

## **The Influence of the Jazz Festival Experience on Tourist Behavior**

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### **Abstract**

Festival tourism has received increasing attention from researchers, and has reached a critical mass with a sufficient level of articles to merit dedicated subject journals such as *Festival Management and Event Tourism*. Recent literature has focused on tourist motivation for festival attendance. However, limited studies examine the impact of tourist experience on their post-event behavioral intentions. This study examines return intentions toward both the festival and the host location. Music festivals can enjoy high attendance figures and can draw attendees from a broad geographic base. This provides an opportunity for the host location to leverage awareness realized through festival attendance. An empirical examination of festival attendees post-event behavioral intentions will illuminate tourist motivation to return to a similar event and also the location itself.

### **Background**

Festival tourism has attracted growing attention from the scholarly community. A destination development perspective attributes the growth of festivals to build revenue during shoulder or low seasons (Ritchie & Beliveau, 1974). Research has documented that the events are drivers for tourist demand that helps ensure visitor demand year round (Getz, Anderson, & Sheehand, 1998). Included in the area of festival research is the phenomenon of music tourism, which is often integrated and encompassed into several types of festivals. While music is typically a key feature at festivals, it can also become the organizing theme. In this case, the event will be termed as a music festival.

Music festivals have been a key aspect of music tourism. These festivals organized around live music performances are unique special events that can attract visitors from an expansive breadth of demographics (Bowen & Daniels, 2005). This provides an opportunity for the host community to work together in expanding the tourist base of destinations. Music festivals will expose tourists to locations and destinations that they may have not been able thinking of visiting otherwise. Therefore, the music festival as a special event functions as a unique driver for the event host community that can build post-festival tourism awareness.

Various aspects of festival tourism are discussed in the academic literature including place marketing, urban development, social change, consumer behavior and tourism (Matheson, 2008; Lee, Petrick & Crompton, 2007; Quinn, 2006; Prentice & Andersen, 2003; Formica & Uysal, 1998; Saleh & Ryan, 1993). A primary area is the examination of motivation for festival attendance. Consumer motivation has received considerable attention in tourism literature related to events and festivals (Backman, Backman, Uysal, & Sunshine, 1995; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Formica & Murrmann, 1998; Getz & Cheyne, 2002; Gibson, 2004; Lee, Lee & Wicks, 2004; Mohr, Backman, Gahan & Backman, 1993). However, despite the expansive examination

of tourist behaviors, little has been done to determine how the experiences of the festival or event shape future behavior towards both the event itself and the host location. Empirical evidence supports a relationship between tourist satisfaction and attitude and behavioral changes (Lehto et al, 2003). In this context, satisfaction increases the possibility of a repeat visit to a place where the tourist has had a memorable experience (Lehto et al, 2003).

It is important to establish a distinction between behavioral intentions in a tourism context and in general business. In the case of a tourism product, the return visit may not mean a literal repeat use of a product or have identical expectations. Alternately, a repeat purchase in product-based industries means the consumer will purchase the same product and expect the same product utility. In tourism, the connotation of repeat purchase can be much broader. It could mean new and different expectations of utility (Lehto et al, 2003). This is especially true for a special interest tourism product such as a musical festival. For example, a music buff may visit a destination for the first time as a result of the pull of a musical event. A repeat visit from this tourist can mean either a second time patronage to the same musical event, or an individual visit to the destination and its vicinity for other attractions and experiences. This latter scenario could be the direct result of exposure to the area as a result of attending the music festival, and can be further influenced by their satisfaction at that event.

Study objective

Against this background, this research has two broad objectives:

1. To examine tourists' music festival motivations and activity participation patterns;
2. To examine the influence of a music festival experience on a tourist's intention to return to the destination;
3. To provide insights for destinations as to how better position itself to market to music festival visitors and capitalize on the experiences gained during the festival.

Method and expected contribution

The festival to be examined will be the New Orleans Jazz Festival which in the scope of festivals would be considered a mega-event that occurs annually. This particular festival has grown from 350 attendees at its inception in 1970 to its current attendance of roughly 400,000 attendees (Mintel Group, 2008). This event draws tourists from across the globe and world renowned artists. The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1987) will be adopted into the music festival context as a basic conceptual framework. 300 Music festival visitors onsite at the New Orleans Jazz Festival will be interviewed. The survey instrument will include questions about respondents' motivations, activities and programs they participated in while in New Orleans. The activities and programs will include both those directly related to the festival and other activities outside the festival theme. Respondents will also be surveyed about their evaluation assessment of the festival as well as the destination as a whole. Their revisit intentions will be assessed both in terms of the festival revisit intent as well as revisit intention to the destination independent of the festival.

This research will contribute to the growing body of academic literature related to festival tourism, especially music festivals. This study will assist with expanding the scope and breadth of knowledge of consumer behavior in relation to music festivals. The unique contribution to

existing literature is the examination of how a festival can influence their intention to return to an area when the festival is not going on. It will yield insights for festival destinations as to how to strategically package a musical festival experience that is delightful for the visitors and that is able to induce willingness of visitors to return to the area.

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