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15. Afterword: The future of edutainment in festival experiences

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Ideation

The ideation underpinning this book stems from the editors' previous works on festivals and edutainment experiences, in which gaps in both knowledge and published research were revealed, prompting a need for greater attention for how these two topics work together to create enhanced audience experiences. Drawing on her areas of expertise - developed from her PhD research (2020) that explored the learning and cultural impacts of participating in literary festivals in Italy and Ireland - Giulia formed the initial ideas for the book, which had originally focused on understanding how people learn, acquire culture, and communicate at festivals. This idea was further inspired by her subsequent research that focused on learning at literary festivals (Rossetti & Quinn, 2019), how cultural capital development occurs at rural festivals (Rossetti & Quinn, 2021, 2022) and how events can be transformational and can change lives (Antchak et al., 2022) - all which came to a deliver a revelation that there existed an underdeveloped knowledge of how education and entertainment work together to create enhanced festival experiences. In discussing these findings with Brianna, who's areas of expertise is of edutainment interpretation and experience design - developed from her PhD research (2019) and subsequent publications on edutainment experiences (Wyatt et al., 2021), interpretation design (Wyatt, 2022), and re-enactment experiences (Wyatt et al., 2023) - it was realised that many festivals do employ a variety of edutainment methods. But in discussing the existing publications (or lack thereof) on edutaining festival experiences, it was soon revealed that more needed to be known. Taking these revelations to Jane, who has explored a range of festival experiences, including festival impacts beyond the financial ones (Carlsen et al., 2007), creating fringe atmospheres (Frew & Ali-Knight, 2009), festivals and place-making (Platt & Ali-Knight, 2018) and using the senses in co-producing dementia events (Stewart et al, 2022), it was soon determined that a curated collection of case studies on edutainment within festivals was needed and would be significant for enhancing understanding across academia and practice. The results of this determination has proven successful in which the contributing chapters have highlighted varying ways in which edutainment is applied across a wide-range of festival experiences, thus prompting further discussion for how it can be applied further in the future.

Reflecting on edutainment in festival experiences

This book has shown that edutainment allows for enhanced audience experiences that deeply engage festival audiences. As the contributors to Part 1 of this book - *Planning edutainment* - have demonstrated, strategically planned and designed edutainment experiences can prompt festival attendees to become inspired to take their learning from the festival experience and apply it at home in an extended learning experience. Involving local businesses and attractions can help to extend the festival experience and therefore learning opportunities, whilst theme parks and attractions can host their own festival experiences to extend their offerings and enhance their visitors' experience. Moreover, by involving the local community in festival experiences and applying edutainment through hands-on activities can help festival attendees to recognise what they are capable of, enhance their self-belief and grow their understanding through learning as play. Such experiences are thus capable of creating extremely memorable experiences. However, as the contributors of Part 2 - *Audience engagement* - demonstrated, these experiences are not confined to physical settings. Thanks to advances in technology, festivals now have the ability to create cross-border experiences and widen their audience participation through online platforms. In many cases, these types of experiences may be the only experience attendees are capable of having, and thus providing such experiences digitally is not only a benefit for accessibility, but also inclusivity. Beyond the digital realm, offering edutainment experiences for children and adults alike, as well as kid-focused activities, and after-hours adult-focused activities are proven ways festivals can further engage their audiences across multiple levels and thus stimulate deeper learning and enjoyment. Moreover, community involvement within the festival experience through strategically designed edutainment activities can help to both educate and entertain audiences, but also strengthen the social bonds between attendees and the local community hosting the festival experience.

Prominent themes in all leisure related studies at the moment are sustainability and EDI (equality, diversity and inclusivity), which is a reflection of society's focus for creating a better tomorrow. In Part 3 of this book - *Sustainability and EDI* - the contributors make clear that the more interactive and co-creative the festival experience is, through, for example, edutaining experiential learning, the more engaged attendees will be and the more they will learn and grow to appreciate the festival's message - such as sustainability. Importantly, it is demonstrated that to truly engage audiences with such important topics, the mission of being sustainable and/or inclusive, diverse, and accessible must be at the forefront of the festival agenda and experience design. Doing this is shown to be quite easy if employing technology, media and film that can enhance the edutainment activities being offered. Such designs must therefore consider the theme of the festival experience and story being told, which in Part 4 - *Experiencing edutainment* - the contributors highlight as being of the utmost importance. Specifically, drawing on the emotional connections attendees may have with the festival theme or storyline through edutainment activities, such as re-enactment, can help to create more memorable experiences. Through experiential learning experiences designed around themes and storylines, attendees can learn more deeply. However, offering them time to reflect on their experiences whilst still in the festival experience is certainly a benefit to the learning experience. What is more, recognising how audiences engage and experience festivals is important to consider when planning and designing audience experiences. However, also considering why some may not engage with particular festivals or festival themes is important, as festival organisers can use this knowledge to redesign their promotional strategies and experience offerings so that

those negative emotions or perspectives towards certain festival themes may be potentially turned into positive ones.

The future of edutainment in festival experiences

Given the information and findings the book's contributors have provided, it is clear that the future of edutainment in festival experiences will likely be driven by technology, co-creation and immersion. It is likely that edutainment methods, such as thematic designs, sensory stimulation, co-creative activities, re-enactments and varying media, such as film and photography will continue to engage festival audiences as we move into the future. However it is uncertain if virtual festival experiences through live-streaming and online engagement platforms will continue to thrive. As society moves further away from the lockdown experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a return of a desire to experience festivals first-hand and to be able to say "I was there". These first-hand experiences offer what Garcia (2021) calls "life-defining moments of shared memories". Yet, as we've seen through the breadth of studies covered in this book, many festival experiences can still engage audiences in a virtual way, not to mention it helps to lower geographic boundaries and increase accessibility and inclusivity. In fact, numerous tourism experiences have capitalised on the virtual experience, offering live-streamed and pre-recorded guided tours of their premises in order to reach those visitors who may not have the means to travel and experience them in person.

As we move further into the future, society is expected to maintain their desire for interactive, immersive and hyper-real experiences. This is likely because society has become largely dependent on technology and media (Perry, 2020), which, in turn, has increased their expectations for more elaborate and simulative experiences (Neuhofer & Buhalis, 2014). Some have suggested AR/VR and wearable technologies, such as headgear, glasses and gloves, will become a sought after edutainment method in tourism, as these will help to enhance experiences and allow full immersion (Wright, 2021). Such technologies are likely to soon be seen in festival experiences, both in at-home and on-site experiences, as attendees can experience the festival live from their home through VR headsets, whilst attendees on-site can wear AR glasses to enhance the scenery as they move around the venue space. Simulation experiences are also a future possibility for festivals, and especially for those that have a strong storyline or message for attendees to learn about. 360⁰ panoramic films or simulation rides like Soarin' Around the World at Disney's California Adventure in the US may offer such simulation experiences (Wu et al., 2020). While the costs of running such experiences may be too high for a one-off or small community festival, larger and annual festivals that have permanent venue spaces, such as Glastonbury or the Edinburgh International Festival, may benefit from such technologies in their attempts to both educate and entertain audiences.

In addition to technology, well-being, social bonding and building cultural capital will likely be dominant themes within festival experiences in the future, and the use of edutainment will likely be a driving force for delivering those social messages and missions. As many of the book's contributors have demonstrated, festivals are inherently underpinned with cultural value and meaning that can help to build social connections between attendees. In fact, scholars have suggested festival participation and involvement - that being physical, emotional, intellectual and/or social - is a way for festival attendees to enhance their social relationships

(Wilks & Quinn, 2016) and cultural capital (Rossetti & Quinn, 2021). Future festivals can continue to rely on their programming, marketing and promotions, and general edutainment activities to build such relationships. However, embracing some of the aforementioned technologies and allowing for more immersive and/or simulated experiences in which attendees can engage with through active involvement across multiple levels, is arguably an effective means for boosting social bonding. As attendees physically engage with, for example, sensory stimulating activities, together - whether that be in their own groups or with other attendees they may not know - they will certainly be able to enhance their cultural capital. In addition, drawing attendees further into the storylines, narratives, and/or festival message and mission through interactivity and group experiential edutainment activities will help them to become more engrossed with those narratives thus feeling a stronger connection to it and those around them, which may, in turn, create "genuine interest in learning and thinking more deeply about the world" (Rossetti & Quinn, 2021, p. 48).

Research futures for edutainment in festival experiences
Suggestions for future studies have been highlighted throughout the book and they include recommendations for a better understanding of how the concept of festival edutainment is defined and used by varying stakeholders (see Chapter 5) and in non-traditional festival settings (see Chapter 4). They also include suggestions to explore different methodological approaches to investigate edutainment at festivals and events (see Chapter 11), investigate global comparisons of the types of activities programmed at edutaining festivals (see Chapter 7) and analyse long-term outcomes of edutainment activities at festivals (see Chapter 13). Other suggestions concern the exploration of certain topics in relation to edutainment in festival settings. For instance, there are calls for further investigations of how the past is told in edutaining festival experiences and how authenticity is therefore managed via edutainment at festivals (see Chapter 3, 12). Other suggestions include exploring how festival edutainment is designed and evaluated in relation to sustainability (see Chapter 9) and community and social-bonding (see Chapter 8), white others called for greater understanding of the use of technology and gamification for festival edutainment (see Chapter 6, 10), and an investigation into the different types of learners for edutaining festival activities (see Chapter 13). Notably, it has been recommended that future studies should better explore the role of negative emotions in planning and consuming edutaining festival experiences (see Chapter 14), which would contribute to the growing literature pertaining to audience motivations and/or other leisure experiences that can induce negative emotions, such as dark tourism. Such recommendations help to enhance those put forward in Chapter 2, which calls for more higher education institutions to work with science festival organisers in order to better support the development of 'science capital'.

True, scholarly interest in the aforementioned future themes has slowly started to emerge, with, for example, some exploring how events and festivals generate subjective and community well-being, health and quality of life (Ahn, 2021; Jepson & Walters, 2021; Rossetti, 2021). However, much more is needed to fully understand the links between learning while having fun (edutainment) at festivals and the promotion of attendees' psychological well-being. For instance, is the enjoyment of learning perceived as an achievement? If so, why? How is edutainment at festivals meaningful for attendees, and in what ways can technology and co-creative activities enhance that meaningful perception? Such topics have been explored within

tourism research (see e.g., de Groot, 2016; Light & Ivanova, 2022; Magelssen, 2006; Wyatt et al., 2023), but it remains an under-developed focus for scholarly attention within the festival experiencescape.

At festivals, attendees can develop their knowledge and skills that can lead to values and behavioural changes (Rossetti & Quinn, 2021). Yet, they can also co-develop these same skills and understanding to create shared values and social change, as several of this book's contributors have demonstrated. As such, future research must further investigate cultural capital development both during and after the festival experience. Future studies should also explore the links between building cultural capital at festivals and well-being outcomes, and how edutainment through, for example, advanced technologies can help to boost that development. In addition, they should investigate how learning and edutaining activities impact on audiences' self-esteem, identity and achievement, which are all components of well-being (Seligman, 2011). Moreover, since edutaining festival experiences are understood as social occasions, where audiences can strengthen their social networks and increase their social relationships (Hassanli et al., 2020; Wilks & Quinn, 2016), future research should explore how the bridging and bonding of social capital occurs while engaging in edutaining festival experiences.

Given all these revelations, Figure 1 summarises the key areas for future research that the editors and contributing authors of this book have identified. Edutainment must be better defined in relation to its use within festival experiences. Research approaches to explore and investigate the use of edutainment within festival experiences also deserves similar scrutiny o that within the tourism sector, this includes the types of methodological approaches taken to explore and investigate this phenomena. Finally, the range of themes, key terms and topics addressed throughout this book and highlighted in this concluding chapter require a narrowed focus within scholarly outputs. Such studies could then help to extend knowledge and understanding of the benefit for, and use of, edutainment within not just tourism experiences, but importantly, festival experiences.

<Figure 15.1 here>
Figure 15.1. Research futures for edutainment in festival experiences (Source: Authors)

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