

The Economic Impact of the 2015 Big Nac Music Festival

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ABSTRACT

Infrastructure is what drives small towns in the United States. Defined as “the basic, underlying framework of a system or organization” (*The Free Dictionary*, 2015), the infrastructure of a small town encapsulates the various roads, businesses, schools, and factories involved with providing the town with economic stability. Unfortunately, in the years following the United States’ economic downturn, this stability has been severely altered. Thus, in an effort to maintain their economies, many small towns are learning to adapt and innovate to protect and nurture their resources. Such innovations include fairs, meetings, conventions, and, the focus of this study, events.

INTRODUCTION

Much like other small towns in the United States, Nacogdoches, Texas has learned to adapt to ensure its economic stability. Better known by its moniker “The Oldest Town in Texas,” Nacogdoches plays host to numerous events throughout the year in an effort to boost its economy. These events include the annual Texas Blueberry Festival, where more than 19,000 people descend upon Nacogdoches’ historic downtown to celebrate the annual blueberry harvest (“Overview – Texas Blueberry Festival,” 2015) and the city’s most recent foray in the realm of budget boosting initiatives – as well as the focus of this study – Big Nac 2015, a four-day music festival designed to showcase the various sounds of Texas music, including the country, rock, blues, Tejano, and bluegrass genres (“Big Nac FAQ’s,” 2015).



METHOD

Over the course of the four-day extravaganza, the City of Nacogdoches hoped to bring in a significant profit through its promotion of 40 artists in 50 shows located at venues in and near Downtown Nacogdoches. By taking a significant risk in partnering with Texas Music Magazine, following a deposit of \$45,000, the City of Nacogdoches was given the permission to model Big Nac after the magazine’s own “Viva Big Bend” festival in West Texas (Bryant, 2015). After months of careful planning, tickets to the event were sold online, advertising “fifty bucks for four days, all shows” (McCollum, 2015). Along with this bargain, tickets were discounted for SFA students and alumni, and free admission was offered for any volunteers of the event (McCollum, 2015).

RESULT

In the four days of the event, held from March 5th through 8th, “more than 800 people attended the Big Nac music festival, resulting in an economic impact of about \$305,000” (Bryant, 2015). Such a figure was significant for the City of Nacogdoches as, according to Nacogdoches CVB Director Carl Watson, the city’s annual budget is only \$540,000. Unfortunately, despite these numbers seeming to be positive, the future of Big Nac would come into question, as Texas Music Magazine opted to “call off [the] next year’s event after failing to raise enough money in sponsorships” (Bryant, 2015). Adding to the unpleasant news, Texas Music Magazine revealed that only 865 tickets were sold for the event, as opposed to the 1,500 that were expected. These expectations led to the assumption that the festival would generate \$207,900 for hotels, \$627,568.13 in sales-tax revenue, \$14,533 in hotel occupancy-tax revenue, and \$760,725 in other revenue. Yet, as evidenced by the real outcome of the event, these projections were far too high.

CONCLUSION

In short, the inability of the Nacogdoches CVB and Texas Music Magazine to reach an agreement on funding for future Big Nac Music Festivals stemmed from the magazine’s cost estimate of the 2016 event to be between \$100,000 and \$150,000, well over double the \$45,000 that funded the previous festival. The City of Nacogdoches would try for months to raise the necessary \$55,000 in sponsorships for Texas Music Magazine to “break even,” considering the numbers given, but would fall short by only obtaining commitments totaling \$38,000 from sponsors.

As a result of the ending partnership between Texas Music Magazine and The City of Nacogdoches, the future of the festival remained uncertain for most of 2015, as there was a disparity over the unofficial trademark of “Big Nac,” which Texas Music Magazine was partially responsible for. Hope, however, remained that another event would occur, as evidenced through CVB board member Kati Kennedy’s statement that “Texas Music magazine is not going to do Big Nac, but we’re still going to do it... the only thing we don’t know is if it’s going to be called Big Nac” (Bryant, 2015).

Fortunately for the City of Nacogdoches, Kennedy’s statement would be confirmed in 2016, as the City of Nacogdoches would hold another four-day music festival. The festival, now simply called the Nacogdoches Music Festival would follow the same premise as Big Nac, yet without a major financial backer, only the Nacogdoches CVB and event sponsors.

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