All that jazz: assessing contemporary South African music festival culture and exceeding audience expectations in Cape Town

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Abstract

It is a well-documented fact that event tourism is increasingly becoming the fastest growing tourism area in the global marketplace. Since 2000, the city of Cape Town has become a sought after destination for Jazz lovers with its hosting of the annual Cape Town International Jazz Festival which has been rated among the top four global Jazz festivals. While the country hosts various well-known jazz concerts and other festivals throughout the year, Jazz in Cape Town is ‘on the up’. South Africa’s jazz repertoire comprises an amalgam of wide-ranging influences which have gradually evolved to convey a unique and highly distinctive sound which is pleasing to connoisseurs of fine music. Thousands of Jazz fans from across the globe consequently flock to Cape Town to appreciate the many skills and talents of South African jazz musicians. This article investigates the history of modern jazz in Cape Town and suggests ways in which event organizers can attract more visitors and become more sustainable in the face of stiff competition from burgeoning jazz events in the international arena.

Key words: Jazz, events, tourism, competition, sustainability, history of music, market segmentation

Source: www.capetownjazzfest.com
Introduction

Events such as music festivals have been proven to drive tourist demand in especially off-peak seasons (Getz, Anderson & Sheehan, 1998). Jazz festivals are thus very important in that they have the potential to boost tourism to a destination and have the ability to attract audiences of all ages and cultures from far and wide (Bowen & Daniels, 2005).

The distinct and often unique market position of a festival which gives it a special image in the minds of the potential audience, allows it to attract market segments that are often difficult to capture (Day, Skidmore & Koller 2002). Given that South African music culture is a melting pot of miscellaneous genres, from jazz, kwaito, hip hop, blues, reggae, pop, alternative rock and gospel, it is well placed to attract diverse segments of the global music market audience. South African Jazz as such, while not entirely conforming to the definition of Jazz as per the American genre, does have a unique place in South Africa’s music culture. Furthermore, South African artists are renowned for pushing musical limits and doing things in what are often fresh and exhilarating ways (http://www.southafrica.net/za/en/articles/entry/article-southafrica.net-net-south-african-music-culture). Audience enjoyment is very important since their satisfaction level increases the likelihood of repeat visits to a destination where they enjoyed memorable experiences and where their expectations were exceeded (Lehto, O’Leary & Morrison, 2003). It is clear from the literature reviewed that any festival will fail unless it meets and exceeds the motivations, expectations and needs of the local and foreign attendees (Shone & Perry, 2004). In fact jazz festivals, have the influence to promote a destination and to attract many more tourists (Robinson, Picard and Long, 2004). The Jazz Festival tourism sector is highly market-driven and it reacts to the particular needs of its performers and the audience. Tassiopoulos (2005) has noted that for any long-term success festivals require resilient differentiation, amid other festivals in the market place, thorough marketing and a strong strategic positioning in the very competitive global marketplace. Quality of offerings and venue are also considered to be major contributors to attendee intentions to revisit a festival (Lee, Petrick and Crompton, 2007). While visitors may attend the same event they each experience it in a unique way depending on the needs they seek to satisfy by attending (Crompton and McKay, 1997). The heterogeneous composition of the audience is therefore an important factor to take into consideration when planning, strategizing and marketing festivals of this kind.

Background

From as early as the 1950s and 1960s, when Blacks, Coloureds and Indians were living under the Apartheid regime of South Africa, there were minor groupings of Black, Coloured and White musicians who began to test the boundaries of an indigenous Jazz as a special genre and who sought to align their style of music with American Jazz music. This early movement resulted in the distinctive style of jazz evident in South Africa today. It was to an extent the start of a collaborative process between musicians and lovers of Jazz from the global arena. The genre of African-American jazz started to be in vogue in South Africa from the early 1900s and there is no doubt that both Ragtime and Dixieland music led to the creation of what became known as Marabi (Ballantine, 1993). Such was the development of jazz in the 1960s and 1970s that even the 'artistic'
The uniqueness of African jazz was fêted in Black South African literature, especially in the work of Mongane Wally Serote, Bloke Modisane and Es'kia Mphahlele (Jacobs, 1988).

The indigenous African jazz genre was emergent from as early as the 1930s, and it achieved greater popularity in the 1940s. It continued to have a relatively strong influence in the African townships of especially Cape Town and Soweto well into the 1950s. Black South Africans became almost obsessed with American jazz which began to dominate African popular culture. Jazz groups such as inter alia the ‘Jazz Maniacs’, ‘Manhattan Brothers’ and the ‘Pitch Black Follies’ grew in stature so that the Marabi sound eventually terminated.

The growth of jazz in South Africa was not a surprising development since many black South Africans could not fail to notice how some their African American counterparts who were also subjected to discrimination in American society, were able to earn great respect and become recognized as world-beaters in their musical endeavors. In Sophiatown, in the 1950s a suburb on the West Rand of Johannesburg where blacks lived with freehold land ownership, people would gather in shebeens (taverns that were illegal) such as The back of the Moon, to enjoy the latest jazz hits from the United States and to listen to the evolving African Jazz of the locals. The cinema brought the vaudevillian song and dance routine to Sophiatown in which audiences were enthralled for hours as they listened to groups such as the ‘Synco Fans’. Tragically, apartheid eventually reared its ugly head and land was confiscated and given to Whites. The new suburb was called ‘Triomf’ (Victory in Afrikaans).

With the advent of World War II, Many musicians crafted their art and identities in both dance bands and in the new jazz style which was somewhat adapted from American jazz to meet the requirements of ever more detractors amongst their audiences. Many bands were hired to entertain the military and so it came to pass that really great, especially Black and Coloured musical talent was eventually exposed to Whites. The campaigner of the emergent jazz boom asserted a vibrant unique cultural perspective with clear political overtones which somewhat taxed the endeavours of the Nationalist Party and led the White state to introduce the policy of Apartheid in the 1960s.

In black and coloured townships of Cape Town, as well as other cities, urbanized dwellers still maintained their basic rural music traditions and merged these traditions with American jive to create a very lively dance style known as the tsaba-tsaba. This encouraged August Musururgwa to create the ‘Skokiaan’ which topped the charts in 1954 in the United States as ‘Happy Africa’. The newly adopted African instrument called the ‘penny whistle’ which was a German metal flageolet, was the prime reason for the ‘kwela’ sound which emerged (Alexander, 1989). This was a very simple working-class favourite genre of jazz. Kwela was followed by the classy rhythms of the mbaqanga, which was a genre that coalesced brass with guitar and bass. South African jazz musicians, who lived in exile due to apartheid, played an important role in driving the new jazz genre which was emerging.

In Cape Town, Coloured dance band musicians forged another cultural direction which absorbed many diverse genres but the stringent racial controls imposed by the Group Areas Act and other apartheid legislation limited the resources available to Black and Coloured jazz musicians. The creation of the Cape Art Centre in the late 1960s, however, was an
endeavor to create an outward looking, establishment for jazz musicians of all race groups who had musical ambitions. Although South African Jazz was very different from American Jazz, from a musicologist perspective, it nevertheless was vibrant and attracted large audiences due to its innovative interpretation of the American genre made famous by the likes of American jazz musicians such as Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw. The Cape Art Centre in Greenpoint, later served as home to many musicians who supported the jazz wave that engulfed the city.

A great South African jazz fundi, pianist and composer Dollar Brand, who later changed his name to Abdullah Ibrahim, was very predisposed to the unconventional music of the 1960s. He rapidly rose to fame playing at a Cinema in Sophiatown. He went abroad and returned to South Africa in the 1970s when he recorded the famous 'Mannenberg', which placed him in the elite group of South Africa's greatest jazz musicians. Another jazz legend was the superb trumpeter, flugelhornist, cornetist, composer and vocalist, Hugh Masekela who began his career as a member of the wonderful Jazz Epistles band which made its name in the mid-1950s. Masekela also fled South Africa and only returned from exile in 1990. His very first trumpet was given to him by the anti-apartheid activist Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, who was the chaplain at St. Peter's Secondary School (Fairweather, 2004). He performed to record-breaking audiences in both Johannesburg and Cape Town from late 1959 to early 1960. After the 21 March 1960 Sharpeville massacre the South African government increased its brutality under the Apartheid state and Masekela fled. He was aided by Archbishop Trevor Huddleston and the great Yehudi Menuhin, violinist and conductor, as well as others and was admitted into London's Guildhall School of Music. Masekela then visited the United States (Masekela, 2004), where he was aided by Harry Belafonte and attended the Manhattan School of Music in New York. It was there that he studied classical trumpet from 1960 to 1964. He was very successful in the United States with the pop jazz tunes "Up, Up and Away" (1967) and the number-one smash "Grazing in the Grass" (1968), which sold four million copies (Yanow, 2001).
There have many other huge successes for Masekela. As recently as December 2013, Masekela guested with the Dave Matthews Band in Johannesburg, South Africa and joined Rashawn Ross on trumpet for "Proudest Monkey" and "Grazing in the Grass". He also performed on the Earth, Wind and Fire programme in Johannesburg in 2013 and was greatly appreciated by the audience.

Miriam Makeba was born from a Swazi mother and Xhosa father, and captured international attention as vocalist for the South African group, The Manhattan Brothers, while they were on tour in the United States of America in 1959. She wanted to return home to bury her mother a year later, but the apartheid state revoked her citizenship and eventually also banned her music. Consequently she spent 31 years in exile, living in the United States and later in Guinea. She became the first black African woman to receive a Grammy Award which she shared with folk singer Harry Belafonte in 1965. Two years later her fame sky-rocketed with the recording of the all-time hit "Pata Pata" (Xhosa for “touch, touch" describing a township dance) although she unknowingly signed away all royalties on the song (http://www.nairaland.com/193660/meriam-makeba-late).

Other great jazz musicians from South Africa include inter-alia legends such as Jonathan Butler, Caiphus Semenya, Letta Mbulu, Abigail Kubheka, Mary Ramotaba, Spokes Mashiyane, Kippie Moeketsi, Dudu Pukwana, Zeph Nkabinde with Black Mambazo, Chris Macgregor, Louis Maholo and Jonas Gwangwa – the list is endless. More recently the singer Simphiwe Dana Thandiswa Mazwai, Bongo Maffin, Freshly ground, the Parlotones and Karen Zoid amongst others, have been raising the banner of South African music in general. Their wonderful artistry is still appreciated by millions. Today South African jazz is at a zenith and is infused with a myriad of very talented young musicians who are able to pervade South African life with their superb musical skills.
Cape Town International Jazz Festival

The Cape Town International Jazz Festival (CTIJF) is an annual event which began in 2000. The Festival hosts over 40 000 music lovers over the 2 show days and it is without doubt the flagship event for the leading events management and production company espAfrika. According to capetownjazzfest.com, it is rated as the fourth best global jazz festival. It competes with the likes of highly respected and superb jazz festivals such as, inter alia, the Montréal Jazz festival, Le Festival de Jazz de Montreux, New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Newport Jazz festival, Monterey Jazz festival, Jazz in Marciac, Copenhagen Jazz Festival, Paris Jazz Festival, Vancouver International Jazz Festival and the Nice Jazz Festival. Such festivals are events which contribute to social and cultural happenings (Allen, O'Toole, McDonnel and Harris, 2005). Given that there are many exceptional global jazz festivals and thus huge competition, it is imperative to market a jazz festival effectively and to demonstrate the differences, advantages and benefits of tourists attending one festival as opposed to another. Jazz breaks the race, gender and cultural barriers in society and the Cape Town International Jazz Festival is one such event which has brought together people from all over the world. It makes use of five stages and over forty artists performing over two days. The programme comprises a 50/50 split between South African artists and international artists (http://www.capetownjazzfest.com/#/about/c1q2r). This festival entices tourists from across the globe and numerous world renowned artists participate. It is often referred to as “Africa’s Grandest Gathering”. The festival is the largest music experience in sub-Saharan Africa and invariably delivers a star-studded line up. It is hosted at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) annually, either the end of March or during the first weekend of April.

This festival which rounds off Cape Town's proud history of dance music and jazz, provides an important period in the augmentation of a uniquely South African jazz expression which has been developing in various stages since the 1920s and which was forged in the cauldron of especially, apartheid South Africa. If the Cape Town International Jazz Festival organizers want the event to remain competitive, they will need to vary their offerings to meet changing consumer lifestyles (Zhang, Song and Huang, 2009). Market segmentation is a strategy that can assist them to achieve this outcome.

Market Segmentation as a tool

Market segmentation refers to the process whereby a large market, often heterogeneous in composition, is divided into different customer segments so that each segment is ultimately more homogeneous in nature. Each respective market segment is therefore perceived to have similar needs, tastes, preferences and priorities. The objective is to then design a marketing mix that precisely matches the expectations of customers in each respective targeted segment. The most common forms of segmentation include geographic segmentation, demographic segmentation, cultural segmentation, behavioural segmentation and psychographic segmentation.

Market segmentation should not be confused with price discrimination. Price discrimination exists when a product is sold to different customers at different prices and these differences in price cannot be explained by variations on the
marginal cost. Although market segmentation is a necessary condition for price discrimination, market segmentation in itself does not imply price discrimination. When a firm has some sort of monopoly power market segmentation allows the firm to practice price discrimination, in pursuit of maximising total revenue and profits, by charging higher prices in those market segments where the price elasticity of demand for the good or service is relatively price inelastic. This means that customer segments that are relatively insensitive to price changes will be charged higher prices whereas those customer segments that are very sensitive to price will be charged lower prices.

Although blatant price discrimination is prohibited, firms can often circumvent the legal system by charging different prices for essentially the “same” good or service and then ascribing these differences in price to quantity purchased (bulk discounts), time of purchase (early bird discounts) and age profiles (student discounts). This pricing strategy is very common in the airline industry but it is not common at all at jazz festivals. So if the pursuit of maximizing profits, by practicing price discrimination, is not the objective of event managers organizing jazz festivals what then are the advantages of market segmentation?

Jazz festivals that conduct market research in an effort to identify customer needs and also satisfy those needs will generally be more prosperous (Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff and Terblanche, 2004). Event management, which involves the design and management of jazz festivals, also plays a very crucial role in whether or not the festival will ultimately be successful (Brown & James, 2004). A jazz festival’s ability to attract carefully identified market segments is generally based on the unique market position of the festival, which incorporates the image it depicts in the minds of existing and potential attendees (Day, Skidmore and Koller, 2002). Good branding is also vital to success. This refers to: “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition” (Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2004). A good brand is of great importance to jazz festivals since it enables one to easily distinguish one festival from another (Hoyle 2002). Jazz festivals are thus able to differentiate their offerings by accentuating attributes that tend to tie in with their target markets’ needs and wants (Schiffman and Kanuk 2000).

There are nonetheless certain musicians who smirk at the mention of the word ‘marketing’ since this, to their way of thinking, characterizes the definitive compromise of their creative values. They associate marketing with a deliberate attempt by the event organizer to cater for the tastes and preferences of the target audience, rather than providing a platform for them to express their own artistic vision.

Such individuals are not willing to play music that people may wish to hear since it stifles their freedom and places restrictive limits on their artistic expression and personal passions. However, generally speaking, seasoned musicians take a contrary stance and are desirous of pre-festival marketing initiatives as a necessary tool to promote their music. Such musicians embrace vigorous market segmentation analysis since they understand that it will ultimately boost their sales. By actively searching for and attracting audiences that appreciate their artistic endeavours, musicians are more likely to create a
bond with audiences that appreciate and value their individual talents. By engaging in a careful analysis of a prospective audience and by analysis of key segments in the global arena, it becomes far easier to attract greater numbers of fans to a jazz festival. Market segmentation analysis enables festival organisers to attract the right audiences, via the right message using appropriate media, at the right time with the right musicians on stage and at an appealing price. According to Levison (1994), “Segmentation is saying something to somebody instead of saying nothing to everybody”.

When musicians accept the notion of target marketing they are in fact increasing their market size and creating the groundwork for very happy audiences. It is important to define what the audiences want and this helps with managing the event so that visitor engagement is satisfied (Wiley, 2004). It is imperative to exceed visitor and audience expectations so that repeat attendance may result. Festival attendees are by nature highly unpredictable and if a festival fails to satisfy their needs and expectations, it is unlikely they will ever return and to try to regain their patronage will be very expensive (Tum, Norton and Wright, 2006).

Jazz festival attendees tend to be swept up by the emotive nature of what they see and it is important to tap into this aspect (Matheson, 2008). Organizers must thus be cognizant of the fact that not every person is equally attracted to every musical style or artistic creation. The reason why attendees come to a festival, in the first instance, often differs from individual to individual. There are those who simply attend out of their love for jazz. There are also those who wish to escape from the humdrum of daily living and who thus go out to explore and socialize. There are also excitement seekers who appreciate and value the particular musical offerings available and who get a thrill by attending a festival (Visser, 2005). By segmenting the market, the jazz artists are freed from the demands which often arise to profile their variable works to fit the needs and tastes of a wider audience. Chang (2006) has ascertained that love of jazz and the cultural ‘injection’ are the primary motivations for tourists to attend a jazz festival. There are however diverse markets and in this regard three groups have been identified namely Jazz Lovers, Escapists and Culture Seekers, and each has a different motivation. Jazz Lovers view marketing and hospitality issues as important, while Culture Seekers want good value for money and quality performances. Escapists simply wish to get away from the busy daily schedules they face (Williams, 2011; Chang, 2006).

Jazz festival organizers need to note that the total “jazz” market is not homogeneous in composition. By identifying groups of people who have similar needs and wants they can segment the markets into groups that are relatively homogeneous in composition. It is critical to appeal to each group’s particular needs and interests in much the same way as if each individual potential attendee was interviewed individually (Ajzen and Driver, 1992). Marketing strategies must be employed that reach and motivate the desired target market, making the most of all available promotional resources. It would be most useful to try to describe an audience in terms of their demographic characteristics. How old are typical attendees? Are they mostly male or female? Are they married or single? Do they have families? Do they reside in close proximity? Are they from abroad? What races or ethnic groups predominate in the
expected audience? What is the typical occupation and level of income? What is their level of education? Organizers need to define segments based on their needs, and remain focused on how the artistic products on offer can locate the audiences most likely to appreciate and value their creativity. Ascertain which are attending to socialize with friends, are seeking some family entertainment, relaxation or other benefits. Are attendees’ regular customers and which types of programmes or performances attract them? What are they looking for, is it a new experience, or the same as last time?

By trying to understand why attendees behave as they do, the organizers can identify important needs that the marketing should consider. They can ascertain how prospective audience expectations can provide a basis for meaningful segmentation and how important is jazz music to the attendees. Is it a priority for them in their limited leisure times? It is perhaps most important to ask them if they like what the festival has to offer and what do they not enjoy? When marketing the festival the organizers should as a matter of course emphasise the “world premiere” performances or state which international acts will be included in the forthcoming festival season. Use other characteristics that can include whatever you can find out about people in a given segment. Look at the attendees’ musical and other interests, and their behavior related to the festival, their personal values, psychological characteristics, and their stage of life. What are their media habits, which newspapers do they read, websites they view, and do they watch television? Which part of the segments analyzed are opinion leaders and how can they be influenced?

Formal audience surveys, discussions in focus groups, and even systematically asking a few key questions, are all very useful ways to analyze and find out what people desire. Efforts should be made to learn as much as possible about the market segments that are likely to become repeat customers, especially those from abroad. How likely are they to spread the word about the festival? How can the organizers benefit from the attendees personality traits and how will this affect the marketing? Essentially, the key will be to develop effective target-audience profiles. Conceptually, a model taking these factors into consideration and which may be useful for event organizers is given below:
Figure 1. Jazz festival success factors model (Authors’ own)

Conclusion

It is evident that event organizers need to be aware of customer expectations. Failing this the likelihood of a return visit to a future similar event, by the attendee, is very unlikely. The Cape Town International Jazz Festival cannot be sustainable unless the organizers conduct appropriate market segmentation and strive to be competitive. The primary key success factors worthy of attention are good signage, the actual venue attributes, variety, good catering, cleanliness and of course effective and vigorous marketing initiatives (Crompton and McKay, 1997; Kruger, 2006; Marais, 2009).

This conceptual analytical research will hopefully contribute to the growing body of academic literature related to jazz festival tourism. It will also support the idea of expanding the range and breadth of knowledge of attendees both local and foreign in relation to jazz festivals such as The Cape Town International Jazz Festival. The contribution to the existing body of knowledge is to expand on how market segmentation can be used to further influence and inform organizers of the attendees’ intention to return to
a festival such as The Cape Town International Jazz Festival using the Jazz festival success factors model developed by the researchers and carefully considering each aspect thereof.

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