

# **A stakeholder model of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe**

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## **Abstract**

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is one of the largest arts festivals in the world and a key component of Edinburgh's festival programme. Dating from 1947, the Fringe has inspired the creation of similar festivals world-wide.

There has been limited research undertaken into the stakeholders of arts festivals such as the Fringe, and the brand relationships that exist between stakeholders and arts festivals. The purpose of this paper is to develop a stakeholder model of the Fringe and in doing so, define its primary and secondary stakeholders.

Stakeholders may be defined as either primary or secondary by the nature of their engagement with an organisation. Clarkson (1995) suggests that the satisfaction and participation of primary stakeholder groups is essential to the continued survival and success of an organisation. Secondary stakeholder groups are defined as those groups that have an ongoing interest within an organisation, but are not essential to its survival.

The classification of primary and secondary stakeholder categories may be applied to festivals. Primary stakeholder groups are deemed essential to festivals and events and their interaction with the festival organisation results in the festival itself (Reid & Arcodia, 2002).

In defining the primary and secondary stakeholder groups of the Fringe, festival stakeholder literature was reviewed. In particular, research concerned with the definition of primary stakeholders was consulted to develop the Fringe stakeholder model. Further, senior staff members of the Fringe were consulted to assist in the development of this model. The proposed stakeholder model provides a unique theoretical framework defining the primary and secondary stakeholders of the Fringe. This may be applicable to other arts festivals: both in defining significant stakeholder categories; and in the examination of their strategic and operational significance. The model will also be useful in underpinning the development of a Fringe-stakeholder brand relationship typology.

**Keywords:** Edinburgh Festival Fringe; stakeholders, brand relationships

## **Introduction**

The role of stakeholders within festival organisations is recognised as being important in terms of stakeholder salience: power; legitimacy; and urgency (Getz, 2007; Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997). It is suggested thus that festivals can only occur and survive as a result of the engagement and interaction of key stakeholders with the relevant festival organisation. The management and continued success of festivals is dependent therefore on those stakeholders who are most involved with the festival organisation (Reid & Arcodia, 2002).

The present study seeks to develop a stakeholder model of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, considering the concepts of “primary” and “secondary” stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995; Reid & Arcodia, 2002); and existing research concerning festival and event stakeholder models (Merrilees, Getz and O’Brien, 2005; Reid & Arcodia, 2002).

The resulting model has been applied to the development of a Fringe-stakeholder brand relationship typology: a conceptual framework, illustrating the forms of relationships that exist between the festival brand and its most engaged stakeholders. The development of this typology is the aim of a PhD study concerned with the Fringe brand image and brand relationships.

## **Literature Review**

### *Stakeholders*

In defining the stakeholders of the Fringe, it is necessary to first address the concept of stakeholders and to define their role within organisations. This stakeholder approach may be applied to festival and event management (Reid & Arcodia, 2002). An investigation of this will serve in both defining the stakeholders of the Fringe and in developing a stakeholder model.

Getz (2007: 92) defines stakeholders as: “...those persons or groups who can influence the organization, or are influenced by it.” Stakeholders of an organisation are categorised as any groups that have a “stake” and therefore affect the organisation and the achievement of its goals. Stakeholder theory is concerned with the stakeholder management framework and understanding the internal and external forces upon the organisation’s context (Freeman, 1984; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001).

It is argued that stakeholder management is important in the successful achievement of current and future organisational objectives. It is therefore possible to define them as: “...groups and individuals who can affect, or are affected by, the achievement of an organization’s mission”, (Freeman, 1984: 52).

Stakeholders are essential to any organisation and indeed are key components within the governance chain of roles and relationships assumed by various groups within overall organisational control. Further, the expectations of stakeholders are considered to be influential upon an organisation’s strategic purpose: along with its governance structure; and social responsibilities (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008).

To define stakeholder groups in relation to the markets within which an organisation operates, Strong, Ringer and Taylor (2001) apply a framework which identifies: customer; employee; and ownership stakeholders as three of the main categories. Jawahar and McLaughlin (2001) suggest that stakeholders may be classified according to the specific organisational needs they can satisfy and the functions they can address. Further, different stakeholder groups become more or less important to the organisation during the various stages of its life-cycle.

Freeman (1984: 25) proposes a “stakeholder view of the firm”, a simplified map of organisational stakeholders, and he notes: “Each of these groups plays a vital role in the success of the business enterprise in today’s environment. Each of the groups has a stake in the modern corporation, hence, the term ‘stakeholder’”. These groups are classified as: owners; consumer advocates; customers; competitors; media; employees; special interest groups; environmentalists; suppliers; governments; and local community organisations.

Stakeholders are acknowledged as being involved therefore in the organisational decision-making process and, as a collective group, are essential to an organisation. Additionally, as noted, they may be further segmented into specific stakeholder categories (Freeman, 1984; Clarkson, 1995; Reid & Arcodia, 2002).

Clarkson (1995) develops Freeman’s (1984) definition of stakeholders as groups that have ownership rights or interests within organisations. These rights may be related to the past, present, or future; and can be legal or moral; individual or collective. Clarkson (1995) suggests that the organisation may itself be defined as a system of stakeholders, and states that it is possible to further classify the key stakeholder groups, according to their main interests, as either primary or secondary in nature.

Clarkson (1995: 106) notes therefore that the satisfaction and participation of primary stakeholder groups is essential to the continued success of an organisation: “A primary stakeholder group is one without whose continuing participation the corporation cannot survive as a going concern.” Conversely, secondary stakeholder groups are classified as those groups that have an ongoing interest within the organisation, but are not essential to its survival.

#### *Festival stakeholders*

Getz (1991: 15) applies the earlier general definition of stakeholders to festivals and events as: “... those people and groups with a stake in the event and its outcomes, including all groups participating in the event production, sponsors and grant-givers, community representatives, and everyone impacted by the event.”

As noted previously, within stakeholder theory it is suggested that core stakeholder attributes may be defined as related to the concept of stakeholder saliency, which is concerned with the possession of: power; legitimacy; and urgency (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Getz, 2007; Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001; Mitchell et al., 1997).

Festival and event stakeholder groups may be considered therefore in relation to the attributed or actual power and influence that they are perceived to have within a festival or event organisation. This can be defined in relation to their roles and the success of festivals and events (Getz, Andersen & Larson, 2007; Larson, 2002; Larson & Wikstrom, 2001; Reid & Arcodia, 2002; Spiropoulos, Gargalianos & Sotiriadou, 2006).

Stakeholders may be considered additionally in relation to their impact upon the achievement of a festival's aims (Campbell, 1997; Clarkson, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Johnson et al., 2008; Getz et al., 2007; Mitchell et al., 1997). It is argued therefore that the identification and classification of festival stakeholders is essential to the strategic positioning of festivals (Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2006; Getz, 2005; 2007; Spiropolous et al., 2005).

There has been limited research into the relationships between festival stakeholders and festival brands. The role of stakeholders in relation to festival ownership and their resulting influence upon festival brands is addressed in some studies (Merrilees et al., 2005; Mossberg & Getz, 2006). It is evident however that relationships between festival stakeholders and festival brands has, so far, commanded little academic attention. There is no identified research that investigates festival brand image and the relationship of this to the festival's stakeholders, but it is notable that: "... stakeholder analysis and management can be used to build more effective event brands", (Merrilees et al., 2005: 1060).

In considering stakeholder influences upon mature festival brands, Getz, et al., (2007) refer to the concept of "resource dependency" (Pfeffer & Salanick, 2003). When applied to festival brands, this suggests that over the course of time mature hallmark festivals, such as the Fringe, become institutional in status; developing a supportive network of diverse stakeholders. In aiming to achieve and maintain hallmark event status it is vital therefore for a strong and positive festival brand image to be reinforced by, and synonymous to, the host city or destination (Anholt, 2004; Brown, Chalip, Jago & Mules, 2004; Getz, 2005; 2007; Mossberg & Getz; 2006; Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules & Ali, 2003).

Similarly to those of other organisations, festival stakeholders may be defined as either primary or secondary, by the nature of their engagement to the festival organisation and the impact they have upon the event occurring (Clarkson, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Getz et al., 2007; Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001; Merrilees et al., 2005; Mitchell et al., 1997; Reid & Arcodia, 2002).

The classification of primary and secondary stakeholder categories may be applied to festivals and events. Primary stakeholder groups are deemed essential to festivals and their interaction with the festival organisation results in the festival. It is suggested thus that primary stakeholders are important because: "... without the direct support of these stakeholders the event would not exist" (Reid & Arcodia, 2002: 494).

Within the primary and secondary categories, it is evident and notable that all festival stakeholders may assume multiple roles affecting the organisation in different ways (Getz et al., 2007).

## **Methodology**

### *Developing a stakeholder model of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe*

This research refers to the proposed categories of primary and secondary stakeholders: based upon the level of engagement and interaction with the festival organisation, and their role within the festival itself occurring (Clarkson, 1995; Reid & Arcodia, 2002).

The literature review considered those studies concerned with developing festival and event stakeholder models, before initial stakeholder categories were defined. The identified primary and secondary stakeholder categories were then presented to two senior staff members at the Fringe and the following consultation process resulted in the development of the Fringe stakeholder model.

On reviewing the literature considering stakeholder models, it was apparent that approaches vary. Bowdin et al. (2006) present a model illustrating the relationships that between events and stakeholders. The event itself is central to this model with the stakeholders groups classified as: participants and spectators (supporting the event and being rewarded with entertainment); co-workers (who provide labour and support in return for payment and other rewards); the host organisation (reciprocal participation and support); the host community (impacts and context); sponsors (financial or in-kind support in return for acknowledgement and exposure to audiences); and finally media organisations (promoting the event in return for advertising revenue or editorial).

Adopting Clarkson's (1995) approach, Reid and Arcodia (2002: 480) apply stakeholder theory to the management of events, suggesting: "... the organisation is a system of stakeholder groups and a failure to retain their participation will result in the failure of the enterprise". They note that event management is a strategic process, differing from other organisational contexts in terms of the often limited time-spans of events. In managing successful events, it is essential to engage event stakeholders throughout the event planning process to gain community satisfaction and support for the event: resulting in competitive advantage.

As noted, Reid and Arcodia (2002) apply Clarkson's (1995) primary and secondary stakeholder model to the events industry. The essential primary event stakeholders are defined thus as: employees; volunteers; sponsors; suppliers; spectators; attendees; and participants. Secondary stakeholders are also important to the success and survival of the event but do not have the same direct impact upon the event as primary stakeholders. These stakeholders are classified therefore as: government; the host community; emergency services; general business; media and tourism organisations.

As noted, there have been a few studies made in relation to stakeholders of specific types of festivals and events. A festival stakeholder model is developed by Spiropoulos et al., (2006) where the stakeholders of the 20<sup>th</sup> Greek Festival of Sydney are identified and categorised in relation to their influence upon the strategic management and delivery of

the festival. Here, stakeholders are categorised according to their functional role so the model consists of: marketing stakeholders, including the festival content (product); venues (place); promotion; and the audience members (people attending). The second group is the festival's production stakeholders (the events occurring during the festival); and the final group is the administration stakeholders, composed of the management functions of human, financial and infrastructure resources.

Larson (2002) defines the stakeholder groups of a music festival that are related to the production and marketing functions of the festival. These are classified as the festival organiser; the music industry (of performers, bands and contractors); the local trade and industry; sponsors; public authorities; associations and clubs (participating venues)) and the media.

Getz et al., (2007) suggest that due to the nature of many festivals with many involved parties, it is difficult to map all stakeholders. The festival organiser, although considered the most powerful stakeholder, is often dependent upon other actors with stakes in the festival. In investigating the relative importance of the remaining stakeholders the authors categorise the key groups as: regulator; facilitator; co-producer; supplier; collaborator; audience; and the impacted.

Some festival and event stakeholder research emphasises the role and influence of stakeholders upon the festival or event brand, and its resulting success; and the development of event brands through marketing and stakeholder approaches (Getz et al., 2007; Merrilees et al., 2005). Existing research is not concerned however with the types of relationships that exist between festival and event stakeholders and the festival or event brand.

In addressing the development of event brands through a marketing approach, Merrilees et al., (2005) develop a stakeholder-based theoretical model in relation to event marketing. They note that Freeman's (1984) stakeholder approach should be adapted, both to consider the important role of primary stakeholders and to create a proactive tool to enhance stakeholder relationships. The resulting analysis and management of stakeholders may be applied to the development of more effective event brands. A qualitative approach is adopted within a case study of the Brisbane Goodwill Games, where the marketing manager of the event is asked to draw a stakeholder map identifying key stakeholders of the marketing department. The department itself is at the centre and the stakeholders deemed as most important to marketing the event are drawn closer to the centre. The resulting model provides an in-depth sense of the event marketing stakeholders, including: the games' public relations department (as co-members of the cooperative team); sponsors; ticketing agency; government tourism agencies; licensees; venues; athletes; public.

Considering the relationship between stakeholders and event brands from the perspective of influence, Mossberg and Getz (2006) examine fourteen festivals in Sweden and Canada in relation to how stakeholder brand ownership may influence the branding of

festivals. The authors argue that the involvement of key stakeholders, such as sponsors, in a festival's branding process is important.

Additionally, and of relevance to the Fringe, Mossberg and Getz (2006) consider the role of host city names and conclude that this does not appear to influence branding. It serves instead to distinguish festivals and position them geographically for attendees. This suggests that while the use of city names is a form of branding, it is incidental to the overall branding process. Furthermore in discussing event branding, Mossberg and Getz (2006) identify the lack of available academic research considering brand ownership and festivals. They note that in contrast to mainstream theories related to private organisations, in their context as non-profit organisations festivals differ. Further, within Europe and North America they suggest that non-profit-societies dominate the festival sector and this raises questions related to defining the ownership and branding of such festivals, as well as stakeholder involvement in the branding process.

In discussing ownership of festival brands, Mossberg and Getz (2006: 323) conclude that brand ownership may be considered as being either "single", or "diffuse", depending on the nature of the festival. Based upon these categories, it can be concluded that the Fringe is a non-profit-society-owned festival and therefore may be considered a single ownership brand.

Further, there is considerable sponsorship involvement with the Fringe brand: but not to the extent of sponsors of the Fringe assuming title or naming rights. This means the Fringe is not associated with any particular sponsor (Masterman & Wood, 2006). There are various other stakeholder influences however within the Fringe, and of particular note are: the independent venues; performing companies; promoters; audience members; funders; staff members and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society board members. It may be concluded therefore these stakeholders are important in relation to the Fringe brand.

In defining the primary and secondary stakeholder categories of the Fringe the findings of the stakeholder literature review, and in particular Reid and Arcodia's (2002) stakeholder model were applied directly to the Fringe as a festival.

Primary stakeholders of the Fringe were initially categorised therefore as: Fringe Society staff and board members; performing companies; venues; promoters; bookers; audience members; Scottish government agencies; Edinburgh City Council; Scottish Arts Council; Festivals Edinburgh; and sponsors.

Secondary stakeholder groups were: government; media; emergency services; tourism organisations and agencies; tourists and visitors to Edinburgh; the host community; Edinburgh's festivals; and general business in the city.

It is evident that these categories of primary and secondary stakeholders are informed by the definitions developed by Reid and Arcodia (2002), and the findings of Merrilees et al., (2005).

Following the development of the above initial stakeholder categories, these were presented to two senior staff at the Fringe. The resulting consultation process resulted in an informed production of a model and further discussion resulted in the development of the final stakeholder model.

## **Results**

As a result of the literature review and consultation process, as detailed above, the final Fringe primary and secondary stakeholder categories were proposed. These were used to develop the model.

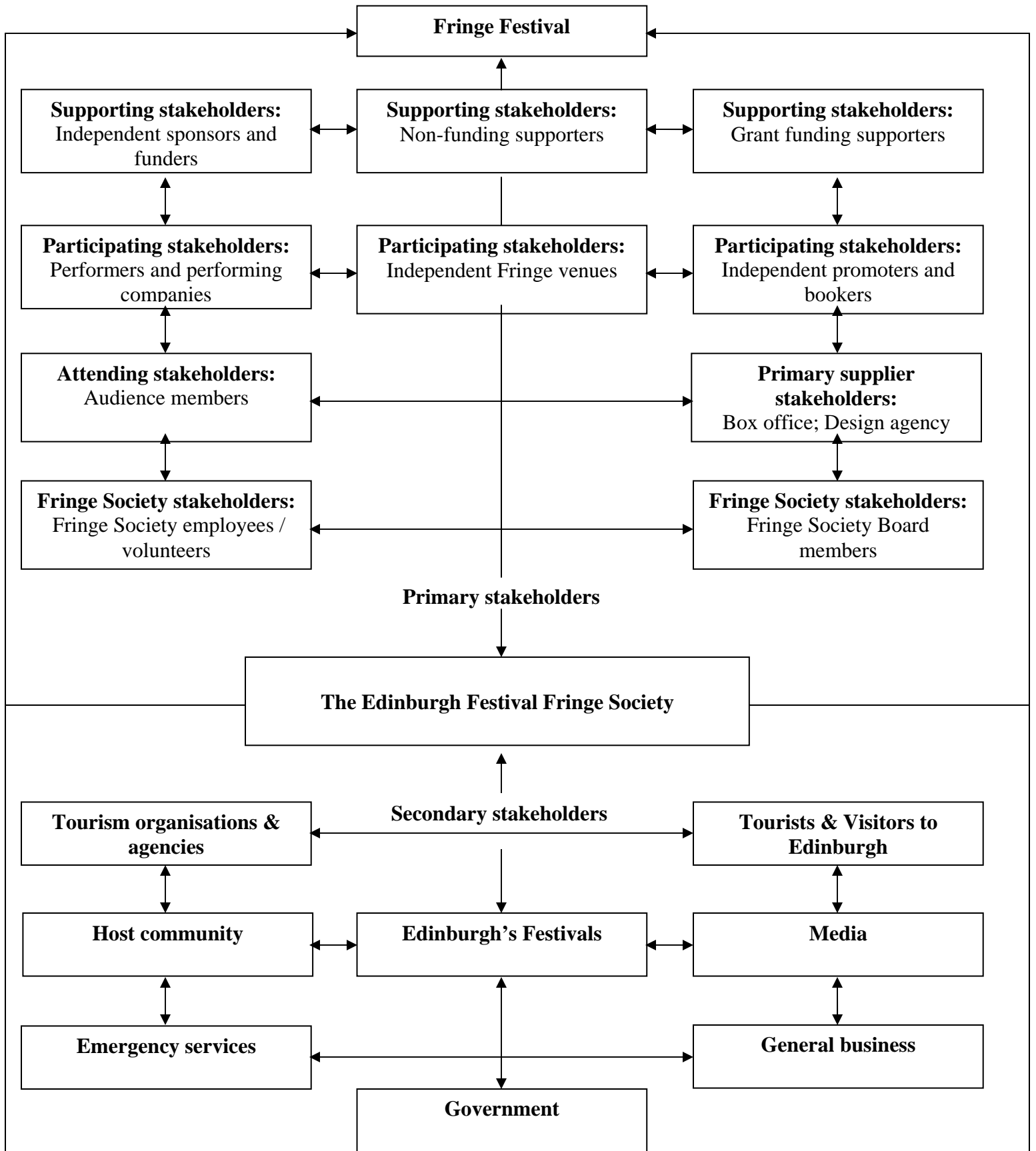
There were found to be five main categories of primary stakeholders and some groups could be included within more than one category. The Fringe primary stakeholder categories are as follows:

- Fringe society stakeholders: Fringe Society staff and volunteers; and Fringe Society Board members;
- Participating stakeholders: performing companies; performers; independent venues; promoters (including bookers, programmers, and talent scouts);
- Attending stakeholders: audience, including ticket buying public and other attendees. This category is notable for the number of overlapping stakeholder groups who are members of other categories, including performing companies, Fringe Society staff; members and venues;
- Supporting stakeholders: both financial and non-financial in nature, including grant funding supporters: Scottish Government; City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Arts Council and members of the Festivals steering group, including Festivals Edinburgh and Scottish Enterprise. This category also includes independent sponsors and funders;
- Primary supplier stakeholders: specifically the Fringe box office supplier; and programme design agency.

The final Fringe secondary stakeholder categories are:

- Government stakeholders: civic local and national, not directly involved in the Fringe;
- Media stakeholders: including local and national media: print, televised, radio and online;
- Emergency services stakeholders;
- Tourism organisations and agencies: including VisitScotland; and EventScotland;
- Tourists and visitors to Edinburgh: not directly participating in the Fringe.
- The host community;
- Edinburgh's Festivals: there are a further eleven city-wide festivals in Edinburgh's festival programme;
- General business in Edinburgh.

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## **Discussion**

It is important to note that the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, as the festival organisation, is central to the proposed stakeholder model and is integral to its stakeholder management approach. It is argued that as a successful festival the Fringe must incorporate all of its stakeholders within its strategic management process (Freeman, 1984; Reid & Arcodia, 2002).

Reid and Arcodia (2002) suggest that while participating primary stakeholder groups for many events are not mutually exclusive, there exists a need to differentiate amongst them. This is supported by Getz et al., (2007) in their assertion that stakeholders may assume multiple roles affecting the organisation in different ways.

Primary stakeholder categories of the Fringe are of particular interest to this study because of their engagement and interaction with the Fringe. The stakeholder model is applied to the development of a Fringe and stakeholder brand relationship typology. Of the five primary stakeholder categories defined, the role of each is considered in relation to their engagement with the Fringe.

### *Fringe Society stakeholders*

As Fringe stakeholder groups the Fringe staff and Festival Fringe Society members are considered primary in nature. They contribute directly to the Fringe and are influenced by the decisions of the Fringe as the event organisation as well as being in the organisational decision-making process (Freeman, 1984; Clarkson, 1995; Reid & Arcodia, 2002).

It is suggested that an event cannot function without the support and participation of employees (Reid & Arcodia, 2002). For an event to be effective it is vital for the vision and philosophy of the event to be shared by all of the team from the managers to the temporary staff (Bowdin et al., 2006). The Fringe operates with a core staff structure of sixteen staff members working across five management functions of: administration; finance; participant services; external affairs; and marketing and sponsorship. In addition to this core structure, prior to, and during the Fringe the staff numbers increase significantly as more than one hundred temporary and seasonal paid staff, and a small number of volunteers are employed by the Fringe Society (Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2010).

The Edinburgh Fringe Society was formed in 1958. This is the charitable and limited company which elects a board of trustees responsible for overseeing the work of the Fringe staff. The Fringe Society determines the Fringe's open access policy which is settled through the annual election of the trustees and Board of Directors. The Fringe Society today is responsible therefore for ensuring the Fringe is continued to be managed in this way (Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2010).

### *Primary supplier stakeholders*

Supplier stakeholders are identified as primary in nature when the goods or services they supply are provided directly to the festival or event (Reid & Arcodia, 2002). In the case of the Fringe there are two groups identified as being primary: the box office software

developers; and the design agency contracted to the Fringe. As a small organisation, the Fringe does not have the internal staffing structure to support these vital functions and it is notable that these suppliers also provide the function of additional staffing to the Fringe in these areas.

#### *Participating and attending stakeholders*

The identified groups within the participating and attending primary stakeholder categories have varying levels of involvement. The performing companies and independent venues are involved with producing and presenting Fringe events and performances. The involvement of these particular groups forms the basis therefore of the Fringe programme. These primary stakeholder groups in particular may be regarded as having various economic and social impacts upon the host community (Delamere, 2001; Delamere, Wankel & Hinch, 2002; Fredline, 2000; Quinn, 2005). This is considered to also be the case for the primary stakeholder groups of audience and other attendees.

#### *Supporting stakeholders*

Of vital consideration are the supporting stakeholders: the category which includes the funders of the Fringe and those non-financial supporters that are involved in the Fringe. These are groups such as the grant funding agencies and the steering committees that support the Fringe. This category of primary stakeholders has notable overlaps in its included stakeholder groups. It includes organisations such as Festivals Edinburgh: the umbrella organisation responsible for the strategic development of Edinburgh's festivals; the Scottish Arts Council; Scottish Enterprise; and various departments of the City of Edinburgh Council with involvement in arts development and the city's branding strategy. It is suggested that these groups are vital to festivals and events. The non-profit organisational model that festival organisations such as the Fringe adopt requires the addressing of various challenges associated with networking; resource acquisition; and financial viability (Getz, Andersson & Larson, 2007).

As discussed previously it is important to consider the stakeholder saliency attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency in the definition of primary stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Getz, 2007; Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001; Mitchell et al., 1997). It is suggested that sponsor stakeholders may be illustrative of the stakeholder saliency attributes. The sponsorship of festivals has the ability to increase brand awareness of festivals and increase perceptions of a positive brand image (Coughlan & Mules, 2001; Gwinner, 1997; Reid & Arcodia, 2002). Mossberg and Getz (2006) further argue that the involvement of key stakeholders, such as sponsors, in a festival's branding process is important to increasing positive brand equity.

### **Conclusions**

The development of the Fringe stakeholder model concludes by presenting the definitions of primary and secondary stakeholder categories, which was the aim of the present study. It is intended that the construction of this model, as detailed above, will inform the development of a Fringe-stakeholder brand relationship typology conceptual model.

The brand relationship proposition suggests that within situations of brand and consumer self-image congruence, brands and consumers form relationships (Fournier, 1998; Fournier & Yao, 1997; Jamal & Goode, 2001; Kates, 2000). Additionally, imbuing brands with personal meanings involves considering brand image and personality and the development of brand relationships, or perceiving "... the brand as a friend" (Elliot and Percy, 2007: 64). It is argued thus that consumers possess a portfolio of brands with which they have brand relationships. Further, they display fluctuating levels of loyalty, trustworthiness and congruence to these brands. By their nature, primary stakeholders of the Fringe are engaged and involved with the Fringe as a festival brand.

### *Implications of results*

It is anticipated that the significance of the present study in its contribution to academic knowledge is the development of a conceptual framework which defines the Fringe stakeholders.

The proposed stakeholder model provides an extension to existing festival and event stakeholder research by providing a unique theoretical framework defining the primary and secondary stakeholders of the Fringe. This conceptual model may be applicable to other arts festivals in defining significant stakeholder categories. Implications of this for practice include the potential of its application to the examination of the roles and significance of the primary and secondary stakeholders of arts festivals within strategic and operational activities.

Further research undertaken in this PhD study defines the Fringe brand image; and a series of Fringe-stakeholder brand relationship types. Collectively, the findings may prove useful in application to the branding practices of festival organisations. This research seeks ultimately thus to provide a better understanding of how festival brand image may be applied to appeal to those significant consumers of primary stakeholders.

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