

Youth tourism festivals in South Africa: the case of Plett Rage

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Abstract

Since the 1980s it has been a growing tradition for many South African school leavers to attend some form of post-school vacation in order to celebrate the conclusion of their high school career. Finding parallels with the likes of Spring Break in the USA and Schoolies Week taking place on the Gold Coast of Australia, thousands of school leavers from various parts of the country flock to coastal hotspots in order to partake in the mass celebrations. Although similar in nature, both Spring Break in USA and Schoolies Week in Australia have been the subject of much research whilst the South African youth tourism festivals have not come under academic scrutiny. The objective of this paper is to examine the organisation and institutionalisation of the Plett Rage festival. Key themes under examination are the establishment of the festival, the nature of festival attendees, accommodation, logistics and linkages with the local economy. It is argued that this youth festival, part of the broader post-matric celebrations, is a highly impactful event for Plettenburg Bay.

Keywords: Festival tourism, youth tourism, youth festival, Plett Rage, South Africa

Introduction

Festival tourism is used as an all-encompassing term when referring to special event tourism and festivals of any size (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002). Furthermore, festival tourism denotes a phenomenon in which individuals from outside of a festival locale visit during a festival period (of limited duration) in order to seek an 'out of the ordinary' occurrence (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002; Ritchie, 1984). In addition festival tourism links to events which take place for a limited duration with the primary purpose of enhancing the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourist destination (Ritchie 1984). The presence of a festival generates a type of 'place distinctiveness' subsequently creating appeal and interest towards the event whilst often creating a 'brand identity' through association for the destination (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000). This, in turn, has the potential to attract visitors, investors and sponsors along with their income-generating potential to the local area (Monterrubio & Andriotis, 2014; Quinn, 2006). Festival tourism is noted as a means to generate large amounts of income for the areas in which the festivals occur whilst allowing host communities to share their culture, environment and most notably 'spending opportunities' with visitors (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002). Festivals have subsequently further emerged as a significant tool both for energising economic development in tourism, as well as re-imaging and re-branding certain urban centres and regions (Ma & Lew, 2012).

It has been demonstrated by Getz (2010) that over the past decade there has been a variety of academic writings relating to different aspects of festival tourism especially in the global north. Some of the key themes that have arisen relate to research on encounters between residents and tourists (Giovanardi, Lucarelli & Decosta, 2014), support for cultural identities (Nurse, 2002), local economic impacts and the role of entrepreneurs during festival periods (O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002; Wilson, Arshed & Shaw, 2014), social significance of festivals (Quinn, 2006; Chang, Gibson & Sisson, 2014), residents and visitor perceptions of festivals (Anwar & Sohail, 2004; Ballantyne, Ballantyne, & Packer 2013; Maneenet & Tran, 2014;

Shen, 2014), attendee motivations for attending festivals (Mohammad, 2014), place marketing through festivals (Prentice & Anderson, 2003), and consuming expressions of culture (Robinson, Picard & Long, 2004).

The objective in this paper is to examine one special form of festival tourism which has been rising in popularity in several parts of the world. Our focus is on post-school youth festival celebrations. Since the 1980s it has been a growing tradition for many South African school leavers to attend some form of post-school vacation in order to celebrate the conclusion of their high school career. With parallels to Spring Break in the USA and Schoolies Week which takes on the Gold Coast of Australia, thousands of school leavers from various parts of the country flock to coastal hotspots in order to partake in these annual mass celebrations. Although Spring Break in USA and Schoolies Week in Australia have been the subject of much research (Babin & Kim, 2001; Monterrubio & Andriotis, 2014; Schiltz, 2013; Weaver & Lawton, 2013; Weaver, 2004), South African youth tourism festivals have not come under academic scrutiny. As a contribution to scholarship on festival tourism as well as youth tourism the task in this paper is to examine the organisation and institutionalisation of the Plett Rage festival hosted at the small Cape coastal town of Plettenberg Bay. Key themes under investigation are the establishment of the festival, the nature of festival attendees, accommodation, logistics and linkages with the local economy. The initial stage of conducting the research involved an overview of existing scholarly literature. This was followed by primary data collection which involved archival and internet mediated searches on the existence of the South African post-school vacation as well as a thorough search of newspaper, magazine publications and online media which provided an insight into the history and media coverage of this youth tourism phenomenon. In depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with event organizers, local business owners, accommodation providers, law enforcement and charity organizations. In addition, focus groups were conducted with final year school leavers, festival attendees and holiday makers.

Youth travel and youth travel festivals

Youth travel is one of the fastest growing segments of the global tourism economy. Over the past decades, rising levels of prosperity across the global North have allowed more young people to save enough money to embark on long haul tourism experiences as well as for parents to subsidise their global travels (O'Reilly, 2006). The action of youth travel is thus being ever-more frequently embraced among privileged social groups as it is ultimately becoming easier to achieve (Frändberg, 2014; Jones, 2004; O'Shea, 2011; Shoham, Schrage & Van Eeden, 2004). Although this opportunity to embark on an alternative, long-haul tourism experience should be available to all young adults, it is evident that the most 'highly rated' forms of youth travel experiences are unfortunately accessible only to those from more affluent backgrounds (Heath, 2007).

With ever-increasing communication advancements, as well as cultural and economic globalisation it has been widely assumed that temporarily living or travelling abroad has become a more commonly adopted practice for those of greater affluence. Furthermore, trends of individualisation have also lead to the more widespread adoption of the alternative youth travel culture. Additionally, media attention and publications around the phenomenon have created the impression of it being a 'powerful trend or fashion' (Blackburn, Clark & Pilgrim, 2005; Cairns, 2008; Conradson & Latham, 2005; Frändberg, 2014; Jones, 2004; Simpson, 2005). Overall, it is thus evident that college-age students travel more than generations before them did (Shoham, *et al.*, 2004). Increasing choices in transportation and decreasing prices of air travel (e.g., cheap charter flights) have made traveling easier. Such developments create new opportunities for students to explore the world (Shoham, *et al.*, 2004: 1). As this type of travel is increasingly common, youth travellers constantly seek tourism experiences that are different to those of mass tourism. Young travellers as tourists "are increasingly searching for forms of travel that provide 'alternative' experiences to the

mainstream” (Ooi & Laing, 2010: 191). This has, in turn, contributed towards the development of, an often youth associated alternative tourism market. The significant development of the alternative tourism market has been catapulted by the rise in popularity of young adults embarking on gap years, volunteer tourism or backpacker tourism experiences.

In several parts of the world it has been a growing trend for young adults to undertake some form of travel, study, work or residence abroad for a limited period of time once they have completed their formal schooling (Blackburn *et al.*, 2005; Conradson & Latham, 2005; Frändberg, 2014; O’Reilly, 2006; O’Shea, 2011; Shoham, *et al.*, 2004; Simpson, 2004). Young adults able to travel are faced with numerous options of which type of travel they wish to embark upon. Some may opt to undertake a ‘conventional’ gap year, wherein they live, work or study abroad, whilst others may wish to go on a more adventurous experience such as a backpacker tourism or embarking on a volunteer tourism program (O’Reilly, 2006). However, many young adults may not have the financial means, ability or desire to undertake long-term travel commitments and opt for similarly purposed, but less extensive post-school vacation festival.

Undertaking a post-school vacation has developed into a ritualistic trend in several parts of the world (Babin & Kim, 2001; Miao, Lehto & Wei, 2014; Monterrubio & Andriotis, 2014). In the United States of America, university-aged students embark upon a week-long event in which they congregate at various resort destinations during their spring holidays. This youth festival is consequently known as ‘Spring Break’ (Monterrubio & Andriotis, 2014; Weaver & Lawton, 2013; Weaver, 2004). Spring break has ultimately become an important rite of passage ritual for American students and when assessed alone represents a “multibillion dollar consumption phenomenon” (Babin & Kim, 2001: 94). Similarly, on the Gold Coast of Queensland, Australia, ‘Schoolies Week’ which informally emerged in the 1970’s, is an annually occurring pilgrimage of school leavers to various coastal destinations with the purpose of celebrating the completion of their high school career (Weaver, 2004; Weaver & Lawton, 2013). Throughout the seven day event masses of students (approximately 30 000) celebrate the end of high school with numerous parties and events whilst frequenting many local resort destinations (Weaver & Lawton, 2013). Both of these post-school vacations are noted as an important rite of passage in the lives of many young adults (Babin & Kim, 2001; Schiltz, 2013; Weaver & Lawton, 2013). The youth festivals are both associated with a number of economic and social effects and are subject to both positive and negative perceptions.

Research conducted on the attitudes of local residents towards youth tourism activities is a highly studied area of tourism (Anwar & Sohail, 2004; Ballantyne *et al.*, 2013; Maneenet & Tran, 2014; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Shen, 2014). The attitudes and perceptions of local residents are extremely important as these individuals are the most directly impacted by the tourism-related events, including youth tourism festivals (Weaver & Lawton, 2013). With contentious events, such as post school vacations, it is noted that “complex resident attitudes might be expected” (Weaver & Lawton, 2013: 167). In general, Jackson (2008) found that residents are generally more favourable towards tourism events that are accompanied by particular social or economic contributions to the destination as a whole. Residents are often aware of the negative impacts associated with these events but are willing to put up with these negative impacts as long as the benefits related to the event (both direct and indirect) outweigh the negative effects (Jackson, 2008; Weaver & Lawton, 2013).

Contentious events such as Spring Break and Schoolies week are associated with numerous negative impacts yet are still favoured due to their “substantial direct and indirect economic benefits” (Weaver & Lawton, 2013: 167). Residents, it is argued, “perceive an increase in alcohol consumption, drug use, noise and litter during the spring break season,

they largely recognise economic benefits and are thus generally supportive for the phenomenon” (Monterrubio & Andriotis, 2014: 1). A spectrum of attitudes towards Spring Break and Schoolies Week are identified. For Spring break festivities Monterrubio and Andriotis (2014: 1) recognise three clusters of attitudes. First, are spring break supporters identified by their high appreciation of Spring Break benefits. Second, are ambivalents who are uncertain about both benefits and costs; this second cluster is distinguished by holding uncertain views and attitudes about spring break’s benefits and costs. Third, are realistics, characterised by recognising both benefits and costs, and comprising residents who recognise Spring Break’s benefits but are also aware of the negative impacts, i.e. realistic residents acknowledge both benefits and costs almost equally.

Despite an international focus on post-school vacation youth festivals and other forms of youth travel there has been little attention given to these practices occurring in the global South. Moreover, there has been no scholarly attention given to the occurrence of a post-school vacation within the context of existing research on festival tourism in South Africa (Visser, 2005). It is against this background that this paper now turns to the annual youth festival held at Plettenberg Bay which is termed Plett Rage. The analysis draws upon a set of qualitative interviews which were conducted in 2014 with event organisers, supporters and local business owners. Specific attention is upon understanding the emergence and organisational development of Plett Rage focusing on the institutionalisation of the youth festival, the organisational systems that have been implemented by organisers and socio-economic dynamics associated with the festival.

The origins of Plett Rage

The historical origins of the post-school vacation in South Africa must be traced back to the period of the 1980s (Rogerson & Harmer, 2015; Harmer, 2016). The tradition for many school leavers in South Africa to attend some type of post-school vacation in order to celebrate the conclusion of their high school career. Usually this vacation was characterised by school leavers travelling to the closest coastal town to simply enjoy a hedonistic time away with friends. Attendees would generally determine their destination according to geographic proximity. Thus for approximately 20 years, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the South African post-school vacation was characterised by informal groupings of friends going on holiday to convenient and affordable coastal destinations.

This casually organised holiday gradually evolved as it became a more commonly adopted tradition amongst school leaving young adults and was titled ‘Matric Vac’ (abbreviated for vacation). The title of ‘Matric Vac’ or ‘Matric Vacation’ for the South African post-school celebrations lasted throughout the 1980’s and the 1990’s until the early 2000’s when the post-school vacation gained the title of ‘Matric Rage’ (Harmer, 2016). It is observed that *“Plett Rage unofficially started off as a few hundred students migrating to Plett for a few days in the early 80’s for good times and to celebrate the summer”* (www.pletrage.co.za, 2014). Subsequently, the phenomenon of Matric Rage has developed into a large-scale youth-travel phenomenon undertaken nationally by over 40 000 school leaving young adults with festivities occurring at various coastal locations, most importantly at uMhlanga Rocks and Ballito in KwaZulu-Natal and Plettenberg Bay in Western Cape. Exhibiting parallels with Schoolies Week in Australia, the post-school youth festival involves school-leavers attending the festivities for as long as ten days, beginning in the last week of November. The increased number of attendees along with the rising popularity of the event has led to a greater geographical diversification of the event and further necessitated higher levels of organisation and subsequently, commercialisation.

Throughout its formative years a matric vacation was not embarked upon for a specific event – other than a holiday – the spontaneous holidays gradually began to create the opportunity for local club owners to host sporadic parties to entertain the growing numbers of school

leavers. The system of haphazard parties and friends going on coastal road trips characterised matric vac for almost 20 years until 2001 brought forth the first year of an 'official,' institutionalised post-school celebration at the coastal destination of Plettenberg Bay in the Western Cape which had been a highly frequented town throughout the initial years of matric vac. During 2001 an entrepreneurial opportunity was realised by an events company called RK Events. RK Events began the institutionalisation of Matric Vac when they decided to host, on a relatively small scale, three parties at various local night clubs for the school leavers during the time of their matric vac. These parties were hosted specially for the attendees and subsequently were titled Matric Rage parties. Matric Rage, which was later titled 'Plett Rage,' in Plettenberg Bay grew in attendee numbers and was publicly recognised as a festival-type event albeit it still operated on a relatively small scale. It was observed as follows: "*In 2003 we had three parties in Plett with 600 people at each party – no sponsors, no media coverage and no DJs of any importance*" (Plett Rage Press release, 2011).

The development of Plett Rage

Plett Rage was formalised in 2001 and organised by an events company called RK Events, a Cape Town based events company which has been responsible for the festivities in Plettenberg Bay. RK Events hosts a number of nightlife entertainment events and has different subsidiary branches to the company - one of these subsidiary branches being 'Plett Rage'. Together, Plett Rage and RK Events are responsible for the organisation and financial orchestration of the post-school festivities in Plettenberg Bay; these are subsequently titled Plett Rage. RK Events established Plett Rage in 2001 and have remained organisers of the event since its inception.

From 2001 to 2003 the organisers were responsible for coordinating the first few Plett Rage parties which occurred in Plettenberg Bay. The early stages of the event had not been recorded statistically but in order to provide some contextualisation as to the size of the event it is noted that in 2003 Plett Rage hosted three parties with approximately 600 attendees at each party. These initial events were on a small scale and hosted at the same venue each night in the respective locations. It is assumed, however, that at this stage (2001-2003) the parties were attended primarily because school leavers were on holiday in the area and it was something for them to do. The parties were by no means the main attraction to the coastal town of Plettenberg Bay. This said, these parties began attracting higher attendee numbers and the need arose for greater levels of organisation. This set the stage for the institutionalisation process of Plett Rage. By 2005 RK Events had created an event in Plettenberg Bay for school leavers to want to attend with the establishment of "Plett Rage".

The phenomenon of Plett Rage gradually developed into a well organised youth-culture festival. As noted from its inception Plett Rage began as week-long events characterised by hosting singular parties. However, from 2004 – 2010 Plett Rage was marketed and hosted as a two and a half week-long festival. During these two weeks it generally happened that those who attended government schools would attend the first week of Plett Rage and those from private schools would attend the second week dependent on when the private or government institutions would finish final exams. Not many attendees would attend the full two and a half weeks. This split of attendees later fell away and by 2012 Plett Rage had become a 10 day festival hosted for all school leavers to attend concurrently. It was observed that the shortening of the length of the festival allowed for organisers to provide a 'bigger and better' experience for attendees in terms of entertainment and event consistency (Jacobs, 2014).

Plett Rage thus developed from the hosting a few parties each year during 2004 to 2006 to having a party each night in 2007. The organisational elements deepened and by 2009

promoters were no longer just hosting parties, but instead providing a Plett Rage 'experience' for school leavers. Increasing attendee numbers in the coastal town also allowed the promoters to host two events on some nights depending on the capacity of the chosen venues. Since 2010 Plett Rage has placed a greater focus also on the organisation of day time activities and the availability of 24 hour entertainment for the Matric Rage attendees. As stated by the event's organiser "*there is more to Rage than just having a party at night and alcohol*" (Jacobs, 2014). By 2011 it was estimated that there were approximately 10 000 individual attendees at Plett Rage. In that year Plett Rage had expanded to host a total of 62 parties over the 2 week youth festival and gained large amounts of media exposure as an event. The growth of the festival was made clear as follows: "*in 2011 we have 62 parties, 150 sponsor activations, nearly every big DJ performing multiple times, lots of media exposure, including radio like 5FM and TV like MTV*" (Plett Rage Press release, 2011).

In the 2013 year of Plett Rage celebrations it was estimated that the youth-festival grew by 26 percent (Jacobs, 2014). Now Plett Rage included more venues and thus hosted more parties whilst the number of attendees grew to an estimated 15 000 individuals. This growth was largely attributed to financial investment and sponsorship directed towards the festival. It was described that "*Rage is now days of partying at 6 awesome festival venues, 300 staff to help you and of course 15,000 of your fellow students rocking it out to the biggest and best of SA's live and electronic music scene*" (www.pletterage.co.za, 2014).

The school leavers attending Plett Rage comprise an unevenly mixed demographic. There is a large contingent of English speaking learners from areas in the Western and Eastern Cape who have traditionally chosen to frequent Plett Rage (Jacobs, 2014, Walsh, 2014). However, as the festival has grown so too has its potential to attract attendees from further afield. Growing numbers of Afrikaans speaking learners from areas in the Free State, Gauteng and the surrounds have chosen to attend Plett Rage even though it is a greater distance to travel. Many Afrikaans learners from Pretoria based high schools also opt for Plett Rage. The events company estimates that over the years of Plett Rage approximately 60 percent of festival attendees have come from a private school background whilst the remaining 40 percent are those who have attended government schools (Jacobs, 2014). Jacobs (2014) deduces that this uneven split is as a result of financial constraints; "*it comes down to Rands and cents in the end*". Jacobs (2014) estimates that throughout the institutionalisation of Plett Rage the demographic mix of attendees has been on average 70 percent white school leavers, 20 percent coloured and 10 percent black. This racial mix certainly does not represent the South African school leaver demographic albeit there has been a recent shift to having more black school leavers attend the event. In interviews it was stated simply that "*Plett Rage has always unfortunately been a white-based event and you know, it's not by choice, it's because the event is ultimately catered for those who are able to afford it*" (Jacobs, 2014).

Organisational dynamics of Plett Rage

With expanding numbers of festival attendees the imperative grew for greater festival organisation and measures of control. The primary organisational control mechanism implemented by Plett Rage organisers was the introduction of what is termed a 'passport' system. In order to partake in the official Plett Rage celebrations, it is essential for attendees to purchase this 'passport'. The Plett Rage passport product is called the 'Plett Rage Freedom Pass' and has been implemented by RK Events since 2007. Attendees purchase a Plett Rage Freedom Pass which acts as their proverbial passport to "destination freedom" after completing school. The Freedom Pass has always served the purpose of providing those who purchase it with entrance to all of the official Plett Rage events. The price of a Freedom Pass works out as more cost effective for Plett Rage attendees looking to attend a party every night. The one-night single entry costs of the nightly events accumulate to a far

larger monetary amount if purchased separately. As Plett Rage does not provide attendees with the option of purchasing pre-sold tickets for individual events, tickets for nightly events are sold either at the door of the event or on the day of the event. Thus to ensure festival goers entry to a party it was recommended that attendees purchase the Freedom Pass. Indeed, the Plett Rage Freedom Pass is commonly purchased by most school leavers frequenting Plettenberg Bay. Upon purchase, the Plett Rage Freedom Pass traditionally has been accompanied by a voucher booklet as well as a 'goodie bag'. The voucher booklet provides attendees with discounts in the form of coupons that can be redeemed at Plett Rage affiliated local business outlets. Coupons may provide attendees with a monetary discount off certain purchases or a percentile deduction from their total spending at the respective outlet. The sale of Plett Rage Freedom Passes begins each year in January and RK Events conclude these sales at the end of October. Usually, Freedom Passes are purchased online via email communication with RK Events or through Plett Rage agents that operate countrywide for RK Events.

A critical organisational issue for this youth festival is that of transport both the means of transport attendees use to get to Plettenberg Bay as well as the transport measures implemented in Plettenberg Bay throughout Plett Rage for the attendees to utilise. Transport is an aspect of the youth festival that requires large amounts of planning and foresight as it is directly related to the safety of the attendees as well as the success of the festival as a whole. The event organisers opted against providing transport options for school leavers to get to Plettenberg Bay. The reason for this was that RK Events and Plett Rage did not wish to be held responsible or associate the youth festival with any possible injuries or accidents which may occur during travel to the festival that would be out of their direct control. The events company further did not wish to be responsible for the potential of transport delays. It was stated by the organisers that *"there is ultimately too much risk involved on the South African roads for us [RK Events] to make providing transport to Plett Rage a viable option"* (Jacobs, 2014). Moreover, as the school leavers attending Plett Rage come from many different regions of South Africa transport provisions would not be feasible to run from all areas. For this reason an affiliate company titled Lucky Student Packages operate and specialise as a tour package provider for prospective attendees with specific transport options for the festival, using a team of fully licensed, insured roadworthy vehicles all with experienced drivers (www.luckystudentpackages.com, 2014).

Usually, most attendees of Plett Rage travel from Cape Town as well as other parts of the Western and Eastern Cape rather than from South Africa's economic heartland of Gauteng. School leavers from Gauteng tend to prefer the parallel youth festivals that emerged at coastal destinations of KwaZulu-Natal (Rogerson & Harmer, 2015). For Plett Rage, the means of transport utilised by most (85 percent) of the attendees is road travel. Of this 85 percent 40 percent of attendees self-drive with friends whilst the remaining 45 percent catch a bus or find other means of private transport which often involves Lucky Student Packages (Jacobs, 2014). Lucky Student Packages provides a number of transport options for attendees wishing to utilise their services. The attendees who drive to Plettenberg Bay commonly do so in vehicles driven by either older students, Matriculants or parents (Jacobs, 2014). The 15 percent of attendees that opt against road travel attend Plett Rage via air travel. As there is no airport in Plettenberg Bay attendees predominantly fly to George Airport from where they catch a sprinter van or shuttle bus to Plettenberg Bay. Another option is for attendees to fly to Port Elizabeth airport but the commute from Port Elizabeth to Plettenberg Bay is much further. The low percentage of attendees using air travel is attributed to the high cost of flying; "it's quite expensive and so not everyone can afford to fly" (Jacobs, 2014). Overall, it is evident that air travel is primarily undertaken by those youth festival goers of greater affluence who are most commonly the group of private school learners.

Once attendees arrive in Plettenberg Bay for Plett Rage it has always been emphasised by RK Events that attendees should limit their driving at all stages during the festival. In order for this to occur RK events has ensured that constant transport provisions have been made for festival attendees. These travel provisions are implemented in order to limit the amount of attendees walking from place to place as well driving under the influence of alcohol as neither of these are noted as safe actions. It is stated by the event organisers that *“at night your safety is our priority so walking is definitely not recommended no matter how close you think you are. Plett Rage has teamed up with trusted local taxi operators to provide you with a safe and efficient means to get around at night”* (www.pletrage.co.za, 2014).

As Plett Rage has evolved and grown in popularity, so has the need to enhance the organisation of the transport system. RK Events implement a transport system that affiliates with local taxi bosses and the local taxi association in order to simultaneously contribute towards local economic development. Since 2008 RK Events has partnered with the taxi groups to mandate their drivers and their vehicles solely for the purpose of Plett Rage for the duration of the festival. The taxi owners are highly involved with the Plett Rage festival activities as they are responsible for the nightly management and dispatch of the various vehicles to the numerous pick up points.

The availability of accommodation services is another issue of critical concern for festival goers. Here, once again, there has been a shift towards greater organisation of services for the youth travellers. From 2001 to 2007 Plett Rage did not have an affiliated accommodation company to work with. During these years attendees would necessarily have to source their own accommodation or stay at a family or a friend's family holiday home. This situation changed in 2008 when 'Lucky Student Packages' formed a partnership with RK Events for provision of accommodation services at Plett Rage. The enterprise Lucky Student Packages is responsible for hiring out hotels, time-shares, private resorts and more recently a campsite in Plettenberg Bay to would-be attendees. Lucky Student Packages completes a 'block booking' and hire out these various accommodation options for the full duration of Plett Rage. The accommodation locations contracted out by Lucky Student Packages are then hired privately to festival attendees. The majority of the potential accommodation options are self-catering venues. Attendees always are able to source their own accommodation with many opting for hotels and private time share hiring options. This said, as Lucky Student Packages has become well known it has emerged as a preferred option for booking accommodation during the period of Plett Rage (Jacobs, 2014). During 2012 Plett Rage in association with Lucky Student Packages advertised a space titled 'Rage Village'. The Rage Village is situated approximately seven kilometres outside of central Plettenberg Bay at the former Aventura resort, now renamed as Forever Resorts. This is a nationally operated holiday destination host and at Plettenberg Bay the camp site and chalets of Forever Resorts are hired out for the duration of Plett Rage by Lucky Student Packages. Rage Village provides the option of low-cost camping accommodation for those attendees who wish to save money on accommodation costs and are willing to spend their matric rage camping in a tent.

Throughout the period that Plett Rage has been held a number of different brands and sponsors have been associated with the event. The various sponsorship campaigns and company collaborations of Plett Rage range from small sponsors of a particular alcohol or beverage for the entire duration of Plett Rage to larger sponsors of single events or parties to headline, presenting sponsorships. Headline or presenting sponsorships allow for the sponsor to be included in the title of the festival (eg. "Plett Rage brought to you by WeChat"). Such sponsorship programmes associated with Plett Rage are viewed as a mutually beneficial affiliation for both RK Events and the respective sponsors. The benefits for the sponsors are the constant advertising to a large, direct target market as well as having a large consumer base that utilise or consume their product.

Social dynamics

As the phenomenon of Plett Rage has developed RK Events has ensured that the event has positive spin-offs for the local community through the involvement of local businesses and also through the implementation of various social upliftment projects. For example, in 2008 the event organisers established a campaign titled 'Friends of the Festival'. This campaign offers attendees who have purchased a Plett Rage Freedom Pass a voucher booklet that includes a number of discount and voucher coupons redeemable at various stores and restaurants within Plettenberg Bay. The businesses that provide coupons for the booklet form the 'Friends of the Festival'. The stores that are part of the Friends of the Festival campaign all display a sign at their entrance to indicate participation. The campaign is noted by local businesses as a good way of attracting customers during the period of Plett Rage. Typically, one interviewed local business owner observed that *"for Rage, there are a whole load of companies within Plett that buy into the Rage concept and the Rage everything else, it's part of our marketing and we become one of the friends of the festival"* (Local Business Owner – Ice Palazzo, 2014).

In order for the Friends of the Festival campaign to be made available for festival goers RK Events market Plett Rage to various local outlets; the outlets do not necessarily approach RK Events. RK Events then charge these outlets a nominal rate of R 1000 to buy into the Friends of the Festival campaign and print up to 5000 voucher booklets each year. The charge for buying into the Friends of the Festival Campaign is justified by RK Events as the vouchers should stimulate revenue within the outlets that are involved as festival goers may opt to frequent these establishments as opposed to non-affiliates in order to save money. It was stressed that the campaign does not render a profit for RK Events. Indeed, the *"reality is that once we've designed it, printed it and distributed it it's a break even exercise that ultimately aids the people buying a pass and it helps the local businesses"* (Jacobs, 2014). The 'Friends of the Festival' participating outlets perform an informal dual role for festival attendees. Participants of the campaign serve their primary purpose of providing discounts and special pricing to Plett Rage attendees with a Freedom Pass whilst also providing somewhat of a 'safe house' for attendees in need. One interviewed business stated that *"being part of the friends of the festival the business also informally provides an area of safety for attendees if necessary - if a kid comes in and they're in trouble, it's an open door, come in and you're safe"* (Local Business Owner – Ice Palazzo, 2014).

In order to contribute further towards local social upliftment RK Events implemented another campaign called the 'Rage4Good Initiative'. The Rage for Good Initiative was launched in 2010 and outsourced in order to be managed and developed by a smaller private events, marketing and public relations company called Firecracker Events. Firecracker Events is managed by an individual who had worked in the field of social development for seven years. RK Events outsource the responsibilities and organisation of the Rage for Good initiative solely to Firecracker Events whilst still remaining involved in the initiative. The rationale was explained as follows: *"when the organisers decided, okay, Plett Rage is big enough and strong enough, the brand is there now, they've sorted themselves out, let's bring in a social development component into the event, they contacted us"* (Firecracker Agency Manager Interview, 2014). Rage for Good has established a relationship and affiliates with the Bitou Municipality (the municipality under which Plettenberg Bay falls) and a local non-profit organisation, the Bitou 10 Foundation, a local education and development based organisation which has been affiliated with Rage for Good since its establishment (Firecracker Agency Manager Interview, 2014). Rage for Good through the Bitou 10 Foundation incorporates an entrepreneurial approach towards social development. This is achieved by working with members of the community and enabling them through various programmes and projects. The organisation works with local partners in order to identify work ready individuals and then provides opportunities for these local community members (Firecracker Agency Manager Interview, 2014). The social initiatives proposed by Rage for

Good have differed each year. In its initial year Rage for Good completely renovated a school recreation area. Through a sponsorship from Lipton Iced Tea Rage for Good organised and built 'The Lipton Freedom Garden' at a local school. The overhaul included the creation of a massive vegetable garden and the planting of 60 yellowwood and lemon trees.

Since 2012 Rage for Good has sold Plett Rage merchandise on Plettenberg Bay central beach. All of the proceeds gained are donated to the Bitou 10 foundation who then direct the funding to various projects. Also in 2012 Rage for Good established the Plett Rage Scholarship which raised funds to send an underprivileged learner to boarding school at the local High School for grades 10 to 12. In addition during 2013 Rage for Good attempted to host a stationary collection campaign, again incentivised by the prospects of winning a number of prizes. This initiative was not successful however as only about 20 attendees actually brought stationary to donate to the local less-advantaged schools.

As one of the organizational and safety measures implemented for Matric Rage, the respective organizational companies formed a partnership with international Christian organization, the Red Frogs. The Red Frogs provide a number of volunteer services for Matric Rage attendees and operate in both Plettenberg Bay and KwaZulu-Natal. It was stated that the "*partnership with the Red Frogs allows for the presence of an open support network for Rage goers at all times. Included is a dedicated area for the Red Frogs to provide on-site counseling should it be required*" (Rage Economic Impact, 2014). The Red Frogs is an international Christian organisation that was established in Australia. This volunteer organisation was initially called Hotel Chaplins but after two years of handing out sweets in the shape of a red frog the name was changed. In terms of the establishment of the South African branch of the organisation, the volunteers working for an organisation called Beach House began helping those attending Matric Rage in Ballito and uMhlanga in 2005. Beach House began as a free lift service which received a positive response from the youth festival attendees. In 2006 these volunteers had one vehicle giving free lifts to attendees. The number of vehicles subsequently expanded. After the 2008 Matric Rage celebrations Beach House made contact with the Australian based Red Frogs. The year 2009 marked the first year that the organisation called themselves The Red Frogs within the South African context. The Australian system was notably adapted and integrated with the Beach House organisation as they shared the same common goals (Red Frogs – Main Organiser, 2014).

The Red Frogs provide an invaluable service to Matric Rage attendees and have done so since their initial affiliation with the youth festival in 2005 as the then titled Beach House organisation. Red Frogs provide on site counselling for any attendees who may require this service and in Plettenberg Bay provisions are even made to host lost or inebriated attendees in a local church. The Red Frogs further respond to distress calls received from attendees that may require assistance and these calls are recorded in an efficient logging system. It is noted that these calls are not life-threatening instances as this lies outside of the capabilities of the organisation. Rather the responses are largely related to social issues as well as assisting those who may be suffering from 'intense hangovers' (Red Frogs – Main Organiser, 2014).

Overall, the institutionalisation and operation of Plett Rage has required the implementation of a number of control and mitigation mechanisms in order to reduce potentially negative social impacts of the event for local residents. The event triggered the implementation of local upliftment and development initiatives such as the Rage for Good initiative and the Friends of the Festival campaign in order to assist in making the local community more favourable towards these large-scale festivities. Organisers work closely with local governmental authorities in order to contain the event and prevent potentially negative impacts which could result in negative perceptions relating to Plett Rage.

Conclusion

This article has expanded a neglected aspect of festival tourism in South Africa, namely that of the post-school celebrations. It is argued that Plett Rage held the essence of a 'small town' community event wherein those with the capacity to do so look after the attendees as well as each other. Indeed, Plett Rage is essentially a community orientated, organised and managed event with a large cross-section of the community working together to create the best possible Plett Rage experience for the thousands of school leavers who were simply coming to have a good time. It is evident that Plett Rage had a grand impact on what is typically a quiet town as the influx of 15 000 attendees all frequented local businesses and restaurants as well as utilised many accommodation providers in a time that precedes the traditional December holiday season.

The celebration of Plett Rage 2014 was a community conscious event with very few social disturbances. Residents, business owners and local authorities commended the organisers on the execution of Plett Rage as they noted 2014 as one of the most successful occurrences of the youth festival. The event organisers implemented numerous strategies to ensure the best possible control and roll out of the event. It is thus argued that this South African rite of passage youth travel phenomenon is not only more demographically and geographically diversified in comparison to its international counterparts, but also that it is more organized, institutionalised and commercialised. Transport provisions worked thoroughly for attendees and no incidents of gross misbehaviour were reported. This outcome can be attributed mostly to the implementation and control measures introduced by the organisers to enhance the experience of festival goers attending this post-school youth festival. Attendees were provided with a variety of entertainment options and frequented many local establishments. The streets of Plettenberg Bay were constantly bustling with groups of friends celebrating their new found freedom responsibly. This said, the local community and resident perceptions of the festival merit further investigation, especially in relation to the positive local economic impact of the hosting of this festival just prior to the major December influx of leisure travellers to the town.

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