Thank you for allowing me to proofread your writing. It was an interesting and enjoyable read, I have gained insight into this fascinating international opportunity for young musicians in the Chinese context.

I left all quotations unedited, since they are the participants’ words, as transcribed by you. However, when there was an apparent error I commented on it.

The edit concerned simplifying your sentences. I edited singular/plural use of the word ‘impact(s)’. More common usage is the singular use, though at times I kept to your plural use. Titles of festivals were changed to be not italic. There was some confusion about when a phrase appears with and without a hyphen: ‘age-range’/‘age range’ ‘open-mind’/‘open mind’/’open-minded’ ‘short-period’/‘short period’/‘short lasting’ ‘co-operation’/‘cooperation’ The prefix ‘multi’ used without a hyphen was changed to ‘multi-artforms’ because 11 times it was used with a hyphen (e.g. ‘multi-layers’, ‘multi-dimension’, ‘multi-faceted’).

One abbreviation, YMCG, was defined the same way in five places. I changed it to the first occurrence only, and again for the narrative in the conclusion.

One abbreviation has not been defined: GDPR

The abbreviation GSO: defined as ‘Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra’ was written out in full after it was already defined. I changed it to GSO.

Best wishes for your academic results!

**Abstract**

The global festivals and events sector has grown significantly since the late twentieth century. However, much research of the field pays attention to its external impact, lacking focus on its core stakeholders: participating musicians – particularly young musicians. At the same time, it can be observed that there is a narrow understanding of the career of emerging musicians. Therefore, this study examines the impact of participating in music festivals on the career development of young musicians, using a case study on the Youth Music Culture Guangdong (YMCG) festival in Guangzhou, China. The research attempts to address the gap in academic literature on festivals as well as optimise career awareness for young musicians. Collected data were analysed through thematic analysis after interviews with both festival organisers and young musician participants. The research findings reveal that the music festival has impacted young musicians’ career in a variety of ways: enlightenment, expanding sustainable networks, collaboration and trust. Although the impact has not yet affected young musicians directly in achieving their career goals, it can be observed that participating in the YMCG has long-term and subtle influences on their future career. This study also calls for further in-depth research on the topic, by undertaking larger samples that investigate whether the impact argued above can directly affect the career development of young musicians as time passes.

1. **Introduction**

Since the late twentieth century, the global festivals and events industry has developed significantly. Festivals as cultural celebration events can not only promote cultures at the local, regional and global level (Cudny, 2016), but can also be used as attractions to draw an influx of visitors. As one of the vital stakeholders of music festivals (Getz et al., 2007), participating musicians are core content suppliers in such events. Due to the prevalence of festivals, a range of published research is available around festivals and events management. However, there is ‘almost no research available which examines the impact of festivals on them [artists and musicians]’ (Comunian, 2017, p. 333). Moreover, with the insight from the music industry, Beeching (2005, p. 26) argues that ‘emerging artists often have a very narrow view of success’, because there is a lack of research on how music careers begin for musicians in the early stages of their careers (Bennett, 2007). Most recently, research by López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2020) claims that young musicians still have a narrow understanding of their career opportunities in the music industry. They further point out that limited exposure for young musicians has led to the restricted development of their career. It indicates that young musicians’ career development has long been an unexplored area, and of great interest, in the field of music education. The scarcity of research on festivals and their impact on the career development of young musicians caught my attention.

The purpose of this research is to examine the mystery of young musicians’ career development within the context of music festivals. By using a case study on the YMCG, this dissertation attempts to investigate which kind of impact the participation in music festivals has on the career development of young musicians. Alongside this, it attempts to analyse how festivals inspire young musicians and enrich their career awareness. This research provided a valuable opportunity to address an academic gap regarding music festivals and their place in the career development of musicians. It is also hoped that this research will give young musicians greater inspiration for their future career trajectory.

In order to gain insights into the topic, this research uses a case study on the YMCG. This is an international classical music festival established in China in 2017, and founded by world-leading cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who received 18 Grammy Awards. The reason for choosing a classical music festival is that the potential for career development has been highlighted by Beeching (2005), stating that many emerging classical musicians may only see success as a soloist touring with orchestras or a world-famous recording artist. However, this pathway is not possible for everyone. Therefore, this research seeks to investigate whether festivals can decline young classical musicians’ stereotype of their professional development. In addition, the YMCG is distinct from most music festivals due to the fact that it offers musical education programmes to young musicians, which connects with our theme of career development. The YMCG offers orchestra and chamber music performances and training, Silkroad workshops (improvisation study), seminar discussions and even a one-to-one talk section with Yo-Yo Ma himself. Considering the diverse programming, this case study may lead to multi-layered career implications for young musicians. Due to its innovation concepts and its influence in the music sector, the YMCG reached the top of the list in 2017’s China Top Ten Music News (YMCG, n.d.). Although the YMCG has only been established recently, its potential impact and media attention show that it can be a valuable case study. Further details of the case study will be demonstrated in the chapter on methodology.

This research intends to undertake a qualitative approach to explore the following questions:

* How does participation in music festivals impact on the career development of young musicians?
* How do organisers of the music festivals offer career support to young musicians through their festivals?
* What impact do music festivals have on the career development of young musicians?

The remaining part of the research is composed of five chapters as follows. In order to understand the crucial role of festival participation, the background into the rapid growth of the festivals and events industry is explained. The following chapter, the literature review, has been divided into four sub-sections. Firstly, the terms used in this dissertation are clarified. Secondly, there is an overview of current research on festivals, including the economic impact and audience-relevant topics. Thirdly, there is an evaluation of the available studies about the impact of festivals on artists and musicians. Finally, drawing on music education literature, the recent occupational situation of young musicians is examined, in order to rationalise the research topic. The fourth chapter concerns the methodology used, and also covers the limitations and ethical issues of the research. Semi-structured interviews will be involved with two groups of interviewees: festival organisers and young musician participants in the chosen case study. Subsequently, collected data will be analysed through thematic analysis with an interpretive perspective.

The findings and discussion are presented in chapter five, focusing on the three key impacts: 1) enlightenment (through festival programmes, tutors and peers), 2) expanding sustainable network and 3) collaboration and trust. Lastly, chapter six concludes the research and considers the limitations as well as calling for future studies on this topic.

1. **Background**

This section is to demonstrate why festivals have grown significantly in recent decades and how important they are to participating musicians. The prevailing phenomenon of the festivals and events industry can be understood from two perspectives: socio-economic and psychological. Firstly, along with the development of modern society, developed countries, and a few developing countries, started to transform from industrial to post-industrial societies, which means they emphasised the role of the service sector, including those related to culture (Cudny, 2016). This change thus enhances the role of culture, as well as the status of festivals, because festivals have been defined as an indivisible component of culture (Yeoman, 2004). Moreover, Schulze (1992) called contemporary societies experience societies, whose citizens tend to pursue experience, whether as lifelong or an impressive one-off experience (in: Cudny, 2016, p. 30). Subsequently, the notion of the ‘experience economy’ was put forward by Pine and Gilmore (1998). This new type of economic category is identified as a fourth economic offering, after commodities, goods and services. It aims to offer an experience, or a memorable moment, to people rather than actual material goods (ibid.). Due to customers increasingly demanding more than simply being satisfied with a specific product or service, businesses need to design impressive events in order to survive in competitive markets and gain substantial profits. Organising festivals is one of these ways, as festivals go beyond people’s daily routine, and aim to provide engaging, unusual and unique experiences for participants. This is the reason that Getz (2008) argues that the accelerated emergence of festivals is a derivation of the experience economy. A festival’s characteristics strongly match the feature of the latest economic category (experience economy), thereby leading to rapid growth of festivals.

Secondly, taking the perspective of psychology, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs also relates to the flourishing festivals and events sector. This theory anticipated people’s needs by outlining five hierarchical stages, namely physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1943) (see figure 1). When the demand for the previous stage has been achieved to a certain level, people seek the needs from higher up the scale (Jerome, 2013). In recent decades, a rising number of people have overcome the struggle with physiological and safety needs and are directed forward to the stage of love and belonging needs. In connection with festivals, delivering a sense of belonging is an important consideration, since festivals reflect religious beliefs as well as local, regional and global culture (Cudny, 2016). Gibson and Stewart note the importance of ‘[festivals’] emphasis on celebrating, promoting or exploring some aspect of local culture, or being an unusual point of convergence for people with a given cultural activity, or of a specific sub-cultural identification’ (2009, p. 6). Thus, participating in festivals is a way of satisfying people’s need for belonging. In other words, the needs of people have encouraged the growth in the number of festivals.

 

Figure 1. *Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.*

A combination of incentives has led to the flourishing of festivals and their growing importance. This trend has even initiated the concept of ‘festivalisation’, which means reconfiguring regular events into festival form (Négrier, 2015, p. 19). It also refers to the fact that some organisers or institutions combine parts of their programmes under a specific theme, uniting in time and space to establish a festival. It is important to note that the term festivalisation ‘can be taken to refer to the role and influence of festivals on the societies that host and stage them – both direct and indirect, and in both the short and the longer term’ (Roche, 2011, p. 127). This influence can be positive and negative. Acknowledging the variable impacts of festivals on multiple issues, it is crucial to study festival-related disciplines.

Under the trend of festivalisation, music festivals are one of the most significant categories in the festivals and events sector. According to the data of *Statista*, a leading statistics provider covering over 170 industries globally, there were 4.9 million people attending music festivals in the UK in 2018 (Statista, 2019a). Glastonbury Music Festival was the largest music festival in the UK with an audience capacity of 210,000 in 2019 (Statista, 2020). In the attempt to maintain loyalty and continuously attract spectators, the participating musicians play a crucial role. Without their work and contribution, festivals will lose their content suppliers, leading to lower audience attendance: 29% of festivalgoers listed enjoying music as their main reason for attending (Statista, 2019b). From the theoretical standpoint, most scholars have identified participating artists as being one of the most important stakeholders of festivals (Reid and Arcodia, 2002; Getz et al., 2007). When taking the perspective of festival ecological theory, each component within the stakeholder network has ‘complex interdependencies’ (Markussen et al., 2011; Holden, 2015). More importantly, a festival is the consequence of complex interaction between multi-dimension stakeholders (Larson, 2009). Due to this decisive position that musicians hold, and their high level of interaction with other stakeholders, it is therefore important to analyse the impact of festivals on them. Examining the interaction between festivals and participating musicians can also develop our understanding of festival management.

1. **Literature Review**

The fact that almost no published research focuses on the participating festival artists (Comunian, 2017) highlights the value of this study. However, this fact also increased the difficulties of structuring a theoretical framework. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it is necessary to analyse, synthesis and critically evaluate available literature in a systematic way, in order to rationalise the research and address the research questions above. (should I briefly introduce the sub-sections below?)

**3.1 Definitions**

Before further diving into the available literature, it is essential to clarify the meaning of festivals. Festivals are a division of events, identified by Donald Getz’s typology criterion as ‘cultural celebration’ (2008, p. 404). However, Cudny (2014) claims that festivals go beyond cultural celebration, as they also involve various themes, such as science and technology. A more comprehensive definition of festivals is provided by Alessandro Falassi. He describes that,

‘[f]estival commonly means a periodically recurrent social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees all members of the whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing a worldview’ (Falassi, 1987, p. 2).

As timed, themed, space-appointed events, festivals not only interact with audiences, but more importantly present the subsequent result of such interaction and the contributions of the multi-faceted stakeholders, such as artists, funders, directors (Larson, 2009).

As stated in one catalogue, music festivals can be defined as local scenes that take place in a delimited space ‘offering a collective opportunity for performers and fans to experience music and other lifestyle elements’ (Dowd et al., 2004, p. 149). The range can cover popular music, jazz, folk music, R&B, classical music, opera and theatre. As this research concentrates on classical music festivals, it is essential to refer to one of the most successful and well known classical music festivals worldwide – theBBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in London. This is an annual for eight-week summer festival with daily orchestral music concerts and other classical music-related activities. ‘Proms’ is short for Promenade concerts which means audiences are free to stroll around when the orchestra is playing. However, some of the classical music festivals go beyond performing, also offering musical training, such as the Verbier Festival in Switzerland and the Aspen Music Festival and School in the United States. They both focus on orchestra and chamber music performances and coaching, but the case study of this research – the YMCG – not only involves orchestra and chamber music ensembles but also includes improvisation, seminar discussions and one-to-one conversation with the artistic director Yo-Yo Ma.

**3.2** **The impact of festivals and music festivals**

Although the field of festivals and music festivals has blossomed, much of the existing studies have tended to focus primarily on their external impact, such as the economy and audience-relevant topics. This section will provide an overview of the recent debates in the literature, excluding the impact on participating artists and musicians, which will be discussed in detail in the following section.

It is evident that music tourism is a significant and rising element within the tourism sector (Gibson and Connell, 2005), thus there is a large volume of published studies examining the economic impact of music festivals. For instance, Tohmo (2005) studies the economic impact of cultural events on local economies by examining the case study of the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival in Finland. In his view, this festival has a substantial impact on regional tax revenues through the annual subsidy of the local municipality. In addition, the visitors consume accommodation, food and others economic sectors. In the same vein, Bracealente et al. (2011) point out that the influence of the Umbria Jazz musical festival has a positive outcome for the local economy without a doubt. A successful music festival acts as a ‘compass’ for orienting the distribution of public services to potential cultural activities and it also develops democratic government in the region, expanding the positive economic impacts further (ibid.). Hosting festivals not only extends the tourist season (Derrett, 2004), but also creates jobs for citizens (Bowdin et al., 2011). Furthermore, large-scale festivals have acted as a catalyst for urban regeneration, enhancing the image of the host city upgrading community infrastructure and transport systems (O’Sullivan and Jackson, 2002; Derrett, 2004). The improvement of city infrastructures can benefit inhabitants to a large extent. A series of positive impacts have promoted the trend of ‘festivalisation’ and have accelerated the generation of festivals. However, there is almost no research concerning how much income the festivals bring to the musicians themselves. Although this research does not primarily examine the economic profits of musicians, it is shown that there is very limited research on festival musicians. In an attempt to enrich the research around the impact of festivals on musicians, this dissertation starts with an investigation into how participating in music festivals affects the career development of musicians.

Although many studies claim festivals lead to a growth in the local economy, there are other authors who question the usefulness of this view. By recognizing the economic benefits of festivals, there are a growing number of ‘so-called’ festivals which primarily use the form of festivals as a marketing tool for attracting visitors in order to increase profits (Quinn, 2006). Furthermore, O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002) challenge the sustainability of those economic increases and argue that 'while festival tourism may have the potential to make a valuable contribution to a locality, it does not automatically make a significant contribution to sustainable local economic development' (p. 338). A similar finding was reported by Crompton and Mckay (1994), who found people often overestimate the economic profits festivals have brought on. This can partly be attributed to the fact that some of the festivalgoers are often local residents (Mason and Beaumont-Kerridge, 2004). Because their consumption has always been a part of the city's GDP, the additional contribution of the festival has not generated a significant growth. More importantly, the local government may invest considerably in the festival, in areas such as transport and infrastructure upgrade. If the festival-led urban regeneration has not thoughtfully matched the long-term strategies of the host city, it may not fundamentally benefit the community, indeed it may even waste the government budget (Gibson, 2013). Despite Uysal and Gitleson (1994) defining festivals as traditional events staged to increase the tourism appeal to potential visitors, if festival managers purely pursue this economic growth without balancing the festival-tourism relationship, the result could question the continuation of a festival and even prejudice the long-term development of tourism in general (Quinn, 2006).

A growing body of literature has investigated the issues around audience. Bowen and Daniels (2005) examine the motivation of music festival audiences’ attendance and investigate whether music is indeed the main driving force. They found that audience motivation can be classified into four patterns: ‘just being social’, ‘enrichment over music’, ‘the music matters’ and ‘love it all’. As it is shown that the majority of audiences emphasise the importance of music, in turn it increases the status of musicians. Packer and Ballantyne (2010) concentrate on the positive psychological and well-being impact on young audiences aged 18–29 years old in the context of music festivals. They argue that audiences feel more positive about themselves after participating in the music festival. For some festivalgoers ‘the music festival experience was not only meaningful in itself but gave meaning to the rest of their lives’ (ibid., p. 178). Although the target group and topic are different, the sample age range of that 2010 research is almost the same as for this study. Therefore, it is valuable to examine whether the positive outcomes in young audiences will also reflect on young musicians, further influencing their career understanding and development.

Furthermore, the research by Liu (2019) examines whether the interaction experience in music festivals can influence young audiences and benefit future audience development, the case study used was also the YMCG, as in this dissertation research. Although the YMCG is a valuable example of music festivals, this is the only one available research to investigate this case study. The findings of Liu’s research show that powerful short period interaction can transform into positive long-term energy in targeted audiences and thereafter effect their daily behaviour. Due to previous and existing audience satisfaction, more spectators engage in the future. However, Liu does not offer an adequate explanation of what exactly impacts the audiences, nor are the daily behaviours explained. Although we are using the same case study, my dissertation research intends to examine the YMCG from another perspective, which is the young musician participants.

**3.3** **Artists and musicians in festivals**

The studies above presented the external impact of festivals from the perspectives of the economy and audience; however, all those implications are built upon the contribution of artists and musicians who are content providers and the core of festivals. Significantly, participating musicians are identified as one of most important stakeholders of festivals (Getz et al., 2007). Yet, very few publications have taken into account the impact of festivals on participating artists or musicians, and none concentrate on young musicians.

Comunian (2017) emphasises the important role of festivals to emerging artists by using a case study of the Fuse Festival in the UK. This is a weekend of street and performing arts events by local, regional and international artists. Comunian characterises festivals as ‘temporary clusters’ that act as a knowledge exchange and network development platform in supporting and commissioning artists’ works. During the festival, artists and young companies not only try out arts experiments but also interact and learn with peers. Although this is approved, this article defines the festival as a platform for artists to interact and do arts experimentations but does not consider whether the festival itself has inspirational implications on artists’ careers and thoughts. At the same time, she does not take into account whether the interactive network within the festival is short lasting, due to the ‘temporary’ nature of festivals.

Glow and Caust (2010) have similar findings as Comunian (2017). They argue that the Adelaide Fringe Festival plays a critical role as being a ‘launching pad’, which mean it is a ‘facilitator of new work dedicated to creating opportunities for artists to practice their craft’, by providing artists with affordable, open access, inclusive spaces (2010, p. 413). This is an annual open access multi-artform festival, including dance, music, comedy, film, and theatre. Both studies above found that those artists agree that participating in the festival brings a number of positive short-term outcomes, including gaining recognition from peers, building reputation, increased opportunities to promote their artworks.

In the follow-up study, Caust and Glow (2011) highlight that the Adelaide Fringe Festival fosters an entrepreneurial mindset among participating artists. However, their findings show that such entrepreneurialism is not primarily driven by the maximisation of profit, but a ‘focus on the development of their craft, and the cultural value of their work’ (ibid, p. 1). However, some scholars, such as Becker (2007) and Rivers (2010), argue that ‘entrepreneur’ is not a suitable term to describe artists, because this word is an outcome of commercial discipline. Yet Thompson and Doherty (2006, p. 361) claim that ‘entrepreneurship is a way of thinking and behaving that has opportunity as its heart. Entrepreneurs recognise, create, engage and exploit opportunities.’ Therefore, despite the challenge for artists to gain a satisfying income instantly, by developing abilities like entrepreneurship in the festival*,* these participating artists have the potential to gain long-term and sustainable influences, as well as ongoing income. It is interesting that research beings to point to the long-term impact of artists participating in a festival, focusing on the development of an entrepreneurial mindset.

Looking at one music festival specifically, the Yaddo Music Festival(1932-1952) emerged along with the musical trend in the early to mid-twentieth century in the United States. The festival was established due to the impetus of the American premier composer Aaron Copland. The purpose of this festival was to provide a platform for composers to perform their compositions, which aims to promote contemporary music rather than struggling with playing the works of the Baroque, Classical and Romantic Period (Dowed et al., 2004). Many composers who took part in Yaddo would later be featured in the performances of major symphony orchestras, higher education curricula and recordings (ibid.). The idea of ​​providing a platform for participating artists to release new works is consistent with the purpose of the Adelaide Fringe Festival. It appears that their participation in festivals impacted on their future careers to a large extent.

However, there are several major limitations and differences between the available literature and the research of this dissertation topic. Firstly, although research around the Yaddo is focused on the music festival specifically, this festival was discontinued in 1953. Due to the outdated nature of this case study, it may lead to irrelevant outcomes. In order to match modern society, more recent and further studies of music festivals are needed. Secondly, the research above does not focus its main attention on the younger generation. However, for emerging graduates in the early stage of their career, their professional development is even harder than others (Beeching, 2005; Comunian et al., 2014). As regards getting a job as a musician, López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2020) highlight the critical role of having a recommended network of contacts within the industry. However, emerging musicians’ networks are relatively limited. With the purpose of providing valuable career guidelines, the need for specialised research for young musicians is urgent. Thirdly, those studies concentrated on artists and composers rather than musicians. The term ‘musicians’ in this research refers specifically to those who are instrumental music performers, such as violinists and cellists. The term ‘composer’ refers to people who specialise in composing musical works, instead of performing them. Although musicians and composers are included in the terminology ‘artists’, artist is a vague term in that it describes occupations across a broad range, with the inclusion of art, design, painting, dance, music and theatre (Karttunen, 1998). However, the different research objectives may lead to different outcomes, because the feature and career pathways of each occupation are diverse. Significantly, whether or not the Adelaide Fringe Festival or Yaddo Music Festival differ from the case study of this dissertation, the important issue is that the YMCG aims to offer music training. For young musicians, it is not only a performance platform, but also one striving to support the progress of younger generations under established musicians’ coaching that may have in-depth implications on young musicians’ careers.

**3.4** **Career understanding of young musicians**

As the research target is to investigate young musicians, it is necessary to review their current occupational situation by drawing on the music education literature.Bennett and Bridgstock (2015) highlight the urgent need for career preview for both students and graduates from the music and dance sector. Several experts (Myers, 2016; López-Íñiguez and Bennett, 2020) note that a number of emerging musicians have either a vague idea of their professional pathway or little understanding of the job opportunities in the music sector. Some may only define success as being a renowned performer with a performance career like Jacqueline du Pré, but do not consider whether this pathway is realistic for them as individuals (Beeching, 2005). This view can be partly attributed to the characteristics of performance training, where practice and rehearsals are relatively isolated from the world (López-Íñiguez and Bennett, 2020). Such a narrow view is also perhaps affected by media-influenced impressions about the world of work, leading to a rigid career identity and understanding of young musicians (Bennett and Bridgstock, 2015). Therefore, in the words of Beeching, ‘musicians unconsciously limit their career options, and their satisfaction and fulfilment in their work lives’ (2005, p. 26). Thus, it is imperative to undertake research and bring out relevant strategies to expand the career understanding of young musicians, so that they can contribute to the sustainability and flourishing of the music industry.

Comunian et al. (2014) tried to address the career issue of young musicians, by considering the role of higher education degrees in initiating and supporting the careers of emerging musicians. Their findings show that, overall, music graduates are aware of the difficulties of entering music and performing arts careers. Although some interviewees appreciated the opportunities offered by the university and career services, it is difficult for the career services that work at such large universities to know exactly what the requirements of entering a music career are. Most information is passed on by the personal tutor, such as the singing teacher or instrumental teacher. Comunian et al. (ibid) point out that there seem to be more professional development opportunities available for students within their degree, such as a study scheme to play in a professional orchestra, rather than post-graduation. However, for those who are not pursuing a performance career pathway, there is a lack of direction in the career opportunities offered by universities. Thus, students have to learn from personal experience outside of the classroom.

Although higher education helps to support the careers of musician students to some extent, the effects are not reflected in individuals. In other words, this highlights the necessity of addressing the career issue from another perspective. Significantly, Bennett and Bridgstock (2015) found that there are ‘mismatches between educational provision and sectoral requirements’, resulting in costs in many ways for music graduates (p. 274). Therefore, participating in a music festival may be a practical tool that acts as a transition for young musicians. Through participating in a festival, music graduates can integrate the knowledge acquired at university with a real life industry awareness, thereby gaining a proper understanding of the requirements of the employment sector. Meanwhile, as festivals offer multi-dimensional activities, it is valuable to examine whether festivals can also help to build the career awareness of music graduates who are not primarily aiming to be performers. In line with this idea, Pike (2019) encourages emerging musicians to gain exposure in community contexts and the music industry. Such exposure can improve graduates’ skills to address cultural and social challenges (Myers, 2016). In this context, festivals can be regarded as one of the forms of community where young musicians can meet and collaborate with peers, and develop their career awareness. However, we do not know exactly what their impact is in terms of their career progression, further research is needed.

In summary, much of the literature on festivals and music festivals pays particularly attention to the economic impact and audience-relevant issues. However, there are very limited studies that have investigated the impact of festivals on participating artists. Although those researchers point out the function of festivals as platforms for artists to launch their work and interact with peers, they do not consider whether the programmes of festivals can stimulate artists' awareness of future career development. Meanwhile, the different targeted objects may lead to a distinction in the research findings, because each occupation has a different career pathway. By examining the literature on music education, a number of scholars underline that emerging musicians and students have a narrow understanding of their career pathway, which emphasises the need for this research. Although higher education offers some support for students, the outcomes are not reflected on everyone. To address the issue of career development, participating in music festivals may be a practical tool for enriching young musicians’ occupational understanding, possibly affecting their future career development. Thus, the dissertation intends to study and draw conclusions from the kinds of impact music festivals have on young musicians’ career development. Also, the intention is to consider whether music festivals are not only a platform for interaction but also have an educational influence and inspire emerging musical careers.

1. **Methodology**

By undertaking a single case study, this research will adopt a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews, evaluating collected data through thematic analysis. The use of a case study offers an opportunity ‘to reveal ethnographic texture and cultural nuance’ (Gibson, 2013, p. 141). The YMCG was chosen as a case study for this research due to its multi-faceted programmes, its increasing reputation in the music sector and the fact that it is devoted to the younger generation which coincides with the theme of this research topic. The establishment of YMCG was facilitated by its artistic director Yo-Yo Ma, who is a world-renowned Chinese American cellist. He serves as a United Nations Messenger of Peace as well as having performed for eight American presidents. Since 2017, this festival has taken place annually, for around ten days, in Guangzhou, China. It is presented by Guangdong Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism and organized jointly by the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra (GSO) and Xinghai Concert Hall (YMCG, n.d.). Globally candidate musicians between 18 and 35 years old audition by tutor group, making up by more than twentieth internationally renowned musicians and educators. Each selected musician will receive a full scholarship which covers the tuition fee, accommodation and meals. They will form the YMCG symphony orchestra and several ensemble groups to commence coaching, improvisation training, seminar discussions and public performances. Using music as a key and culture as a link, the YMCG aims to connect across cultures and create artistic and human trust (YMCG, 2017).

**4.1 Data collection**

A major advantage of the qualitative approach is that it provides an in-depth understanding of people’s interpretation of a specific issue. As the social world is constructed on human behaviour and attitudes (Gaskell, 2000), the value of interviews is highlighted. Because of this human-oriented approach, the ‘emphasis on interviewees’ own perspective’ (Bryman, 2016, p. 466) enables the collection of the actual language spoken by interviewees. More importantly, the research questions of this study aim to gain a precise view of how the festival is perceived as impacting on young musicians’ career development, rather than pursing numerical data. The use of semi-structured interviews not only offers an effective way for interviewees to present their own opinions by asking open-ended questions (Saldana, 2011; Bryman, 2016), but also encourages the researcher to keep an open mind when collecting various information. In doing so, additional and unexpected data may arise, which could enrich the research findings and lead to a more comprehensive conclusion. Through a prepared list of predetermined questions, the interviewer can make sure all interviews stay on the right track and that the required range of data are collected. Although the order of questions may differ during interviewing, the interviewer aims to make each interviewee feel as comfortable as possible, which should benefit the fluency of conversation needed for data collection.

The identified interviewees have been divided into two different groups: two organisers of the YMCG and five outstanding young participating musicians aged between 18 and 30 years old, all studying in higher education institutes or having recently graduated less than five years ago. Musicians of this age are in the relatively early stages of their careers, therefore the study is able to examine the issue mentioned in the literature review – namely how participating in a music festival can inspire and influence emerging musicians in their careers. A small sample was chosen because of the limited scope and tight timing of the dissertation. However, through collecting and discussing the information from both parties of the festival, the researcher gains a better understanding of the YMCG and how the festival intends to offer career support for participants. As well as this, the study analyses what young musicians have obtained from their festival participation and how these outcomes impacted on their future occupational development.

Through interviewing festival organisers, the research can involve the original purpose of hosting the YMCG and what career development support does the festival aims to deliver to all young musical participants. Despite the fact that the personal contact details of both organisers was not publicly available, the researcher was able to contact the interviewees and receive their permission to interview them, having been a music participant in YMCG 2019.

As young musicians are the main targeted subject of this research, it is imperative to hear their opinions. As with the festival organisers, these five participants were invited using the researcher’s established network. In order to diminish the concern of sample reliability and validity in qualitative research (Morse et al., 2002), the selected young musician interviewees are of different ages and nationalities, from different educational backgrounds, at different stages of their career and playing different instruments. One of the interviewees has participated in the YMCG every year since the festival was established, his voice is strongly representative of the perspective of YMCG participants. Another interviewee, Kenji Kusakawa, is a Japanese amateur violinist who majors in architectural engineering and recently opened a businesses in Japan (he opted to be fully identified in the research). His experience and multiple identities offers us another dimension to examine whether participating in the music festival may inspire career development in other professional areas. Such sampling selection aims to have a comprehensive view of how the festival can impact on young musicians, whether professional or amateur. Although the researcher knew the interviewees and had participated in the same festival, the individuals have varying opinions and understanding of the subject. To clarify, the perceptions of all individuals differ from those of the researcher to a large extent, so the relationship does not affect the outcome of this research. But as this potential issue is noted, a degree of reflectivity and self-awareness is needed to ensure reliability in the research.

All interviews were conducted remotely via Facebook, WeChat and Skype, due to the geographical separation with interviewees. In addition, the uncertain situation of COVID-19, did not affect the data collection process. Asking participants to be interviewed in a place they are familiar with can also make them feel more comfortable and relaxed. Interviews were conveyed using English, Mandarin and Cantonese, based on the preference of each interviewee. Using the familiar language of participants helps to ensure they are able to express the exact meaning of their thoughts.

**4.2 Data analysis**

Thematic analysis was the selected approach to data evaluation and analysis, with an interpretive perspective. This method ‘pays greater attention to the qualitative aspects of the material analysed’ (Joffe and Yardley, 2004, p. 56) and allows the data ‘to speak’ by extracting the core themes of interview conversations (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). A theme refers to a specific pattern that is of interest in the data and occurs repeatedly. In order to identify those themes, coding was used and then broken down into component parts, which were subsequently labelled as key themes (Bryman, 2016). In this way, conclusions were made and cataloguing was possible, showing the specific career impacts that young musicians might find or expect from music festivals.

For the purpose of applying the thematic analysis, each interview was audio recorded with prior permission of participants and was transcribed for analysis. Transcribing directly after each interview not only benefited accurate remembering of the detailed content, but also helped the researcher evaluate and reflect on the outcomes and shortcomings, thereby facilitating improvement of techniques for upcoming interviews. Although transcription was a demanding and time-consuming process, it often represented a crucial stage of data analysis and assisted in gaining a direct sense of all available information. Once all interviews were transcribed, participants’ responses were coded in order to bring out major themes for further discussion. In this sense, research concentrated firstly on ‘organising and refining rather than beginning data analysis’ , which happened in the later research period. Subsequently, a range of information and views provides information on how music festivals can, or might, impact on the careers of musicians.

Thematic analysis was also used in evaluating the secondary sources of the case study. The sources examined include previous promotional booklets and internal statements of the YMCG. Internal statements were provided by one of the festival organisers and used with her prior authorisation, given during interview conversation. The use of these materials ‘involves a close encounter with the work itself’ (Belsey, 2013, p. 160) and also enriches the viewpoint of this researcher. Notably, Yo-Yo Ma wrote a number of announcements among all booklets and internal statements. Although I was not able to interview master Ma, such materials allow us to understand the YMCG from his perspective.

**4.3 Limitations and potential ethical problems**

This research has several limitations to note. Firstly, qualitative research may reflect certain pre-existing biases of the researcher (Bryman, 2016), particularly as someone who has attended that festival and may have ideas. By acknowledging this potential risk, the interviewer refrained from asking leading questions, allowing people to share diverse experiences and interpretations, so avoiding guiding the biases of interviewees. This was also designed to be more open in encouraging various responses. As mentioned above, all interviewees were accessed based on the established network of participants of YMCG 2019. A degree of familiarity allows for greater comfort and trust between the interviewer and interview participants, which increased the depth of conversation and ensured trustworthiness of the responses. Secondly, although there was an attempt to choose diverse samples, the fact of there being a small size of the samples meant that it was not possible to represent the situation of all young musicians. Also, the findings of this qualitative research would be difficult to replicate because of its specific context (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). It is acknowledged that the sampling issue has had an impact on the research findings and so further bears out the suggestion for future research in the conclusion section. However, considering the limited existing research around the impact of festivals on musicians and the urgent need of improving career awareness for young musicians, this research still aims to be a valuable reference.

As the research relied on human subjects in the data collection process, there are some ethical issues concerned. Before collecting data, ethical approval was obtained from the King’s College London. All participants received an information sheet about this research and signed a consent form which means they were made aware of the right to withdraw their data from the research until 14th August. Collected data were stored based on the regulations of GDPR, for ensuring the confidentiality of participants’ information and avoiding potential loss due to technology failure. As the research needed no subtle or sensitive information to be collected, the possible risk of participating in this research was minimised. Therefore, interviewees felt free to opt for using their full name or first initial. Eventually, one young musician and one festival organiser chose to be partially identified, while others opted to be fully identified.

1. **Findings and Discussions**

The Youth Music Culture Guangdong festivalprovides an opportunity for examining how participation in music festivals impacts on the career development of young musicians. Through in-depth interviews with two festival organisers and five young participants allows for information to be discussed with both people offer career development support and those for whom obtain support. Young musicians stated that participating in the YMCG has a great positive impact on their professional awareness and career development, which is mainly reflected in: 1) enlightenment through the festival programmes, tutors and peers, 2) expanding their sustainable network, and 3) increased collaboration and trust. The role of enlightenment and collaboration and trust were also highlighted by both organisers and the words of Yo-Yo Ma, which were collected from the internal statements of the YMCG.

**5.1 Enlightenment**

**5.1.1 Enlightenment through the content of the music festival**

Findings in previous literature show that a festival is a platform for artists to interact and do arts experimentation (Comunian, 2017) or is a ‘launching pad’ for presenting their artworks (Glow and Caust, 2010). This research argues that the festival itself (its contents and programmes) also has the potential to inspire participating musicians’ thoughts and further affect their career. To understand this outcome, it is necessary to refer to one of the programmes of the YMCG – Silkroad workshops. This is a form of ensemble workshop that asked participants to learn music by ear, using it as a basis to improvise new arrangements, to exercise a kind of creativity that is not part of their classical training. The typical classical music training for instrument players is primarily focused on playing published pieces – including solos, chamber music and orchestral arrangements – rather than improvisation.

The teaching concept of Silkroad workshops is consistent with the belief of Deliège and Wiggins (2006) that aspiring musicians should explore multiple genres, such as improvisation and composition skills. Silkroad workshops are based on the notion of the ‘Silkroad Ensemble’ which was founded by Yo-Yo Ma in 2000. Ma was enlightened by the multiculturalism of the ancient Chinese Silk Road which refers to the vast networks for merchandise trade, cultural exchange and religious interactions, covering East Asia and Southern Europe. Adapting this idea to the context of music, he hopes to break down regional barriers and conduct communication across time and space, using music exchange and ideas collision between musicians in different places around the world.

Participants pointed out that Silkroad workshops provide another viewpoint about instrument playing and their understanding of classical music, leading them to re-think their possibilities for a future career pathway. Interviewee Richard Li has participated in the YMCG for four years continuously and currently studies violin performance in Yale University. He has been deeply influenced and inspired by Silkroad workshops:

‘The classical music market has become saturated, such as employees of orchestras. However, the workshop taught us to explore a new pathway which to integrate tradition and innovation, and to arrange new compositions. In the last four years, such exploration helps me to grow from an improvise beginner to a person who able to offer improvisation lessons. The experience in Silkroad workshops is the main driven-force and incentive.’ (Richard)

Through the inspiration of Silkroad workshops, Richard has dug into the world of musical improvisation after his first experience at YMCG. Recently, he has been able to earn money by offering lessons online, thereby building up his reputation. This helps to establish his career as a teacher and also obtain experience for feeding back further teaching. There is no doubt that the experience in the YMCG has substantially impacted on Richard’s career:

‘The sample of Silkroad workshops makes me aware more possibilities of the sector. Meanwhile, the participation of YMCG alerts me to think creatively about how to be unique in my future career development. Learning the skills of improvisation and re-arrange previous music pieces is the most optimised approach to show my uniqueness which was significantly inspired by the YMCG and those amazing teachers.’ (Richard)

If Richard was influenced significantly because he participated in the YMCG for four years, then interviewees Rain and Kaichun, who participated twice, also experienced similar gains:

‘I am a freelance musician who not to playing classical music in a very serious way, such as orchestral and opera music. My project ideas have inspired by the Silkroad workshops that learning how to integrate different kinds of music and thoughts.’ (Rain)

‘The programmes taught me a creative way of playing music which is not I can imagine before, especially in re-arrange the piece of Bach. Classical music is so much fun than I thought.’ (Kaichun)

The points obtained from these interviewees matched the ideology that the YMCG aims to convey. The Secretary-General of the YMCG’s Artistic Committee, Dr Huan Jing, was interviewed for this research. She emphasised the role of the YMCG in presenting diverse possibilities in the sector and leading participants to think actively and creatively:

‘All our programmes and themes are elaborate-designed to provide multi-dimensional possibilities of music playing as well as the potential of the sector. We hope the creation of YMCG not only of nurturing creative and flexible musicians, but also of cultivating artists who can think actively about why their music is needed and how to serve that need. Apart from developing outstanding performance skills, a activate thinking way is very important in music career.’ (Jing)

Because exercising creativity is not a typical part of classical music training (YMCG, 2017), it is therefore reasonable that young musicians only define success in playing classical instruments as becoming a soloist or lead performer in orchestras (Beeching, 2005). However, being a soloist is unrealistic for everyone and the employment of orchestras indeed saturated. Firstly, there are very limited positions in renowned orchestras, for example, there are only four flautists in a standard modern symphony orchestra. On top of that, some musicians work in the same orchestra for many years. Even if those orchestras are recruiting, unsurprisingly, there will be a large number of musicians to audition. Secondly, according to The New York Times reported in 2010, many freelance orchestras in New York faced enormous financial pressure, and they rely on donations and a small number of government grants (Wakin, 2010). Thirdly, while suffering COVID-19, top-listed companies such as the Metropolitan Opera are furloughing their union employees (Jones and Davidson, 2020). The dream of playing in orchestras is not as easy and as stable as people imagine. It is difficult to survive in the music sector if young musicians still maintain a restricted career understanding. This study does not encourage all young musicians not to work for orchestras, but instead, expand the horizon of their career and the potential of the sector, thereby encouraging a more sustainable career development.

By using the Silkroad workshop for improvisation, the YMCG illustrates that playing classical music instruments not only demonstrates a seriousness in performing orchestral or operatic music, but also encourages innovation and improvisation. Participating in a music festival is a way of expanding young musicians’ career awareness. It is also a solution to diminish the concern of López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2020), namely that emerging musicians have a narrow understanding of their possible career path. As Klickstern (2009, p. 300) argues, ‘[d]iverse careers are available to musicians because people worldwide consume huge amounts of music-related products and services every day’. There is a range of possibilities in the sector yet to be explored by young people: jobs around performance such as administration, health and wellness, music technology and education. Music festivals provide an opportunity to gain insight into the people and recent tendencies of the sector. This is because, unlike the established curriculum in the higher education and systematic manner in workplace, the theme and the form of music festivals always follows, and even leads, the latest hot spots in society and industry. More importantly, a successful artist should keep their eyes on industry tastes and tendencies, engaging with markets and observing changing perceptions (Gee, 2019). This also highlights the need for young musicians to participate in music festivals and interact with the music industry in social contexts.

Furthermore, participants mentioned that the seminar discussions offered in the festival programme inspired their thinking: ‘Due to Yo-Yo tend to offer macro-level concept, therefore, sometimes I cannot understand immediately. But it teaches me how to think deeply and when I recall his notion, I always can discover some deeper meanings.’ (Kaichun).

The music festival is unconsciously leading the career awareness and understanding of young participants through presenting positive examples of music and the sector. As well as this, it offers a feasible direction (the recent trend of the sector) for activating the thoughts of musicians. As artistic director Yo-Yo Ma says, ‘I hope you will connect ideas, turn hunches into experiments, realise that your love of one thing can turn into something much bigger, and turn all these experiences back to your music and your life’ (YMCG, 2018, p. 6). In the words of Jing,

‘of course, practice is the basement of a music career, but we are just afraid that young musicians do not think and only concentrated on day-to-day practice. Because most people who do not integrate both aspects are not achieved sustainable career development.’ (Jing)

As long as young musicians start to think creatively and critically, to learn how to integrate innovation and traditional ideas, their careers will definitely be triggered one day.

**5.1.2 Enlightenment through tutors**

As mentioned above, the YMCG is a festival that offers music training by world-renowned musicians and educators primarily through orchestra and chamber music coaching. There is no doubt that teachers play a vital role in guiding students. A convincing music tutor will continually seek out new approaches for improving the music skill of students (Beeching, 2005). Unsurprisingly, the advice offered by those prominent tutors is an invaluable gift to young participants. Interviewees further point out that they see tutors’ different teaching styles and absorb their merits.

‘Apart from doing projects and playing gigs, I also teach some kids and teenagers. By keeping the identity of teacher in mind, I always watch how other tutors were teaching and how the conductor rehearses. It provides very useful sources and guidelines for my teaching career.’ (Rain)

‘In teaching the music of Bach, Hsin-Yun Huang[[1]](#footnote-2) has a different approach to analysis the pieces compared with my teacher in university. Both approaches offer me different perspectives to understand Bach’s music which is helpful for my music learning journey.’ (Kaichun)

By studying different methods of playing and analysing music, young musicians improve their musical performance skills. Meanwhile, for those young musicians who wish to be a teacher, learning different teaching approaches not only enriches their teaching style, but also leads to spreading such useful methods for the benefit of a more extensive range of students. This is also a way of broadening the job opportunities for emerging musicians.

Moreover, this research also found that the young musicians valued the personalities of the teachers, how they were inclusive and respectful. This affected the participants unconsciously. In addition, tutors at the YMCG maintain an open mind to different opinions and cultures – brought about by both their outstanding peers and the young participants.

‘They [tutors] are all outstanding musicians in their specialise instrument and developed mature personalise teaching and performance style. I am very curious how they are so inclusive for others idea and to integrate all their teaching concepts together, then smoothly deliver to participants. […] Although we are nobody, tutors still embrace and happy to hear our opinions.’ (Kaichun)

‘We are emerging musicians; they are world-famous artists. Logically, they can teach us what to do and how to play. But actually, they allow us to express our opinions and involve our music ideas.’ (Chen)

Rather than stop listening to young people’s voices because of their own personal accomplishments and experience, tutors taught young musicians to not hold a hostile attitude when meeting peers, and not to be arrogant or look down on others when they are weaker. Instead, participants should accept that other people may have something they do not have. Young musicians learn to hold an all-embracing manner that respects others’ musical interpretations and culture in the name of diversity. This kind of impact is not only the influence of the professional notion of the younger generation, but also toward the depth life attitude. Tutors affect young people through their exceptional artistic performance, as well as by their inclusive and respectful attitude toward the world. The temperament shown by the teachers is a model that emerging musicians should pursue in the music industry in the future. Although there are many advanced musicians in the world, it is difficult to gather many of them for a period of time at the places where young musicians work and study. If those advanced musicians are scattered in various locations and time, their influence may be relatively little. Young musicians may be unaware of the importance of inclusivity when only one musician behaves like this; but when a group of advanced musicians have the same characteristic, young people will realise that such an inclusive attitude is the essence of the survival of the music industry. Fortunately, the music festival provides such a platform for learning and communicating with a number of prominent musicians.

Furthermore, interviewees highlighted the impact that they absorbed through conversation with those renowned tutors at the YMCG. The music festival is not only a peer-to-peer interaction platform, but also allows younger generations to communicate with experienced musicians, possibly addressing any confusions young people may have.

‘The most impressive and impactful thing in the YMCG was the one-to-one conversation with Yo-Yo. I asked him about how I can manage three of my roles: violinist, engineer and businessman. Yo-Yo answered me through a story of bubbles – ‘sometimes bubbles will clash then broken, but sometimes bubbles get closer and become a bigger bubble. What you need to do is convinced what you are doing currently and to create a bigger bubble, then become a person with unique abilities and techniques. It is only you can do in this world.’ I was suddenly activated, to create a ‘bigger bubble’ is become my goal.’ (Kenji)

‘Yo-Yo always emphasised audience is the most important group of people in performances. Our music is to serve them. This concept has influenced me a lot and became my belief in performing music. Because I always think about what audiences like, which form of performances they adore, and so on.’ (Chen)

It is almost impossible for young musicians to chat with experienced masters like Yo-Yo Ma, if they do not engage in music festivals, especially someone like Kenji, who is an amateur violinist, not primarily employed in the music industry. Because advanced musicians have more experience than the younger generations, their understanding and opinions serve as a valuable gift towards the young musicians’ future development.

**5.1.3 Enlightenment through peers**

As seen in the literature review, music festivals are a place for peers to interact (Comunian, 2017). This function was further clarified by interviewees in this research. Because the music festival has a selection process, auditioning young musicians from all over the world, those selected participants are relatively advanced. Interviewees mentioned that they themselves have been motivated by the performance ability of other participants:

‘I found lots of participants in the YMCG are treasure particularly reflect on their performance. They make me practice harder.’ (Kaichun)

Meanwhile, interviewees gladly said that through rehearsals and performances with peers they rediscovered the passion of music and work:

‘Participants and tutors are so passionate about the music. It is ‘playing’ music and have fun with music, which is different from other festivals I participated before that always focus on regular day-to-day rehearsals rather than. I think YMCG shows us how music should be like.’ (Rain)

‘When I cannot find my passion for playing music, I always recall our positive memory towards music during those days at the YMCG. That energetic state is I yearn for my future career.’ (Kaichun)

‘Maybe due to the short duration, I felt participants are so enthusiasm, concentrate and energetic, that is a valuable experience of us.’ (Kenji)

The two points above can be understood from two aspects. Firstly, young musicians may be complacent about their abilities, within the small context of their specific conservatories or regular workplaces. However, when they engage with the wider context of the music industry and social events, especially in this festival with auditions worldwide, the advantage young musicians may have felt in their own context may have diminished. By participating in music festivals and experiencing the strength of other musicians, young people accept their own weaknesses and stimulate their ambition, so striving for greater success. Secondly, when people dig into a subject and it becomes their normal routine for years, their passion may reduce and they lose their original intention, likewise with musicians. Therefore, musicians, especially young musicians, need a duration of time to get out of their everyday life. This kind of exposure and experience in music festivals provides space for self-reflection and opportunities to advance their career.

The need for self-reflection is in accord with the notion of ‘time out of time’ which was put forward by Falassi (1987). It refers to having a certain time outside of a routine, which allows people to think, act and respond differently, thereby stimulating self-reflection and re-evaluation. Such time applies to the duration of music festivals, which provide young musicians with an external space to re-evaluate their performance skills and re-discover the passion of playing instruments. Similarly, Packer and Ballantyne (2010) argue that festivals provide spectators with a ‘separation experience’ which ‘distinguishes the festival event from everyday life. It provides a sense of *disconnection* that prompts festival attendees to reflect on their lives and their understanding of themselves’ (p. 173). This research found that this same function of festivals not only reflected on festivalgoers but also on those young musician participants.

Furthermore, previous research indicates that engaging with music festivals can build a sense of community (Gibson and Connell, 2005). This phenomenon can lead to the behaviour of ‘communities of practice’ which is a theory raised by Etienne Wenger (1998). This notion refers to a social learning system for ‘groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (p. 1). Communities of practice perfectly describes the experience of young musicians in the YMCG. Forming such a system of communities of practice during a music festival, not only helps to improve performance skills, but also strengthens young musicians’ passion toward music and reinforces their sense of community in the music sector. These outcomes emerged from the interaction among peers, and are essential in achieving an outstanding career.

**5.2** **Expanding sustainable networks**

Networking is the exchange of friendship, information, benefits and influence (Michael and Yukl, 1993, p. 328). Effective networking is the number one tool for advancing a music career (Beeching, 2005, p. 38). The findings of López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2020) show that musicians emphasise the importance of industry contacts and recommendations (p. 6), especially given the small relationship-driven world of the music industry (Beeching, 2005). Packer and Ballantyne (2010) called networking a ‘social experience’ in the context of festivals which facilitated connections between attendees. Although their research was dedicated to festivalgoers, their findings also apply to festival participants, as all interviewed young musicians of this research underline the role of this festival in expanding their network and horizons. This is in accord with the wish of Yo-Yo Ma that ‘to encounters with colleagues, new musical relationships, conversations that develop into friendships’ (YMCG, 2018).

One interviewee claimed the diversity of the festival population enriched her network to a large extent:

‘Apart from participating in music festivals, it is difficult to establish networks with so many peers of distinct background in a short period.’ (Rain)

‘The YMCG offered me an opportunity to meet people of various ages and from different culture or education backgrounds. Especially the multiple programmes allow me to talk with different group of people. They informed me diverse experiences and knowledge, and provide a multi-dimensional thinking way which is hard to obtain in university.’ (Kaichun)

Although the university network is a great source of career opportunities (Beeching, 2005), its nature of being a place-based and age-specific institution (Comunian et al., 2014) may limit the scope of the network. Meanwhile, sharing the same environment with the same group of peers for a long time tends to narrow young musicians’ career awareness and their understanding of the sector. A similar finding was reported by López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2020). They note that lacking exposure to the industry contributes to the limited success of later careers. Therefore, musicians need separation from the comfort zone and exposure to the music industry in order to be in-touch with the world outside of universities. As a perioded event, the YMCG is able to gather global musicians in a short time. It involves participants who are working in orchestras in different cities, studying in various countries or experiencing different stages of their career. Through conversation and information exchange, participants not only get to know people in the industry, but also grow their general understanding of the sectoral circumstances in other places. One interviewee mentioned:

‘I do not need to travel around the world to gain insight into other orchestras and conservatories, because participants of the YMCG brought helpful information here. As I was studied abroad for several years, the time and experience in the YMCG allows me to explore the current market of Chinese classical music and its potential.’ (Chen)

Knowing the range of information and the market potential expands participants’ sectoral understanding, especially those who study or live in different countries or cities. Moreover, such networks and knowledge may facilitate setting occupational objectives and choosing a workplace. All this stimulates participants to enrich their career understanding and accelerate their career development.

One interviewee further points out that participating in the YMCG adds a multi-directional element to their network:

‘I not only building networks with the participants and tutors in the festival, but also using the experience of YMCG to know other people in the music industry. As an amateur violinist, I do not have a music degree for proving my performance skills. But by participating in the high-standard festival of YMCG, I finally can add a valuable phrase in my music CV. Because others in the industry appreciate the reputation of YMCG, they also value my violin skill as I was be selected and able to play with Yo-Yo that not everybody can.’ (Kenji)

However, all five interviewees mentioned that the YMCG network has not directly reflected on their career yet, in that they are yet to receive any job opportunities. They highlight the reason as being regional, a direct career impact is difficult if established networks are far from their location. Interviewee Rain Chan said that: ‘friends from the YMCG does provide some ideas for my projects, but they have not assisted my career physically or in a direct way, like editing video or recommend me to play in gigs’ (Rain). Although networks are used to mobilise resources allowing music graduates to start freelancing and establish themselves (Comunian et al., 2014), it is important to consider where these networks originate.

Meanwhile, two out of five interviewees attribute an indirect-impact through the YMCG network. For example, studying a further education qualification is crucial, especially for music students who want to be professional performers (ibid.). As Kaichun mentioned:

‘due to my plan of studying master’s degree, network is mainly used for information exchange rather than career support. For example, the understanding of pieces and recent recruitment of music festivals. It really helps to build my understand of music technique and follow the trendy of the sector.’ (Kaichun)

The YMCG network has no direct effect on young musicians' career at its current stage, maybe because the festival has just been established. Thus, the impact of these networks still needs a period of time to be fully examined. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that ‘the contacts you have right now include people who can help move your career forward’ (Beeching, 2005, p. 38).

Although the YMCG networks are mainly reflected psychologically and through information exchange, this research observed that such networks remain tight-knit and sustainable. Firstly, interviewees mentioned the shared value and common interest of other participants:

‘Applying for the same music festival means we have similar interests and pursuits, at least in line with the values ​​of the YMCG. Compared with friends in university, friends here are more diverse in terms of background, experience and understanding of the world. All these features make individuals being attractive.’ (Kaichun)

‘People in the YMCG are all hold a very positive attitude toward music, friends and the world.’ (Rain)

Secondly, interviewees pointed out that the network in festival is more positive, compared with those networks in higher education or in the industry, since there is no direct conflict of interest between participants.

‘In university, students may contend with performance opportunities, leading role of orchestras or the ranking of recitals. This perhaps because we are in similar age range and may not be tolerant and open-mind enough for other people. But the festival is an inclusive community for us to communicate, to learn and to experiment. There are no distinct from right and wrong opinion, no good or bad performances in the YMCG; therefore, we are communication rather than competition.’ (Kaichun)

‘The nature of YMCG is open and all-embracing, which means we are free to express our opinions without hesitation. I do not need to worry if my views are different from others and whether it will have negative impacts on your career or network’ (Rain)

‘I can say the YMCG is a pure community for music, without considering money, rights and status.’ (Chen)

The discovery that the YMCG is a sustainable network has added a layer to the outcomes of Comunian (2017) – festivals indeed are ‘temporary clusters’ for network exchange among artists, but the relationship is not short lasting or unreliable. Conversely, gained networks have sustainability because of the shared values and common interests of participating musicians. This positive situation may be more obvious in the context of YMCG, because Yo-Yo Ma aims to ‘nurture participants to embrace an open and flexible artistic philosophy’ (YMCG, n.d.). It cannot be claimed that all festivals help to establish sustainable networks between musicians, but regarding the case of the YMCG, a festival provides a positive example to young musicians in reality, encouraging them to engage with the wider music industry context and develop career cognition.

**5.3 Collaboration and trust**

From the perspective of festival ecology, the interdependent nature of relationships between multi-faceted stakeholders should be emphasised (Markussen et al., 2011; Holden, 2015). Prior studies have noted that festivals ‘like other project-based activities, they tend to require the skills and collaboration of different people for a short time’ (Comunian, 2017, p. 335). However, this research found that there is a close-knit collaboration within the same category of stakeholders, namely cooperation between the young musicians. Significantly, musicians mentioned that they have learned how to work with peers during their experience in the YMCG:

‘Apart from orchestra, we [participants] only got very limited time to rehearse chamber music ensemble and the piece in Silkroad workshop. It highly trained the skill of effectively collaborate. The process was difficult, but the skill is useful.’ (Kaichun)

The reason for this difficulty is unfamiliarity with each other. In the normal environment where young musicians regularly study and work, most people in that space work together frequently, which means they have a general understanding of each one’s characteristics. However, in the context of music festivals, participants will encounter other unknown musicians in the sector. Despite this, young musicians must react quickly, because they are required to start rehearsals and even prepare public performances with others in a short time. This not only trains the skills of collaboration, but also how to effectively communicate with unfamiliar people. The YMCG claims it ‘not only emphasises on technical proficiency, but also on how to be creative and flexible, and how to achieve things together that we cannot achieve alone’ (YMCG, 2019). Combining the findings argued above, being creative can refer to many strands: creative thinking, integrating flexibly, communicating and collaboration with peers. All this creates the ‘bigger bubble’ that Yo-Yo described in the previous section.

However, another interviewee pointed out that sometimes unhappy experiences occur during rehearsals:

‘Indeed, the Silkroad workshops were fun. But in the first two rehearsals, there were some embarrassing moments happened when we re-arranged the melody. Because everyone has different thoughts, but it is challenging to put all those materials together.’ (Kenji)

Since musicians are from all over the world and study with different professors, it leads to a range of interpretation of music and various articulations of playing instruments. But if the problem is left unsolved it will reduce participants engagement (Liddle, 2017). Perhaps Yo-Yo Ma anticipated such conflict, therefore, he has encouraged participants to connect across cultures and create human trust since the first year of the festival (YMCG, 2017). Interviewees later said that they eventually chose to listen to each other’s views in order to solve the problems:

‘After that I tried to adopt others thinking way, to understand their opinions during rehearsals. As Yo-Yo said that to trust your colleagues. Such turn was hugely helpful for me.’ (Kenji)

Indeed, participants were from various educational backgrounds and may have different opinions, but this does not mean the ideas were wrong. When young musicians trust each other and listen carefully, it not only enriches the material of the re-arranged pieces but also improves their ability in musical interpretation and helps them discover more possibilities in the music world. More importantly, ‘a well-directed and solved conflict is an investment for the future’ (Titov et al., 2018, p. 25). This reinforces the finding above, that of sustainable networks, because a well-solved conflict can improve relationships and the creation of trust is the basis of a sustainable network. In the words of interviewed festival organiser, Yu, ‘we want young musicians to learn to embrace and trust others. These are valuable qualities in society.’ (Yu). To some extent, this is in accord with the observation of Packer and Ballantyne (2010:, ‘the music festival experience was not only meaningful in itself but gave meaning to the rest of their [festivalgoers] lives’ (p. 178). This outcome reflects on both festivalgoers and YMCG festival participants. Although collaboration and building trust did not directly impact on the careers of young musicians, they are crucial and essential transferable skills in career development, as well as in people’s lives in general. Due to the nature of transferable skills, both impacts can be applied to other occupations. In other words, participating in music festivals not only benefits young musicians who aims to be performers, but also subserve others who are conducting music-relevant occupations or in other areas.

1. **Conclusion**

This research was the result of an investigation into the impact of participating in music festivals on the career development of young musicians. The topic emerged from the observations of both the narrow career understanding of emerging musicians and the limited available research on the impact of festivals on participating musicians, especially for the younger generation. Literature was drawn from three perspectives, including research around festivals (themed by economic impacts and audience-related issues), artists and musicians in festivals, and current career understanding of young musicians. By providing a multi-faceted review, this study informed readers about the imbalance of research on festivals, which is heavily focused on external impacts, with a scarcity of study on its core content suppliers (musicians and artists). Furthermore, based on the research of Beeching (2005) and López-Íñiguez and Bennett (2020), it is shown that the issue of emerging musicians’ limited career understanding of their future has been a long-term problem. Combining such concerns and issues, music festivals offer a reasonable context to fill the academic gap, while increasing the career awareness of young musicians. As Pike (2019) especially considered, festivals encourage emerging musicians to gain exposure to community and industry contexts. In order to find the specific impacts of music festivals and how they affect young musicians’ career, this research used the Youth Music Culture Guangdong festival as a case study. The festival offers selected young musicians from around the world opportunities for public music performance, music training and improvisation workshops, as well as seminar discussion provided by international-renowned musicians. Interviews with festival organisers and young musician participants allowed information to be collected and discussed from both sides.

Through thematic analysis of interviewee transcripts, promotional booklets from the YMCG and its internal statements provided by the festival organisers, the findings of this study were identified into three themes – enlightenment, expanding sustainable networks and collaboration and trust – all of which have impacted on young musicians’ career development. The impact of enlightenment was found to have three dimensions. Firstly, the music festival itself has activated young musicians to think actively and creatively, by providing improvisation workshops and other diverse programmes that show the possibilities of classical music instrument playing, the potential of the classical music market and the recent trends in the music sector. This finding has added another layer of understanding to previous studies that music festivals impact on emerging participants not only as interaction platforms (Comunian, 2017) and as a ‘launching pad’ for presenting their works (Glow and Caust, 2010), but also have inspirational implications of widening their career understanding. Secondly, tutors have inspired young musicians through their advanced performance skills and various teaching approaches. Another feature of the tutoring was their inclusive and respectful manner toward their colleagues, the younger generations and the different musical interpretations and opinions. Thirdly, working with peers can activate their motivation towards their practice and help them rediscover their passion of working with and playing music.

Furthermore, young participants have expanded their network with peers from different ages, stages of career and locations, thereby enriching their multi-dimensional career awareness. Comunian (2017) argues festivals are ‘temporary clusters’ for building networks, but the findings of this research has further shown that these networks are not affected by the ‘temporary’ nature of festivals. Instead they can develop sustainably, due to participants’ shared values and lack of direct conflict of interest. Although all the interviewed young musicians mentioned that the networks have no direct impact on their career in terms of gaining employment, due to geographical differences, the contacts they have gained include people who can help move forward their career (Beeching, 2005, p. 38). Lastly, the research has revealed that participating in the music festival can train participants’ ability in collaboration and build trust with unfamiliar peers in a short time. Such ideology is the core of the YMCG, because they are aiming to establish ‘meaningful communication; trust between the self and the collective; cooperation of individuals’ (YMCG, n.d.). As both of these impacts are transferable skills, this is also beneficial for people who are not primarily planning a musical performance career.

There are limits to the generalisability of these findings. Firstly, the use of qualitative approaches and a defined case study meant the research findings are hard to replicate in other music festivals. However, such methodology allowed us to gain greater insight into a realistic context and understand the precise impacts that can affect young musicians’ careers. Secondly, although the intention was to collect diverse information, due to the limited time and scope of the research, the small sample size was not able to represent the voice of all young musicians. Notwithstanding these limitations, this study is still valuable for further studies, whether research into the case study of YMCG or examining the impact of festivals on participating musicians.

In summary, participating in the YMCG has long-term and subtle influences on the young musicians' career development. Although these impacts have not affected young musicians directly in achieving their intended career accomplishments yet, the experience of participating in the YMCG expanded their mentality, enriched their understanding of the music sector, led them to think creatively about the possibilities of music and explore their potential. Within such an industrial and social context, music festivals offer a place of transition, where experiments with knowledge and experience gained from universities or workplaces can be explored, while obtaining new experiences which can feed back to future study and work. As Dustin Gee, the manager of employer development and engagement at the Berklee College of Music, argues ‘the path followed by the majority of top executives and artists we know today was not narrow or linear. Like theirs, your [young musicians] path will involve ongoing learning, hustle, and investment in yourself’ (Gee, 2019).’ Further research could consider undertaking a bigger sample size and investigate whether those impacts argued above can affect young musicians’ career development directly.

**Acknowledgments**

I wish to thank the following people, without whom I could not have completed this dissertation:

I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Serena Ercolino, who spent hours answering my questions and guiding me to structure this dissertation. Especially during such difficult times of COVID-19 pandemic and the different time zone between us, Serena still patiently organised suitable slots of supervision meetings. I am grateful to all my interviewees for contributing to this research. In particular, Dr Huan Jing and the GSO who kindly offered me internal statements and promotional booklets from the YMCG. I am also thankful to my friends who provided valuable suggestions for my writing. Last but not least, I would deeply thank my dear family who encouraged me, supported me consistently throughout the years I studied abroad.

1. Hsin-Yun Huang is one of the tutors in the YMCG, who also teaches in both the Curtis Institute of Music and the Juilliard School in the New York City. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)