

## The nature of the social experience at popular music festivals

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Popular music festivals are an integral part of the British summer time. Doubts over the maturation of the market place makes it even more important for a greater understanding of the nature of the experience that they offer. They aim to provide an enjoyable and memorable experience for all attendees, enticing consumers to return year after year. Music festival organisers can experiment with the design, programming and physical organization of their festivals in order to implement a positive experience, however the overall experience is affected by social interaction, personal benefits, symbolic meanings and cultural communication.

The aim of this study was to explore and detail the nature of festival-goer social experience at music festivals by exploring socialisation at music festivals with particular reference to Packer and Ballantyne's (2011) four facets and Nordvall et al.'s (2014) concepts of known-group socialisation, external socialisation and audience socialisation. The study was carried out in the form of qualitative in depth interviews with seven 2014 Bestival festival-goers between the age of 20-23. The study discovered that Bestival was a shared social experience that participants were immersed in by communally escaping reality in the pursuit of united happiness and social acceptance. Participants had formed communities based on shared social values to deepen their level of friendship, meet new friends and positively interact with the festival-goers around them. The festival was a third place (Hawkins and Ryans 2013) that had a distinct culture that was formed, to some extent, by the nature of socialisation itself.

### Theme: Creating Spaces

Hawkins, C. and Ryan, L., 2013. Festival Spaces as Third Places. *Journal of Place Management & Development*, 6 (3), 192-202.

Nordvall, A., Pettersson, R., Svensson, B. and Brown, S., 2014. Designing Events for Social Interaction. *Event Management*, 18 (2), 127-140.

Packer, J. and Ballantyne, J., 2011. The Impact of Music Festival Attendance on Young People's Psychological and Social Well-Being. *Psychology of Music*, 39 (2), 164-181.