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## 1. Introduction

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### Abstract

This introductory chapter offers an overview of the key terms and topics that underpin the collection of chapters within this edited book. Through a review of edutainment within festival experiences, this chapter outlines the context and nature of the book's focus, and presents a structured rationale for this book's need. Importantly, this chapter introduces the contributing 14 chapters and afterword, which, through a series of case studies, offer unique and important insights that will extend current understandings of festival experiences emphasising the use and benefit of edutainment activities.

### Introduction

Festivals are dynamic, influential and powerful - a phenomena that has the ability to create greater understanding of one's surroundings and subsequently social change. They exist as a space for cultural exposure that may result in what Garcia (2021, para. 10) calls "meaningful" and "life-defining shared memories". They offer meaning to varying audiences through acts of, for example, engagement, interactivity, remembrance, tradition, and feasting - all with the potential to captivate and "enable people to negotiate their sense of belonging" and/or to "(re)consider their understanding and place in the world" (Whyton, 2020, p. 556). Such experiences are made possible through strategically planned experience designs that mix educational elements with entertainment activities, thereby creating an edutainment festival experience. As such, this edited book explores the practice of edutainment, or rather the mixing of education and entertainment, within festival experiences. Through a series of case studies it explores how a wide range of festivals utilise edutainment methods to connect with audiences as well as how edutainment is perceived by the attendees.

### Edutainment

Edutainment is a varied practice, including online gaming, live action role play, film and television, education, tourism, and events. Within the context of the leisure industry, it is traditionally understood as an interpretation agenda, designed to promote educational entertainment or entertaining education. It is commonly used to transform static and passive audience experiences to be more engaging and interactive, so that audiences may both enjoy and learn more deeply (Oren & Shani, 2012; Smith, 2016). With the aim to interpret and

communicate information through engaging and entertaining activities and/or media, edutainment creates memorable audience experiences.

Etymologically, the notion of edutainment is often linked to Walt Disney, who in 1954 addressed the usefulness of mixing education and entertainment for audience learning (Oren & Shani, 2012; Wyatt et al, 2021). Although the coining of the term ‘edutainment’ can be attributed to the later work of Robert Heyman (1973) and his National Geographic Society documentaries (Aksakal, 2015), it is often referred to as a process, strategy or tool for designing and improving audience experiences to be memorable (Wyatt, 2022). Such experiences tend to use innovative and engaging methods, such as interactive theming, storytelling, immersion, technology, simulation, and re-enactment, which others have previously noted as beneficial for enjoyable learning (Aksakal, 2015; Hertzman et al., 2008; Rapeepisarn et al., 2006).

From a consumption point of view, the notion of edutainment underpins Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) experience economy, which theorises that experiences consist of four realms: education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics. In explaining the experience economy, Pine and Gilmore (1998, para. 6) refer to the staging of experiences in such a way that they will be deeply memorable, which they explain can be accomplished “on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level”. They go on to address the possibility of these experiences as being dependent on theming - a staging process similar to set design (Åström, 2020) and the engagement of senses, which is arguably very effective in creating memorable experiences. Such claims have been echoed in subsequent studies that have explored audience experiences reliant on edutainment techniques to create engaging and thought-provoking experiences (see e.g., Bowman & Pezzullo, 2010; Ivanova & Light, 2018; Oren & Shani, 2012; Wright, 2021; Wyatt et al, 2023).

The experience economy argument echoes Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) concept of flow, in which the optimal experience is both educational and fulfilling, and one in which people are so deeply engaged that the experience becomes a life-long learning opportunity, or rather an imprint on their life. Such experiences have been on the rise with an increasing demand for more engaging and interactive experiences (Neuhofer & Buhalis, 2014). In fact, Neuhofer and Buhalis (2014, p. 124) refer to the the experience economy as one that has continued to evolve over the last few decades, moving from “Experience 1.0 (the experience economy) to the Experience 2.0 (co-creation experiences), to the now Experience 3.0 (technology enhanced experiences)”. Their proposal of this shift has rang true, as affective, co-created, immersive, simulated and hyper-real experiences - all made possible through edutainment methods - are becoming a preferred experience among audiences (Alabau-Montoya & Ruiz-Molina, 2020; Light & Ivanova, 2021; Martini & Buda, 2020). What is more, studies have shown that the experience economy has grown to accept edutainment as an effective way to connect with audiences on a deeper level, engaging them in fun-centric learning experiences. Santonen and Faber (2015), and more recently Seraphin and Yallop (2020), have demonstrated the benefit edutainment methods can have for children and adults alike, as the application of edutainment can generate greater learning motivation to engage and participate in learning, as well as to retain the information learned. For children in particular, learning through play can help them to develop not only knowledge and understanding, but also their social and communication skills (Seraphin & Yallop, 2020).

### ***Edutainment and the festival experience***

Within festival experiences, edutainment can offer added value to the audience experience. In exploring edutainment within wine festivals, Viljoen et al. (2018) demonstrated how edutainment experiences help the audience to learn something new, enhance their existing knowledge, develop a greater appreciation for local produce, diversify their palate, enhances their curiosity, and enhance their overall well-being, among a range of other benefits. More recently, Iverson et al. (2022) explored the use of edutainment activities within Viking festivals, demonstrating edutainment leads to “a deeper level of immersion”, which in turn increases “the appraisal - audience attitude, memory, and intentions - of Viking festivals” (p. 37). Despite these benefits, edutainment as a subject for study within festival experiences remains under-developed and it also remains under-utilised by festival practitioners. Some have called for more festivals to increase their edutainment opportunities in order to allow audiences to be both entertained by festival performances, but to also be educated within that space (Saifudin & Saleh, 2022; Viljoen & Kruger, 2020; Wosnam et al, 2009).

Exacerbating the under-developed understanding and practice of edutainment within festivals, very few have explored this topic within an academic context. Instead, edutainment and the notion of learning for fun is most often explored within museum and visitor attraction settings (e.g. Hertzman et al., 2008; Packer, 2006; Packer & Ballantyne, 2004; Seraphin & Yallop, 2020). This may be due to some suggestions that festivals are mainly entertainment leisure occasions (Driscoll, 2014; Ommundsen, 2009) and that nowadays, people attend festivals mainly for fun and social purposes, and not for education (Meehan, 2005; Négrier, 2015). As such, calls for more research on how festivals can be edutaining experiences, where people learn while having fun (see e.g. Rossetti & Quinn, 2019, 2021; Szabó, 2015; Wilks & Quinn, 2016), have hitherto been unfulfilled. Given the demonstrated benefits of edutainment, there is an overt need to explore how education and entertainment mix within festivals to enhance the audience experience. Therefore, this book addresses these calls and extends understanding of how education and entertainment work together in festival contexts. As there has yet to be any texts directly relating to festivals as edutainment experiences, this book, framed thematically in four parts, offers what is believed to be the first collection of festival studies that emphasise edutainment experiences.

The curated collection of chapters include a wide range of case studies, from science and food festivals to dark and history festivals. The case studies included are diverse in terms of size and locality - taking place across the globe in different countries, including UK, USA, Greece, Turkey, Ireland and Mexico. A variety of methodologies and methods have also been used throughout the chapters, including interviews, observations, databases, netnography, and social media analysis in both face-to-face and digital interactions involving the festival participants, organisers, and other relevant stakeholders. All of this helps to provide a well-rounded global perspective on how festivals and edutainment are intertwined.

### ***Part 1: Planning edutainment***

The first five chapters of this book explore the ways festivals plan edutainment and informal learning experiences, as well as how stakeholders can influence the designing of edutainment

experiences at festivals. It is commonly understood that any good festival experience starts with effective planning for the festival and audience experience. Within this, considerations are needed for the intended audience experience and what festival attendees should be taking away from the experience, which in turn requires discussions surrounding the tools and methods most effective for achieving these intended outcomes. Evaluation is therefore of great importance in ensuring the planning processes are both completed and fulfilled. Each chapter within this first part addresses elements of the edutainment festival experience planning process, as outlined in the following.

In Chapter 2, Jones, Canovan, and Fallon explore how the organisers of the Lancashire Science Festival in the UK manage and deliver their annual edutainment experience at the University of Central Lancashire. Using a triangulation of methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups, their chapter highlights how a range of stakeholders work together to plan, design, deliver and evaluate the festival to ensure both an engaging audience experience and the continuous improvement of the festival. Their findings are not only relevant for other science festivals, but also for other educational institutions that stage or are considering staging edutaining festivals or student-led events.

Chapter 3 brings us to the USA, in which Stewart, Todd and Ali-Knight examine the Haunted Happenings festival in Witch City - Salem, Massachusetts. Using a case study approach, this chapter explores how the festival uses edutainment to educate and entertain attendees about Salem's dark history of witchcraft and persecution. The authors use interviewing to reveal the Haunted Happenings festival has transformed Salem's dark past into a festival experience that engages attendees, the local community and attractions through edutainment, which they argue acts as a combative tool for social and political change, and as a cultural benefit that creates an immersive educational experience.

In Chapter 4, Baker examines in detail the EPCOT festivals in the USA, which include the International Festival of the Arts (2017), the International Flower & Garden Festival (1994), the International Food & Wine Festival (1996), and the International Festival of the Holidays (1996). Baker outlines how each festival is different, although are similar in terms of their planned experience, interactive activities, demonstrations and educational sessions, cultural elements, and merchandise. Drawing on the author's in-person experiences and participant observation at the festivals since 2000 through to 2022, this chapter illustrates the potential of a theme park festival as revenue strategy, play site, cultural immersion creator, and educational tool.

Closing this section, in Chapter 5, Goodey explores SouthWestFest, an annual award-winning cultural community festival in the London Borough of Westminster (UK). Drawing on a case study approach, this chapter sets out to consider how the specific cues, environment and setting of the SouthWestFest festivalscape are utilised by the festival and three of its partner organisations, in the planning and design of learning and engagement activities which take place in connection with entertainment delivered through the festival. Goodey demonstrates the value of understanding these processes as edutainment is then assessed and presented in terms of supporting the festival in heightening learning opportunities and experiences and communicating outcomes to funders and stakeholders.

## ***Part 2: Audience engagement***

Section 2 delves deeper into how audiences can become engaged and immersed in edutainment experiences at festivals and how edutainment can occur. In focusing on audience engagement, the four chapters of this section explore the dynamics of this important component of the festival experience. Creating engaging and interactive experiences within a festival is arguably key to ensuring audience enjoyment and satisfaction, but these are also foundational elements for edutainment experiences as well, which each of the following chapters address.

In Chapter 6, Lu explores how international music festivals used digital platforms to create edutainment experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on the data collected from online audience comments and reactions, Lu analyses the ways in which audiences obtain and extend their edutainment experiences in the 4th China-UK International Music Festival held on digital platforms. The findings of this chapter suggest the enjoyment of online music festivals stimulates audiences to learn more about Chinese and UK music and musicians, which in turn contributes to furthering their digital engagement and festival participation experiences. Importantly, this chapter prompts important questions for the future of festivals online as most festivals are now being delivered again in the physical world. Still, there are benefits of offering online or hybrid experiences, which certainly allows for greater access and inclusivity.

Exploring the British Science Festival in Chapter 7, Frew and Makua address how science festivals have become a popular means for the science community. They outline how these festivals help to raise public awareness, as well as encouraging conversations about science between science communities and society. The authors take a unique approach as they consider science festivals within the theory of valuable leisure which suggests successful leisure activities (such as science festivals) can contribute to human development by enhancing individuals' capabilities, promoting well-being, empowering them, encouraging conviviality, supporting individual values, and protecting cultural diversity. Their findings reveal the creative and innovative activities and experiences via edutainment is an approach that is aligned with the key aspects of the valuable leisure experience.

Chapter 8 explores seven Greek festivals, in which the authors, Skoultos and Karachalis, reveal these festival experiences create edutainment opportunities that can cultivate strong bonds between the local community, tourists, and festival organisations. As the authors approach edutainment as a tool to enhance the active engagement of attendees during the festival experience, their findings, collected from structured interviews, reveal edutainment activities help to develop a form of festival legacy that further contributes to festival success and long-term viability.

## ***Part 3: Sustainability and EDI***

Part three of this book explores the nature of sustainability and EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) within the context of edutainment activities and festival experiences. Considering edutainment is often used to engage individuals in their experience and with others in a way

that allows them to co-create their experience so that it is personalised and deeply memorable, ensuring these experiences are equally accessible, inclusive, and promote diversity is of the utmost importance. Such assurances help to ensure the festival experience is a sustainable one - not just in terms of being green and environmentally friendly - but also socially and economically sustainable, thereby extending the festival's legacy value. The three chapters within this part highlight important details about how edutainment is an essential tool for festival experiences that seek to promote these themes.

In Chapter 9, Wright explores how the rural farming Irish festival - The Winterage Festival - fosters learning about nature, farming, and the locality through edutainment techniques that promote place-based learning centred around heritage, folklore, sustainability, and biodiversity. Drawing on interviews and participation in the visitor journey, the author's findings suggest that education and entertainment coincide in this lunar landscape where reverse transhumance is practised - moving cattle to upland pastures over the winter months, before returning to fertile lowland pastures for the summer. Most insightful is the author's revelations that visitors and locals alike are fully immersed in this festival, where co-creation leads to the learning landscape providing the canvas for an outdoor classroom experience.

The Accessible Film Festival, an annual festival held in Turkey, is explored in Chapter 10. The authors Ece, Ezenel and Şenel, consider the issues of festival organisation, transportation and location, physical environment, social inclusion, communication, content, and technology throughout this comprehensive chapter in order to ensure inclusiveness and diversity in an edutainment-driven festival. Relying on interviewing and storytelling techniques, the authors demonstrate how festivals can utilise edutainment methods to create film festival experiences that are inclusive and diverse for both attendees and film-makers showcasing their work at film festivals.

In Chapter 11, Sánchez-Aguirre explores film festivals as a way to enhance sustainability understanding through edutainment techniques. Through a case study approach reliant on interviews and media analysis, the author explores Cinema Planeta, the first film festival in Morelos, Mexico, as an example of how edutainment techniques can be used to engage film festival audiences through online platforms. The author's findings highlighted the significance of including an online platform within the film festival experience, as well as giving audience rewards to those for participating in edutainment activities relating to the themes of the films. In doing so, the author demonstrates how edutainment activities may be designed to promote sustainability and the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (2015) through film festival experiences.

#### ***Part 4: Experiencing edutainment***

The final part of this book focuses on understanding how festival attendees experience edutainment, and not just enjoyable learning, but also their development of a sense of authenticity and community. The festival experience has, up until now, been discussed throughout this book in a variety of contexts relating to the planning and organisation processes for ensuring an enhanced, inclusive and sustainable audience experience through edutainment activities. The final three chapters therefore explore edutainment within the festival

experiences, with a closer look into how audiences experience enjoyable learning - edutainment.

In Chapter 12, Leonard and Whitfield explore 1940s festivals and events in the UK which are shown to create an immersive and edutaining experience that is guided by homage and commemoration of this time. The authors complete a critical questioning on the importance of storytelling through living history to disseminate memoirs of this historic era; how 1940s festivals and events can trigger nostalgia; the inclusion of edutainment and finding a synergy between entertainment and education; and the responsibility to accurately present this past as best possible. Their findings confirm that organisers strive to present an accurate and authentic representation of the 1940s in order to help attendees to better connect with and learn from this past. Attendees are thus engaged in the experience through truthful storytelling and entertaining festival content, which work together to form a successful edutainment experience.

In Chapter 13, Kajzer Mitchell, Van Winkle and Low merge two concepts - ludic learning spaces and service ecosystems - to examine how two food festivals, the globally occurring Local Wild Food Challenge and the Harvest Moon Festival in Canada, engage their attendees in deep learning processes. The authors use this framework to examine interactions between multiple actors and to map the resulting multi-layered edutainment experiences through various levels of analysis, from individual to relational, and from personal to communal. Their findings reveal how edutainment festival experiences do not just constitute a fun day out but that the fun and frolics within the festival encourage attendees to explore their creativity, express themselves in novel ways, learn about alternative food realities and connect with a broader alternative food movement.

Chapter 14 is a theoretical contribution that proposes an enlarged concept of emotion for edutainment in science festivals. In this chapter, Fernandes explores how science festivals that use edutainment techniques can capitalise on negative emotions to engage attendees that have a troubled relationship with science. Using specifically Horror Science-Fiction Movie Festivals, the chapter questions the theory that edutainment-based science festivals are appealing because they rest precisely on positive emotions. As such, the author posits negative emotions can be just as powerful as positive emotions when used effectively through edutainment techniques in science themed festivals, and can in turn generate an enjoyable learning experience.

## **Conclusions**

This book closes with an afterword (Chapter 15), in which the editors review the ideation of this book. A reflective review of the contributing chapters is offered before addressing the future of edutainment within the festival experiencescape. Themes such as technology and wellbeing are identified as growing themes for academic interest across interdisciplinary studies relating to the global visitor economy, and specifically the festival industry. Given these future thinking proposals, in conjunction with the following carefully curated collection of chapters, this book will be a valuable tool for students, researchers, festival organisers, and policy makers in better understanding the edutainment potential of festivals. Moreover, it will be useful for people working in higher education and involved in pedagogic research focused

on using festivals as a tool for enjoyable learning opportunities. Other fields that utilise edutainment to create audience experiences, such as museums, hospitality, theatre, and education will also find interest in this book and the authors' contributing chapters.

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