

# **“The Influence of Music Festivals on Young Adult’s Mental Well-Being”**

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Bachelor Thesis Proposal for Obtaining the Degree  
Bachelor of Business Administration in  
Event Management

Submitted to Dr. Ivo Ponocny

Alexia Wilmink

1811535

Vienna, 22. January 2023

## **Affidavit**

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed. The thesis was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to another examination board and was not published elsewhere.

Date: 22. January 2023

## Abstract

Music festivals have been part of our society ever since the written word has been helping us to remember. Music has influenced generations, impacted political movements, and been used as a medium to express social viewpoints. As a destination for common interests, the festival or shared musical experience has the power to bring different people and societies together. Music festivals are often seen as a space for self-reflection that contribute to attendees' journey to the heart. Tapping into this magical lure and an ever-growing community, destinations have decided to use music festivals for their economic advantage. Festivals have turned into a gigantic cash cow and are increasingly being turned into a profit-only-focused business model. Therefore, academic literature began to analyze the economic and socio-cultural impacts of music festivals. It was in the interest of business to focus on how music festivals contribute to local economies, communities and the overall destination itself. However, the most important element of festivals has been overlooked: the people – the attendees themselves.

Given the aforementioned growth of music festivals and the lack of researchers' interest in the influence on festival attendees, this thesis tries to investigate how music festivals impact young adult's well-being. In this study, the definition and the essential compounds of festivals are closely discussed in order to link those to their impacts on the environment, local and international economic, as well as socio-cultural influences. Furthermore, this research provides valuable insight into the psychology of music and live performances as a means to explain the influence of music festivals on young adults attending.

In order to examine how music festivals can influence young people and whether there are certain emotions linked to them, several in-depth interviews have been conducted. The implications of the findings are provided and critically discussed at the end of the paper.

## Table of Contents

Affidavit.....	2
Abstract.....	3
List of Tables .....	6
List of Figures .....	6
List of Abbreviations .....	6
1 Introduction .....	7
1.1 Aim of this Study .....	8
1.2 Overview of this Thesis .....	9
2 Literature Review .....	11
2.1 Introduction into the Event Industry .....	11
2.1.1 Definition.....	11
2.1.2 History of the Event Industry .....	11
2.1.3 Types of Events .....	12
2.1.4 Festivals.....	14
2.2 The Music Festival Experience .....	16
2.2.1 Definition.....	16
2.2.2 Impact of Music Festivals.....	17
2.2.3 Attendees’ Motivations.....	20
2.2.4 The Music Experience .....	21
2.3 Psychology of Music.....	23
2.3.1 Music and Emotions.....	23
2.3.2 Music Performances and Emotion Regulation.....	24
3 Methodology.....	26
3.1 Research Objectives.....	27
3.2 Research Aim and Design.....	27
3.3 Data Collection.....	29

3.4	Interview Reflection .....	31
4	Evaluation.....	34
4.1	Interviewees' Characteristics .....	34
4.2	The Music Festival Experience .....	34
4.3	Music and Emotions.....	39
4.4	Stimuli .....	42
5	Conclusion.....	43
5.1	Limitations and Recommendations of Research .....	44
	Bibliography .....	46
	Appendices.....	52
	Appendix 1: Instagram Story on the Author's Account .....	52
	Appendix 2: Consent Form.....	52
	Appendix 3: Questionnaire .....	53

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1.</b> Interviewees’ Characteristics .....	31
<b>Table 2.</b> The Music Festival Experience .....	32
<b>Table 3.</b> Questions about Music and Emotions .....	32
<b>Table 4.</b> Stimuli .....	33

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1.</b> Categorization of events (Bowdin et al., 2011, p. 19).....	13
<b>Figure 2.</b> Typology of planned events (Getz, 2005, as cited in Getz, 2008, p. 404)....	14
<b>Figure 3.</b> Major elements, processes and relationships contributing to festivals (Yeoman et al., 2004, p. 41) .....	15
<b>Figure 4.</b> Socio-cultural impacts of events (Delamere et al., 2001, as cited in Sharpley & Stone, 2011, p. 350) .....	19
<b>Figure 5.</b> Methodology Process leading to this Paper’s Research Findings.....	26

## List of Abbreviations

D’n’B – Drum and Bass  
 EDM – Electronic Dance Music  
 LA – Los Angeles  
 R’n’B – Rhythm and Blues  
 UK – United Kingdom  
 US, USA – United States of America

# 1 Introduction

Music festivals have become one of the most popular and trending sectors of the event industry. Worldwide the numbers of festival goers keep growing. In the UK alone, 4.9 million people attend festivals annually (Badiali & Johnson, 2020). Even though music festivals have always played an important role in many cultures, they have only during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with their increasing economic importance, been brought to the attention of structured research (Yeoman et al., 2004). Bowdin et al. (2011) assert that the starting period of the festival boom must have originated between the 1950s and 1960s, whereas Yeoman et al. (2004) suggest that the festival trend, as we know them today, has only increased in the early to late 1990s. Nevertheless, most experts claim and agree that festivals attract thousands of people and play a vital role in the destinations' images, influencing societies and therefore have gained international economic interest, which continues to increase (Beech et al., 2014; Bowdin et al., 2011; Cudny, 2014). In recognition of this trend, research was conducted on the various impacts music festivals can have, focusing mainly on social, environmental and economic impacts. Through those studies researchers have found that festivals often enhance community pride and improve the local image (Yolal et al., 2016), hereby underlining the importance of people being at the heart of festivals.

However, only a limited amount of work has focused on the influence festivals can have on residents and attendees. As suggested and evaluated by Filep, Volic and Lee (2015), events can have a great impact on their attendees themselves, but there is limited research on the psychology of events. Additionally, Lamont (2012) outlines that simple music performances are closely linked with the emotions of their audiences and can contribute to their well-being. Overall, it is also worth mentioning that music itself impacts the mind of its listeners and can positively influence them (Harvey, 2017). Music can bring up long lost emotions and can help listeners through difficult times. Furthermore, listening to music sometimes provides unique experiences which can result in personal growth and even strengthen physical being. Research has shown that people look for mental stability in music and try to find their true identity by doing so (Lawendowski & Besta, 2020; Papinczak et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to call into question whether music festivals themselves can influence young people with their music too, and whether those live performances

have long-term impacts on their audiences as well. Of all the research conducted on the larger impacts a music festival can have, there are few studies which are directly related to the influence of attendees' well-being (Filep et al., 2015).

Even though the psychological influences are astonishing, they are yet very untouched in the field of study. Consequently, as there presently is no extended literature on the impact music festivals can have on young people (Filep et al., 2015), this thesis is a preliminary attempt to analyze how those might be affected mentally after attending at least two festivals and deepen the understanding of how much impact a music festival can have. The author of this paper tries to discover a greater connection between the festival and the attendees themselves. Since music, the core element of a music festival, is known to have a strong impact on mental well-being and the process of seeking self-fulfillment (Lawendowski & Besta, 2020), this thesis can help to develop festivals that are more focused on the music itself and creating an experience for body and soul in the future. After the research is conducted and analyzed, researchers and festival organizers should be provided with necessary information to create music festivals that are better targeted to the mental well-being of young people.

## **1.1 Aim of this Study**

As mentioned above, the main aim of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of the influences that music festivals have on their attendees. To develop an answer to that aim, the following research question has been established:

**“How do music festivals impact the mental well-being of young people?”**

Based on the research topic, the following secondary aims, which help to discover a relationship between the variables of this author's research, have been developed:

- The typology and structure of music festivals, to help understand what music festivals are about how literature perceives those events compared to the interviewees' perception later on.
- Defining the overall music festival experience, to help understand elements and success factors.



- Discussing the impact of live performances on their attendees, as a guideline of this study to evaluate the impact of music festivals later on.
- Identifying the role music plays on our mental well-being, to finally establish the link between music, music festivals and music festivals' attendees.

Based on those secondary aims mentioned above, the author has stated the following sub-research questions:

- What are the vital elements in structuring a music festival and how are those perceived by the attendees?
- How is the music festival experience perceived by its attendees?
- Do live performances impact their attendees in a psychological matter? If yes, are the attendees aware of such?
- What are the effects of music on young people's mental well-being and what are the relations between those and the experience of a live music festival?

The main research question, supported by multiple sub-research questions, was designed in an attempt to answer the following hypothesis:

*"Music festivals have an impact on young people's (attendees') mental well-being"*

During this research, several limitations have been identified. Even though the author tried to conduct in-depth research, the limited timeframe led to possible limitations in the research process. More time could have been invested in developing a greater in-depth analysis of the collected data. Furthermore, the sample size consisting of 8 interviews, also indicates impediment to the research results. Having a greater number as sample size, allows findings to be more accurate and the concerns regarding false generalization fade.

## **1.2 Overview of this Thesis**

This thesis tries to address the missing gap in literature on the impacts music festivals have on their attendees. For this research the following outline has been developed:

Introduction: Here the author gives a quick overview on what this thesis is about and what the preliminary aim of this study is. The introduction discusses the importance of music festivals' impacts and illustrates the research gap found in the literature

review. The author further outlines the secondary aims, stating the research question and hypothesis of this study.

Literature Review: Here the author provides an extensive overview on the music festival definition and history, as well as its economic and socio-cultural impact. As the aim of this study is to identify the impact music festivals have on their attendees, it tried to investigate the attendees' motivation to join a festival and the literature perceived festival experience. Later, the author discusses the impact music has on our emotions, well-being and what role music plays in our everyday life. Through analyzing such, it serves as an attempt to create a deeper connection between music, the main element at any festival, and the impact it has on attendees' well-being.

Methodology: Here the author justifies the chosen research method and analysis used for this research. It provides the reader with the necessary information to understand why the author selected a convenience non-probability sampling method. Further, it gives a clear justification on the selected interview questions.

Evaluation: This chapter will give a clear overview on the collected answers from the interviewees. The author will present the collected data and illustrate the findings in a summarized and comparative manner.

Conclusion: The final chapter clarifies why impact on music festival attendees matters. It reviews the results and with the help of the findings indicates possible improvements for future music festival organizers.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction into the Event Industry**

#### **2.1.1 Definition**

Even though there are various discussions about the term “event,” it can simply be defined as anything or something that happens. Typically, this means something that is unique in someone’s daily routine and breaks out of the ordinary (Beech et al., 2014; Bowdin et al., 2011). Events can range widely, from going to an amusement park with friends, attending a special museum exhibition, or heading to the FIFA World Cup (Beech et al., 2014). Further, Bowdin et al. (2011) describe that any event is seen as a milestone and creates, either in public or private, an excitement which allows humans to experience a break of reality. Thus there is no limit to what an event specifically can be as its intentions can vary.

However, this thesis is focused on events that belong to the business of event management. Even more specifically, the music festival industry, which is a type of event related to live music and entertainment taking the form of a public celebration.

#### **2.1.2 History of the Event Industry**

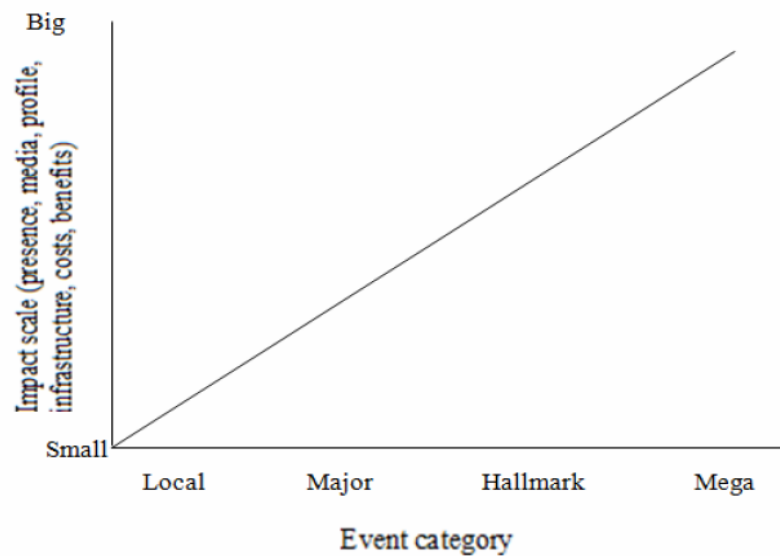
The origin of events, such as rituals and those of tradition, might be unknown or uncertain; however, event literature believes that the urge of celebration has been with us since the beginning of time (Shone & Parry, 2004). Whether it is the Olympic Games in ancient Greece, continuing with weddings as smaller celebrations, the annual festivities such as Christmas or New Years and finally modern large-scale music festivals, they serve as very important benchmarks in each generation’s lifetime (Bowdin et al., 2011; Shone & Parry, 2004). But it was only in the early 1980s that the terminology “event industry” was first discussed (Bowdin et al., 2011). It has definitely been discovered that events can be used for commercial purposes and can be treated as a business sector on their own. However, Bowdin et al. (2011) argue that even before that time, governments already realized how they could benefit from hosting large scale events in their destinations. Public events have had a continuous increase in requests, and the event industry is thriving (Cudny, 2014; Kim et al., 2001).

The increase in the economic value of the event industry has been one of the most discussed topics in event impact literature. As many governments - local as well as on a national basis - began implementing effective event strategies to boost their economies, literature became very interested in which way events can impact an economy (Bowdin et al., 2011). Yeoman et al. (2004) especially outline how destinations can be promoted and tourists can be attracted if the local authorities decide to host an event. For many countries it has been vital to host major events in order to become recognized by investors and tourists as a destination of interest. In 1990, the city of Edinburgh began measuring the economic value of events. They discovered that by hosting a festival in Edinburgh they could generate \$ 9 million in local income and fill 1,300 full-time jobs (Scottish Tourist Board in Yeoman et al., 2004). Other countries quickly followed suit and secured their economic interests by hosting a festival event.

### **2.1.3 Types of Events**

To understand how events can be differentiated and why it is of essence to understand their impact, here is a short overview of different types of events.

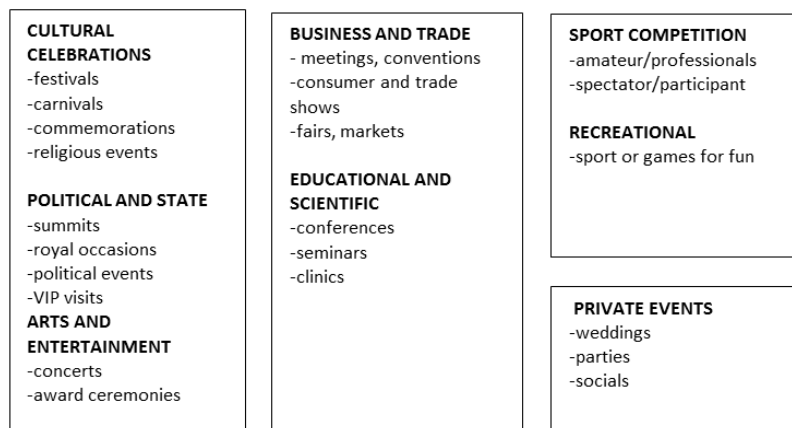
“An event is often composed of several different yet related functions.” (Accepted Practices Exchange Industry Glossary of Terms, 2003, as cited in Bowdin et al., 2011, p. 66). Those functions are related to the process of development and completion of any event, such as the planning, organizing and funding (Bowdin et al., 2011). Nonetheless further literature suggests that there are distinctions to be made in size, scale and character of an event (Beech et al., 2014; Shone & Parry, 2004). Figure 1, retrieved from Bowdin et al. (2011), perfectly illustrates those differences. It can be seen that local events are the smallest in scale, whereas mega events are by far the largest.



*Figure 1. Categorization of events (Bowdin et al., 2011, p. 19)*

Local events can be associated with small gatherings planned by communities with the intention of targeting locals. Those events are often used as a medium to strengthen the sense of belonging and bring significant values to the community (Yolal et al., 2016). Major events can be slightly larger in scale, with a wider reach of media coverage. They already target an audience of international interest and mainly involve competitions. Referring to hallmark events Bowdin et al. (2011) define them as “events that become so identified with the spirit or ethos of a town, city or region that they become synonymous with the name of the place” (p. 20). The best examples of such hallmark events would be the Carnival in Rio, Oktoberfest in Munich and the Glastonbury Festival in the United Kingdom. Initially, mega events can be described as events of very large scale with an impressive impact on their destinations. Those events usually take place only in a few years’ time and are considered to be internationally known, such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup (Bowdin et al., 2011; Getz et al., 2012).

However, in contrast to Bowdin’s et al. (2011) categorization of events, Getz (2008) attempted to give events a broader distinction in their terminology. As seen in Figure 2 down below, Getz aggregated different types of events by combining similarities under various topics, such as cultural celebrations, political and state, arts and entertainment, business and trade, educational and scientific, sport competitions, recreational and private events (Getz, 2008).



*Figure 2. Typology of planned events (Getz, 2005, as cited in Getz, 2008, p. 404)*

Those classifications help future studies to understand their field of research and give readers a more narrow understanding about what is being discussed. For example, festivals can be associated with cultural celebrations, but can be organized on a wide range from small community festivals to large multinational festivities with thousands of visitors such as the Donauinselfest in Vienna with more than 2.5 million visitors (Brownlow, 2021).

This thesis will focus on the festival experience, more specifically on music festivals. By elaborating on the characteristics and typology of events the author gives readers a thorough understanding when later discussing the impact a music festival can have on its attendees and give a feeling on the overall size of such events.

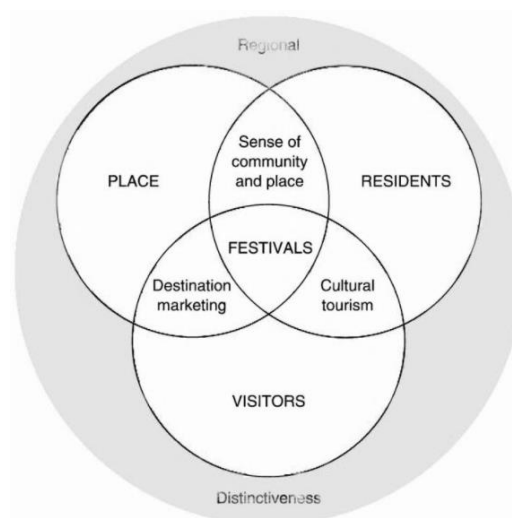
#### **2.1.4 Festivals**

The simplest definition of a festival is taken from Getz as he describes them to be a “themed, public celebration” (Getz, 2007, as cited in UNESCO, 2015, p.9), which gives a very narrow yet practical meaning to festivals. A more detailed description is taken from Beech et al. (2014), defining festivals to be “a term frequently used for an arts or cultural event; often applied to an umbrella event incorporating a series of related mini events” (p.4). Further, Yeoman et al. (2004) argue that festivals are seen as an essential part of various cultures celebrating ancient heroes and as “indigenous” and “festive,” which can only frequently be validated as not all festivals indicate a spiritual purpose.

To give a broader understanding about festivals, the Oxford Dictionary clarifies that a festival can be “series of performances of music, plays, film etc., usually organized in the same place every year” so basically, “a series of public events connected with a particular activity or idea” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, para. 1). To further distinguish festivals, Bowdin et al. (2011) lay out that festivals can be differentiated in their main sense of entertainment or purpose, however, music always being a vital element of those events.

As seen in Figure 2 from Getz (2005, as cited in Getz, 2008) and looking at Beech et al. (2014) argumentation, all insist that festivals are part of a destination’s cultural celebration. Meaning, they can contribute to social cohesion and allow an open space for communities to foster respect. Essentially, those festivals have often become part of the destination’s brand image (Yeoman et al., 2004). Hereafter, aligning with the definition of the Oxford Dictionary that festivals are usually held in the same place every year, making festivals strong contributors to the local business activity, depending on their size and scale (Kim et al., 2001).

To give a more narrow understanding and visual approach, Yeoman et al. (2004) further argue that there are three vital elements that make up a festival. As shown in Figure 3 below, they illustrate that a successful festival, either regional or distinct, is dependent on three elements: place, residents and visitors. This figure simplifies the essential values and perfectly creates an easy overview of festivals’ major elements.



**Figure 3.** Major elements, processes and relationships contributing to festivals (Yeoman et al., 2004, p. 41)

To host a successful festival, it is said that those three elements have to align with each other, be coordinately worked on and equally observed by the host. Yeoman et al.'s (2004) figure further perfectly exemplifies the main reasons behind planning and executing a festival: destination marketing, cultural tourism and sense of community and place (Bowdin et al., 2011; Yeoman et al., 2004). Again, this illustration further aligns with Getz's (2005) view of categorizing festivals as cultural celebrations. Overall, those three reasons established by Yeoman et al. (2004) have helped research to focus on certain aspects involving the impacts and purposes of events. Especially transforming the purpose of festivals into a destination marketing subject has attracted many authors to evaluate and discuss festivals' impacts.

This being said, literature has had a very strong focus on discovering the impacts of festivals on the place and its residents. Research discovered how destinations can use festivals as a tourism attraction to lure in thousands of visitors, consequently explaining their impact on the destination's economy as well as its communities. However, being a fundamental segment in a festival's creation, few researchers have addressed the question of impact a music festival can have on its visitors. With this in mind the author of this thesis emphasizes on the impacts festivals can have on their third, equally meaningful element: the visitors themselves.

To get a better understanding on the festival impacts discovered by previous research, the next chapter of this thesis will go into depth on the impacts music festivals can have on their places, residents and environments.

## **2.2 The Music Festival Experience**

### **2.2.1 Definition**

Music festivals can be described as a type of festival dedicated to music, entertainment and celebration (Bowen & Daniels, 2005). It lies in their essence to deliver an aural good to the audience and give artists the opportunity to play their music in front of numerous people (Cudny, 2014). The music played at those festivals can be a focus of one genre such as pop, rock or jazz or can present a mixture of various artists of different genres. Commonly, those festivals take place over several



days, with the audience camping on-site, and include many additional entertaining activities (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

### **2.2.2 Impact of Music Festivals**

As shown in Figure 3 (Yeoman et al., 2004), music festivals are built around three main elements: place, residents and visitors. Being dependent on those elements it is only reasonable to assume that the impact of a music festival has its equal weight on those three pillars. Nevertheless, while each factor has the same value in festival development, literature has had a dominant focus on the economic aspects (Quinn, 2013).

Reasonably, music festivals can have a positive influence on local economies as they can attract a large number of visitors. This ultimately leads to increased tourist expenditure, longer visits and new business opportunities (Kim et al., 2001; Yolal et al., 2009). Many destinations have taken this into consideration and have focused on the financial return on investment of hosting a music festival (Goldblatt, 2002). This can further be supported by numbers analyzed through festival reports. For example, solely during the year of 2014 music festivals hosted in the UK generated 1.7 billion pounds of direct and indirect spending by tourists. This single report shows that those festivals sustained 13,543 full-time jobs and can support the discussed economic benefits (Webster & McKay, 2016). The numbers only increased and by the year of 2018, the UK welcomed over 4.9 million festival goers annually (Badiali, & Johnson, 2020).

Not only the UK, being one of the countries hosting the most festivals, has discovered the economic importance of music festivals. Also the United States of America (US) have discovered the profitability of hosting music festivals, as visitor spending and ticket sales has exploded (Gajanan, 2019). One of the most successful festivals recorded in the country with a profit of \$ 114.6 million in 2017 is the Coachella Music Festival (Hennis, 2022). With over 750,000 people attending both festival weekends in 2022, it has become one of the largest commercialized music festivals in the country (Ogilvie, 2022). Studies estimate that in 2021 live concerts brought a revenue of \$ 600 million to their local economies (Sohaib, 2022). These numbers provide confirmatory evidence that there is in fact a strong monetary economic impact arising from music

festivals. Additional literature and supportive arguments made by research papers confirm those statements (Andersson et al., 2013; Webster & McKay, 2016).

Secondly, a widely discussed and thoroughly analysed topic are the socio-cultural impacts of music festivals. Socio-cultural impacts are related to the influence or affective change an event can have on people's lives (Wallstam et al., 2018). In literature social impacts often refer to the transformation an event has on people's quality of life. In other words, how change affects the way communities live, work or cope with meeting their needs (Sharpley & Stone, 2011; Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Cultural impacts on the other hand can be related to the changes made towards personal norms, beliefs and values that create a sense of unity within a society. Evidently, a distinction between social and cultural impacts should be kept. However, even if differences in definition are visible, the relationship between those two impacts are unmissable and therefore, out of simplicity in this thesis, will be combined and referred as socio-cultural impacts.

Finally, depending on the dimensions such an event has, its influence on local communities can vary. As festivals create a unique atmosphere by gathering thousands of individuals, they allow space to develop a union between individuals involved and strengthen the local communities' bond (Yolal et al., 2009). Especially, since music festivals continuously allow locals to embrace their culture and express their identity towards others (Yeoman et Al., 2004; Quinn, 2013). To grant a more detailed summary of social impacts, besides the elements discovered by Yeoman et al. (2004) presented in Figure 3 above, Delamere et al. (2001, as cited in Sharpley & Stone, 2011) illustrated a list of not only positive but also negative impacts, as seen in Figure 4 below.

Social Benefits	Social Costs
<p><b>Community Benefits:</b>            Celebration of community            Enhanced community identity            Enhanced community image            Increased community cohesion            increased community well-being            Improved quality of community life            Individual pride through participation            Shared ideas amongst community</p> <p><b>Cultural / Educational Benefits:</b>            Experience of new activities            Participants learn new things            Event showcases new ideas            Development of cultural skills / talents            Exposure to new cultural experiences            Strengthening of community friendships            Lasting positive cultural impact            Achievement of common community goals</p>	<p><b>Quality of Life Concerns:</b>            Increased crime / vandalism            Unacceptable increase in vehicular / pedestrian traffic            Overcrowding            Litter / ecological damage            Reduced privacy            Disruption to normal routines            Unacceptable noise levels            Overuse of community facilities</p> <p><b>Community Resource Concerns:</b>            Increased disagreement within community            Event is 'all work no play'            Excessive demand on community human resources            Highlights cultural stereotypes            Unequal sharing of benefits of the event            Weakened community identity            Excessive demand on community financial resources            Potential sense of failure within community</p>

*Figure 4. Socio-cultural impacts of events (Delamere et al., 2001, as cited in Sharpley & Stone, 2011, p. 350)*

A closer look at Figure 4 indicates that the authors want to raise their concern regarding the quality of life and community resources for events with large attendance as they further create local disruptions. Therefore, if not properly managed, festivals can create social dislocations (Bowdin et al., 2011). To avoid disturbances and negative consequences, festivals' direct and indirect impacts have to be carefully considered, analysed by stakeholders and outweighed against each other. Nevertheless, literature emphases lie on the greater potential such as local pride and cultural expressions (Arnegger & Herz, 2016; Bowdin et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2001; Quinn, 2013; Sharpley & Stone, 2011).

Sharpley and Stone (2011) further indicate that even if events differ in their purpose, all major festivals or minor local festivities have one thing in common: the people. Whether it be an international audience, local volunteers or the organizers themselves, "[...] in either case, however, the event may have impacts on both participants and spectators and on the local (host) community more generally as well as, depending on its nature and scale, on communities further afield or not directly involved with the event." (Sharpley & Stone, 2011, p. 347). In terms of this study, it can be found that since local communities attend music festivals as well, some elements of socio-cultural impacts might influence the attendees' overall well-being too.

### **2.2.3 Attendees' Motivations**

Even though understanding visitors' motivation to attend a music festival is vital to offering the ultimate experience (Crompton & McKay, 1997), only few researchers focus on festival motivation (Abreu-Novais & Arcodia, 2013). By looking into the small amount of research on understanding the attendees' motivations it can help create alignments to future possible psychological influences of attendees. For this reason research on visitor motives, as an element of this literature review, is shortly being analyzed.

According to the existing literature there are several yet related reasons why people attend festivals. Most studies on event motivations fall back on the push-pull theory (Dann, 1981) and the escape-seeking dichotomy (Iso-Ahola, 1982). The first one indicates that push factors such as internal emotional needs and pull factors such as external attractions stimulate visitors to accept an event invitation. On the one hand, people begin to be pushed by internal arouses towards possible need-fillers. On the other hand, they are being pulled towards external enchantments. Both forces leave a mark and are crucial when it comes to the individual decision-making process (Dann, 1981).

The second framework used in multiple motivation studies indicates that again there are two deciding forces: (1) the desire to escape day-to-day life, (2) the quest for personal rewards. Iso-Ahola (1982) displays that both factors can be equally present. Similarly, both frameworks reveal that there is a very strong internal motivation when it comes to attending music festivals, and by looking into following literature it seems as there is a strong link between personal identity and music festival motivation.

Crompton and McKay (1997) finally conducted a study on festival visitors' motivations by using both of those separate frameworks: the escape-seeking dichotomy and the push-pull factors. Those two authors underlined that internal factors such as personal wants and needs play a determined part when it comes to intrinsic motivations (Crompton & McKay, 1997).

Finally, more recent studies can support both of those frameworks as well as indicate a rather more detailed explanation by conducting surveys and finding more specific reasons (Bowen & Daniels, 2005; Uysal et al. 1993; Shone & Parry, 2006). Uysal et al.

(1993) surveyed 174 people regarding their festival attendance motivation and identified 5 main reasons, such as: escape, thrill, novelty, togetherness and socialization. Those factors are closely related to the escape-seeking dichotomy by Iso-Ahola (1982). Furthermore, Shone and Parry (2004) supported those outcomes by finding out that people attend events for the socializing effect, interacting with others and personal effects such as self-fulfillment and relaxation. Those studies show the similarities between both original frameworks and further support their ideas by discovering additional motivations, such as socialization.

This thesis will try to use this valuable knowledge in order to identify similarities within. Further, when creating and conducting the interviews, the author of this thesis will try to emphasize on the interviewees' motivations and is interested whether they can influence psychological outcomes.

#### **2.2.4 The Music Experience**

Besides intrinsic motivations, the actual music experience at a music festival is said to be the main motive why visitors are willing to attend (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Music is a very powerful tool, which influences humans in a more meaningful way than we might assume. At a certain level, music can affect people's emotions, and especially a live performance, which is the main element of a music festival, is on full force to influence and enhance such emotions (Lamont, 2012; Thompson et al., 2005). However, this thesis will discuss musical influences on humans in the following chapter in a more detailed matter and further continue to describe music as part of the festival experience.

Music experiences at a festival are put together through multiple performances, rather than only one or a few artists. In most cases some of these performances are marketed as headliners of the festival (Laing & Mair, 2015). Meaning, that the band or singer is someone very well-known, who has the means of attracting people to the festival. Further, the type of music played at a festival can also differ. Almost all genres of music can be found at festivals, but organizers often specify a certain genre. For example, Nova Rock in Austria is a pure rock music festival and the Copenhagen jazz festival is specially designed for jazz enthusiasts. However, no matter the genre, music

lies in the main essence of a music festival and will contribute to the overall festival experience of each individual attending.

To elaborate on past literature, Packer and Ballantyne (2011) have discovered that the music brings people together and unites them during their overall festival experience. It is not surprising that without the right music and singers' performances, music festivals would not receive the same acknowledgement as they do today. Especially since the music is often a live performance, the dimension of engagement and power the audience feels is quite different from listening to music at home (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Thompson et al., 2005).

In general, music performances are said to generate well-being and have positive influences on the audiences' mood and their quality of life (Lamont, 2012). A review of further literature has also indicated the connection between music and the expression of individuality, self-identity and self-development, especially seen by Millennials (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Lamont, 2012).

Further, it is important to mention statements made by music journalists as they align the high interest of music experiences within the experience economy (Clark, 2015). LA Weekly journalists believe that due to the fact that access to music has been made so easy, the urge to attend a live performance as an external experience has risen. This can be supported by research conducted by Brown and Knox (2016) who took a closer look into the reasons why individuals attend live music performances as a result of having easy access to free music and increasing the popularity of engaging in life performances. The two authors have developed four main indicators through their analysis: Experience, Engagement, Novelty and Practical [*sic*]. The first one being the decisive factor of linking the previously mentioned journalism and research together. Participants want to be part of the performance and want to feel like they belong to this unique, out of the daily routine, experience, which again links back to the original definition describing a successful event.

The music experience during music festivals is indeed a very strong connector between the audience and the performers themselves. Music provides a common ground of emotions and helps foster a connection within the group of people experiencing it. A group identity will be formed, as each individual's personality slowly

merges into one joint emotion. Then again, a live music performance, as a form of active participation, can create such feeling of belonging in a much deeper way than passive listening of music at home (Lamont, 2012). Henceforth, this thesis will continue to evaluate the importance of music and will give a more detailed overview on music influencing emotions. At a level of affect, the survey questions will be closely linked to discovering a deeper connection between the attendee and his or her music festival experience.

## **2.3 Psychology of Music**

The psychology of music is a field of research where psychologists, neurologists and musicians discuss “the processes by which people perceive, respond to and create music, and how they integrate it into their lives” (Tan et al., 2010, p. 15). Already over 2000 years ago it was discovered that there is a strong connection between the sound of music and the possibilities of receiving its sound waves by the human ear. However, it is of fundamental understanding that music itself is a complex field of study and does require more than simply listening, but also involves additional senses through the impact of melody, rhythm and performance (Tan et al., 2010).

### **2.3.1 Music and Emotions**

Music has the power to influence human beings in many ways. Harvey (2017) argues that music touches us and enables our brain to bring back memories and “stimulate our emotions” (01:31). Similarly did Pascoe et al. (2005, p. 8) describe that music can “exalt the human spirit, transform the human experience and bring joy, beauty, and satisfaction to people’s lives” (as cited in Packer & Ballantyne, 2011, p. 164). In other words, music has the power to express a certain mood, as well as trigger emotional response, if connected to a specific experience or memory. Therefore, it is impossible to connect music to an intrinsic value, as each individual creates different emotions when listening to a piece of music (Vink, 2001). It is also important to note that there are multiple beneficial effects that are linked to music, as established by MacDonald et al. (2012). The authors realized that music is more than a means to evoke emotions, but also engages, distracts, adds to social activities and can affect identities. Listening to the same music is said to create a sense of belonging together and especially young

people, on the search of their identity, tend to orient themselves with their music taste (MacDonald et al., 2012).

Research conducted by Papinczak et al. (2015) discovered that for people between the ages of 15 and 25 years old, music and well-being are linked in several different ways. They have found that young people in particular often come back to listening to music if they are feeling stressed or emotional after a long day. Moreover, Packer and Ballantyne (2011) claim that music is part of an identity development and as any form of art can help people to express themselves particularly at a young age, which is conclusively proven by Papinczak et al.'s study in 2015. Hence, it can be said that music plays a vital role in human self-development and therefore can be strongly connected to the early stages of young adulthood. Huron (2006) further indicates that music is seen as a safe space, initiating exploration and expression of emotions.

Especially during the early stages of childhood music has a significant impact on each individual. As research indicates, being actively engaged with music can benefit many developing stages in life (Hallam, 2010). For example, music helps with language and literacy skills, attainment and creativity, social development and is closely linked to physical development and health (Hallam, 2010). As Hallam (2010) discovered, being actively engaged with music can even reduce stress and support the immune system. This was further proven by a study conducted during a live performance by Fancourt and Williamon (2015), which will be discussed in detail in the following paragraph.

### **2.3.2 Music Performances and Emotion Regulation**

Emotion regulation is the ability to understand, control and accept one's emotions. By implementing regulation strategies, individuals have the power to control impulsive behavior and regulate emotions in a beneficial way. For centuries music has been used as a form of expression and engagement with culture where musical engagement was often seen as a form to regulate emotions (Chin & Rickard, 2013).

Further research also indicates that music is used as an effective tool to induce positive or negative emotions (North et al., 2004). As mentioned in the previous chapter, music has the power to benefit growth and reduce stress in many ways. With regards to emotions, research has further demonstrated that music is an efficient tool



for forcing positive emotions, dealing with negative feelings, but also helping with stabilizing desirable moods (Hallam, 2010; North et al., 2004).

Hence, research on emotional regulation and impact of music can be closely linked with regards to its listeners' well-being and the listeners' engagement with music (Chin & Rickard, 2013). Chin and Rickard (2012), further defined music engagement as a level of interaction, active or passive, in music activities. Those music activities can be either active music participation, by playing instruments, or music listening to ensure psychological well-being and create a platform for self-growth (Chin & Rickard, 2012; Huron, 2006).

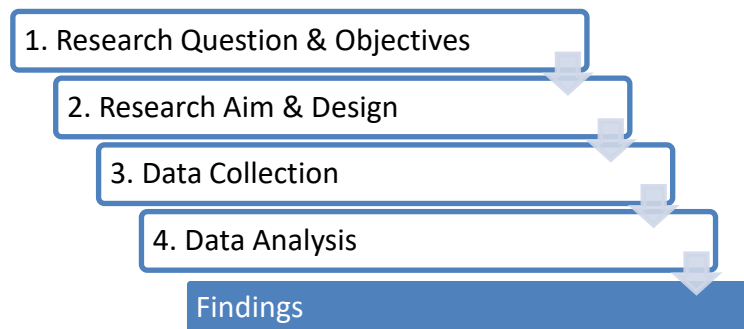
Music performances can be, in a sense, also be seen as a music engagement (Swarbrick et al., 2019). Music performances have the tendency to evoke emotions and memories too, hence have a great potential to influence the audience in a much stronger sense than one might expect (Chin & Rickard, 2013; Lamont, 2012; Swarbrick et al., 2019). Tan et al. (2010) elaborate on how the performer influences the audience and vice versa. Research has encountered that it is usually the presence of others who affect the own perception of a music performance. Concerning the fact that music festivals are essentially a multitude of music performances it could be concluded that they have a strong effect on the attendees' well-being, as music has the power to increase such emotional sensitivity and intelligence (Resnicow et al., 2004; Västfjäll et al., 2012).

However, there is yet only limited amount of research conducted on the relationship connecting music festivals and their attendees' mental well-being (Lamont, 2012; Ballantyne et al., 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). The first active research was done in 2015 by Fancourt and Williamon, who explored the greater impact of a live music performance on the body and mind of an attendee. As previous research solely focused on laboratory research, this experiment took a closer look into the biological responses to a live performance. Fancourt and Williamon (2015) explored the impact on the human body's steroid hormone response and officially discovered a positive correlation between live music and the reduction of human stress levels. In this study the audience was asked to give a saliva sample before and within 60 minutes after the concert. Through those samples it was possible to detect the reduced cortisol level, indicating a lower stress level than before the concert. Based on this study further

research should be undertaken as a mean to contribute to a wider range of literature reviews in the field of live performance's impact on attendees' well-being.

### 3 Methodology

The methodology section serves as an outline on the analytical approach used for this research. The literature review previously showed that even if there is a good amount of research on the overall impacts of music festivals, what seems to be missing are sources concerning the psychological influences on their attendees. In order to add to the small amount of existing literature and gain more information on psychological impact, the author tries to identify how live performances and music festivals influence festival attendees. To give a clear understanding, Figure 5 tries to visualize the author's guideline on the methodology process.



*Figure 5. Methodology Process leading to this Paper's Research Findings*

First of all, the aim of this chapter is to describe the research question and related objectives, the intentions of this research. Further, the description of the research aim and design shall contribute to a better understanding on why the following research approach was chosen. Continuing with the data collection and the subsequent introduction of the data analysis will offer an understanding on how the author received and interpreted the data. Finally, as a consequence of this chapter, the author will present the findings of this study.

### **3.1 Research Objectives**

Understanding the research objectives and research question can help to propose the right methodology, emphasize what needs to be achieved and what is aimed for when conducting this study.

With focus on the missing literature stated during the literature review, this paper has discovered the following gap in research, being the research question:

#### **How do music festivals impact the mental well-being of young people?**

In order to evaluate and answer this research question appropriately, a number of objectives have been established. These objectives have been developed with the help of the collected literature review above and provide a limitation of focus when researching and answering the research question. The following research objectives were identified:

- Understand the relationship young people have with music festivals.
- Evaluate the motivation of young people's willingness to attend a music festival.
- Identify the relation between a live performance, its music and the audience's perceived emotions.

### **3.2 Research Aim and Design**

When discussing the different measures on how to conduct research, Creswell (2014) distinguishes between three main types: qualitative research, quantitative research and mixed research. Qualitative research, often supported through interviews, collects data by focusing on individuals discussing a "social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014, p.1). Quantitative research is more about testing theory by looking at variables. Those variables are used to prove or reject a statement, often collected through a survey. The mixed method tries to combine both qualitative and quantitative research. Through this design the research is presumed to be more accurate and gives an even closer understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2014). For this study, the qualitative research method has been chosen as the author tries to

look deeper into individuals' perceptions and intake of emotions. Hence, interviews from a spectrum of 8 participants will be used to acquire primary data.

The main aim of this research is to evaluate and discover the impact music festivals have on their attendees. To elaborate on this interest, the research objectives obtained above will help to guide this research in answering the research question. The central focus lies on the question how music festivals influence young people's mental well-being as live performances are known to have a positive impact on their attendees (Fancourt & Williamon, 2015). This knowledge can be consequently used to give festival organizers an understanding of the audience experience and hence, allows the festival experience to exceed expectations.

As music is the essential element in hosting a music festival, the impact music has on its listeners in their daily lives will also be examined. Therefore, serving as a means to justify the research objective on the correlation between music and its impact on listeners' well-being, which will later on be put into justifying the relationship between live music and the impact on its attendees. Overall, this research has been designed to discover the links between music and emotions, live performances and well-being, and developing festival experience based on the results.

Consequently, this study requires the implementation of a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is mostly used in research conducted on social context (Mohajan, 2018), which seems most fitting towards this specific research. Qualitative research allows to focus on social studies as it thoroughly examines, or tries to explain, why certain members of a group behave as they do. It focuses on the influence situations have on the people experiencing them and how it affects their behavior or impacts their daily lives. Conger (1998) suggests that the main purpose of conducting qualitative research is to identify and evaluate personal experiences. It is about discovering individuals' perception on situations and therefore allows results to be more in-depth and powerful. Mohajan (2018) further supports this argument as he believes qualitative research "seeks to gain a better understanding of people's thoughts, attitudes and behaviors" (p.17).

As this research on music festival impact is based on discovering the mental impacts of the audience, qualitative research is arguably a more suitable fit compared to a

quantitative research method. Quantitative research focuses on numerical statistics and is more valuable when it comes to scientific evaluations. This thesis tries to gain deeper answers in terms of how the participants feel, which can be better achieved by answering open ended questions during an interview.

However, it has to be taken into account that there are potential weaknesses which can arise when conducting qualitative research. For example, investing more time into interpreting the answers, having limited subjective answers and a lack of accuracy which is usually delivered by numbers (Mohajan, 2018). Further, it is being argued that purely qualitative research allows space of being biased by the author or difficult to present (Richards & Richards, 1994). Keeping those limitations in mind or being aware of those disadvantages, however, can help the author of this thesis being objective and managing an in-depth analysis of the data retrieved, when designing this survey.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

In accordance with the proposed research method, in-depth interviews were conducted. Those interviews consisted of multiple open-ended questions, which assisted in discovering in-depth information on individuals' festival experience, festival knowledge and the influence of music. Further, the author implied to include additional questions working together with stimuli, such as pictures or videos, which allowed a greater understanding on arising emotions with regards to memorizing past festival experience.

Firstly, in order to get an understanding about the characteristics of the participant, questions were asked related to the person. For example, gender, age, nationality and personality. As the main purpose of this research is to examine young people, those interviews were conducted with 20-25 year old. With the limited time available for conducting this research and the author being in the same age frame, the sample for this research has been taken from acquaintances of the author.

In consequence, leading to a convenience non-probability sampling method. Convenience sampling is known as sampling method of using "convenient" respondents for the researcher. Meaning, it could be anyone who is related,

befriended or working together with the author (Galloway, 2005). However, to counteract the high probability of being biased, the author of this thesis chose to work with the social media platform Instagram. Hereby, she posted an Instagram story, requesting who might be interested in participating in her studies (App. 1). Through this measure the author tried to minimize personal bias and ensured the voluntariness of the participants.

The selection criteria were especially focused on the ages of the participants, to ensure an equal range within the population. In advance of conducting the interviews, participants were further selected based on the fact that they have been to at least 2 festivals before. Regarding this fact, the author tried to find reasons why the participants decided to attend another time. Finally, all the information and data collected have been ethically considered, as all participants have been asked for their consent and filled out the consent form (App. 2).

After getting a closer look at the characteristics of the participants, the second section consisted of multiple open-ended questions asking about the relationship a participant has towards festivals. Finding out about the history and the experience each person has with festivals gave a clear understanding whether it has impacted them, consciously or not, in the long, as well as, in the short run. After having finalized their previous festival experiences, the author continued the interview with grabbing the attention by working together with stimuli. This section started off by showing a picture and the after-movie of a popular music festival in Austria to address as many interests as possible.

Afterwards participants were asked to reflect on how these audio-visual stimuli make them feel. The final section took a closer look into the relation between music, live performances and the attendees' emotions. With a range of open-ended questions, an open-ended interview was designed and participants were given the possibility to answer as thoroughly as possible. Finally, the interviews were recorded and transcribed, to ensure transparency and accuracy of the data retrieved. The language used in constructing and performing the interviews is English.

### 3.4 Interview Reflection

This chapter tries to give a narrow understanding on why specific questions were chosen. It emphasizes the author’s decision-making process behind each question chosen for this questionnaire (App. 3). The questions were placed in chronological order, giving participants a smooth introduction towards the topic. Having open-ended questions further allows flexibility in the interview process. The interview was structured into the following sections:

- Interviewees’ Characteristics
- The Music Festival Experience
- Music and Emotions

#### Interviewees’ Characteristics

The interviewees’ characteristics cover the personal data collection of the interviewees. The table below illustrates how this data can be used in advantage of the research purposes.

Interview Questions	Aim of Question
Personal Information such as name, age, sex	Possibility of distinguishing and finding similarities between ages and genders
Occupation and Education	Personal competence and responsibility
Festival Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Music Festivals you attended?</li> <li>• What kind of festival was it and how many days was each of those festivals long?</li> </ul>	Possibility of distinguishing and finding similarities in interviewees’ festival experience and understanding music festivals in practice

**Table 1.** Interviewees’ Characteristics

#### The Music Festival Experience

The second section of this interview was developed to identify the main associations and relationships each individual has with music festivals. The answers to those questions serve as an indication to develop an understanding how strong music festival attendees feel towards their festival experience and whether or not a stronger bond can be felt in the following section between music and emotions. This could help

realize the impact music festivals have on their lives and whether or not the experience has long lasting memories.

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the word “music festival”?
2. Looking back, what were the main reasons for you to attend those music festivals? (follow up: Did the line-up affect your decision to go?)
3. What makes a music festival different to other events?
4. What does your perfect festival experience look like?
5. Has your festival experience changed over time? If yes, what memorable values/aspects do you appreciate the most?
6. Looking back, do you remember how you felt after attending a music festival? Do you believe it affected your well-being?

**Table 2.** *The Music Festival Experience*

**Music and Emotions**

The following questions aim to investigate how music and live performances affect the well-being of their listeners. They further try to identify whether or not the emotions felt when listening to live music differ towards those felt when listening to music at home. The questions intend to find out the greater impact of music on young people’s mental well-being and use in their everyday life.

1. How often do you listen to music / day? Do you feel like it adds something to your life?
2. Do you think music festivals / live music performances add value to your everyday life? If yes or no, how so?
3. Do you feel that music festivals have influenced the way you listen to music?
4. How does music make you feel?
5. From your point of view, is there a link between music and emotions? If yes, how? Is this link stronger at music festivals?
6. In what ways do you feel different when listening to live music than to music on your own at home?

**Table 3.** *Questions about Music and Emotions*



Stimuli

The following section was chosen to stimulate the emotions and call back the music festival memories of the attendees. The author tries to identify similarities between the participants and whether generalized assumptions can be made. Further, it helps to conclude whether or not certain types of emotions or a form of impact can be discovered.

Looking at this picture: What do you see, what moments do you remember and how does it make you feel?



Watching this video: How does this make you feel and what are the characteristics that make you feel that way? What do you think when seeing this? How do the different types of music affect your emotions?



**Table 4.** Stimuli

## 4 Evaluation

The following chapter provides an overview of all the collected data and presents the findings of this author's research analysis.

### 4.1 Interviewees' Characteristics

A total of eight people, four male and four female participants in the ages of 20-24, were interviewed, all currently completing their bachelor studies with various majors. The author asked questions related to their personal music festival experience and their connection between music and emotions, while finally working with stimuli to get a better understanding on their emotions.

Overall, the average number of festivals attended was 6, which is quite a significant number indicating that all participants were willing to attend more than two or even three music festivals. Furthermore, looking at the types of festivals attended, it can be seen that there is a large variety in music interests. Even though all participants attended a regular pop/rock festival, some repeatedly attended EDM, drum and bass and finally techno festivals, leaving space to evaluate music genres preferences within the current young adult generation.

### 4.2 The Music Festival Experience

Looking into the participants' music festival experience, the author found very similar interest in the motivation to attend and the personal definition of a music festival. *Friends, fun, joy and living life* were the main elements when remembering what a music festival is. Other elements such as *sun, alcohol and camping* were the secondary factors mentioned by the participants, leading to the authors' suggestion of further research concerning their potential influence or relevance towards the overall festival experience.

*"The first thing that comes to my mind is the word: carelessness. Having a good time with friends, not worrying about anything except which artist you want to see and if there is enough beer and food for everyone."*

*"Listening to music I like, with a group of my friends, camping for several days, drinking and just enjoying life."*

*“Good music, many people, camping, alcohol, having a good time with friends while meeting new people and having an open, free lifestyle for once.”*

Festivals offer a playground for musical interests, open minds and open hearts. It is a setting for strengthening friendships, but also lays a foundation for discovering new ones.

*“First my memories and experiences come up. I guess the festival in Paris is the first one that comes up in my mind because I was there two days in a row. – But I also think about the happy crowd and the crazy laser lights.”*

The primary research undertaken revealed that the main reasons for attendance are: *the line-up (the music)* and *the people*. Even though music seemed to be vital, the festival goers indicated that the overall festival experience was completed by creating memories with their friends and strangers. The consequential social aspect, besides the initial music experience, supports Packer and Ballantyne’s (2011) findings in added value to the festival atmosphere.

*“... the people surrounding make it more exciting.”*

*“My main reason to go is the music for sure, but it is also mostly about having a good time with friends and party.”*

*“Festivals always have a unique ‘aura’. You will never meet as open minded people as at a festival. Everybody is on the same page and likes the same music. To take part at such a big event is just a matchless experience. That’s why I attend more than one festival.”*

The participants spoke about how there is no place which compares to a festival ground. It creates this aura and space, where everyone seems to be on the same page and is looking forward to the same experience.

*“I will never forget the awesome times I’ve had at festivals together with my friends and all the strangers we got to know.”*

*“It’s about spending time together with your friends camping and chilling, meet new people that are on the same page as you.”*

*“There are mainly two reasons why I would or would not go to a music festival. First of all, if I can find a group of friends to join me and second of all if I like the line-up.”*

Being at a music festival means enjoying music one loves, but also suggests sharing an extraordinary experience with people you know, strangers and looking back to those moments together. It builds a sense of belonging by creating a playground of similar interests and taste in music. Music festivals not only offer the advantage of engaging with well-known artists, but as mentioned by the participants, they allow to find new interests in unknown artists and broaden one’s taste in music.

*“... a festival is a wonderful way to relieve stress and give you the reset you need. Dancing in a crowd alongside your friends and strangers offers a lot in terms of just feeling great overall.”*

*“I believe the more bands or artists you like, the more likely you will enjoy the festival and have a better time. For example, if you are in the middle of the crowd and you love the same band as the others, watching them, you will feel being part of this huge group of people that sing, shout and dance to the same music you do. That just pushes the experience to another level. To be honest, if you don’t like the band, you will probably feel in the wrong place. Apart of that, there is still a chance to find a new band that you would like and listen to in the future.”*

This participant explicitly describes the feeling of what its like standing in the crowd. As mentioned above the ‘aura’ at a music festival is unique and this is one of the factors which might make it so spectacular. The ‘aura’ is created through the heightening of all senses, while seeing, feeling and listening to what is happening around oneself once you become part of this unparalleled crowd. It is the feeling of freedom that a participant can take from this experience and the sense of belonging to something that has never been like this before.

*“... it [the music festival] definitely affected my well-being, afterwards I always felt happy, free and enjoyed the dancing and great fun I just had.”*

*“... you can just live free and do [close to] whatever you would like.”*

Those answers further support the argumentation that music festivals offer a place of freedom, self-development and personal growth (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Even though some interviewees mentioned that they were exhausted coming home from a festival, all eight participants were happy and content looking back to their time of “happy crowds” and “enjoying life”. A festival atmosphere is somehow seen as a world of freedom and escape, truly enjoying every second with all seven senses.

Furthermore, as suggested by the question whether the festival experience has influenced their well-being, most of the participants did agree. Even though the evidence of this research might not be enough to determine long-term effects, it does suggest rather a positive correlation between a festival experience, the consequent fond memories and the attendees well-being.

*“Yes, definitely. First of all you feel very overwhelmed and tired. After some days you look back it all feels unreal in a positive way. [...] Usually at a festival you experience a lot of crazy things that you will talk about afterwards with your friends and looking back will always make you feel happy, because you think about a time you didn’t have any responsibilities and enjoyed life.”*

The feeling of freedom, the feeling of escape and an unreal atmosphere which is difficult to describe are just a few memories taken from the participants festival experience.

*“Yes, definitely affects my well-being. I always feel very happy afterwards and my friends talk about it days after. [...] There are always good, positive vibes, which of course positively influence my well-being.”*

*“I was tired. It can be very exhausting, because if you party three days straight you are relieved it was over. But when I watch the videos and remember the moments of fun I feel joy and happiness, which is why I would believe that it does affect my well-being.”*

On the other hand, some participants stated the following:

*“Definitely really exhausted [looking back], physically as well as mentally. Maybe it did affect my well-being or happiness for a short period of time, but nothing lasting.”*

*“Not really, because I have only been there a couple of times. After these days I have always been really happy to be back and have my own shower and my own bed.”*

*“Well, yes I do think it made me happy afterwards, but they tend to be exhausting too. With all the partying, drinking and sleeping in an uncomfortable bed, living on a budget – it is nice to come home too.”*

It can thus be suggested that the festival experience is indeed a limited event. Even though the overall experience might have been positive, it is not one’s goal to spend a long time at the festival ground. This could mean, that when creating a perfect festival experience, organizers should take a time frame into consideration and can expect people to attend festivals for a few days only. In further conclusion this might suggest to further investigate whether there is a difference in attendees satisfaction of festivals with various lengths.

Furthermore, when recalling festival memories and whether values changed over time, the following statements have been made:

*“Not much changed [in my values] to be honest, the only thing is that I value comfort and hygiene more. That was one of the reasons my friends and I bought more expensive tickets for our last festivals, which promised more comfort.”*

*“I think the comfort at the campground also influences the overall experience, toilets and showers should be available, not too far from my tent and also not too dirty.”*

*“The comfort got more and more important. Even with little things like having a good tent in case it rains, a comfortable camping chair or taking enough stuff to eat that lasts long enough. It’s just the small things that can improve the festival experience drastically.”*

Indicating changes in valued comfort might be important from a managerial perspective. Even though camping is considered being part of a music festival participants did speak about their increased value in hygiene and with every gained festival experience they would consider paying more for proper facilities.

*“The taste in music changed a lot in my experience. First D’n’B, then pop and R’n’B. So having that musical experience changed for me every time. I feel sad sometimes*

*because I did enjoy my past experiences, but now I am just looking for something else and brand new. As every genre was different, the vibes at the festival were different too, but I enjoyed every single one of them.”*

*“Honestly, they have not changed very much. I still go to the same music, clothing style or anything else hasn’t changed either. Every music festival is so different and if you have seen a DJ at two different events, it’s always a different experience. That’s why I like it so much.”*

*“No. I don’t believe anything has changed.”*

While others did not believe that their overall music festival experience changed and others mentioned their growth in hygienically awareness, one participant specifically mentioned their change in music. Those results differ for each person and no necessary link could be made. However, it thus leaves anticipation to conduct further research on the change in hygienical factors and whether it receives the same responds if you experience a music festival for the first time. The answers leaves space to interpret, that in the future attendees will carefully consider hygienical factors when evaluating their overall festival experience, which again can influence their general happiness and satisfaction towards the event.

### **4.3 Music and Emotions**

Not only by looking at the results of this primary research, but also supported by the literature above, it is clear that music and emotions are closely linked. Music can evoke emotions, underline them and strengthen their meaning. The results further show that all participants listen to music every single day. Music is being used as a means of stress-relief and adding purpose into boring or lonely situations.

*“Probably three to ten times a day. I listen to music in every situation, music adds something to my life.”*

*“I concentrate on the music and life doesn’t feel boring.”*

*“I listen to music whenever I can, so it is definitely a big part of my daily life. I think music is just a great way to process so many different things.”*

*“It makes me feel good most of the time. But sometimes when I am in a bad mood, listening to sad songs is not beneficial. It makes me even sadder.”*

*“Yes, every day. It definitely does [add something to my life], when I am stressed, I listen to calming music. When I feel a little down, music also lifts me up.”*

Listening to music seems to be a form of stress-relief and helps people encounter their negative as well as positive emotions. Even if music sometimes enhances unsettling feelings, it thus helps to regulate those and can eventually clear someone’s mind.

*“I listen to music whenever I can, so it is definitely a big part of my daily life. I think music is just a great way to process so many different things.”*

*“It definitely does, when I am stressed I listen to calming music and when I feel down, music also lifts me up.”*

*“On average I listen to music one to two times per day. I always notice that it makes me happier on changes my mood. For example, Monday morning on the train to university – once I hear a good song I’m already feeling much better.”*

Music has the power to trigger emotions and enhance sensitive reactions. All participants agreed that music often pulls them back to past experiences. It helps them remember certain moments. This further aligns with the answers gathered in the previous chapter 4.2. The participants recalled being filled of joy and happiness when thinking of their past festival experience and remember certain moments while talking to friends or rewatching videos.

*“When I rewatch a video of a performance I saw live, I kind of get to re-live that moment and the emotions I had back then.”*

*“... music helps me process emotions, understand them and feel them a bit deeper.”*

*“Basically music makes my bad days seem not so bad and my good days even better.”*

*“Certain songs I heard live and when I hear them now take me back to the moment at the concert and gives me joy to remember it.”*



*"... music works like an emotional rollercoaster. [...] on festivals there is this phenomenon, that you will have a big group that usually listens to the same music. Therefore they tend to react in the same way to that type of music and that is just a very pleasing and completing feeling."*

In context of attending music festivals, the element of a live performance adds even more to the preexisting relationship an individual has with an artist and his or her music. The participants mentioned that seeing an artist perform live can strengthen this relationship by being actively part of their music. Supported by the surrounding large crowds helps them become part of something bigger, living an out of body experience.

*"The social aspect, have adventure with friends and simply listen to music, certainly brings added value [to your everyday life also] since live music is always connected with many people."*

*"When I am listening to live music it is easier for me to "feel" the music."*

*"When you come together with a group of people who like the same music as you do, it just feels special. Being in a crowd, knowing most people want to enjoy the moment is just an amazing feeling."*

It can be observed that there is a clear connection within the crowd. Once you enter the live performance and become a part of it, it gives an extraordinary feeling which is contagious to those involved.

*"When listening to music at home I am also thinking a lot about everyday stuff, other than at a concert or at a festival where I am living in the moment."*

*"Listening live gives a whole new experience to hear the music. For me, it means being in a crowd of people with the same interests. Seeing and feeling more. For me, it means fully recognizing the artists and it is more than just listening."*

In other words, listening to an artist at home is seen as passive participation. However, watching an artist perform live creates an active bond between every member of the crowd. The festival setting presents a collective group of individuals connected

through their unique relationship with the artist and the music, celebrating the artists full potential and spirit.

*“I guess you cannot really feel the ‘spirit’ when you listen at home which you get at a festival or concert. For example, sitting in a concert hall [...] and everything around you vibrates. This you won’t get when you press play on your phone at home.”*

Some participants mentioned that the true satisfaction comes from being part of a large crowd, while seeing their favorite artist perform live with other people who love them just as much. Experiencing an “out of the ordinary” event and belonging to a bigger group is an essential element within the festival experience. Henceforth, the perceived emotions from listening to music are deeper and stronger when connecting them to a live performance and its audience.

#### **4.4 Stimuli**

This section was created to evaluate whether participants have similar memories or if there is a link in the emotions which the stimuli created.

When assessing the results it can be found, that the responds have been quite positive. Again, the participants remember their past experience, willing to return to a festival in the near future. Especially the video evoked positive emotions and further emphasizes on the great happiness followed of a festival experience. Even though, of course greater research of larger sample size would be more precise, the results indicate a positive link towards emotions can be felt when triggering festival memories.

*“When looking at this picture I can almost hear the loud music and people singing along. It makes me think about my last festival and all the good memories I had there, so it most certainly makes me feel good.”*

*“I wouldn’t say that the music shown in the video affects my emotions differently. [...] But I do think back to my last festival experience this summer and a lot of cheerful emotions come back to my mind.”*

*“My head is immediately ‘I want to go there right now!’. It triggers my anticipation for the next festival. The picture for me is ‘positive vibes, only’. The video also makes me*

*feel exciting. [...] I think 'really nice party'. But the video itself has topped the music, so I didn't really care about the music."*

The participants spoke about how they will return to another festival and how anticipated they are for upcoming events. Similar to the previous answers on the music festival experience the participants remember feeling happiness and the unique energy of a collective crowd which is difficult to put into words.

*"I can feel the warmth of the flames, the energy of the crowd enjoying the moments. I just feel that I want to be exactly in this crowd dancing with the others. That makes me happy and motivates me to go to a live performance."*

*"When I watch this video, I think about the times that I have been to a festival and how happy or complete I was. Also, it motivates me so much to feel that feeling again and enjoy those wonderful days."*

*"You know, it makes me feel happiness, pleasure and screaming to have no voice in the next morning. I wish I could turn back tomorrow."*

## **5 Conclusion**

Overall, the findings of this paper were a preliminary attempt to identify whether music festivals influence the well-being of their audience. While the conducted research demonstrated that there might be no long-term conscious influence on mental well-being, it does add value to young people's life. This value may not be deliberately felt on a daily matter but arises when listening to music associated to a time spent at a music festival and reliving those moments with friends.

While research continues to focus on the economic and social influences a music festival can have (Arnegger & Herz, 2016; Bowdin et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2001; Quinn, 2013; Sharpley & Stone, 2011; Yolal et al., 2009), this study tries to add to the few existing studies on the influence festivals have on their attendees (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Fancourt & Williamon, 2015; Lamont, 2012). Taking into consideration that the festival industry is a fast-growing phenomenon, it is of great importance valuing and remembering all elements described by Yeoman et al.

(2004; see Figure 3 of this thesis). By equally acknowledging all relationships of those elements, festival organizers are assured to create the most memorable experience. This will not only benefit on a managerial level, but when recognized by the crowd will generate a willingness to return to this expected space of freedom.

Being part of a music festival becomes an unforgettable memory, different for every member of the crowd. Positive feelings and close friendships are long-term effects, which should be recognized and valued as such. As all participants of this study were positively minded towards their past festival experience, it can be concluded that music festivals do influence their audience in a positive way.

Music, as the main motive of attendees, opens up minds, it offers a common ground of interest and connects not only strangers, but also brings friends closer together. Even though no signs of long-term conscious influences on mental well-being were discovered, answers did reveal that participants consider music festivals as an important life experience, adding value with incredible memories.

Music festival organizers have the power to create a unique festive atmosphere with the purpose of evoking emotions and forming a space of memories. By looking at the results, it is clear that music and the people you are with are the reasons for young people to attend a music festival. Both elements are very closely linked as each individual has emphasized that one does not go without the other. Music and live performances become a space of common grounds for the audience to bring it to life. As mentioned by many participants of this study, the crowd, the same interest in music and celebrating one's favorite artist, is what makes the true festival experience.

## **5.1 Limitations and Recommendations of Research**

Finally, it is plausible that a number of limitations may have influenced the results obtained by this study. First of all, the limitation in the timeframe and the lack of respondents' voluntariness, limited the number of participants for this research. Even though the total of eight interviews was achieved, data with a higher response rate is said to be more accurate (Creswell, 2014).

As the focus of this study lies on a festival audience who has attended multiple events, there might be a difference in result when comparing young people's well-being

including young adults who have not attended music festivals in the past. For further investigations it would be interesting to see whether there is a difference in the impact between people who have and have not attended festivals before. Also, as the attendees of this study are rather cheerful when it comes to past festival experiences, it would be interesting to compare answers with people who did not like it or have no plans to return. Festival organizers should be cautious about assuming that everyone who attends finds them equally wonderful. Therefore, it would be interesting to understand what makes someone become a serial festival attender.

Furthermore, there is always a scope of development in terms of research. In hindsight of this study, it leaves research with more questions and room of thought for further studies. It is yet of question, whether or not actual long-term effects can be recognized, whether impact differs when comparing festivals of various sizes, or whether the influence changes within multiple festival goers' generations.

As the festival industry is increasing and the demand for an extraordinary experience is rising, festival organizers should keep the long-term effects in mind. The outcome of this thesis supports festival management to keep the musical element at heart and create an atmosphere for people to express their freedom and merge into one big crowd. The findings of this research indicate that it is about creating an atmosphere, coming together and leaving the daily worries behind.

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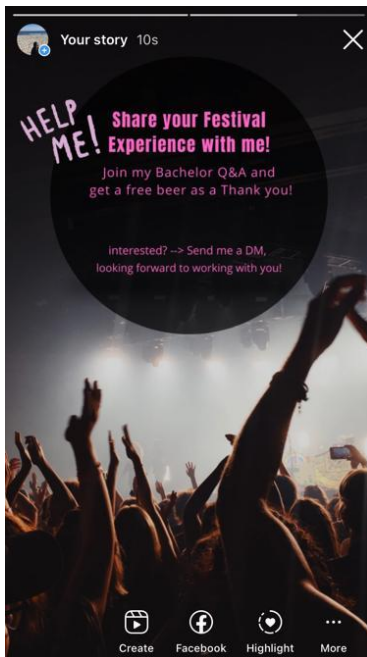
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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Instagram Story on the Author's Account

Shared on the 26<sup>th</sup> of of October, 09:00 am:



### Appendix 2: Consent Form

#### Bachelor Thesis on the Impact of Music Festivals on Young People's Mental Well-Being

##### *Consent to take part in research*

- I..... (name of participant) voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves answering the research questions asked by the researcher of this project.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in this research paper.

-----  
Signature of participant

-----  
Date

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

-----  
Signature of researcher

-----  
Date

### **Appendix 3: Questionnaire**

#### ***Questionnaire Protocol***

**Facilitator:** Alexia Wilmink

**Date:** tba.

**Topic Of Project:** An exploratory research into how music festivals influence young people's mental well-being.

The purpose of this study will be to understand the psychological influences (central phenomenon of the study) for young people at music festivals.

#### **Body of Interview**

##### Interviewee's Characteristics:

- Name:
- Age:
- Sex:
- Occupation:

- Education:
- Number of Music Festivals you attended:
- What kind of festival was it and how many days was each of those festivals long?

The Music Festival Experience:

7. What comes to your mind when you hear the word “music festival”?
8. Looking back, what were the main reasons for you to attend those music festivals and why did you go multiple times? (follow up: Did the line-up affect your decision to go?)
9. What does your perfect festival experience look like?
10. What type of music festival did you go to?
11. Has your festival experience changed over time? If yes, what values/aspects do you appreciate the most?
12. Looking back, do you remember how you felt after attending a music festival? Do you believe it affected your well-being?

Music and Emotions:

1. How often do you listen to music per day? Do you feel like it adds something to your life?
2. Do you think live music performances add value to your everyday life? If yes or no, how so?
3. Do you feel that music festivals have influenced the way you listen to music?
4. How does music make you feel?
5. From your point of view, is there a link between music and emotions? If yes, how and where?
6. In what ways do you feel different when listening to live music than to music on your own at home?

Stimuli:

1. Looking at this picture: What do you see and how does it make you feel?



2. Watching this video: How does this make you feel and what are the characteristics that make you feel that way? What do you think when seeing this? How do the different types of music affect your emotions?

