

ESCAPE TO MAYHEM? TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF ATTENDEES' MOTIVATIONS AT A HEAVY METAL FESTIVAL

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate and analyse motivations for attending Download Festival. This study further seeks to add to music festival literature, with focus on the heavy metal genre. Primary data were collected using Iso-Ahola's (1987) motivation framework- a survey of 264 visitors was conducted. Seventeen motivational items were factor analysed resulting in five factors: event experience, event curiosity, socialisation, escape and band affiliation. Results of this study identified two new motivating factors, 'event experience' and 'event curiosity'. The underlying results suggest that motivations for attending a heavy metal festival are unique to the heavy metal genre.

Introduction

Whilst it has been identified that music festivals are an important element of the festival and event industry (Getz, 2011) and attendees motivations are of interest to researchers and industry alike, a number of authors have identified this as an under researched area and have called for further research addressing motivations to attend such festivals (Bowen and Daniels, 2005; Gelder and Robinson, 2009; Pegg and Patterson, 2010). Heavy metal music festivals in particular are increasing in popularity. Despite this increase in popularity, relatively little is known about attendees' motivations for attending a heavy metal music festival.

Understanding attendee motivations is beneficial for practitioners (Bowen and Daniels, 2005; Gelder and Robinson, 2009) and industry professionals alike (Crompton and McKay, 1997; McMorland and Mactaggart, 2007). Identification of motivation to attend further helps event managers' better position and market their festivals (Formica and Uysal, 1996; Scott, 1996) which, in turn can lead to more precise marketing activities. Further, identifying motivations is a prerequisite for the effective planning of event programmes and activities (Crompton and McKay, 1997). A further benefit of identifying visitor motivation for organisers is that, in meeting socio-psychological needs of visitors, organisers could assist in creating an environment which is emotionally satisfying (Crompton, 2003) which, in turn could lead to an increase in attendance.

The need for motivation research at music festivals has been repeatedly emphasized (Gelder and Robinson, 2009; McMorland and Mactaggart, 2007). This study aims to address these needs whilst focussing on the relatively under-researched heavy metal genre through developing an understanding of the range of attendee motivations at Download music festival, 2014.

Review of literature

It has been suggested that festivals are a sharing of common interest, a statement of social identity (Farber, 1983; Mayfield and Crompton, 1995; Saleh and Ryan, 1992) and music festivals, in particular, play an important role in preserving sub-cultures and offer “a wonderful opportunity for self-expression” (Ickis, 1964: 2). Despite constant criticism surrounding song lyrics, physical appearances and general behaviour which shuns mainstream ‘norms’, heavy metal musicians and fans alike continue to articulate their identity through the heavy metal sub-culture. Heavy metal fans express themselves with their “uniform” of long hair and band shirt (Roccor, 2000). It is clear that heavy metal has become a symbol, a platform to assist fans in weathering “the strains of modernity” (Walser, 1993). The heavy metal sub-culture, it could therefore be argued, is a metaphor, a musical and physical expression of identity. The popularity of this genre is growing with an increase from one festival in the 1970’s to more than 200 such festivals worldwide. It might therefore be argued that Heavy Metal music festivals, are a platform for expression, unity and a place for fans to express their social identity in a particular setting. Further, “heavy metal festivals remain crucial junctures for bringing together the wandering heavy metal fan base” (Christe, 2004: 374).

Several researchers have identified possible motivations for attending a variety of music festivals, yet scholarly activities concerning attendees at heavy metal festivals is sparse. Festival and event tourism is increasingly important in creating economic opportunities (Bowdin *et al*, 2011; Getz, 2011; Hausman, 2000) and it has been suggested that music festivals have a significant economic impact and, further, play an important role in tourism (Getz, 2011). For example, Download Festival generates around £3 million each year for the local economy (Download Festival, 2014) and Bowen and Daniels (2005: 163) suggest that “music festivals are bound for continued growth”. One means of ensuring the long term viability of such festivals is the development of a clearer understanding of attendees’ motivations which would allow organisers to improve the various components of festivals (Crompton and McKay, 1997). Indeed, Crompton and McKay (1997) suggest three reasons why attendee motivation at festivals is important: firstly, it is a platform to create and market better products and services; it is also a way to create attendee satisfaction and, finally, it allows for a better understanding of attendees’ decision-making process. Music festivals are important as they have wide-ranging appeal and it has been found that, in addition to performers, the range of activities on offer appears to impact the satisfaction of attendees (Bowen and Daniels, 2005). Thus it is important for festival organisers to understand what motivates people to attend a festival in order to be able to provide products and services appropriate to the needs and wants of attendees.

It has been argued that motivation is linked to behaviour and satisfaction and, further, that motivation is a complex phenomenon. When applied to the context of music festivals, for example, it might be reasonable to conclude that the performers at a particular festival would have an influence regarding attendance (see for example, Thrane 2002). However, previous studies that have examined motivations to attend festivals have suggested that a range of other factors are considered by attendees. For example Mohr *et al*, (1993: 90) adopted a descriptive analysis in order to generate a visitor profile type at a 4-day festival in the United States and identified five motivational factors - socialization, family togetherness, excitement, escape and event novelty - had influenced attendees. Applying Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987) framework Uysal *et al* (1993) and Formica and Uysal (1996) found that attendees at music festivals

were looking for: escape, excitement/thrills, event novelty, socialization and family togetherness from their festival experience. In a similar vein, Crompton and McKay (1997) in their study of attendees at the Fiesta Festival, identified six motivational dimensions: cultural exploration, novelty/regression, recover equilibrium, known group socialisation, external interaction/ socialization, and gregariousness. Their study confirmed the complexity of motivational factors and concluded that attendees at the same festival possessed different motives. Contemporary research undertaken by Kruger and Saayman (2012a) added to these motivational dimensions through the identification of 'fun' and 'nostalgia' motives. Confirming that the performers and the music were not the only motivating factor for attending a festival, Bowen and Daniels (2005) found that three sets of motivations: 'discovery', 'music' and 'enjoyment' had equal influence on attending. These three motivations each identified four clusters of attendees: those who came to socialise, those seeking personal enrichment, those for which the music mattered greatly and those who enjoyed the overall festival experience. Indeed, this study found a group of attendees who were not particularly interested in the music, but in the variety of other activities available at the festival. Whilst it might be suggested that particular bands are not the only motivating factor, this study did conclude that the *genre* of music does matter to visitors and is a key motivating factor in attending a music festival (see also, Kruger and Saayman, 2012a). Indeed, other studies have emphasised the concept of belonging or group togetherness (Kruger and Saayman, 2009) as important motivating factors. Gelder and Robinson's (2009) comparison of Glastonbury and V Festivals confirmed the complex nature of attendee motivation but confirmed the relatively low importance of particular performers with 49% of attendees at V festival and only 12% of attendees at Glastonbury specifically attending as a consequence of the performers.

By their very definition, heavy metal festivals are an arena for fans of the heavy metal sub-culture to congregate and escape mainstream society and several studies have identified escape as a motivating factor for festival attendance (Lee *et al*, 2004; Mohr *et al*, 1993; Uysal *et al*, 1993). However, heavy metal attendees may be motivated by more than a desire to escape to an area where they are a part of the culture. Several studies have identified socio-psychological motives for festival attendance (Bowen and Daniels, 2005; Gelder and Robinson, 2009; McMorland and Mactaggart, 2007), which relate to the seeking benefits portion of the framework. Thus suggesting that attendees at a heavy metal festival may be motivated by a combination of both seeking and escape, such as in studies by Dunn-Ross and Iso-Ahola (1991). Interestingly several studies assessing motivation at music festivals found that the music was not the main motivating factor. Socialisation (Gelder and Robinson, 2009), escape (Kruger and Saayman, 2009) and the atmosphere (Pegg and Patterson, 2010) were found to be the leading motivation factors. Few studies identified the music as being the most important motivating factor, Gelder and Robinson (2009) found that 49.2% of attendee at the V festival were motivated by the music and Pegg and Patterson (2010) identified that only 52% of attendees regarded music as the main motivating factor and consequently there remains a large percentage of motivational factors not attributed to the music. Therefore, it could be suggested that organisers must be aware of the importance of providing a range of activities and services. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that attendees at music festivals are seeking more than just the music (Gelder and Robinson, 2009; McMorland and Mactaggart, 2007). Previous studies have identified a number of reasons for attending a music festival. The majority of these studies suggest that which bands are performing

at the festival is not the only motivating factor for attending. Thus, identification of further motives remains an important element in assessing motivation and further research is necessary.

Although attempts have been made to understand motivation across a range of events, there remains a paucity of research in the field of music festivals. Further, the degrees to which motives are important vary greatly across events. This study is an attempt to ascertain motivations at a heavy metal music festival.

Methods

The study is quantitative in nature and aims to assess attendee motivation based on a seventeen-item motivation scale. The survey questionnaire utilised for this study was developed based on a thorough review of the literature. The culmination of these initial efforts identified five common themes: socialisation, escape, excitement, event novelty and family togetherness. 'Family togetherness' was replaced with the 'music/ band affiliation factor'. Each of the five factors included multiple motivational statements. The motivation items were measured on a five-point Likert type scale: 1- Strongly Agree, 2- Agree, 3- Neutral, 4- Disagree, and 5- Strongly Disagree. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with each item. Results were then analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. The analysis section of this study consisted of two stages. First, univariate analysis with standard deviation was performed to test for normality as well as to establish the descriptive statistics. A factor analysis was then performed: a principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation was conducted to delineate underlying factors. The Anderson-Rubin method was used to test for any unique relationships which may be evident between variables and factors.

Results

Results of this study suggest that visitor motives for attending Download Festival are mainly socio-psychological in nature which confirms the findings from several other studies, which identified socio-psychological motives, such as socialisation and excitement, for attending various festivals and events (Formica and Uysal, 1996; Kruger and Saayman, 2012a; Saleh and Ryan, 1992). This seems to suggest that attending Download Festival as an event is important, but not the sole motivating factor, but the desire to satisfy the socio-psychological needs is, which would suggest that the genre is important and visitors would not attend a genre-specific music festival without some form of appreciation for the music. Further, 'band affiliation' was identified as a motivating factor in this study, again suggesting that the genre of music is a motivating factor and whilst attendees are seeking to fulfil socio-psychological factors, the choice of festival is of importance. Seemingly attendees are motivated to fulfil their socio-psychological needs within a heavy metal setting, however, the specific festival is not of high importance. Attendees at Download expect to see heavy metal bands, but these findings suggest it is important to provide a range of products and services as a means of satisfying the underlying socio-psychological motives to attend.

Confirming previous studies (see for example, McMorland and Mactaggart, 2007), the mean for three of the 'music/band affiliation' items were not very high, and in fact leaned more towards respondents not being overly motivated by the music – see Table 1 below. This could be due to the fact that Download is a longstanding music festival and may well have developed a loyal fan base

who attend the festival year after year. However, that is not to say that just anyone would attend a heavy metal festival. The rotated factor loadings (as seen in Table 2) show that the music does in fact matter. Further, Download had a range of heavy metal bands performing, some of which are well-known in popular music culture. This could suggest that certain visitors attend the festival for the small selection of well-known mainstream bands, but are not motivated by the heavy metal line-up as a whole. Festival organisers could find this information useful in order to broaden their marketing. If a group of attendees exists, who are not a part of the heavy metal sub-culture, but who will attend the festival to see a small selection of the bands, then festival organisers should widen their marketing to ensure this market is aware of the festival's appeal. Further evidence to suggest that the market could be segmented in this manner lies in the items which had the highest overall mean score: 'to see international bands' (1.57) and 'to be with friends' (1.37). The fact that the majority of respondents were strongly motivated by their desire to see international bands, which may not have been performing at another UK festival, could attract visitors from outside the heavy metal sub-culture. Organisers could benefit from higher attendance rates if they market the fact that the line-up consist of well-known bands who are not performing at other festivals.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation ^a	Analysis N ^a	Missing N
To be with people enjoying themselves	1.6856	.71088	264	0
To enjoy the crowds	2.0758	.94423	264	0
To experience new and different things	2.2273	1.08981	264	0
Because it is stimulating and exciting	1.6061	.73746	264	0
To experience the festival myself	1.7424	.94020	264	0
To be part of the unique event	1.8485	.87626	264	0
Because I like the variety of things to see and do	1.8030	.79389	264	0
To have a change from my daily routine	1.6250	.85414	264	0
To get away from the demands of life	1.7576	1.00660	264	0
To see international bands	1.5720	.85583	264	0
To be with people who also enjoy heavy metal	1.6591	.70122	264	0
To observe other people attending the festival	2.7879	1.06824	264	0
To be with friends	1.3712	.70204	264	0
As I was curious	2.8523	1.13573	264	0
Mainly to see heavy metal bands	2.0076	1.06086	264	0
Solely for this year's line-up of bands	2.9167	1.10334	264	0
The festival is value for money	2.3598	.99201	264	0

Table 2: Rotated factor loadings of music festival attendance motivations

	Factor				
	1-Event experience	2- Event curiosity	3- Socialisation	4- Escape	5- Band affiliation
To be part of the unique event	.591	.268	.183	.099	.178
Because it is stimulating and exciting	.553	.229	.205	.235	.071
To experience the festival myself	.520	.503	-.004	.086	.087
Because I like the variety of things to see and do	.516	.077	.167	.242	.074
To enjoy the crowds	.472	-.058	.252	.039	.208
The festival is value for money	.337	.060	.077	.049	.141
To be with friends	.293	.173	.032	.192	.102
As I was curious	.028	.757	.102	-.039	.168
To experience new and different things	.306	.676	.082	.032	-.004
To be with people enjoying themselves	.178	.060	.863	.210	.042
To be with people who also enjoy heavy metal	.277	.142	.493	.108	.022
To observe other people attending the festival	.067	.022	.322	.086	.176
To have a change from my daily routine	.245	.015	.170	.761	.047
To get away from the demands of life	.137	-.010	.198	.696	.111
To see international bands	.197	.050	.090	.208	.589
Mainly to see heavy metal bands	.084	.070	.268	.090	.504
Solely for this year's line-up of bands	.198	.106	-.060	-.108	.305

Table 3 displays the items which loaded into Factor 1. The top five items were in response to the question “Why did you come to Download?” The ‘frequency’ column represents the number of respondents, out of a total of 264, who answered ‘strongly agree’ to each of the items. The ‘percent’ column represents the percentage of respondents. ‘To be with friends’ was the most important item for respondents.

Table 3: Factor 1 items

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
To be with friends	190	72.0	72.0
Because it is stimulating and exciting	136	51.5	51.5
To have a change from my daily routine	146	55.3	55.3
To get away from the demands of life	145	54.9	54.9
To see international bands	159	60.2	60.2

As the factor analysis identified the underlying motivational factors, an attempt to segment the Download market was made. Chi-square testing overall revealed no significant differences between items based on age, there were however a small number of differences. The ‘because I was curious’ ($F = 2.28$) item was relevant to those between 20 and 30 years. Whilst respondents older than 30 tended to be ‘neutral’ in response. The ‘to have a change from my daily routine’ ($F = 1.71$) and ‘to get away from the demands of life’ ($F = 1.32$) were not important to those between 18 and 30 year olds. Respondents older than 30 tended to ‘strongly agree’ with these items. The ‘mainly to see heavy metal bands’ ($F = 0.48$) item was significant only for 20-30 year olds. Table 4 displays items which contributed to Factor 1 had marginal differences between genders in relation to those who ‘strongly agreed’ with the items.

Table 4: Factor 1 items, differences between genders

	Gender		
	Male	Female	
To be part of this unique event	66 37.3%	42 48.3%	Count % within gender
Because it is stimulating and exciting	83 46.9%	53 60.9%	
To experience the festival myself	88 49.7%	43 49.4%	
Because I like the variety of things to see and do	57 32.2%	43 49.4%	
To enjoy the crowds	51 28.8%	25 28.7%	

Discussion

Results of this study suggest that music festival organisers need to supply a variety of activities at their festivals in order to entertain visitors. Items ‘because I like the variety of things to see and do’ and ‘to experience new and different things’ correlate highly to their corresponding factor. This supports the notion that music festivals reach a wide audience because of the variety of activities on offer (Bowen and Daniels, 2005). From this study it was found that “event experience” was the main reason for attending Download Festival, accounting for 23.50% of the variance. This suggests that attendees are interested in experiencing the festival due to the diverse offerings available at the festival. Interestingly ‘event experience’ is not a factor found in previous studies, but the elements which make up the factor have been found in previous stud-

ies (Gelder and Robinson, 2009). However the final factors in their studies held no mention of 'event experience'. Interestingly, experience was only identified as an overall motivating factor in one other study (Kruger and Saayman, 2012a). The particular items which correlated to Factor 1 of this study (as seen in Table 1) suggested that the factor was directly related to Download Festival itself, unlike in the study by Kruger and Saayman (2012a), whereby the 'experience' factor tended to be generic. In contrast several studies did not identify experience as a motivating factor nor a motivation item (Bowen and Daniels, 2005; Kruger and Saayman, 2009; McMorland and MacTaggart, 2007). This highlights the complexity of attendee motivations and emphasises the importance of continued research within the field. Clearly festival organisers should have a strong line-up of bands at their festivals as well as a variety of other activities. This supports the findings of Bowen and Daniels (2005) and Gelder and Robinson (2009).

Factors 1 'event experience' and 2 'event curiosity' validated highly and accounted for a combined 31.38% of the total variance. These factors included items 'because I like the variety of things to see and do' and 'to experience new and different things', which correlated .516 and .676 respectively to each factor. Download Festival has a wide range of activities. There are a range of activities which are open late into the night, well after the music performances finish. These findings support previous music festival research conducted by Bowen and Daniels (2005), Gelder and Robinson (2009) and Crompton and McKay (2007) who suggest the overall experience is a key motivating factor.

Surprisingly 'socialisation' was not found to be the leading factor in this study, despite being the item which loads the highest on several previous studies (Formica and Uysal, 1996; Kruger and Saayman, 2012b; Swanson *et al*, 2008). This study identified 'escape' as a motivating factor, accounting for 3.71% of the variance which supports the escape-seeking framework first identified by Iso-Ahola (1982). Several other studies have identified 'escape' as a motivating factor (Lee *et al*, 2004; Mohr *et al*, 1993; Scott, 1996; Uysal *et al*, 1993) which might suggest that there are a range of more personal motives, such as being involved in the heavy metal-subculture, in a heavy metal music festival setting.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the range of motivations of visitors attending a heavy metal music festival. Factor analysis of 17 motivation items identified five underlying motivational factors: 'event experience', 'event curiosity', 'socialisation', 'escape' and 'band affiliation'. The reasons for attending a heavy metal festival were consistent with findings from previous music festival studies (Bowen and Daniels, 2005; Gelder and Robinson, 2009; McMorland and Mactaggart, 2007) however this study identified two previously unknown motivational factors of 'event experience' and 'event curiosity'. The highest motivating factor was 'event experience'. This included items 'because I like the variety of things to see and do' and 'to experience the festival myself'. Thus suggesting that attendees are seeking more than just the music and their interest in the festival goes beyond which bands are a part of the line-up. Festival managers who wish to attract a large audience should therefore not rely purely on the line-up of bands. A variety of activities should be available in order to ensure visitors have a fun and exciting experience as well as to provide activities for those who are not solely interested in the music.

The identification of these two new factors, which had not been identified in previous studies, suggest that motivations vary across music genres as well as the range of festivals studied, and that there may be motivations which relate specifically to music festivals. The very nature of the 'event experience' factor highlights the unique motivations within the heavy metal genre. Attendees were motivated not only by the range of activities but also by the unique experience which Download Festival provides. Thus suggesting that a music festival motivation scale, which moves away from the touristic frameworks, may be of use for future music festival studies. This would be a more specialised scale than the generic festival and events-specific scale suggested by Gelder and Robinson (2009).

Motivations for attending a heavy metal festival are unique compared to other music festivals. Attendees are motivated by a desire to attend a heavy metal festival, however, it appears that the variety of activities and the opportunity to have new and different experiences within a heavy metal context is what has motivated attendees at Download Festival. It is therefore argued that heavy metal fans are motivated by the specific heavy metal festival and that the motivational forces, the pull-forces, lie within the festival. There may be other heavy metal festivals available yet attendees chose to attend Download Festival. The two new factors further highlight the complexity of music festival attendance across genres, emphasising the "distinctive phenomenon" that is festivals and events (Gelder and Robinson, 2009: 194). Understanding what motivates attendees within this field is therefore complex and requires further research.

The results of this study shed light on a number of implications, both for future research and practitioners. The results suggest that whilst heavy metal music is a motivating factor, it is not the most important reason visitors attended Download. Despite seemingly being a platform for expressing the unique attributes of belonging to the heavy metal sub-culture, Download festival attendees were not largely motivated by the heavy metal music. It could therefore be argued that festival organisers should pay attention to individual motives for attending. It must be stressed, however, that more research is needed in the music festival field before concrete conclusions can be made. In light of the above, it could be suggested that festival organisers are required to focus on the variety of activities available as well as the bands/ artists who will be a part of the line-up.

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