

Festival republic and glastonbury festival essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Glastonbury Festival has become a worldwide attraction for music fans and artists alike. In 2009, Bruce Springsteen was added to the long list of acts (from Paul McCartney to Oasis) that have appeared at the festival. It started in 1970 when 1,500 hippy revellers gathered on a farm near Glastonbury Tor to be plied with free milk and entertainment from a makeshift stage. Now, Glastonbury is a major international festival that attracts over 150,000 attendees. Without any knowledge of the lineup, the tickets for the 2010 Festival sold out in days. In those early days, the Festival was developed by local farmer, Michael Eavis, whose passion for music and social principles led to a weekend of music as a means of raising funds for good causes. It was a social mission rooted in the hippy counter-culture of the 1960s and events such as Woodstock. Today, the Glastonbury Festival attendee finds that those early days of hippy idealism are a long way off. The scale of the organisation demands strong management to support the achievement of the festival's social aims.

At first, the statutory requirements for an event held on private land were minimal. Jovial policemen looked over hedges whilst recreational drugs were sold from tables near the festival entrance as if this was just a slightly unusual village fête. Needless to say, the festival began to attract the attention of a number of different groups, especially as legislation around the running of events tightened. Eavis struggled with local residents who hated the invasion of their privacy; with hippy activist groups who felt that their contribution in helping at the festival gave them a sense of ownership; with drug dealers carrying on their activities on the fringes of the festival; and fans climbing over the fences to get free access. The festival's continued

expansión has resulted in a festival with over ten stages covering jazz, dance, classical, world music and other genres. Added to this, there is comedy, poetry, circus, theatre and children's entertainment alongside more esoteric street theatre performances. Much of this is organised into specific grassy field áreas where, for example, the Dance Village uses a number of tents dedicated to different types of dance music. Indeed, such is the range of entertainment on offer that some attenders spend the whole weekend at the festival without seeing a single live music act.

Though the Eavis family remain involved with the main programme, much of the other entertainment is now managed by others. Reflecting this shift towards more diverse entertainment, the ñame of the festival was changed from Glastonbury Fayre (reflecting the ancient cultural heritage of the área) to the Glastonbury Festival for Contemporary Performing Arts. In some years, the festival is forced to take a year off to allow the farmland to recover from the trampling of thousands of pairs of feet. Not only is this wise on an agricultural front but also gives the local residents a rest from the annual invasión of festival goers. Despite this, the festival has met with a number of controversies such as when a large number of gatecrashers spoilt the fun in 2000. This caused the festival to be fined due to exceeding the licensed attendance and excessive noise after the event. Furthermore, health and safety laws now require the event management to have a ' duty of care' to everyone on the festival site. To address these health and safety concerns, support was sought from Melvin Benn who ran festivals for the Mean Fiddler organisation. With a steel fence erected around the perimeter, Melvin Benn helped re-establish the festival in 2002 after a year off.

Ownership of the festival remained with the Eavis family but Melvin Benn was appointed Managing Director. However, concerns arose in 2006 when his employer, Mean Fiddler, was taken over by major music promoters, Live Nation and MCD Productions. In a worrying move, Live Nation announced that they would entice a number of major artists to appear on the weekend normally used by Glastonbury at a new UK festival called Wireless. Based in London, this seemed set to offer a city-based alternative to Glastonbury. At much the same time, Live Nation announced that they would launch their own online ticket agency to support the sales of their music events. This shift in power between the major music promoters indicated not only their interest in the ownership of key events but their desire to control income streams. Elsewhere in the world of live entertainment, the success of Glastonbury had not gone unnoticed and the festival market showed considerable growth. Some of the other festivals tried to capitalise on features that Glastonbury could not offer. For example, Glastonbury was famous for its wet weather with pictures of damp revellers and collapsed tents being commonplace. Live Nation's city-based Wireless festival offered the opportunity to sleep under a roof at home or hotel, as opposed to risking the weather outdoors.

Alternatively, Benicassim in southern Spain offered a festival with an excellent chance of sunshine and top acts for the price of a low cost airline ticket. Other festivals noted that Glastonbury attendees enjoyed the wider entertainment at the event. In doing this, they realised that many festival goers were attracted by the whole social experience. So, sidestepping major acts and their related high fees, smaller festivals were created for just a few

thousand attenders. These offered entertainment in various formats, often in a family-friendly atmosphere. Sometimes described as boutique festivals, Freddie Fellowes, organiser of the Secret Garden Party, describes this type of festival as a chance 'to be playful, to break down barriers between people and create an environment where you have perfect freedom and perfect nourishment, intellectually and visually'. Festival Republic, the rebranded Mean Fiddler, created a boutique festival on a larger scale with their Latitude festival. Similarly, Rob da Bank, a BBC DJ, put together Bestival on the Isle of Wight where the attenders are encouraged to join in the fun by appearing in fancy dress.

Quite clearly, audiences are now being presented with a wide range of festivals to consider for their leisure time entertainment. Many of these festivals attract sponsors with some becoming prominent by acquiring naming rights on the festival. Others have low profile arrangements involving so-called 'contra' deals as opposed to sponsorship payments. For example, Glastonbury has official cider suppliers who typically boost their brand by giving the festival a preferential deal on their products in exchange for publicity. Though these commercial relationships are sometimes spurned by the smaller festivals that see the branding as an intrusion on their fun environment, larger festivals often need such relationships to survive. In order to attract sponsors, large festivals are turning to radio and television broadcasters as a means to expand the audience and offer wider exposure for the sponsor. Indeed, in 2009, the BBC sent over 400 staff members down to Glastonbury for broadcasting aimed at satisfying the interest of the armchair viewer/listener. With such huge demand for their talents, artists

can have a lucrative summer moving between festivals. Similarly, audiences can make lengthy treks to their favourite festivals. For some, this has caused environmental concerns with Glastonbury's rural location, poor transport links and large audience being cited as a specific problem.

On the other hand, artists are not only finding that the festivals offer a good source of income but that private parties and corporate entertainment have emerged as alternative, often greater, income opportunities. One newspaper claimed that George Michael pocketed more than £1.5m (~€1.65m; ~\$2.25m] to entertain revellers at the British billionaire retailer Sir Philip Green's 55th birthday party in the Maldives. Hence, for many artists, the summer has become a case of 'cherry picking' their favourite festivals or seeking out the most lucrative opportunities. Over time, the shift from small, homespun event to corporate-controlled festival has provided awkward situations for Michael Eavis – from the difficulties with establishment figures who felt the event was out of control to the demands of counter-cultural groups such as the travelling hippies. However, along the way, the festival has maintained its aim of supporting charities like CND and, later, Greenpeace, Oxfam and a number of local charities. In the mind of the audience, this helps position the festival as a fun event with a social conscience. The continued expansion and shift in management of the festival has freed Michael Eavis to be the figurehead for the event and to pursue the original social mission of the festival. Given this growing and increasingly competitive market, there is much to consider for the festivals involved. In recent years, Glastonbury has sold all its tickets and made donations to its favoured causes, confirming

the financial viability of its current business model. Indeed, the festival's iconic status has traditionally meant that it is a rite of passage for many young music fans. Yet, in 2008, Eavis publicly registered concern over the age of the Glastonbury audience suggesting that selling tickets by phone would help attract a younger audience. Maybe Eavis was concerned by comments such as those in The Times newspaper that cruelly declared Glastonbury as suited to the 'the hip-hop generation' and questioned whether young people thought it was 'cool' to go to the same music events as their parents. On the other hand, their parents belong to the 'baby boomer' generation that grew up with popular music and festivals like Glastonbury. So, there is no real surprise that they would enjoy this eclectic event. Whatever disturbed Eavis, he announced that Jay-Z, an American rap artist, was to headline in order to help attract a younger audience. With sales slower compared with previous sell-out years, he later stated 'We're not trying to get rid of anybody. The older people are fantastic, but we do need young people coming in as well.'

Then, reflecting on the 2008 festival in 2009, Michael Eavis displayed concerns over the future of the festival saying 'Last year I thought that maybe we'd got to the end and we'd have to bite the bullet and fold it all up. A lot of the bands were saying Glastonbury had become too big, too muddy and too horrible.' With such an established festival as Glastonbury, one would expect the management might be looking to leverage its brand with, for example, further events. Yet, the comments of Michael Eavis suggest not only a lack of clarity about the target audience but also concern over whether it can persist. Furthermore, Eavis seems nervous about the festival's

appeal to artists who have lots of opportunities to make appearances over the summer. Audiences and artists are the two key factors

that underpin financial success at these events, as successful festival promoters are well aware. Sources: The history of Glastonbury is charted on its website ([http:// www. glastonburyfestivals. co. uk/history](http://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk/history)) whilst ownership and finances are available through Companies House. Most of the background to the festival and related market has been drawn from online news resources such as the BBC, Times Online and the Guardian, or industry magazines such as Music Week. More information on UK Festivals is available from Mintel.

Questions

- 1 Sticking to the 35 word limit suggested by Collis and Rukstad in section 1.
2. 3, what strategy statement would you propose for the Glastonbury Festival? 2 Carry out a 'three horizons' analysis (section 1. 2. 1) of the Glastonbury Festival, in terms of both existing activities and possible future ones. How might this analysis affect their future strategic direction? 3 Using the headings of environment, strategic capability, strategic purpose and culture seen in section 1. 5. 1, identify key positioning issues for the Glastonbury Festival and consider their relative importance. It Following on from the previous question and making use of section 1. 5. 2, what alternative strategies do you see for the Glastonbury Festival? 5 Converting good strategic thinking into action can be a challenge: examine how the Glastonbury Festival has achieved this by considering the elements seen in section 1. 5. 3.