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### Glastonbury: managing the mystification of festivity

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## Glastonbury: managing the mystification of festivity

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The realm of music festivity has grown into a global circuit that responds to the demand for emotive experiential products and taps into postmodern themes that celebrate a lifestyle attitude of extended youth. This paper investigates the phenomenon of festival culture through a case study of Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts. It highlights how modern music festivals have become sites of mediated brand management where commodified hyper-experiences are considered as new forms of contested cultural capital. Through a critical conceptual matrix that combines the work of Bourdieu, Pine and Gilmore, and Jensen the authors critically explore the interplay between the experiential dimension, mystical and fantasy narratives and the political contestation of festivity. Focusing on Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts 2010 the study presents an innovative interpretation of festivity through multi and social media. The authors argue that, while promoted as an ethical festival that celebrates its anti-commercial countercultural cool, Glastonbury reflects a modern cathedral of consumption where experiences are the mediated and managerially puppeteered capital of the field. However, festivity is moving beyond management as it is increasingly dependant on the co-creative social media activity of consumers to perpetuate the fantasy and capital of festivity.

**Keywords:** consumer culture; culture; events; popular culture; capitalism; management

### Introduction

Festivity is an area of cultural consumption that resonates across the modern world. Like music festivity has a universality that is steeped in ancient history, often associated with religion, rites of passage, patronage or even as a mode of structural resistance or social control (Roberts, 1999; Rojek, 2005). However, from the biblical references to the debauched celebrations of the golden calf through to the wild spectacles of the Burning Man, festivity touches the taboo. At its core, festivity reflects a gregarious collectivism, celebrates carnal desire and conveys the promise of libidinal release. In a modern rationalised world of harried and disenchanted lifestyles (Ritzer, 1999), the fantasy of festivity exerts a magnetic allure on a mass scale.

Since Woodstock, with its arguably iconic performances and images of Hendrix, the Who and Janice Joplin, music festivals have grown to become a global

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commodity of the culture industries (Mintel, 2010). Moreover, while the annual youth pilgrimage continues, music festivals attract a wider demographic and tap into postmodern themes that reflect an attitude of extended youth (Green, 1998; Miles, 2000). Whether a right of passage or nostalgic retro-reinvention modern festivals are spectacular sites of promised hyper-experience and orgiastic hedonism (Frew & McGillivray, 2008). Taking Glastonbury in 2010 as its case study, this paper critically explores this cultural phenomenon. It argues that, rather than a site of spontaneous freedom, festivity has become a managerially manipulated fantasy product where experience is constantly captured and virally mediated to become the sustaining capital of the field (Bourdieu, 1986a). The phenomenal growth of social media platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, now lie at the centre of this process. Social media provides a window of connection and immediacy into festivity which creates new opportunities and challenges for festival and event organisers. Festival consumers, empowered via mobile technologies, instantaneously capture and upload images, video clips and reviews of events that dynamical network with others, which represents an alternative live narrative to that of managerial prescription and promotion. In exploring this process this paper points to a new era of festivity emerging where ubiquitous social media is a managerial and festival game changer. The fantasy of festivity is moving beyond management, and is now a co-created and convergent construct.

Social media is central to the modern politic of identity and can be found in the dynamics of mediated consumer experiences and managerially produced fantasy product of festivity. Identity is now a hybrid construct where the localised ephemeral and embodied experiences of festivity demand a simultaneous mediated and socially globalised reflection. Festival producers need to openly engage with this socially mediated lifestyle as the mediated experiences of consumers reflect the symbolic meanings and capital that is valued within the field. Social media platforms are now the hallowed repositories of a digital self and the life force of the fantasy of festivity.

Therefore, the fantasy product of festivity, and its distinctive sustaining capital, is no longer in the bastion of managerial control. Following Qualman (2010), festival producers do not have a choice as to whether to engage with social media, it is simply a question is how well they do it. The fantasy of festivity is a co-created construct of sociability that, ironically, depends upon the digital displays of a self-regulating performative consumer whose embodied experience demands a virtual and viral presence.

### **Situating festivity: the case of Glastonbury**

While the notion of festivity has become embedded in the modern consciousness, its resonance and power are ancient and culturally universal (Falissi, 1997). Of course festivity takes a number of cultural forms, from pagan renewal (Winters, 1997), sporting (Rustin, 2009), food and beverage boutique, (Axelsen & Swan, 2010) to local community (Carlsen, Ali-Knight, & Robinson, 2008). Festivity conjures ideas of social release, escape and moral vacations of the self as in the carnivalesque experience and inverted social structures of the Rio Carnival (Featherstone, 1991). However, it can also convey a paradox where, as in the case of Mardi Gras, wild, sexualised behaviour sits alongside communal family fun (Gotham, 2007). Moreover, festivity is increasingly seen as a policy vehicle used as

a form of community and social glue to create economic impact and regeneration (Picard & Robinson, 2006). For the purpose of this paper, the focus of festivity will refer to that encapsulated under the musical genre.

Modern music festivals have a long-standing and international tradition, and have evolved into multistaged, facilitised events that are a mecca for music aficionados, fans and curious consumers (Stone, 2008). Music festivity has a symbiotic relationship with the study of popular culture. A clear trajectory can be discerned from connections to the stylistic resistance of youth (Cohen, 1987; Hebdige, 1979), to neotribalism, club culture (Thornton, 1995) and postmodern identities (Bennett, 2000; Maffesoli, 1996; Redhead, 1997), and the Deleuzian critique of rave culture (Jordan, 1995). Although often associated with 60s hippy idealism, resistance, the play of identity and carnival content was evident at many earlier festivals (Brocken, 2003; Clarke, 1982) with the likes of Cambridge Folk Festival still in existence today (Clarke, 1982; Sayer & King, 2003).

Nevertheless, for most, in August of 1969, the modern music festival was conceived under the auspices of the Woodstock Music and Art Fair. As an antiwar, countercultural statement this poorly planned three-day event is widely heralded as one of the most pivotal moments in popular music history (Laing, 2004). However, the power and longevity of Woodstock owes a great deal to the emerging technology of the time. Through the power of TV the chaotic spectacle and experience of Woodstock was captured and burned into the global consciousness ultimately establishing the fantasy of modern festivity (Evans & Kingsbury, 2009).

While the scale and media sensation of Woodstock was pivotal, the manipulation of its mythology and transformation of the 'festival experience' through 'increasing integration and corporatisation of the live music industry' (Bennett, 2004, p. 13) has been recognised. Others have also highlighted the impact of commercialisation on early festivity and, in terms of the focus of this paper, on Glastonbury (McKay, 2000). More recently, the commercialisation of the carnivalesque has been critiqued as a key feature of festivity expectation and expansion (Anderton, 2008). Even the hedonistic and creative chaos of festivals such as Burning Man have not escaped the organising power of commercial forces (Chen, 2009; Kozinets, 2002a). Modern festivity increasingly reflects a sophisticated field of cultural consumption (Bourdieu, 1986a) and Glastonbury has, arguably, developed into the iconic world leader of music festivity.

Held annually at Worthy Farm near the village of Pilton, the Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts has grown from humble beginnings into one of the largest greenfield music and performing arts festivals in the world (McKay, 2000). Although best known for its iconic musical performances, the festival features a wide range of contemporary art forms including comedy, dance, theatre, circus and cabaret. The festival was conceived by farmer Michael Eavis who was inspired to organise a small festival after attending the Bath Blues Festival in the summer of 1970 (Glastonbury Festivals Ltd, 2005). Eavis sought to develop an improved model of festivity by combining popular festival culture with more traditional fairs and harvest festival celebrations. Moreover, and mirroring the mythology that surrounds Woodstock (Street, 2004), Eavis ensured that Glastonbury would continue its association with the ethos of the late 60s generation, summer of love and hippy movement. However, from its humble and ideologically driven roots Glastonbury has evolved, with growing sophistication, to become a central festival within the expanding festival economy.

From its romantic past, the festival has grown significantly from the original and informal gathering of 1500 people in 1970 into a spectacular event showcasing some 700 acts playing over 80 stages to a cumulative audience of 177,500 people (Glastonbury Festivals, 2009). Although Glastonbury has attempted to maintain its non-commercial roots, the pressures of the market have impacted upon the festival. Ironically, the ethical and environmental stance of Glastonbury and the involvement of charitable organisations, such as the CND in the 1970s, sparked the commercial interest (Henderson, 2009; McKay, 2000). Even though these ethical and charitable associations unintentionally captivated aspects of commerce, there is little doubt that changes in the market and the increasing demands of today's consumers have significantly influenced the development of the festival. The modern festival market is a far cry from the mud and mayhem of the past and many, such as the V Festival, are 'unapologetically commercial' which has 'proved popular with music fans' (Anderton, 2008, p. 40).

The challenges of providing an event for nearly 200,000 people along with increasingly demanding legislative and legal requirements means that Glastonbury has been compelled to change, with an increasingly professionalised approach to the festival's management and operations being adopted. With its growth, a strategic and managerial presence can be discerned with roles and responsibilities disaggregated through the creation of Glastonbury Festival Ltd. Now Glastonbury evidences a divisional management structure with the Mean Fiddler Music Group (later bought over and renamed Festival Republic) buying shares in the limited company in 2001. At this point, they assumed responsibility for the logistical management and security of the event, leaving Eavis and his team to concentrate on the artistic content of the festival. Interestingly, this partnership ended in June 2012 with it being suggested that the partnership had come to a natural end and that it was time for Eavis to 'pick up the reins again and build for the future'. However, it is worth noting that despite this 'split' the Festival Republic financial interest in Festival Management Company is passed to their parent company LNG. Glastonbury has come a long way from offering free milk with its original £1 entrance fee. Today it is secured by a 'super' fence and is technologically ticketed, marketed and mediated (McKay, 2000). Glastonbury has become a modern event that has navigated the demands of contemporary consumerism and legislative change, whilst ever aware of the romantic, countercultural cool that differentiates it from an increasingly crowded marketplace. More importantly, (and echoing the mythology surrounding Woodstock (Street, 2004)), this mystical aura has practically and symbolically been the focus of management in the creation of the experiential brand identity of Glastonbury.

### **Festivity: a critical conceptual matrix**

Cultural consumption has been an area of critical credibility for some time (Miles, 2000; Rojek, 1995). However, the field of festivity provides a new seam for academic critique (Stone, 2008). While critical applications draw on social theory (Frew & McGillivray, 2008) or business and management (Raj, Walters, & Rashid, 2009), few conceptual couplings are evident. Given the focus on the interplay between the experiential dimension, mystical or fantasy narratives and political contestation of festivity, this paper fills a gap through a critical conceptual matrix. This involves integrating Pine and Gilmore's (1999) notion of experience economy and Jensen's claims for a shift to Dream Society narratives (1999) with a critical Bourdieusian analysis.

Bourdieu offers a new addition to the analysis of festival culture as his work provides useful insights into the subtle transitions of consumer capitalism and the role played by cultural consumption in identity politics (Bourdieu, 1986a; Frew, 2006). While placing his theoretical contribution as that of 'genetic structuralism', Bourdieu pictures 'individuals as cultural beings and social actors ... inextricably bound up together, each being a contributor to – and indeed, aspect of – the other' and so clearly locates his work within the 'structure and agency' dualism (Jenkins, 2002, pp. 19–20). This dualism, which has blighted the social sciences for decades (Bourdieu, 1990), finds a new site of contestation with the development of festival culture. Through Bourdieu's 'formula: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice', Glastonbury can be envisaged as a 'symbolic space' that masks the dynamic dialectic of the 'systematic nature of life-styles ... the practice-unifying and practice-generating principle, i.e. class habitus' (Bourdieu, 1986a, p. 101). Therefore, as a field of cultural consumption, Glastonbury offers a new site within which to critically investigate how cultural capital is desired and deployed to gain distinction. As Frew (2006, p. 50) suggests, 'cultural fields provide the objective boundaries and structures whereupon the particular rules of any game are played out'. In the case of contemporary music festivals, it is clear that these are highly controlled spaces where certain behaviours are expected if not sanctioned. Adherence to these rules facilitates social stratification within the festival via the development of cultural capital amongst consumers. It is this manner by which consumers are attracted to, become immersed in and, most importantly, capture and mediate this cultural competition to their social networks and external world that is central here. For this mediation of capital reveals, the *illusio* of festivity or that feeling of being 'caught up in and by the game' (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 76) as consumers joust for position and prestige within the field. Moreover, modern management has come to play a key role in making this game 'worth playing' and, through a Bourdieusian lens, is seen to maintain the 'professional modes of operation' and 'procedural rules' (Fowler, 1997, p. 17) essential to perpetuating festival itself. In this case, the Bourdieusian analysis of festivity is conceptually supported by the work of Pine and Gilmore and Jensen.

Festival culture, as an array of image centred and emotionally intense experiential products, resonates with the shift to an experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). As the next stage in economic transition, Pine and Gilmore argue that the sophisticated modern consumer now demands, and seeks to display, emotive and engaging experiences. For them, experiences are not left to chance but are deliberately constructed around a set theme that seeks to trigger 'sweet spots' of intense emotional engagement. Consumers are transported to, or immersed in, thematic worlds that fabricate and manage the positive cues of the theme (e.g. Wizarding World of Harry Potter, Orlando; Rainforest Café). In this way, magical moments of planned experiences are produced and provide the means to burn brands into the memory of consumers. However, while Pine and Gilmore focus on staging experiences, Jensen (1999) takes this to another level and completes the conceptual matrix of this study.

Whereas Pine and Gilmore advocate the thematic and materially staged experience, Jensen argues that we are moving towards a Dream Society where the realm of the immaterial imagination is central. By this he means social epochs, such as the industrial, are transforming at an increasingly rapid pace and we are now moving from an information society to one premised on the power of imagination



or fantasy stories. Products, services or experiences are, for Jensen, no longer the key to consumption. Rather, consumers are seduced through stories, whether real or fabricated, which tap the consciousness and, consequentially, emotions. Therefore, whether the romanticism of Venice, the ethics of free range eggs or the environmentalism of Farmers Markets, the materiality of products, staging services or emotion of experiences need the mystical and mentally engaging sugar-coated story.

Therefore, this conceptual matrix essentially highlights transitions and developments in Bourdieusian analysis as the capital of consumer capitalism shifts within cultural fields (here festivity) and merges with an age of ubiquitous social media. Just as Bourdieu was at pains to demonstrate how 'the dynamic subtleties of cultural consumption perpetuate domination and symbolic violence' (Frew, 2006, p. 46) via modes of cultural capital Pine and Gilmore point to the consumer experience as a new form of emotive capital. Likewise Jensen's focus on the emerging power of the sugar-coated story layers an emphasis on the imagined or fantasy element associated with cultural fields. Through this conceptual matrix, this paper traces how the experiential (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and the imaginary, fantasy elements (Jensen, 1999) of festivity are sought after as the valued markers of distinction within the field. It highlights how, for both consumers and producers, embodied lived experience demands a digitised avatar of festivity which, being constantly captured, displayed, re-told and re-lived across social media networks, reflects the new capital of the field (Bourdieu, 1986a).

### **Methodology: sentiment in multi and social media**

This paper is derived from an ongoing investigation of the discourses of identity production, consumption and governance within the global music festival phenomenon. Although Glastonbury provides the case study focus for this paper, it is located within a wider series of prominent traditional and modern festivals (e.g. Benicassim (Spain), T-in-the-Park (Scotland), Burning Man (Nevada, USA) and Coachella (California, USA)). The rationale for the focus on Glastonbury is premised upon its pivotal position within music festival culture. Moreover, as modern festival culture is recognised as a growth area of the cultural industries (Intel, 2010), the longevity of Glastonbury, having reaching its 40th Anniversary in 2010, and its globally recognised countercultural heritage makes it an ideal site to investigate cultural contestation. It is the attraction, representation and circulation of this mystical core that is central to the methodology adopted here. However, and resonating with the focus and conceptual matrix that analytically underpins this paper, the methodology takes an innovative web-based approach.

Media spectacle has a long tradition and many uses within the field of events and festivity. Whether the propaganda of the Berlin Games (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2004), tourism potential of Mardi Gras (Gotham, 2005) or city brand promotion through the night-time Singapore Formula One (Foley, McGillivray, & McPherson, 2008), media is central to events and festivity. Moreover, the evolution of multi and social media mirrors that of events and festivity as the experiences of image centred and aesthetically conscious postmodern identities need to be captured, mediated and displayed (Frew & McGillivray, 2005; Kellner, 2003). Given this symbiotic relationship, and its central importance to the management and maintenance of festivity and the experiential distinction of consumers, multi and social media provide the innovative methodology for this paper.



In contrast to traditional empirical approaches, the media-centred methodology adopted here cuts across macro and micro social media platforms. Macro media involves the documentary analysis (Jupp & Norris, 1993) of primary TV and press partners, official web-based and peripheral media. Specifically, this involves examining the sponsoring media of the BBC (including the use of BBC iPlayer), the Guardian newspaper as well as the authorised mainstream press and web media of festival producers. Interestingly, as the course of the methodology revealed, the notion of traditional macro media is increasingly obsolete as all formal press is replicated via an online presence. Reducing the traditional paper trail gathering accelerated the process due to the use of social media metrics software (discussed below); this reflects the transition of formal macro media into the online and micro world and integration of social media. Nevertheless, and as highlighted in other studies such as sport (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2004; Maguire, 2004) and festivity (Chen, 2009; Gotham, 2005), media analysis provides the formal, produced, or managed, visual and verbal narrative promoted to the general public and festival consumer. With a fluid or 'running' process, coherent patterns or pictures can be discerned by thematically framing data (Mayring, 2000) around a core 'theme or strand of related themes' (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999, p. 169). Moreover, although this qualitative approach is more established in macro media analysis (Flick, 2002), it provides a bridge of methodological continuity into the realm of micro social media.

Unlike traditional macro media, methodological trawls of micro social media are relatively new (Adamic & Glance, 2005) and problematic with the explosion of social media. However, given that these media spaces place the locus of control and interpretation in the hands of individuals and groups of consumers (in this case festival fans) they represent a rich seam of research narratives. As has been highlighted, with a 'blog created every second', we are living in a time of the 'netizens' (Tapscott and Williams 2008, p. 40). The internet has become the space where cultural communities, such as those of festivity, network their lives and experiences (Shih, 2010). As such it has emerged as the new frontier of capital and commerce (Solis, 2012). This new sphere of sociability has produced new methodologies such as netographies (Kozinets, 2002b) and examinations of the cacophony of blogosphere voices (Chenail, 2011). Nevertheless, the sheer volume of social media presents methodological difficulties. The key to overcoming this problematic was to utilise social media monitoring (often called brand monitoring), which are digital platforms that track and measure consumer online sentiment. While originally designed for business, focusing on areas such as product development, campaign monitoring, trend analysis and consumer support, these tools make social media accessible for academic research. Essentially, social media monitoring enables the trawl and capture of what is being written, videoed, digitally captured and discussed about a topic online (Bruns, Burgess, Highfield, Kirchhoff, & Nicolai, 2010). Many social media monitoring tools are free and well recognised (e.g. google analytics;<sup>1</sup> yahoo web analytics), while others offer more in-depth analysis, reports and monitoring (e.g. sentimentmetrix; radian6).

This study utilised Alterain SM2 as the multi and social media tracking platform. It allows conversations, online sentiment across social media channels such as blogs, wikis, microblogs, social networks and video/photo sharing sites to be tracked and reviewed (including Facebook, Youtube, Flickr and Twitter). Versatile software searches were run across the blogosphere and social media

platforms by setting themed keywords, which help subdivide and build up search results for analysis as needed (e.g. 'Glastonbury (2010)' adds a number of keywords such as lay lines, pyramid stage, gallery photos, video, merchandising, TV, sponsors, press, charity or commerce). Additionally, setting date parameters and real-time alerts allowed the thematic mining and monitoring of the rich verbal and visual narrative of Glastonbury to be captured. Therefore, through this digital documentary of the official macro and micro social media, and underpinning conceptual matrix, an alternative reading of festivity is presented.

### **Discussion: managing the mystification of brand Glastonbury**

A perusal of most music festival experiences will reveal a plethora of images representing gregarious youth, resplendent costumes or weird hybrid, almost alien creations (Kozinets, 2002a) with highly energised, sexually charged dancing often accentuated by alcohol. This gregarious or wild behaviour is nothing new being valued within subcultural movements or that of dance and rave club culture (Thornton, 1995). However, while resistant youth are placed on the margins Glastonbury not only mirrors the wild, outlandish image, it actively promotes it. Its official web page provides a running photo gallery and footage of such images, which are archived for posterity.<sup>2</sup> Again, official marketing material affirms Glastonbury as a carnivalesque, liberating off world (Frew & McGillivray, 2008) heralding it as a place where 'the rules of society are a bit different, a bit freer' (Glastonbury Festivals, 2009). From web, press, BBC coverage to post event review Glastonbury captivates and titillates through a unified and repetitively articulated series of images, sounds and sound bites that reinforce claims of a liberating 'unforgettable experience' (Glastonbury Festivals, 2009). Interestingly, this authorised representation is validated through both macro and micro media.

BBC coverage of the event, now archived and relived through the likes of iPlayer, layers upon the official media management by capturing the gregarious, weird and wonderful. Social media sites such as YouTube and Flickr mirror this TV coverage of a 'walk on the wild side' showing a standardised formula of the crazy costumed, madcap behaviour, young and beautiful to the odd and outlandish. Moreover, experience is captured and radical behaviours 'lines of coke being carved' on 'iPhone..iCoke' and celebrated in interactive 'coke and caine' blogosphere play. Interestingly, pre-event ticket purchasing reinforced the official promotion and mystical hype associated with the festival. An 'annual ticket frenzy' emerged across social media platforms. Patterns of positive and negative experiences such as, 'best feeling in the world'; 'fucking gutted wasted 4 hrs no Glasto for me'; 'Glastonbury 2010 is like really going to happen I can't sit still'; '3 tickets totally stoked', are expressed and posted to YouTube, Twitter and blogosphere. Management tap and tease this frustrated desire through incessant web posts and Tweets of countdowns to future ticket issues. Echoing Charlie and the Chocolate Factory Glastonbury fuels this anticipation through its 'golden ticket' promotion and so imbues the objective capital of tickets with a deeper mystical relation.

From the distilled euphoria to TV, official web and photo galleries to Facebook posts, Tweets and Flickr links the expressive and emotive content festival products such as Glastonbury exemplify the attraction of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Even the celebrations and conciliations' over tickets highlight an inconspicuous consumption (Miles, 2000); that frustrated desire to 'be there next

time' and the powerful allure of the festival experience. In a time where predominately western life is atomised, harried, insecure and interpersonally disconnected, moments of collective or networked emotional intensity appear to be highly valued. The experience economy that looks to theme, accentuate positive cues and emotively immerse the individual, is all about creating magical mystical moments. As emotive media networks echo the experience economy Glastonbury seeks to transport the individual into its mystical experiential bubble or, more appropriately, brand.

However, and more importantly, it is not enough to capture, circulate and relive emotive experiences. In line with the themed core of the experience economy, the Glastonbury experiential brand must tick certain boxes to remain 'authentic'. For a brand to endure, it must be more than a name or logo. Brands say and do more; they convey symbolic meanings, values, aspirations and associations (Moor, 2003). Brands seek to be personal, to speak to us, touching us at our core. The repetitive articulation and reference to the iconic images, symbolic signs and their mystical associations, demonstrate an astute aspirational brand in action.

Following Jensen (1999) organisers strategically deploy symbolic mythology and pagan traditions to build mystical narrative (Glastonbury Festivals, 2009), which repetitively articulates the brand story directly into the social media networks and consciousness of and already malleable mass of festival consumers. The Pyramid Stage, its reference to Glastonbury Abbey/Stonehenge ley lines where the apex draws energy up while also drawing energy down from the sun and stars, is a reflection of marketed mystique. This is a distinguishing mark of Glastonbury and power of festival stories that offers consumers an opportunity to escape into a fantasy world, 'of the countercultural carnivalesque' (Anderton, 2008, p. 40).

The pyramid stage, stone circle or countercultural hippy heritage was continuously and consciously referenced along with the gregarious, of more hedonistic, sites of Trash City and Shangri-La. From the 'peaceful spiritual vibe of the Green Fields'; 'soul searching old hippy faithful'; 'vibes from the stone circle are amazing' to 'conga at the Pyramid', the symbolism of Glastonbury was central across web, press, blogs, TV and online communities, which feeds desire for mystical stories (Jensen, 1999). Notwithstanding commentary, these images become the visual and objective markers of capital, which are circulated for comment between the social media networks of consumers. More recently, these competitions of cool-hunting imagery (Klein, 2001) have been accentuated, by the festivals intensified charitable environmental stance (Henderson, 2009). In effect this environmental focus represents a subtle branding shift for Glastonbury as, with changing societal concerns, it positions itself as a champion of emerging environmental and ethical agendas. Glastonbury (2010) was awash with partner logos with Greenpeace, Water Aid and Oxfam being visible throughout all elements of the event from the tickets, wristbands, merchandise, programme, post-event reviews to the pyramid stage. With the wind turbine beside the Pyramid Stage (since 1994), another symbolic and ethical icon has been layered on to the Glastonbury mythology. While clearly adding to the underpinning fantasy story and status value of Glastonbury, Twitter debates and blogs also legitimate the excessive experience of fans; 'activism, support for good causes and 24hr hedonism live on'; 'it's all for a good cause – the many partner charities receive the proceeds; 'wasted n adding to the chaos but wi charity'. With this the cool of the carnivalesque experience mingles and merges with an environmental and charitable conscience, which furthers the distinction of Glastonbury as a gregarious adventure loaded with an experiential and ethical capital (Bourdieu,

1986b; Kozinets, 2002a). Essentially, the Glastonbury experience does not just happen; it is not left to chance. It is a managed and manicured product where iconography, symbolic meaning, ethical and charitable association are not only essential, they are an anticipated and expected element of the Glastonbury experience and sugar-coated story. While these hedonistic escape attempts and the contestation of experiential capital are fundamentally important to festival culture, they are moving beyond management. With the explosion of social media the fantasy story and experiential core, the heart of the festival brand is increasingly in the precarious hands of smartphones and keyboards of consumers.

### **Experiential capital in cathedrals of consumption**

The days when music festivity was a bastion of the young, and not for the faint hearted, have been transformed by an age of retro-reinvention (Miles, 2000) where structural associations of youth are replaced by attitudes of extension and a thirst for staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1989). However, in responding to the challenges of a fluid and fractured postmodern age, modern festivity reflects an obsession with consumption. Glastonbury, with its mystical nostalgia and ethical stance, reigns supreme as it juggles the apparent contradiction between unfettered chaos and commercialism. Such commercialism has not gone unnoticed with fans blogging their ‘rant about Orange Corporate place’ and posting grievance that ‘to ban flags at Glastonbury ... just another step along the path of commercialism’. Even official partner posts capitalise on the conflict of commerce with ‘credit cards’ and where ‘rich camp in style’. Therefore, while social media forums promote ‘get off ur face in Trash City’; ‘the hedonistic carnage of the Dance Village’ and the press highlight ‘mud, music and hippies [with] fans absorbed by giant televisions ... alongside dreadlocks, Mohicans and naked mud wrestling’ (Steele, 2010, p. 25) Glastonbury capitalises on this dominant discourse. As Anderton (2008) highlights festivity has become an uncritical site of management and creeping commerce. Glastonbury, being the focus of critical gaze here, evidences this trajectory in its operational procedures, provision and practices. The growing popularity of Glastonbury, its inability to retain control and security, as well as new legislation, have accelerated and legitimated the demand and discourse for new modern management. Cocooned within a steel ‘super fence’ Glastonbury is a slick managerial machine of systematic control and compartmentalisation.

Within the superface Glastonbury is an experiential city ranging from the Green Fields where fans can learn how to release their own potential and discover how to change the world to Trash City, an apocalyptic dream-world straight from the pages of a 2000AD comic, where space pirates, bootleggers, illegal aliens and all the scum of the universe can come and party the night away ... (Glastonbury Festivals, 2009). Despite the vast range of offerings within ‘the biggest festival in the world’ (Henderson, 2009, p. 12), the Glastonbury experience is about engaging with a series of rationalised spaces that are literally mapped out, contained and controlled. From colour-coded camping and themed villages such as those mentioned above to genre stages and mass tents, Glastonbury is partitioned in space and time. The festival fan of modern Glastonbury is free to roam but ‘within designated zones’. For some, resistant to its governed commerce, posts complaints that this its ‘like a prison camp’ others video and debate this ‘military style’ security with those who simply see this as ‘no different to what you see at other festivals’.

Regardless, upon entry to the festival site e-ticketing is physically replaced by photo ticketing, bar code scanning and security checks. This is accentuated by differential colouring of wristbands, lanyards and passes corresponding to compartmentalised villages, campsites, states and tents, and likewise the level of access afforded to their segregated spaces. Importantly, all this securitisation of space is normalised for fans who happily blog and Twitter site locations, Flickr wristband access and post experiences on YouTube unaware that their hedonism is, largely, managerially puppeteered. Before they even arrive and in the safety of home, at that distant moment when web connection is made and e-ticket selected, the conveyor belt of categorisation and containment is set in motion.

Highlighted by the press-centred celebrity VIP Winnebago hospitality park to blog forums 'laying my mitts on a couple of VIPs'; 'got a BBC compound pass'; 'know there are corporate tickets' the concentric containment of Glastonbury can only be navigated through the reading, or scanning of lanyards, passes and wristbands. Moreover, as captured in the BBC coverage, interviews and roving reports, official 'rules of the game' (Glastonbury Festivals, 2009), security and surveillance operationalise a more covert role in cultural competition. Effectively, they are the gatekeepers of difference securing the compartmentalised spaces of Glastonbury. Tickets, passes and wristbands are markers of categorisation and, by the access they afford to VIP or backstage areas, sponsor tents or artist after-parties, they are signs of objective capital, which fans are keen to YouTube, comment or post Flickr.

In modern managed festivity banding becomes branding, visible external markers reflect more than economic power with the tastes of cultural capital internalised via the habitus. Taste categories reveal the 'individual's material conditions of existence [they] ingrain a habitus or set of dispositions, which in turn generates cultural tastes' and as 'the 'right' tastes ... facilitate the accumulation of cultural capital' (Gartman, 2002, p. 257). The festival fan, with their level of capital on display, links to a deeper and wider identity politics. Glastonbury offers a microcosm of evolving consumer capitalism and transitions in cultural capital. Just as social media is resplendent with those happy to network getting a ticket and performing the 'mud and mayhem' those with their 'Egyptian sheets' who can 'stand up in my Yurt' are also posted online. These outward objective markers of capital, all captured and circulated within the macro and social media, are anything but playful. Following Bourdieu, such cultural jousting for position and prestige would link to the wider social dimension where the excluded are found and their social domination hierarchically and experientially reinforced (Bourdieu, 1986a).

### **Conclusion: fuelling the fantasy**

Today the festival experience is often represented as that site of liberation and cathartic expression; an off-world where the constraints of consumerism and an everyday self can, for a moment, be left behind. This paper has sought to critically unpick how this view of festivity is perpetuated and, importantly, how festivity works in an age of ubiquitous social media where lifestyles are increasingly digitised and networked. Taking the case of Glastonbury modern festivity has evolved as a credit to consumerism. Glastonbury has been transformed from a casual and chaotic past into a haven of rationalised consumption (Ritzer, 1993) that mirrors that of most 24-h post-industrial cities (Hannigan, 1998). It reflects a modern managerial triumph as its romantic and mystical countercultural cool, with



wellies, mud, stoic austerity all tinged with an environmental ethic, sit in a sea of merchandising. Although compartmentalised and spatially secured, Glastonbury still evokes a common freedom and walk on the wild side. However, be it bands or passes to hospitality or VIP areas, basic tents to Egyptian sheeted Yurts, burger stalls to bistro bars, beer to Beaujolais there is a palpable contrast or clash of cultural capital. Under modern management and, like other fields of cultural consumption, the festival product, increasingly, displays a stratification of taste.

Essentially Glastonbury reflects the productive and rationalising power of management in transforming festivity into a core component of the creative industries. However with its professional production and promised fantasy experiences, the capital and cultural competition of festivity is in evidence from the moment you pop out of your pod, pick up a latte in Café Tango or have a jacuzzi in Shangri-La (Glastonbury Festivals, 2009). As Glastonbury demonstrates festivity is increasingly defined by 'rough comfort' (Foley, Frew, & McGillivray, 2004) experiences where the fantasy of an edgy, adventurous individualism mixes with the reality of instant gratification and the mod cons quality of twenty-first century consumerism. It is not so much that festivity, and its fantasy story of countercultural cool and walk on the wild side are managerially produced and puppeted but this success masks the darker by-product of contestation over capital. Glastonbury may reflect the sophisticated transformation and development of festivity but it also sets in motion and reveals how cultural fields produce capital that creates the identity politics of differentiation and distinction (Bourdieu, 1986a). Although Glastonbury appears a cathedral of experiential consumption its freedoms are spatially secured and demarcated, these are hierarchically matched by opportunities to accumulate capital. It is argued that this process is problematic for the festival industry and its management. On the one hand, it sets the inherent rationalising and controlling traits of modernist management against the liberating fantasy festivity promises. On the other, the very juxtaposition of the fantasy 'rough' with the reality 'comfort' runs the risk of morphing into an alienating sameness. If the off-world fantasy of festivity becomes undifferentiated from everyday festivity it loses its capital, power and marker of identity. However, and more importantly, the rise of ubiquitous social media and the co-created activity of consumers present the greatest challenge to festivity.

Undoubtedly, the power of technology is a driving and transformational force in festivity. Whereas Woodstock set in motion, and mediated the fantasy experience (Laing, 2004), now macro technologies appear to facilitate the sea of social media platforms. Glastonbury not only reflects the democratising power of social media, with the opportunity to reinforce or create alternative, potentially damaging, narratives to fantasy of festivity, but also shows the shift in modes of capital. Traditional forms of objective, social or institutional/knowledge capital (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002) are layered by desire for those of experience that can be distilled and digitised across social media platforms. Capital is an experience economy captured (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) in a fantasy story (Jensen, 1999) that is co-created within convergent communities of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or the hundreds of social media platforms upon which festival consumers can now engage (Solis, 2012).

The managed, controlled and produced fantasy of festivity is decentred and its authority stripped in the mobile and immediate digital democracy of the social media generation. Embodied experience is no longer sufficient for the modern festival consumer. Live and located physical presence now demands a digitised avatar that can virally carry the distilled experiential capital of festivity to social networks.



It is argued that it is here that the magic moments of experience are displayed, capital decided and the fantasy of festivity formed. The socially mediated online, in circulating capital in an almost omnipresent manner, possesses the power to shape the future offline of festivity. Given its potential to mediate the experiential capital of the field, which in turn draws consumers to performatively reconstruct and dynamically rework capital in a cycle of cultural competition, it is here festival management need to be.

It is argued that social media is exerting a game changing impact on festivity, which requires a radical rethink of its management and future development. The performativity of the fantasy of festivity is now a co-created technology of the self (Foucault, 1988) as consumers construct, re-tell and consume these dynamic narratives of identity. Glastonbury, as with other festivals, may have managerially morphed into a commercial experiential brand of countercultural cool but its longevity, and that of the industry, will be determined by the digital life-force found in the co-created communities of social media.

### Notes

1. In line with the methodology adopted and centrality of online digitised lifestyles, the paper utilises hyperlinks to content (both here and throughout the discussion). The hyperlinks here will allow further depth and insight into the workings and applications of social media metrics.
2. Where appropriate the data of digital media, both formal/macro and macro social media sites, will be hyperlinked allowing readers, if they wish, to click through to view these digital narratives.

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