges in creating festival experiences and the extent to which it is recognised, shared, valued and capitalised upon within independent music festival organisations.

To achieve this aim, the objectives are:

- To review the existing literature on organisation knowledge and knowledge management in general and as a resource and capability within firms. Furthermore, aspects of knowledge including different dimensions and perspectives are theoretically examined, to understand their practical application and value in the research context and specifically in the organisation and delivery of independent music festivals.
- To analyse the perspectives of a range of participants leading or working in independent music festival organisations, thereby gaining a realistic and authentic understanding of how different types of knowledge are perceived and utilised, consciously or unconsciously in creating their festival experiences.
- To provide an understanding for those leading and working in independent music festivals about the nature and role of tacit, experiential knowledge, how this understanding may contribute to a festival organisation's performance and to support individuals to maximise the potential of holding their festival-relevant knowledge.

The research takes an explorative approach, and the following questions guided the intent and direction of the study:

- What aspects of knowledge are perceived as important in creating successful festival experiences?
- What is the value of tacit knowledge to individuals and the organisation?
- To what extent is tacit knowledge effectively nurtured in independent music festival organisations?

1.6 Research Methodology

This thesis is concerned with tacit knowledge, a dimension of knowledge which is related to skills and experience, personal perceptions and values and is context dependent (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Nonaka and von Krogh 2009a; Werner et al. 2015). It is described as more difficult to express than explicit knowledge; that which

can be expressed in words and numbers and which can be written down and codified (Ambrosini and Bowman 2001; Gascoigne and Thornton 2013; Muñoz et al. 2015). The research is carried out as an inductive, qualitative study. Seventeen semi-structured interviews were carried out and analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) to tell the story of the participants' perspectives about the knowledge they have gained and apply in the planning and organisation of independent music festivals. These are presented as four themes in Chapter 4.0 Findings and Analysis.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

There are varying perspectives on the use of literature in a qualitative research project. One perspective is that literature should be used sparingly at the start of the process, to maintain an inductive design, unless specific requirements indicate otherwise (Creswell and Poth 2024). Other qualitative research proponents support a preliminary literature review to determine whether the topic has been studied before, to identify key concepts, and to orient researchers within prior and current thinking, even if they are not yet fully clear about the direction of the study (Giles et al. 2013).

From another perspective, Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed that in qualitative research, the literature review should ideally follow data collection and analysis, to minimise influence of the researcher's perspective. However, in later writing, Strauss acknowledged that whilst prior familiarity with the literature can constrain creativity, it can also positively enhance perceptiveness to the data (Corbin and Strauss 2013). Braun and Clarke (2022) recommend that for effective Reflexive Thematic Analysis 'the researcher must engage with theory before data analysis or risk theoretical assumptions and concepts being unknowingly and unreflexively imported into the analysis' (p. 261). Accordingly, a comprehensive literature review follows in this chapter, which is used for comparison with the data findings and evaluated in the subsequent discussions. This research was undertaken through an organisational

development lens, exploring tacit knowledge in the specific context of independent music festival organisations.

2.1.1 Structure of The Literature Review

The literature review begins with an overview of literature on events and festivals to provide additional context to the research setting of independent music festivals. These organisations differ from other types of events businesses because they usually deliver a single, annual event and rely on contractors, sub-contractors and seasonal, temporary staff to operationalise their product. They are described as ‘pulsating organisations’ due to this expansion and contraction process (Stadler 2021, p. 188). The literature review is structured to flow logically and following the overview of events and festivals, the review continues with an exploration of the role and value of knowledge within organisations and an examination of the knowledge management discourse, followed by a particular focus on tacit knowledge. Subsequent sections address aspects of knowledge, the management of tacit knowledge and whether this can be achieved. Following this, and because the academic fields of events and festivals are closely linked with much overlap in the literature, perspectives on knowledge within events and festival organisations are then reviewed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main insights from the literature and some identified gaps.

2.1.2 Organisational Development Lens

Organisational Development emerged as a discipline from the 1950’s with dominant theoretical approaches and thinking that were functionalist, scientific, top-down management in nature (French & Bell, 2008). Early literature adopted a social engineering view of organisations, characterised by Beckhard’s definition of organisational development (1969, p. 16) as ‘a planned change involving systematic diagnosis, managed from the top to increase organisational effectiveness and health.’ By the 1990’s, thinking had shifted towards anti-bureaucratic (adhocracy), corporate stewardship and facilitative approaches (Grieves 2000).

French & Bell's definition (1995, p. 28) characterises the movement away from social engineering approaches, towards managing and developing organisations:

'A long-range effort to improve an organisation's problem-solving capabilities and its ability to cope with changes in its external environment' (French & Bell, 1995, p. 28).

Their definition highlights empowerment through articulation of the change agent's values, designed to facilitate visioning, organisational learning and problem solving in the interests of collaborative organisation culture management. This value driven approach and organisational learning remained prominent in the 1990s (Pedler & Aspinwall, 1998; Senge 2006). The concept of organisational learning follows the resource-based view for gaining competitive advantage (Barney, 1991) and promotes an environment where individuals and teams are encouraged to develop new skills, share knowledge and reflect on their experiences. This is said to create a culture that supports collaboration and flexibility, leading to sustained growth and competitive advantage by adapting to the dynamic external environment (Senge, 1990). Furthermore, this approach to facilitating learning in organisations was seen as essential to innovation and organisational success by empowering employees to build on their knowledge, adapt to new changes and drive improvement (Easterby-Smith et al. 1999; Pedler et al, 1997).

However, the concept of the learning organisation was superseded by that of Knowledge Management (Pedler & Burgoyne, 2017), which is the dominant contemporary discourse. Literature on established theories within the field of management and organisation studies were reviewed, to explain prevailing concepts of knowledge and tacit knowledge, including how organisation structures and cultures, mechanisms and processes shape perceptions and management of tacit knowledge. However, it is also important to consider tacit knowledge from a cultural, anthropological perspective. For example, Polanyi (1966; 2012) argued that tacit knowledge is personal, socially constructed and culturally embedded, which influences how it is acquired and used. He proposed that tacit knowledge is transmitted through socialisation and apprenticeship, where individuals learn from

others in their cultural context. This knowledge, according to Polanyi, is shaped by the traditions, norms, and values of the society in which it is embedded.

Social aspects are also foundational to Nonaka's SECI model (Nonaka et al. 2000), a well-known and often cited theory for explaining tacit knowledge transfer. The SECI model incorporates social learning theory (Bandura 1977) and organisational culture (McAuley 2013) to explain how individuals learn through observation, imitation, modelling, and reinforcement. According to the SECI model, individuals are more likely to retain and use what they have learned, if they are motivated to do so. This model is discussed in section 2.7.2 of the literature review and analysed in the context of the findings in section.

2.1.3 Event Studies

This section provides an overview of the key research themes in the events and festivals body of knowledge at the time of submission. It is necessarily concise and serves as background to the thesis development and to enhance the contextual information provided in the introduction. In terms of published literature, event and festivals are relative newcomers to the academic studies block, as the industry evolved from the hospitality functions of hotel, film, music and sporting industries from the 1960s onwards (Getz, 2016). Events management is also a comparatively new subject for higher education, with degrees first emerging around the turn of the 21st century. Events and festivals management attracted little academic attention during the 1970s but emerged as a recognised sector in the 1990s and a discipline by the early 2000's (Getz, Andersson & Carlsen, 2010a; Getz, 2016). Early literature mostly addressed the leisure sector (Kim et al. 2013), but in the 1980s, events gained global recognition from governments, for the potential to generate positive social, financial and reputational impacts, known as 'boosterism' (Getz & Page, 2016) and academic interest grew (Mair and Whitford 2013). Event studies began with a focus on operations and management (Calver et al. 2023; Kim et al. 2013), shaped by the disciplines and backgrounds of researchers involved in the development of the academic field (Jackson et al. 2018).

By 2005, the Events Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) encompassed administration, design, marketing, operations and risk management, as essential areas of practical events knowledge and also for academic research (Silvers and O'Toole 2021). As a critical element of event operations, comprehensive guidance on event health and safety is provided by The Purple Guide (eventsindustryforum, 2025), an industry publication covering all aspects of legislation and best practice for a wide range of events. Their top-level guidance is that event audiences should be safe, comfortable and able to enjoy the entertainment. Specific guidance for outdoor events such as festivals is provided by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority Green Guide (sgsa.org.uk, 2025) and organisers can refer to particular guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE.gov.uk, 2025). However, the complexity of event and festival operations means that controlling all circumstances is impossible and eliminating all risks is not possible (Brito, Torres Júnior, & Diniz, 2020). Event and festival health and safety literature includes perspectives and guidance on event safety and risk management, including health and safety planning and risk assessments, crowd management and security planning (O'Toole, Luke, Brown, Tatrai & Semmens, 2019; Silvers and O'Toole 2021; Tarlow, 2002). Awareness of crowd size is critical for attendee safety (Gong et al. 2021) and crowd management has been researched in the context of mass outdoor events (Struniawski 2024), responding to extreme circumstances such as stampedes (Shao, Shao & Kuo, 2019) and in response to security incidents, which are impeded by inadequate planning and risk assessing, lack of responsibility and poor communication (Hutton, Robertson & Ranse, 2025).

Sustainability in events and festivals is a contemporary issue that has progressed from a 'quadruple bottom line' approach where sustainable practices strategically embedded in event and festival planning (Jones 2018), to a more recent call for researchers to explore how events may drive societal change and sustainable development, rather than continuing to focus on the sustainability of individual events (Mair and Smith 2021). Other studies also follow this critical approach to studying events, examining the cultural, societal and political impacts of events and (Ali-Knight 2008; Ensor et al. 2011; Organ et al. 2015; Richards, 2014; Yeoman 2004).

Subsequent literature has further proposed that management, marketing, leadership, supply chain management and technological capabilities are important aspects of events management knowledge and as such, valuable for study (Wickham, Donnelly & French, 2021).

Research interests have also developed to include equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in events, which is welcomed as an audit of the four leading events management journals between 2011 and 2021 found an 'unquestionable gap in EDI knowledge production' and 'no critical mass of EDI events research', with a call from the authors for EDI to become an integral aspect of the events discourse (Calver et al. 2023, p. 21). Whilst a critical mass is yet to be achieved, valuable EDI studies are emerging, including an examination of accessibility at UK festivals for people who are deaf or disabled (Bossey 2020). Other studies have examined diversity in festivals, particularly at the strategic level (Haynes & Mogilnicka, 2024) and the role of festival organisers in making festivals more accessible to people living in poverty (Davies et al. 2023). These areas of event study create opportunities for new knowledge and industry best practice to develop together.

Studies applying leadership, management and organisation theories specifically to events and festivals were scant until relatively recently. In an analysis of 178 event-related studies, (Kim, Boo & Kim, 2013), found that knowledge considerations were either absent or overlooked, despite relevant literature existing at the time (for example, Alexia and Mihiotis 2012; Baggio and Cooper 2010; Shaw and Williams 2009). These were followed by others including Longhi & Rochhia (2015) Sigala & Chalkiti (2014) and Tan, Luh, and Kung (2014). Filling in some gaps, Abson considered theory and practical methods for event leaders (Abson, 2021) and advocated for contemporary perspectives, including shared leadership for project-based organisations such as independent music festivals (Abson, Norman & Schofield, 2024). Other studies explored antecedents for shared leadership (Abson and Schofield 2022). Similarly championing contemporary leadership, Megheirkouni (2021) examined relationships between leadership and job satisfaction, finding a

connection between empowerment-facilitated authentic leadership, job satisfaction and commitment within events organisations.

Some authors have explored knowledge and knowledge management in events management. Getz, Andersson & Carlsen (2010a) proposed a framework for understanding and creating knowledge about festivals and Blackman et al. (2017) applied the 'Knowledge Value Chain' as a framework supporting human capital legacies, in preventing knowledge loss between iterations of mega events such as the Olympic Games. Another study considered the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in event services to manage explicit knowledge absorption, flow and dissemination (Borodako et al. 2021). Stadler's 2021 textbook was the first to specifically consider 'Knowledge Management in Events Organisations' and the first to explain generic management frameworks in that context. Festival identities are often linked to their organisers' vision, to the extent that some well-known festivals such as Glastonbury have developed identities as 'things' in themselves (Stadler et al. 2014b). This functionalist view (McAuley Duberley & Johnson, 2013) of festival organisations suggests a shared understanding and knowledge of the festival ethos within the organisation and wider society. However, the study of knowledge in events and festivals, and in particular tacit knowledge, remains underrepresented in the literature, compared to other sectors or industries.

As with other fields, festivals (and specifically independent music festivals) constitute a distinct sub-field within events management studies. Festivals' diversity, universal reach, social and cultural associations to people and places, bring discrete areas for research, as their celebratory nature sets them apart from events designed for corporate, educational, competitive, political and entertainment purposes (Getz, Andersson, & Carlsen, 2010). Because of their cultural and social impacts, festivals attract some interdisciplinary interest, including sociology and anthropology (Handelman 1998; Mcgeeney 2013). However, to succeed in their competitive environment, festivals, like organisations in other sectors, require not only human

and financial capital but rely on specialised knowledge to sustain their distinctiveness and to pursue competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Stadler, 2021).

2.1.4 Characteristics of Independent Music Festival Organisations

As well as the planning, management, marketing and administrative functions outlined in the previous section, festivals in greenfield sites or parks are built ‘from scratch’. This requires a complex infrastructure of perimeters, staging, trackway, backstage production, bars, welfare and first aid provision, power supplies, offices and often areas for staff and guest accommodation and much more, depending on the festival to be constructed (Newbold 2019). This means that festival organisers face significant practical and technical challenges every time they take place (Carlsen, Andersson, Ali-Knight, Jaeger & Taylor, 2010). Festivals also incur peaks and troughs of activity, and the size of the workforce fluctuates throughout the year (Stadler 2021; Vendelø and Rerup 2020). As most independent music festivals commonly deliver a single annual event with further iterations occurring each subsequent year (Tonga Uriarte et al. 2019) they can be classed as project work or as functions of a temporary organisation. The annual process of regenerating a festival follows a rhythm, according to Vendelø and Rerup (2020).

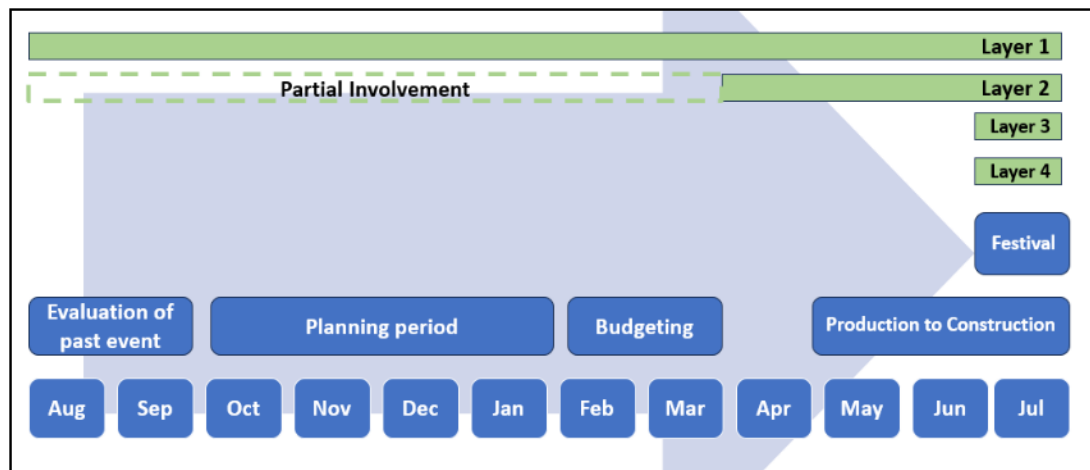


Figure 1. Overview of the Annual Process of Regenerating Roskilde Festival

(Researcher's illustration, adapted from Vendelø & Rerup, 2020, p. 5).

This model helps to visualise the flow of independent festival organisation and the ‘pulsating’ nature of events and festivals as project-based organisations (Stadler

2021). The pulsating nature of independent music festivals illustrated in Figure 1 means that whilst they are often owned and run by a small core team (Layer 1), contractors, subcontractors (Layers 2, 3 and 4) and teams of workers (Layers 3 and 4) contribute to the complex logistics (Masterman, 2003) and construction of the event for shorter periods of time. Each contributor has the potential to influence the subsequent experience of attendees, but this structure also brings significant operational and knowledge-related challenges (Stadler, 2021).

Linked to the pulsating nature of independent music festivals, a further defining characteristic is the precarity of their workforce, defined by the part-time, unprotected and insecure nature of their work (Sheptak & Menaker, 2020), which echoes patterns identified across the wider sports (Sheptak & Menaker, 2020), creative and cultural sectors (Hancock & Tyler, 2024) and means people often have self-responsibility for creating and maintaining their career paths (Banks, 2019). Cultural labour markets have typically been characterised by an oversupply of available workers, however the roles are often for freelance, self-employed and temporary contracts (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015) where people often combine multiple job types to generate sufficient revenue (Ashton, 2015). In independent music festivals, precarity manifests in fluctuating teams of freelancers, contractors, seasonal staff and volunteers (Michopoulou, Azara & Russell, 2020; Stadler, 2021; Vendelø & Rerup, 2020) as experienced and observed by the researcher in her two annual freelance roles, as team members within the same function have consistently changed between consecutive iterations. It follows, therefore, that workforce precarity creates variability in skills, knowledge and experience and leaves organisations vulnerable to instability, uncertainty and financial insecurity, conditions that were particularly noticeable after the COVID-19 pandemic (Comunion & England, 2020), when live events were among the most severely affected by a lack of returning workers (Skeith, 2024). Inevitably, the instability of a largely temporary workforce creates challenges around knowledge retention and growth, coordination and continuity, particularly when essential experiential knowledge resides with individuals who may not return. The dynamics of the independent music festival sector workforce highlight the knowledge-related vulnerabilities of temporary,

project-based organisations, and strengthen the value of this research in exploring ways to maximise the benefits of recognising, nurturing and effectively retaining tacit knowledge as a valuable resource. Indeed, Stadler (2021) argues that temporary events organisations are particularly susceptible to knowledge inefficiencies that can be costly and lead to ‘reinventing the wheel’ in each subsequent iteration of the event, emphasising the impact of the annual event business model and a link between workforce precarity and knowledge precarity. A lack of time and resources may lead to poor documentation and knowledge sharing, and where larger scale events may face knowledge management challenges with large numbers of volunteers who may lack knowledge, forget or unlearn it, smaller scale events may lack expertise within the core team. Furthermore, knowledge may be hidden or hoarded by individuals, such as freelancers, to protect their employability for future work (Stadler, 2021).

These challenges further emphasise that knowledge should be considered a core strategic asset, as it directly impacts on operational continuity, efficiency and the quality of festival delivery and suggest that within independent music festivals, knowledge is significantly connected to the organisational and workforce structures and the temporal rhythm of festival production. Understanding the importance, nature and role of knowledge is therefore essential to enhance efficiency, minimise disruption, support organisational capabilities and the long-term sustainability of the festival. Accordingly, the following sections build on this argument, by first examining the role and value of knowledge from a broad organisational perspective, then exploring key distinctions between different types of knowledge, and finally considering how these concepts apply specifically to creating and delivering independent music festival experiences.

2.2 The Role and Value of Knowledge in Organisations

In 1973, Bell predicted that knowledge and information would be the key components of a changing tide in industrial progress from manufacturing to service industries, leading to a post-industrial society where knowledge-based goods and services would succeed manufactured goods as primary generators of wealth (Hislop

2013). Bell's theory is validated as by 2025, service industries accounted for 81% of the UK economic output (House of Commons Library, 2025), with the music concerts and festivals market alone estimated to have reached £3.5 billion in 2024 (Intel, 2024). From a resource-based view of a firm (Barney, 1991), knowledge is regarded as the most significant resource for organisations operating in the contemporary environment.

Research highlights the importance of knowledge in delivering unique products and services, maximising revenue and customer satisfaction to achieve competitive advantage (Chuang et al. 2016; Grant, 2016; Paliszkievicz and Paliszkievicz 2020; Singh et al. 2007). More specifically, the knowledge-based view (Grant, 1996) positions knowledge above other tangible resources as the primary source for creating value and sustaining superior performance (Wang, Wang & Liang, 2014). Grace and Butler (2005, p. 56) argue that 'in the knowledge economy, a firm's intellectual capital represents the only sustainable source of competitive advantage'. This is because, as long as it remains private to the organisation, knowledge can satisfy Barney's criteria for being valuable, rare, nonsubstitutable and inimitable (Bollinger and Smith 2001). Therefore, in the current knowledge economy (Kacperska and Łukasiewicz 2020) knowledge is a valuable resource, and tacit knowledge, is a more significant core competence than other tangible resources, leading to superior performance (Lubit 2001), emphasised by Phipps and Prieto (2012, p.43), stating 'Knowledge, by itself, is worthless. It is the strategic use of this knowledge, coupled with a sense of entrepreneurs' hip that enables individuals, teams, and organizations to hone their creativity, so that they can meet and even surpass their goals.' Exploring the extent to which this occurs in independent music festivals is a key aspect of this thesis. For example, explicit knowledge of the macro and micro external environments is as essential for festival and events organisations as any other type of organisation. Empirical research by Adema and Roehl (2010) revealed that knowledge of technological factors such as new developments in audio visual capabilities can impact event design, as festival goers now have the opportunity to enjoy events from their television or other portable devices, creating both opportunities and threats for live experience designers. However, the skill of

integrating these elements into festival design lies within the tacit dimension (Ambrosini and Bowman 2001).

From an organisation success perspective, strategic capability is 'the adequacy and suitability of the resources and competences of an organisation for it to survive and prosper' (Johnson, Whittington, Regner & Scholes, 2014, p. 118), and leveraging knowledge as a valuable intangible resource presents opportunities for organisations to pursue competitive advantage. Johnson et al. (2014) propose that competences reflect the extent to which resources are deployed effectively through organisational activities and processes. Furthermore, they explain that threshold resources are the minimum tangible and intangible requirements needed for the organisation to operate and survive, and organisations demonstrating threshold competences are operating in such a way that they meet the minimum customer requirements but are not thriving or likely to achieve competitive advantage. Comparable with Barney's resource-based view, expert knowledge and intellectual capital can be considered unique intangible resources if they are difficult for rival organisations to imitate as they are similarly elusive for competitors (Johnson, Whittington, Regner & Scholes, 2014).

Some authors discuss knowledge as a noun, as 'created by individuals' and capable of conversion between its explicit and tacit forms (Nonaka and von Krogh 2009a, p. 635). Whereas others focus on the process of knowing as mediated, situated, provisional, pragmatic and contested (Radford, 2013). Blackler (1995) advocates *knowing* in preference to *knowledge* as it avoids 'connotations of abstraction, progress, permanency and mentalism' (p. 1035). Indeed, Polanyi (1966, p.2) refers to 'tacit knowing', rather than tacit knowledge. Authors also argue that the complexity of understanding and implementing effective knowledge management systems present organisations of all sizes with a confusing picture that can seem too expensive, time-consuming and difficult to implement (Bollinger and Smith 2001; Grant, 2016). This dilemma suggests that such challenges may cause organisations to miss opportunities and lose precious knowledge resources, hampering their potential performance. The importance of effectively managing knowledge is

therefore clear and with the shift towards a more knowledge-based economy (Grace and Butler 2005), literature discussing knowledge management gained momentum.

2.3 Knowledge Management Discourse

The extensive body of literature associated with knowledge management saw exponential growth from the mid-1990s, with publications in dedicated knowledge management journals and several other fields such as information technology and economics (Arisha 2013) and more recently in hospitality, tourism and events journals (Hallin and Marnburg 2008; Morgan 2008; Qin et al. 2022; Ragsdell and Jepson 2014; Singh et al. 2007; Stadler et al. 2014a; Stadler and Fullagar 2016). A large volume of work appeared to emerge as a ready-made concept, adopted initially by the manufacturing industries during the 1990s (Lambe 2011). Despite some warnings that knowledge management was a passing trend in the field of information systems (Collins, 2003; Leonard & Koenig, 2002) it has endured, with new methods and practices proposed (Ceruti et al. 2019; Grant, 2016; Mohiuddin et al. 2022), developing from 'a premature concept into a mainstream organisational necessity' (Girard & Ribière, 2016).

Despite the growth of knowledge management literature, inconsistencies remain about its origins, with few works reflecting further back than the 1990s (Lambe 2011). This apparent reluctance to recognise antecedent knowledge may contribute to ongoing ambiguity around organisational knowledge and how best to manage it (Lambe, 2011), and so knowledge remains a 'multidimensional and ambiguous notion' (Pussa and Eerikainen, 2010, p 307). Hallin and Marnburg's definition of knowledge (2008, p. 367) includes personal knowledge and collective knowledge within a tourism and hospitality context, with a focus on organisation development to achieve innovation. This definition infers organisation success but does not go so far as the pursuit of competitive advantage:

'Knowledge Management may be understood as the practice of capturing and developing individual and collective knowledge within an organisation for the purpose of using it to promote innovation through the transfer of knowledge and continuous learning.'

To find a 'catch all' definition of knowledge management, Girard and Ribi re (2016, p15) reviewed and analysed over 100 definitions from diverse research fields and industrial contexts, proposing the following two statements to encompass their findings:

- Knowledge Management is the process of creating, sharing, using and managing the knowledge and information of an organisation.
- Knowledge Management is the management process of creating, sharing and using organisational information and knowledge.

Stadler (2021, p. 10) proposed the below definition of knowledge management, which aligns best with the purpose of this study, as it encompasses tacit knowledge and event and organisation success:

'The effective use of organisational systems, processes and practices which allow both explicit and tacit knowledge to be created, identified, acquired, utilised, shared and stored, in order for the organisation to produce a successful event experience and to sustain a competitive advantage over time.'

Creating new knowledge is crucial for driving innovation and product development (Shankar, Mittal, Rabinowitz, Baveja, & Acharia, 2013) and there is consensus that continuous knowledge creation, diffused throughout the organisation and quickly adopted into new products and technologies, significantly increases the likelihood of success (Corner and Pavlovich 2016; Lyles 2014; Nonaka 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Von Krogh et al. 1997). Nonaka, acknowledged as highly influential in the field of knowledge management and known for inspiring an extensive body of secondary literature (Gourlay 2006) observed that in the 1990s, western organisations largely epitomised a functionalist view of the organisation as a machine, favouring a positivistic, quantitative approach to what they considered appropriate measures of success. Nonaka (1994) proposed that organisational knowledge is created through a continuous, metaphorical spiral of knowledge conversion, with four sequential modes: socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation, examined in more detail in section 2.7.2.

Extant empirical research has identified specific components of the knowledge management process, using terms such as knowledge capture, secure, coordinate, retrieve and store (Singh et al. 2007). Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz Valle (2011) put forward a comparable explanation, emphasising the importance of managing and leveraging knowledge assets for organisational success:

- Knowledge acquisition is the process used by an organisation to obtain new information and knowledge.
- Knowledge distribution is the process by which information is shared by employees.
- Knowledge interpretation occurs when information in given meaning and is transformed into new common knowledge
- Organisational memory is the method by which the information and knowledge are stored for use in the future.

Aspects of knowledge management seem to be largely explored from one of two approaches: case study analysis of a single organisation or department (Huo et al. 2016; Ragsdell and Jepson 2014) or surveys to test hypotheses (Chuang et al. 2016; Wang, Z. et al. 2014). According to Hislop (2013), the dominant discourse in knowledge management is neo-functionalist with the supposition that managing knowledge is a positive activity beneficial to all the members of an organisation and that objectifies knowledge as a resource that can be managed. However, according to Wang et al. (2014) there is less research focusing on the specific effects of knowledge management processes on organisational performance, the relationships between knowledge management processes or increasing the intellectual capital of the organisation.

One exception is Grant (2016) who (in the context of insurance firms) examines the value of knowledge sharing through social networks across supply chains, which is relevant to this study as festivals rely on multiple suppliers, contractors and sub-contractors (Stadler, 2021). Further aspects found lacking in empirical research include the importance of acknowledging the personal nature of knowledge; that workers' individual competencies, preferences, and attitudes can determine the

success or otherwise of any knowledge project (Schou 2007) and the value to individuals of their knowledge.

Although this thesis focuses on tacit knowledge in independent music festivals, rather than looking at specific knowledge projects, Schou's emphasis on the personal nature of knowledge is relevant, suggesting that personal knowledge is shaped by the unique experiences of those involved, and the thesis also aims to explore how individuals working in independent music festivals perceive and value their knowledge.

Knowledge mapping has been used as a tool within knowledge management, for visualising knowledge flows and identifying areas of knowledge and expertise within organisations, to facilitate innovation and creativity to support achieving competitive advantage (Menaouer and Nada 2020). Stadler (2021, p71) proposes that whilst knowledge itself cannot be managed, it can be optimised by creating an environment that supports knowledge interactions. This view is also supported by Hislop (2013) who recommends investing in methods for sharing practice-based knowledge [experiential knowledge (Borkman, 1974)]:

- Developing a knowledge sharing culture (rewarding people for sharing).
- Facilitating the development of organisational communities of practice.
- Providing forums (electronic or face-to face) which create opportunities for social interaction between people.
- Implementing a formalised mentoring scheme to pair experienced and inexperienced workers.

It is important here to recognise the influence of social capital, the quality of interactions between people (Daft 2016) and the impact of variations in common perspectives to be able to recognise, combine and share knowledge in order to create new knowledge, which is central to the knowledge sharing process (Gold, Malhotra & Segars, 2001). This is because the more often organisations implement knowledge management projects, the more the processes become familiar, and although the variety and complexity of the knowledge and methods may impact upon the

efficiency, a flexible organisation should succeed in successfully combining its knowledge (Gold et al., 2001). These concepts are explored further in section 2.7.2.

The literature reviewed suggests that in the competitive landscape of independent music festivals, effectively predicting and responding to uncertainty and change requires recognising and building knowledge capacity (Ceruti et al. 2019) and implementing processes to utilise knowledge resources effectively, which echoes the original aspirations of Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell (1997) and Senge (2010) for learning organisations. However, the literature review has considered knowledge mostly in general terms, so far. To identify how knowledge within independent music festival organisations could be optimised to drive success, a closer examination of the various aspects of knowledge presented in the literature follows in the next section.

2.4 Aspects of Knowledge

A review of knowledge management literature reveals several dichotomies, notably those between explicit and tacit knowledge, individual and collective (or organisational) knowledge and private and public knowledge and procedural and declarative knowledge (Gamble 2020). These contrasting aspects of knowledge are addressed next.

2.4.1 Explicit and Tacit Knowledge

Knowledge within organisations can be measured in terms of its explicitness, comprising three sub-constructs: codifiability, teachability and complexity and the sharing and transfer of knowledge become more difficult with the level of tacitness (Chua 2002). Explicit knowledge refers to information or knowledge that can be articulated in formal language, mathematical expressions and documents (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995) in books, manuals, papers and checklists, or created and stored for individuals or teams to access and share (Goffin and Koners 2011; Gordon 2022; Panahi et al. 2013). In contrast, tacit knowledge is generalised as that which cannot easily be explained or communicated in written format, due to its 'sticky nature'

(Chugh, Bulucea, Mastorakis & Mladenov, 2018) and is borne of experience, values and personal perceptions and is context dependent (Werner, Dickson, & Hyde, 2015).

Tacit knowledge is described as the development of skills, with intuition a key feature (Ambrosini and Bowman 2001). It is 'unarticulated and tied to the senses, movement skills, physical experiences, intuition, or implicit rules of thumb' (Nonaka and von Krogh 2009b, p. 635) and is 'a central pillar of practical intelligence' (Asher and Popper 2019, p. 265). It is also described as a 'personally constructed blend of knowledge and experience, often developed over years of professional practice' (van Houten 2023, p. 198). Peterson and Van Fleet (2004), describe skill as the ability to perform specific behavioural or cognitive task such as using IT equipment, giving presentations or demonstrating how to use particular work-related equipment, usually requiring some motor skills. According to Peterson and Van Fleet (2004) both behavioural and cognitive skills consist of three key aspects (*Italics* denote researcher's emphasis):

- The existence of a domain specific knowledge base – *involving explicit/implicit knowledge*
- A method for accessing this knowledge – *including environment*
- The ability to enact a set of behaviours or cognitions using the retrieved knowledge to perform the given task – *involving tacit knowledge*

The authors differentiated between the first two essential prerequisites to perform the task and the third aspect which is the observable skill. In other words, the authors suggest that a skill may be seen by others but is not necessarily easy for the performer to articulate. However, as stated, to leverage the potential of tacit knowledge for long-term competitive advantage, these details need to be part of a strategic framework, which means understanding the nature of knowledge held by individuals and where it is lacking, recognising opportunities to create and utilise it, which in turn relies on clear and knowledge-appreciating leadership (Nonaka et al. 2000).

A potential issue arises if important tacit knowledge remains confined to a single individual and is not shared others in the organisation (Puusa and Eerikäinen 2010). Moreover, there is a risk when employees retire or leave, taking this resource with them (Jennex, 2014). For festival organisations, the risk is increased as due to seasonal staff and sub-contractors moving on after the festival (Stadler et al. 2014b).

The distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge is important to note, although not always addressed in knowledge management-related literature. Much of the literature about knowledge focuses on explicit knowledge, in the form of data, document and information management systems and processes (Coakes 2006; Khan et al. 2015; Nadkarni 2008; Zhao and Detlor 2023). However, Frank and Ribiero (2014) note the importance of addressing explicit and tacit knowledge together, drawing on Davenport and Prusak's (1998; Davenport and Prusak 2006) view of knowledge as a blend of experience, values, contextual information and insights acquired by individuals or teams over time. Whilst they do not use the terms explicit or tacit knowledge, they emphasise that knowledge resides not only in documents, routines and activities but also in the minds of people. Chuang et al. (2016) agree that it is not a case of one or the other, but 'rather than conceptualize knowledge as either tacit or explicit, it is more appropriate to view knowledge processed within teams as varying along a continuum that ranges from low tacitness (most explicit) to high tacitness (least explicit)' (p 531) illustrated by Stadler (2021) in Figure 2.

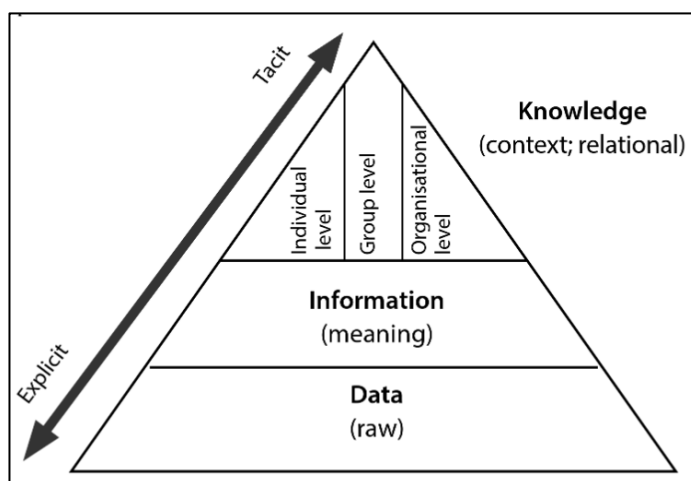


Figure 2. Dimensions and Levels of Knowledge
(Stadler, 2021, p. 154).

Perspectives about the tacitness and dimensions of knowledge, and views on overgeneralisations about knowledge are addressed in section 2.5. Data is the basest form of knowledge, which becomes information when meaning is attached to it. According to Stadler (2021) personal tacit knowledge can exist at the individual level, and shared tacit knowledge can also exist at the group or organisational level. Therefore, understanding the theoretical distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge is important, as is recognising that they are both aspects of the same phenomenon.

Successful management of the interplay between explicit and tacit knowledge is essential to value creation and business success (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995) and the following contrasting perspectives reflect the broader opinions in the literature. One perspective of value creation advocates for strategy focused, in-depth quantitative research, eliminating judgment and bias suggesting that that hunch, intuition and gut feelings are outdated (Martin, 2010). An alternative view rejects the 'McDonaldisation' approach to business, where all processes are systemised, and instead promotes creativity, innovation and design, asserting that intuition and 'the art of knowing without reasoning' lies at its core (Martin, 2010, p38).

2.4.2 Individual and Collective Knowledge

Personal knowledge can be viewed from two epistemological perspectives of possession and practice; where personal knowledge is possessed, it is an intangible personal asset and cognitive capacity. The practice view relates knowledge to actions, to what people do, which can also be interpreted as skill (Razmerita, Kirchner & Nabeth, 2014). Similarly, and considered from a human sciences perspective, personal knowledge determines what (Asher and Popper 2019, p. 265) a person can or cannot do; what someone with knowledge can successfully do, compared with someone with a lack or poor knowledge (Adloff et al. 2015). Collective knowledge, or organisational knowledge is used to mean the total knowledge, explicit and tacit that is common to all members of a team or organisation, and can relate to knowledge of mission, vision, rules, regulations, procedures (Taylor 2007) or 'invisible structure' (Razmerita et al., 2014, p 76). Collective knowledge is prioritised by some as a

strategic asset over individual knowledge as it is transformed to become organisational wisdom through shared experiences competencies and expertise (Bollinger and Smith 2001; Chua 2002).

2.4.3 Private and Public Knowledge

Private knowledge, that which is contained or is proprietary to the organisation (Chua, 2002) can be a source of competitive advantage if it is analysed and found to be valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). On the other hand, public knowledge, such as best practice, health and safety legislation, sustainability and generic ways of organising events (or events organisations), that were once private knowledge, are not considered sources of competitive advantage as they are not unique to the organisation and can be accessed by many (Chua, 2002). However, in line with Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (1959) a lack of such threshold knowledge or capability may cause competitive disadvantage or failure if they are not employed (Hill et al., 2015). Further dissemination of tacit knowledge is necessary to evaluate its potential as a distinctive resource, creating opportunities for festivals to outperform their rivals on this basis (Johnson et al., 2014) and the most appropriate methods and environments to elucidate it, which are considered in section 2.5 Aspects of Tacit Knowledge.

2.4.4 Procedural and Declarative Knowledge

Saks, Ilves and Noppel (2021) and Gamble (2020) describe procedural knowledge as know-how or practical knowledge, involving skills and the ability to achieve tasks, and declarative knowledge as know-that or descriptive and formal. There are clear similarities in these descriptions to those the distinctions and descriptions of tacit and explicit knowledge, again underlining the complexity and perspectives the concept of knowledge. Kirkhart (2001) examined the role of declarative and nondeclarative (understood as procedural) knowledge and their roles in understanding intentional (or explicit) learning processes and unintentional (or implicit) learning processes. The concept of intention to learn something specific (e.g. for a test) and unintentional (or experiential and gained or learned by doing

something) is interesting for this thesis in the context of gaining festival knowledge through experience.

2.5 Aspects of Tacit Knowledge

2.5.1 Origins and Developments in Tacit Knowledge Literature

This section seeks to clarify different aspects of tacit knowledge, which are often overlooked in the literature or discussed under the broad umbrella of ‘tacit knowledge’ (Alexia and Mihiotis 2012; Buckley 2013; Herschel et al. 2001; Scully et al. 2013; Shaw and Williams 2009; Wei 2010; Yuqin et al. 2012). Addressing this issue serves to facilitate deeper understanding of firstly, knowledge that is potentially being lost or underutilised in event and festival organisations through a lack of awareness or attention, and secondly, to enable greater understanding of the types of knowledge involved in the creation, delivery and improvement of festival experiences and organisations. Or, as eloquently stated by Muñoz, Mosey, & Binks (2015) ‘how best to identify and transfer knowledge that maintains the performance of an organisation and how to better create new knowledge to enhance the future performance of that organisation’. Therefore, development of the concept of tacit knowledge and propositions in the literature are reviewed next.

Tacit knowledge has been considered in several research disciplines and fields including Philosophy of Science, Sociology of Science, Theology, Philosophy of Sociology, Knowledge Management and Organisation Theory (Schmidt 2012). Following earlier work on personal knowledge in 1958, Michael Polanyi is widely recognised as introducing the concept of tacit knowledge and the explicit–tacit continuum in 1966, cited in many publications about tacit knowledge (Ambrosini and Bowman 2001; Bhardwaj and Monin 2006; Gascoigne and Thornton 2013; Leonard and Sensiper 1998; Muskat and Deery 2017; Organ et al. 2015; see Zander and Kogut 1995). Born in Budapest in 1891, Polanyi studied medicine before moving into chemistry and working as a scientist in Berlin. He was then driven towards a philosophical path, impacted by soviet ideology under Stalin at the time, which ‘denied justification to the pursuit of pure science’ and led Polanyi to reject the strict

control of scientific research and engage with the 'Society for Freedom in Science' and the phenomenon of personal knowledge (Schmidt 2012, p.174).

In the context of specific skills and practices employed in what he called 'pure science' Polanyi proposed the concept of tacit knowledge and the philosophical dichotomy between explicit 'knowing what' at one extremity of the continuum and tacit 'knowing how' knowledge at the opposite (Schmidt 2012, p. 174). His fundamental argument is that it may not be possible to objectively or explicitly formalise all knowledge due to the inability of people to put into words some of the knowledge they hold in their heads. Polanyi's most commonly cited phrase is 'we can know more than we can tell' (Collins, 2010). However, some authors have strayed from the original meaning proposed by Polanyi and use the term tacit knowledge in a generalised manner, to describe any kind of knowledge that has not been verbally explicated or written down, such as easily communicated, unshared information.

2.5.2 The Value of Tacit Knowledge

As stated, knowledge, by itself, cannot create value, but value is created by people utilising knowledge effectively (Yang & Farn, 2009). Knowledge was identified earlier in the literature review as a key source of competitive advantage (Frank & Ribeiro, 2014; Grace & Butler, 2005; Huo, Cai, Luo, Men, & Jia, 2016) and as both a resource and a capability (Luiz and Lemos 2010). Furthermore, tacit knowledge is claimed to be 'the most important source of competitive advantage for an individual, a group, or a firm' (Yang & Farn, 2009, p. 210). This literature review finds that most of the tacit knowledge literature focuses on its definition, management or the value to the organisation, with little attention paid to the personal value of tacit knowledge. One exception is a study from van Houten (2023, p. 199), who also found the focus to be on organisational performance, which he states is an understandable but narrow view, 'coloured by competition, production and KM [knowledge management]' which 'emphasises economic value over, for instance, behavioural or developmental value'. Pertinent to this thesis, if the products of festival design are festival experiences (Berridge 2010) then the tacit knowledge input of experienced event organisers to the event creation process offers a valuable contribution to event and

organisation success, measurable through positive ticket sales and attendee feedback.

Moreover, effective application of tacit knowledge can support operational efficiency and effectiveness (Stadler and Fullagar 2016) also contributing to positive audience experiences (or avoiding negative ones). These points indicate the value of experiential, tacit knowledge to festival design and delivery. However, operational competence must be supported by strategic and managerial competence for event organisations to grow and sustain their financial position and respond to their external environment (Wickham et al., 2021). The researcher has identified a gap in the literature linking tacit knowledge to event and festival business success and whilst some authors have expressed that tacit knowledge is important to events and festival organisations (Muskat and Deery 2017; Stadler et al. 2013; Stadler 2021), its value to the festival business or individuals working in that sector has not yet been fully explored.

2.5.3 How Tacit is Tacit Knowledge?

According to the literature reviewed so far, explicit knowledge is accessible, structured and objective, whereas tacit knowledge remains subjective, embedded in personal experience and can be semi-conscious or unconscious (Leonard and Sensiper 1998). In other words, people have the potential to hold knowledge that is difficult to express or describe to others. For example, it is easy to email festival ticket sales data to a colleague but interpreting the data and understanding its implications for the delivery of an event requires procedural analytical skills and experience that are less easy or immediate to acquire and execute.

An important aspect of the relationship between explicit and tacit knowledge is that 'explicit knowledge must rely on being tacitly understood and applied' (Polanyi, 1966, p144), meaning that tacit and explicit knowledge interact, and knowledge creation relies on the interaction of both. Furthermore, it is suggested that there is always a tacit element of explicit knowledge (Leonard and Sensiper 1998; Panahi, Watson & Partridge, 2013) insofar as the comprehension of explicit knowledge requires some

implicit understanding of how to act upon it, and that even after it is shared, an element of knowledge always remains tacit (Muñoz et al. 2015). Some authors, for example Zander and Kogut (1995) refuted the notion of a single dimension of tacitness and proposed four characteristics of knowledge which can be measured to determine tacitness:

- Codifiability – the degree to which knowledge can be represented by symbols.
- Teachability – the degree to which knowledge can be taught.
- Complexity – the degree to which knowledge embodies multiple kinds of competencies.
- Systems dependence – the degree to which knowledge requires many different experienced people for its application.

Gascoigne and Thornton (2013) proposed three alternative principles to test the extent to which knowledge is explicit or tacit, is knowledge or simply information.

- The principle of codifiability - all knowledge can be fully articulated or codified in context-independent terms.
- The principle of inarticulacy - there can be knowledge that cannot be articulated.
- The principle of articulacy – all knowledge can be articulated, either in context-independent terms (i.e. it can be codified) or in context-dependent terms.

The authors conclude that tacit knowledge is ‘context dependent, conceptually structured, practical knowledge’ which should be respected as both tacit and knowledge (Gascoigne & Thornton, 2013, p 191).

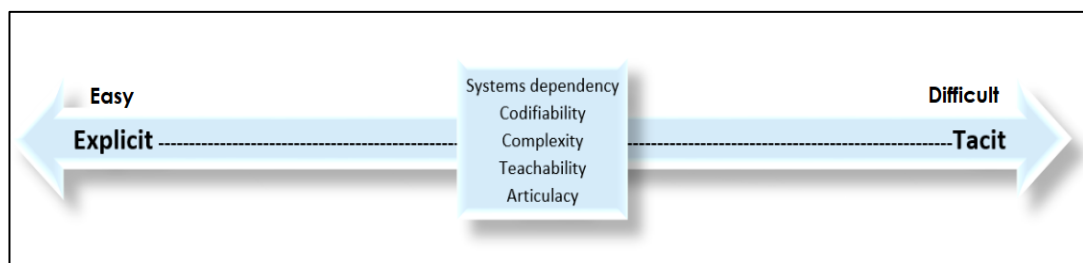


Figure 3. Principles of the Explicit – Tacit Knowledge Continuum

(Researcher’s interpretation)

Figure 3 draws on Zander and Kogut (1995), Gascoigne and Thornton (2013), Muñoz et al. (2015) and Chuang, Jackson & Jiang (2016) to illustrate the concept of the explicit – tacit knowledge continuum. Taylor (2007) concurs with Polanyi's argument that both explicit and tacit knowledge are simultaneously present in a person's knowledge, such as our knowing that we recognise a person's face, but not always knowing how we know that face. Therefore, the nature of tacit knowledge, difficult to articulate through words, text and numbers, makes gaining or sharing it in the workplace problematic, as it is based on experience and relates to procedural *knowing how* to do something (Saks et al. 2021). It has been proposed that taking a broad understanding of articulation to include linguistics and actions, means that theoretically, practical demonstration could serve as a potential form of tacit knowledge articulation (Yu 2015). Adopting Yu's permissive view of articulation suggests a case for using demonstrative concepts to capture in words and actions what is tacitly known. Furthermore, the use of metaphor and analogy, storytelling and cartooning have been proposed as a qualitative research method to elucidate tacit insights into how people experience a phenomenon (Beard and Rhodes 2002).

Although it is not tangible, some claim that know-how is measurable by capturing its creation, distribution and application, although investment in such knowledge projects can be costly, time consuming and rely on competent articulation of those involved (Bollinger and Smith 2001). However, the ambiguous and context-dependent nature of tacit knowledge (Hatch 2013) means that those who hold certain types of tacit knowledge may not only find it impossible to articulate their knowledge to share it (Gascoigne and Thornton 2013) but may also be unaware of it or how they gained it, underpinning the case for understanding and highlighting perceptions of tacit knowledge in independent music festival organisations.

2.5.3.1 Implicit Knowledge

So far, the distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge has been discussed, along with the observation that tacit knowledge is often generalised in the literature, to mean any knowledge which is not written down, verbalised or easy to explain (Taylor, 2007; Asher & Popper, 2019). Misunderstandings, generalisations and ambiguity

occur when the term tacit knowledge is used interchangeably with implicit knowledge that can be articulated but has not yet been (Agrawal 2006; Taylor 2007). However, this 'middle ground' is suggested to be implicit knowledge, where knowledge perceived to be tacit can be made explicit, through dedicated time and effort (Frappaolo 2008). An example is provided by Muñoz et al. (2015) who consider a typical company boardroom meeting that could be applied to an events or festival organisation. In the example, some knowledge is available explicitly as financial reports, market research, and other documents. Some declarable (able to be articulated) knowledge is not explicit at the start of the meeting but can be articulated by participating executives sharing verbal information that was not written or recorded in formal reports. This information is shared as implicit knowledge (Frappaolo 2008), becoming explicit in the process. According to the authors, where cognitive skill processes (procedural knowledge) are then employed to analyse and interpret the data or information in relation to the organisation's performance, making complex decisions about its use and meaning, this leans towards the tacit end of the spectrum. This is because it is based on experience, acumen, insight and synthesis of other explicit or tacit knowledge held by the executives, rather than being recountable information or knowledge more easily communicated. For the tacit dimension of knowledge to be developed it needs to be experienced, allowing personal meanings to emerge and be internalised (Spraggon & Bodolica, 2017).

2.5.3.2 Latent Knowledge

Latent knowledge is a similar concept to implicit knowledge and is again distinct from explicit and authentic tacit knowledge. The term was proposed by Agrawal (2006) in his examination of outcomes of experiments conducted by inventors at universities. Potentially valuable knowledge resulting from failed experiments, was not recorded and was being lost. According to respondents in the study, most of their experiments failed or partially failed, but due to the constraints of time and funding, the results were not codified. This type of knowledge is not truly tacit, as it could have been codified, but at the time was not. Agrawal states this is latent knowledge and 'is

valuable for climbing atop the shoulders of giants, advancing research, and, in the case of commercialization, developing the early-stage inventions into saleable products or processes' (Agrawal, 2006, p 64). Making efforts to uncover latent knowledge in festival organisations could help remove or reduce avoidable mistakes and could have significant benefits for operational and safety issues. The sharing of latent knowledge was emphasised by Agrawal as critical yet often not pursued.

An area of events and festivals practice that is often disregarded due to time and environmental constraints is event evaluation, which should include review and communication regarding all event outcomes from the planning and delivery stages (May, 2014). This implicit and/or latent knowledge is critical to event and festival designers for continuous improvement and to avoid repeating mistakes though a lack of information or knowledge sharing (Stadler, 2021).

2.5.3.3 Relational Tacit Knowledge

Collins (2010) proposed that the degree of resistance to tacit knowledge being made explicit could be described as weak (relational), medium (collective) or strong (somatic) tacit knowledge. Collins refers to weak tacit knowledge as relational tacit knowledge (RTK), proposing that this type of knowledge is comparable to latent or implicit knowledge, as knowledge that could be made explicit, or is 'explicable', but remains uncommunicated. Reasons for this may include individuals choosing not to share it, forgetting to share it or lacking the opportunity to do so. For example, Stadler (2021) suggests that on the run up to an annual event, induction and training of new staff may be poorly carried out due to time and organisational structure constraints. The researcher has experienced this directly working for an independent music festival, where although the role was familiar, processes and staff were changed each year, and there was an assumption that she would 'just pick things up'. In some cases, relational tacit knowledge is too complex to be easily verbalised, but it can be demonstrated or illustrated. Collins' (2010) concept of relational knowledge is also comparable with Agrawal's (2006) idea of latent knowledge, where individuals may be unaware of the value of certain knowledge, such as the way they carry out a certain procedure or process differently to a colleague. This may eventually be

recognised by one or both parties if they work closely together but may remain hidden if they do not, with implications for missed opportunities to improve practices or efficiency. Knowledge referred to in the literature as implicit knowledge also falls into the relational knowledge category, as it has the potential for explication, but has not yet been communicated.

2.5.3.4 Experiential Knowledge

Experiential knowledge was introduced as a new analytical distinction and analytical tool used to examine theoretical problems, in the context of 'self-help groups' such as Weight Watchers, Alcoholics Anonymous and others (Borkman 1976). Borkman defined experiential knowledge as know-how, 'truth based on personal experience of a phenomenon, rather than by discursive reasoning, observation or reflection on information provided by others' (1976 p. 445). Experiential knowledge is valid because it comes from personal participation, or lived experiences (Noorani et al. 2019) is unique and contextualised (Borkman 1976; Collins 2013).

By 2019, Noorani, Karlsson and Borkman had developed the concept of Deep Experiential Knowledge (DEK) (Noorani et al. 2019) to signify the meaningfulness and significance of 'embodied knowledge' and shared experiences in 'mutual aid groups'. A comparison can be made between mutual aid groups and communities of practice in the event and festival industry, where the aim is to understand problems and ways of dealing with them, based on others' experiences. According to Alvesson (1993) and Collins (2013), experiential knowledge can also be described as embodied knowledge or somatic knowledge, meaning bodily, practice-based knowledge that is very hard to articulate. A frequently cited example of this is Polanyi's (1966) description of the physical and interpretative aspects required to ride a bicycle, which cannot be achieved by simply reading instructions about balance and propulsion.

Other authors describe what could be interpreted as experiential knowledge, without explicitly using the term. For example, Hislop et al (2013) used the term practice-based knowledge, which they describe as embodied and complex, involving explicit and tacit knowledge, and constantly evolving as experience is gained, whilst

Stadler (2021) refers to 'learned on the job' knowledge. Nimkulrat, Groth, Tomico and Valle-Noronha (2020) suggest that experiential knowledge is gained through direct participation, involvement or interaction, and is pragmatic and based on individual experience, resulting from direct sensory experience (embodied) or through interactions or emotional ties with others (empathetic). Moreover:

'There is no alternative to learning through experimentation. Benchmarking and studying 'best practices' will not suffice—because the prototyping process does not involve just incremental changes in established ways of doing things, but radical new ideas and practices that together create a new way of managing' (Senge, 2010, p. 127).

Noorani, Karlsson and Borkman (2019) proposed that whilst experiential knowledge is gained through reflection on one's experiences, deep experiential knowledge is gained over time but developed through repeated experiences of one's own and others' experiences. In their research context of self-help groups, and they champion 'old timers' or long-term members for their adeptness at understanding the experiences of newer members, which, related to independent music festivals could involve new or temporary staff learning from experienced, core team members. Contextual understanding is important to experiential knowledge, as broad requirements of a seemingly simple task encompass explicit and tacit knowledge, as in the following excerpt:

'To spray chairs, humans (assuming they are not trained after the fashion of galley slaves) have to understand what chair spraying means. They have to know that paint costs money and should not be wasted, they have to know what a satisfactory job looks like—how thick the paint should be on the surfaces, which are the important surfaces and which less important (which in turn depends on an understanding of how chairs are used), and so forth. So, chair spraying depends on an understanding of human society, economics, and sitting' (Collins, 2010, p. 71).

This analogy can be applied to independent music festival organisers using experiential knowledge of the broader festival context and environment in which their festival operates, as well as explicit specialist technical knowledge (Collins, 2010; Friest, 2013) such as logistics, budgets and scheduling. Therefore, experiential knowledge can involve somatic, embodied skills, gained through practice over time and is hard to articulate. It can also be relational, involving explanations and interactions with others and 'learning on the job' (Stadler, 2021), which may include both physical and verbal learning (Collins, 2010).

Due to the temporal aspects of independent music festivals, the changing cultural, financial and physical environment in which they operate, the research questions explore the knowledge requirements of festival experience creators. Expertise is required for safe and successful events and festivals (Bladen, Kennell, Abson & Wilde, 2018). However, Senge (2010) described the concept of personal mastery, which he states is 'grounded in competence and skills' but 'means approaching one's life as a creative work, living life from a creative as opposed to reactive viewpoint' (p. 71).

So far, the literature review has considered types of tacit knowledge and clarified the different labels accorded to them, explored the cognitive and technical dimensions, and that tacit knowledge and skills are developed over time, through experience. A comprehensive summary of the main points of the literature is presented in the concluding section of this chapter. The process of learning through experience is considered in more detail in section 2.7.1 of the literature review, Theory of Experiential Learning.

2.5.4 Cognitive and Technical Dimensions of Tacit Knowledge

A paradox emerges from the reviewed tacit knowledge literature, in the potentially futile pursuit of trying to explain what is stated to be unexplainable (Collins, 2010). Nonetheless, the phenomenon has been studied by authors seeking to understand and explain it. Further segregation of tacit knowledge was proposed by Castillo (2002) in a four-category typology of tacit knowledge, outlined in Table 2:

Type of Tacit Knowledge	Description
Nonepistemic	Truly inarticulate forms of knowledge, the result of implicit learning
Sociocultural	Systems of knowledge or knowing. Collective knowledge
Semantic	Unverbalized, implicitly known meaning of words, acts and other phenomena
Sagacious	Tacit forms of knowing that emanate in an acute and keen practical sense (spontaneous awareness of solutions from unconscious cues)

Table 2. Typology of Tacit Knowledge (Castillo, 2002)

These specific categories of tacit knowledge types may serve to untangle the concept of tacit knowledge from an academic perspective but for practical application, the terminology may not be constructive for event professionals.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1994) perceived two dimensions of tacit knowledge: cognitive and technical. Their cognitive dimension encompasses beliefs, ideas, values, mental models and intuition, with the technical dimension related to know-how, practical skills and informal expertise, recognised in the literature as aspects of tacit knowledge. The cognitive dimension may be experienced unconsciously, operating under the radar of awareness and too quickly for us to intentionally access (Lakoff and Johnson 1999), but it could be argued they inform the approach taken to aspects in the technical dimension. Moreover, two types of cognitive tacit knowledge have been proposed, which can therefore occur subconsciously: autonomous sensory and motor functions and perception. This includes activities such as reading, driving a car or typing and implicit sociocultural knowledge - gained through experience, which become automatic through practice, such as 'non-verbal communication, etiquette, understanding humour and behaviour at rituals and ceremonies' (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, p. 13). Developing Nonaka and Takeuchi's 1994 model, Panahi et al (2013) proposed a comprehensive set of tacit knowledge components represented in Figure 4.

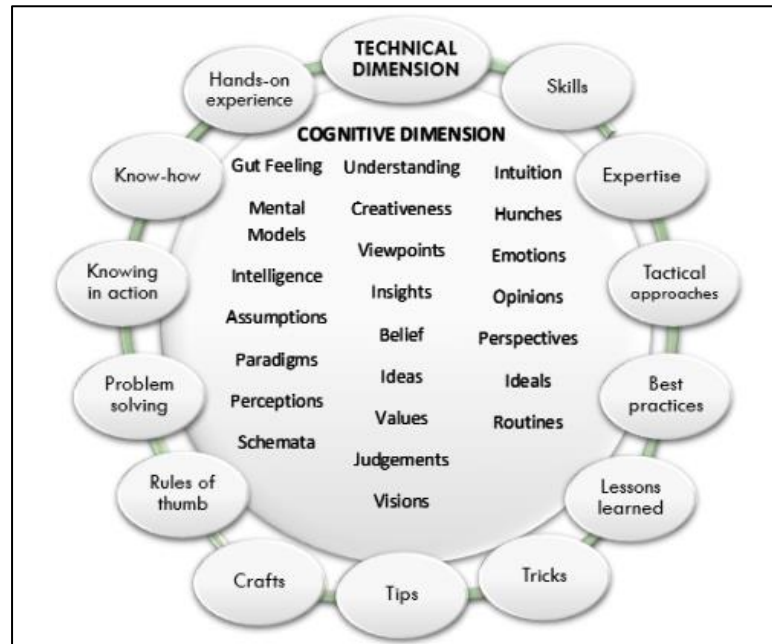


Figure 4. Two Dimensions of Tacit Knowledge.

(Researchers illustration of Panahi et al. 2013, adapted from Nonaka, 1994).

This model may be helpful as a tool for examining tacit knowledge in festivals, however, some of the components contain potentially explicable, articulable aspects, such as lessons learned, best practices, tips, tricks, viewpoints, routines, opinions, and are therefore more identifiable as relational knowledge (discussed shortly in 2.5.8). This infers a deviation from Polanyi's tacit knowledge meaning of 'cannot tell' and further exacerbates some of the tacit knowledge 'muddle' (Schmidt, 2012) and 'conceptual vagueness' (Asher & Popper, 2019). Furthermore, different interpretations about cognitive aspects of tacit knowledge exist. Ward (2004) described cognitive skills as evaluative processes such as problem solving, decision making or appraising performance, where Panahi, Watson and Partridge (2013) identified problem solving as belonging to the technical dimension. Decision-making is not explicitly included by Panahi et al., (2013) but is arguably implied in 'problem solving', 'knowing in action' and 'tactical approaches'.

It could also be argued that creativeness, identified as a cognitive aspect of tacit knowledge is relevant to festival experience design and to technical aspects such as problem solving. Ward (2004, p.185) suggests creative cognition to generate novel or original ideas and implies that creativity involves tacit knowledge insofar as it is 'a

complex enough phenomenon that the structures and processes underlying novel idea generation will not be enough to explain it fully.’ This is further supported by Nonaka (1994), proposing that cognitive experience is embodied and as such, tacit knowledge is enhanced by the interaction of physical and mental aspects of the same experience, and where shared experiences occur, they create ‘co-experiences’ which deepen learning and positively impact group dynamics.

Attempting to represent a phenomenon such as tacit knowledge, which is intangible and in its most authentic state, difficult to represent in a two-dimensional format such as that in Figure 4, is reminiscent of Collin’s (2010) paradoxical thoughts about attempting to explain the unexplainable. Nonetheless, Collins (2013) developed a three-dimensional model entitled the Expertise-Space diagram, in an effort to distinguish between ubiquitous and specialist expertise, based on exposure to tacit knowledge. In Figure 5, the esotericity, or size of the group with some specialised knowledge, interacts with the exposure to the environment where the tacit knowledge can be gained, to influence the level of accomplishment by an individual or a collective.

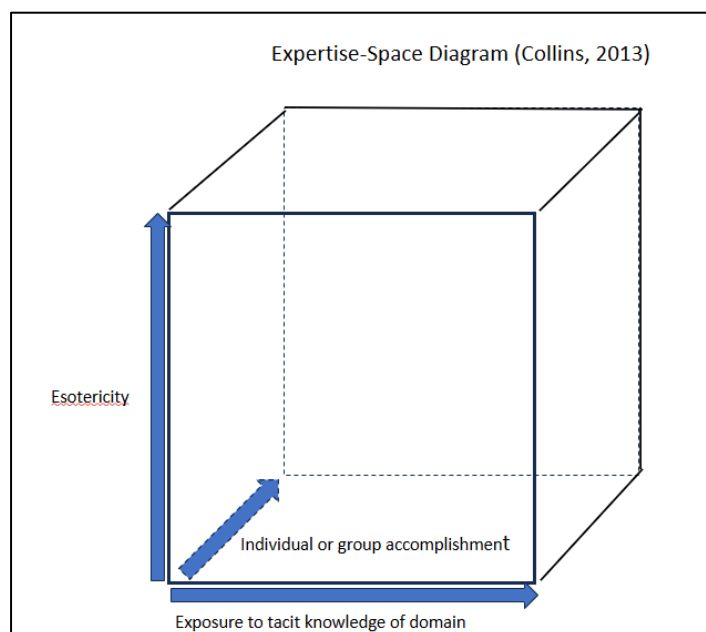


Figure 5. Expertise-Space Diagram.

(Based on Collins, 2013)

The vertical esotericity axis ranges from 'ubiquitous domains, such language-speaking or literacy at the bottom and things like gravitational wave physics at the top' (Collins, 2013, p. 257).

Collins (2013) applied the model to various scenarios, including chess-playing, education, car-driving and learning a foreign language to point out the three-dimensionality of expertise, the different trajectories that ensue on a learning journey, and the influence of others in gaining personal tacit knowledge.

Cognitive domains introduced in the three-dimensional model include individual skills acquisition, interactional expertise and gaining intuitive, experience-based tacit knowledge, echoed in Friest's view (2013) that the journey from novice to master is impossible to achieve without exposure to tacit knowledge. Furthermore, the ability to contribute expertise to a knowledge domain relies on relevant technical capabilities, often the result of specialised training and experience. Collins likewise acknowledges that specific skills may be embedded in a community of practice and that technical know-how is transmitted through apprenticeship and practice (Collins 2013). This seems to suggest that gaining expertise is not only about possessing specialist knowledge or technical skills but involves a combination of cognitive understanding and technical ability. An example of this could be navigating a festival's complex logistical challenges to deliver experiences tailored to audience preferences.

In another approach to explaining the fusion between different types of tacit knowledge, the Onion Model (Asher and Popper 2019) offers a further conceptualisation of tacit knowledge. It may facilitate comprehending the technical and cognitive dimensions of tacit knowledge more easily as fluid and interactive, operating between layers of consciousness. In the Onion Model, tacit knowledge is conceived as a 'multilayer phenomenon', a 'more integrative view of tacit knowledge' and 'a hierarchical and dynamic phenomenon' (Asher and Popper 2019, p. 266), compared to the linear explicit-tacit continuum more prevalent in the literature (Muñoz et al. 2015; Stadler 2021; Taylor 2007; Zander and Kogut 1995).

According to the authors, experiencing is central to the development of 'practical intelligence and organisational learning' (Asher & Popper, p. 271).

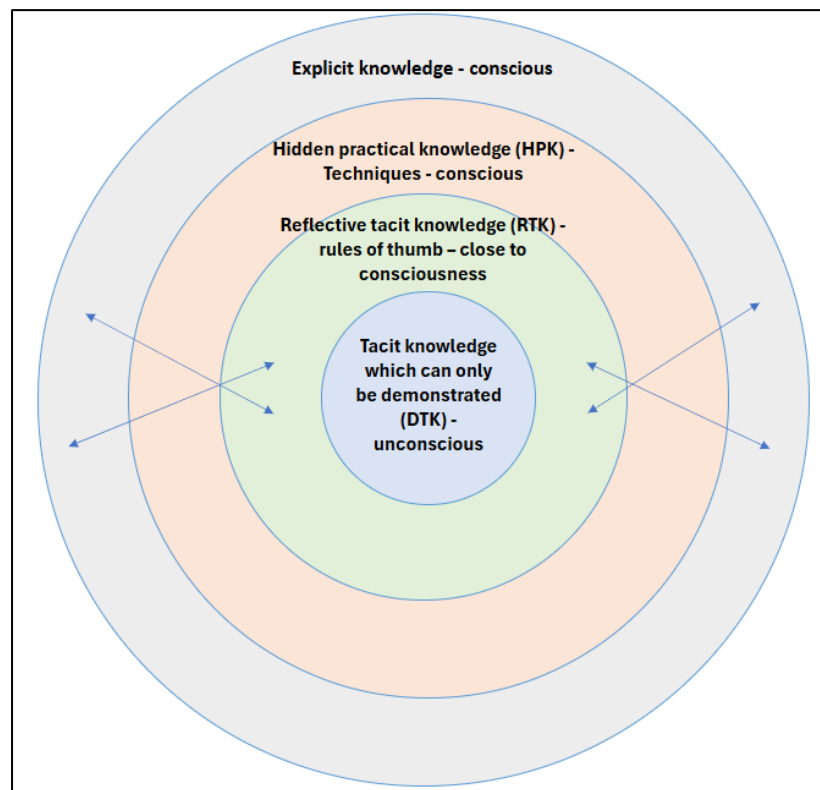


Figure 6. The Onion Model.

(Researcher's illustration of Asher and Popper 2019).

The outer layer represents explicit knowledge at the conscious level, which perhaps could be more appropriately explained as *available* at a conscious level. The hidden practical knowledge layer is comparable with relational knowledge (Collins, 2010) implicit knowledge (Taylor, 2007) or latent knowledge (Agrawal, 2006), as that which can be communicated but has not yet been. The reflective tacit knowledge layer also seems to apply to relational, implicit and latent knowledge, but Asher and Popper suggest this type of knowledge cannot be as easily communicated. It is said to be close to consciousness and discoverable through more intense training, experimentation or investigation, to develop 'rules of thumb' that can then be shared and implemented as a form of double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1996) where, rather than simply fixing problems, root causes, practice and systems changes are enabled. The central core represents the 'deepest' tacit knowledge and skill, which

the authors suggest cannot be explained but can easily be demonstrated or, somewhat contradictorily, told through stories about actions.

This layer represents expertise that others can learn over time, through imitation and observation of others in a social learning context. In the Onion Model, Asher and Popper (2019) seem to focus on how knowledge is stored within individuals, but they state that conceptualising tacit knowledge as layers facilitates research methodologies for eliciting the different types. For example, hidden practical knowledge can be elicited by direct questioning such as interviews, and relational and demonstrable tacit knowledge can be shared through telling stories and imitation, aligning with theories of knowledge acquisition and transfer, discussed in section 2.7.2. Distinguishing between the cognitive and technical dimensions of tacit knowledge may be useful for practitioners in understanding aspects of their own or other people's tacit knowledge, prompting research questions about the extent to which know-how and skills may bring operational advantages to the festival and any associated personal benefits.

2.5.5 The Trouble with Tacit Knowledge

This section addresses the 'conceptual muddle' of the concept of tacit knowledge (Schmidt 2012, p. 163), an ongoing dispute in the literature also described as the 'conceptual dichotomy' (Asher and Popper 2019). Some authors propose that it is possible to explicate tacit knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995) whilst others argue that truly tacit knowledge is not easily expressed verbally and is only communicable by demonstration and gained through experience (Collins, 2010; Stadler, 2021).

Arguing against use of the often over-simplified explicit–tacit dichotomy (Muñoz et al., 2015) (for example Huang, Hsieh, & He (2014), in knowledge management literature), Schmidt (2012) asserts that the explicit-tacit dichotomy 'mystifies the concept of practical knowledge and skilful work practices' (p.164). He contests that the concept of tacit knowledge (also tacit knowing; tacit dimension) does little to help understand the issues. Collins (2010) similarly found that literature on tacit

knowledge was unclear in disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, artificial intelligence, economics and management. Furthermore, because the term tacit knowledge has been oversimplified, the ambiguity or misconception about it is compounded, including ontological debates about what it is, and epistemological discussions about whether it can, in fact, be captured (Asher and Popper 2019; Taylor 2007).

An examination of the historical concept in which Polanyi coined the term 'we can know more than we can tell' finds that it was originally intended to shield 'pure science' from external scrutiny and was not intended to invite research into knowledge practices, rather to 'ward off any such intrusion' (Schmidt, 2012, p. 164). Interestingly, Asher and Popper (2019) and van Houten (2023) also suggest that incorporating tacit knowledge research into organisation studies is a departure from Polanyi's (1966) original concept of individual knowledge accumulation, forming a new discourse around sharing and transferring of knowledge, rather than an expansion of the original.

The term tacit knowledge has been co-opted into managerial approaches as a way of discussing practical knowledge in vague terms and has become 'doubly equivocal and incoherent' (Schmidt, 2012, p. 164) and Polanyi's original dictum of 'we can know more than we can tell' is almost always cited without communicating an understanding of the original concept. Certainly, in the literature reviewed for this thesis, few, other than Schmidt (2012) and Collins (2010), presented any deeper explanation of the phrase, which may be a reflection the complex nature of Polanyi's writing on the subject, but suggests that a lack of deeper understanding may explain the ambiguity and incoherence identified by Schmidt (2012). This thesis addresses this issue, through its contribution to identifying the benefits of personal tacit knowledge accumulation in the independent music festival sector.

2.6 Knowledge and Creating Festival Experiences

Festival organisers are in the business of creating experiences, which are complex, multidimensional and interactive, involving individuals, groups and organisations,

and can extend to societies (Berridge, 2006; 2015; Beard, 2014; Beard, 2023). A study of 586 UK festival goers (Brown and Sharpley 2019, p. 707), highlighted the most important aspects for attendees [and requiring organisers' knowledge], were (in order): Atmosphere, the quality of music and performance, memorable experiences, quality of sound and lighting, feeling safe and secure. It is perhaps not surprising that for attendees, the least important aspects were having a commercial experience, having access to VIP packages and upgrades, whether the festival is sponsored and/or by whom. This suggests a challenge for festival organisers in satisfying the preferences of audiences and balancing the financial and operational needs of the organisation. It also follows that achieving this balance requires explicit knowledge of site design and infrastructure, health and safety and their audience preferences and tacit knowledge such as judgement, decision making and assessing crowd dynamics, for example.

Getz, Andersson & Carlson (2010a, p. 47) previously proposed a model for understanding and creating knowledge about festivals, which at the time, was intended to include 'everything a festival manager might need or want to know'. They also suggested major topics, foundation theories and concepts and research priorities for each of the areas Personal antecedents and choices, Outcomes and the impacted, Patterns and processes and Planning and managing festivals. Getz et al.'s major topics included some of the explicit knowledge about festivals discussed in section 2.6.1 and include logistics and operations, risk management, stakeholder roles, programming, potential economic and environmental impacts and measuring satisfaction and quality, common aspects in events and festivals textbooks (Bladen et al., 2018; Newbold 2019). These provide a comprehensive guide to the broad knowledge required by festival organisers.

Aspects pertaining more to tacit knowledge or skills identified by Getz et al (2010) as major topics in *The Festival Experience and Meanings* (p. 52), include organising and coordination, creativity in event design and themes, aspects of experience that impact on individuals or culture, understanding cultural and community influences, leadership and decision-making, managing relationships and stakeholders, and

understanding the market. Newbould (2019) adds the ‘ability to handle crises’ to expected leadership behaviours.

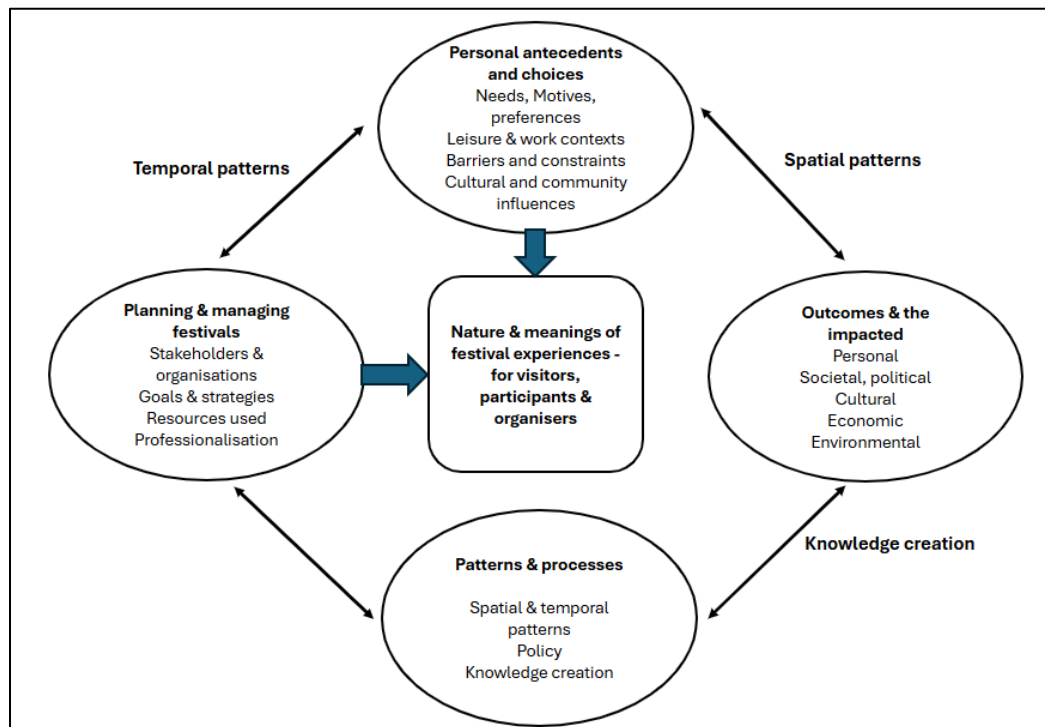


Figure 7. Framework for Understanding and Creating Knowledge About Festivals

(Getz et al., 2010).

The most relevant of Getz et al.’s (2010) research priorities to this study include:

- What is the wow factor
- What makes an event memorable or special
- Fostering creativity
- Determining the efficiency and effectiveness of various design methods and creative elements
- Learning from failures
- Core versus hygiene factors that explain satisfaction or delight
- Interactions between setting, program, management system and customer reactions.

However, their model could be contemporaneously developed to identify where tacit knowledge is employed, such as in understanding and analysing the following major topics listed by them: Business planning, feasibility of new events or plans,

understanding finance, budgets and controls, responding to emergencies. One industry publication (mpi.org, 2011), covers a wide range of knowledge and skills considered essential for professionals in the business events sector. Each competency is divided into subskills with overall 'common knowledge' (public knowledge) and indicative 'knowledge of' (explicit) and 'ability to' (some tacit) sections related to the specific organisation (private knowledge). They indicate that to become proficient in 'program design' takes five years, the competency is indicated as level five difficulty (the highest) and that the activity is performed routinely/regularly. The tacit elements of program design identified by the researcher include aspects such as analysis, decision making and creativity.

The literature review has shown that creating festival experiences requires a combination of explicit and more tacit types of knowledge and each type is important to inform legal, sales and operational activities. Further examination of how explicit and tacit knowledge can be used in the process of festival creation follows.

2.6.1 Explicit Knowledge in Events and Festivals

As previously outlined, explicit knowledge is generally accessible and articulable to others, structured, codified, objective, rational and created in the 'there and then' whereas tacit elements are subjective, experiential, held in people's heads, semi-conscious or unconscious and created in the 'here and now' (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998). Explicit knowledge and information management are essential for event planning and execution of safe events and (Singh et al. 2007). Documentation outlining legal compliance and operational processes are essential to festival success (Bowdin et al., 2011; Matthews 2016; Stadler et al. 2014b; Stadler 2021) and all must comply with stringent legal requirements and should adhere to best practice guidance, providing documentation for licensing, health, safety, and employment. Detailed event plans, safety and emergency plans, marketing plans, job specifications, site maps and other operational documents are compiled by festival organisers (Shone and Parry 2019).

The Licensing Act (2003) requires events of more than 499 attendees to successfully acquire a Premises Licence from the Local Licensing Authority, setting out the ways in which they will promote the four licensing objectives and consult with key services, such as police, security and first aid provision (gov.uk, 2021). In addition, most festivals work with a Safety Advisory Group (SAG) comprising of Police, Fire and Ambulance services, Welfare, First Aid, Traffic Management, Local Authority and other key stakeholders to determine the safest and most appropriate delivery of the festival (Bladen et al., 2018; Bowdin et al., 2011; Matthews 2016). Managing multiple stakeholders' information and requirements and maintaining extensive records seems to be unavoidable. However, event-specific information technology is available to manage large amounts of event planning and delivery documentation (Goldblatt 2005; Shelginskaya 2022; Silvers and O'Toole 2021). The use of technology has developed from word processed documents and spreadsheets to complex multi-agency management platforms such as Chronosoft events control software, which includes incident and emergency management and workforce coordination (chronosoft.com.au, 2024).

Additional systems include full event management platforms, such as Eventsair, which incorporate customer management systems, payment processing platforms and communications and social media integration (eventsair.com, 2024). Empirical research (Adema and Roehl 2010) revealed that explicit knowledge of technological factors such as new developments in audio visual capabilities impact on event design insofar as festival goers now have the opportunity to enjoy events from their television or other portable devices. However, the skill in integrating these into festival design appears to lie within the tacit dimension (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2001).

2.6.2 Experience Design and Creativity

People want experiences that excite their senses, move their hearts, and engage their mind (Beard, 2014), so festivals should have a 'wow' factor that makes them memorable, special, and ideally unique (Getz, 2010a; Mehmetoglu and Engen 2011; Pine 2011). Adopting this audience centric view, festival organisations pursuing a

differentiation strategy can appeal to their target audience (Porter 2004; Wickham et al. 2021), build loyalty and reputation and remain competitive. Therefore, if a festival organisation can strategically leverage its unique and difficult to imitate resources such as its brand and tacit knowledge, a competitive advantage is more likely (Barney and Clark 2007; Paliszkiewicz, 2020).

Early event design literature was practice driven (Berridge, 2006) providing a source of inspiration for event managers to create aesthetically pleasing settings in an abundant range of perspectives and technical guidance on how to create attractive and functional sets and events (Getz, 2016). Aspects of events and festivals that designers can manipulate (Getz, 2010) include décor, theme, use of space, choice of music, entertainment, food and beverage and flow of people, and were mostly related to physical aspects of an event (Matthews 2016; Silvers and O'Toole 2021) although Getz (2010) added atmosphere, services and consumables. Getz (2016, p. 261) expanded this view of event design to 'the creation, conceptual development and staging of an event using event design principles and techniques to capture and engage the audience with a positive and meaningful experience', suggesting the input of tacit knowledge into the process.

Festival organisers have the opportunity to make purposeful event design decisions, to shape their audience's experience and persuade them to spend the time, money and effort to attend their events (Adema and Roehl 2010). They can choose how to combine tangible resources to shape intangible experiences, anticipating the motivations, emotions and expectations of the target audience (Berridge 2006; Getz et al., 2010a; Tattersall & Cooper, 2014). Mulder & Hitters (2021) found differences between the expectations of festival attendees, who seek social and personal experiences and those of music concert attendees, who visit predominantly for artistic reasons and the unique live experience of a particular performer, highlighting the benefits of this level of insight. Experiences are created not only through the physical environment but through 'socialisation, sense of belonging/togetherness, enjoyment, excitement/thrills, novelty, festival atmosphere and love of the music' (Hoksbergen and Insch 2016, p. 86), with reputation and authenticity adding to

attendee perceptions (Rust 2020). However, several factors lie outside of the organisers' control, such as the social company, previous experience, preferences and level of participation of the attendees (Liu, Sparks & Coghlan, 2017). Furthermore, experiences are co-created between organisers and audiences (Crowther, 2014; Richards et al., 2015) and audiences also co-create their experience between themselves (Zhang et al. 2019). Designed, co-created event experiences lead to positive, memorable impressions (Crowther, 2014), and when attendees engage in additional activities such as paid-for photo opportunities at an event, their level of enjoyment increases (Liu et al. 2017).

Beard's (2014) Human Experience Model links the physical and personal ways that people experience and respond to their experiences, emotionally and cognitively suggesting the personal nature of experience is dependent on people's individual sensory perceptions, previous experiences and expectations. The concept guides event designers to consider the deeper personal impacts of their design decisions and thereby create more meaningful experiences for attendees. However, some authors suggest that experience per se cannot be produced or designed, only shaped, facilitated or constrained by what the designers create (Getz, 2016; Moilanen and Rainisto 2009). However, clear design objectives need to be set to influence and measure the outcomes of experiences (Berridge 2010; Richards et al., 2015; Crowther, 2014) and understanding whether the design has been successful is important for festival continuity. Therefore, an important aspect of designing or redesigning experiences is learning from previous iterations. Event and festival designs should be evaluated for success based on 'the senses of feeling, learning, being, and doing' (Gilmore, Pine & Conger, 1999) and where this is achieved, audiences' experiences are optimised, and overall event objectives can be met and exceeded (Mehmetoglu and Engen 2011).

Creativeness, a cognitive dimension of tacit knowledge (section 2.5.3.5), is central to design and stems from conscious, semiconscious and unconscious mental processes of sorting, grouping, matching and synthesising ideas (Leonard and Sensiper 1998). Creativity occurs when mental processes are applied to existing knowledge or where

new ideas are formed from the merging of previously separate concepts (Ward 2004). Therefore, because creativity is constrained by the confines of an individual's current experience or, 'the truism that one cannot produce something from nothing—ex nihilo nihil fit—applies to ideas as well as to tangible things' (Ward, 2004, p 176), it follows that independent music festival organisations will benefit if staff turnover is minimised, allowing the retention of existing tacit knowledge and to allow it to build and develop within its people. Therefore, successful event experience design requires the employment of divergent creative thinking processes (related to tacit knowledge) to generate design ideas, and convergent logical thinking (related to explicit knowledge) to manipulate resources and deliver the design safely, at the right time, place and cost (Leonard and Sensiper 1998; Tum 2005).

2.6.3 Tacit Knowledge and Expertise in Festivals

Beyond design and creativity, tacit knowledge is involved in shaping strategy and operational decision-making, for example in developing design expertise. Schindler (2015) suggests that expertise is not an innate skill, but one that is acquired following hours of diligent practice and years of experience. When knowledge is embodied or somatic (Alvesson, 1993; Collins, 2010) it is more tacit than relational knowledge because it is more deeply embedded and fundamentally linked to physical practice and bodily learning (Collins, 2010). Furthermore, expert designers possess superior skills in perceiving, formulating and solving problems and that 'the expert's conceptualization goes beyond knowing facts, rules, principles, guidelines, and examples when they solve problems' (Schindler, 2025, p. 2). Therefore, knowledge of design can be considered as tacit, implicit [somatic] and experiential (Nimkulrat, Groth, Tomico & Valle-Noronha, 2020). Tacit knowledge is also acknowledged as important in making sense and deriving meaning from data and information (Dampney et al. 2002), for decision making (Hodgkinson et al. 2009) and in the creative processes to develop innovations and a vision or mental model (Vink et al. 2019) of the festival. However, there is a lack of literature about the role of tacit knowledge in the context of managing operational aspects of music festivals, as well as the perceptions that festival organisers and their staff have about their knowledge

(Stadler et al. 2014b; Stadler 2021). That said, a closer look at some of the management and operation focused event and festival literature through a tacit knowledge lens, reveals that these discussions often contain unspoken or implied assumptions about the role of experiential knowledge and expertise. For example, Getz (2002) highlights the importance of strategic planning but does not explicitly acknowledge how festival organisers develop the intuitive decision-making skills needed to adapt to unforeseen challenges. Therefore, this thesis serves as an opportunity to study how tacit knowledge manifests in independent music festivals. Theories that may serve those in independent music festivals to understand the value of their tacit knowledge, and how it can be gained and transferred, are considered in the next section.

2.7 Theoretical Approaches

As stated, the aim of this thesis is to investigate how tacit knowledge is understood within independent music festival organisations, and the extent to which it is recognised, valued and utilised as a resource. Following the knowledge management principles of knowledge acquisition, distribution, interpretation and organisational memory in section 2.3, this segment explores theoretical approaches of Experiential Learning, Social Exchange, Organisational Learning and Knowledge Creation and Transfer for understanding knowledge exchanges between and within organisations, and the inherent implicit expectations individuals may have during the process (Zhao and Detlor 2023).

2.7.1 Theory of Experiential Learning

The cognitive aspects of tacit knowledge were explored in section 2.5.3.5, regarding its technical and cognitive dimensions. Here, experiential learning is explored as a ‘process of human cognition’ (Fenwick, 2000, p.244, cited in Beard and Wilson 2013) where learning and experience are inextricably linked. First proposed in 1984, the widely used and applied Experiential Learning Cycle is a ‘dynamic view of learning’ where learning is defined as ‘the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience’ (Kolb 2014, p. 47). In 2002, Beard and Wilson defined

experiential learning as ‘the insight gained through the conscious or unconscious internalization of our own or observed experiences which build upon our past experiences or knowledge’ but later, they broadened their definition to encompass cognitive processes engaged during interactions between an individual’s personal self and the external environment, stating ‘Experiential learning is the sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment’ (Beard and Wilson 2013, p. 25). According to the authors, the inner world includes physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual aspects and the environment includes a sense of belonging or actions performed in physical spaces, and within social, cultural or political contexts. Other definitions point to the role of experiential learning in decision making, such as learning that is rooted in our doing and experience and to the development of skills and personal psychographics. For example, ‘Learning which illuminates that experience and provides direction for the making of judgements as a guide to choice and action (Hutton, 1989, p. 51, in Beard & Wilson, 2013, p. 25) and ‘Learning that begins with experience and transforms it into knowledge, skill, attitude, emotions, values, beliefs, senses (Jarvis, 1999, p. 65, in Beard & Wilson, 2013, p. 25). Through these definitions, the relationship of experience to deep, embodied and tacit learning and its links to experiential knowledge (Borkman 1976; Noorani et al. 2019) are clear, but it is important in the context of this thesis to understand the process of the learning journey.

Figure 8 illustrates Kolb’s four stages in the learning cycle: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation. Experience ignites the connection between action and knowledge as Concrete Experience [doing] and Abstract Conceptualisation [learning] are proposed as modes of ‘grasping experience’ and Reflective Observation [reviewing] and Active Experimentation [applying] are modes of ‘transforming experience’ (Kolb 2014, p. 49). In the optimum scenario, a learner engages with each of the stages, and each can be revisited more than once, to produce implications or ideas about solutions or improvements to issues arising from reflection on prior actions.

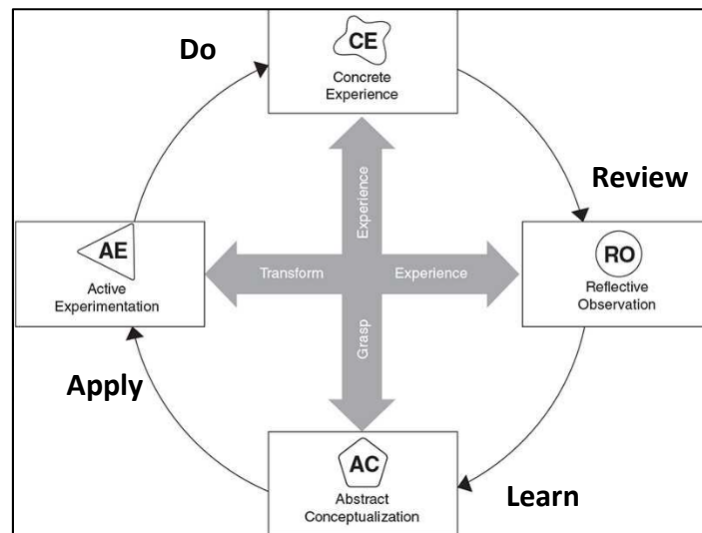


Figure 8. The Experiential Learning Cycle.

(Kolb, 2014, p. 48).

Dennison and Kirk (1990) simplified Kolb's original terminology to be more easily utilised by educators and outdoor learning practitioners. Their amended stage titles of 'Do, Review, Learn, Apply' were included by the researcher against Kolb's in the explanation above, to demonstrate that (without prejudice) that using this language may be more practical for those working in the festival industry to use. Unlike Kolb, Dennison and Kirk explicitly include the benefits of using the experiential learning cycle to recognise and capitalise upon a learners motivation to learn, through recognising mistakes and implementing improvements.

2.7.1.1 Learning from Failure

By following the learning cycle theory, experiential learning can be developed through making, recognising, learning from and rectifying mistakes (Beard and Wilson 2013). Getz (2002) and Carlsen et al. (2010) examined aspects of this to identify causes for festival delivery and business failure, finding common causes including financial, marketing, programming and inadequate planning aspects. Getz stated that 'knowing common reasons why festivals fail, or having an understanding of potential causes of failure, should help event managers avoid some of the pitfalls and aid in strategic planning' (2002, p. 209). Getz's identified that the main factors likely to cause festival failure included:

- Resource Dependency – Reliance on external sources of funding, dependence on a small number of suppliers or scarcity of supplies.
- Competition and Saturation – Festivals are subject to a loss of novelty and increased investment is required to maintain interest.
- External forces – The weather, rising costs
- Financial Resources – Poor fiscal management, overreliance on one source of money, lack of corporate sponsorship, insufficient attention on making profit.
- Inadequate Marketing
- Lack of Strategic Planning
- Incompetent Managers or Staff
- Lack of Strong Leadership

These factors, provide insights into some of the issues which may affect contemporary independent music festivals. Although not explicitly studied by Getz, his findings prompted the researcher to consider questions about the role of experiential knowledge in exacerbating or avoiding the issues listed above. Making mistakes can influence future actions and create positive or negative emotional responses, which in turn can impact the motivation or ability to learn (Moon 2004). However, mistakes are only valuable when lessons are learned from the experience (Beard & Wilson, 2013). In the experiential learning cycle, true learning is only achieved when an experience is repeated following reflection and with learning from the previous event applied (Kolb, 1984; Beard & Wilson, 2013). Alternative outcomes of making mistakes may include repeating the same mistake through a lack of knowledge gained, or avoiding the scenario altogether in future, because of negative emotions or trauma experienced through making the mistake (Beard & Wilson, 2013). According to Johnson et al (2014) experience develops competence at the individual and organisational levels, and efficiencies may be gained by reducing wastage of time and resources. Furthermore, a festival may benefit from the experience of specialist short-term contractors, such as security and stage management (Stadler, 2021), rather than spending time and money employing specialists or developing them in-house.

Understanding the impacts of failure and its role in experiential learning may help those in independent music festivals to avoid some of Getz's pitfalls. However, this understanding may be less effective unless its potential is appreciated and opportunities for experiential learning are maximised. Therefore, theories and environments that support tacit knowledge learning and growth are considered next.

2.7.2 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange theory originated in the fields of sociology and psychology, with foundational work by Homans (1958) who proposed that individuals prefer to maximise rewards and minimise costs in social exchanges, with reciprocity introduced as a key notion in the process. Blau (1964) expanded the concept to larger organisation settings, focusing on power, influence and dependency and suggested that individuals with more resources (including knowledge) have more power than those with less. Blau's main assumption was that 'the basis of social life is exchange' (Wyleżalek 2021, p. 3), which is applicable to the temporary and fluid nature of festival organisations (Stadler, 2021).

Contemporary Social Exchange Theory conceptualises about human behaviour and relationships and is often applied to customer or buyer to business (C2B) exchanges (Lee, Johnny Jiungyee et al. 2014; Tanskanen 2015) and organisational behaviour (Shiau and Luo 2012). The theory suggests that individuals and groups exchange resources based on their perceived value and potential benefits, with interactions between people having an element of reciprocation or cost-benefit to maximise their gains in a social system (Tanskanen 2015). The reward is measured in the relationship between the actors and can be tangible exchanges such as financial rewards or goods, or intangible such as trust, recognition, gratitude, affection (Zhao and Detlor 2023) or knowledge (Paliszkiewicz, 2020). One of the earliest forms of non-capitalist social exchange practices is barter, which is still used in some countries and less conventional economic communities and Local Exchange Trading Systems (Burke 2022). Social exchange theory suggests that interactions between parties can be asymmetrical, so that one party benefits more or less than another (Tanskanen, 2015). For example, an emerging artist may agree to perform at a festival for a low

or no fee to gain further exposure, whilst the festival benefits from the artists' followers purchasing tickets and names on the line up. Conversely, a high-profile artist may demand exceptionally high fees, posing financial risks to the festival if ticket sales are not forthcoming. For example, Tramlines Festival in Sheffield offers the winners of their 'Apply to Play' scheme paid slots at a future Tramlines festival, free studio recording time, 12 months of artist mentoring and a 7" pressed vinyl record of their music (tramlines.org, 2025). Topics of knowledge shared to the artist through the artist mentoring scheme include Being Your Own Boss, Navigating the Music Industry, Building Your Fanbase, Enhancing Creativity, Working with Labels, Sustaining Your Career (charmfactory.co.uk, 2025), suggesting valuable knowledge sharing and learning.

However, the reward of additional stage time brings additional experiential learning and opportunities to gain tacit knowledge. The Tramlines festival example demonstrates how Social Exchange Theory can be used to explain knowledge-sharing practices in the contemporary festival context. By offering opportunities to gain explicit and tacit knowledge, the festival establishes a mutually positive relationship with the artists, with the assumed intention that they will be motivated to engage and benefit from the opportunities. This aligns with the broader understanding that effective knowledge exchange relies on the ability and motivation of the donor source to share the knowledge, the nature of the knowledge, the dynamic within both parties and the 'absorptive capacity' or the capability of the recipient to absorb the knowledge, and their motivation to learn it (Easterby-Smith and Lyles 2008). The contribution of knowledge, and in particular tacit knowledge, to organisation success has been established through the literature review, and success may be further enhanced or impeded by the availability and efficacy of processes in place for knowledge sharing (Kacperska and Łukasiewicz 2020).

Figure 9, adapted from Easterby-Smith and Lyles (2008) illustrates this, in the context of dyadic knowledge transfer between one organisation and another.

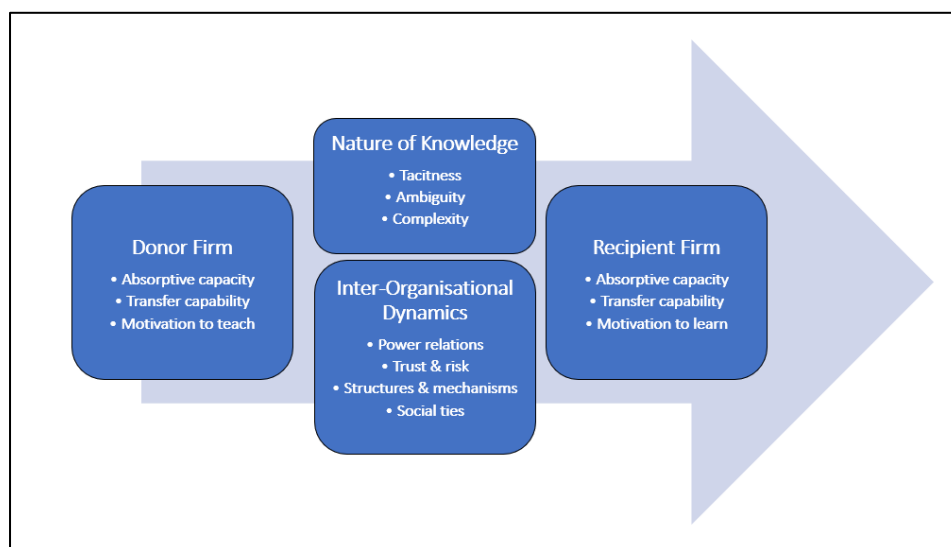


Figure 9. Factors Shaping Inter-Organisational Knowledge Transfer.

(Researcher's illustration, adapted from Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2008)

The model depicts the role of the organisation's capability to recognise the value of the knowledge being transferred and to use and integrate it. The model also recognises that the tacitness, ambiguity and complexity of the knowledge may offer challenges to exchange or transfer. However, the authors suggest that knowledge as a whole can be measured, contrary to others who agree that measuring tacit knowledge is problematic (Alvesson 1993; Bollinger and Smith 2001). The size and absorptive capacity (Easterby & Lyles, 2008) of an organisation can also influence the effectiveness of inter-organisational knowledge transfer (Van Wijk, Jansen & Lyles, 2008).

Moreover, it follows that the degree to which the donor-recipient knowledge is related to the recipient, impacts on the efficacy of transfer, with variable reciprocal benefits for both parties. Another model, Lawler, Thye and Yoon's (2006) four modes of knowledge exchange, is helpful to understand the extent to which reciprocation is explicitly defined and communicated between parties, along with expectations and motivations for sharing or exchanging knowledge for something in return:

- **Negotiated Mode:** Conditions for reciprocation are explicitly agreed upon before the knowledge exchange, with the recipient committing to a specific return, for example as part of a contract.
- **Reciprocal Mode:** Reciprocation is expected but not explicitly negotiated, relying on trust that the recipient will eventually return the favour, for example in less formally agreed arrangements or as part of a team.
- **Generalised Mode:** Knowledge is shared with the belief that others in the organisation—not necessarily the recipient—will share knowledge in return at a later time.
- **Productive Mode:** Knowledge is shared altruistically, with no expectation of reciprocation, based on the belief that everyone contributes toward a shared organisational goal, for example in a genuine learning organisation environment (Senge, 2010).

A fundamental aspect of social exchange, therefore, is trust, including trust between individual participants in the reciprocal and generalised modes above (Lawler, Thye & Yoon, 2006). As discussed, some literature supports the idea that tacit knowledge can be captured and shared through the development of knowledge management processes (Arisha 2013; Borodako et al. 2021). However, Social Exchange Theory suggests it is influenced by relationships between individuals, their motivations, the recipient's absorptive capacity and clarity of communication. Furthermore, the complexity and tacitness of knowledge, can impede progress and the most tacit knowledge requires time, opportunity, experience and willingness from all parties, as well as 'adequate, useful interaction and communication' (van Houten 2023, p. 201). If festival organisations make the time and effort to nurture their tacit knowledge capital and regard it as a source of inspiration (Bhardwaj and Monin 2006), it may lead to greater profitability, through creativity and innovation (Barney and Clark 2007) and personal and professional development (van Houten 2023). This is not a new concept as in 1995, Nonaka and Takeuchi challenged a previously held convention about the nature of Japanese organisations' success being derived from imitation and product development.

They contended that success lay in innovation and creating new organisational knowledge, with explicit knowledge being captured in printed material such as plans and manuals, and tacit knowledge learned through experience (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

2.7.2 Theory of Tacit Knowledge Acquisition and Transfer

The previous section considered how understanding Social Exchange Theory may help to facilitate exchanges of knowledge, including tacit knowledge, between individuals and organisations. This section explores theories proposed in the literature for transforming tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. However, given the previously identified ambiguity with which some authors seem to understand tacit knowledge, the degree to which this is achievable will depend on their interpretation. For example, Scully, Buttigieg, Fullard, Shaw & Gregson (2013, p. 2302) suggest that the process of explicating tacit knowledge is achievable through some straightforward, but potentially time consuming and costly methods, although this interpretation of tacit knowledge appears to refer to relational knowledge:

‘Turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge to generate creativity and new ideas can be achieved in a number of ways. These include integrating external knowledge, drawing on the knowledge of line managers and business partners and tapping into the local knowledge of staff through their personal interaction.’

One of the most widely cited models applied in the pursuit of turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (8809 citations on webofscience.com via the Sheffield Hallam University Library on 11.11.2024) was proposed by Nonaka (1994). The SECI model explains a process for gaining and transferring explicit and tacit knowledge through a spiral of four iterative processes: Socialisation, Externalisation, Combination and Internalisation. Nonaka proposed that knowledge can be transferred from explicit to explicit, explicit to tacit, tacit to tacit and tacit to explicit, and that both are essential to knowledge creation in organisations (López-Meza, Terán-Bustamante & Leyva-Hernández, 2024). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) contended that at the time, US firms concentrated on the explicit aspects of knowledge such as benchmarking and best

practice, whereas the Japanese focused on the tacit and moreover, had learned how to turn tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge.

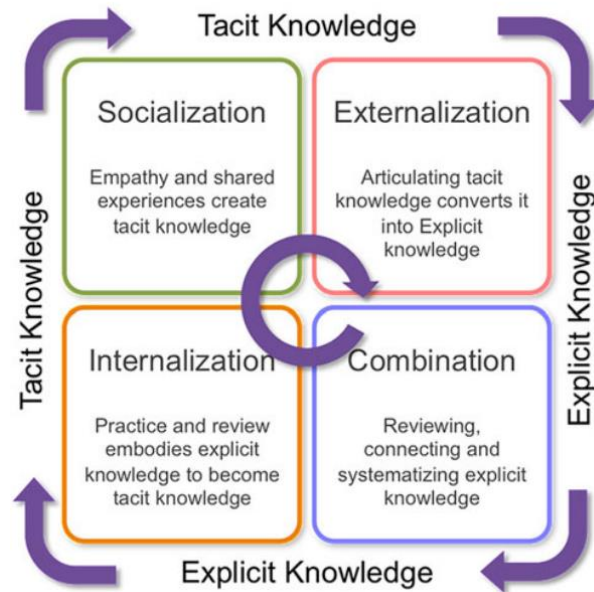


Figure 10. SECI Model of Knowledge Creation.

Nonaka & Takeushi, 1995 in Menaouer & Nada, 2020).

The SECI model has been applied in several studies related to explicit and tacit knowledge management (Anshari and Hamdan 2022; Cerchione et al. 2024; Sian Lee and Kelkar 2013) and the four interactive stages are:

- Combination refers to the process of converting explicit knowledge into even more systematic and complex forms of explicit knowledge.
- Externalisation is the conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge through verbalisation.
- Internalisation occurs when explicit knowledge is converted into tacit knowledge.
- Socialisation involves the conversion of new tacit knowledge into the existing base of tacit knowledge (Werner, Dickinson & Hyde, 2015, p. 175).

Experiential learning plays a significant role in the SECI model, as without some form of shared experience, 'it is extremely difficult for people to share each other's thinking processes' (Nonaka, 1994, p. 19). Therefore, the sharing of tacit knowledge

involves its transference between employees with the transfer mechanisms between people, spaces and time of critical importance (Huo et. al, 2016), and the more tacit the knowledge, the slower, more costly and more uncertain the outcome becomes (Grant, 1996).

The effectiveness of tacit knowledge transfer is also influenced by factors identified in Social Exchange Theory, such as timing, front-loading, backloading and the type of transfer method, highlighting the importance of 'interaction between source and recipient, personalised communication, recipient observation of the knowledge in use and recipient practice' (Szulanski, Ringov, & Jensen, 2016, p. 306). In the SECI model, social interactions between individuals and groups are also central to attempting to elucidate tacit knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995) a view upheld by supporters of the SECI model (Borodako et al. 2021; Stadler et al. 2014b; Stadler 2021), highlighting the value of good relationships between festival leaders, contactors and workers. The value of social interactions was highlighted by Greenwood and Fletcher (2021), who identified that shared participation in events creates strong and long-lasting connections between participants, strengthening existing relationships and building new ones. Whilst this study considered participants of open water swimming events, a comparison can be made between these groups and the temporary teams and individuals working over the festival period.

However, the SECI model does not specifically consider knowledge transfer between management and employees or between customers and employees, or reference the scale of tacitness proposed by others (Polanyi, 1966; Zander and Kogut, 1995; Gascoigne and Thornton, 2013; Muñoz et al., 2015; Chuang et al., 2016). Moreover, potential barriers to exchange between employers and employees or customers and organisations need to be considered. Furthermore, the SECI model has been criticised at a fundamental level for simplistic assumptions made about tacit to explicit knowledge conversion (Bandera, Keshtkar, Bartolacci, Neerudu & Bartolacci, 2017), a lack of clarity regarding knowledge creation processes (Li, Liu & Zhou, 2018), for paying too little attention to the personal or individual nature of knowledge

sharing (Razmerita et al., 2014) and for lacking rigorous empirical justification in sufficient organisational settings (Bandera et al. 2017; Chang et al. 2025). Besides a deliberate pursuit of knowledge through directed knowledge projects, learning may also occur implicitly when a person acquires knowledge without a conscious attempt to do so, and largely without explicit awareness of what was acquired (Taylor 2007). Furthermore, informal processes where explicit or tacit knowledge sharing occurs risk incorrect or inappropriate (for the task) knowledge being transferred. For example, 'Sitting with Nellie' relates to poor quality learning 'on-the-job, where rather receiving instruction from an experienced, qualified person, a learner is expected to gain experience by simply observing and spending time with a longer serving colleague - Nellie (Noon and Heery 2017). In this disorderly scenario, some of Nellie's bad habits may be transferred along with any expertise, due to a lack of competence in Nellie's training skills. In the Onion Model (Asher & Popper, 2019) discussed in section 2.5.3.5, knowledge was conceptualised as layers, increasing in depth of consciousness, and thereby, accessibility. This correlates with the Competence Hierarchy (Bowers, Petre & Howson, 2019) illustrated in Figure 11, when applied to gaining and the ability to share tacit knowledge.

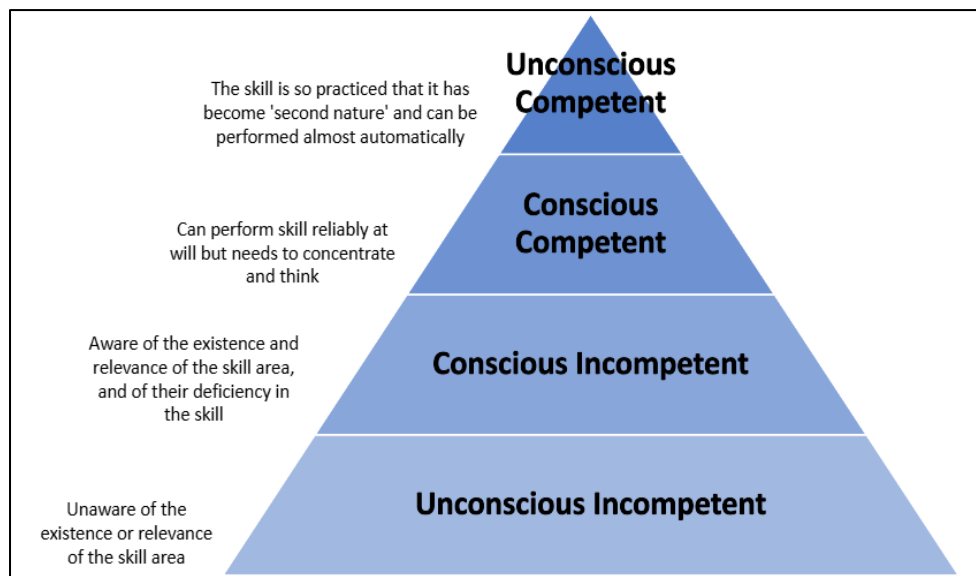


Figure 11. Competence Hierarchy.

(Researcher's illustration of Bowers, Petre & Howson, 2019)

Bowers, Petre & Howson (2019) applied the model to the development of skills, where learners progress from a state of unconscious incompetence, being unaware that the skill area exists or that it may have some relevance for them, to conscious incompetence, where they are aware of the skill, its relevance, and also that they are not proficient in that skill. With practice and understanding, learners may progress to the state of conscious competence where, with concentration and conscious effort, they can perform the skills and move to the final stage of unconscious competence, where they become so proficient in the skill that it is performed without conscious effort or even awareness. Conscious competence may then be relatively easily transferred as declarative explicit knowledge (Asher and Popper 2019; Nonaka 1994; Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Scully, Buttigieg, Fullard, Shaw & Gregson, 2013; Stadler 2021). Explanation may serve to elicit procedural, relational knowledge and demonstration or imitation may facilitate procedural tacit knowledge transfer (Asher and Popper 2019; Kirkhart 2001; Saks et al. 2021), if appropriate environments and procedures are in place and implemented effectively. Acquisition and development of knowledge using the conscious competence model was reimagined by Tovstiga and Tovstiga (2021) in Figure 12, who applied the stages to the developing understanding of Covid-19, during the early period of the pandemic in 2020.

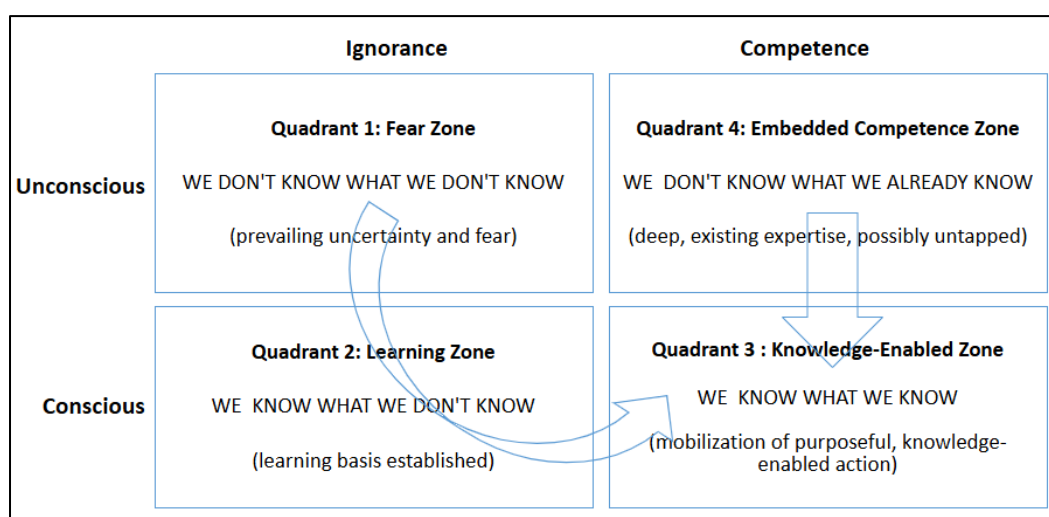


Figure 12. Conscious Competence Framework.

(Researcher's illustration of Tovstiga & Tovstiga, 2021)

In their interpretation, Quadrant 1, the Fear Zone represents fears about the causes, unpredictability and uncertainty of data and trajectory of the pandemic. However, if the original intent of the model is followed, unconscious ignorance is more representative of the stage before Covid 19 was known and these aspects would be more relevant to Quadrant 2, the learning zone, when there was an awareness of the lack of understanding about the pandemic. In a festival setting, and in line with the original concept, an example for Quadrant 1 might feature someone starting out with a complete lack of awareness of health and safety regulations, or liaising with local authorities regarding licensing, so it cannot occur to them as necessary or relevant. Quadrant 2, the Learning Zone would include learning, perhaps through a mistake or incident, that those activities require knowledge to be acquired within the festival organisation or to be paid for. Quadrant 3, the Knowledge-Enabled Zone would contain aspects of festival organisation knowledge that are now embedded within the organisation's people, executed to a good standard and checked for competence, for example, skilled tacit evaluation of several sources of contextual information to facilitate decision-making about operational requirements. Quadrant 4, the Embedded Competence Zone may demonstrate decision-making based on experiential knowledge, to the extent that problem solving becomes 'second nature' without conscious effort and is trusted without the need to explain decisions. Quadrant 4 knowledge, according to Tovstiga & Tovstiga (2021), contains the deep, embedded knowledge most likely to be authentic tacit knowledge, which may then either remain with the holder, or imparted over time, through socialisation or demonstration, following the principles of Social Exchange Theory, the SECI model or the Onion Model.

Other methods for transferring tacit knowledge have been proposed, for example Peet (2012) used Empirical Generative Knowledge Interviewing as a method of knowledge retrieval, verification and transfer with a group of retiring senior leaders at a non-profit organisation. The process was considered successful in transferring tacit knowledge to the new leaders and two years later, the process was used in other areas of the organisation such as human resource management, training and coaching and mentoring.

The organisation reported significant cost reductions, supporting the research aim. However, there is an arguable risk that time and scale implications of this method may impede its efficacy.

Herschel, Menati and Steiger (2001) used knowledge exchange protocols; structured information recall exchanges, to try to determine the extent to which different methods of recall impacted on information retrieval. However, there are limitations of this study in that it appeared to measure information recall, rather than revealing tacit knowledge. Beard & Rhodes (2002) proposed storytelling as a useful qualitative method. Whilst they did not reference tacit knowledge specifically, they claim storytelling as a way to access and share deeply embedded, experiential knowledge. They emphasised storytelling has the ability to reveal the nuances of personal insights, contextual understanding and unspoken knowledge within organisations, as advocated by Asher and Popper in the Onion Model (2019). Later, Wijetunge(2012) claimed storytelling as a method to capture and transfer tacit knowledge from senior to junior library workers.

Using a six-step model for storytelling and combining qualitative and quantitative methods, Wijetunge found that facial expressions, gestures and other body language enhanced the meanings gained from the recipients about the nature of the stories. However, applying the previous assertions made in this literature review about the nature of tacit knowledge, the tacit knowledge in this study would be considered relational knowledge.

Muskat & Deery's (2017) study of knowledge transfer in event organisations provides some insights into the distinctiveness of festivals from other organisations because of the intensive way that people work together for a limited time period, as most independent music festivals are one-off or annual events (Lindner and Wald 2011; Stadler 2021). The authors acknowledge that there is less research on knowledge transfer in smaller event organisations and their findings have value in identifying that in the pre-event phase, there is great reliance on written, explicit knowledge pertaining to manuals and checklists, and that event staff 'seek tacit knowledge via face-to-face delivery' (Muskat and Deery, p. 438). They further conclude that 'tacit

knowledge evolves during the event but often remains hidden and stuck with the knowledge holder' (p 445), due to constraints of time and process (Stadler, 2021).

The environments in which festival organisers conduct work also have the potential to influence tacit-to-tacit knowledge exchange through socialisation, which is individual and takes place face to face (Nonaka, Toyama and Konno, 2000; Panahi, Watson & Partridge, 2013). Similarly, Bouncken and Aslam (2019) found that shared, informal and casual spaces promote easy and unplanned collaboration through proximity, fast communication, and easy resource sharing. Therefore, the influence of physical and social working environments and their impacts on gaining and transferring tacit knowledge are considered next.

2.8 Environments for Tacit Knowledge Acquisition and Transfer

Given that tacit knowledge originates in individuals and requires social and face to face requirements for its effective sharing and transfer, it therefore follows that it is beneficial to foster the appropriate culture and organisational structure for the people involved (Lemon 2004). Shared experiences in the workplace inspire creativity (Leonard and Sensiper 1998), which is also enhanced by other factors including 'diversity, personality, cognitive style, job complexity, relationship with supervisors and coworkers, rewards, evaluation, deadlines and goals, and spatial configuration of work' (Phipps and Prieto, 2012, p 44).

Furthermore, Huang, Hsieh & He (2014) found that individuals are more likely to generate novel and creative ideas if they are exposed to diverse knowledge and information, through interaction with others that have similar expertise. This indicates that individual creativity is facilitated or compromised by interactions between individual members' expertise, dissimilarity or similarity, and the knowledge-sharing practices employed. From another standpoint, Zander and Kogut (1995) suggest that new knowledge and skills are developed by revisiting and integrating existing capabilities and through social relationships that create new experiences. In festival organisations, Stadler & Fullagar (2016) argue that knowledge transfer operates on two levels: in formalised practices such as team meetings and

informal occurrences such as during social activities such as over team lunches. They propose that knowledge transfer is performed as 'creative and relational social practice, involving professionals and volunteers with different backgrounds coming together for only a short period of time, who share their artistic and operational know-how to create the festival experience' (p 146). This suggests that due to the structure and social learning aspects of independent music festivals, an alternative approach is required, compared to knowledge management projects and processes that work in more traditionally organised businesses.

2.8.1 Organisation Structure

Nonaka (1991) argued that knowledge is disseminated from managers' beliefs about the validity of certain knowledge, suggesting that the power for knowledge sharing lies with managers rather than individuals within the firm (Gourlay 2006). This suggests Nonaka had a bureaucratic organisation in mind. A key feature of such organisations is the removal of discretion of its workers, where tasks and roles are prescribed and defined, and people comply with rules and regulations about specific tasks and how to perform them, to maximise efficiency and output (Grey 2013). It shares similarities with the early twentieth century metaphor of machine-like organisations, with functions supporting rational processes and rules creating a harmony not clouded by personal preference (Dash and Padhi 2020; Grey 2013).

In contrast, the entrepreneurial nature of small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) (Pérez-Luño, Saporito & Gopalakrishnan, 2016) suggests there is a common interest in building collective tacit knowledge, achieved through the sharing of specialised, accumulated private knowledge so that it is 'refined, transformed, extended, and updated so that innovations can be achieved' (Yuqin, Guijin, Zhenqiang & Quanke, 2012, p. 296). Others too believe in this positive relationship between a SME's entrepreneurial orientation and tacit knowledge, but also that there is a risk of losing their creative vision due to the need to respond to immediate customer demands (Lindner and Wald 2011; Pérez-Luño, Cabello Medina, Carmona Lavado Cuevas Rodríguez, 2011). In other words, SME's need to adapt current

innovations in place of developing creative or innovative new products or services, due to the pressures of the environment.

From an ontological perspective, comparative arguments about the study of organisations are often vigorously made. For example, championing the positivist approach to organisation study, Donaldson (1996) is uncompromising in his view that the structure of a firm is determined by its external environment (along with other contingent factors that are affected by it, such as strategy, size and need for innovation), and that success depends on adaptation and change in response to this environment. An alternative proposal for post bureaucratic organisations suggests a deliberate elimination of chains of command and a positive environment of knowledge sharing, rather than hoarding or hiding of information (Jaffee 2001), suggesting a more favourable environment for tacit knowledge sharing to take place. However, the structure of some post bureaucratic organisations, such as networked organisations, may inhibit tacit knowledge sharing, due to their vertically disintegrated nature, where, despite strong connectivity through information technology (IT), it may be necessary to form strategic alliances to acquire tacit knowledge from outside the firm (Jaffee, 2001). This concept applies to independent music festivals as their membership pulses over the course of an annual cycle, and team members and contractors may work independently until closer to the show (Stadler, 2021; Bowdin et al, 2011; Bladen et al, 2018).

Matusik and Hill (1998) contended that more permeable organisational boundaries are an overlooked aspect of organisational knowledge theory and that they facilitate access to external knowledge, whilst simultaneously providing for 'more rapid dissemination of a firm's unique stock of knowledge outside its boundaries' (p 680). Somewhere in the middle ground of these theoretical ideals, an optimum organisational structure to foster knowledge creation was proposed by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) as 'middle-up-down'. They suggest the link between the ideals of top managers and the knowledge acquired on the frontline is facilitated by middle managers. This could raise problems for independent music festivals that lack layers of management and which align to observations by Hatch (2013) that some

companies adopt radically different business models compared to traditional organisations, relying heavily on freelancers, co-creation, and crowdsourcing. This approach results in multiple, often temporary, stakeholders, aligning with the characterisation of independent music festivals as temporary or pulsating organisations typically owned and managed by a small core team (Muskat and Deery 2017; Stadler 2021).

Following Social Exchange Theory, the structure of independent music festival organisations may impact the flow of tacit knowledge which raises research questions around trust and relationships, knowledge retention, the absorptive capacity of the festival organisation, and the nature and opportunities for knowledge exchange. The challenges and opportunities for maximising tacit knowledge capital prompted the researcher to consider the 'learning organisation' concept, where systems of continuous learning, adaptability and knowledge sharing processes are embedded (Hess & Arlow, 2014; Senge 2010).

2.8.2 The Learning Organisation

The concept of the learning organisation, associated with organisation change or organisational development (McAuley 2013) was first proposed by Peter Senge in 1990 (Senge, 2010; Fielding, 2001). An environment of continuous learning and improving capabilities to create is facilitated by supportive and motivating leaders and colleagues. Senge (2010) proposed five business disciplines of the learning organisation for contemporary businesses to operate in the increasingly interconnected, dynamic and complex environment. According to the theory, organisations that support workers at all levels to learn, absorb new ideas, theories and practices, are better able to leverage competitive advantage.

The Five Disciplines are summarised as:

- **Systems Thinking:** Holistic understanding of the organisation and its people, interrelated parts and actions. Interdependence between business functions but working together as a whole system.

- **Personal Mastery:** High levels of proficiency or craftsmanship, consistent engagement with the meaning of the work, commitment to lifelong learning, constant clarification and deepening of personal vision, focus of energy and objective view of reality.
- **Mental Models:** Embedded internal, personal or shared opinions, generalisations and assumptions, views of the world and others. Adaptation and growth of organisations responding to changes in the environment can be influenced by sharing and changing mental models of the business, competitors and markets.
- **Building Shared Vision:** Genuine vision that binds people in the organisation, creating a common identity and shared purpose. Helps to translate individual leader's visions into shared vision, with guidance rather than dictation.
- **Team Learning:** Team learning is fundamental to organisational learning. Individuals work together to achieve more and discover more insights than they could individually, facilitated by dialogue, rather than discussion. Coordinated action leads to 'extraordinary' results (Senge 2010).

Further to the five disciplines, Senge proposed three levels of each (researcher's emphasis in *italics*): Practices: What you do [*where practitioners focus their time and energy*]; Principles: Guiding ideas and insights [*the rationale for the practices, points of reference for continuous improvement*]; Essences: The state of being of those with high levels of mastery in the discipline [*related to tacit/experiential knowledge, difficult to articulate, intuitive decisions based on experience*] (Senge 2010, p. 184).

Applying Senge's framework provides opportunities to explore how independent music festival creators view and facilitate learning within the organisation and wider stakeholder groups, use their individual and collective knowledge to respond to their challenges and opportunities, and the extent to which the shared vision is communicated (Stadler, 2021). Whilst the benefits of the learning organisation are said to include valid and measurable learning capabilities (Talbot et al. 2014; Tsang 2017), the concept lacks clarity about the meaning of community (Fielding 2001) and was criticised as impractical for implementation, due to a perceived incompatibility

of systems and practices and theory and practice, and for scattering people, power, knowledge and independence within organisations (Caldwell 2012).

Easterby-Smith, Burgoyne and Araujo (1999) identified a distinction in the focus of organisational learning studies between technical and social processes, with organisational learning identified with a technical approach and the learning organisation with social processes. Similarly, comparisons are drawn between knowledge management and organisational learning. Although the terms are often interchangeably applied, their aims are different (Irani, Sharif & Love, 2009). Knowledge management involves the use and realisation of organisation-wide knowledge management concepts, whilst organisational learning 'seeks to provide people, processes and technology to better manage and make use of intellectual assets' (Irani et. al. 2009, p 202). Furthermore, there are differences of perspectives about whether organisations have the capacity to learn and some literature reifies organisations as entities, or things, able to learn, adapt and capable of thought things (McAuley, 2013). Argyris and Schön (1978) adopted this view, that organisations are cognitive enterprises, capable of developing knowledge, whereas Hess and Arlow (2014) argue that organisations are incapable of learning unless the people within them learn, but that learning is essential for successful operations and innovation. Similarly, Senge (1990) was clear that for any kind of organisational learning to take place, it must be preceded by individual learning, but that there is no guarantee it will follow. In either scenario, knowledge is the underpinning requirement of organisational learning (Jiménez-Jiménez and Sanz-Valle 2011).

The literature in this section suggests that independent music festival organisers would benefit from creating a culture that encourages individual learning, leading to wider learning within the organisation. Furthermore, continuity would be better maintained along with creativity and the potential to achieve objectives could be maximised. This inherent issue of temporary staffing, therefore, represents a key distinction from traditionally organised businesses.

2.8.3 Organisation Culture

Organisation strategy should embed knowledge as an asset and culture as a facilitator of knowledge (Bollinger and Smith 2001). According to neo-modernist theory, underpinned by social science in the 1920s, developing human aspects of organisation and exploring issues of motivation, leadership and culture were said to improve employee effectiveness (McAuley, 2013). Whilst this may appear to be a favourable approach for tacit knowledge sharing, the emphasis is still on efficiency and effectiveness, whereas a postmodern theory resonates with Gascoigne and Thornton's (2013) notions of tacit knowledge, insofar as it is context dependent and depends on the language [or other forms of articulation] used to express it.

Comparable with the Onion Model's representation of knowledge (Asher & Popper, 2019), Lemon and Sahota (2004, p. 486) conceptualise organisational culture as 'a multilayered knowledge repository, each layer of which has behavioural qualities and the ability to store and process information', with tacit knowledge disseminated as embodied-individual tacit knowledge and encultured-collective tacit knowledge. This is a helpful concept of tacit knowledge as a phenomenon experienced individually and shared through organisation culture but not reified as belonging to 'the organisation' an entity.

As relatively recently as the 1990s, predictions about the way organisations would look in the Twenty First Century have a 'Tomorrow's World' air about them, for example 'Loneliness may be the real disease of the next century, as we live alone, work alone and play alone, insulated by our modem, our Walkman or our television' (Handy 1993, p. 248). Clearly, silo working poses an interesting conundrum for any kind of tacit knowledge sharing, and event consultants working on festival design, or individuals coming together for the sole purpose of the festival programme, may spend time working alone. The value of the tacit knowledge in this circumstance is not diminished, but the capacity for transfer and adoption may be. However, this could be an example of when retaining tacit knowledge serves to maintain the consultant's role of expert, whose services are required (Block 2024).

2.8.4 Leadership

Developments and debates about the multiple leadership definitions, schools and styles can be found in several research fields the literature, but publications about leadership in the specific context of events and festivals are scant (Ensor, Robertson & Ali-Knight, 2011). Parent, Olver and Seguin (2009) found that by 2007, 'no studies of leadership theories/styles had been conducted regarding the management of sporting events' (p.168) and Abson, Norman and Schofield (2024) called for greater academic interest in events leadership, finding 'only a handful of empirical research papers that focused on leadership, including some of our own work' (p.170). They argue for the importance of studying the people that lead essential event design, delivery and creation processes, for a complete and holistic understanding of how experiences are created. Aspects of leadership and management such as human resource management and financial management are included in events and festival management literature (Bladen et al., 2012; Bowdin et al., 2011; Getz, 2016), and in articles related to festival management (Getz, Andersson & Carlsen, 2010b), more from an operational than theoretical perspective. Classic texts such as Handy (1993) advocate that organisations need leadership in some form, to bring members together and represent them in the organisation, and festival leaders' roles and strengths in directing success or failure are equally significant (Ensor et al. 2011; Getz, 2002).

Successful organisations are often influenced by the tacit knowledge of their leaders, who create a 'learning curve' for others to follow, but no matter the origin of a leader's approach, the style of leadership can have a profound impact on the opportunities for tacit knowledge gaining and sharing tacit knowledge (Peet, 2012). Furthermore, the qualities of the leader, interpersonal skills and people's perceptions of their roles can impact on interactions in the workplace and by association, the flow of knowledge (Handy, 1993). When strong leadership is not present, the organisation becomes susceptible to knowledge loss (Shankar, Mittal, Rabinowitz, Baveja & Acharia, 2013), which can pose risks to any organisation. For project-based organisations such as independent music festivals (Abson et al. 2021;

Stadler 2021; Tonga Uriarte et al. 2019), shared leadership may be a more appropriate alternative to traditional vertical leadership styles, where the conventional approach for leaders to influence teams and stakeholders to complete projects (Agarwal et al. 2021). Because individuals in a typical core team of festival leaders may not possess the full range of expertise, knowledge and skills required to manage the complexities and variety of tasks faced by teams, shared leadership responsibility can be distributed horizontally among peers and vertically from higher levels in the organisation, thereby expanding the pool of expertise and facilitating more effective knowledge sharing (Abson, Norman and Schofield, 2024). Echoing Senge, Abson et al. (2024) further propose that a collaborative culture supports knowledge sharing, recognition and reward. This fosters trust within and between teams creates advantages for 'creative, complex, team and project-based organisations' within the events industry (Abson et al., 2024, p. 10).

2.9 Barriers and Challenges

Section 2.8 explored how organisational structure affects the capacity for social exchange and the potential for shared tacit knowledge to influence creative cognition in the event experience. This section considers some of the barriers and challenges facing independent music festivals in maximising the potential for tacit knowledge advantages. Large corporate event organisations such as Live Nation (Music) UK Ltd deliver festivals and other music events in the UK and as such, perform most functions using in house teams, providing a relatively stable opportunity for a project of knowledge sharing to take place.

Hatch (2013), however, observed that some business models are radically different to traditional forms of organisations, relying on freelancers and other processes such as co-creation and crowdsourcing, resulting in multiple and often temporary stakeholders. This model is comparable with independent music festivals, usually owned and managed by a small core team and are considered temporary or pulsating organisations, insofar as they grow and shrink with the timeline of the festival (Stadler, 2021).

Temporary organisations are faced with either unique, one-off or annual projects, with a fragmented workforce and therefore fragmented knowledge and opportunities for exchange in between projects and challenges include: Less opportunity for organisational learning or developing shared routines; Irregular or shifting work groups can diffuse individual or organisational knowledge; Difficulty in knowledge sharing opportunities due to lack of established learning processes; Immediacy and short-term focus can lead to insufficient time for knowledge management systems to have impact and cause insufficient knowledge transfer between projects (Lindner & Wald, 2011).

Further issues can include knowledge hiding, withholding or concealing task information, ideas or know-how knowledge, which can inhibit individual or organisational performance (Huo et al., 2016) and can be intentional and linked to a lack of trust or individual performance (Shrivastava, Pazzaglia & Sonpar, 2021). It is also linked to employees feeling a strong ownership of their knowledge and they resist sharing it to obtain or maintain status or power (Peng 2013), which may apply to freelancers who are hired for their expertise.

An interesting distinction is made between intentional knowledge hiding and knowledge hoarding which may result from a lack of time, poor procedures or other unforeseen conditions (Huo, Cai, Luo, Men & Jia, 2016). Hou et al. (2016) found that when the perceived value of the knowledge and the level of cooperation needed is high, knowledge hiding was less prevalent. By contrast, in a qualitative study, Vitari, Moro, Ravarini and Bourdon (2007) found that appropriate rewards systems and the definition of the organisational structure have the potential to significantly increase acceptance of knowledge management systems. It must be noted that these studies do not distinguish between explicit and tacit knowledge.

Inevitably, there are barriers associated with knowledge management initiatives, which Bollinger and Smith (2001, p. 14) summarised as:

Organisational perspective	Time consuming, labour intensive, people are busy, temporary project teams, workers see no benefit, difficult to codify tacit knowledge, strong positive culture is needed for people to care enough, may involve additional work
Team/group perspective	Reward for individual effort will encourage hoarding of knowledge, fear of recrimination and criticism from peers and management, lack of respect for other disciplines, lack of respect, trust and common goal
Individual perspective	Reluctance to share information, knowledge as source of power, advancement, or reward/punishment, sense of worth and status because of expertise, fear of diminished personal value if give up know-how, competition among professionals

A later study (Chugh, Bulucea, Mastorakis & Mledonov, 2018) specifically identified barriers to tacit knowledge transfer in universities, comparable with those identified above by Bollinger and Smith (2001), relating to generalised knowledge:

- Adequate communication
- Lack of avenues for informal interaction
- Culture – personal and organisational
- Lack of peer trust
- Job insecurity
- Work overload
- Lack of resources and incentives
- Lack of leadership
- Organisational politics
- Lack of technology (Chugh et al. 2018, p. 4).

Therefore, organisational environments, communication, trust and organisational and personal perceptions of the value of tacit knowledge remain key factors in optimising the personal tacit knowledge of people involved in creating festival experiences. Understanding the potential barriers and challenges, identifying where tacit knowledge resides and creating an environment that supports its sharing (if appropriate) is crucial to achieve efficiency, as managing knowledge within an

organisation can only be maximised by finding an appropriate 'mode of interaction' (Grant, 1996, p. 114).

Finally in this section concerning barriers and challenges, knowledge loss is considered. This occurs most commonly through the departure of knowledgeable workers, through retirement or moving to another firm and is a key concern of managers (Shankar et al., 2013), particularly knowledge workers as they tend to be a transient group (Jennex, 2014). This issue is particularly applicable to independent music festivals workers due to the temporary nature of much work being carried out by infrastructure and security contractors and other teams such as volunteers and cleansing teams (Stadler 2014; 2021; Vendelo & Rerup, 2020). Furthermore, when more senior organisation members move to another role or another company, the loss of their tacit knowledge can be more costly because of their level of knowledge and experience (Peet 2012). Other causes of knowledge loss may include redundancies or retrenchment strategies, where collective or cumulative knowledge loss may result. Explicit knowledge loss can occur at any time when there is a storage failure, through either electronic or human error, including knowledge or its location being forgotten (Jennex, 2014). Conversely, from the literature reviewed, it is fair to conclude that the most authentic, embodied tacit knowledge and skills gained by experience over time, are less likely to be forgotten by individuals and its loss to a festival organisation is most likely to occur through the loss of people. Interestingly, Davenport & Prusak (2006) suggest that organisations should spend less time worrying about protecting knowledge and more time and effort concerning themselves with creating and sharing it. However, Ambrosini & Bowman (2001) cautioned that by surfacing tacit skills, organisations may risk the osmosis of those skills but, if firms are aware of their tacit skills and knowledge assets, they can take steps to protect them, as with any other distinctive resource.

2.10 Chapter Summary

The aim of this research is to understand whether and to what extent tacit knowledge is understood, recognised, valued and utilised within independent music festivals. The purpose of this is to present a critical contribution to event studies and tacit

knowledge theory and to offer a practical contribution to festival organisation development through recommendations made at the end of the study.

The literature review was framed through an organisational development lens, to highlight festivals as knowledge-dependent organisations that operate within a complex and fluctuating environment. It positioned festivals within event studies, a relevant interdisciplinary field, then explored the distinctive characteristics of independent music festival organisations, including the single event business model, a reliance on temporary staff and knowledge retention challenges. The review then considered different aspects of knowledge, including perspectives in the literature about the distinctions between explicit and tacit knowledge, individual and collective, private and public and procedural and declarative knowledge. These dichotomies highlighted the complexities of knowledge in organisations and relevance to festival management.

An in-depth focus was then applied to tacit knowledge, outlining its theoretical origins and subsequent developments in the literature. The review examined debates on the value of tacit knowledge, the extent to which it can be articulated or transferred, including theoretical models, and its cognitive and technical dimensions. Relevant organisational challenges associated with knowledge loss, dependency on individuals and festival practices that impede codification and transfer were also discussed.

The literature review then situated knowledge within the context of creating independent music festival experiences, establishing the necessity of explicit forms of knowledge in event operations alongside more tacit dimensions of creativity, design and expertise. It significantly highlighted how tacit knowledge underpins decision-making and problem-solving within such fast-paced environments as festivals. Relevant theoretical approaches were reviewed including experiential learning theory, social exchange theory and theories of tacit knowledge acquisition and transfer. The chapter concluded by examining organisational conditions that support tacit knowledge development including learning organisations, organisation

culture and leadership. The literature review provided a comprehensive foundation for the empirical study that follows in the subsequent chapters.

The chapter has established that a key issue for evaluating tacit knowledge management is that the most tacit knowledge, or *nonepistemic* tacit knowledge (Castillo 2002), is difficult to capture and measure, and is developed through experience and over time. If the knowledge is experiential (Beard, 2014), embodied or somatic (Alvesson, 1993) it is more tacit than relational knowledge because it is more deeply embedded and is fundamentally linked to physical practice and bodily learning (Collins, 2010), and therefore more difficult to articulate and share. Implicit, latent or relational knowledge are said to be more easily codified or articulated, if appropriate investment, processes and methods are employed (Agrawal 2006). It has also been established that some of the literature regarding tacit knowledge does not differentiate between the most and least tacit types of knowledge, which adds a layer of complexity when analysing methods for managing tacit knowledge proposed in the literature. Difficulties in sharing tacit knowledge identified in the literature include issues of articulation (Gascoigne and Thornton 2013), power dynamics, knowledge hiding (Huo et al. 2016) and issues at organisation, team and individual levels (Ribeiro and Collins 2007). The review has also highlighted that early literature about event and festival success is written from an instructive, operational or management perspective, due to the relative nascence of the field in academia.

However, when examined with a better understanding of tacit knowledge dimensions and types, many of these discussions contain implicit assumptions about the role of experiential knowledge and expertise, in strategic planning and decision-making, for example. However, they do not specifically consider how festival organisers develop the decision-making and problem-solving skills needed to adapt or react to the unpredictable and changeable environment, or any personal and organisational benefits. Therefore, this study aims for a contribution to knowledge by addressing this gap in the literature. To support this contribution, Table 3 summarises the main theoretical concepts of knowledge identified in the literature, refined by the researcher into the categories of explicit, relational and tacit knowledge.

Explicit (easily codifiable)	Relational (potential for articulation)	Tacit (least articulable)
Declarative	Declarative	Procedural
Data	Explicit	Expertise
Information	Information	Experiential
	Data	Embodied
	Procedural	Sagacious
	Implicit	Semantic
	Latent	Nonepistole

Table 3. Refined Typology of Knowledge, based on the literature review.

This re-classification addresses some of the ambiguity and incoherence identified in the literature, and is intended as an aid to future researchers, and to support the data interpretation in Chapter 4, Findings and Analysis. The findings and analysis explore the extent to which tacit, experiential knowledge is recognised, valued and employed in independent music festivals, providing a contribution to practice by identifying ways for practitioners to maximise its potential on a personal, professional and organisational level.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explain how an appropriate methodology for this research project was determined and implemented. It includes explanations of ontology and epistemology, the researcher's philosophical stance then moves on to the methodology, research design and data analysis method to answer the research questions and generate a contribution to the literature, to industry and society. The literature review revealed that some authors generalise tacit knowledge as not-yet-articulated explicit knowledge, or implicit and latent knowledge and therefore a significant amount of the literature is not specific enough to be applied to the most tacit type of knowledge. This study is interested in people's understanding, feelings and perceptions of the value of tacit knowledge, to help individuals and organisers

of independent music festivals to make the most of this valuable resource. There appears to be a gap in the literature for studies applying qualitative research methods to explore tacit knowledge in independent music festival organisations.

The aim of business or management research is to find or propose solutions to problems or challenges faced by organisations, through systematic enquiry that subsequently contributes to business knowledge (Easterby, Thorpe, Jackson & Jaspersen, 2018). Therefore, this study follows the principles of applied research, with the aim of generating knowledge, practical solutions and insights about tacit knowledge that could be applied to improve business outcomes for independent music festivals and individuals that work within them. Compared to 'basic' research, which seeks to generate new knowledge without testing practical application of theories, applied research aims to discover solutions to business issues, concerns or problems and find alternatives to current situations or practices (Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014). Furthermore, the field of management research is complex (Gill, Johnson & Clark, 2010), as is the practice of business management (Brotherton 2015) and careful consideration of a range of methodologies and research methods used in previous studies was undertaken, to achieve credible and authentic research, with practical business implications.

3.1.1 Research Questions

The following questions guided the direction of the research:

- What aspects of knowledge are perceived as important in creating successful festival experiences?
- What is the value of tacit knowledge to individuals and the organisation?
- Is tacit knowledge effectively nurtured in independent music festival organisations?

3.1.2 The Research Strategy

A methodology is a research strategy; the design that underpins the selection and implementation of the methods used (techniques and processes) to collect and analyse data related to the research question (Crotty 1998). Whilst there are numerous approaches to research, the methodological approach should be based on

the researcher's interpretation of the research topic or problem, and the nature of the problem itself (Crotty, 1998; Gill et al., 2010). Therefore, a justification of the research approach in the context of the research setting is presented, the journey to ontological and epistemological understanding is explained, and the research design is detailed. The chapter continues with a rationale of the qualitative research logic and the use of Clarke and Braun's (2013; 2017) and Braun & Clarke's (2019; 2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis method. The research setting and participants are subsequently explained, and reflexivity aspects are discussed. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations.

3.1.3 Credibility and Validity of the Research Approach

To create confidence in the credibility and therefore the validity of any research, the methodology should be based on an appropriate epistemology or 'way of explaining how we know what we know' (Crotty, 1998 p. 3). Some authors (Fleetwood, 2014; Edwards, O'Mahohey & Vincent, 2014) make it clear that ontology, or beliefs about being or what is (Crotty, 1998), influences epistemology and methodology and that to select a research methodology before considering one's ontological perspective, equates to believing something for research convenience and hence, mistaking one's ontology would be a 'meta-theoretical disaster' (Fleetwood, 2014 p 187). Because this thesis explores the concept of tacit knowledge which is difficult to articulate, write down or easily observe, careful consideration of approaches that would facilitate a reflexive approach and a contribution to organisational and management research was undertaken, to be confident in the methodological process.

Crotty's model (1998, p. 4), adapted in Figure 13 presents epistemology leading the theoretical perspective or philosophical stance which informs the methodology and provides the context, research methods, logic and criteria. He does not include ontology in this schema, despite the assertion by many that it comes first, as he suggests that ontological and epistemological issues often surface together as a theoretical perspective, including 'what is it' (ontological) aspects of a research topic as well as understanding 'what it is to know' it (epistemological).

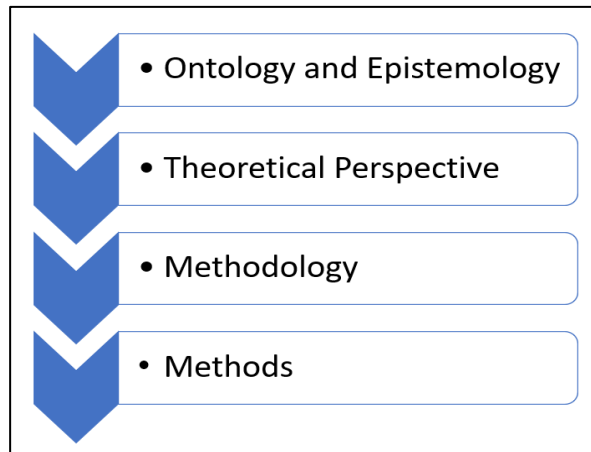


Figure 13. Process of Social Research

(Researcher's illustration, adapted from Crotty, 1998)

It is therefore pertinent to agree with oneself what reality, or one's personal, ontological view of the world is, before selecting a methodology (Tsoukas and Chia 2011) and so ontology has been added by the researcher as a first step to Crotty's model (Figure 13). Whilst philosophers and authors appeared to agree on the main components of research, the myriads of paradigms, ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies and their respective accepted or disputed methods were daunting to the researcher setting out on her doctoral journey. However, through diligent research and consideration of personal views and beliefs, a priori knowledge and experience of music festivals, her position is explained in the following sections.

3.2 Philosophical Positioning

'Merely mentioning 'knowledge' raises problems, for anyone with 'the temerity to write about knowledge has to confront the pervasive disagreement about what constitutes knowledge' (Starbuck 2006, p. 74). This statement from Starbuck was a catalyst for gaining as much understanding of the arguments and positions around knowledge as possible, without the thesis becoming a philosophical exploration of knowledge. After addressing the complexities, ambiguities, and various perspectives of tacit knowledge in the literature, the researcher carefully considered her philosophical stance, to determine the most credible and personally appropriate approach for the research, outlined in Table 4.

Philosophical stance	Ontology: Realist Epistemology: Constructivist
Research design	Inductive Qualitative
Methodology	Phenomenology
Method of analysis	Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Table 4. Research Approach

3.2.1 Ontology and Epistemology

3.3.1.1 Ontology

When examining the different philosophical positions, alignment with either side of the objectivist-subjectivist ontological dichotomy did not feel comfortable to the researcher, as there were aspects of both sides that made sense or felt disconnected to her. It was understood, technically, that objectivist or realist approaches (McAuley, Duberley & Johnson, 2014) include empiricist, deductive and positivist methodologies and that subjectivist approaches include interpretive, inductive and social constructionist methodologies (Edwards, Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). However, it was hard to fully commit to the objective notion that objects, or phenomena only exist independently of people and are real and discoverable, but outside of our cognitive or perceptual structures or any human interpretation (Krausz 2000; McAuley et al. 2014), confirmed only if they can be observed (Edwards et al., 2014). Sayer (2000) argues that our tendency to get things wrong or be confounded in our expectations or see that knowledge has been superseded or disproved by new understanding, creates belief that the world must exist irrespective of our thoughts about it.

Similar difficulties were experienced in accepting the wholly interpretivist position that knowledge or reality is only revealed through studying phenomena 'from the 'inside' via the thoughts, beliefs, intentions and interpretations of people' (Fleetwood, 2014 p 184) or the idealistic ontology of postmodernism where reality is 'entirely constructed in discourse' (Fleetwood, 2014, p. 184) and where knowledge

cannot possibly be objective. However, if knowledge is constructed by us, then we can never be wrong or mistaken about anything and therefore realism is fundamentally fallible (Sayer, 2000). The researcher holds to the belief that an apple is an apple and the fruit is observable and exists outside of her cognition, but it would not be called an apple if humans had not conceived of it as food, thought of it as delicious or sour and given it a name, therefore there is an element of construction in the idea of an apple.

From a positivist perspective the researcher accepts that organisations exist independently of their founders, directors, managers and employees and 'do not lie in the consciousness of the organisational inhabitants' (Donaldson 1996, p. 173). Although, with a legal status, premises, networks, operational systems, commercial presence, resources, competitors and potential to generate profits, an organisation does exist as an entity in itself but is also a construct of the people who are part of it, through cultures, norms and practices. However, the researcher supports McAuley et al.'s (2014) subjective approach that organisations are projections of people's thoughts and consciousness. This includes concepts such as organisational culture, relationships, the view that people hold of the organisation, and that each of these will be constructed differently for the actors in the organisation and will change upon interaction with others. Moreover, it is conceivable that individuals interpret reality differently (Goles and Hirschheim 2000) and, to borrow from Sayer (2000), the constructed discourse of organisational theory exists whether someone engages with it or not. From a theoretical perspective, the researcher aligns with the methodology of Phenomenology adopting the ontological position that things, phenomena or entities can be extra-discursive or constructed from discourse.

A single reality is recognised, but multiple interpretations of it, or in other words, the researcher believes that an objective 'world exists independently of people's perceptions, language or imagination' whilst recognizing that 'part of the world consists of subjective interpretations which influence the ways in which it is perceived and experienced' (Edwards et al., 2014 p 3). For some phenomenologists, reality is understood as relational, with agents and structures being distinct but still

interactive and includes four modes of reality: material, artefact, ideal and socially real (Fleetwood, 2014). This is a welcome departure from the Cartesian Dualism (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar & Dowling, 2016), either side of which does not 'sit right' with the researcher. Finally, an important consideration was that the research participants may or may not be aware or consider their ontological beliefs or what their world view is in any explicit or organised way. Therefore, following phenomenology, it is the position of the researcher that if opinions, hunches and 'real-to-me' experiences were expressed, this would be their 'truth' and acknowledged as such in the data analysis, in the spirit of Husserl and 'going back to the things in themselves' (Groenewald 2004; Steinbock 1997).

3.3.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is understood as knowledge about knowledge (Symon and Cassell 2012). To understand the phenomenon of tacit knowledge as the research participants experience it and produce credible findings and analysis, an appropriate approach to represent their views, both positive and subjective approaches were considered. A key feature of tacit knowledge is intuition and although tacit knowledge is not tangible, some authors claim it is measurable by capturing an organisation's know-how through creation, distribution and application (Bollinger and Smith 2001). However, by its very nature tacit knowledge is resistant to observation.

A positivist epistemology follows the Weberian stance that social science should be based on empirical facts (Donaldson, 1996). Some studies into tacit knowledge (for example Yang, 2015) and festivals use this approach (Lee & Kyle, 2013). For this thesis, the researcher felt a positivist approach would be unlikely to create a rich picture of how people involved in the creation of festivals experiences conceive of and express their tacit knowledge and skills. Johnson and Duberley (2000) suggest that attaining the truth, or being certain that scientific fact has been proven, is impossible, despite repeated empirical testing. From their viewpoint, it is only reasonable that people have a preference for theories about knowledge, based on their ability to better withstand criticism than others.

However, the researcher agrees with Crotty (1998), who observed that 'the existence of a world without a mind is conceivable' but that 'meaning without a mind is not'. He concurs that this facilitates a realist ontology and a constructivist epistemology, which is also suggested as a possible position of Phenomenology (McAuley et al., 2014; Johnson & Duberley, 2000) thereby supporting the researcher's approach.

3.3 Research Design

The research was shaped by an inductive, idiographic approach, using semi-structured interviews as a qualitative research method.

3.3.1 Inductive

From the outset, the researcher was committed to an inductive research process, aiming to build theory from the findings rather than setting out with a hypothesis to prove or disprove, as in deductive research (Bryman 1995). The purpose of the DBA is not to seek cause and effect conclusions associated with tacit knowledge management, as would be produced by deductive, positivist research approaches (Donaldson 1996), for example aiming to produce an algorithm or operating manual for explicating tacit knowledge. The difference between inductive and deductive research is that deduction seeks to prove that something is or must be, whereas induction reveals that something is operative in a given context or situation (Niedderer and Imani 2009).

This study is about discovering insights into how tacit knowledge is perceived, valued, and utilised by people working in festivals, to generate useful insights for maximising outcomes. By allowing the story to unfold through the voices of the participants, the researcher was able to theorise about its nature and role within festival organisations. Using an inductive process, theories and explanations emerged from the analysis of textual data, through observations about the way the participants' thoughts and nonverbal responses were expressed. A deductive approach would have set out with a hypothesis, or abstract conceptualisation (Kolb, 1984) subsequently tested through the application of theory (Gill et al. 2010). The aim therefore, was to explore the aspects of tacit knowledge from a human perspective,

understanding how people working in independent music festivals perceive their tacit knowledge and that of others. The inductive approach acknowledges and accepts the inevitable subjectivity and interpretation of the researcher and participants, in the human activity of interacting with each other, conceptualising learning experiences, considering norms, beliefs, values and behaviours in relation to understanding tacit knowledge (Ravn 2023).

Inductive social science research begins with observations of a phenomena (data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews) and moves to the construction of explanations and theories, based on what was observed or experienced (Gill et al. 2010). Deductive research, on the other hand, begins with a theory or hypothesis, which is tested through experimentation or observations in the empirical world, and ends with a theory proven or disproven, leading to further research. Phenomenon-driven research is one of three approaches that academics can take, according to Easterby-Smith et al (2018).

- Starting from a gap in the literature that they wish to fill
- Striving to find out more about a phenomenon they have some interest in.
- Being problem-driven (e.g. action research)

This research fits into the second and third of these categories, as previous personal experience and passion for the development and success of independent music festivals was the catalyst for this thesis, together with a longstanding desire to understand how some people become ‘so good at their job’, and this remained a driver (but not a bias) throughout the research process.

Reflecting on the earlier consideration about whether a literature review is appropriate for inductive research, Corbin & Strauss (2013) recognise it is unlikely for someone to choose to research something they have very little knowledge or experience of, and that it is important to have an awareness of at least some of the extant literature, but also that it is important not to impose bias or opinion onto the analysis. With this in mind, the researcher queried herself regularly, making notes of questions to ensure that the voices of the participants were truly heard (Byrne

2022a). Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), the method used in this research, emphasises the importance of considering a researcher's personal and social context as well as the ways in which they interact with and understand the data, which is discussed in 6.0, the thesis Conclusion.

3.3.2 Qualitative

The field of qualitative research is diverse and can be complex, with an array of data collection and analysis methods, but it differs from quantitative research in that it is primarily concerned with meaning and is about gaining understanding and insights into the social or psychological world. It enables researchers to interpret and build frameworks for understanding some of the most complex and messy aspects of life (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Qualitative research situates the researcher 'in the world' (Denzin and Lincoln 2018), and is about the 'bigger picture' of a problem or issue, bringing multiple viewpoints and factors together, reflecting how real life is complex and establishing a model or better understanding of it (Creswell and Creswell 2022a) that is useful from an academic and perspective and from an industry perspective for this DBA thesis.

Through qualitative methodologies and interpretative techniques, the world can be transformed into tangible representations such as field notes, personal reflections, recordings, interviews, conversations and photographs. Moreover, qualitative processes enable researchers to interpret and bring out the significance to people of the phenomena studied (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). Subsequently, through an emergent approach, researchers gather data in a way that is appropriate to the study and the participants, generating patterns and themes through analysis. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change (Creswell 2013).

Qualitative investigation is rooted in a constructivist epistemology, which posits that there is no single version of truth or knowledge and that our understanding and belief of how things are is constructed from discourses and systems of meaning, related to

social, cultural, moral ideological and political experiences (Clarke & Braun, 2013). This felt like the natural approach for this research to 'gain knowledge of a subject matter in order to unify, or at least relate, fragmented or contradictory theories, or to illustrate and draw attention to taken-for-granted understandings and practices' (Wertz 2011, p. 88). This aligns with the research objectives of understanding festival creators' perspectives about tacit knowledge. However, Crotty (1998) cautions that it is necessary to refute our existing meaning systems and presumptions to fully recognise and appreciate the phenomena anew.

Conscious of the positivist argument that qualitative research is not as rigorous or valid as quantitative research and has even been labelled as anecdotal (Denzin and Lincoln 2018), it was imperative to the researcher that this qualitative study was carried out in a conscientious, methodical manner to gain creditable, meaningful and valuable outcomes, closely following the Reflexive Thematic Analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2022). To be trustworthy, outputs created by qualitative researchers must demonstrate a systematic and diligent approach to data analysis, organising and recording the process meticulously, being transparent in the disclosure of analytical methods sufficiently for the credibility of the study to be evaluated (Nowell et al. 2017). Therefore, although the distinction between scientifically tested 'facts' that so far appear to hold true, and theories about what 'might be' are researched from opposing paradigms, the researcher believes that there is a knowable reality but does not believe humans have ever, or can ever, know all there is to know.

The meanings that people give to their experiences are entirely as relevant and important as scientifically tested knowledge, therefore a qualitative research approach is appropriate for exploring people's perceptions about their tacit knowledge and that of others. A scientific paradigm is surely, after all, a construction of the currently accepted body of knowledge. Furthermore, because tacit knowledge includes subjective views, intuition, perceptions, experience, ideas, values and feelings (Pussa & Eeriainen, 2010), therefore, any tacit knowledge shared will be subject to the psychographics of the both the person holding the tacit knowledge and the intended recipient. This humanistic view of tacit knowledge further supports that

research looking at whether tacit knowledge can indeed be transferred qualitative approach. The thorough approach of Reflexive Thematic Analysis was mindfully followed and implemented and is introduced in the following section.

3.3.3 Methodology

A methodology is the 'study of the methods or procedures used in a discipline so as to gain warranted knowledge' (Gill & Johnson, 2010) and 'a combination of methods used to inquire into a specific situation' (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018, p. 400). It is clear from these definitions that the way in which a research subject is investigated should be appropriate to produce valid understanding, relevant to the project. In the literature, there are several methodological options available to those interested in organisation, business and management research and Gill & Johnson (2010) emphasise the situational aspect of selecting the right methodology for the researcher and the research project but warn about the risk of thinking about a methodology as something that can be 'taken off the shelf' (p.6). Rather than selecting a methodology based purely on the nature of the research project, researchers must understand their own philosophical commitments, as this has a direct impact on the way they understand the subject under investigation and their preunderstanding and assumptions about what truth is, and how they consider the accessibility of social reality (Gill & Johnson, 2010). Following the ontological and epistemological voyage of self-discovery, the researcher felt confident in the decision to follow inductive, qualitative research using the Reflexive Thematic Analysis method proposed by Braun & Clarke (2019; 2022). Their definition of methodology is adopted as the framework by which a research project is designed and carried out, informed by theory.

3.3.4 Phenomenology

After the consideration of ontology and epistemology, several methodologies were considered and the researcher was reassured by Silverman (2013, p. 1) who empathises with the new researcher, stating that 'rather than having one fixed version of who we are, we all move between multiple identities.'

Whilst this study does not adopt a formal phenomenological research method such as Heidegger's version of Hermeneutics (1962), it is nevertheless carried out in the spirit of Phenomenology. This positioning reflects the researcher's epistemological positioning rather than a strict methodological commitment, because Phenomenology does not work on the assumption that there is only one version of reality or answer, rather multiple realities may exist, shaped by groups or individuals or contexts (Bhaskar and Hartwig 2010; Byrne 2022a). This pluralistic understanding (Drouin, Müller, & Sankaran, 2013) underpins this DBA research as the findings in 4.0 show that knowledge and practice are subjective and context dependent, and highlights how they are experienced, understood and valued by those working in independent music festivals, rather than assuming a single, shared reality. Accordingly, using a phenomenological methodology enabled the researcher to seek and analyse the meaning of the participants' lived experiences (Marshall, Rossman, Blanco & Rossman, 2022) and allowed the phenomena to be described as they were perceived, rather than 'being explained or having its causal relations searched for, and it focuses on the very things as they manifest themselves' (Sadala and Adorno 2002, p. 282). Phenomenology invites researchers to engage with phenomena as 'the things themselves' and make sense of them 'directly and immediately' dispensing with the preconceptions we hold about them and allow ourselves to let the experience speak directly to us (Crotty, 1998 p 79). Sadala and Adorno (2002 p. 285) summarise Husserl's definition of Phenomenology as 'the descriptive science of the essences and actions of consciousness' which reflects the crux of this thesis, exploring the nature and role of tacit knowledge in independent festival organisations.

Phenomenologists do not consent to the idealist notion that it is impossible to determine whether claims of knowledge are true or false because those who claim it believe it (in other words it is their construction), because otherwise all that then remains is to compare competing claims (Fleetwood, 2014). Rather, taking a pragmatic approach that something is held to be true if a 'community' believes it to be true, is acceptable for this study. Therefore, a phenomenon is 'the case' rather than 'the truth' for the people to whom it matters, as this is good enough for it to be

considered valid by them. In other words, if the tacit knowledge identified in this study is understood to be relevant and valuable to the people who hold it, and those who may benefit from it, then this is their tacit knowledge that they possess and can choose to share and utilise (or not). Using a phenomenology-led approach, the researcher was able to maintain a realist ontology and constructivist epistemology, accepting that there are alternate possible explanations for any phenomenon, and that knowledge can never be truly complete (Butler-Kisber 2018). In this way, the research aligns with phenomenology as a guiding perspective, rather than a prescriptive methodological framework.

Interestingly, in the Critical Theorist stance 'legitimate knowledge' is the product of consensus negotiated in a democratic way via social relationships (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Johnson and Duberley (2000) also propose a pragmatic-critical realistic epistemology to rise above the positivist 'absolute' position and the 'chaotic relativism' of postmodernism, with this approach being simultaneously anti-positivist and anti-relativist. However, this study did not set out to be critical of the social phenomena at play in independent musical festivals or purposely seek to address social inequalities as critical realist work does (Sayer, 1999). That said, some aspects of power and social exchange regarding tacit knowledge sharing were uncovered and are discussed in the findings and analysis chapter.

3.5 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) is defined as a structured qualitative research method used to interpret patterns of meaning within large amounts of data textual data collected through interviews, focus groups and written documents (Clarke & Braun, 2006; 2017). Others consider it not as a solitary method, but as an approach with varying styles. Although considered a 'basic' approach by some, it is widely used and accepted as an appropriate method for analysing qualitative research data, such as in-depth interviews used in this study, but that it is important to demonstrate that it has been done well (King 2018). Following several publications post-2006 (Braun and Clarke 2006; Braun and Clarke 2016; Braun and Clarke 2019; Braun and Clarke 2022; King 2018), this method was developed to address issues with TA, which they

considered to be a poorly defined but widely used method of analysis, 'lacking a coherent discussion of philosophical underpinning and processes' (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p.589).

The authors' new method, Reflexive Thematic Analysis was adopted for this study, as it provides researchers with a guide that considers the practicalities of carrying out good qualitative research and reflexive 'conceptual bases for knowledge generation processes' (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 591). This is achieved by valuing the subjective views of the researcher, developing open and organic codes, avoiding a coding framework and iterative development of themes. Qualitative research has been criticised for a lack of clarity in reporting analytical processes, particularly in relation to the categorisation of data while claiming to follow a structured template, and therefore the presented work lacks sufficient evidence (Grodal, Anteby & Holm, 2021). Some other reported disadvantages are considered at the end of this section in 3.4.1 Limitations.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis recommends six phases to achieving academic rigour, although as previously discussed, subjectivity in the nature of the themes is encouraged. The phases and processes followed to fulfil them in this study are outlined next. Braun & Clarke developed the phases between 2006 and 2020, with the most recent iteration outlined below.

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the dataset

The researcher spent several weeks enjoying full immersion in the data, reading and rereading transcripts, listening to recordings multiple times, making notes about initial thoughts and ideas about analysis, through annotations and memos in NVivo 11 and NVivo 12. Through this process, ideas were generated over time and the meaning of some points that had not seemed important at the beginning, became central to the development of themes later on. Immersion did not stop when the coding began, but continued even through the writing up phase, as the researcher returned several times to each recording, transcript and the codes.

Phase 2: Coding

Braun & Clarke (2022, p. 53) explain codes and coding as process and output activities, used to 'parse out the diversity of meanings from the data; codes should not capture multiple meaning' and define the terms as follows:

- **Coding:** The *process* of exploring the diversity and patterning of meaning from the dataset, developing codes, and applying code labels to specific segments of data in each data item.
- **Code:** An *output* of the coding process; an analytically interesting idea, concept or meaning associated with particular segments of the data, often refined during the coding process.
- **Code Label:** An *output* of the coding process; a succinct phrase attached to a segment of data, a shorthand tag for a code, often refined during the coding process.

According to Braun and Clarke (2022), codes can be descriptive (or summative) or conceptual and convey explicit (or semantic) meaning, or be more abstract, representing latent (or implicit) meaning understood from the data. Sometimes this felt like a 'double whammy', thinking about the latent meanings about participants tacit knowledge, which they sometimes were not aware they were talking about. Each recording and line of transcript was systematically analysed, sometimes coding short phrases or a few words and sometimes whole paragraphs were coded, with some paragraphs generating several code labels. Initially 1614 segments of data were coded, and individual codes were identified and examples are included later in this chapter. Mind maps relating to some of the early thoughts on the codes were also developed, using NVivo 11 and then NVivo 12. Some initial codes were somewhat semantic and descriptive to start with, and Corbin and Strauss (2013) suggest that in the beginning, the questions a researcher asks of the data need not be overly clever but serve to start the thinking process.

Braun and Clarke (2022) further reassure the researcher that there is no right or specific level at this stage, and that how the coding is done is directed by the research

purpose and questions. At the beginning of the coding phase, multiple individual codes for separate segments of data were created, which felt somewhat daunting. However, as subsequent transcripts were analysed, and related points from different participants were added to the codes, patterns of similarity and difference became evident.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE	12	123
actively finding ways to share knowledge	6	8
appreciating benefits of sharing	3	3
appreciating others learn by figuring it out	1	2
appreciating others learn from you	2	2
appreciating that others have different versions of the knowledge	3	5
being happy to share knowledge	7	10
difficulty in sharing tacit knowledge	2	4
explaining process for sharing knowledge	6	15
exploring shared knowledge	1	1
justifying not sharing knowledge	4	4
NOT SHARING KNOWLEDGE	4	6
others learning by 'default'	1	1
planned knowledge sharing	1	1
recognising barriers to sharing knowledge	8	21

Figure 14. An example of some early codes in NVivo

This was motivating to the researcher, and whilst the codes lacked sophistication at this stage, the beginnings of a story began to surface, as Braun and Clarke (2022) had assured. The codes and code labels were developed over time through reconsideration, working on ascribing meaning and concentrating on the following questions: What does this mean? What are they not saying? Are there any hidden or latent codes as well as semantic codes? These questions sent the researcher back to the data set and recordings repeatedly, until she was confident that the full meaning of the dataset, as she interpreted it, had been captured.

Whilst this study is at heart an inductive research process, it became apparent through reflexive thinking, that some of the meanings ascribed to the data though code labels were deductive in nature, insofar as they were discerned through the insights gained about theories of knowledge management, tacit knowledge and theories such as social exchange theory from the literature review. This created uncertainty and worry that her commitment to stay true to the research strategy had

been compromised. It also lent weight to Strauss's argument that truly inductive research should be related to the literature only after the data has been analysed. However, Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 56) suggest that 'the subjective and embedded process makes pure induction impossible: we bring with us all sorts of perspectives, theoretical and otherwise, to our meaning-making, so our engagement with the data is never purely inductive'. Therefore, through continued reflexive thinking and treating those codes as a starting point for more inductive analysis, mindful coding progressed.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes

After the first round of analysis, the data generated in NVivo consisted of 26 loose categories, 756 codes and subcodes. After Phase 3 analysis, the data was collated into 4 Themes, 8 categories and subcategories and 776 individual data.

Clusters of codes that appeared to contain shared or related meaning, or contrasting aspects of the same meaning were compiled, then the potential of proposed themes to answer some of the research questions was considered.

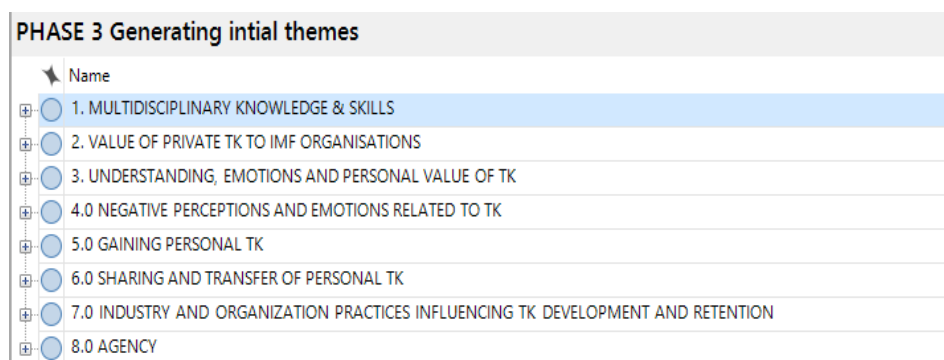


Figure 15. Initial themes in NVivo

This helped to avoid 'going down a rabbit hole' of interesting but not necessarily relevant directions. Codes were grouped around broader themes and identified some more standalone ideas. Whilst most themes developed from reoccurring, related or opposing codes, some codes which appeared only once became important to the analysis, for example P14's reflection: 'How did we do this? Oh yeah, a little bit of magic. Ta Da!' resonated with the researcher and summed up the complexities

of creating festival experiences and the sense of achievement when successfully done. At this stage, a new folder 'Thematic Analysis' was created in NVivo, and codes and categories were copied over into theme subfolders, based on their meaning and relationship between them.

Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes

Assessing and developing the initial themes involved returning to the full dataset to evaluate the importance and relevance of each theme to the study, as well as the relationship between themes and whether they contributed to the 'story' of the research. For example, the participants' stories of their journeys to their current role were interesting and inspiring, but some were very lengthy and descriptive. Elements of these learning journeys are included in the findings, but not all codes generated were eventually included.



An important distinction is made by Braun & Clarke (2022) between topic summaries and themes, and that topic summaries are often presented erroneously as themes but do not represent concrete or conceptual shared meaning or ideas, which Reflexive Thematic Analysis themes should. Therefore, throughout phases five and six, developing themes and writing up, defining and refining them led to the eventual thematic map.

Figure 16. Hands-on thematic analysis process.

Whilst NVivo 12 was useful for generating electronic models and maps and seeing connections between the data, a hands-on exercise using post it notes was also completed, to physically see the relationships and evaluate how the categories and subcategories fit within themes, illustrated in Figure 16. (Researcher's photograph).

Phase 5: Refining, defining and naming themes

This was the most insightful and developmental phase. Some themes were redefined, some were abandoned, and others accepted as they were. Each theme was eventually defined and explained in the context of the analysis. For example:

PHASE 5 Refining, defining and naming themes	
Name	
THEME 1 IMF ENVIRONMENT IS COMPLEX AND REQUIRES MULTIFACETED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	
THEME 2 PARTICIPANTS UNDERSTANDING OF ORGANISATION AND PERSONAL VALUE OF TK	
THEME 3 GAINING AND SHARING EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	
THEME 4 INDIVIDUAL, SECTOR & ORGANISATION CULTURE & PRACTICES	

Figure 17. Examples of further theme and primary code development.

Phase 6: Writing up

During the writing up phase, the value of the annotations and memos made during the previous phases were invaluable and provided context to the development of the thesis. Despite the use of Nvivo to organise the themes, subthemes and primary codes, the themes developed yet again during the write up as the full story of the research unfolded on the pages. Some codes were 'let go' (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 100) but the researcher was very mindful not to allow bias or 'cherry picking' influence this process. At times, writing up felt like one step forward, two steps back and it became more and more important to go back to the entire transcripts, to ensure the data was not taken out of context or shaped into a narrative that the researcher wanted to tell. The four themes were, however, reorganised more than once, to achieve an account that flows logically to the researcher. Through demonstrating the 'audit trail' of the research process, it is hoped that credibility has been achieved and by extension, trustworthiness and plausibility of the findings.

3.4.1 Reflexivity in Practice

For positivist and quantitative researchers, objectivity is key and avoiding bias is a significant concern as any unintentional influence through poor practices or a hint of

subjectivity, such as from that perspective, inadequate sampling or survey design is believed to render the results untrustworthy. However, subjectivity is not always considered inappropriate for qualitative research and often is driven by personal experience or interest in a particular topic that is the catalyst for a study, and researchers bring their history, values and assumptions to the process. Indeed, Braun & Clarke (2022) reconceptualise subjectivity as ‘the fuel that drives the engine’ (p.12) and other authors (Finlay 2002) claim it as an important aspect of reflexive qualitative research. Moreover, the researcher becomes the instrument of analysis, particularly in semi-structured or unstructured interviews (Creswell and Creswell 2022a; Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017) and can use their skills to elicit sensitive and detailed narratives. Being reflexive means critically reflecting on the researcher’s role in producing the knowledge that emerges from research (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

Through reflexivity, a researcher’s role in the qualitative research process, previous experience, demographics and psychographics are reflected upon, to inquire of their potential to influence and shape interpretations of data and development of themes (Creswell and Creswell 2022b). Braun & Clarke (2022) recommend that researchers undertake reflection upon aspects of the researcher’s background, to identify any privileges of race, education and socioeconomic status, as well as demographic aspects such as gender, background and culture. Creswell and Creswell (2022, p. 223) identify two main aspects to include in reflective memos:

- ‘Statements about past experiences with the research problem or with the participants or setting that help the reader understand the connection between the researchers and the study.
- Be explicit about how these experiences may potentially shape the interpretations the researchers make during the study’

With the researcher as the instrument of analysis, reflexive research relies on the interpretation drawn from the data, which as stated is influenced by the values, assumptions, beliefs and linguistic capabilities of the researcher, but also requires the researcher to focus on themselves, thinking about how their intellect, education, culture, perception and ideology inform their interpretation (Symon and Cassell

2012). With a background in events management education and work, the researcher could identify and recognise some comparative situations and challenges, and experiential learning experiences, as well as providing opportunities for others to learn experientially.

Some of the participants had more years of experience in events and festival management than the researcher, so there were some interviews in which the researcher felt inferior knowledge, an interesting observation, from a reflexive point of view. A researcher memo from one such interview included the comment:

'I was in awe listening to [P17]! He has so much tacit knowledge around event operations that I have only seen the results of, not been a part of. He told me so many stories of his career, and situations that have gone wrong, went well, how he's managed people, and what he's learned from it all. It's so interesting because it makes me feel like I'm just a beginner, and I did feel a bit of imposter syndrome!'

Interviews with some of the graduate participants who had been taught by her at university, prompted the following memo about improvements that could be made in her role as an events educator:

'I feel mixed emotions about the gaps that the graduates feel in their knowledge, like a responsibility that we have missed some things out of the course, or could do more in some areas, but pride for them that they're learning so much in their jobs. I know that much of the tacit knowledge they're gaining would be difficult to include in our degree course but will seriously think about what else we can do.'

Reflections during interviews and on the data provided the researcher with ideas for development of her own practices in module content of the degree courses, such as increased focus on operational issues and experiential learning situations. These are presented in 6.0 the concluding chapter of the thesis.

3.4.2 Limitations Associated with Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Compared to other qualitative research methods such as grounded theory, ethnography or hermeneutics, less literature is available to researchers about thematic analysis or reflexive thematic analysis, which can create uncertainty for unexperienced researchers about how to conduct a rigorous project (Nowell et al. 2017). Even recent editions of some of the well-known textbooks about research methods or specifically qualitative research methods, do not include it. For example, there is no mention of it in Miles, Huberman & Soldana (2014), Richards (2015) or Easterby-smith et al (2018), although Symon and Cassell (2013) briefly commend its use.

Helpfully, Braun & Clarke have produced several papers and a textbook about how to conduct TA and RTA (2006; 2012; 2022; 2026) and others (Byrne 2022b; Nowell et al. 2017) and have attempted to fill the gap with pragmatic guidance on how to conduct TA. However, Braun and Clarke (2019) note several misinterpretations and misapplication of TA in published studies and claim a cluster of appropriate approaches to TA exist, including 'coding reliability', 'codebook' and 'reflective' Thematic Analysis (p.332). To avoid confusion, the researcher followed Braun & Clarke's reflexive approach diligently.

3.5 Data Collection Method

The following section outlines the process of data collection undertaken.

3.5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are a common qualitative data collection method, which can be 'as ordinary as a conversation and as intrusive as a spy camera' (Richards, 2015, p. 46). They can be carried out in different ways from formal, very structured, controlled situations to more fluid, semi structured or unstructured conversations (Brotherton 2015). Collecting data via Interviews has advantages such as participants being able to recount information at length, and recall events from the past, as well as giving the researcher the opportunity to steer the conversation and line of questioning

(Creswell and Creswell 2022b). An interview is personal, contextualised and negotiated, offering opportunities for discovery, reflection, and explanation about phenomena, such as tacit knowledge, that qualitative authors believe are not possible to capture through numeric data (Easterby-Smith et al. 2018). In addition, researchers can note the participants reactions, body language and difficulties in answering questions. They can also make judgements about whether there is a need to pursue a line of questioning more deeply or pull back from another. According to Beuving and Vries (2015), researchers carrying out in-depth interviews, or open interviews, should enquire about a range of aspects related to the topic, to give opportunities for participants to recall additional memories and bring a wide perspective to the discussion, as well as tactfully exploring the participants' feelings about them, to facilitate a deep and meaningful analysis. Further justification to support the use of semi-structured interviews is that they are similar to real life situations, compared with experiments or completing questionnaires (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and allow for respondents to express their feelings through words, expressions and other nonverbal communication in a conversational way.

Following this guidance, the semi-structured interviews lasted between fifty-one and ninety-four minutes, to give participants enough time for them to think about the questions, to explore their thoughts and to tell the stories of their career journeys and experiences. Generating narrative through the interviews gave participants an opportunity to think about what happened and what they did whilst recalling their experiences and considering their knowledge (Butler-Kisber 2018). Prompts and follow up questions were asked to expand on some responses, for example:

P4: '...but a lot of it you don't learn until something goes wrong.'

I: 'You say that you learn when things go wrong. What do you think you learn, when you learn how to fix something?'

P4: 'I guess it's just to prevent it happening. So, for example, [artists] not being there on time - the first time I sent an advance out, I'd never think to double-check it, to put it in bold, you know what I mean?'

Prior to each interview, the participants were emailed a consent form for participation in the interview and acknowledged they had read the background information sheet, which accompanied the consent form. At the start of the interview, introductions or greetings were made, with a reminder of the purpose of the research and reiteration that it was entirely voluntary and confidential, and participants could refuse to answer any questions or discontinue the interview at any time. Participants were also reminded that the interview would be recorded (included in the consent form) as it would be unethical to announce this aspect as a surprise at the start of the interview (Wang & Geale, 2015).

A pilot interview was carried out to gain experience of conducting the interviews, and this lasted almost two hours. Subsequent reflection on the interview indicated that the researcher needed to reframe some of the questions and manage the time more efficiently. Rapport came easily with most of the participants, but care was taken to spend a few minutes with each of the participants, putting them at ease with general conversation so that they felt comfortable before proceeding to the interview and answering the questions. A list of topics for questions, with sub points was prepared prior to conducting the pilot interview (Appendix 5) and each began with the researcher asking the participants to talk freely about their job and their journey to their current role, so they were talking about something familiar to them, making the conversation flow easily. Some participants did this quite succinctly, requiring additional prompts, as they were not sure how much detail to go into, and others talked about this for much longer. Depending on the direction of the discussions, it was not necessary to ask all the questions as some were answered by the participants in extended responses to others and the conversations mostly flowed naturally to cover the main points under investigation. The researcher did not interrupt any participants during their answers, to allow them to express their thoughts freely but occasionally needed to steer the conversation back to the question asked. For example:

'...I was like self-taught... and you know, talking with other people who have some experience as well... you know, learning from them... What's the question again?' (P7).

Questions were carefully considered to avoid being offensive, leading or presumptive, and ticked off as they were addressed, so that eye contact and conversation could be maintained with the participants, rather than the researcher making a lot of notes (Bell and Waters 2018).

The main areas of questioning were:

- Please tell me about your current role and career journey.
- What you feel you've learned along the way?
- How do you think you have learned how to do this role?
- How are your event experiences created?
- Can you think of any knowledge that you think could or should be shared more or more often?
- What can you say about your personal knowledge, skills and know how?
- If you could, would you happily share your tacit knowledge or are there any reasons you might prefer to retain it as personal?
- Would you say knowledge is managed in the organisation?
- Do you think that the knowledge people have offers the company a competitive edge and if so, why?
- Final thoughts.

Some interesting and insightful comments came at the end of the interviews, when participants were asked if they had any final thoughts about the topics discussed.

3.5.2 Disadvantages of Interviews

Some noted disadvantages of gathering data through interviews include the potential for bias due to the researcher being present, that people's level of articulacy and perception may vary, and participants being removed from the natural setting, rather than being observed in situ (Creswell and Creswell 2022b). For example, the interviews did not take place during a festival, although one interview did take place on the festival site, a week before the event. The researcher is based in Sheffield and whilst over half of the interviews were conducted locally, two were conducted in Edinburgh, four in London, one in West Yorkshire and one in North Yorkshire,

requiring several hours of travel. Interviews and their transcription are also time consuming and require arrangements for the meetings to be made at a location convenient for the participant (Bell and Waters 2018). The combined interviews lasted more than 24 hours and generated an average of 10,000 words of textual data per interview.

3.5.3 Alternative Data Collection Methods Considered

A case study approach was considered for data collection, gathering documents, conducting interviews and doing a 'deep dive' into a single festival, gaining access to additional functions, such as security managers, artiste management companies, site construction workers, ex-employees and other significant stakeholders, such as emergency services and licensing authorities. This would provide wider and more intra-agent insights, rather than the inter-agent focus of this study. However, a single case study did not appeal to the researcher as this would not have provided a credible broader picture that is hopefully useful to the wider festival and events industry.

3.6 Research Setting and Participants

The introduction and literature review chapters gave an overview of the way in which independent music festival organisations tend to be structured, with a small core team or co-owners and a wide network of contractors, sub-contractors and temporary workers to build the festival site, arrange and liaise with entertainment and retail outlets, provide security and manage traffic and manage volunteers. Whilst the festival concept and planning is usually developed by the core team, the overall festival experience is created from a combination of the environment, entertainment and interaction with other members of the audience (Stadler, 2014; 2021; Crowther, 2014). As indicated in the literature review, operational teams implement the design of the core team (Vendelø and Rerup 2020), and the attendees' festival experience is impacted not only by their entertainment experience but also by the quality of other services such as comfort facilities, safety and security teams, marshals and information and retail outlets (Crowther, 2014; Berridge, 2015). Therefore, the

researcher aimed to include participants with experience of as many of these aspects as possible.

3.6.1 Target Population

One of the most important aspects in determining who or what social science research participants (or observables) should be is the validity or trustworthiness of the respondents (Easterby-Smith et al. 2018), in other words that the participants are representative of the population of people, companies, processes, events or other phenomena to which the research subject applies (Brotherton 2015). The target population for this research was people whose work contributes to creating independent music festival experiences in the UK. As noted in the literature review, freelance experts and workers may fill their seasons working on several festivals in succession, therefore this study's sample frame included participants who are members of core proprietor teams and freelance contractors and workers for independent music festivals in the UK, although in practice the participants were involved in festivals in England and Scotland only. Some of the participants had also worked for larger commercial festival organisations, as well as independents.

3.6.2 Sampling Technique

A sample of a population is used when it is not possible to include everyone to whom the research subject applies. For example, if this research was concerned only with the core team of one independent music festival, it would be likely that all the core team could be included, therefore a sample would not be required. A sample was required for this study because of the number of independent music festivals in the UK and because of the number of people working in the sector (more than 85,000 jobs supported by the sector according to Heap, 2020). There was no maximum limit set for the number of interviews to be carried out, and every interview revealed a unique and personal career journey. For the researcher, the interviews were extremely interesting and could have continued indefinitely, but after seventeen interviews, the data related to perceptions of tacit knowledge and how it is considered within independent festival organisations was considered sufficient to

form the basis of the analysis, as whilst the stories the participants told related to different contextual situations, the underpinning concepts and explanations reached the point of saturation.

The targeting and selection of participants for qualitative research is often dependent on practicalities such as who the researcher can gain access to and permission from (Symon and Cassell 2012) and theoretical or purposive sampling (Easterby-Smith et al. 2018; Richards, Lyn 2015) also termed non-probability sampling (Symon and Cassell 2012) was initially used to bring the most relevant perspectives to the research, and exclude those which would not be relevant. Participants were therefore selected by carefully considering the focus of the research and initially approaching personal connections to people working in the sector in a range of roles and their length of service. For example, through her work with a Sheffield-based festival, the site director, event manager and event coordinator were invited to participate. This provided perspectives of people in leadership roles, overall festival and operations responsibilities and with many years of knowledge acquisition and experience to explore. In addition, two of the participants were graduates of the researchers events management degree course, who had several years of freelance experience and contributed their perspectives about festival knowledge from working at several organisations each season, and the value of their specific knowledge to gaining future work. Two others who were personally approached were in the early stages of their festival employment and added a different perspective, as they were focused on gaining experience and knowledge and sensitive to the leadership and cultural systems that aided or constrained their potential to learn. Following each interview, or sometimes emerging during some of the interviews, new potential participants were referred by the interviewee and each was considered for their potential to add further or different perspectives. This is known as a snowballing effect, referring to a non-probability technique to identify further potential participants that might otherwise have been hard to identify (Bindah 2019), resulting in seventeen interviews.

As stated, the primary intention of the researcher was to include the perspectives of a range of practitioners in the sample, from those starting out on their career journeys to those with several years of experience and different roles to reflect upon. Ethnicity, religion, age, income, disability, sexual, marital or residential status were not recorded as the participants' roles, festival experience, length of career and learning journeys were considered the most important factors for this study. Gender, though noted, did not emerge as a significant factor in the context of the data, or in any findings related to career development, the development of tacit knowledge or its value to the participants. However, it is notable that only two of the ten respondents with more than ten years' experience were female, which follows a pattern seen in the wider events industry, where more senior roles are typically held by white males (Rowley, Drakeley & Brown, 2025). The researcher passionately believes that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the events and festival industry are critically important for the future sustainability of the industry, and further developments of this research may include comparing the learning opportunities for people from different backgrounds and with different abilities. However, for this study, the researcher did not target specific groups, but the sample developed through snowballing as described (Bindah, 2019) and is therefore representative of the target sample within the independent music festival sector at the time of the interviews, and the participants provided a rich picture of their experiences, shared in 4.0 Findings and Analysis. Whilst this could be considered a small survey sample, the interviews were all at least fifty minutes in length and most continued for over an hour, generating over twenty hours and 250,000 words of textual data.

3.6.3 Research Participants

All the participants took part voluntarily, twelve of the seventeen were known to the researcher through previous event or university work and as described previously, the remaining participants were referrals through previous interviews. Participants were purposefully selected for their role in the festival industry and whilst not specifically asked about their education, in all cases, this was revealed when they discussed their journey to their current role. Half of the participants had more than

ten years' experience in creating event experiences, some had been in the industry for five to nine years and some were recent graduates (within the last three years).

ID	Highest Education Achievement	Gender	Current role title	Length of career
1	Events Degree	Female	Event project coordinator	1-3 years
2	Events Degree	Female	Event Assistant	1-3 years
3	Events Degree	Female	Event Assistant	1-3 years
4	Degree	Male	Operations Manager	4-5 years
5	Events Degree	Female	Licensing manager	5-9 years
6	Events Degree	Female	Event Assistant	5-9 years
7	Events Degree	Male	Freelance Operations	5-9 years
8	Master's Degree	Male	Head of Operations	5-9 years
9	Master's Degree	Male	Festival director	10 years +
10	Master's Degree	Female	Head of Operations	10 years +
11	Events Degree	Female	Festival Director	10 years +
12	No degree	Male	CEO	10 years +
13	Degree	Male	Festival Director	10 years +
14	Master's Degree	Male	Festival Director	10 years +
15	Master's degree	Male	CEO	10 years +
16	Degree	Male	Founder	10 years +
17	No degree	Male	Operations Director	10 years +

Table 4. Participant Roles and Years of Industry Experience

The interest here was in the experiences and perspectives of all participants, whether 'seasoned' professionals or relatively new to the industry. All the respondents were aware that the researcher works as an events educator and has event and festival work experience. This created some interesting moments of similar shared

experiences and implied understanding and recognition of each other's knowledge, highlighted in some of the initial codes:

'Yeah well, I mean you can learn it from books, certainly, I mean you probably know the purple guide better than I do, there are resources out there and you can certainly do degrees in events management, we certainly didn't, we definitely learnt it on the job' (P11).

3.6.4 Data Management and Storage

To facilitate an effective and well-managed project, careful attention was paid to data management, planned before the data collection phase (Richards, 2015). The data collection produced seventeen recordings and transcripts, which were imported into NVivo, provided by licence through Sheffield Hallam University. All electronic documents related to the project were also stored in password protected, organised files on the researcher's personal computer and copied to a separate external hard drive, locked in a safe at her home. This included recordings of interviews, consent forms and transcripts. Paper copies of field notes and annotated question sheets from each interview were also locked in the safe. Using a structured file management system enabled the numerous documents to be easily located and used (Richards, 2015).

3.6.5 Data Transcription

Each of the interviews was recorded using a voice recorder app on the researcher's mobile phone. The app had been successfully used by the researcher for previous unrelated interviews and so she was confident it would provide sufficient quality recordings. Before the interview started the participants were asked if they were comfortable with this and each agreed they were. The recordings lasted between fifty-one and ninety-four minutes, with an average of around an hour. For convenience, the interviews were transcribed using 'wreally' software (transcribe.wreally.com), a relatively affordable, paid-for service, which offered reasonably good accuracy. The researcher then listened to each interview transcription, correcting any mistakes made by the software, but not altering grammatical mistakes or repeated words, to remain true to the spoken words of the

participants. During this process, the researcher made initial notes about some of the points made and recorded initial thoughts about their potential meaning to the research. The expressions, pauses and searching for the right way to express their responses gave some interesting insights into the participants' difficulty in expressing tacit knowledge and gave the researcher some confidence that they were interested enough in the research to carefully consider their responses. For Example:

'So, like... I'm trying to think how to explain it' (P2)

I think it's... I think there's a... I think it's not solely that, but I think it's one of those... think it's one of those things where... yeah experience prepares you best for things, having kind of... going through some sort of... yeah, that experiential... don't really know what I'm trying to say' (P8).

The transcription process generated a mean average of approximately 10,000 words per interview and corrections of the interviews took between two and four hours each to complete, including stopping the recordings regularly to make corrections and make notes.

3.7 Other Methodologies Considered

Given that tacit knowledge includes subjective views, intuition, perceptions, experience, ideas, values, and feelings of people within organisations (Pussa & Eeriainen, 2010), the interpretative qualities of the Hermeneutic methodology were considered. However, this methodology is based on both a subjective ontology and epistemology (Johnson & Duberley, 2001; McAuley et al., 2014) and therefore at odds with a realist-subjectivist stance. Heuristics is often referred to in organisation and management research as ways or strategies for quick and efficient decision making (Loock and Hinnen 2015). It is also applied in the analysis of artificial Intelligence search algorithms (Edelkamp 2012). However, the model of Heuristics considered for this research was that used in the Human Sciences, for the discovery of phenomena through inquiring of oneself, and engaging in dialogue with other people to discover the 'underlying meanings of important human experiences' (Moustakas 1994, p. 16). This inferred the self-discovery of tacit knowledge by

participants and the researcher, understanding what it means to each, how it is learned and can be used. Moustakas (1994) claims that a powerful human experience with potential links to Maslow's self-actualization is central to the Heuristic approach and that the phenomenon under study is experienced by the researcher as well as the participants, or co-researchers.

In this respect, an ethnographic dimension could also be present in the process (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This approach did fit with the reflexive aspiration for personal learning and deeper understanding of the researcher's tacit knowledge and its influence on her own practice. Moustakas (1990) suggests that it is within oneself that the most profound understanding of meaning, and knowledge occurs through senses, perceptions, beliefs and judgements. Moustakas uses multiple in-depth interviews and other sources such as personal journals, depictions and poems in his studies. Similarly, Moses (2012) describes Heuristics as a series of individual case studies, based on the researcher's understanding, used to generate new hypotheses or theories, depending on the deductive or inductive approach. In their approach, the model or new understanding from each case study is used as a 'building block' to then form the basis of the next case study, and eventually all the case studies are analysed and assembled to create a stronger 'theoretical edifice' (p 140). Although this study was not carried out as a heuristic project, heuristics are involved in Reflexive Thematic analysis, as codes are essentially 'heuristic devices to add rich, nuanced understanding of the topic of interest in the analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.288).

Grounded Theory was also considered as it shares some aspirations with thematic analysis in that it presents researchers with the opportunity and challenge of unpicking and understanding 'mysteries and moments of human life' through qualitative research (Charmaz 2014, p. 165) although Glaser (1998) contends that quantitative studies may also be carried out using the Grounded Theory method. There are other similarities between the thematic analysis method and a grounded theory approach, as Glaser & Strauss (Glaser and Strauss 1967) stress the importance

of constant comparison and ensuring that codes and categories (themes) fit the data and are derived from and interpret the data truthfully.

Grounded Theory also advocates a reflexive, interactive relationship with the data (Charmaz, 2009) a key aspect of the developed Reflexive Thematic Analysis followed in this study. However, the purpose of this study is exploratory, to better understand the nature, role and potential of tacit knowledge in independent music festivals, rather than generating theory about it, and therefore Reflexive Thematic Analysis was embraced.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

When teachers and students of medicine swear by the three-thousand-year-old Hippocratic Oath, (translated from Greek in 1849 by Francis Adams to form the basis of the contemporary version), they promise to prescribe only for the good of patients and do no harm, to live exemplary professional and personal lives, to cherish life and 'refrain from mischief' of various manners (Isaacs 2011). In other words, medical practitioners swear to be true, authentic and act with integrity. Academic researchers are not bound to swear by any comparable professional code, but the profession relies on the 'self-policing' peer review system of publication, intended to ensure truthfulness, integrity and authenticity. However, data fabrication is said to occur frequently, along with self-plagiarism, plagiarism, failure to disclose conflicts of interest and misleading authorship (Campbell et al. 2012; Martin, 2013). In social science research, the different beliefs that researchers hold about knowledge, its existence and form, coupled with the arguments about what constitutes proof of knowledge, lead to a never-ending stream of partially answered or partially justified research questions, presented in journal articles, according to Starbuck (2006). He continues that in turn, the articles in this stream, focus on publication over discovery and knowledge and often include 'for further research' sections, fuelling the continuous supply of ambiguous topics and 'ritualized pretence rather than a source of genuine contributions to knowledge' (Starbuck, 2006, p 3). Because of this point of view and the assertion that some of the most blatant academic misconduct is alleged to be committed by Doctoral students and even senior researchers and

professors (Martin, 2013), the researcher took a fastidious approach to ethical considerations.

Veal and Burton (2014) outline eight different stages of the research process where ethical issues can arise and were carefully considered (Veal and Burton 2014), illustrated in Table 5.

Ethical Issue		Stage in the research process					
		Design & Organisation	Collection	Analysis & interpretation	Storing data during project	Reporting	Storing data after project
1	Social Benefit						
2	Researcher competence						
3	Subject's freedom of choice						
4	Subject's informed consent						
5	Risk of harm to subject - anonymous						
6	Risk of harm to subjects - identifiable						
7	Honesty / rigour in analysis/ interpretation						
8	Honesty / rigour in reporting						

Table 5. Ethical Considerations Throughout the Research Process

Adapted from Veal & Burton (2014)

1. From the outset, the aim was to explore any benefits to the events and festival industry in understanding more about tacit knowledge and its management, with the intention of publishing in industry, as well as academic sources, making any advantages discovered available in appropriate, accessible formats.
2. The RCD training was undertaken, and an ethics form submitted to Converis with approval for the category 'very low risk human participants studies' ethical approval number ER6323491.

3. The participants' freedom of choice was made explicit through the Participant Consent Form (Appendix 1), signed by all participants and the researcher in each other's presence, which included a tick box to indicate agreement of the following:
 - I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
4. Subjects were informed about the nature of the study through an initial phone call, followed by an email and a one-page information sheet about the nature and purpose of the study (Appendix 2). The Participant Consent Form (appendix 1) included a tick box to indicate agreement with the following:
 - I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 22/08/2018 and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
5. Regarding anonymity, all participants were allocated a numerical assignment for example P1, P2 through to P17, and no participants' names, companies or festivals were included in the presentation of findings or analysis. The Participant Consent Form in Appendix 2 included a tick box to indicate agreement with the following:
 - I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials and will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.
6. Further to the above, The Participant Consent Form (Appendix 3) included a tick box to indicate agreement with the following:
 - I agree for this interview to be audio-recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified, may be used in any conference presentation, report or journal article developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be

made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original recording.

7. and 8. Honesty and rigour in analysis, interpretation and reporting were pursued by diligently following the Reflexive Thematic Analysis method, which guided the researcher through a period of prolonged engagement with the data, returning several times to the transcripts, recordings and memos, to be sure that the participants' words were truthfully represented. Each of the participants received a transcript of their interview and invited to comment on anything that was not reported as intended. No participants reported that their words were incorrectly represented in the transcripts. Reflexive activities undertaken to question the interpretations derived from the data included revisiting each set of data and the initial codes and subsequent themes, with revisions made as progress continued, but always with reference back to the original sources.

To truthfully represent the voices of the participants, care was taken to question any bias on the part of the researcher influenced the analysis and interpretation of the data. Whilst subjectivity, experience and familiarity with the context is an accepted characteristic of qualitative research (Ravn 2023), it did not skew or alter the findings. Rather, the researcher entered the analysis with eyes and mind wide open, related to the findings and used the revelations in a reflexive way to consider and inform her own practice. Careful attention was paid to not form or communicate opinions about the value of tacit knowledge to the participants, and emotional responses to the data were managed through repeated rounds of analysis and maintenance of memos.

3.9 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the research approach adopted for this thesis. Firstly, the research strategy was outlined, followed by an explanation of the researcher's world view, through the discussion of ontology and epistemology. An inductive, qualitative research strategy was justified in the context of these theoretical assumptions, alongside a phenomenology-led methodology that understands tacit knowledge as a socially constructed phenomenon, embedded in

the practice of creating independent music festivals. The researcher's prior familiarity with, and experience of working of independent music festivals was acknowledged as an influence in recognising some of the skills, knowledge and expertise employed in creating independent music festival experiences, which in the spirit of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was treated as a resource in the analysis of data, rather than bias.

The chapter then explained the rationale for using semi-structured interviews to generate rich, experiential accounts from participants who have worked in the industry for between one and thirty years, as well as the process of transcription and prolonged engagement with the data. This sustained immersion supported the development of meaningful themes, grounded in the participants experiences. The chapter subsequently detailed the systematic application of Reflexive Thematic Analysis, from initial coding to developed themes, alongside ethical management and storage of data. A key part of the process was reflexively considering the researchers' influence on the interview process, analytical decisions and interpretation of the way in which tacit knowledge is perceived, valued, gained, used and shared in independent music festivals. The researcher was satisfied that this element of the research has significantly contributed to the conclusions and her own professional practice.

Building on this methodological foundation, the following chapter presents and analyses the key findings from the study. Each theme includes an analytical discussion of the findings in relation to the literature review. The themes are presented in a sequence designed to first outline the distinctive knowledge requirements and challenges faced by practitioners and leaders of independent music festival organisations, and then to highlight the types of knowledge most valued by the participants, from organisational and personal perspectives. Enabling and constraining factors to gaining and sustaining experiential knowledge complete the chapter.

4.0 Chapter 4 Findings & Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted for this thesis. Carefully following the Reflexive Thematic Analysis method (Braun and Clarke 2022), the themes are presented in an intended 'logical and meaningful manner, building a cogent representation of the data' (Byrne 2022b, p.1401). Themes, subthemes, primary and supplementary codes are explained, using the perspectives of the participants as understood by the researcher through the interviews. Codes integrated into 4.0, the findings chapter were either the most referenced or most enlightening to demonstrate the development of themes as they emerged from the data. The chapter begins with explanations of the themes, subthemes and primary and codes, illustrated in Figure 18. It continues with an overview of the data and reintroduces the participants, their roles and years of experience working in the festival industry.

Findings and analysis related to each of the four themes are then presented in turn with a concluding discussion section, comparing the findings to relevant literature from the literature review.

4.1.1 Overview of Themes

Theme 1 Introduces the participants' perceptions about the complexity of festivals and the uncertain environment they operate in, which determine the knowledge and skills required of those working in the industry, and which they must draw upon to respond to the many challenges that arise.

Theme 2 Outlines the breadth of holistic and specific knowledge and skills required to successfully create and deliver an independent music festival, and the types of knowledge that participants felt were important. It includes insights into the relationship between tacit and explicit knowledge as experienced by the participants, the importance of explicit knowledge but also the insufficiency of explicit knowledge alone, without the tacit knowledge dimension.

Theme 3 Develops perspectives around the value of authentic tacit knowledge to independent music festival organisations and some risks associated with its loss or lack of recognition. This theme also presents the participants' perspectives about the personal value of tacit knowledge, for their own development and career progression, but also reveals some negative associations, as some felt a weight of responsibility that comes with being the 'go-to' holder of important tacit knowledge.

Theme 4 This theme concludes the findings chapters with perspectives about the experiential way in which people working in independent music festival organisations gain and share tacit knowledge, consciously or unconsciously. These processes can be positively or negatively influenced by others, as well as by the common structure and culture within independent festivals and the wider sector. One of the most noticeable findings was the emotional impacts of making mistakes, and how this influences future approaches to learning and professional development.

Figure 18, overleaf, includes the four themes, seven subthemes and twenty-two primary codes identified during the data analysis process. Further supplementary codes are included in the findings and analysis sections for each primary code to disseminate the narrative of the main findings.

Within this chapter, a full overview of the data collected and analysed is provided, along with the data produced during the different phases of the thematic analysis of the interviews. Themes, subthemes and codes are presented in the order which flows most logically to tell the story of the research. As outlined in the previous chapter, a total of seventeen interviews were carried out between June and December 2019, with participants' years of experience in the events and festival industry ranging from one to over thirty years. Interviews were carried out at the participant's place of work, or at Sheffield Hallam University and one was conducted on the festival site, a week before the festival took place. The demographics of the participants were considered important to the analysis in relation to their role title, festival experience, length of career and learning journeys, rather than their age and consequently ages were not recorded.

Theme	Subtheme	Primary Codes		
4.3 Theme 1 Factors influencing knowledge requirements for independent music festivals	4.3.1 Uncertainty and unpredictability of the external environment	4.3.1.1 External impacts	4.3.1.2 Internal factors	
Theme	Sub-theme	Primary Codes		
4.4 Theme 2 Participants' Perspectives of Tacit Knowledge in Context	4.4.1 Breadth of knowledge	4.4.1.1 Holistic festival knowledge	4.4.1.2 Importance of codified knowledge	4.4.1.3 Insufficiency of explicit knowledge
	4.4.2 Relevant types of Knowledge	4.4.2.1 Relational knowledge	4.4.2.2 Authentic tacit knowledge and skills	4.4.2.3 Authentic tacit knowledge and skills in action
Theme	Sub-theme	Primary Codes		
4.5 Theme 3 Perceived value of experiential knowledge and skills in context	4.5.1 The value of experiential knowledge to the organisation	4.5.1. 1 Organisational value	4.5.1.2 Organisational risks	
	4.5.2 Personal value of tacit knowledge	4.5.2.1 Awareness of personal knowledge	4.5.2.2 Positive perceptions	4.5.2.3 Negative associations
Theme	Sub-theme	Primary Codes		
4.6 Theme 4 Gaining and sharing tacit knowledge in independent music festivals	4.6.1 Gaining tacit Developing experiential tacit knowledge 'on the job'	4.6.1.1 Learning by living it	4.6.1.2 Learning from mistakes	4.6.1.3 Motivators and drivers
	4.6.2 Barriers and enablers for experiential knowledge development and transfer	4.6.2.1 Enablers for gaining experiential knowledge	4.6.2.2 Barriers to experiential knowledge development and transfer	4.6.2.3 Agency

Figure 18. Themes, Subthemes and Primary Codes

4.2 Data Overview

Overall, nine of the participants were male and eight were female. Gender, though recorded, did not emerge as a significant factor in the context of the data, or in any findings related to career development, the development of tacit knowledge or its value to the participants.

However, only two of the ten respondents with more than ten years' experience were female. Whilst this study does not include a focus on gender equality in career progression within the independent music festival sector, it is an area of future interest to the researcher.

To protect the participants' anonymity and comply with ethical requirements, each participant was assigned a number, which is included next to any responses used in the presentation of the findings and analysis (P1 – P17). Any inclusion of data from the researcher is identified as 'R'. Fifteen of the seventeen participants had either a bachelor's degree or master's degree. Two of the respondents did not have a degree but had more than ten years of experience. Six of the respondents had a degree in events management, but this, and the gender distribution, are attributed to the purposive and snowballing sampling methods employed for the study. All the participants worked at, or had experience of working, at one or more independent music festivals, some full-time, some part-time and the role titles included are those given by the participants. The chief executive officers (CEOs) and festival directors interviewed had strategic oversight of the festival, its size and capacity, licensing, genre and quality of music, entertainment and retail, and ticket prices. They were all actively involved with their current festival (or festival organisation members, in the case of the association CEO), and in each case, their festival had grown out of a passion for live music and attending previous festivals.

Participants identifying with operational roles, from working as a freelance contractor to operations director, were involved with the construction of the festival site, staging and other infrastructure, logistics, security requirements, traffic management, health and safety compliance and creating the physical festival environment. The more recent entrants into the industry, working as event assistants, supported various festival functions, from office-based co-ordination liaising with retailers, ticket companies and artist management companies, to onsite support of operations and marketing. The range of roles covered the central functions through which the attendee festival experience is created and delivered. Each participant had experience of and insights into festival organisation and delivery

processes that take place pre-event, during the event and post-event. All the interviewees were willing to participate in the interviews and gave their time and answers freely. No questions were refused, and the researcher, mindful of the competitive nature of the independent music festival sector, assured participants of the confidentiality of the research ahead of each interview.

4.3 Theme 1: Factors Influencing Knowledge Requirements in Independent Music Festivals

This theme emerged strongly from the interviews, as the participants seemed to feel strongly about the impacts and consequences of the particular business and physical environmental factors that festival practitioners must often respond to and operate within, which are not typical for many other types of businesses. This theme therefore is important to include here, as it highlights the complexity of festivals and the uncertain contextual environment in which practitioners operate. These factors in turn determine the nature and scope of the knowledge required by practitioners with different levels of experience and roles in the industry. This theme sets the scene for Theme 2, where the specific knowledge and skills required of those working in the industry are identified, reflected upon and analysed.

Theme	Subtheme	Primary Codes	
		Supplementary Codes	
4.3 Theme 1 Factors influencing knowledge requirements for independent music festivals	4.3.1 Uncertainty and unpredictability of the external environment	4.3.1.1 External impacts	4.3.1.2 Internal factors
		* External impacts on operations * Managing multiple stakeholders * Financial uncertainty	* Characteristics of independent music festivals

Figure 19. Theme 1: Primary and Supplementary Codes

4.3.1 Subtheme: Uncertainty and unpredictability of the external environment

Participants described a range of challenging circumstances they confronted within their roles that can impact on festival planning and delivery, for example:

'There's millions of challenges...' (P16).

'Every promoter wants to deliver a safe and enjoyable experience, but they often also have to deal with incredibly unpredictable circumstances' (P15).

'I had no idea I'd walked into the most chaotic time for planning a festival [April]' (P6).

The main challenges described by participants are presented in the first primary code and include environmental factors, by far the most significant of which is the UK weather, but operational or technical issues were also a significant factor, such as: *'...the generator blows, or the power goes down or the internet drops' (P7).*

Interestingly, when participants spoke about these types of operational and technical issues, they did so with a smile and seemed to accept these as inevitable, regular occurrences in festival operations, for example:

'I think there's a tendency to kind of assume that the aim is to avoid those situations entirely... that's not possible' (P14).

Other challenges include managing multiple stakeholders and unpredictable attendee behaviour.

4.3.1.1 Primary Code: External Impacts

External impacts on operations

Several participants shared experiences of how the unpredictability of the UK weather directly impacts festival planning and delivery, despite advance planning:

'There's a lot of unique challenges, you're at the mercy of external factors like weather and you know, with the best laid plans...' (P15).

Disruption can occur during the festival site build and during festival show days, especially when extreme weather is unpredicted or worse than predicted. This emphasises the limits of even the most comprehensive plans. P6 highlighted how weather conditions create uncertainty and can require adaptation in real time:

'I think a lot of it [dealing with the weather] is like improvising and hoping ... there's obviously things put in place, but you never know how bad it's going to be' (P6).

Year one of [festival] at the show ground, the weather was awful, and I ended up... I had to redesign the site like four times' (P14).

The comment from P14 highlights that live site plans may be significantly disrupted as a result of unforeseen conditions, particularly when the festival is held at a site for the first time, as specific contextual and situational prior knowledge may not be available.

Costly improvisation in response to weather disruption was a recurring theme and P14 recalled significant operational consequences, suggesting a reactive, unplanned for scenario:

'But then the weather kicked in and then it was... you know, that was like... totally... all-out war, bringing in infrastructure and throwing everything you can at it' (P14).

The terminology used by P14 emphasises the severity of logistical challenges and the cost implications of bad weather impacts, underlining the high-pressure environment in which festival organisers operate.

The disruption to operations can be further exacerbated by previous bad weather at other festivals, if a contractor's availability is impacted:

'If the contractors are at a previous festival and their festival got rained off or they get stuck in the mud, that then delays your build as well, and you have all these amazing plans but then they're a couple of days late because something else has happened outside of your control, so yeah, it's a challenge' (P16).

This highlights risks associated with relying on external contractors to provide important aspects of the festival build, and the consequences when issues arise. This dependency on others reflects some of the business risks incurred by independent music festivals, compared with vertically integrated organisations.

Other business and safety risks were exposed, in addition to the operational and cost implications:

'We had to postpone putting the stage tents up because of the high winds and that had a knock-on effect, and during the festival we had high winds as well, so we had to run around actually tying things down, making sure no one died basically, because if a bar tent blows away and kills somebody...' (P11).

P11's comment illustrates some of the life-threatening circumstances that can occur, which require quick and effective responses, to avoid grave outcomes for workers and attendees and avert potential legal and financial penalties to the organisation.

These findings suggest that expertise, prior knowledge and experience would benefit organisers in such circumstances, demonstrated by P7's belief that previous experience of festival operations is essential to planning for and managing other potentially serious situations:

'...when you're running a weekend festival and you know there's recreational drug use, it's knowing how to put a medical operation together for during a show... during my time I've seen people like drop dead in front of me and have heart attacks and then be brought to life... and then in the welfare tent at 2:00 in the morning on a Saturday night and like... dealing with six teenagers that have overdosed on ketamine...' (P7).

This account demonstrates that how previous experience in crisis situations informs decision making and responses to dangerous situations but also highlights the importance of understanding the audience profile and any potentially risky behaviours.

Managing Multiple Stakeholders

Some participants described challenges and nuances of managing relationships and multiple stakeholders in the annual cycle of festival organisation:

'There are so many different people to try and keep happy' (P4).

'I'm often accountable to directors, shareholders or boards. I work with the council, have meetings with the police like every week. So, you've got to... you've got to be able to deal with a whole lot of stakeholders' (P7).

Some stakeholders, such as licensing authorities, can significantly impact the scope of the festival or prevent it from going ahead, and the following statements describe challenges faced, adding to the complexity of festival planning:

'They [Licensing Authority] said you can have all of this [site area] and then they suddenly went 'Oh actually, no, you can't have all of that, you can only have this bit...' and we were like 'great so we'll just redesign the whole festival!'" (P14).

The interviews further revealed that the approaches and preferences of different licensing authorities approaches vary between locations. Prior knowledge of this, and skills in stakeholder management, are beneficial to for smooth and successful festival planning and operations, and each encounter with a different authority provides an opportunity for learning:

'[Licensing] varies so much from authority to authority, it's a bit like police forces and what their attitude is to events, to festivals... [for example] if they previously had a negative experience of those events in their particular area, and has that burned them, [such as] the views of local residents – [granting a licence] is informed by all of these things' (P15).

'You have a license that's specific to a show from a council so, all those sorts of logistics side of the security schedule, fire, all those kinds of sections and then dealing with a council and I mean, I think probably over the years I've worked with Maybe 10, 12 different councils. They all have a different priority. In [location], they were absolutely obsessed with catering and the hygiene, and the health and safety documents... And then for [location] the council were obsessed with gas and storage of LPG, how we stored it, and the three women from environmental health were like an absolute nightmare... and then at [festival] it's very security [focused] and all councils are different. So, I learnt a lot by dealing with different ones' (P3).

Residents living close to festivals can also be major stakeholders, as they may influence the granting or refusal of festival premises licences. However, some participants indicated frustration with this stakeholder group, suggesting

interactions can be emotive, therefore requiring strong relationship management skills:

'I guess it's understanding where they sit in the festival, you know, residents, as much as they piss me off, are a big part of us being able to be at [festival location]' (P5, urban festival).

'Like, I have to go sit down in a residents meeting and stand up and say, 'hello I'm bringing 50,000 people to your tiny village for four days and I'm gonna make your life hell for four weeks, like, what can we do to help?' And you know, after, I have had people like shouting at me, had things thrown at me...' (P7, greenfield festival).

Careful stakeholder management is also required for some artists, as these relationships can be difficult:

'Artists sometimes aren't the most level-headed people to kind of work with sometimes and... those relationships just... mitigating any damage to those relationships and things like that, which there are some horrible moments, but there are some also really rewarding moments where something happens and at the end of the festival they go 'I really want to thank you for how you helped us with that' and then that makes it all kind of worth it' (P8).

Financial Risks and Uncertainty

Financial risks associated with staging independent music festivals were described as significant, with some highlighting the precarious nature of festival finances and therefore livelihoods:

'For the guys running the festival... if this flops... like, that's their life' (P6).

'I mean, our shows are expensive... and if they were to get more expensive then we'd all lose lots of money and I'd be out on my ear!' (P12).

The costs of temporary infrastructure were described as 'absolutely monstrous' (P15) and the fragility of festival finances was also expressed:

'To an economist, it doesn't make much sense 'cos margins are really, really tight' (P15).

'Inevitably with independent festivals, you're running them on an absolute shoestring, you are bootstrapping from beginning to end' (P14).

These examples suggest that the unexpected or last-minute challenges previously described would have significant negative impacts on already constrained margins.

Other participants further confirmed these and previous findings, describing how unplanned or unforeseen issues require quick, reactive decisions about additional resource requirements and operational changes with financial impacts:

'... there are circumstantial things which crop up that we also have to deal with in the run-up to the festival, where it goes 'Well, we weren't expecting to have to deal with this, right we've now got to put x amount of resource in to make sure that happens...' (P8).

'He has an event to run, and even to the decision making that's made, you know, the 11th hour where he's just like just 'chuck money at the problem, we'll deal with it later' (P10).

Generating sufficient ticket sales was another source of financial uncertainty, as unlike other businesses that have regular income streams, annual festivals rely on a demand for tickets for one show only, and do not have an opportunity to later recoup lost revenue:

'The biggest challenge is selling the tickets actually... it's a financial risk and if you don't quite make it that weekend, you know, you can't have another one the next week to actually make back the money, so it is a high risk' (P16).

Other external financial burdens can unexpectedly impact festival budgets. P15, who represents the legal concerns of independent festival association members, described an issue where landowners were passing increases in their business rates to organisations holding festivals on their premises:

'All of a sudden, bills started landing on desks..., and some of these for small businesses were astronomical, like 60-70 grand bills. Something like that is quite unpredictable' (P15).

This example further illustrates how external forces beyond the control of festival organisers can significantly impact financial feasibility.

4.3.1.2 Primary Code: Internal Factors

Characteristics of Independent Music Festival Organisations

Some participants talked about the organisational arrangements of their festivals, describing a small number of core founders or directors to make major decisions about the festival. For example, P16 stated there are 6 directors and one paid employee for their two festivals, 12,000 and 15,000-capacity respectively, and P11 stated that he and his wife are the sole directors of their 10,000-capacity festival and employ only two staff. P13, event manager for a 34,000-capacity independent music festival, described the organisational composition in Figure 20, illustrating the small core team.

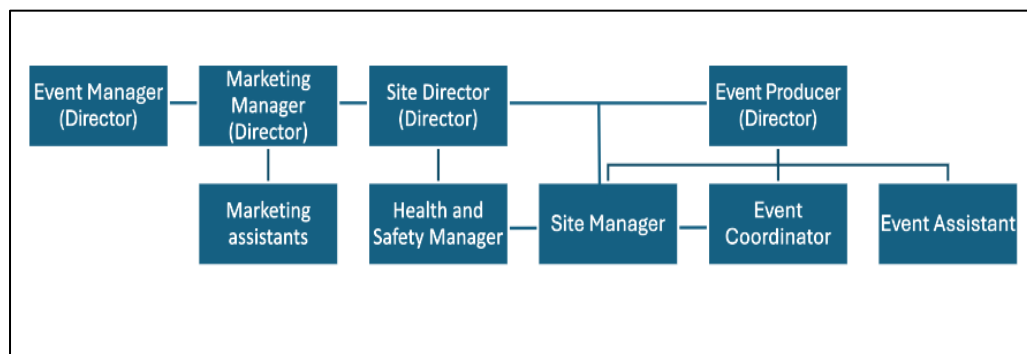


Figure 20. Independent Music Festival Organisation Structure

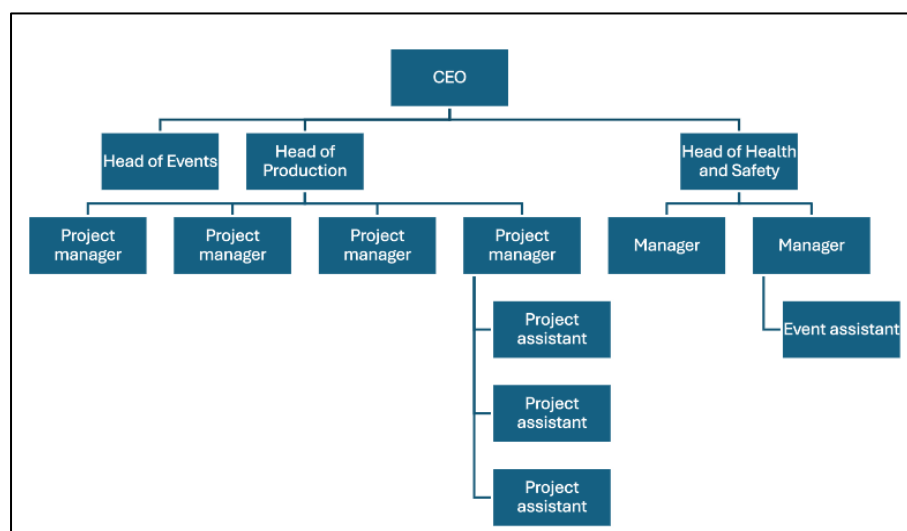


Figure 21. Commercial Festival Organisation Structure

Before becoming a freelancer for independent music festivals, P3 worked in a large commercial festival organisation and described its organisation illustrated in Figure 21. This suggests that larger commercial festival organisations, delivering multiple festivals each year, typically employ more full-time staff and incorporate more layers of management. It therefore seems there are similarities in role functions between the organisational structures of independent festival operators, and between commercial and independent festival operators. However, in these examples, a difference in the number of supporting assistant roles and organisational layers is apparent.

Some participants suggested that independent music festival organisations offer higher quality and more personal experiences to audiences than commercial festivals. This was based on their small core team not being obligated to maximise profits by shareholders, and because they felt that independent music festivals offer differentiated and more creative experiences. P16 suggested they are more personally and financially invested in creating a good experience for their attendees than commercial festival organisations:

'Being an independent festival, you've got the control... and it's your baby, you're invested in that, in actually making it as good as possible, whereas some of the big boys, the Readings, and the Downloads they've got you know, shareholders and other investors and they don't necessarily make the right decisions for the experience, you know, they want to maximise profit. So some things that we'll do are not necessarily profit driving, but we know that it's going to be beneficial to the overall experience of the festival, and I think that's why you get a nicer experience at some of the smaller festivals, because they do want to make money but they are not, you know, not every decision is purely based on that fact, so you try and make it as good as you can' (P16).

This example suggests that caring about and, importantly, understanding the attendee experience, creates positive attendee experiences. This feeling was also expressed by P14 below, but both responses include assumptions that people operating commercial festivals care less about their attendees.

'[Commercial festivals] are... consume over there, you know, eat over there, drink over there, watch there... yeah, that's not... there's plenty of events that are like that... you know, nobody really invests in them, it's just you know, whether it's the organisers or the businesses that own the events, or the venues that host them or the attendees that go to them, it's a kind of take it or leave it sort of thing. Yeah, that's not, that's not a very good event' (P14).

P6, an event assistant also shared the perception that the nature of independent music festival organisations helps to provide a more personal experience than commercial festivals:

'I get emails all the time from customers that have been coming like every single year, and they're like 'we love what you're doing 'and 'we love you'... you don't get that from like, like massive mainstream festivals. Yeah, everyone's just a big family...' (P6).

The scope of this research did not extend to comparing these perspectives with commercial festival operators or whether these aspects of independent music festivals are as unique as the organisers perceive them to be, however, this would be an interesting area for future research.

4.3.2 Summary and Discussion of Theme 1 Findings

The aim of the thesis is to examine whether and to what extent tacit knowledge is understood, recognised, valued and utilised within independent music festivals. To do so, it was important to understand the participants' perspectives about the context in which their festivals operate, determining the nature and scope of knowledge and competences required (Johnson et al., 2014). The findings in this chapter outlined the participants perspectives about the challenges of creating and delivering independent music festivals and the findings strongly support the literature, that the environment in which they operate is financially uncertain and operationally complex (Masterman, 2004; Matthews, 2008; Carlsen et al., 2010; Boden & shipway, 2024). Some idiosyncratic financial risks of staging independent music festivals were a significant concern for the participants, due to their personal and financial investment in the business. The findings support the literature that the

single annual event business model means they have only one opportunity per annum to sell tickets, compared to repeat or year-round events businesses (Tonga Uriarte et al., 2019; Stadler, 2021).

This compounds financial pressures associated with a crowded and competitive market (Lawson 2024; Stadler, Fullagar & Reid, 2014a; Wickham, Donnelly & French, 2021) and volatile consumer demand (Getz, 2002; Anderton, 2021). Interestingly, rivalry within the festival sector was not directly raised by participants, although dependence on ticket sales implies competition for attendees and the literature suggests that they remain competitive. Furthermore, the literature suggests that festivals are directly impacted by any increase in the costs of supplies (Van der Wagen & White, 2010; Ali & Balme, 2022) as they lack economies of scale (Henderson, 2011) and participants stressed they operate within 'really, really tight' margins (P15) and 'on a shoestring' (P14). The financial burden of temporary infrastructure costs was described as 'absolutely monstrous' (P15), further reflecting the financial constraints and leaving limited resources and possible cash flow problems for organisers to respond to errors or unexpected expenses (Lorincz et al. 2023; Van der Wagen and White 2010).

The participants' financial concerns were clear, and whilst academic literature (Newbould, 2019; Matthews, 2008; Silvers & Rutherford, 2021) and industry guides (eventsindustryforum, 2025) provide direction to organisers about the process of budgeting and likely expenditure items, there appears to be a gap in literature about the financial risks that independent music festival organisers are exposed to. Complexities of festival site construction (Newbould, 2019) create 'unpredictable circumstances' and 'millions of challenges' (P16) that were often 'unavoidable' (P14), meaning responding to unexpected operational issues often results in having to 'chuck money at the problem' (P10). As P7 stated, 'one thing could have a knock-on effect to like a hundred things... it's having the knowledge to identify when you need to break that chain reaction.' The literature supports the significance of external impacts on organisational success and the importance of adaptability to changing circumstances (Senge, 1990; Esterby-smith et al., 1999; Pedler, 1997). The findings

further indicate that unpredicted circumstances can arise abruptly on the run up to, or during the festival, such as contractor delays, equipment failure, audience behaviour or commonly, the UK weather. Some consequences are potentially life threatening and pose significant health and safety and business risks. The literature supports the likelihood of operational disruption (Boden & Shipway, 2024) including the shutdown or postponement of festivals due adverse weather conditions (Getz, 2002; Carlsen, 2010) and that attendee and staff safety should always be prioritised (O'Toole, Luke, Brown, Tatrai & Semmens, 2019; Silvers and O'Toole 2021; Tarlow, 2002). The findings also suggest organisers have sometimes been caught out by a lack of preparedness for weather conditions that were unexpected or worse than expected, but arguably, somewhat predictable through diligent planning. The literature warns that inadequate planning and financial management, as well as poor management or leadership may cause festival failure (Getz, 2002; Carlsen et al., 2010; Lorincz, 2023). The findings did not suggest any evidence of mismanagement, but an acceptance that operational and technical issues would occur during festival build and show days, perhaps because of the complexity budgetary constraints, evident in P6's sense of 'improvising and hoping' and never knowing 'how bad it's going to be.' However, only one participant expressed a meticulous approach to planning for unforeseen circumstances in particular.

'So, it's almost like doing the advanced planning as though you are going to be in an inquest at the end of it. It's like documenting that process and... planning for something to go wrong, so that when it does, everything is there and it's perfect and it's watertight.'

Interestingly, participants mentioned several issues related to bad weather impacts, but hot weather was not cited as having caused problems. Climate change predictions suggest the UK will experience hotter and drier summers (Cotterill, Pope & Stott, 2023; Parry et al. 2024) but will also be more subject to extreme weather and flooding (Fosser et al. 2020). Therefore, festival organisers will inevitably continue to face uncertainty in planning and this highlights a responsibility to prepare for more extreme circumstances, to protect the safety of attendees and workers, and the financial sustainability of the organisation. Literature supports this perspective,

suggesting that festivals with knowledge and expertise at their core and dispersed throughout the organisation are more able to respond to challenging circumstances and sustain success (Bladen, 2012). The literature suggests that most independent music festivals are led by a small core team that works on planning throughout the year, with teams of contractors and workers joining closer to the show, contributing to the construction and delivery of the event (Stadler, 2021; Vendelø & Rerup, 2020), which participants confirmed was the case in their organisations.

‘Out of the say 200-250 people that would be directly involved in making the event happen on the day, you're looking at core group of about eight or ten people that offer continuity’ (P14).

Participants felt that their personal and financial investment, whilst risky, reflected their ability and commitment to providing different and more personal experiences for their audiences, which Berridge (2015) suggests is important to attract and maintain audiences that are looking for bespoke events.

Theme 1 has established that independent music festival organisers face financial uncertain and operational complexities that inevitably change with each iteration of the festival. This first theme, therefore, makes an original contribution to knowledge by highlighting the lived experiences of practitioners in planning for, but more often responding to, unpredicted site conditions, weather and infrastructure challenges that require quick decision-making. By evidencing how organisers draw on often deeply embedded knowledge to manage potentially critical financial or operational issues, this theme demonstrates that independent music festival systems are somewhat fragile as they rely on the knowledge and expertise of a small core team and are arguably impossible to fully control due to the ever-changing environment.

Therefore, this theme provides an essential foundation for the remaining themes, providing established background about the environment in which independent music festivals operate. The findings particularly support the next theme, which examines the practitioners’ perspectives about the specific types of knowledge required for responding to the outlined conditions and challenges associated with planning and delivering independent music festivals.

4.4 Theme 2: Participants' Perspectives of Tacit Knowledge in Context

Theme	Subtheme	Primary Codes		
		Supplementary codes		
4.4 Theme 2 Participants' Perspectives of Tacit Knowledge in Context	4.4.1 Breadth of knowledge	4.4.1.1 Holistic festival knowledge	4.4.1.2 Importance of codified knowledge	4.4.1.3 Insufficiency of explicit knowledge
		* Breadth of roles and knowledge applied in festival organisations * Understanding audiences	* Essential codified documentation * Unarticulated explicit knowledge or information	
	4.4.2 Relevant types of Knowledge	4.4.2.1 Relational knowledge	4.4.2.2 Authentic tacit knowledge and skills	4.4.2.3 Authentic tacit knowledge and skills in action
		* A combination of explicit and experiential knowledge	* Intuitive knowing * Authentic tacit skills	* Integrating context, intuition, and reasoning

Figure 22. Theme 2: Subthemes, Primary and Secondary Codes

This section includes some industry specific terminology used in the festival industry and therefore, a glossary of terms is provided in Table 7, compiled by the researcher.

Early Bird	Tickets for the following year's festival that are offered for sale at a discounted price, often immediately after the current festival
Egress	The process of managing festival goers leaving the event site
Event Control	Live function during show days that receives, and records information, responds to and deploys emergency or other services to address issues and record their outcomes.
Festival Capacity	Maximum number of tickets that can be sold for the festival, according to the premises licence.
Green Guide	Comprehensive legal and best practice guidance about all aspects of outdoor events management, published by the Events Industry Forum.
Health and Safety Executive	Comprehensive legal and best practice guidance about health and safety aspects of events management. Includes reporting of incidents, accidents and near misses.
Ingress	The process of managing festival goers entering the event site.
Purple Guide	Comprehensive legal and best practice guidance about all aspects of events management, published by the Events Industry Forum.
Riders	Artists' and performers' requests for items they require in their dressing rooms or green rooms, such as food, drinks, entertainment, or facilities.

Table 7. Glossary of Terms

4.4.1 Subtheme: Breadth of Knowledge

This subtheme provides an overview of the participants' perceptions about the breadth of knowledge employed in successfully planning and operating an independent music festival organisation. The findings provide insights into how roles are typically wide-ranging and require holistic and specific explicit and tacit knowledge to perform their roles and to respond to external and internal factors.

4.4.1.1 Primary Code: Holistic Festival Knowledge

The participants' motivations and learning journeys are explored in Theme 4, however, for some it seems that the ambition of creating a festival was sparked by attending festivals, rather than prior knowledge of organising them. The use of 'naively' suggests it was more challenging than anticipated:

'We used to be festivalgoers, we used to go to Reading Festival all the time and we were just sat around thinking naively that we could do a better job, make a better festival' (P16).

'...it was started by a guy... and there was him and his uni mates and essentially they'd just be learning as they're going' (P13).

Participants further suggested that from first being involved, every iteration of a festival brings new challenges and knowledge is gained, developed and retained over time and through experience:

'Once you've done it once or twice you build up an incredible knowledge base' (P11)

'Each time you do something or there's a challenge on a different event, that bit of knowledge goes into your head for the next time you're preparing that for another event' (P7)

'A lot of it relies on that kind of ingrained knowledge that I have, which was maybe not ingrained knowledge at the beginning' (P9).

Breadth of Knowledge Required Festival Organisation At the time of the interviews, the participants held roles in festival organisations ranging from relatively new event assistants to some with more than 30 years' experience.

When participants described their roles, it became clear that individuals with several years of experience working in the independent music festival sector tend to have responsibilities that cover a wide range of areas.

'That's pretty much where I am now... event manager or coordinator level, I normally get budget control, then the freedom to put my own teams together and put whatever freelancers are on them... legal, production, infrastructure, running the show while it's happening, obviously overseeing their event control, doing all the multi-agency planning with the local authority]' (P7, freelance operations manager, 10+ years).

'Complete oversight of it, what the event is, what it does, what it says, how many tickets sold...the product is entirely my responsibility' (P13, event manager, 10+ years).

'My role encompasses everything that is required for the festival to operate so it's all the production, it's all the site, it's all the traffic, it's all the toilets, it's all the Ingress and egress, it's security, everything basically, a full overview of festivals operations' (P17, operations director, 10+ years).

This multi-faceted 'Jack of all trades' knowledge requirement also extends to people with a designated area of responsibility:

'I'm basically the sales director you could say, but festivals being what they are, you have to be a sort of Jack of all trades' (P16).

'There is an aspect of the Jack of all trades to this' (P11).

The complexity of independent music festivals was reiterated, demonstrating the multifaceted expertise and understanding needed by organisers, whilst highlighting the breadth of responsibility held by the participants:

'You've got to become a bit of an expert or have at least working knowledge in all of these areas ...you've got to have a certain understanding' (P15).

'It's everything that you can think about in terms of getting a green field into a fully functioning full town essentially... it's getting it all to fit in and arrive in sequence or at least at the right time' (P16).

Mid-level and entry-level roles also seem to span different departments or areas of responsibility as indicated by P3:

'...An event coordinator job or an event assistant is actually in different jobs... 10 different jobs... I learnt a lot more about another side of festivals than I realised on accreditation, because that was kind of half a security thing, half a production thing and a bit of everyone else' (P3).

Interestingly, P16 voiced a perception that outside of the festival sector, there is a lack of understanding about how much knowledge is required in planning and delivering a festival:

'...They think that we just turn up the week before and... just magic it out of thin air [laughs]. But you know, we're busy and there's a lot to think about' (P16).

Whilst the findings show that organisers need to have holistic knowledge and understanding of the unique festival environment, P17 stated that it is not necessary for everyone working on different aspects to have the same level of knowledge or awareness, but they do need to understand their own specific responsibilities and related areas:

'And so, the challenge is making sure that the correct people have read the right bit that they need.... So, everyone that's involved in the egress can get that information. They don't need to know anything else about the festival for that particular operation, they just need to know that bit and what their role is within that' (P17).

In this case it seems that judgements were based on assumptions about what other people need or want to enable them to do their job.

Another skill requirement is knowing how to manage multiple stakeholders involved in creating the festival experience, outlined in 4.4.1.1 findings:

'I have a team within [festival organisation] and then another sphere, a sort of doughnut around that of the subcontractors and then volunteers, stewards, security and then performers, artists, exhibitors, stall holders, caterers and then the public.' (P14).

From an alternative perspective P7 highlighted some of the challenges, knowledge and skill requirements of performing an event sub contractor role synthesising multiple sources of information:

'I was the safety officer there and... part of my job's to vet all the contractors and food concessions, bars, get all the risk assessments, get... rigging plots from the staging company, I get weight loadings and I have to get all this information from everyone together' (P7).

Understanding Audiences

Besides the participants' breadth of knowledge and areas of responsibility, the importance of understanding and learning from audiences was highlighted, along with its potential to determine the success of a festival:

'You can't do it without the public... it's not an event' (P14).

'We would fail but for the active participation of our audience' (P12).

Furthermore, understanding audiences' preferences and behaviours is an important aspect of generating ticket sales:

'[Festival founder] is a great example, she is really into country music, so she put it on and booked all these acts that she loves, knowing that there was a market for that...thinking 'this is what our core demographic audience want to listen to or see and feel' (P16).

Misunderstanding or ignoring audience preferences, on the other hand, can cause significantly negative business consequences.

'[Festival] went terribly wrong, like they went bankrupt, they misunderstood the audience, misunderstood [to the point] where it was getting to become more of a vanity project [of the organisers]' (P15).

'And there's instances where other festivals, other band bookers have tried to book for another festival and not quite got the musical offering quite right and they've gone bust as a result' (P16).

Attendee experiences can be also negatively impacted by a lack of situational and technical understanding of a festival site:

'...sound spill is an issue to be considered. You know, the worst thing at festivals is to be still, watching a quiet acoustic act and here [points away] there's something else going on' (P16).

'...it is site specific, and it's that thing of like not all festival sites are the same and you know, you can look at it a thousand times, but until you've actually got the people there, doing what people do you, you don't necessarily know everything about it' (P17).

However, P14 seemed to embrace some positive outcomes of audience unpredictability, using his knowledge to design festivals that allow attendees the freedom to create their own experiences:

'...people behave in peculiar ways, sometimes, you know, they do stuff that you wouldn't expect them to do, and they also do stuff that's kind of rather magical and that so you have to factor in that randomness that chaos whilst also, you know, creating a framework in which that chaos can kind of happen' (P14).

The findings suggest that festival organisers' accumulated knowledge informs planning decisions about how to meet their audience preferences, whilst providing opportunities for attendees to create their own experiences. Participants also indicated that understanding their attendees perceptions about the festival is gained through feedback from attendees:

'You can't please everyone, but... we can change [things]. (P6).

'Most years we'll do a survey' (P11)

'With the intention of making changes to make things better... for the people that are coming' (P4)

'Provided it makes sense and the feedback is constructive, it shows them that you are actually listening to them. So, I think festivals can probably learn the most from their audiences' (P15).

These comments suggest an intention to learn from audiences, but also a subjective approach to attendee feedback, and that acting upon it depends on the nature of the feedback and capacity to make changes in the context of a particular festival.

Interestingly, a freelance event manager (P5) expressed that planning for a positive attendee experience is important not only from a business perspective, but also from a career perspective:

‘...if we take into account their experience and you know, we plan for that from the off, they come in the show, they have a really good time, they buy a new ticket, early birds sell out, I get a bonus, there’s a down payment already on the contract for next year’ (P5).

These insights highlight the wide-ranging sphere of knowledge held by the participants, which has been developed over their careers to date.

4.4.1.2 Primary Code: Importance of Codified Knowledge

Table 8 lists the range of documentation created and used for planning and delivering independent music festivals, indicated as essential by the participants.

Document	Purpose	Cited by
Event Management Plan	Comprehensive planning documents for all aspects of the festival	P3, P11, P16, P5, P13, P11, P16, P14, P17
Event Safety Plan / Health and Safety Plan	Either a separate plan or part of the event plan	P7, P3, P4
Event Safety and Management Plan	Combined event and safety plan	P13
Trader documents	Relating to vendors at the festival	P6, P2
Staffing rotas	Aspect of the event plan	P11
Contingency Plan	Aspect of the event plan	P6
Egress Plan	Aspect of the event plan	P5, P17
Event Improvement Plan	Feedback from key team members for future iterations	P5
Counter Terrorism Plan	Aspect of the event plan	P5
Site Plan	Maps of the festival site denoting key features	P3, P13, P16
Budget	Financial management of the event plan	P16, P6, P4, P7, P14, P8, P10, P12, P9
Key Man Risk document	Responsibilities of key team members and plan for absence.	P16
Briefing documents	Aspect of the event plan, distinct for different functions.	P16, P1, P3, P2, P4, P7, P14, P8, TP9, P17

Security Plan	Aspect of the event plan	P16, P3, P4
Contracts	Aspect of the event plan	P4, P7
Accreditation documents	Aspect of the event plan, levels of access and security clearance for different staff members and site crews.	P7, P3
Handover document	Reflections on the most recent iteration of the festival, key feedback points.	P9, P14
Rider	Requests from artists for items to be available in their dressing rooms.	P11
Green Guide	Guidance on organising outdoor sporting events	P7
Purple Guide	Comprehensive industry guidance for event managers	P7, P11

Table 8. Festival Planning Documentation

Participants expressed the importance of explicit knowledge in the form of codified, written information, documentation and processes and that without information, festivals would not be legal or successful:

‘If you didn't have stuff written down, you just couldn't do it’ (P17).

Furthermore, participants agreed that safe and successful festivals require significant amounts of documentation to manage complex operations, avoid disruption and to demonstrate compliance with licensing conditions, regulations and legislation.

Documentation is produced for many elements of the festival, from health and safety compliance to managing festival traders:

‘If you're over a certain distance from the hospital you need an ambulance on the site’ (P14).

‘...a lot of documents for the food traders... like maps and sorted to make sure obviously they were all in the right places, and make sure they weren't in any fire lanes or emergency exits or anything like that’ (P2).

‘You don't want your food vendors moaning at your weekend because they've got no foot fall, so you have to make sure that [vendor plan] is as uniform as you can possibly make it’ (P11).

Documents such as event management plans, safety plans and spreadsheets are used to disseminate operational information and are shared for reference by all the relevant parties involved in delivering the event.

'It's all written down in the event management plan' (P16).

'It's done on spreadsheets, so you've got all my performers there, I've got all of my volunteers there and I've got all of my artists there and their contact details, and their agents and what their riders are' (P11)

However, clues about participants using their experiential knowledge to create plans and analyse information began to emerge, for example by the use of 'obviously' in P16's comment:

'Because if the toilets aren't being cleaned then obviously there's going to be a nasty problem there' (P16).

The consequences of supplying or receiving incorrect information can threaten the festival's success, as this example demonstrates:

'We didn't have sufficient medical cover on site for the [number of] public that were attending and then... it was just by pure circumstance that we had someone turn up to do a Green Guide inspection... and they gave me like eight hours to fix the problem otherwise they were gonna shut us down (P7).

However, some participants felt that too much documentation was produced, creating overwhelm and a risk that important information may be missed:

'Anyone who says that every member of their staff has read the event plan is lying for a start' (P11).

'Yeah. I mean we we're our own kind of worst enemy with the documentation... She's just reviewed what we call our reference library and I think she said there was 160 documents on there, which we were all expected to [contextualise]. But who is reading all of those documents and ... if I can barely read them, yet expect someone else to read them all?' (P5).

This highlights the importance of effective information management systems to avoid being overwhelmed by information or being unable to access required

documents when needed. Some participants described information sharing processes taking place through the various documents outlined in Table 9.

As the festival plans develop, relevant information is shared with subcontractors or other key stakeholders in similar ways:

'...technical will have specialized software for architectural bits and finance have accounting software ... there are some specialist things that are used that are specific to the department, but we mainly work on shared documents, live documents and emails and meetings and discussions' (P8).

Furthermore, because each festival is planned and delivered in a unique combination of circumstances, the planning and delivery requirements change with each iteration, requiring updates to existing documents and creation of new ones:

'But even if I used that [plan] for the next year, it would change again' (P3).

'You start again the year after saying 'okay, y'know, we're going to do the same thing', but then you realise the same thing was a product of a particular set of circumstances that probably aren't going to repeat themselves' (P14).

However, P5 stated that documentation is not only important for information and compliance but also for accountability in circumstances where problems could arise:

'If you've given someone something [documentation] you've then like, like covered your ass with it because... 'well, that's what I sent you in that document!''(P5).

4.4.1.3 Primary Code: Insufficiency of Explicit Knowledge

So far, the findings have established that written information and documentation are essential for independent music festivals to be legally compliant, and to demonstrate due diligence. However, participants felt that on its own, written information and explicit knowledge were not sufficient to deliver a successful festival. This example suggests creating the intangible festival experience involves personal knowledge and cannot not be learned from written sources alone:

'The experience side of the festival is a big one, it's creating an environment that allows people to have an amazing festival, so you learn that on the job, you learn it from experience in seeing what people do, and hearing their feedback and I guess that's... it's something intangible that you can't really learn from a book, and it all really depends on the ethos of your event I think and what you're trying to achieve and all that sort of thing' (P16).

Participants cited written guidance available to festival and event organisers from publications such as the Purple Guide (Events Industry Forum, 2024) and the Health and Safety Executive website (HSE.gov.uk), but it is not possible for every nuanced aspect of each individual festival to be covered in this guidance:

'Like for example a sound check... does it need to be covered in your licensable hours or does it not ...it was a grey area, and no one could give me the right answer' (P7).

Participants also felt that it would not be practicable to include sufficient information and knowledge into written documents and that even if it was possible, without experience and prior knowledge it would be difficult to do:

'So, you could put everything in one document... it would be 500 pages long. Nobody's gonna read it all...' (P17).

'Try writing that in an event manual. No thanks, not a chance...' (P14).

'If you didn't have the knowledge that the four of us had, even if you've got it all written down... it wouldn't be anywhere near as easy and smooth' (P17).

'Our event plan's enormous ... but you cannot, in the middle of a dire emergency... you can't, you can't be suddenly reading chapter 17 sub section or whatever you're meant to do at that point because you just don't have the time' (P11).

The following example further highlights the importance of being able to draw on experience, rather than relying on sources of explicit information alone, especially when faced with potentially dangerous situations, which could have serious personal as well as operational impacts:

'...[with] contingency plans and stuff like that, I think it's all well and good putting it on a sheet of paper and saying this is what we're going to do if things go wrong. But when you're in a heightened situation and a field, when you've got limited technology and you've got hundreds of people to manage, I think it's so hard to execute that. I think that's when... you have to have that experience behind you to... hold it together. Yeah, because I think if you don't, I think it's like impossible... anyone would lose their mind' (P6).

Furthermore, P7 stated that abiding by minimum requirements is insufficient in some circumstances that could otherwise have serious outcomes, and that his previous experience led him to go beyond the legal requirements for first aid provision:

'I'll always pay for an extra ambulance... because you can guarantee that the one time that your ambulance goes off on blue lights, that will be the time that you need a second one, and it's just little things like that, that no one actually tells you or teaches you, but just through experience and different circumstances, it just helps you improve how you do the job' (P7).

The findings therefore suggest documentation, although essential, is not sufficient to successfully deliver successful festival outcomes. Experience, skills and tacit knowledge are involved in the creation and interpretation of codified information such as event plans, and in responding to challenges and making decisions.

'Even though I've read the procedure, that sort of stuff doesn't stick in my head because it's not something we deal with every day' [but] ... like residents, the problems with tickets, all of that stuff I deal with every day, it's in my brain' (P4).

P4's comment sums up the link between repeated experience and understanding elements of the festival in an event plan.

Unarticulated explicit knowledge or information

Whilst participants outlined some of their robust practices for maintaining documents, it seems there was also a lack of regular and adequate processes to record unwritten information and knowledge:

'Historically, stuff has been lost' (P12).

'We did have meetings every now and again' (P2).

'So, the next year you'd sort of think 'Well, I didn't really like how this went, or this took too long' (P4).

'You do something in the last-minute panic and then you completely forget about it and you don't remember until the same time the next year, you know...' (P9).

'It used to be very much like I'd say like a pikey approach' (P7).

P1, a festival intern recounted a negative experience of information not being passed on, emphasising the impact of information not being recorded or passed on:

'[Manager] is one of those people that keeps everything in her head, and then when she remembers it needs to be done it's... 'this needs to be done'. It's like 'I could have done with knowing that a week ago'. Or, you know it's like 'well, you know, I'm in the middle of doing ten of the things that you've asked me to do. I really did need to know that a while ago'.

Some participants also conceded that sometimes explicit information that could be shared either verbally or in written format is not, due to opportunity, time pressures, difficulty or simply forgetting, as in the examples below:

'There are hand-over documents that they've written, they took a long time to talk to people and write down things, but... there are definitely gaps there and they tried their absolute best to get it all written down, but I think there is definitely things that are going to get missed' (P9).

'There's always a little last-minute panic... we go... 'Oh goodness. I forgot this hasn't arrived, or this isn't done, I haven't told this person, or the venue don't know we're arriving' or something...' (P8).

'...you get to the site and maybe you don't have time to brief everybody' (P16).

'Then there's some stuff that you just... I would have never got to the point of telling her, because I couldn't remember it' (P3).

'I keep forgetting to disseminate and trickle down' (P10).

The participants' knowledge is further explored in the next primary code, which presents findings about the types of knowledge they highlighted as most important in their roles.

4.4.2 Subtheme: Relevant Types of Knowledge

In discussing their knowledge, participants used terms such as knowledge, knowing, know that, know what, know who, know how, or in the negative such as not knowing or didn't know. None of the participants volunteered the specific terms explicit or tacit knowledge, unless previously stated by the researcher.

As the interviews progressed, it became evident that they had deep knowledge about aspects of their roles and the knowledge and skills they used to perform them.

Theme	Subtheme	Primary Codes		
		Supplementary Codes		
4.4 Theme 2 Participants' Perspectives of Tacit Knowledge in Context	4.4.2 Relevant types of Knowledge	4.4.2.1 Relational knowledge	4.4.2.2 Authentic tacit knowledge and skills	4.4.2.3 Authentic tacit knowledge and skills in action
		* A combination of explicit and experiential knowledge	* Intuitive knowing * Tacit skills	* Integrating context, intuition, and reasoning

Theme 2: Subtheme, Primary and Secondary Codes

4.4.2.1 Primary Code: Relational Knowledge

Participants seemed to find it easy to talk about aspects of their declarative 'know that' 'know what' knowledge, illustrating that these types of knowledge are codifiable and articulable. However, whilst participants easily expressed this form of knowledge explicitly, the researcher observed some underlying interpretation, based on their experience and situational or contextual awareness. The findings and analysis in this section begin with examples of relational knowledge (articulable,

codifiable or explicit knowledge) which appears to be more complex than simply stating factual knowledge.

'You can think you know something, but it's about understanding something. That's the most important thing' (P13).

A Combination of Explicit and Experiential Knowledge

The following examples demonstrate that in articulating explicit knowledge, the participants often implied a deeper level of understanding, based on their experience, rather than simply stating facts.

'I know that the guidance generally isn't enough toilets' (P17).

In this statement, P17 expressed their explicit knowledge of the published guidance for portable toilets requirements. However, the phrase *'isn't enough'* indicates they have a deeper understanding of what is required for a positive attendee experience (or to avoid dissatisfaction) and effective operations.

Therefore, experiential knowledge is used in evaluating explicit information, to aid decision-making about aspects of festival management. Similarly, P3 demonstrated this level of understanding, applying experiential, contextual knowledge about audiences to decisions about toilet provision:

'...it's like the [guidance for] toilets will be one per 500 males and two for women in the Purple Guide. But then for some shows, I would like 'up' what that was [depending on the crowd]' (P3).

Further examples of experiential knowledge informing explicable, relational knowledge included:

'I know I need to know people to run the front of house and need to know people there, to load stuff in' (P13).

'You wouldn't run bars on a festival without having a bar manager - a proper bar manager who knows about stock rotations' (P7).

In both the above statements, the participants demonstrated knowledge of effective bar management and an appreciation of the specialist knowledge of others.

'We know what the correct spacing for bin posts should be' (P11).

Whilst the above statement refers to seemingly trivial codifiable information, the phrase 'should be' suggests contextual, experiential knowledge to prevent avoidable mistakes, and inefficient deployment of time and resources.

'If something goes horrendously wrong, I know the process ...say if someone was in a critical condition, I know who to contact, what the radio procedure is' (P13).

This statement illustrates drawing on experiential knowledge to enable quick responses to high pressure circumstances.

The previous statements illustrate the participants' awareness of their explicit knowledge, such as regulations, staffing requirements and emergency procedures, whilst analysis of the findings suggests that applying this knowledge effectively requires experientially acquired tacit understanding, situational awareness and the ability to adapt in real time. This suggests that explicit and tacit knowledge interact and both are integral to 'getting the job done'.

This was further evident when participants described procedural knowledge, knowing 'how to' execute tasks, where explicit knowledge contained in documentation, formal processes and systems is applied using practical expertise:

'I know how our ticketing system operates. I know how merchant services operate, I know how to construct a contract' (P10).

'I learnt how to do a lot of the contracting for shows, how to advance the shows' (P4).

'We know how to make big groups of people sing a song and dance, we know how to do that, we've done it before, we know how to move people around big environments' (P12).

'It's a web-based, event management system... and everybody knows how to use it' (P11).

'...like how to use CAD or the need to know how to lay out a site' (P17).

These examples further suggest that to be effective, explicit knowledge is combined with technical and operational skills. Explaining how they come to know these

aspects was challenging for the participants and is considered in the next section Authentic Tacit Knowledge and Skills.

Findings in this section suggest that it is possible to articulate relational knowledge. However, the findings also show that tacit, experiential knowledge is involved in interpreting and making sense of, or making decisions about explicit, articulable and codifiable information.

4.4.2.2 Primary Code: Authentic Tacit Knowledge and Skills

One of the main findings was the perception that much of what festival organisers do, is done intuitively, highlighted in P14's concise response to the following question:

I: What do you draw upon when you make those decisions?

P14: [Laughs] 'Instinct!'

This section presents findings about the participants' descriptions of how they use their tacit knowledge and skills in practice, which they often found difficult to express, although both appear fundamental to their roles. The researcher therefore proposes that these findings represent authentic tacit knowledge and authentic tacit skills. Several of the examples highlight a lack of distinction between tacit knowledge and skills, and include strong suggestions that participants considered their use of either one as intuition. Whilst many examples illustrated this fusion of tacit knowledge and skills, the section first presents findings more specifically about each in turn, before demonstrating how in practice, they seem to operate simultaneously.

Intuitive Knowing

Whilst participants found it relatively easy to describe what they knew about or how they performed certain tasks, explaining how they came to know these things seemed to be more challenging, demonstrative the authentic tacitness of some of their experiential festival knowledge. For example:

'...and by the way this is me kind of grappling with why I think I know that... I think it's one of those, think it's one of those things where...

yeah, experience prepares you best for things, having kind of... going through some sort of... yeah that experiential... don't really know what I'm trying to say' (P8).

'I think there's definitely aspects... mainly around site planning and... around movement of people because that's... it's so complicated to put it into words' (P17).

But, actually saying why it's not going to work... you'd have to... it would take so long to do, and you might not even actually even say it right... but you just know in your head it just won't work (P14).

This difficulty in articulating some types of knowledge was interesting and upon further exploration with the participants, some referred to instinctive or emotionally guided knowledge, embedded in their actions rather than consciously reflected upon, for example:

'It's like second nature when you're doing it, you just you don't think of it at the time' (P1).

'You don't know how to deal with it until you're doing it' (P4).

These points suggest that the participants felt and applied their tacit knowledge and that their responses to some situations were instinctive.

In the following example, P8 suggests that intuition based on experience plays a significant role in making decisions about his festival, but the most tacit aspects of his understanding were difficult to explain. Findings related to how the participants gained tacit knowledge and skills through experience, are presented in the next theme.

*'You just get a sense of how things work. It's... I think that's the only thing I can really describe it as is it's like **I know** [participant emphasis] this works, I know this will... it's a calculated gut feeling, it's not just a whimsical gut feeling... there is a calculation there, I couldn't tell you what the calculation is, but the gut feeling is backed up by something, which is just ingrained at this point' (P8).*

The following examples further demonstrate the participants intuitively knowing or feeling what would or would not work at a festival, through their previous experience and by seeing and working through it, in the specific context of the site or venue.

'For example, looking at a venue and going ' What's wrong with this venue?' Right? It's because you can't do anything on the floor because seating rows are too shallow (P9).

'You can look at a site map and just go 'that's not going to work' (P17).

These examples suggest being able to immediately recognise logistical challenges, and intuitively reason appropriate responses for planning or actions, or as P11 describes below, being able to combine logical thinking with emotional intelligence:

'You feel your way through it emotionally and with a business head on, but certainly you feel... you know... it's an emotional intelligence thing at some point... it's things like not always going for the cheapest quote, you know, just going for what feels right, and what feels right... you can't always write it down - or you could but like you haven't time (P11).

P11's comment highlights a reliance on personal hunches or intuitive decision-making, based on experience. Similarly, P14 shared the power of emotional intuition combined with his unique contextual insights and prior knowledge, leading to just 'knowing' where the ideal site for a new stage would be:

'That was a very specific brief that was about a functional need for another stage... So anyway, yeah cycling around and I just took an unusual route... and I basically... still got them now, I get goose bumps because just I cycled into the space and just slammed on the brakes and was like, 'oh, yeah, I found it' got on the phone straight away and I'm like 'Sarah, I've got it, I've got it, I know where we're going to be!' it was just that moment of finding the space, seeing enough room for a couple of thousand people and it was by a river, is surrounded by trees, it's... it's like its own natural event space' (P14).

In another example, P9 described a festival element for young people and how he was able to intuitively 'read' the audience's engagement and differentiate between an experienced and less experienced storyteller:

'I can instantly tell, because the difference is so obvious to me' (P9).

Interestingly, P5 referred to tacit knowledge as 'common sense', suggesting the below example is an obvious response to a contextual issue:

'It's about understanding people's behaviour and you know for example, if you [attendee] needed to get from here from there, there's a natural cut through that everyone's going to go up... people are not gonna walk around the park, and it's all those little things that is quite common sense' (P5).

However, this common sense is constructed by holistically understanding the site map, cognitively evaluating the physical site context, number of people in the festival and the locations of different attractions. They also cognitively apply their experiential knowledge of how audiences tend to move around the festival. Therefore, these 'common sense' issues would be less obvious to someone without the same experiential insights.

Similarly, P13 intuitively understood that additional ticket sales would require different audience management tactics, and 'just knew' that moving the stage would solve a potential risk of crowd crushing:

'[Festival] was selling a lot better than we expected... so we're like, [attendees] are going to be at the top of the field, we should move [the stage] to 200 meters to left...I know that site, I know this is gonna work...' (P13).

In summary, the participants' intuition or 'hunches' were a key factor in interpreting and evaluating complex situations, driven by previous, contextual experience and without consciously thinking about the process.

Authentic Tacit Skills

Participants also described situations where following intuitive evaluations, their skills also came instinctively as the ability to act quickly and appropriately, as in the following example. This may appear to be a 'common sense' response, but making mistakes with inadequate toilet provision was an issue mentioned by more than one participant:

'From being on site and seeing it, that actually, that crowd is a big drinking crowd and they're not very clean and so we'll do some more toilets' (P3).

Evaluating and solving problems is an essential skill, despite comprehensive planning:

'That's one of the biggest challenges of festivals is having all the plans prepared and when those plans go wrong, it's how you solve those problems ... you've just got to be a problem solver, and it's how you actually evaluate what's going on in real time and how you actually solve that problem (P16).

The inevitability of issues occurring was reiterated here in the phrase 'when those plans go wrong' and 'obviously happens a lot' below. These findings also highlight the importance of quick evaluation to make the right decisions and subsequently taking the right actions, emphasising the fundamental importance of problem-solving skills to festival organisations:

'Decision making under pressure, obviously happens a lot as an event manager and there's always a number of situations that one finds oneself in, that... is essentially decision-making under pressure, that would be really difficult to kind of write down, to be able to kind of say 'right when you find yourself in that situation, you know, and that situation might arise from these various factors...' It's like a very, very fluid decision-making process that... when it comes to the crunch, it's... your ability in that situation to kind of to cope with it appropriately... The aim is to know how to cope with those situations as and when they arise, because they will always arise.' (P14).

As explained in the example below, the event control team must have contextual awareness of the site, operational procedures, communications, the audience and live performances to be effective. They must also understand the roles of the other agencies and the resources available to them, be able to rapidly interpret the data communicated to them about live situations and use their tacit skills to quickly action appropriate responses:

'So, in event control, you've got the event control manager and assistant, you've got representatives from police, council ambulance, medics, fire, security, maybe highways depending on the show, and like sometimes the airport. So, anything that happens on site like the toilets need cleaning, or there's been a structural collapse, or we need a medic, or we need security, someone will always radio into event control... they were making decisions on you know... close the show or not close, like those and really big decisions' (P3).

'[in event control] I'm alerted to every single issue there as it happens and it's live... and I take control of an incident' (P7)

Interestingly, whilst reflecting on their decision-making and problem-solving, the participants did not seem to be aware of the cognitive processes involved, rather, it seemed to be accepted an inevitable and intuitive aspect of their role and simply what they did on a regular basis. Although not directly expressed, it is clear that the participants often drew on their contextual awareness and cognitive reasoning skills to act quickly in situations that needed swift responses. Furthermore, the findings in this section also reflected skills in synthesising multiple variables and balancing priorities, based on experiential knowledge and instinctive perception.

4.4.2.3 Primary Code: Authentic Tacit Knowledge and Skills in Action

Context, Intuition and Reasoning

Whilst it was useful to identify examples of the participants' tacit knowledge and tacit skills for analytical purposes, during the interviews these aspects were often expressed as part of a subconscious, blended process. For instance, the example below illustrates how experienced festival organisers could interpret and process complex visual information and apply their tacit experiential knowledge to amend designs, to create safe and smooth-running experiences:

'You kind of visualise where problems are going to be before they happen' (P16).

'I could look at a site plan and go... that's a pinch point, that's out of sight, they're not going to see that bar, those toilets need big signs so people can see them... you know the quirks of the site, because it's actually about the environment they're in, so changing a site all the time, what you do learn is using past experience to go ..'ooh that looks like a bit of a dark area, therefore that's where someone might deal drugs, or break in and slash people's tents and nick stuff'' (P13).

In the above example, P13's understanding and response to the situation involves reading and holistically understanding information, perceiving the relevant environmental and contextual factors, and cognitively processing the implications for the given situation. The process of reasoning through solutions seems to rely on

intuition, based on experience and knowledge of requirements, to conceive potential outcomes in a very short, if not instantaneous, period of time.

P2, a festival intern, described reasoning through a task that was new and complex for her, demonstrating how learning something new may take longer than the intuitive examples provided by more experienced organisers:

'I had to fill in the spreadsheet, the spreadsheet was very confusing... but got there in the end, once you've got your head around it was fine' (P2).

The following examples further illustrate the application of perceptual understanding, analytical thinking and predictive reasoning to make decisions and solve problems based on explicit information provided during planning or operational activities.

'I've got job forms that I've built and customized, so I'll write an email to 20 contractors, and I'll say, 'click this link fill it all in online' and that gives me all their accreditation and numbers, so that I can decide 'right, well, they need accommodation there, they've got caterer in there [and so on]' (P7).

'If I have to do a partial evacuation of a big arena... like [festival] they can hold 20 thousand people. If you temporary stop one of them, it can have such more of a big negative impact on the rest of the site, trampling or anything like that (P7).

'...people are like sheep. They see where [other] people are, and they go there, or they've walked in one way, [so] they will know where the toilets are on the way in, and so they go back to those toilets. So, it's just knowing how people mill around the site [to plan accordingly]' (P13).

It also seems important that others involved in creating the festival understand an organiser's vision, suggesting that tacit understanding helps to minimise some of the efficiency and operational risks highlighted in Theme 1:

'You need to feel confident... that they kind of get what it is you're trying to create' (P14).

The following examples effectively summarise how, together in action, tacit knowledge and skills, are beneficial to the festival organisation:

'I think my true... my greatest skill comes when I'm on the ground and I'm in the face of challenges, because I'm incredibly good at just going straight into like... tunnel vision - this is what we need to achieve and what were gonna do to do it' (P7).

'And that is the skill of running the festival, that you could be having disasters behind the scenes, and you would be running around trying to sort out problems but the front of house, the guests, the punters wouldn't know anything, they would just be having a great time, that's the skill of running a festival' (P16).

The example from P16 suggests that solving problems without alerting attendees to any potential issues, is indicative of professional event management.

Through the findings in this section, participants demonstrated that tacit knowledge and skills manifest as practised judgement and intuitive action, based on contextual awareness gained through experience. Whilst participants found it difficult to articulate how they 'just knew' how to respond or act, doing so helped them to manage the perceived inevitability of challenges associated delivering independent music festivals.

Findings related to the perceived organisational and personal benefits of tacit knowledge and skills are presented in the next theme.

4.4.3 Summary and Discussion of Theme 2

The findings in Theme 2 reveal the extensive and multifaceted knowledge used to plan and deliver independent music festivals and build on the participants' perceptions about the uncertainty and unpredictability of the festival environment presented in Theme 1. The findings highlight the knowledge requirements of translating complex and extensive festival plans that turn 'a green field into a fully functioning full town' (P16) and create experiences that are safe, that audiences want to attend and that have the capacity to adapt to environmental and operational changes.

Theme 1 findings established that the participants were involved in independent music festivals operating a small core team, which expands considerably with contractors and other teams closer to the festival, which is typical of the sector (Vendelø & Rerup, 2020; Stadler, 2021). Theme 2 findings suggest this structure means that a wide breadth of knowledge is required for overseeing successful design, planning and operational aspects and understanding their audiences. However, they also expressed specific contextual and situational knowledge, related to their festivals. This notion of a 'Jack of all trades' (P16; P17) was felt not only by experienced organisers, but also those with specific and entry level roles. This is supported in the literature as a need for flexibility within festival workers (Skeith, 2024) and indirectly by the range of festival management attributes and areas of responsibility proposed in textbooks (Shone & Parry, 2019; Newbold, 2019). Furthermore, the literature suggests that any missing specialist knowledge may need to be acquired through outsourcing to contractors (Stadler, 2021), with examples in the findings including safety and medical (P7), technical and finance (P8) and security (P11) requirements.

The complexities of festival organisation identified by the participants suggest that explicit and tacit knowledge are developed over time and are not static, for example 'Each time you do something ... that bit of knowledge goes into your head for the next time (P7); '...ingrained knowledge that I have, which was maybe not ingrained knowledge at the beginning' (P9). This is supported in the literature as each iteration of the festival provides unique, personal opportunities for gaining new explicit knowledge and practice-based (Hislop, 2013), experiential learning (Borkman, 1976; Beard, 2014), in response to environmental factors outlined in Theme 1.

In the literature, explicit knowledge is defined as accessible and articulable to others, structured, codified, objective, rational and created in the 'there and then' whereas tacit elements are subjective, experiential, held in people's heads and created in the 'here and now' (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998). A significant theme emerging from the findings was the insufficiency of explicit knowledge alone, explained by P17:

'If you didn't have the knowledge that the four of us had, even if you've got it all written down... it wouldn't be anywhere near as easy and smooth'

Whilst participants frequently referred to the comprehensive documentation required for legal compliance, best practice and operational practicality, without which 'you just couldn't do it' (P17), they also strongly indicated that a 'human, hand-stitched' (P7) input is required to solve problems (P8; P16), through decision making under pressure (P14; P3) and to take control of any incidents (P7). The necessity for codified information (Coakes, 2006; Khan et al., 2015; Nadkarni, 2008; Zhao & Detlor, 2023) is supported in the event and festival literature as the need for event plans, risk management plans, legal compliance, marketing plans, site maps and operational documents (Goldblatt, 2002; Allen et al., 2005; Shone & Parry, 2019; Matthews, 2008; Newbold, 2019; Silvers & O'Toole, 2021; eventsindustryforum, 2025). However, the literature also recognises the limitations of relying only on written documentation, because it requires those with adequate knowledge to give it meaning (Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz Valle, 2011) and the skills to implement it (Dennison & Kirk, 1990; Vendelø & Rerup, 2020). A further limitation of written documentation emerged through the findings, that documentation must be revised and changed for the unique conditions of each iteration of the festival and that documentation 'overwhelm' (P11; P5) may result in information being missed or improvised, risking mistakes or inefficiencies.

Polanyi (1966) proposed that explicit knowledge relies on being tacitly understood and applied and in the SECI model (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka et al., 2000) effective knowledge creation relies on interactions between explicit and tacit knowledge, and both are simultaneously present in a person's knowledge (Taylor, 2007). Furthermore, semi-conscious or unconscious implicit understanding is required for interpretation (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998; Panahi et al., 2016), comparable with Castillo's (2010) concepts of sagacious tacit knowledge, which emerges spontaneously as 'solutions from unconscious cues' and semantic tacit knowledge which is defined as implicitly 'knowing' the meaning of words and 'other phenomena.' These theoretical insights were reflected in the participants

perspectives of 'just knowing' (P14), 'second nature' (P1), 'kind of having feel for it' (P11), and not knowing 'how to deal with it until you're doing it' (P4).

Interactions between explicit, codifiable knowledge and the more tacit, intuitive forms of knowing was particularly evident in the participants' reflections, notably their role in decision making and problem solving. Repeated experiences of problems, or informed responses to unexpected circumstances, seemed to develop into an internalised understanding of potential issues and how to anticipate and manage them, thereby reducing operational, safety and business risks. For example, this intuitive 'knack that you learn' (P13) or 'calculated gut feeling' (P8) helps to 'just go 'that's not going to work'' (P17). P15 indicated that repetition was the key to retaining tacit knowledge and that unfamiliar information is hard to keep hold of, stating 'that sort of stuff doesn't stick in my head because it's not something we deal with every day, unlike regular problems that are 'in my brain'. However, Muñoz et al., (2015) state that even after it is shared, an element of knowledge always remains tacit.

The findings concur with the literature that there are different dimensions of knowledge, but that they are complex and some academic perspectives lack consensus (Collins, 2010; Schmidt, 2012). Describing 'know that' knowledge was straightforward for the participants and they found it easy to classify what they 'know how to do'. However, they encountered difficulty in expressing their most 'sticky' tacit knowledge (Chugh et al., 2018) as it was 'so complicated to put into words' (P17). The literature supports these findings, defining declarative knowledge as descriptive, and procedural knowledge as involving skills and the ability to achieve tasks (Gamble, 2020; Saks et al., 2021). The findings therefore align with the principles of systems dependency, complexity, articulacy, codifiability and teachability in the literature, applied to explain where certain knowledge fits onto the explicit-tacit continuum of knowledge (Zander and Kogut, 1995; Gascoigne and Thornton, 2013; Muñoz et al., 2015; Chuang et al., 2016).

Some participants expressed how information and knowledge that could be articulated, was sometimes not, for example:

'you can't always write it down - or you could but like you haven't time' (P11)

'You don't remember until the same time the next year' (P9).

'Maybe you don't have time to brief everybody' (P16).

In the literature, Collins (2010) describes this as weak tacit knowledge or Relational Tacit Knowledge (RTK) which is comparable to implicit knowledge (Taylor, 2007; Frappaolo, 2008) and latent knowledge (Agrawal, 2006) insofar as it is explicable (Frappaolo, 2008; Muñoz et al., 2015) but has not been communicated. The literature supports the findings, suggesting reasons for this lack of communication include opportunity, effort, motivation or circumstances impede communication (Ribeiro & Collins, 2007) or that the value of the information or knowledge is not understood (Agrawal, 2006).

The researcher contends that the distinction made by Collins and Ribiero (2007) between relational (shareable) knowledge and authentic (unshareable) tacit knowledge should be acknowledged by those writing about tacit knowledge. However, their term Relational Tacit Knowledge seems to compound the confusion they sought to clarify, and therefore, this study argues that most appropriate term for this type of knowledge is Relational Knowledge, indicating that it may be explicit knowledge, implicitly understood but has the ability to be codified or socially communicated.

The participants could say what their tacit knowledge centred around, but not how it became action, demonstrating authentic tacitness. Examples included synthesising multiple sources of information, interpreting and evaluating environmental and social cues, for example 'reading the crowd' (P3) and making changes in real-time, but not being able to say how the decisions were made. Truly tacit knowledge is said to be 'context dependent, conceptually structured, practical knowledge' (Gascoigne & Thornton, 2013) that is a truly inarticulable 'nonepistle' form of knowledge, gained through implicit learning (Castillo, 2002).

In another example, P13 described reviewing being able to review a site plan and instinctively identify where poor lighting or hidden areas may encourage criminal

activity. His reaction came from prior experience embedded in his memory and contextual knowledge to enable interpretation and decision-making skills. The literature supports this view of tacit knowledge as experiential knowledge as originating in personal participation, lived experiences, unique and contextualised (Borkman, 1976; Collins, 2013).

The findings suggest that tacit knowledge resides in a practitioner's embodied responses to situations and is borne of their experiences of situations and contexts. The ambiguity in the literature and unfamiliarity of the term tacit knowledge expressed by most of the participants after the interviews, suggests a redefinition (but not a change of meaning) would be useful to the industry. Whilst the term 'experiential knowledge' is not yet widely used in the literature, its definition aligns with the phenomenological lens of this study, as 'truth based on personal experience' rather than based on observation, discussion or reflection on information (Borkman, 1976) and embodied knowledge (Noorani et al., 2019).

Therefore, the researcher proposes *experiential knowledge* as a conceptually robust, industry-relevant and more accessible framing of tacit knowledge within independent music festivals. *Experiential knowledge* captures the intuitive, embodied and contextual nature of a practitioner's knowing, using more easily understood language in place of the more abstract tacit knowledge, and is adopted for the subsequent theme, to demonstrate its usage and appropriateness in context.

4.5 Theme 3: The Perceived Value of Experiential Knowledge

The findings have so far have clarified that experiential knowledge encompasses technical and cognitive dimensions which are translated into action through experience and skills. This theme concerns the participants' perceptions of the value of experiential knowledge, to the festival organisation and to themselves. Some risks were identified if experiential knowledge is lost, mismanaged or undervalued.

Theme	Subtheme	Primary codes		
		Supplementary codes		
4.5 Theme 3 Perceived value of experiential knowledge and skills in context	4.5.1 The value of experiential knowledge to the organisation	4.5.1.1 Organisational value	4.5.1.2 Organisational risks	
		* Operational efficiency * Continuity * Decision-making and problem-solving	* Knowledge loss * Organisation disruption * Succession * Trust * Assumptions * Informality and lack of process	
	4.5.2 Personal value of experiential knowledge	4.5.2.1 Awareness of personal knowledge	4.5.2.2 Positive perceptions	4.5.2.3 Negative associations
		* Recognition and articulacy * Use of metaphor	* Confidence and identity * Sense of achievement * Empowerment	* Responsibility and vulnerability

Figure 24. Theme 3: Subthemes, Primary Codes and Supplementary Codes

4.5.1 Subtheme: The Organisational Value of Experiential Knowledge

The nature of experiential festival knowledge was explored in Theme 2. The findings in this section demonstrate that experiential knowledge plays a fundamental role in the successful planning and delivery of independent music festivals.

They show how operational efficiency and continuity benefit through active decision-making and problem-solving.

4.5.1.1 Primary Code: Organisational Value

Operational Efficiency

P11 recognised how their organisational skills had contributed to smooth operations, creating a public perception of a well-run festival:

'That is a skill that has enabled us to run smoothly and not be a shambles, and people's view of [festival] is that it's well organized - that's something that has been a theme' (P11).

P3 described an issue that could have gone unnoticed but was resolved through her experience-based evaluation of the situation, demonstrating the benefits of interpretative skills and experiential knowledge when faced with practical realities on site:

'...until you then stand on the ground and you're like 'actually on the site plan it's bit different, and that fence means you can actually come around this way and get through that gate and you shouldn't be able to' so we had to... it was more last minute, like I've got a [site] plan, but now we're on site and you look at it, you're like 'no that's not going to work' and you have to make it happen and change it' (P3).

These examples show how experiential knowledge helps practitioners to interpret situations and help avoid disruption.

Continuity

Maintaining continuity of contractors and other workers was highlighted by the participants as important in sustaining efficiency.

P16 reflected on the additional workload when using a new supplier:

'So, we had a new toilet contractor this year for instance, and that is just more work... because you've got to brief them from scratch, whereas if they'd done it before, they know the site, they know where they've got to go and all the rest of it' (P16).

This illustrates that if it is possible to maintain continuity of contractors, then smooth operations are more likely, and inefficiencies avoided. Contractors' prior experience of a particular festival is beneficial to the organisation because of their existing situational awareness, contextual knowledge and understanding of the logistical requirements.

'[Team member] 's great at that... does all the volunteers and is very good with food vendors... and he builds a team of vendor handlers

who understand, who have probably got similar sort of soft skills'
(P11).

This highlights the benefits of retaining individuals and teams with relevant skills of managing people and processes, which builds trust within the organisation.

P7 described operational advantages of team continuity across two festivals. In this example, he was working as a freelancer, delivering two commercial festivals consecutively:

'It's flawless, because you're doing one festival and you're picking every single thing up, all your contractors all your staff and you just putting it down in another location and it's the same team for the last five years, so you've already stress-tested weaknesses, you know... you know where any potential problem areas are' (P7).

This example highlights the operational continuity and efficiency benefits of retaining the experiential knowledge and skills of the teams between the two festivals and over time, minimising the risk of mistakes or operational inefficiencies.

However, it also reveals an inherent risk to annual independent festivals, as they lack this level of continuity to immediately apply learning from a recently preceding iteration. P12's comment neatly, if not dramatically, summarises the potential consequences of discontinuity and having to begin each iteration of the festival afresh:

'You're doomed if you have to learn everything from scratch again'
(P12),

Findings about other organisational risks associated with experiential knowledge are presented in the next primary code, 4.5.1.2 Organisational Risks.

Decision-Making and Problem-Solving

In Theme 2, the processes of decision-making and problem-solving were outlined. The frequency that these aspects arose in the findings highlights their importance to festival organisation. The following examples relate specifically to the organisational benefits of individuals' experiential knowledge and skills to interpret complex information and respond effectively in the moment.

'I have a huge breadth of organisational, historical and operational knowledge...I'm involved in a lot of conversations just to be sort of like, 'oh, yeah... Well, that's because of x y z' (P10).

Decision-making often involved responding to in-the-moment situations that required a quick judgement call. The participants' decisions and judgments were based on previous experience of either the same or a similar situation, illustrated by these examples:

'I could deal with it straight away' (P5).

'So, I went in, and my decisions and my opinions were formed because... I knew it worked. I'd seen it happen, seen it work' (P3).

'I've made mistakes along the way, but they've always been salvageable, and I've always been able to problem-solve myself out of out of them, even when they're you know, potentially quite significant' (P10).

Furthermore, decisions made in one area may have negative consequences in another, and this example suggests the value of experience in preventing or mitigating problems:

'[An inexperienced] simple decision can impact so many different other things without you actually being aware... I suppose that's what makes you a good event manager is when you've got that oversight about how something can negatively affect something else' (P7).

These examples suggest that experiential knowledge is valuable when applied to make judgements and decisions 'in the moment', regularly solving issues and avoiding costly effects and impacts that may otherwise occur.

4.5.1.2 Primary Code: Organisational Risks

The findings so far suggest that the participants consider experiential knowledge to be a significant asset to independent music festivals, particularly when applied during planning and operations. However, they also raised some risks related to reliance on individuals and associated with informal or absent processes.

The importance of experiential knowledge is reflected in P16's comment, highlighting significant consequences of their inexperience when they started out:

'We lost a lot of money in the first year as well, because we didn't know what we were doing' (P16).

Knowledge Loss

Knowledge loss emerged as a significant concern. Participants described some of the consequences of losing key staff, particularly in relation to their insights or contextual understanding:

'[Manager] left... so then I had to step up to manage the marketing budget last year' (P4)

The above example demonstrates how a small team is easily disrupted by someone leaving, but also the opportunity this created for P4 to gain new knowledge and skills. However, this situation created an immediate knowledge gap, impacting continuity. Knowledge lost by the manager leaving may never be gained by P4.

When P3 moved on to another festival, she recognised the tacit knowledge gap that her leaving then created:

'There's practical knowledge that [another colleague] never used to get involved in, that I knew more about and was fulfilling in my role, so I knew that was leaving a bit of a gap there' (P3).

The risk of knowledge loss can also have an impact on the wellbeing of other team members, expressed by P16:

'It's ... what keeps you awake at night throughout the year ... like if [director] couldn't be there. He books all the bands, what happens if he can't be at the festival... how do we run the festival without him?' (P16).

Organisation Disruption

The annual cycle and precarious finances of independent music festivals means that there may not be enough full-time or sufficiently paid work to retain staff with specific skills and knowledge:

'[Team member] who has been with us since year two in some form or another... is leaving us unfortunately this year... she's going off for another job that is probably paying her more than we can afford' (P11).

Prior to establishing P11's previously mentioned smooth operations, lack of organisation festival skills led not to knowledge loss but to potential efficiency and financial risks due to a lack of knowledge awareness:

'...when any Festival starts, I guess you're relying on friends, on friends with certain skills as well. I've got all these mates, and who shall we put in charge of the bar? When you've got like thousands of pounds with no-till system or any sort of stock control, how do you deal with that?' (P11).

This interesting example from P17 highlights the risks of organisers overestimating, having insufficient or not seeking specialist knowledge to properly plan for complex aspects of festival construction, leading to disruption and delays:

'...it's quite easy for you to sit in your office going 'oh yeah, that'll take a day or two, yeah, that'll be fine, you know and, in your head, that's fine. But then you have never done that, so unless you then go to someone else 'is this going to take a day or two?', you'll schedule it for a day or two, and the people turn up on site and go 'are you kidding?' (P17).

Succession

Succession planning seemed to be limited within the participants' organisations, with associated costs and apparent avoidance expressed by P17. However, upon reflection, the significance of his knowledge loss to the festival was acknowledged:

There's no knowledge transfer with the organisation...we can't afford it, or we haven't been able to... never really needed it. But then, there is a slight worry with that as well, because what if I got hit by a bus tomorrow? (P17).

However, retention of people with contextual and experiential knowledge was considered important by some participants. When any member of the team leaves, transferable skills and insights will inevitably be lost, for example:

'You really want to keep them for a period of time ...they don't just leave with themselves and the skill set that they brought to the team... but they also leave with their particular take on a specific element of the of the event' (P14).

For more senior roles, the impact of leaving is more significant due to their breadth of in-depth knowledge and experience, for example when P14 left a festival he had co-founded:

'It took me about 3 years to leave...I had to invest a lot of time to either find other people who could fill the role that I developed, or the bodies of information' (P14).

P10 (director of operations) acknowledge the risks associated with being a significant knowledge-holder.

'...the bit of my brain that is director of operations, is responsible for risk and strategy, just sees that I'm a huge risk to this organisation if I don't share and disseminate that knowledge... (P10)

P16 (festival founder) was the only participant who identified a purposeful approach to succession planning, perhaps as a result of the financial losses incurred before they gained experience.

'... And this is one of the challenges for a festival... we call it the 'key man risk' document, so that's basically if one of us got hit by a bus and couldn't make it for the festival, who is going to take over my responsibilities, and what are those responsibilities? So those are the kind of things which are a high level stuff, the production schedule says this is going to happen on such a such a date and I would be in charge of that and this is how you would do it, who do you call, what is supposed to happen, where is it supposed to go, and that is supposed to be written down in the key man risk document'.

However, previous findings suggest that such a document could not reflect the truly tacit aspects of the 'key man's' knowledge and the phrase 'supposed to be written down' indicates the difficulty of communicating experiential knowledge.

P14 conceded that the only solution to fully handing over all his knowledge and experience would be to duplicate himself:

'Yeah, like a cloning machine [laughs]' (P14).

Trust

The findings suggest that trusting others involved in the festival comes from recognising their abilities and track record of experience:

'When I'm looking to employ somebody for [festival] or for any event that I've worked on, the most important thing is their experience' (P17).

'...And we trust her implicitly... so we leave her to it' (P10).

'I do respect his opinion because he's done it for a lot of years' (P17).

Trusting others was seen as essential, due to the workload and scale of festival organisation:

'[You need to] trust in other people because you can't do it all' (P14).

'Once you've got a load of decent contractors, they will hold your hand through the whole process as well, saying 'well you need more power there' or 'you need more lighting there' sort of things' (P16).

However, the following example below suggests that trusting others with organisation-sensitive information is implicit and taken for granted, based on assumptions about the nature of the industry and reputational impacts, rather than any formal processes:

'... in terms of knowledge leaking... everyone knows that you don't take somebody else's plans and give them somebody ... it's an unwritten code... that trust element is so important, and it's the same with documents and confidentiality. It comes back to experience... most people got that level of experience by working a lot, and you can only work a lot if you've got that level of confidentiality because you don't go saying, 'oh so and so does this, this is their plans' they'd be sacked... you just... you don't do it' (P17).'

Assumptions

As well as making assumptions about the trustworthiness of experienced people, interestingly, the findings revealed that some participants rely on personal judgements, personal experience and untested assumptions. For example:

'...People don't know what they want. I think there's a bit of that, you know, that if we gave our audience what they wanted, [the festival] would be shit. We give them what they don't know they want really... we're here to kind of stretch people's horizons out a bit' (P11).

'I used to go to that festival, I know what it is, I know what I wanted when I was 16, so we built it very much in that image' (P13).

Individual perspectives that remain unchallenged may carry risks, as outlined in a comment previously presented in Theme 1:

'[It] went terribly wrong, like they went bankrupt, they misunderstood the audience, misunderstood [to the point] where it was getting to become more of a vanity project [of the organisers]' (P15).

Similarly, this example highlights risks associated trusting others to understand a particular aspect of the festival, with potentially disruptive consequences:

'People have their own opinions on [things], you know, their own interpretation of what you're sharing to them. And it might not necessarily be how you envisage it... because they've interpreted what you want differently' (P 17).

Furthermore, assumptions about the effectiveness of existing processes can lead to complacency, risking opportunities for improvements to be missed:

'I never thought about what would go wrong with accreditation because we always did the same thing for a very long time, then when I did a new show last year... you realise you don't get it right' (P3)

'They were like really well-built relationships, like we'd go into a medical meeting and the ambulance service would just be like, 'oh you just doing the same as last year?' and [Manager] would go 'Yeah' and he's like... 'that's cool' (P3).

Whilst this last example highlights some benefits of good working relationships and not needing to 'reinvent the wheel' for each iteration of the festival, this scenario may lead to a false sense of security with the arrangement, highlighting the necessity of stringent documentation checking.

Informality and Lack of Process

The findings suggest that risks to retaining experiential knowledge are created by a lack of organisation structure, informal practices and unclear processes:

'I think it's a shame that it's not a proper company - in terms of it has people with a structure and employees, and so people do have to think they can get more work elsewhere' (P4).

P11 suggested a lack of process means reliance on their own or others' experiential knowledge:

'... it is all written down, but we probably don't refer to it as often as we should, because we've been doing it so long that a lot of it is either in our head or it's in the person's head that it needs to be in' (P11).

The findings in this subtheme show that experiential knowledge is highly valuable to independent music festival organisations, as it enables efficient decision making and problem solving. However, significant risks arise through informal organisation processes. The findings show that the impact of knowledge loss was perceived as significant and informal ways of working can leave organisations vulnerable, particularly in the context of time constraints, seasonality and complexity of festival delivery. Personal judgements and assumptions seem to inform some key decisions, and although this was shown to sometimes cause negative impacts, it can yield positive outcomes if based on sound experiential knowledge.

4.5.2 Subtheme: The Personal Value of Tacit Knowledge

Theme	Subtheme	Primary Codes		
		Supplementary codes		
4.5 Theme 3 Participants' Perspectives of Tacit Knowledge in Context	4.5.2 The personal value of tacit knowledge	4.5.2.1 Awareness of personal knowledge	4.5.2.2 Positive perceptions	4.5.2.3 Negative associations
		* Recognition and articulation * Use of metaphor	* Confidence and identity * Sense of achievement * Empowerment	* Responsibility and vulnerability

Theme 3: Subtheme, Primary and Supplementary Codes

4.5.2.1 Primary Code: Awareness of Personal Tacit Knowledge

Recognition and Articulacy

When asked during interviews if they spent time thinking about their personal knowledge, most participants stated they did not. However, at the end of the interviews several participants described the process of thinking about their knowledge as interesting, challenging and thought-provoking:

'No, I don't really ever think about it...I think it's interesting to think about this, to think about the knowledge that you have' (P17).

'Yeah, that was... that was a thinker... lots to think about... it's really interesting to think about it' (P10)

'Yeah, I think you do need to reflect... it's been really hard!' (P6).

'It's been nice to be able to talk about it, I just don't think you can't put your finger on why you know what you know' (P4).

'I know what I'm capable of, but how do I write that down?' (P3).

P17 and P13 voiced appreciation of the value of their experiential knowledge

'Knowledge gets that respect. It's not power but gets you bit of respect, it gets you more people's ears...' (P13).

'I do understand that I know a lot, I do understand that I've had that experience... and I do understand that there is a value to that, but it's weird. It's like a weird thing because I understand the value to it, but then you don't really recognise that value within yourself. Weird' (P17).

However, P17's comment suggests a conflicting perception that it was hard to recognise tacit knowledge within himself.

Similarly, P14 generalised about himself and others not realising the knowledge they held:

'There's an awful lot of people myself included, you know, you're just like 'I didn't know I knew that... I didn't even know I had that in me'' (P14).

P12 seemed to feel that his knowledge was less important than that of others in the organisation. The use of 'that's it' seems to suggest he did not recognise the significance of his role in facilitating the creativity of others:

'None of it is mine! There's nothing from me! No, seriously, so my job is to create spaces for people to be brilliant in and... that's it' (P12).

P3 expressed the difficulty in articulating some of the most tacit aspects of her experiential knowledge:

'...you don't know why you know that it should be that way, I think for me it was an experience thing' (P3)

After further reflection, some of the participants began to express awareness of their experiential knowledge, realised through actions, new responsibilities, or by thinking about transferable skills and knowledge:

'I had no idea that it was probably in my brain until I got asked to do it on my own... I was like 'Oh actually, that rings a bell...'' (P3).

'I'm now pretty comfortable and then [manager] says, 'he needs to be thrown into something new... he's comfortable again, throw him something new', and it's kind of gone up that way and that has built my tacit knowledge to the point where I feel that I'm quite a significant asset to the company' (P10).

'You only realise you need to know when you actually have to do it' (P14).

'I could go to another festival and probably operate another festival, you know, look at their plans, look at the site map, look at their operations manual, understand how it works and make it work' (P17).

The above example from P17 appears to contradict previous findings about the importance of situational awareness of specific festivals, but it also indicates the transferability of experiential knowledge and operational skills between festivals.

Use of Metaphor

Some participants used metaphorical language to articulate aspects of their experiential knowledge and give clues about how they felt about it, for example

explaining their approach to designing and producing the event, or the festival itself. Particularly interesting to the researcher was how the use of metaphor created strong mental images, and helped to understand how the participants' felt about their deepest tacit knowledge:

'I always think of an event as a stage, you know, and it's theatrical in its... in the way... it's produced' (P14).

P14's description suggests dramatic production aspects such as choreography, backstage activities and the audience experience, expanding a view of the festival as more than operations and logistics.

'The excellences are in the... in the DNA of the business having done it quite a long time and having done it in a way where the canvas gets bigger and bigger' (P12).

This example suggests the evolving nature of the festival and the 'DNA' seems to imply the culture and collective knowledge of those within the organisation.

Other metaphors helped to communicate how the participants felt about their working environment and teams, suggesting a strong sense of belonging and inclusion, even if temporarily:

'You never felt like you were a fish out of water' (P1).

'Part of the like team and the kind of like strange little family' (P3).

Lastly, P14 arrived at the metaphor of a doughnut to create a vision of the festival organisation, with the organising team in the centre, orbited by other stakeholders who 'as part of the mix' form an integrated but complex system:

'I have a team within [the festival] and then another sort of sphere, a sort of doughnut around that of the subcontractors and then volunteers, stewards, security and then performers, artists, exhibitors, stall holders, caterers and then the public you know because they're all part of the mix' (P14).

P10's use of metaphor vividly conjured up images of the sense of achievement after a successful festival

'It's like finishing a race and knowing that you ran as fast as you could' (P10).

4.5.2.2 Primary Code: Positive Perceptions

Some participants expressed positive feelings about their experiential knowledge such as a sense of identity, self-worth, enjoyment, motivation and growth, either through other people's expressed perceptions of their knowledge, or by realising it through interactions with others.

Confidence and identity

Being recognised for their value to the organisation and for their personal experiential knowledge seemed to create a strong sense of identity and self-worth, creating confidence:

'Everyone likes to be appreciated, you know, and to have that sense of being valued not because of like what you've been paid, but because of what people think of you and how they might perceive and interpret your particular version of magic' (P14).

'So, there's a great sense of self satisfaction in being the person that everybody knows 'knows' everything and also being that fundamental to an organization' (P10).

'And they'd ask stuff and things will just come out of my mouth and I'll be like, 'oh, I do know what I'm talking about!'" (P3).

P3 recalled when she first left employment to become a freelance event manager for independent music festivals, and the realisation that she had more knowledge in her head than she was aware of, brought about by necessity and having to be self-reliant.

'I took a step up in responsibility, but I had nobody... [above]. So, I think only because of that, I then had to pull on the stuff that I didn't know was there... or I didn't know that I could sit in that meeting and run it off myself and write the event management plan myself' (P3).

She then further associated her skills and knowledge with the amount she would charge for her daily rate as a freelancer:

'You just have to get to the point where you decide... this is how much I'm worth a day' (P3).

Sense of Achievement

Some participants expressed a strong sense of personal satisfaction in collectively or individually averting an issue, facilitated by their experiential knowledge:

*'And generally, what comes out is good and then you kind of go...
'Oh, yeah, how did we do that? Oh, a bit of magic! Ta Da!' (P14).*

'It's great when you work together with the team, and you actually solve a problem that you didn't foresee' (P16).

'There's nothing gets you over your imposter syndrome pretty quickly when you've got something in front of you and you know the answer to this question and every subsequent question and can assess what the potential risks and pitfalls might be and make a decision in that minute' (P10).

The sense of achievement P2 felt after being given additional responsibility for key areas of the festival was clear:

'I think the part that I enjoyed most was the responsibility, because... you're responsible for this [contractor], and so you did feel like you had quite an important role in it, which was good because when I was told that I was responsible for the bars and things like that I was like 'oh my God that's a massive part of the festival', so that was exciting!' (P2).

It also seems that strong positive feelings were associated with successfully overcoming challenges associated with festival delivery. The metaphors of 'weathering the storm' and 'crackdown time' in these examples communicate the intensity of the run up to and festival show days:

'There's no better feeling than knowing that you ran your team, or you crew of like a hundred people sometimes through that, you know weathered the storm...' (P7).

'There's those first few days before the show week, they're really intense - it's like crackdown time, it's happening now and everybody's mood just completely changes because they just want to get it all done, and perfect it all before it starts. You've just got to get through

that bit... you've got to persist with it, because it's the best thing when it happens!' (P4).

Despite the challenges, it seems that a lasting sense of collective and individual achievement and enjoyment was experienced by the participants:

'That is such a powerful thing - the togetherness. And it's also about performance and then ultimately it sort of finishes, and you feel 'I really enjoyed that, it was hard, and it was stressful' (P11).

'I loved the first few days that I'd been down there in the hustle and bustle... It was just so good (P1).

Empowerment

Some participants reflected on their early careers, expressing a sense of empowerment and value after developing experiential knowledge:

'When I first started it was... I didn't have anything to give, I was just figuring it out... and then in my second year, I got... a bit more responsibility to stop doing so much of like document collecting and was doing stuff on my own. So, I felt more valued then because they actually let me take more responsibility for certain things and giving it to me and saying you go and do that' (P6).

'You start to think, I do know this, I can confidently go ahead and speak to this person about this, because I do know what I'm talking about' (P1).

P3 seemed to feel a sense of empowerment as she realised her experiential knowledge had developed to the point where she could contribute in a meaningful way to Safety Advisory Group meetings:

'I wouldn't normally say much in those meetings... you know that they're going to ask and you're too scared of doing it wrong... and I sat there, and I was like 'Oh actually, I do know this!'" (P3).

Similarly, P10 explicitly expressed feeling empowered because of successfully managing a department of her festival:

'...it was incredibly empowering because I went into it with 'I don't know if I can do this, but we've got a choice whether to find out' and you know, I pulled it off!' (P10).

However, P7 expressed two connected but different motivations to develop their experiential knowledge. One perspective was driven by career progression and personal ambitions and the other was from a sense of responsibility to ensure that their professional actions protected attendees from harm:

"I think it's to be more of a professional... and wanting to be as good as you possibly can be... because you know, lives are at stake" (P7).

This suggests that experiential knowledge is not only acquired subconsciously through experience but is sometimes deliberately pursued through seeking out opportunities for growth.

4.5.2.3 Primary Code: Negative Associations

Responsibility and Vulnerability

Despite recognising the value of their experiential knowledge, some participants associated being the 'go-to' person with a weighty sense of responsibility and vulnerability.

The findings suggest this level of responsibility brings physical and mental stresses:

'... it was us doing every single job and that's when you run yourself ragged (P16).

'When did you last even think about anything except for the event, not just like four working days, but four stretches of 24 hours, with a bit of sleep in between' (P14).

The participants also expressed feelings of vulnerability that comes with experiential knowledge and the associated responsibilities of being the festival owner or licensee:

'... And that's why it's hard for organisers, it's very stressful because you know all the nuts and bolts, you know the implications, you know if something goes wrong you can go to prison... You're the one that's going to have to answer for it' (P16)

'I've been in that position where it's only been... I'm the only one that can answer that question... I don't really like that, you know... very vulnerable (P14).

The weight of responsibility even caused P13 to doubt his role:

'...being the responsible person on site for everyone there... and someone's disappeared in the river and you're a bit like 'someone could die' I'm 23 years old, why am I responsible for this? (P13).

Furthermore, P7 highlights some of the serious issues that those responsible for health and safety contend with. His example illustrates his awareness that his health and safety knowledge led to this previous role, but also that he has sufficient experiential knowledge to plan for any legal outcomes of such incidents:

'I've seen people drop dead in front of me and have heart attacks and then be brought to life, and then in the welfare tent at 2:00 in the morning on a Saturday night and dealing with six teenagers that have overdosed on ketamine... and so you get six ambulances, so then it triggers a major incident response from the local authorities, so then there's an investigation and you know, it's knowing that when you're exposed the positions like that, getting yourself watertight, you know, so that your skills and experience, qualifications, are all what they should be when you're in a position of legal responsibility... when you're the one that's going to have to answer for it. Ten years later, I wouldn't put myself back there for all the tea in China (P7).

The final part of P7's comment reflects the impact that immediate level of responsibility had on his further career choices.

However, P14 and P16' shared view suggests that despite the weight of responsibility, they enjoyed the stresses, responsibilities and fluctuations of festival management:

'A lot of stress, a lot of responsibility... good stress though, I like it, I wouldn't do it otherwise' (P14).

'I love the set up more than the actual festival, it's um really challenging and sleepless nights, but you know it's great when you work together with the team, and you actually solve a problem that you didn't foresee' (P16).

The findings in this subtheme have highlighted the participants' positive perceptions of their experiential knowledge which include boosting confidence, satisfaction and a sense of belonging within the festival community. However, they also show that higher levels of responsibility can leave individuals feeling physically and mentally

burdened, and anxious about possible outcomes of their actions or behaviours, if things go wrong.

4.5.3 Summary and Discussion of Theme 3

This theme explored the perceived value of experiential knowledge from an organisational and personal perspective. The dual analysis revealed that this type of tacit knowledge is fundamental to festival planning, logistical and operational efficiency and financial sustainability (Getz, Andersson & Carlson, 2010) and is a source of personal identity and job satisfaction. However, the findings also indicated risks associated with the operational and business complexities of independent music festivals outlined in the previous theme (Brito et al., 2020), if it is not sufficiently valued and protected. The findings also highlighted some negative associations of being a key knowledge holder.

The findings in Theme 2 highlighted how the participants were able to cognitively synthesise and interpret multiple sources of information, which the literature acknowledges is attributable to tacit knowledge (Dampney et al., 2002; Panahi, 2013). Theme 3 findings revealed the value of their experiential knowledge in intuitively making decisions and taking actions beneficial to festival planning and operations, a specific account of which is so far lacking in the literature. Findings in this theme confirm that the participants' experiential knowledge was widely perceived as valuable to independent music festival organisations for the ways in which it enabled them to make practical decisions to reduce errors and solve problems characteristic in the sector. For example, they were able to intuitively ascertain 'that's not going to work' (P3) or 'that's because of x y z' (P10), 'straight away' (P5) in response to potentially problematic site and crowd management issues.

These insights align with Polanyi's (1966) seminal proposition of 'we can know more than we can tell', as the findings capture the embodied qualities of the participants' experiential knowledge but reflected that they found it difficult to explain how they could respond the way they did.

The value of having an experienced team lies in increasing the chances of a 'smooth running' festival (P10) and avoid negative impacts of poor decisions made by inexperienced individuals. In turn, this helps to create a positive attendee experience, which literature suggests relies on festival goers enjoying the quality of performers and feeling safe and secure (Brown & Sharpley, 2019). The availability of experiential knowledge also increases the likelihood of financial success, as indicated by P16, whose festival initially made a loss because they 'didn't know what we were doing'. Events organisations (including festivals) have been criticised in the literature for a lack of financial management (Getz, 2002; Raj, 2003; Newbould, 2019). Therefore, specialised experiential knowledge, manifested as competent decision making and problem solving, may contribute to financial stability, protecting festivals against competitive market forces (Mintel, 2016; Lawson, 2024) and improving their long-term sustainability (Stadler, 2021).

The findings also indicate that other people's specialist experiential knowledge is beneficial for operational continuity, particularly due to the reliance on contractors and temporary staff. This was reflected in examples of trusting others to 'hold your hand through the whole process' (P16) but also that the scale of the work necessitates trusting others 'because you can't do it all' (P14). Maintaining continuity of suppliers familiar with the festival was shown to enhance efficiency, save time and reduce the need for repeated briefings. However, organisers should guard against complacency or over reliance on trusted contractors, as previous findings indicated that plans inevitably change between iterations and in real time.

Some risks associated with losing specialised knowledge were highlighted through the findings, which participants attributed to people leaving or being unavailable 'what happens if he can't be at the festival?' (P16), sometimes exacerbated by informal processes that could result in disruption and inefficiency. This was seen as more of a potential 'huge disruption' (P10) if core team members were to leave. This is supported in the literature as the departure of people from an organisation is the most common cause of knowledge loss and the loss of senior staff is more costly because of their level of knowledge (Shankar et al., 2013). Whilst contractors,

freelancers and temporary staff are arguably more easily replaceable than the core team (expressed by P14 and P7), the risk of lower-level knowledge loss, for example of temporary staff, is exacerbated by the temporal gaps in the annual cycle of festival organisations (Jennex, 2014; Stadler, 2014; 2021).

The findings in this theme therefore support Barney's (1991) Resource Based View that as an organisational resource, experiential knowledge is valuable intellectual capital, which is difficult for competitors to imitate because of its intangible, contextual uniqueness and the time it takes to develop expertise (Johnson et al., 2014). However, the findings suggest that experiential knowledge is transferable to other festival settings, as a personal resource remaining with the knowledge holder as P17 suggested 'I could go to another festival and probably... make it work.' Therefore, recognising the value of individuals' experiential knowledge at a strategic level and prioritising retention of those who hold it would better support leveraging it as a core competence of the organisation (Johnson et al., 2014).

A lack of succession planning was also identified, and whilst P16 referred to their 'key man risk' document, most participants agreed that the nuanced nature of their roles and reliance on experiential knowledge meant that their roles would be almost impossible to capture in any kind of written handover. This is reflected in the literature, as Asher & Popper's (2019) Onion Model conceptualises tacit knowledge as the deepest and most valuable type of knowledge, where experience is the key to organisational learning. This underscores that experiential knowledge is most closely associated with intuition and the most difficult to articulate and transfer. P14's comment that fully sharing his knowledge would require a 'cloning machine' effectively parallels this point.

In addition to the organisational dimension, the participants reflected on the personal significance of their experiential knowledge. For some, the depth of their knowledge was surprising and the process of thinking about it, although challenging, brought revelations, such as 'You only realise you need to know when you actually have to do it' (P14); 'I had no idea that it was probably in my brain until I got asked

to do it on my own (P3); I understand the value to it, but then you don't really recognise that value within yourself (P17).

Several participants described positive emotions associated with their experiential knowledge. Recognised personal knowledge seemed create a sense empowerment and confidence as a 'significant asset to the company' (P10)' or identity as someone with knowledge 'that gets respect' (P13). Furthermore, a strong sense of personal achievement and great enjoyment stemmed from realising the value of solving problems and making 'a decision in that minute' (P10) using experiential knowledge to bring the festival together. Participants enthusiastically admitted 'there's no better feeling (P7) and 'it's the best thing' (P4). Although there is limited literature addressing the personal value of tacit knowledge within an organisational context, particularly in festival organisations, the concept of the learning organisation supports these findings. The concept of 'Personal Mastery' is one of Senge's (1990;2020) five disciplines of a learning organisation and described as an individual's commitment to long term learning and the development of high levels of proficiency. These aspects are reflected in the participants' growth in confidence and sense of achievement in a job well done and examples of their experiential knowledge also resonate with Senge's 'essence' level of mastery, which is intuitive, 'unspoken' knowledge, gained through sustained practice. The concept of personal mastery suggests achieving one's full potential, feeling confident in personal skills and knowledge, which Moustakas (1994) recognised as a powerful, motivating experience, associated with Maslow's (1943) concept of self-actualisation. The findings in this theme, therefore, strongly support these theoretical perspectives.

Bollinger & Smith's (2001) barriers to implementing knowledge management initiatives identified that power, reward and status may cause individuals to hold on to knowledge, to maintain personal advantage. A flipped perspective, linked to the findings, is to consider these same factors as motivating, positive aspects of experiential knowledge and a source of professional identity.

However, some emotional and physical burdens associated with being a key knowledge holder were uncovered, despite assertions from some that the challenges

are 'enjoyable', expressed by P14 as 'good stress though, I like it, I wouldn't do it otherwise'. Participants holding key roles and therefore responsible for fundamental and critical decisions, expressed feelings of stress (P11; P16) vulnerability (P14; P13; P7) and fear of negative consequences when 'someone could die' (P13) and 'you can go to prison' (P16). The legal, ethical and safety responsibilities that came with their expertise arguably supports Alvesson's (2004) view that knowledge-intensive work whilst empowering, can lead to emotional overload due to expectations, real or perceived, placed up on them. The literature suggests that control over every operational eventuality is impossible, vociferously reflected in the findings, but that crisis management is an expectation of festival leadership (Newbould, 20019). Therefore, value lies in the continuous development of experiential knowledge and professional practices within independent festival organisations, including measuring quality (Bladen et al., 2018) to minimise mistakes (May, 2014; Stadler, 2021).

An interesting outcome of the interviews was how the participants used metaphors to communicate some of their innermost perceptions, some deliberately expressed, others seemingly subconsciously. Examples included describing events as 'theatrical' (P14), knowledge excellence as organisational 'DNA' (P12) and festival culture as never feeling 'like a fish out of water' (P1). Using metaphors seemed to help participants navigate around the difficulty of verbally expressing these holistic views. This is supported by Schindler's (2025) view that expert understanding goes beyond factual knowledge and Huang et al.'s (2014) assertion that creative ideas spring from diverse knowledge. Such figurative expressions represent a form of knowledge externalisation, an element of Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) SECI model, which is explored in the next and final theme.

In summary, Theme 3 has demonstrated that experiential knowledge is both a valuable organisation resource and personal asset. It supports organisational efficiency and therefore contributes to financial stability, though cost, time and resource efficiencies. The findings illustrate that organisation structure, informal practices and the pulsating nature of independent music festivals create risks of

knowledge loss that other types of more permanently organised businesses are less susceptible to. Furthermore, where experiential knowledge is lacking, poor decision making and mistakes may lead to operational delays and additional costs. Therefore, if experiential knowledge is better recognised and considered important at a strategic and managerial level, it has the potential to add value to organisational performance and competitive advantage through competence, efficiency, continuity, motivation and the well-being of individuals working in the industry.

This theme provides a contribution to knowledge by demonstrating that independent music festival practitioners' experiential knowledge is deeply embedded in intuitive decision-making and is fundamental to operational efficiency, safety and financial sustainability. Moreover, it forms part of a practitioner's sense of professional identity. The findings further contribute to tacit knowledge theory by providing empirical evidence of the role of experience-based knowing in managing complex situations in real-time. Furthermore, this theme supports theoretical perspectives of experiential knowledge as a strategic resource and highlights some associated potential vulnerabilities within temporary organisations, contributing to extant resource-based perspectives. At the individual level, this theme offers previously underexplored insights into the benefits of recognising and capitalising upon one's own experiential knowledge as well as some negative associations of being a key knowledge holder. From an industry perspective, findings in this theme highlight the importance of recognising and strategically supporting an individual's experiential knowledge development to enhance continuity, decision-making, staff wellbeing and the long-term sustainability of the organisation. These findings lead to the next and final theme, which explores the ways in which experiential knowledge is gained and shared, and provides insights into the ways in which independent music festival organisations and practitioners can facilitate an environment that supports learning and growth and the nurturing of experiential knowledge as a valuable resource.

4.6 Theme 4 Gaining and Sharing Tacit Knowledge in Independent Music Festivals

Theme	Subtheme	Primary Codes		
		Supplementary Codes		
4.6 Theme 4 Gaining and sharing tacit knowledge in independent music festivals	4.6.1 Developing experiential tacit knowledge 'on the job'	4.6.1.1 Learning by living it	4.6.1.2 Learning from mistakes	4.6.1.3 Motivations and drivers
		* Linear and non-linear learning journeys * Embodied learning through practice * Immersion and observation * Value of learning experientially	* Operational and professional mistakes * Emotional impacts * Reflection for improvement	* Intrinsic * Extrinsic
	4.6.2 Barriers and enablers for experiential knowledge development and transfer	4.6.2.1 Enablers for gaining experiential knowledge	4.6.2.2 Barriers to experiential knowledge development and transfer	4.6.2.3 Agency
		* Informal learning culture * Communities of practice	* Organisational constraints * Time * Cultural and interpersonal	* Organisational agency * Personal agency

Figure 25. Theme 4: Subthemes, Primary Codes and Supplementary Codes

Theme 4 explores the participants' perspectives about how their experiential knowledge was developed through immersive, practical involvement in festival work, and the extent to which the sector and organisation environment impacts gaining, sharing and transferring it.

4.6.1 Subtheme: Developing Experiential Tacit Knowledge 'On the Job'.

Unsurprisingly, a strong theme emerged from these findings that participants gained experiential knowledge through hands-on festival work.

4.6.1.1 Primary Code: Learning by Living It

These findings helped to develop the researcher's understanding of how the participants' experiential knowledge developed into the valuable organisational and personal assets uncovered in the previous themes.

Linear and Non-Linear Learning Journeys

Through the interviews, participants shared their routes to their current roles, some of which spanned several years and different festival roles, and some of those more recently entering the industry were naturally less extensive. The findings revealed that some participants purposefully planned a route to working in festivals, including gaining work experience whilst studying:

'When I was at university... I had contacted someone who I knew had some sort of input in the festival and asked if there was any volunteering opportunities' (P4, 5-9 years' experience).

'When I was at Uni, I did loads of random volunteer experience (P3, 5-9 years' experience).

'I was doing a master's in journalism and just doing whatever I could to be around music really and that resulted in sort of working at some festivals' (P15, 10+ years' experience).

Other participants described a more diverse, accidental or serendipitous route to their current role, as illustrated in the following examples:

'It's all kind of by accident, it wasn't a plan... I was working for [band] as their tour manager, and he said he was being asked to be involved in this festival... He said would I come and make sure that it was all right, and he weren't going to look an idiot basically. So, I said yeah' (P17, 10+ years' experience).

'I left school and didn't really know what I wanted to do and then ended up becoming an assistant manager of a pub. That's where I met [current festival director]. I started working for them about five years ago...' (P6, 5-9 years' experience).

Some participants described a transition into music festivals from other types of employment or fields of work, suggesting transferability of some skills between

sectors and different types of festival employment, such as freelancing and becoming a director:

'I got made redundant and started my job at [festival]... went independent and then just started freelancing with lots of different event production companies and festival clients...' (P7, 10+ years' experience).

'We all had other careers, so I was in pharmaceutical sales and that's why I fell into the sales side of it... We had no event training, no event management knowledge whatsoever, but within 8 months we'd launched our first festival... and the rest is history as they say' (P16, 10+ years' experience).

Whilst these examples highlight that some skills are transferable to a festival environment, or between different festivals and roles, it must be noted that participants also felt that specific experiential knowledge of an area of festival management or contextual knowledge of a specific festival were most important for effective, active decision making and problem solving, as identified in Theme 2 findings.

Embodied Learning Through Practice

Several participants strongly asserted that knowledge was gained through repeated experience. They did not seem to differentiate between explicit and tacit knowledge here, however, whether explicable or inarticulable types of knowledge, the role of immersive, repeated practice seems to have led to them internalising what they had learned:

'A lot of it is from actually doing stuff, working' (P4).

'...a learn by doing aspect to how I've learned to do this job' (P8).

'We definitely learnt it on the job' (P16).

P17's comment particularly encompasses the longevity and embodied nature of his experiential knowledge:

'I've lived through all that stuff... when you live through something, all of that, every bit of that experience stays with you... within your

head goes every bit of that experience that you've been through' (P17).

Some participants described how they had gained specific aspects of their experiential knowledge 'on the job', for example knowing how to create intangible experiences from tangible resources:

'...it's creating an environment that allows people to have an amazing festival - you learn that on the job, you learn it from experience' (P14).

The following examples illustrate that the process of learning tacit skills such as negotiating, is achieved through experientially learning new operative areas:

'Last year I learned a [lot] about bars because I had to negotiate the whole contract' (P13).

'I've had to learn a lot more about specific festival operations' (P17).

P1's comment sums up the process of experiential learning:

'... and the more I was learning... it was just like second nature to me then' (P1)

Continuous Experiential Learning

The accumulation of tacit knowledge was seen as a continuous, career-long process, even by those with an extensive career history:

'Definitely a gradual kind of doing the jobs yourself... learning from experience' (P5).

'From when the festival started to now, it's quite a dramatic change in what's in my head, definitely... you build up a level of knowledge' (P17).

'A lot of it relies on that kind of ingrained knowledge that I have which was maybe not ingrained knowledge at the beginning' (P8).

P14's comment below suggests an understanding of the fluidity and sources of experiential knowledge gained over time:

'We're drawing on a whole lifetime's experience of cultural activity and musical tastes or you know event experiences that we've had ourselves' (P14).

Some participants indicated that experiential learning is continuous, continuous and ongoing:

'There's still so much I need to I need to learn, and I'm learning every day' (P8).

'You could always know more...you need to keep learning' (P13).

'It's all learning, everything about it is the constant process of learning' (P14).

Immersion and Observation

The findings in this section suggest that being in the presence of, observing and engaging with others 'on the job' contributes to developing experiential knowledge. Both these examples are from new entrants to the festival sector and reflect their experiences of feeling supported and motivated to learn, through the more senior staff members' explanations of the reasoning behind their actions, suggesting a willingness to share their own knowledge:

'It was interesting to see what [Safety Contractors] saw as a potential hazard, like the pictures that was coming through [on CCTV] that you've never even... you'd just blink and never even think of what potential dangers was out there! And for [Safety Contractors] to tell you like... this is what it is, this is what has potential to happen, so this is what we've done to mitigate that risk. One of the guys actually did take me around with him for a few hours, just doing what he was doing, just sort of shadowing him' (P1).

'We would just be walking around and he'd be like, 'well, we're going to do this, we need to go and check this structure because... the weight load of that' and then I'm obviously stood there... like blank face 'don't know what you're talking about', and they would always explain it to me... so that everywhere we were going, they were like we're doing this because... or we're going to do that because...' (P3).

P4 explained learning about contracting from a manager, by being involved in the process. Through this immersive process, her confidence grew to a point where she felt knowledgeable enough to question the contents of contracts:

'I'd never seen it an artist contract before ever in my life before I started working there and [Manager] sat me down... and taught me all of how to do that and then I guess from doing that, I think I used to then go 'Oh, this doesn't seem very fair. Can I just check this one with you?'' (P4).

The previous examples outline participants experientially learning how to perform certain tasks. However, P1's example below illustrates how behaviours are also learned through observation and immersion, which seems to have been an impactful experience for her:

'He was just so good at handling situations and delegating to who would be best to sort it out... I did sit in the office with him for a little while and shadowed him and he was really, really good... he didn't lose his head at all, he was just making sure that everybody was doing what they need to do, they were all at the right places where they needed to be' (P1).

Value of Learning Experientially

Earlier findings revealed that some of the participants attributed value to their experiential knowledge, from a personal perspective and in performing their roles. The findings in this theme also indicate that they place value on the process of learning experientially. For example, P17 recognised that knowledge is embedded within experience, suggesting that value lies in the unique mental narratives created through experiential learning, which can be drawn on when needed to address issues arising:

'... just by being there you see how long stuff takes, you see how things can go wrong so quickly and you use that knowledge that just... it stacks up in your head, you know, it's that that learned knowledge of... you see something happen and you know, what happened afterwards... it's that thing - you've lived through it...' (P17).

Others acknowledged that explicit knowledge can be gained from written sources, but felt they gained more by learning experientially:

'I think I've progressed a lot more doing things than I did reading things' (P4).

'... there are resources out there and you can certainly do degrees in events management, but we certainly didn't' (P16).

The following example illustrates that experiential knowledge may be gained subconsciously and remain untapped until realised through reflection or necessity. Therefore, tacit knowledge may remain hidden or unarticulated indefinitely:

'So, I think I learned a lot more than I knew that I knew, until later on when I took more of that into [working for] myself' (P3).

The Role of Reflection

The interviews revealed that the process of reflection seemed to help some participants realise the depth of their knowledge and that they were still learning. Reflection was also revealed as an important stage of learning to improve aspects of the festival. These examples reveal that relational knowledge and information can be readily uncovered through time and effort:

'Afterwards you look at it and go 'Joe didn't do what he was supposed to do.' So can we talk to Joe and make sure that he does this... (P17).

'You then say 'Well, which of the things that we did do we want to keep?' and make those baseline features... and everyone's learning from that' (P14).

The next example suggests uncovering more tacit knowledge within one's own head is more challenging, but achievable if not required to articulate it:

'I didn't know that I knew it, until I got forced into having to really think about it' (P3).

However, it was very clear from the findings in the next section, that some of the most profound learning experiences came through making mistakes.

4.6.1.2 Primary Code: Learning from Mistakes

These findings explore a significant primary code emerging through the interviews. Mistakes ranging from minor and significant operational oversights to personal misjudgements seemed to trigger powerful and memorable learning experiences for several of the participants.

Mistakes as Triggers for Experiential Learning

Through the interviews, several participants acknowledged that memorable lessons had been learned through 'getting things wrong':

'Some of it I think comes from messing it up' (P10).

'... a lot of it you don't learn until something goes wrong... you know if a gig runs really well, that's really great, but you haven't really learnt anything' (P4).

P4's comment suggests a paradox that success offers less opportunity for learning than failure, because failure forces reflection and adaption to improve the situation, creating new experiential knowledge.

Operational and Professional Mistakes

Participants described some seemingly basic operational errors, made early in their festival's history, including underestimating retail requirements, underproviding security and underestimating toilet provision:

'We ran out of change in the bars... and we didn't have build and break security at all' (P11).

'For instance, the toilets calculation - a really boring thing - but you get it wrong and it's a disaster. We got it wrong the first year at [festival site] ... making people queue for 45 minutes to go to the toilet' (P17).

The examples suggest that a lack of awareness of procedural knowledge requirements can lead to potentially serious negative outcomes and business risks:

'It was just by pure circumstance that we had someone turn up to do a Green Guide inspection...they gave me eight hours to fix the problem, otherwise they were gonna shut us down' (P7).

P3 described a mix up in allocating accreditation passes, which created issues for show production and upset some performing artists:

'But you end up with certain staff in the wrong areas, like being able to get on the stage, and it becomes manic then everyone's in the way, and the show doesn't happen properly' (P3).

However, it seems not all mistakes are made through a lack of awareness, but may result from misjudgements and unexperienced risk taking, as P11's budget miscalculation suggests:

'It's not a mistake that we made consciously, but it's because we didn't have the money to actually pay for trackway' (P16).

Their experiences were impactful and remembered vividly, especially when they resulted in negative attendee or organisation outcomes.

The Emotional Impact of Getting it Wrong

Mistakes seemed to be felt particularly deeply for some participants, especially if they created emotions of fear, embarrassment or guilt. This in turn seemed to provoke a determination not to repeat these particular experiences:

'it was frightening, you know, when you when it's your responsibility, there's an element of fear like 'shit, this could go wrong'... but we learned from that that year and so the next year we planned the egress better' (P17).

'... getting the wrath of someone like [agent] who, when you first start, you don't realise that he is like one of the main people, the primary agent that looks after [several well-known bands]... And you get 'I will never work with you again!'... but you only learn by [messing] up' (P13).

'I felt really bad... to this day it's something that I keep in mind because I worry about getting the right amount of traders for the amount of ticket sales' (P6).

'Maybe I didn't I didn't check [the artists] well enough for how loud their show was, because now we've got sound bleed issue between two venues, and then you have to go talk to them and be 'I'm really sorry that this happened' (P8).

When discussing these examples, the participants' emotional responses seemed to be deeply linked to how they subsequently acted, suggesting they were affected personally and professionally by their experiences.

Experiential Learning and Procedural Change

Some participants shared how making mistakes was formative, leading directly to changes in their personal practices and organisational procedures:

'So that that led to me in the future paying a lot more attention to the selection of medical contractors and making sure that they had sufficient resources to honour the contract' (P7).

'... reinterpreting and reassessing and thinking how do I stop that happening next time, because that was painful, and I don't want to do that again' (P10).

'We'd never put anything on there before about not playing anywhere else in Sheffield... we'd book a headliner and they would go and do a DJ set at [nightclub] for free... so then we would add more things in [to the artist contract]' (P4).

Therefore, the findings further suggest because of the emotional impacts, 'error-based' learning may be more influential than learning through successful festival organisation and can lead to changes in personal and organisational procedures. The findings illustrate its contribution to improving operations and to developing experiential knowledge.

Cultural Acceptance

The inevitability of making mistakes under pressure seemed to be outwardly accepted by some as an innate aspect of festival organisation, but as the examples suggest, often result in deep, experiential learning.

'You learn by doing and making mistakes and rectifying them' (P16).

'Each time there's a challenge on a different event, that bit of knowledge goes into your head for the next time you're preparing that for another event' (P7).

'Looking back, it's um... you wonder how we made such a mess of it, well... we didn't make a mess of it, but there's certain things, you know that you would do differently' (P11).

Findings in Theme 1 identified a mixed approach to festival review and evaluation, further illustrated in these examples:

'This really didn't work, why didn't it work? Right, well, how about we try this or that?' (P8).

'You make all these mistakes and then... it's remembering what you did and how to change it and then it's a whole year until you actually can rectify those mistakes' (P17).

These findings strongly suggest that understanding and recording mistakes, their outcomes and how they are addressed (or not) is an important aspect of continuous improvement of the festival and personal experiential knowledge development. Furthermore, the annual cycle of festivals can impede improvements if mistakes are not corrected in real time, because they risk being forgotten and, if remembered, can only be corrected the following year.

4.6.1.3 Primary Code: Motivators and Drivers

This primary code explores the findings related to extrinsic and intrinsic factors that appeared to influence the participants to develop their experiential knowledge. Whilst previous findings have discussed the nature and role of tacit experiential knowledge in creating music festival experiences, this section focuses on what seemed to drive the participants to pursue continuous learning.

Intrinsic Motivators

Some participants expressed personal motivators for wanting to perform their roles well and these comments convey a passion that drives their commitment to what they do:

'That festival means a lot to me, seeing the other side of it...it was nice to sort of feel like you were giving something back' (P1).

It came from the passion to create an amazing event and an event that we wanted to come to ourselves... it is about love and it is about nurturing... and some of that is kind of just intrinsic... a festival, open air, camping... (P11).

P6 expressed being motivated by recognition and sense of achievement:

'I'm driven by appreciation and like, someone noticing that I'm able to change something' (P6).

'It's an expensive hobby, keeping something like that going [laughs]'
(P14).

P14's comment suggests that despite not profiting from his community festival he continues to do it for the enjoyment and does not view it as 'work'. The strength of these emotional responses to how they feel about what they do, somewhat explains the negative feelings experienced when things go wrong.

Extrinsic Drivers

The sense of responsibility expressed by some participants in Theme 3 and the emotional impacts described in the previous primary code in this theme suggest participants were driven to develop their knowledge to avoid negative reprimand or prosecution, for example:

'...it was our heads if anything went wrong (P1).

However, P7 identified that if an individual's reputation is tainted by adverse circumstances, this may have long term impacts on their career:

'Once you've got a kind of black mark against your name it's not easy to get rid of' (P7).

Furthermore, P7 suggested that freelance workers are driven to maintain and develop their experiential knowledge to remain relevant and gain contracts. They are hired for their knowledge and expertise and must therefore also be recognised for it.

'There's so many people that want your job, that you've got to be at the top of your game' (P7).

In summary, the findings in this subtheme highlight the diverse learning journeys of the participants and that the depth of experiential knowledge gained through hands-on festival work. Furthermore, mistakes were emphasised as profound learning opportunities that may be experienced negatively but which may subsequently create motivation to improve and, if acted upon, drive positive organisation outcomes.

4.6.2 Subtheme: Enablers and Barriers for Experiential Knowledge Development and Transfer

Theme	Subtheme	Primary Codes		
		Supplementary codes		
4.6 Theme 4 Gaining and sharing tacit knowledge in independent music festivals	4.6.2 Subtheme Enablers and barriers for experiential knowledge development and transfer	4.6.2.1 Factors enabling experiential knowledge gain	4.6.2.2 Barriers to experiential knowledge development and transfer	4.6.2.3 Agency
		* Informal learning culture * Communities of practice	* Organisational constraints * Time * Cultural and interpersonal	* Organisational agency * Personal agency

Theme 4: Subtheme, Primary and Supplementary Codes

4.6.2.1 Primary Code: Factors Enabling Experiential Knowledge Gain

Previous findings have illustrated the difficulty in articulating the most tacit types of knowledge. This section focuses on the physical, structural, cultural and interpersonal factors that either enable or inhibit individuals from gaining or sharing their experiential knowledge.

The findings suggest that despite a lack of structured training processes, the informal and cultural aspects of independent music festivals seem to provide opportunities for immersive, organic learning in supportive environments.

Informal Learning Culture

The first examples are the perspectives of relatively new entrants to the festival industry (1-5 years), demonstrating they felt welcomed into the festival community

'[At first], I was like 'wow, they're all so like close-knit' and ...[now] I feel a part of that... it's really nice' (P6).

'I was shocked to learn that quite a few people there had only met each other that season... they just met each other and became such

good friends because you're just immersed into this environment, I think that's the best bit' (P2).

P2 felt that even as an intern, she was treated as one of the full-time team, suggestive of a supportive learning environment:

'You were part of the work force, and they respected you as an employee on the same level as them (P2).

Informal socialisation offers opportunities for temporary staff to people to get to know each other, but also to gain relational knowledge of other areas of festival organisation:

'People... come every year and there they bring their families, they bring their kids. There's probably 100 people there and we'll all have a communal meal together every night' (P6).

'It was so nice... every evening everybody sat out, they had a drink just talked about the day and what they've done, because you're in your own like little environment, you're not sure what's going off in others. So, it was nice to hear everybody at the end of the day saying what they've gone through' (P1).

These settings could be termed 'relational learning environments' where the unique social environment of working and camping together creates social bonds and trust. Storytelling in social settings provides opportunities for personal relational knowledge development and seems to deepen the sense of belonging, creating a sense of a shared experience between staff.

Communities of Practice

Socialisation also seems to provide opportunities for work-relevant relational knowledge to be shared and transferred between festival workers and volunteers, for example:

'...With the volunteers and the people that work there, they kind of make the festival what it is. And it also makes for a very fluid kind of knowledge sharing' (P6).

However, despite the fact that 'the industry so small' (P7), findings about sharing best practice, sharing stories and experiences between organisers were noticeably lacking, perhaps because as P15 stated:

'They can be quite... Lone Wolf (P15).

An exception is the annual two-day Congress of the Association for Independent Festivals, a two-day conference of workshops and talks for sharing 'knowledge' and campaigns, with other meetings taking place throughout the year, including:

'...an additional four members meetings... including very small training days and things like that, and... things happen socially around those' (P15).

P16 said:

'The AIF have been instrumental in kind of tying us all together, sharing knowledge and that side of things. And it is great for like if you don't know something about any aspect of the festival you can just fire them an email' (P16).

These points suggest a mix of storytelling, explicit information and relational knowledge shared socially and in written format.

P6 also felt the benefit of this community of practice, when attending the AIF Congress, when she had been able to speak with others about their approach to managing vendors and traders. This comment suggests a benefit of this forum is due to the difficulty of experiencing issues outside of a specific festival, highlighting a disbenefit of non-experiential learning:

'It's so hard because I haven't ever done this role in any other festival, and I'm not really sure how other people do it... I'm always intrigued to know how other people manage traders, especially the food trader element. [Those] guys are really lovely and they've got quite a friendly attitude, so I spoke to them about it' (P6).

P14 seemed to understand the difference between sharing declarative, explicit knowledge and more implicit, relational knowledge. His example suggests that storytelling in communities of practice can lead to deeper insights than information swapping:

'You have you have the business conversations and then you have the kind of tacit knowledge type conversations, you know, and the business conversations tend to be much more kind of cut and dry -Did you do this? When will you be paid, how much, you know all those sorts of nuts-and-bolts stuff. But then you might sort of slip into the more... How did it go for you? What's your feeling about that? You know, tell me about when that happened, how did you respond? So, you just you end up with a better understanding' (P14).

This example highlights how social settings can help to build understanding that with practice, but the researcher argues this leads to relational rather than tacit knowledge sharing.

4.6.2.2 Primary Code: Barriers to Experiential Knowledge Sharing and Transfer

Some of the enablers of gaining experiential knowledge can serve as barriers to sharing or transferring it, such the organisation structure and informal culture and lack of time.

Structural

Contrasting earlier findings about the sense of community felt by temporary festival workers, P4, a permanent, self-employed event coordinator, suggested that their silo working impacted on cohesion and team spirit at a more senior level.

'You know, I mean everyone's coming in and working on it, and as much as we do like to feel like a team, we don't' (P4).

Furthermore, P4 highlighted a lack of formal training processes due to being self-employed:

'We don't really have training because everyone is self-employed' (P4).

P7, a freelance operations manager, self-employment resulted in a lack of investment in people and continuous professional development, compared to his assumption about working in the commercial festival sector:

'They're not going to send me on a 5 grand training course... when in a year I could just leave, so I don't think that there is that

development support... if you work for Live Nation, it's probably different kettle of fish there, because they've got the money to be able to invest in the people like that, but when you're working for independent promoters, they don't see the value for money in that or I don't think there is that commitment there (P7).

Temporary Organisations

The 'pulsating', discontinuous nature of independent music festivals was experienced by P6 as a lack of communication and engagement from the core team, which seems to suggest a detrimental impact on opportunities for her gaining experiential or relational knowledge:

'So, I think [the festival organisers] are all busy doing their own stuff. And I think, communication is such a big part of the festival organisation stuff that I think sometimes maybe is lacking. 'They only see me like once or twice a year [before the busy season]' (P6).

The impacts of discontinuity were also highlighted by P11 in an interesting perspective about cumulative experiential knowledge, as the annual event model includes significant gaps in between intense periods of work, suggesting barriers for maintaining knowledge not captured in documents, and knowledge loss. Furthermore, this example highlights the short learning window available:

'Although we've done 20 festivals, we've only actually done - if you think about it - 20 weekends, because it's spread over 15 years' (P16).

(P16 co-owns two different independent music festivals, delivering one per year for ten years, and two per year for the last five years).

Time

Challenges associated with the time constraints of creating annual events were identified as a barrier to sharing relational and experiential knowledge. Time pressures impacted the participants' availability or motivation to explain potentially important aspects, highlighting some disadvantages of the typical approach to festival organisation, identified in this study, for example:

'We were quite bad at taking time to explain how things should be done' (P4).

'Everyone's been really, really busy all the time (P12).

'[Manager] is so busy, she's got so much that she's got on, it wasn't always easy to for her to sit down and explain what we're doing. So, it took another few days to get one thing done when it could have been done in a few hours... but it did make it difficult and I think the people in the office were expected to... just sort of know, in a way, what needed to be done...' (P2).

The following examples suggest that a lack of time impacts on the participants available motivation and energy to support others' immersive learning:

'It gets to the point where you're... I'm too busy now' (P3).

"Well, it'll take me half the time to do it, so I'll just do it" (P4).

Articulacy

These findings exemplify the difficulty in articulating the complex intricacies of festival management:

'You can't brief somebody for a few hours and expect them to run a festival' (P16).

'I'd to write down one day, if I even could, but I don't think you could' (P7).

'So, the management accounts interpretation is... I guess maybe some of that is about the skill that I think I have, that would be difficult... the person behind me would have to learn their own way through... I couldn't teach them' (P10)'

These examples highlight that transferring explicit, relational or experiential knowledge relies on the recipient's individual, experiential understanding what is being communicated.

4.6.2.3 Primary Code: Agency

Intrinsic and extrinsic drivers to gain experiential knowledge were explored earlier in this final theme. Here, the findings relate to individual behaviours and attitudes

towards owning knowledge, suggesting a reluctance to share, linked to power and control:

'You would get some people that would not want to share what they knew and you're like... [quizzical expression]' (P3).

'It was usually because of that sort of trying to retain responsibility and control as opposed to delegating it and letting it go, so you just try and do everything yourself' (P14).

Conversely, P16 expressed his supportive approach towards people working for him learning experientially:

'I'm a big believer of letting people get on with it, giving them clear directions, but then let them... not make their own mistakes, but get on with it and then... not check their work but kind of keep an eye on them' (P16).

However, P14's comment seems to suggest that understanding the value of one's experiential knowledge may justify keeping it private:

'If they have a better understanding of what they themselves bring as a source of value to their own offer..., they might be better equipped to commodify it more proactively, and to... if you like, stake ownership claim over it' (P14).

It seems this is particularly the case for freelancers, as earlier findings revealed a need to commodify their experiential knowledge to continue operating in the industry.

The findings in Theme 4 are sardonically summarised by P7, in response to the researcher's question about the value of his accumulated experiential knowledge:

I: And if you'd known then what you know now...?

P: Oh, yeah, I'd be a millionaire and I'd have made all my money by now (P7)

4.6.3 Summary and Discussion of Theme 4

Theme 4 focused on the ways experiential knowledge is developed within independent music festivals and considered factors that emerged from the data, that seem to enable or impede individuals' progress. The findings demonstrate that within independent music festivals, experiential knowledge is gained through immersive, practice-based festival work. Furthermore, analysis of the findings extends existing theories of experiential learning by illustrating how experiential learning develops within the distinctive conditions of independent music festivals. Unlike many other organisational settings with more stable environments, the cyclical complexities and often high-pressure contexts of festivals provide enriching, active knowledge development opportunities for seasoned professionals and new entrants (P2; P8; P13; P14). Importantly, the findings demonstrate that experiential knowledge, in the distinctive independent music festival sector, is often accelerated through traditional interpretations of experiential learning theories.

A unanimous view from the findings was that experiential knowledge is gained and developed through direct involvement and immersion in festival planning and operations 'on the job' (P5; P8; P16; P14), regardless of their route to industry, and was characterised in the findings as 'living it'. The literature supports these views, as experiential learning is understood as the process of developing learning from experiences into knowledge and skills [experiential knowledge] and other phenomena such as attitudes, emotions, values, beliefs and senses (Jarvis, 1999, Beard & Wilson, 2013). Deep learning (Noorani et al., 2019) is achieved through the choices learners make whilst proceeding through stages of experiencing, reflecting upon, conceptualising and applying learning, according to Kolb's (1984) Theory of Experiential Learning.

Examples from the findings include negotiating contracts (P4; P13) and specific operational aspects (P17), with practitioners developing from novice to expert (Collins, 2010; Friest, 2013) through 'actually doing stuff' (P4). Every experience has the potential for learning, but Kolb's (1984) model suggests this is less likely to occur, without reflection, analysis and application to a further experience.

P17 summed up several participants' perspectives about personal learning, by commenting 'when you live through something, every bit of that experience stays with you', which suggests that experiential learning is profound and that experiential knowledge becomes deeply ingrained. This aligns with Collins' (2010) three-dimensional view of expertise, where intuitive, experience-based knowledge, acquired through sustained practice, allows individuals to contribute meaningfully to a domain of knowledge. This is reflected in the findings as being recognised for their 'particular version of magic' (P14) and for being the person 'everybody know knows everything' (P10), which was acknowledged as a personal motivator for some participants.

The findings also revealed that learning may occur subconsciously as P4 reflected that 'You don't know how to deal with it until you're doing it'. This suggests relational or experiential knowledge may lay hidden or inactive until triggered by the need to act. In this aspect, the findings correspond with the Conscious Competence Framework (Tovstiga & Tovstiga, 2021), which ascribes learning across four stages, from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence. Applied to the findings, the stages can be reasoned as follows:

- * Unconscious incompetence – P16 making mistakes in their first festival when they had 'no event management knowledge whatsoever.'
- * Conscious incompetence – P17 realising 'we got it wrong with the toilets.'
- * Conscious competence P3 appreciating 'I know what I'm capable of'.
- * Unconscious competence P1 reflecting that 'It's like second nature when you're doing it, you just you don't think of it at the time.'

The framework is useful for explain how, through immersive practice, a practitioner's experiential knowledge is internalised over time, from focused task performance to instinctive actions.

This 'dramatic change in what's in my head' (P17), from unfamiliarity with an aspect of festival management, for example 'never seen an artist contract before in my life' (P4), to the 'ingrained knowledge that I have' (P8) suggests that confidence is gained

at each stage of the process and is comparable with Kolb's notion of internalising abstract knowledge into action, through experiential learning. Similarly, the findings indicated that experiential learning occurs through repeated festival work. This can be attributed to the 'Internalisation' stage of the SECI model (Nonaka & Takeushi, 1995) where explicit (personal or shared) knowledge is embodied through experience and reflective practice. Therefore, the findings reflect each of the three learning process models, Conscious Competence Framework, Experiential Learning Cycle and SECI Model.

The findings also indicate some knowledge transfer through the Socialisation stage of the SECI model, which Nonaka & Takeushi (1995) propose involves the conversion of new tacit knowledge into the existing base of tacit knowledge (Werner et al., 2015). Furthermore, some of the knowledge transferred through immersive socialisation can be considered authentically tacit experiential knowledge, including behaviours such as handling crises 'he was so good at handling situations...didn't lose his head at all' (P1), whilst other examples were more related to relational, declarative or procedural knowledge such as explaining 'we're doing this because... or we're going to do that because' (P3). This application of the findings to the SECI model confirms one of the researcher's key conclusions from the literature review, that there is ambiguity around the use of the term tacit knowledge. However, theories about learning process, such as the Conscious Competence Framework, the Experiential Learning Cycle and the SECI model rely on 'causative mechanisms' to induce the transition from one stage to the next (Engeström and Sannino 2012, p. 46). In each model, experience is the key catalyst for learning, which the findings strongly support as the most significant learning mechanism in the independent music festival sector. A supportive environment for learning was identified to some extent in the findings, but challenges associated with organisational structure, informal practices and time presented some barriers. However, socialisation opportunities to share stories and informal learning was found to be prevalent with temporary staff and lower-level workers through a 'close-knit' community on site (P2; P6). However, a sense of community was less apparent between competing 'lone wolf' (P15) festival owners and self-employed team members.

The internalisation stage of the SECI model is said to convert explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge. This stage aligns with the transition from conscious competence to unconscious competence, where 'that bit of knowledge goes into your head for the next time' (P7). A difference between the SECI model and the other two models, is the shared element of the learning process. Processes of learning in the Experiential Learning Cycle and Conscious Competence models are applied to individual learning, with influences from other individuals, whereas the Socialisation stage of the SECI model includes transfer between individuals. Furthermore, the Combination stage of the SECI model transfers explicit, relational knowledge and the outputs of experiential knowledge between individuals into organisation processes and procedures, as was evident in the findings regarding making mistakes.

A key original insight from the findings is that whilst it is gained through repeated experience, one of the deepest learning catalysts for experiential knowledge development came from emotionally charged experiences, such as the participants making mistakes because, paradoxically, 'if a gig runs really well... you haven't really learnt anything' (P4). The findings highlighted that getting even small details wrong can have significantly negative outcomes, such as customer and artist dissatisfaction to potentially critical situations such as 'eight hours to fix the problem, otherwise they were gonna shut us down' (P7). The findings revealed that making mistakes triggered strong emotional responses, such as fear that things could become unsafe, regret for getting things wrong on behalf of others and embarrassment for causing operational problems, which led to the participants reasoning through solutions to make improvements.

In the literature, Dennison and Kirk (1990) linked the motivation to gain experiential knowledge with progressing through the experiential learning cycle, where a sense of achievement is felt by recognising improvements and implementing changes. In this respect, the findings revealed some intrinsic motivations for gaining and applying experiential knowledge that were influenced by personal passions for the industry. These included feeling connected to a festival that 'means so much to me' (P1), the desire to 'create an amazing event' (P11) and being recognised and respected for

their skills and knowledge (P2; P6). Conversely, extrinsic drivers included wanting to avoid disasters (P1; P14; P13; P7) and maintaining a professional reputation. Contemporary Social Exchange Theory proposes that individuals engage in exchanges based on perceptions of the reciprocal value of time, effort or knowledge benefits (Lee et al., 2014; Tanskanen, 2015; Shiao & Luo, 2012).

Previous findings indicated that for freelancers, prior experiential knowledge also informs this exchange, related to their perceptions of risks and responsibilities associated with a contract. The findings in this theme, particularly related to temporary or voluntary staff and festival founders, suggest the intrinsic motivators influence their willingness to contribute or accept responsibilities, based less on financial reward than trust, recognition, affiliation and the opportunity (or security) of future work (Zhao & Detlor, 2023; Paliszkievicz, 2020).

Integrating Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle and the SECI model with Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1994) two technical and cognitive dimensions of tacit knowledge is a useful way to associate the emotions felt after making a mistake with the subsequent learning. For example, the cognitive perception of the severity of the mistake experienced, and assumptions about the consequences, influence the emotional response. If reflected upon, these processes stimulate conceptualising about possible solutions. Within the technical dimensions, the lessons learned through hands-on experience and problem solving are embedded through socialisation and combination, creating improved personal and organisational practices. The findings support these outcomes as 'reinterpreting and reassessing... because that was painful' (P10), others subsequently 'making sure they had sufficient resources' (P7) and improving artist contracts (P4). These learning experiences are also supported in the literature by Argyris and Schön's (1978) double-loop learning where, rather than simply correcting mistakes based on current practices, reflection, including questioning and modifying existing assumptions and norms, support an adaptive approach to anticipating and making changes. However, it must be noted that earlier findings advocated intuition and experiential expertise as important and valuable for pre-emptive and responsive decision making and problem solving. The findings in this

theme highlight that humans are fallible and things going wrong at festivals were described as 'inevitable' by the participants. Therefore, including scenario planning into strategic processes may serve to mitigate against some of the more significant outcomes of errors being made.

Barriers to experiential learning, which then impede the flow of experiential knowledge in independent music festivals, were identified in the findings and have the potential to lead to mistakes being made. Structural issues included time constraints as everyone is 'so busy', especially on the run up and during the festival (P2; P3; P12) causing some to do tasks themselves, rather than delegate and thereby hindering learning opportunities for others. The literature supports this as constraints of time are identified in several studies as detrimental to knowledge flow and transfer (Grant, 1996; Bhardwaj & Monin, 2006; Scully et al., 2013; Huo et al., 2016; van Houten, 2023). Another barrier to knowledge flow identified in the literature is the stop-start nature of annual events (Vendelø & Rerup, 2020; Stadler, 2014; 2021) which for freelancers and self-employed staff was experienced as a lack of investment in training and development, in the findings.

The literature is unanimous in assertions that the most tacit forms of knowledge are difficult to articulate and may only be transferable through observation and imitation of others and immersion in activity (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1994; 2000; Taylor, 2007; Asher & Popper, 2019) and the findings throughout this study support this fundamental aspect of knowledge. In this theme, articulacy was raised as a barrier to transferring complex, experiential festival organisation knowledge to others, which was again perceived as unachievable. Similarly, managing experiential knowledge itself is unachievable, as it is held in individuals' heads (Stadler, 2021). However, Hislop (2013) recommends creating a supportive environment and knowledge sharing culture that facilitates knowledge interactions. This allows people to 'get on with it' (P16) and develop their own practice-based knowledge, including at the organisational level, such as the Association for Independent Music Festivals, where knowledge sharing is 'very much a focus' (P15).

Lastly, whilst it was not a strong theme in the findings, as not directly questioned, some insights about leadership emerged. In the literature, a gap regarding event leadership was noted by Ensor, Robertson and Ali-Knight (2011) and again by Abson, Norman and Schofield (2024), calling for further academic attention in this context. Abson (2021) and Abson et al., (2024) propose that in project-based environments such as independent music festivals, shared leadership is more appropriate than vertical models, as alone, individuals rarely possess all the knowledge and skills required, and that distributed horizontally, responsibility and knowledge create a wider pool of expertise. The findings suggest that leadership was often informal and embedded within activity. Whilst some less experienced participants felt a lack of guidance due to the managers' time constraints discussed earlier, others felt guided through challenging situations, for example P1 appreciated a manager who was 'so good at handling situations and delegating'. Some more senior participants demonstrated leadership by empowering others, such as giving responsibility to others 'and they're going to run with it now' (P14) and believing in 'letting people get on with it' (P16). Leadership was not a focus of this study, but these few insights and the call for more further study from other academics, create interest for the researcher to pursue this in the future.

In summary, the findings and analysis of Theme 4 contribute to a clearer understanding of experiential knowledge development in independent music festivals and how it is generated and developed through immersive, hands-on experience. This study demonstrates originality by integrating Theme 4 findings with Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, the Conscious Competence Framework and the SECI model, to provide a more contextualised understanding of how experiential knowledge develops in project-based or temporary organisations such as independent music festivals. In particular, the findings suggest immersive experience as the primary catalyst and facilitator of movement between the stages of learning, whilst emotional responses to operational challenges reinforce the internalisation process. Its development is valued by practitioners, and influenced by intrinsic motivators and extrinsic drivers, emotional connections and opportunities provided or absent within the cultural and structural environment of the organisation and

sector. The typically informal learning culture offers opportunities for new entrants to gain immersive experience but exacerbates time constraints, creating barriers to those individuals. Overall, the findings extend the existing knowledge management and experiential learning literature by demonstrating how experiential knowledge is gained, internalised and shared within the specific organisational environment of independent music festivals. In so doing, this study reinforces the importance of recognising experiential knowledge as a valuable strategic resource and highlights the need for organisational cultures and procedures that recognise, nurture and provide space and time for its development, thereby allowing expertise to grow and benefit the wider independent festival industry. The findings also confirm experiential knowledge as not only accumulated experiences but as a deeply embedded form of knowing-in-action that evolves through festival practitioners' lived experiences of planning, delivery and problem solving.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented perspectives about the knowledge that the participants felt most relevant to creating independent music festival experiences. Data was captured through semi-structured interviews with seventeen participants, either owner-directors, self-employed freelancers or temporary staff of independent music festivals.

The participants were asked to share their thoughts about the types of knowledge they felt they had, how they gained it and how they used it in their roles to create festival experiences. Analysis of the four inter-connected themes shows that in the context of independent music festivals, tacit knowledge is embedded and shared through active experience, is contextual and transferable and often operates beneath conscious awareness. Experiential knowledge informs decision-making and problem-solving in planning and operational situations and is appreciated by individuals for its role in operational efficiency and personal identity. Through the findings chapters, the researcher developed a case for reframing the dimensions of knowledge, to be more practically understood and utilised within the independent and wider events industry. The key points from this chapter, which

subsequently inform Chapter 5, Thematic Insights and Practical, are now summarised.

Theme 1 provided an important overview of the complexity of the independent music festival environment and how practitioners must respond to unpredictable and unforeseen challenges. The findings indicate that planning and delivering festival experiences requires a wide breadth of explicit and experiential knowledge to understand and manage compliance, risk management, logistics, communications, and multiple stakeholders including audiences. Technical and procedural knowledge was viewed as essential, but interpretation, synthesis of information and judgement calls were considered equally important.

Theme 2 distinguished between dimensions of knowledge. The findings revealed articulable, relational types of knowledge, such as explaining procedural 'how to' and important declarative 'know that' explicit knowledge and more authentically tacit, inarticulable, but observable experiential knowledge and skills, which were often experienced as intuitive by the participants. It focused on the interaction between explicit and tacit knowledge, revealing that creating successful festival experiences draws on both. Participants affirmed that essential documentation on its own is not sufficient, and in this theme the value of tacit, experiential knowledge began to emerge. In the festival context, the utility of explicit, codified knowledge was only realised when interpreted or actively implemented by practitioners with practical, contextual knowledge developed through experience. Through these findings, the researcher reaffirms her assertion (in the literature review) that ambiguity, overcomplication and generalisation within much of the tacit knowledge literature create barriers to industry practitioners gaining awareness and understanding of it as a concept, thereby missing opportunities for optimising the utilisation of their tacit knowledge resources. The researcher's case for reframing some articulable knowledge as relational knowledge (currently included in tacit knowledge literature), was therefore made in this theme. Furthermore, the researcher also proposed that *experiential knowledge* is a more appropriate yet conceptually robust, industry-relevant and more accessible term to use, to reframe tacit knowledge for industry

use. It more aptly describes the embodied and contextual nature of a practitioner's knowing, using more easily understood language in place of the more abstract tacit knowledge, and is adopted for the remainder of the thesis to demonstrate its usage and appropriateness in context.

In Theme 3, the value of experiential knowledge to independent music festivals and individuals working in the industry were explored. Participants connected their experiential knowledge with intuitive decision-making and problem-solving to anticipate and resolve complex, regularly arising issues. Its role in the smooth running of operations was widely acknowledged, suggesting a financial advantage if inefficiencies and discontinuity are avoided. Reliance on specialist knowledge, knowledge interruptions and loss were identified as inherent risks of the typical independent music festival business model. The findings also revealed the personal value that participants attributed to their experiential knowledge, including creating confidence, a sense of empowerment and sense of achievement. However, some negative emotions were experienced by those carrying significant responsibilities, associated with the outcomes of their decisions and actions and this personal perspective is under researched in the literature. Theme 3 also revealed how inarticulacy was demonstrated when participants used metaphors to communicate some of their most tacit knowledge. Findings from this theme form the basis of Figure 27, the Experiential Knowledge Value and Risks model, which contributes to the literature with an original model illustrating that there are positive, negative and shared associations of experiential knowledge for both practitioners and organisations.

Theme 4 explored how individuals gained experiential knowledge and how it is gained and transferred within the independent music festivals included in this study. Learning was predominantly achieved through active, experiential learning 'on the job' and through immersive observation and participation in teams. A particularly rich and new contribution to the existing literature was gained, regarding how making mistakes acted as memorable and emotionally impactful learning experiences, for practitioners of independent music festivals. Emotions and a sense

of belonging were also revealed as motivators to continuous learning, including feeling appreciated and recognised for their knowledge for some, whilst others felt pressured to maintain their knowledge base in order to continue working. The complexities of independent music festivals present a wide range of opportunities to gain experiential knowledge, whilst the informal structure and culture was described as offering a supportive learning environment, and time constraints impeded the quality of learning for some.

5.0 Thematic Insights and Practical Implications

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the following aspects of tacit knowledge, within the research context of independent music festivals, to provide useful insights for practitioners, and to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the subject:

- What aspects of knowledge are perceived as important in creating successful festival experiences?
- What is the value of tacit knowledge to individuals and the organisation?
- Is tacit knowledge effectively nurtured in independent music festival organisations?

Based on the findings and in-depth analytical discussion presented in Chapter 4, the following thematic insights summarise the researcher's new understanding of tacit knowledge within the independent music festival context. They summarise the extent to which the thesis has answered the above research questions.

The findings of this study suggest that tacit, experiential knowledge plays a more significant role in festival management than is currently acknowledged in event and festival literature. This study shows that in practice, much practitioner knowledge is developed more through lived experiences than from written sources.

Considering festival management through the lens of tacit knowledge, this study highlights the value of recognising and nurturing embodied knowledge and skills, as fundamental elements of creating successful festival experiences.

5.2 The Nature and Role of Tacit Knowledge: Proposed Reframing for Practical Application in Festivals and Events

'You either know or you don't know. We didn't know... but now we do' (Festival Organiser, P16).

This research started out exploring tacit knowledge, as this was the first academic term encountered by the researcher to explain the intuitive knowledge she had experienced and been curious about for some time. Through examination of the literature and reflexive thematic analysis of independent music festival practitioners' perspectives, the researcher proposes that a more practice-friendly, yet ontologically sound term to use in industry settings is *experiential knowledge*.

This proposal emerged from the researcher's critical literature review, which found that the term tacit knowledge is abstract, broad and in many cases ambiguous or over generalised, referring to any knowledge that is not written down or verbally communicated. Comparing these conclusions with the findings increased the sense of incongruity between the variable views in the literature and the participants' cohesive views about their tacit knowledge, within the research context.

The theoretical concept of tacit knowledge is not disputed, as the findings of this study affirm that it is indeed deeply embedded and very difficult to directly articulate. The findings, however, strongly emphasised the ways festival practitioners accumulate it over time through active problem solving, trial and error, observation, immersive practice and (sometimes) reflection. These descriptions represent the intuitive, contextual and enacted qualities of experiential knowledge, as opposed to the abstract, academic conceptualisations about degrees of tacitness (Polanyi, 1966; Collins 2010; Gascoigne & Thornton, 2013). Reframing this type of tacit knowledge as experiential knowledge for festival and events practitioners does not interfere with the theoretical concept of tacit knowledge but corresponds to the lived experiences of the participants. It provides a more accessible and practical lens through which practitioners (and educators) may recognise, support and develop this valuable resource. Furthermore, *experiential knowledge* offers clearer language for recognising festival and event professionals' expertise and may be easier for events

management students and entry-level practitioners to understand, identify with and pursue, as they develop their careers.

Whilst explicit and relational knowledge can be gained through experience, the term experiential knowledge reflects how it is applied, rather than how it is gained. It is a form of tacit knowledge enacted through practice and is context specific and difficult to articulate (Borkman, 1976; Collins, 2013). It compares with the literature on ‘authentic’ or ‘strong’ tacit knowledge (Collins, 2010; Gascoigne & Thornton, 2013). The term also represents the way intuitive ‘knowing’ (Blackler, 1995) informs enacted embodied skills such as decision-making and problem-solving, positioning *experiential knowledge* as a form of knowing-in-action, identified in Theme 2 findings.

5.2.1 Experiential Knowing-in-Action

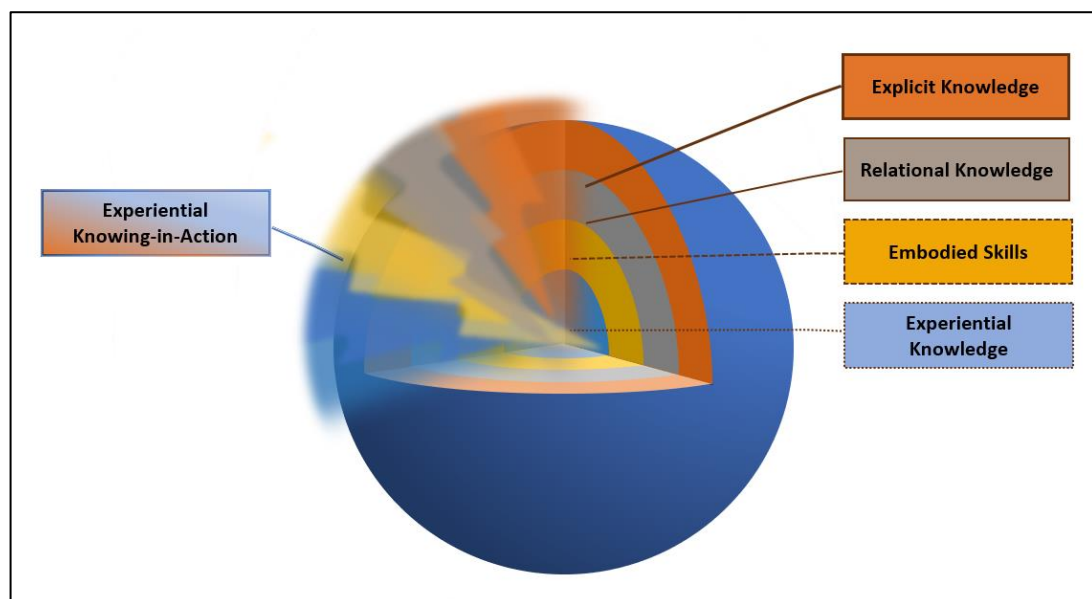


Figure 26. Experiential Knowing-in-Action (Researcher’s Illustration, adapted from a template retrieved from JustFreeSlide.com)

Figure 26 illustrates the researcher’s reframed model of Experiential Knowing-in-Action, which builds on Asher & Popper’s Onion Model (2019). Unlike the original two-dimensional concentric depiction (see p. 43), this model is represented as a three-dimensional sphere, to emphasise the depth of the most tacit, experiential knowledge and that the different forms of knowledge are not static layers but may

interact dynamically during practice. The blurred transitions between layers illustrate the fluid boundaries between different forms of knowledge engaged during practice. The model conceptualises experiential knowing-in-action as the intuitive ability (embodied skill) to integrate different types of knowledge simultaneously, representing 'just knowing what to do'. Indeed, Polanyi (1958) interpreted knowing as 'active comprehension of the things known, an action that requires skill' (p vii). Depicting the types of knowledge (explicit, relational and experiential) as non-static, fluid and interacting dynamically with embodied skills, creates a holistic representation of instinctive, experiential knowing-in-action.

The researcher proposes that this illustration of experiential knowing-in-action underpins the research findings that the most valuable type of knowledge and skills were difficult to articulate but were used constantly and considered essential for safe and operationally efficient festival management.

Layer 1. Explicit Knowledge (easily codifiable, visible, shareable) The outer layer represents explicit, articulable, codifiable knowledge, often information or data. It is the easiest type of knowledge to consciously access and is closest to the surface. However, explicit knowledge relies on experiential knowledge to give it meaning, for example when interpreting complex documents such as event plans, risk assessments, site maps or contracts. Such documentation is essential for festival management but does not (usually) inform practitioners *how* to make decisions about aspects of them in the moment. Even detailed decision trees in documentation require contextual interpretation and cognitive reasoning input.

Layer 2. Relational Knowledge (explicable) The second layer represents declarative 'know that' knowledge which is articulable, describable and codifiable, but not necessarily immediately accessible and has not yet been shared. Procedural 'know how to' knowledge about performing tasks may also be explained verbally or via written instruction. It often includes explicit information that has not yet been shared. It may have been temporarily forgotten but is not tacit as it may be recalled. Forgotten knowledge is lost, not tacit. This type of knowledge also relies on a human

with experiential knowledge to give it meaning. Examples include situation updates during the festival, reports on incidents occurring or feedback about the festival.

Layer 3 Embodied Skills (physical and cognitive skills) The third layer represents embodied skills. These are personal, demonstrable and observable actions or enacted procedural knowledge. They are gained through practice, experience, imitation and immersion and may be instinctively performed over time. They may be shared through demonstration, observation and immersion, but deeply embodied skills are difficult to articulate verbally or through written instructions. Common sector-relevant examples include making decisions and solving problems, which are informed by experiential knowledge, and explicit and relational knowledge.

Layer 4 Experiential Knowledge (least articulable, personal contextual knowing) The inner core represents experiential knowledge because it is the most deeply embedded type of knowledge. It is authentic tacit knowledge, gained over time through experience. This inarticulable 'just knowing' includes cognitive reasoning, synthesis of multiple sources of information and evaluation of contextual and situational circumstances. It may be intuitive or require deep thought. Experiential knowledge is therefore fundamental to contextual decision-making and problem-solving. The model illustrates the proposed holistic concept of experiential knowing-in-action, the fluid interaction of explicit knowledge, relational knowledge, experiential knowledge and embodied skills in regular, practical, festival planning and delivery.

5.3 The Value of Experiential Knowledge

This study has shown that experiential knowledge has organisational and personal value, and some aspects that are beneficial to both, along with risks, illustrated in Figure 27. Based on the findings and detailed discussion in Theme 3, and the reframed concept of experiential knowing-in-action in the previous section, Figure 27 presents the value and risks associated with experiential knowledge at the personal, organisational and shared level.

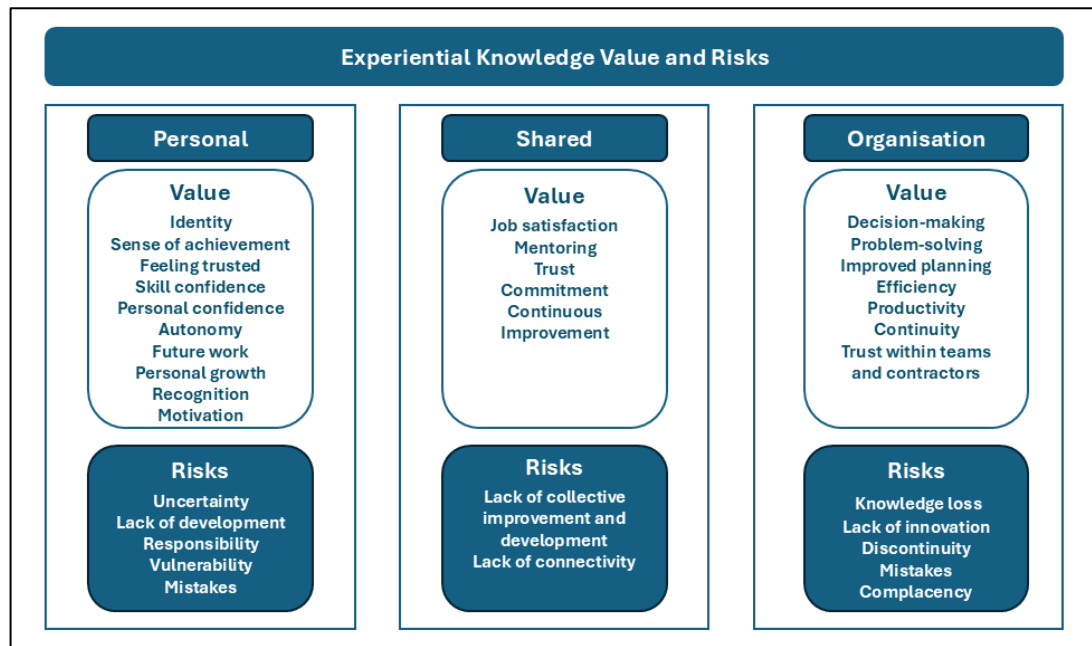


Figure 27. Experiential Knowledge Value and Risks

(Researcher's illustration)

Organisation benefits may be tangible, operational improvements and budgetary benefits gained through efficiency and continuity, generated by decisions and problem-solving. If recognised by others or in oneself, individual experiential knowledge contributes to personal identity, confidence, career motivation and progression and a sense of achieving one's potential or contributing meaningfully to the success of the festival. An important aspect of the model is the shared value of experiential knowledge, where job satisfaction, trust, mentoring and collaborative ways of working are mutually beneficial to individuals and the organisation.

However, each level also carries risks identified through the research. Being the holder of specialist experiential knowledge is associated with positions of high responsibility, which can be overwhelming and lead to a sense of personal and professional vulnerability. Whilst making mistakes presents learning opportunities, a lack of experiential knowledge can leave individuals feeling embarrassed, fearful of outcomes and professionally incompetent. Significant organisation risks are associated with knowledge loss or unavailability, creating gaps that may negatively impact on the planning and delivery of the festival. Discontinuity of contractors and temporary teams wastes time and may lead to 'reinventing the wheel' in some areas,

although it also provides opportunities for others to step in to roles. Mistakes made through organisation processes or procedural errors, due to a lack of experiential planning or operational knowledge may create serious safety issues and pose significant business risks. Similarly, over confidence, based on prior experience may lead to complacency and disregard for documentation or formal procedures. Where knowledge loss or organisation constraints of time or lack of formal structures impact in individual learning, progress or development, this may negatively impact on continuous improvement, connectivity between individuals, teams and the organisation, and therefore productivity.

5.3.1 Festivals are a Series of Problems to be Solved

'You've just got to be a problem solver' (P11).

The participants in this study were all involved in festivals that had been running for several years and had experience of managing the numerous processes and resources required to produce a festival, identified in the findings. Broad areas include administration, design, marketing, operations and risk management, however participants referred to specific areas such as production, traffic management, toilets, managing admission gates, budget management, hiring teams, site build, managing residents, liaising with local authorities, arranging medical and welfare services, security and volunteers, booking and managing artists, managing vendors, traders and bar management and managing an event control department. Other areas covered in the literature include technical aspects such as installing power, audio visual aspects, creating emergency routes and creating backstage areas for artists and production teams. This study, therefore, highlights the complex nature of festival management and the many different functions that present challenges and opportunities for things to go wrong.

Success was measured by the degree to which each area and the festival as a whole ran smoothly, whether attendees were protected from harm and perceptions about the festival experience gathered from festival goers and other stakeholders. The complexities of festival organisation and management, and the uncertain and

unpredictable environment in which they operate, mean that for practitioners, challenges in delivering successful festivals continuously emerge. These issues range from preventable minor operational glitches to unavoidable and potentially show-stopping phenomena such as severe weather conditions. Stringent legal compliance requirements direct design and operational decisions and managing multiple stakeholders adds another layer of complexity. Problem solving, therefore, is an inevitable, constant and essential skill of festival management.

5.3.2 'I just knew what to do': How Experiential Knowledge Informs Festival Practice

Problem solving was revealed in this study to be an essential proactive and reactive skill, made more effective and efficient by personally and organisationally valued experiential knowledge. Heightened or potentially dangerous situations require immediate attention, with safety a main priority. Intuitive interpretation of physical environments and contextual situations, coupled with experiential understanding of explicit plans and procedures, lead to instinctive decision making and swift remedial actions. This was illustrated in Figure 26 as experiential knowing-in-action and represents practitioner expertise, developed over time, through active participation in festival work. As P16 said, 'you can't brief someone for a few hours and expect them to run a festival'.

In this study, experiential knowledge was often applied in making decisions under pressure, solving problems, managing site logistics and construction. However, it also fundamentally informs ongoing event planning documentation, based on insights gained through previous iterations of the festival, and making and resolving mistakes. Plans are then translated into practical action, deepening experiential knowledge. The findings suggest that it would be practically impossible for festival organisers to anticipate every eventuality of the many complexities and uncertainties of festival management, and even more so to document their myriad solutions for any given context. However, this study finds that experiential knowledge makes responding to challenges and issues more achievable, reflecting its organisational value to practice.

5.3.3 Learning in the Field: Festival Environments Foster Experiential Learning

This study has highlighted that independent music festivals are particularly fertile grounds (excuse the pun) for gaining and developing experiential knowledge, due to the wide variety of festival functions and immersive, fast-paced nature of creating the festival site and delivering the show, albeit temporary. Because of the ‘pulsating’ nature of festivals (Stadler, 2021), the number of people involved swells considerably, from a small core team working throughout the year, to a larger site construction crew, to possibly hundreds of team members during the show. Freelancers and their teams may extend their knowledge development window by moving from show to show, providing services to different festivals.

The culture that seems to exist within this temporary workforce is informal and collaborative, where people are often emotionally engaged and driven by a passion for festivals. Opportunities for social interactions during and after work, facilitate reflection and shared learning and working at different festivals in a season provides repeated cycles of experiential knowledge development. Festival environments facilitate opportunities for immersive learning from seasoned practitioners and allow newer staff to observe and imitate practices and behaviours. However, the fast-paced nature and tight budgets of the festival environment can also hamper the transfer of experiential knowledge, particularly if line managers are too busy to spend time nurturing team members. That said, most of the longer-serving participants in the study welcomed opportunities to share their knowledge with others and seemed genuinely interested in developing the skills and knowledge of the future festival generation.

5.3.4 Succession Planning and Experiential Knowledge Retention

The findings highlighted the importance of succession planning, as it seemed to be an aspect that was left to chance in the festivals included in this study. This appeared to be related to the perceived difficulty in transferring the deep experiential and contextual knowledge of owner-organisers. However, safeguarding the long-term sustainability of independent music festivals through succession planning is more

difficult than within corporate organisations, where structured handover processes may be in place. The structure of independent music festivals creates risks of knowledge loss and discontinuity, particularly impactful regarding more senior team members. This is evident in the way participants described ‘just knowing’ what to do, which came from years of accumulated experience, decision-making under pressure, learning from mistakes and a developed intuitive understanding of festival organisation dynamics. Changing long-held practices is not easy, but through the experiential knowledge workshop, the researcher plans to encourage practitioners to consider options for succession planning that will protect the knowledge embedded within individuals and the organisation,

5.3.5 My Black Box: The Freelancer Perspective

This study highlighted a perspective from freelance and self-employed practitioners who were more cautious about sharing their expertise with others. Their knowledge and skills are their source of income and work security, the reason they are hired. In this respect their knowledge is commodified and they may weigh the exchange of their knowledge against the fee offered, the level of responsibility and the perceived advantages or risks to their reputation. Whilst this was not a major theme in the findings, comparing the perspectives of freelancers, paid staff, volunteers and independent festival owners would be an interesting future study.

5.4 Experiential Knowledge Practitioner Workshop

This study has highlighted the nature of tacit knowledge in independent music festivals, identified and most commonly applied as experiential knowledge. Its essential role in contributing to delivering safe and successful festival experiences, averting costly mistakes in advance, and actively reasoning through solutions to urgent issues in real time, has been established. However, the study revealed that whilst it is recognised and valued in others, most practitioners are too busy to take the time to reflect on their own knowledge, or its value, missing opportunities to experience the personal benefits this can bring, or potential career advancement opportunities. Freelance contractors may be more aware of the financial value of

their skills and knowledge, but the research revealed that they also rarely spend time reflecting on what they know. Therefore, an output of this research is the development of a half-day practitioner workshop, to be delivered through the Association of Independent Festivals, to explore, understand and leverage the value of their experiential knowledge. It will also be embedded within the BSc Events Management course at Sheffield Hallam University, following final year students' delivery of charity fundraising events in the Live Event Experience module.

The workshop integrates aspects of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) Conscious Competence Framework (Tovstiga & Tovstiga, 2021), Social Exchange Theory (Senge, 1990) and the SECI model (Nonaka and Takeushi, 1995) and introduces the researcher's Experiential Knowledge-in Action Model (Figure 26) to synthesise these theories. Because the study has affirmed the difficulty in articulating experiential knowledge and embodied skills, the session aims to foster an appreciation of practitioners' own and shared experiential knowledge, through reflection, sharing explicit and relational knowledge and storytelling using metaphors.

The objectives of the session are:

- To understand the layers of personal knowledge
- To understand the nature of experiential knowledge in festivals
- To identify where experiential knowledge supports decision-making and problem-solving
- To learn from stories of making and adapting to mistakes
- To value experiential knowledge as a strategic personal and organisational asset
- Explore how to nurture, transfer and retain experiential knowledge in the organisation.

The session plan outline is included in Appendix 5.

6.0 Conclusion

This final chapter of the thesis outlines the impact of the research, including its original contributions to knowledge and practice, the researcher's ambitions for the transfer of her new knowledge into events education and industry practice, and reflections on the use of the Reflexive Thematic Analysis research method. The chapter also acknowledges some limitations of the study and makes recommendations for suggestions for further areas of study based on the findings of this thesis.

6.1 Research Impact

This DBA research contributes to academic understanding and professional practice by offering a new conceptualisation of tacit knowledge as experiential knowledge within the independent music festival sector, to reflect its practical nature and the way in which it is gained, shared and applied through experience, such as in making festival design decisions. Furthermore, the Experiential Knowledge-in-Action model highlights the how practitioners integrate explicit, relational and deep experiential knowledge with embodied skills, when responding to complex and time-pressured operational situations.

6.1.1 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the body of academic literature about tacit knowledge, by clarifying some of the existing ambiguity about what is, and what is not authentic tacit knowledge. Furthermore, it moves attention towards studying experiential knowledge in the distinct context of independent music festival sector. The thesis categorises festival knowledge into three simplified dimensions – explicit, relational and experiential. It builds on foundational theories such as Polanyi's (1966) original concept of tacit knowledge, Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) SECI knowledge creation model, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model and Asher and Popper's (2019) Onion Model but addresses a noted gap in the literature about how these concepts apply to temporary, 'pulsating' (Stadler, 2021) festival organisations, that fall outside of traditional corporate structures.

A key contribution is the reframing of tacit knowledge as experiential knowing-in-action to reflect the intuitive, embodied and contextual nature of the type of knowledge often used by festival practitioners. Literature about tacit knowledge often presents it as an abstract concept (Blackler, 1995) or form of individual expertise, whereas this study proposes it is non-static, socially facilitated and co-created by individuals practising within the festival environment. This perspective draws on Blackler's (1995) distinction between 'knowing' as embedded in action and context, as opposed to knowledge which he describes as a static asset. It also connects the related dimensions of knowing, doing and learning in the unpredictable and changeable festival context.

A further contribution is methodological, using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) to explore the extent to which festival-relevant knowledge and skills are perceived, valued, nurtured and applied by practitioners in the independent music festival sector. The qualitative, narrative-rich generated context specific insights into how festival practitioners view their knowledge, revealing its role in ongoing continuous improvement of festival experiences, though lessons learned iteratively, through practice. The thesis also responds to calls for more situated, contextual approaches to studying knowledge practices (Gherardi, 2020).

The study also introduces the conceptual model of Experiential Knowledge Value and Risks, which represents the personal, organisational and shared value of experiential knowledge, and some risks associated with personal emotional burden and organisational knowledge loss or its poor management. The model illustrates how experiential knowledge supports strategic capabilities such as problem solving and operational continuity. The risks may be moderated through better awareness and appreciation of experiential knowledge and are addressed in the practical contribution via the practitioner workshop outlined in Chapter 5. The model contributes to knowledge management theory by framing personal, organisational and shared value and risks together.

Furthermore, the personal dimension of experiential knowledge was uncovered in this study, a previously underexplored aspect of experiential knowledge, which is

included in the Experiential Knowledge Value and Risks model. The participants outwardly associated their knowledge with what they 'knew about' or could 'do', but the research revealed that experiential knowledge is also strongly linked to how they viewed themselves, for example as trusted, competent or responsible. These aspects highlight that emotional and identity-related associations were important to the participants and linked to their motivation to continue learning and developing in the industry. This also influenced their willingness to mentor others by sharing their knowledge and are less prevalent in the literature than studies about technical aspects of knowledge and skill, or how they are gained.

Finally, the thesis contributes to knowledge by drawing attention to the strategic role of experiential knowledge in sustaining independent festival organisations. Whilst literature on tacit knowledge has proposed it as the most valuable of an organisation's asset, studying its application in the idiosyncratic conditions faced by typically small, precariously resourced, fluctuating and operationally led organisations, extends the discourse. This study, however, highlights the risks of the single event model and that whilst systems to codify and disseminate explicit knowledge exist, the essential experiential knowledge required for independent music festival success mainly resides in people. This expands the knowledge management, organisation development and experiential learning literature in relation to informally organised businesses in the creative industries.

6.1.2 Contribution to Practice

This study offers some practical insights with direct relevance for independent music festival practitioners, organisers and the wider events industry. The findings suggest that a festival's long-term sustainability and strategic capability are closely linked not only to financial and other tangible resources, but also with effective use and recognition of experiential knowledge, used to deliver the festival's priorities. Whilst it has been shown to contribute directly to successfully delivered festival experiences, more could be done to nurture and protect it within the organisation.

The research highlights a strategic need for independent festival organisations to more purposefully identify, value and safeguard experiential knowledge as a fundamental resource. The findings suggest there are clear organisational benefits of fostering environments to support experiential learning and experiential knowledge development, particularly given the staff discontinuity typical of the sector.

The Experiential Knowledge Value and Risks model was developed as a useful tool for practical application alongside the Experiential Knowing-in-Action model, in the Experiential Knowledge Workshop for festival leaders and experienced practitioners, new entrants and students. It may be used to identify where vulnerabilities exist, to recognise knowledge assets and how to leverage them for personal and organisational gain. Used in training, it may support motivation, retention and professional development and inform how to approach learning opportunities. For new entrants, the model is designed to help understand how essential knowledge is gained and applied.

Finally, this study also highlights the personal and emotional aspects of experiential knowledge which, if recognised, can enhance confidence, trust and perceptions of work identity and self-worth. These insights can help festival organisers to appreciate how knowledge is linked to motivation and wellbeing, and therefore productivity. Creating or improving cultures that value people not only for what they know now, but support their future development, means 'paying it forward' for their festival and the wider sector.

6.2 Transfer of Knowledge to Practice

Completing this thesis has led the researcher to design additional activities into developmental teaching sessions with events management students and events and festival practitioners. The Live Event Experience module at Sheffield Hallam University is delivered as the capstone module at the end of the events management degree. The researcher has led the module for the last fifteen years, and it is commended by students as the most beneficial aspect of the course because of the experience and knowledge they feel they gain. Through the module, the researcher

shares her own experience, and invites industry professionals to share theirs, which the students absorb as relational knowledge, however this has always been during the planning stages, to inform event plans and operational aspects. After their events, students reflect on their personal and professional development, but this activity will provide a more meaningful and impactful session, for long-lasting, effectual learning. Formative sessions ahead of delivering the live events will create awareness and recognition of what they will experientially gain through planning and delivering their live events. The post-event workshops are designed to take place in small groups of around fifteen students and industry practitioners, to effectively evaluate not only the outcomes of the event, but also a deeper understanding of their experiential knowledge and how to leverage this, alongside the explicit and relational knowledge gained through their degree. Inviting industry practitioners to contribute will create a collaborative, shared learning experience of inspiring stories about successes and failures, 'aha' moments and an appreciation of the value of experiential knowledge.

A further workshop intended solely for industry practitioners is planned to take place after evaluating the student sessions, to facilitate double-loop, experiential learning, integrating perspectives of students and industry participants of the previous sessions. By providing a visual framework that illustrates how explicit, relational and experiential knowledge interact through embodied skills, the aim is to help practitioners recognise aspects of their expertise that are often difficult to explain and provide opportunities to discuss decision-making processes, in the spirit of shared development as a community of practice.

Through these sessions, the researcher aims not only to enhance student learning but also to nurture wider recognition of experiential knowledge as a concept and as a valuable form of expertise within the events and festival industry. By embedding the concepts developed through this study within educational and industry practice, the intention is to encourage and support more reflective professional development and greater awareness of how experiential knowing-in-action has the potential to contribute to successful event delivery.

6.3 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis was adopted for this study, as it offers a flexible and conceptually grounded approach to conducting rigorous qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Rather than applying a rigid coding framework, the analysis involved guided cycles of interpretative engagement with the data and open, organic coding, to identify patterns in the data, from which the themes presented in Chapter 4 emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Following the process of Reflexive Thematic Analysis has helped the researcher to focus deeply on the challenges and experiences of the participants' festival work, recognise the value and contribution of experiential knowledge and realise an apparent lack of recognition of their own personal knowledge assets.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis acknowledges that subjectivity in interpretation is valid (Braun & Clarke, 2022), however, the researcher was very mindful that the insights the previous chapter were based on the findings and literature review, not on personal experience of the festival sector. However, the outputs originate in subjectivity and are designed for direct input into her work in events education, as a means to share the concept of experiential knowledge with industry professionals through communities of practice such as the Association for Independent Festivals and as content for academic publication.

6.4 Limitations of the Research

The contributions of this study to knowledge and practice have been outlined, however some limitations must be acknowledged. The first limitation is the size of the study, which is based on seventeen semi structured interviews with industry practitioners, working in ten different independent festivals. Whilst the data gathered was abundant and no new perspectives about the key research questions emerged towards the end of the data collection, a larger number of participants in the study could be considered more robust. The Association for Independent Festivals represents over one hundred independent festival promoters in the UK, therefore this study represents less than ten percent of their membership. However,

Thematic Reflexive Analysis suggests that developing themes from quality rich data is more important than sample size (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Secondly, the range of years of industry experience was between one and over thirty years. Whilst this created a rich picture of perspectives about gaining explicit, relational and experiential knowledge, not all the participants contributed equally to all areas of questioning, for example, newer practitioners had less experience to reflect upon, and more experienced participants did not have access to the same voluntary work experience opportunities as do current students, so their learning journeys were not directly comparable.

From another perspective, including the perspectives of commercial music festival employees could add another dimension to the research. This would have enabled comparison between the processes of more structured organisations with teams working on multiple events and those in the annual festivals in this study.

6.5 Areas for further study

This thesis is based on the perspectives of practitioners working in independent music festivals in the UK. Whilst contributions to knowledge and practice have been suggested, the researcher has identified opportunities for further, related research in the following areas:

- The research into experiential knowledge in temporary organisations has potential to extend to other areas of events such as annual sporting events, country and agricultural fairs, or even further afield, for example construction projects.
- A comparative study between independent festivals and commercial organisation would provide useful insights and opportunities for organisation development in either sector.
- An evaluation of the Experiential Knowledge workshop would ascertain the usefulness of the Experiential Knowing-in-Action model and the Experiential Knowledge Value and Risks model in the short term, and a longitudinal study would measure longer term outcomes.

- A study into the personal emotional and identity related aspects of experiential knowledge, such as intuition and confidence is very interesting to the researcher.
- However, a particular interesting area for future study is the concept of Festival 'families' that was expressed by some of the participants, who felt strong affiliation as part of a 'family'. This culture amongst temporary festival workers, who meet, work and socialise in the 'bubble' of festivals seemed to create a sense of belonging that also supported informal knowledge sharing and long-lasting bonds between workers. The concept of family identity and family display (Shannon, 2022, in Fletcher, 2022) could be extended to working groups in a festival context.
- A study exploring the perspectives of freelancers and self-employed festival and event practitioners, volunteers and contracted temporary staff, about their motivations, challenges and opportunities to develop experiential learning would be an interesting study, through the lens of Social Exchange Theory.
- Finally, considering an alternative research method such as ethnography, being immersed in a festival organisation over a period of time and gaining insights relatable to those of the participants, could create a rich, subjective yet compelling study.

Undertaking this research has been a labour of love, and the researcher heartily thanks the reader for taking the time to persevere to the end.

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Appendix 1. Research Ethics Approval

Title of research study: The Nature and Role of Tacit Knowledge in Creating Event Experiences.

Ethics review reference ER6323491 Approval date 02.05.2018

Thesis chapter(s) 3.0 Methodology

Type of Ethics Review Template: Very low risk human participants studies

Reviewer – Phil Crowther (previous Director of Studies)

From: converis@shu.ac.uk <converis@shu.ac.uk>

Sent: Wednesday, May 16, 2018 3:29:40 PM

To: Tattersall, Jane <fomjt@exchange.shu.ac.uk>

Subject: Converis - Ethics Review - Approval

Dear Jane,

Title of Ethics Review: [The Nature and Role of Tacit Knowledge in Creating Event Experiences](#)

Ethics Review ID: ER6323491

The University has reviewed your ethics application named above and can confirm that the project has been approved.

You are expected to deliver the project in accordance with the University's research ethics and integrity policies and procedures:

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice>

As the Principal Investigator you are responsible for monitoring the project on an ongoing basis and ensuring that the approved documentation is used. The project may be audited by the University during or after its lifetime.

Should any changes to the delivery of the project be required, you are required to submit an amendment for review.

Wishing you success with your study

Appendix 2. Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title

The Nature and Role of Tacit Knowledge in Creating Event and Festival Experiences

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide to do so, it is important you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the research?

I'm a senior lecturer in events management at Sheffield Hallam University, currently undertaking a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) investigating the Nature and Role of Tacit Knowledge in Creating Event Experiences. The research will for the basis of the thesis submitted for the DBA. The research builds on previous academic studies published in the field of Business and Management, Event and Tourism Management. The research is intended to provide deeper understanding of the subject matter and the intended contributions include a) a cross-disciplinary contribution linking tacit knowledge and event experience creation b) a practical contribution sharing findings about potential methods to elicit and share valuable tacit knowledge that may otherwise be lost or remain hidden, for the benefit of individuals and the organization c) publications in academic journals and text books based the thesis.

Why have you been invited to take part?

As an event professional working in the festival sector, your perspectives and knowledge about creating event experiences are central to this study.

Do you have to take part?

Participation is voluntary, and it is entirely your choice to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet and you should indicate your agreement to the online consent form. You can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

What will you be asked to do?

The research will be conducted through semi structured interviews, which should not take more than an hour, although there is no set time limit. I may ask to follow up on any points to clarify meaning, and this may be by email telephone or in person, in agreement with the interviewee. A further interview or additional questions may be requested, but there is no obligation to agree. I will ask if you would consent to making notes about any future instances or experiences where you have been aware of using your tacit knowledge in your role. You do not have to consent to this or share this with me, but it may be that following the interview, you notice this happening more than you currently do.

Are there any risks to taking part?

Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause you any disadvantages or discomfort. The potential physical and/or psychological harm or distress will be the same as any experienced in everyday life.

Are there any benefits to taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will have a beneficial impact on how you view your own tacit knowledge in the context of your work and create wider recognition of the value of tacit knowledge within your organisation.

Will your participation be confidential?

All the information collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications. Your institution will also not be identified or identifiable. Any data collected about you in the interview will be stored online in a form protected by passwords and other relevant security processes and technologies. Data collected may be shared in an anonymised form to allow reuse by the research team and other third parties. These anonymised data will not allow any individuals or their institutions to be identified or identifiable.

Will you be recorded?

Interviews will be recorded on audio equipment and transcribed before analysis. This will only be done with your written consent.

What type of information will be sought from you and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

Firstly, you'll be asked some background about your carer journey and what you feel you've learned along the way. You will be asked about how attendee and other stakeholder experiences are created at your events. You'll be asked to think about your personal knowledge, skills and know-how and finally how knowledge is managed in your organisation. Your views and experience are what the project is interested in exploring.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

Results of the research will be published. You will not be identified in any report or publication. Your institution will not be identified in any report or publication. If you wish to be given a copy of any reports resulting from the research, please ask us to put you on our circulation list.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved by the Sheffield Hallam University's Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for further information

Jane Tattersall Senior Lecturer, Events Management, Sheffield Hallam University
jane.tattersall@shu.ac.uk

Many thanks for taking part in this research

Jane Tattersall

Appendix 3. Research Participant Consent Form

Title: The Nature and Role of Tacit Knowledge in Creating Event and Festival Experiences

Consent Form for Qualitative Semi Structured Interviews

Thank you for reading the information sheet about the interview study. If you are happy to participate then please complete and sign the form below. Please initial the boxes below to confirm that you agree with each statement:

*Please
Initial box:*

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 22/08/2018 and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

☐

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

☐

I agree for this interview to be audio-recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified, may be used in any conference presentation, report or journal article developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original recording.

☐☐

I agree that my anonymised data will be kept for future research purposes such as publications related to this study after the completion of the study.

☐

I agree to take part in this interview.

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Jane Tattersall
Principal Investigator

Date

Signature

To be counter-signed and dated electronically for telephone interviews or in the presence of the participant for face-to-face interviews

Appendix 4. Semi-Structured Interview Questions (primary and follow up).



Introduction – thank you and confidentiality, information, consent, follow up.

Firstly, I'll ask some background about your career journey and what you feel you've learned along the way.

Please tell me about your current or most recent role and the journey to getting here (key events in time or people – Expand)

Overall, how do you think you have learned how to do your job? (experience and trial and error, from other people or from formal sources such as books, courses, training)

Can you talk me through the 'know that' and 'know how' knowledge you have?

Thinking about how experiences are created at your events /your current/most recent role

How important a factor is the event experience in the creation of your events?

How are your event experiences created? In other words, how do different people including yourself contribute or collaborate, draw it out on paper – explore further re knowledge sharing throughout)

Can you think of any information or knowledge that you think could or should be shared more or more often? (info or knowledge that only certain people have?)

What are the things that prevent this from happening?

Can you think of any ways to make it easier for this type of knowledge to be shared?

Do you consider staff and other stakeholders as well as attendees when planning the events and do you get their input?

Thinking about your personal knowledge, skills and know how

Can you think of any know how you have that is difficult to explain to others?

Is there any know how or knowledge that only you have in the organization - link to previous question

Can you think of any disadvantages or advantages of this? (in terms of your role, organisation or event)

If you could, would you happily share your tacit knowledge or are there any reasons you might prefer to retain it as personal?

How could you facilitate the sharing of this difficult to explain knowledge and have you ever thought about that?

How knowledge is managed in the organisation

Do you think that the knowledge people have gives the company a competitive edge and if so, why?

Is it recognised and acknowledged or appreciated?

Is there any management of knowledge in the company? (confidentiality etc)

Final thoughts?

Would you agree to keep notes of any thoughts you have about your tacit knowledge or examples where you have experienced or noticed opportunities for using or sharing your tacit knowledge, and share these with me at a future point?

Appendix 5. Experiential Knowledge Half-Day Workshop (Draft)

This half-day workshop is designed to help festival practitioners (and students) explore, recognise and value their experiential knowledge. It introduces the concept of Experiential Knowing-in-Action and aspects of experiential learning.

Workshop Aims

- To understand the layers of personal knowledge
- To understand the nature of experiential knowledge in festivals
- To identify where experiential knowledge supports decision-making and problem-solving
- To learn from stories of making and adapting to mistakes
- To value experiential knowledge as a strategic personal and organisational asset
- Explore how to nurture, transfer and retain experiential knowledge in the organisation.

Workshop Activities and Discussions

- **Icebreaker:** One thing I wish someone had told me before I started working in festivals...
- **Unconscious Competence Framework:** Learning journeys from then until now
- **Experiential Knowledge:** What is it? Mapping explicit, relational and experiential knowledge in festivals.
- **Experiential Knowing-in-Action:** Making decisions and solving problems based on experience – storytelling session.
- **Learning from Mistakes:** Examples and solutions. What did it change? Learning cycle.
- **Experiential Knowledge Value and Risks:** Applied to your festival. What is at stake when this knowledge isn't shared or recognised? What enables sharing?
- **Succession planning:** What happens if I'm captured by aliens?
- **Application:** What strategic actions will support improved opportunities for experiential development and retention?
- **Evaluation:** What did you learn? Will it make a difference? What will you commit to?