Dance To The Music: Fans and Socialites in the festival audience

Dr Stephen Henderson Senior Lecturer UK Centre for Events Management Leeds Metropolitan University Telephone: 0113 812 5514

Email: s.henderson@leedsmet.ac.uk

Autobiographical note

Stephen Henderson is a Senior Lecturer in the UK Centre for Events Management at Leeds Metropolitan University where he teaches marketing and indulges his passion for music and sport events. Over the years, he has promoted gigs with Elvis Costello, The Clash, The Ramones, Tony Benn and Roy Bailey, Iggy Pop, Richard Thompson, Ian Dury and many more. Initially, he followed the gaining of BSc, MSc and PhD degrees from the University of Leeds with an MBA from the University of Warwick. Then, he spent over twenty years in industry before consulting to a wide range of international blue chip clients. During this period, he worked on the MBA courses at the Universities of Warwick, Durham, Surrey, Bradford and The Open University prior to taking up his current position.

and

Dr Emma Harriet Wood Reader Leeds Metropolitan University UK Centre for Events Management Telephone: 0113 812 3963

Email: e.wood@leedsmet.ac.uk

Autobiographical note

Emma Wood is Reader in Festivals and Event Marketing. Originally from a marketing and market research background Emma's current research interests are in the areas of event/experience marketing and evaluation of the impacts of community festivals. She has co-authored books on Innovative Marketing Communication published by Elsevier and a European Edition of Hoffman and Bateson's Services Marketing text, published by Cengage in 2009. Emma is Research Awards Coordinator and joint editor of the Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events. She also chairs the Academy of Marketing special interest group in Events and Experiential Marketing and undertakes consultancy projects for local government and other bodies focusing on the evaluation of festivals and events.

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Abstract

This paper uses the Wireless Festival held in Leeds in 2008 to look at the different motivations of attendees across the two days where the programming was directed towards different music interests. It concludes that whilst different genres of music may attract audiences with different demographics, there are two significant groupings of attendees at the festival. These are those for whom 'the music really does matter' and other tribal 'socialites' who seek an experience beyond the music being played on stage. For those promoting festivals, this has important implications in the way that not only they are programmed in terms of music but the surrounding environment is arranged for socialisation.

Background

The growth in live music over recent years has been significant with festivals presenting opportunities for music promoters and musicians alike. In particular, performers now see live performance as a key income generating opportunity as recorded music provides much less income due to the shift from physical media to downloads (Mintel, 2008). As a consequence, music promoters seek new opportunities to expand their business by offering artists the chance to play at new festivals. This paper looks at the Wireless Festival being managed by global music promoters, Live Nation. At this festival, the differing genres of music programmed for each day of the two day festival provided an unusual research opportunity to contrast two different festival audiences at a single venue. In this way, revealing their differences and similarities in order to improve the marketing to these audiences by the promoter and learn some general lessons for all those involved in the festival business.

The Wireless Festival

In the UK, the flagship festival of Glastonbury has shown the significant attendance heights that can be achieved with well over 100,000 attendees (Glastonbury, 2009). However, Glastonbury took a year off in 2006 triggering other promoters to think about how the hunger of those music fans might be satiated. As a result, Live Nation launched the Wireless Festival in London's Hyde Park in 2005. In 2006, the festival was expanded in London and extended to a second location, Harewood House outside of Leeds (Harewood, 2009). In this way, there was an option for acts to play both the northern and southern UK sites with a partially rotating line-up which was financially satisfying for all parties involved. Unlike London, the Harewood House venue was not in an urban location but about seven miles outside of the city of Leeds and closer to the spa town of Harrogate. Furthermore, it is the site of a stately home with Lord Harewood, the Queen's cousin, in residence there for some of the time. Though the venue had previously held concerts with mainstream pop acts such as Simply Red, Meatloaf and Boyzone, these had all involved one-day concerts with no opportunity for the audience to stay overnight. So, the option to have a multi-day event with a broadly similar appeal across all

days risked a disappointed audience as many would want the full festival experience and the opportunity to stay overnight. This dilemma led Live Nation to target different segments of the live music market on the two days using entertainment programmes bases around different musical genres. Their approach targeted segments interested in dance music (see Figure 1 for the line-up on Saturday) and rock music (see Figure 2 for the line-up on Sunday). As a result, they ran a hybrid marketing campaign to suit the two audiences. In doing this, the Live Nation marketing campaign and its choice of communication media reflected differences in their perceptions of the audience. For example, the Saturday line-up headlined by Massive Attack was heavily promoted around the universities in Leeds where students would see the dance music oriented programme. Whilst the Sunday line-up with the classic rock headliners, The Who, was advertised in rock music magazines and newspapers read by the older music fan – the homes of 'dad rock' as described by Live Nation's Marketing Director (Young, J., personal communication, 11 February 2009).

Aim and objectives of the study

As the circumstances described above indicate, the Wireless Festival at Harewood House was untypical of many multi-day festivals where programmes of entertainment would be aimed at a specific target market that would participate across the whole of the event and, often, stay onsite overnight. The overall aim of this study, therefore, was to investigate how the distinctly different programmes of the two days were reflected in the differences and similarities between audiences. Furthermore, to consider how any differences might alter the basic age demographic segmentation and targeting implied by the Live Nation marketing. In doing this, the research sought to answer the following objectives:

- To identify what the literature on audiences suggests is of importance in terms of segmentation of this market.
- To identify the extent to which the demographics and motivations of the audiences at the Wireless Festival differ between the two days.
- To reveal how any differences in demographics and motivations might influence the segmentation and targeting approach of live music marketers.

Whilst the first objective is achieved by reviewing the literature, the second objective required primary research at the Wireless Festival and an examination of the statistics obtained to reveal basic demographic and motivational data alongside the use of cluster analysis to find any attendee groupings with common demographics and/or motivations. The final objective is achieved by drawing together the literature revealed in achieving the first objective with the information about the Wireless Festival found within the pursuit of the second objective.

Literature Review

Identifying heterogeneous groups of homogenous customers around whom suitable positioning strategies can be devised has become central to marketing thinking. Many renowned marketing authors have identified this segmentation of

markets as a vital tool for success in an increasingly competitive business world (Kotler et al, 2001; McDonald and Dunbar, 2004; Wedel and Kamakura, 1998). So vital, in fact, that Dibb (1998) considers in some depth what can go wrong between the theorists and the practitioners in terms of generating suitable segmentation methods. Typically, it is suggested that these homogenous groupings will have common characteristics based around demographics, behaviour and/or needs. Yet, the practical use of these groupings is limited by how easily identifiable they are and whether or not they can be targeted through a differentiated marketing mix. Indeed, Firat and Shultz (1997) argue that the fragmentation of increasingly dynamic markets in the postmodern era is suggesting that segmentation is becoming less useful to marketing management.

Specifically in relation to the consumption of music, researchers have come up with a variety of different views. For example, Oakes (2003) compared the attendees at jazz and classical music concerts concluding that the difference in demographics was significant for the sponsors of those events. Others suggest that more sophisticated segmentation can be achieved by moving beyond simple demographics and considering personality, motivations and other psychographic factors (Bowen and Daniels, 2005; Choong-Ki et al, 2004; Kotarba, 2005 and Nuttall, 2008). For example, Kotarba (2005), in an ethnographic study, sees the middle age experience of rock music in terms of personality groupings where individuals see themselves as the e-self, self as lover, self as parent, self as believer or self as political actor. A study of younger music consumers (Nuttall, 2008) focuses on behavioural characteristics for the adolescent consumption of recorded music and results in groupings of those who are quite adventurous ('experiential'), like to blend in ('chameleon') or have a deliberate and clear musical taste ('defender'). Similarly, Bowen and Daniels (2005), using cluster analysis around motivations, revealed four groupings of visitors, 'just being social', 'enrichment over music', 'the music matters' and 'love it all' showing that these groups also differed based on race, marital status, and household income. Earlier, this review of literature began by noting that marketing practitioners have tended to look for heterogeneous groups of homogenous customers. The fact that it offers neat targets via the technique of segmentation has proved to be an attractive feature for the exploitation of markets. Yet, as noted above, Firat and Shultz (1997) argue that the postmodern era is fragmenting market segments as increasingly dynamic behaviour is observed. For some, technology is the key driver that pushes fragmentation in society via a range of activities that are carried out alone whether in private or public such as social networks or the i-Pod Generation (Bosanguet and Gibbs, 2005). Others consider that the shift to fragmentation is related to the societal shift from extended to nuclear families seen in certain cultures and aggravated by the potential for family members moving home in search of employment (Georgas et al, 2001). Clearly, there is much that might be considered within such a wide field of study but, here, the most interesting points are raised by Maffesoli (1996) who suggests that the postmodern society has developed a need to form tribes (or 'tribus' as he terms this). The concept of 'tribus' has been linked to youth cultures and musical taste by Bennett (1999) who uses the example of the dance music scene in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne to highlight the transient nature of

these tribes and their use of music events as places of ritual. Taking this further, Cova and Cova (2002) suggest that this tribal behaviour challenges traditional relationship marketing ideas with its like minded people drifting into and out of tribes as befits their individual circumstances. Unlike past tribes, this notion allows for the membership of different tribes at the same time as part of the pursuit of the underlying aim stated by Cova and Cova (2002, p.596) as where 'the urgent societal issue is not to celebrate freedom from social constraints, but to re-establish communal embeddedness'. In other words, as a means to create community, society has seen the creation of heterogeneous tribes that contrast with the marketing manager's traditional homogenous segments (based, mainly, on demographics).

Naturally, for those who practice marketing, this has caused a rethink to the traditional approach based around a belief, as Cova and Cova (2008, p.600) suggest, that 'the credo of this so-called tribal marketing is that today consumers are looking not only for products and services that make them feel freer but also for products, services, employees and physical surroundings which can link them to others, to a tribe'. Following the ideas of Bennett (1999) and the link to music events, it is clear that festivals like Wireless offer the potential for the 'ritual meetings' of tribes. This is seen in a more extreme form at the Burning Man festival where Kozinets (2002) observes the anti-market attitudes of many of the participants involved in this tribal meeting. An alternative view would suggest that tribes are less anti-market and more related to the concept of a brand web (Leitch and Richardson, 2003) where heterogeneous tribes are attracted to a grouping of brands whether these have formalised relationships in the commercial sense or are have informal links within a tribal setting.

Alongside the thinking that has emerged on tribes, a number of writers have written about the experiential nature of events and its significance in marketing. The work of Pine and Gilmore (1998,1999) and Schmitt (1999a,1999b) stimulated the early thinking in this area and began to highlight how an all round experience affecting all the senses was of value to marketing. In particular, the work of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) indicated how experience was related into consumer behaviour suggesting that the nature of consumption has symbolic, hedonic, and aesthetic aspects. Terms that can be associated with the experience of those in attendance at a range of festivals. Furthermore, Ponsonby-Mccabe and Boyle (2006) linked the brand to the experiential space in a manner that suggests an event like a festival is a marketing opportunity for not only the organiser but other brands that might be involved. Caru and Cova (2003) drew upon Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and others to further refine the definition of an experience. In their later work, using attendees at classical concerts, the links to the management of events such as festivals became clear within their consideration of the service aspects of the experience (Caru and Cova, 2006). Their work highlights how the psycho-sensorial dimensions of experience might be facilitated by a process of immersion Involving nesting (where the sense of the attendee are impacted), investigating (when the attendee explores their feelings), and stamping (as the attendee attributes significance to the event).

In the festivals industry, this immersion in experience is reflected in the emerging

trend of the so-called 'boutique' festival (Times Online, 2009) where the emphasis is on experience related to activities such as fancy dress, street theatre and a wide variety of entertainment rather than the appearance of superstar musicians. Though the term 'boutique' might suggest a small operation, some larger festivals have adopted this term as a means of differentiation from their competitors. In doing this, the event is visualised as a continuous experience from the moment of entry to the point of departure as opposed to one that merely involves an onstage presentation of music, theatre or similar. As regards this study, though unlikely to be categorised as a 'boutique' festival, it is hypothesised that a number of the above viewpoints may hold true for Wireless Festival. Whilst the work of Oakes (2003) suggests that differences in demographics may be observed, the socially inclined clusters of Bowen and Daniels (2005) may also be revealed. The latter, potentially, reflecting the symbolic, hedonic, and aesthetic consumption aspects described by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and the community needs of tribal thinking identified by Cova and Cova (2002). This thinking suggests that music festival planners can use different marketing tactics to broaden a festival's appeal and that it is risky for event managers to rely on the music itself or a specific artist to draw large festival crowds. Furthermore, the overall indication is that psychographic factors are offering a more meaningful approach to segmenting the attendees at these music events.

Methodology

In order to consider the audiences across the two days of the Festival, a questionnaire was generated to record demographic details, behavioural elements such as the frequency of seeing live music, and the relative importance of various factors including motivations for attending, and level of satisfaction. The specific questions were consolidated from the earlier work of Kim et al. (2002) and Lee et al. (2003) with an addition of some relating to customer satisfaction. On each day, a team of six researchers was used to gather the data via printed surveys and each team was deliberately mixed to vary age and gender in an effort to reduce bias in what was, essentially, a convenience sampling of interviewees. Doors to the event opened at 1.00pm and interviews were carried out between the hours of 4.00pm and 6.00pm. It was considered that the interviewees would have had insufficient experience of the event before 4.00pm and, on the other hand, after 6.00pm, they would be more interested in enjoying the entertainment itself. The outcome was a total of 637 responses split between 325 on Day 1 (Saturday) and 312 on Day 2 (Sunday). The sample size was felt to be sufficient to generalise from in terms of the motivations and influences on attendance and was large enough to use a variety of statistical techniques for analysis. Initially, some simple comparisons of demographics were generated using chi-squared and t-tests to identify any differences which would merit further investigation. Also, two-step cluster analysis using SPSS was applied to various aspects of the data for characteristics that might identify attendee groupings with common characteristics.

Discussion of basic findings and the application of cluster analysis

There was some disparity in levels of awareness amongst respondents on each in

relation to knowledge of the other day of music. Most respondents were only attending on the day they were questioned (82% day 1 and 93% on day 2) and 14% of them were not aware that there was another day of music. This lack of awareness of the other day was twice as high in day 2 attendees. This may be due to promotion of the second day during day 1 but was more likely to be due to the hybrid marketing campaign used by Live Nation, the promoter of the festival. Certainly, the generally high lack of awareness suggests that the reach of the festival marketing had brought about relatively distinct audiences on the two days. The findings on demographics show some differences in the make-up of attendees with a significant difference in the individual age profile of the two days. The biggest difference being in the 50-59 age group with substantially more on day 2. Day 2 also had fewer 20-39s, more 40-49s and an increase in 0-19s (possibly due to parents bringing children). There also appeared to be some difference between the proportion of males and females on the two days. Day 1 was fairly evenly split with a slightly higher proportion of females (54%) whilst day 2 had a larger number of males (60%). These variations in demographics resonate with the findings of Oakes (2003) but the two days were less extreme in their specific age differences and showed a similar range of age on each day. This would be seem to relate simply to the difference in music genres with Oakes (2003) contrasting jazz with classical and the Wireless Festival split between dance and rock music. General analysis considering the attendees' stated reasons for attending a festival found 'desire to see the acts' was the motivator cited by most attendees on both days with 'general entertainment' also important, 'excitement' and 'socialisation with friends' were also seen as important motivators (see Figure 3). The only marked difference between the two days is the increase in 'desire to see the act' on day 2. This is likely to be due to the fact that there was great interest in the headline act on that day as The Who were embarking on their first world tour for twenty years. There were also a larger number of people seeking 'relaxation' and 'escape' on day 1.

Looking in more detail at factors regarding ticket purchase at the Wireless Festival, the top five most important influences were 'quality of line-up', 'atmosphere', 'price of entrance',' mix of acts' and 'amenities' (i.e. toilets, etc). The factors which were of little or no importance in the decision to purchase tickets were 'fit with self image/ lifestyle' (i.e. it's my sort of thing), 'size of event', 'ancillary entertainment' (i.e. non-musical entertainment), 'duration of festival', 'promotional information about event' and 'event name' (i.e. the brand name). These observations further corroborate the earlier mentioned motivations for attending festivals with their focus on the quality and mix of the programme. This finding reflects the observations of Bowen and Daniels (2005) who saw a significant group for whom 'the music matters' and those of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) suggesting the importance of aesthetics or, indeed, symbolism in the case of fans of The Who.

As the differences between the two days was mainly focused on some differences in age and gender it was decided to use cluster analysis, as indicated earlier, to examine attendees as a whole in order to identify homogeneity within groups. The only factors found which gave distinct groupings were based on motivation with no links to demographics and the cluster analysis using these factors identified two

clearly distinct groups. As can be seen in Table 1, there are those that state they come only to see the particular line-up (or one act within it), Cluster 1('fans') and those who come for a variety of reasons, Cluster 2 ('socialites').

'Fans' contains only 30% of respondents but this 30% state that they are <u>only</u> influenced by the line-up. 'Socialites' has around 70% of attendees who are motivated by a range of factors (including the line-up) and are therefore likely to have higher expectations of all aspects of the festival. A further analysis of both these clusters shows that 'fans' contains more day 2 attendees (64%) than day 1 (36%) indicating that The Who's fans had made a strong turn out. Yet, the 'socialites' have a more even split across the days with more day 1 attendees (57%) than day 2 (43%). In addition, the 'socialites' have an even split on gender but the 'fans' contains a larger proportion of males (62%) due to the presence of the aforementioned 'dad rock' contingent. Age profiles do not appear to differ between the two clusters nor do behavioural factors such as the frequency of gig going or the number in group.

In terms of factors influencing ticket purchases, there were many similarities between the two clusters. However, there were significant differences in seven of the influences on ticket purchase (see Table 2). As expected the factors relating to the line-up are of greater importance to the 'fans' and factors relating to other aspects of the event (service and ancillary entertainment) are of less importance. The 'socialites' were far more influenced by their expectations of the atmosphere of the event indicating their need for overall entertainment, socialising and to feel comfortable.

This further supports the earlier suggestion with 'fans' being similar to the group described by Bowen and Daniels (2005) as 'the music matters'. Interestingly, the 'socialites' seem to reflect the thinking of Cova and Cova (2002) in that this group appears to enjoy the community created by the ritual of social behaviour found at a festival

There is no difference between these clusters in their rating of the overall event. However, the 'socialites' are more likely to return in future years than the 'fans'. This again relates to their motivation in that they are not following the bands but interested in the overall experience. Their loyalty to the festival can therefore be developed more easily than the 'fans' who are more likely to be loyal to the act and travel to different festivals to see them. It might also suggest that, whilst festival organisers need to concern themselves with developing a new and attractive line-up each year, there is also a need to ensure that overall entertainment is kept fresh in order to keep its appeal.

Conclusions

The literature considered here in the pursuit of factors that might help in segmenting the market for festivals identified the option of presenting differing genres of music with the intention of attracting somewhat different audiences in terms of demographics and motivations, as observed by Oakes (2003). This fits well with the premise of the promoter's marketing strategy in varying the billing on each day of the Wireless Festival to attract distinctly different audiences. However, the above analysis suggests that there were more similarities between attendees

on the two days than differences within the demographics. Of greater importance in future festival marketing is the identification of the two distinct groupings based on motivation. There is the smaller group of 'fans', to whom 'the music really does matter' (Bowen and Daniels, 2005) and, perhaps the harder to satisfy, 'socialites' who are looking for far more from the festival than just the opportunity to see their favourite acts. The 'socialites' may well be observed to be an amalgamation of some of the groupings noted by others. For example, 'just being social', 'enrichment over music' and 'love it all' as noted by Bowen and Daniels (2005). In considering this, the different needs of the 'socialites' begin to emerge but also their behaviour is observed as tribal in nature. Reflecting the work of Cova and Cova (2002), this suggests a problem for those marketing to this grouping as the attendees may drift away from their ritual experience at a festival in search of other sources of 'communal embeddedness'. Similarly, in terms of providing marketing with a means to target this group and satisfying their needs, the social motivation is clear but understanding what constitutes a 'good time' is not only problematic but may be difficult to repeat. Indeed, the literature on experience from Caru and Cova (2006) suggests a number of service aspects that need to be managed to meet the required symbolic, hedonic, and aesthetic goals proposed for the experience by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). So, in conclusion, whilst marketing a specific genre of music is helped by an understanding of the demographics for segmentation purposes, festival managers need to consider that a significant proportion of those attending may be transient, tribal 'socialites' with a different set of need and not all will attend because 'the music really does matter'.

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Figure 1: Saturday line-up at Wireless Festival, Leeds

Figure 2: Sunday line-up at Wireless Festival, Leeds

Figure 3: Motivations to attend

Table 1. Cluster distribution based on motivation to attend

		N	% of Combined	% of Total
Cluster	C1 Music only 'fans'	188	29.7%	27.4%
	C2 Range of reasons 'socialites'	444	70.3%	64.6%
	Combined	632	100.0%	92.0%
	Excluded Cases	55		8.0%
	Total	687		100.0%

Table 2: Differences in influencing factors

Influencing factor	Outcome		
Quality of line-up	Of greater importance to C1		
Promotional information about event	Of less importance to C1		
Functional service, (i.e. organisation deliver what it promises)	Of less importance to C1		
Interpersonal service, (i.e. staff friendly, helpful, etc)	Of less importance to C1		
Ancillary entertainment (i.e. non-musical entertainment)	Of far less importance to C1		
Event 'name' (i.e. the brand name)	Of far less importance to C1		
Atmosphere	Of greater importance to C2		