
4 Emotional interactions in festivals: How do consumers build a collective emotional experience?

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The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Deepen the analysis of the collective emotional dimension at play during a consumer experience.
- Show that the nature of emotional interactions and their intensity is a central component of the experience.
- Identify consumption strategies and logics implemented by festival-goers to develop this collective dimension of the experience.
- Propose a new framework to analyze emotional interactions in a collective recreational context, in order to consider all types of emotion transfers, not reduced to the visitors' companions.
- Propose the notion of emotional group in order to take into consideration unexpected and ephemeral encounters that are looked for during this leisure experience.

Keywords: collective emotional dynamics; consumer behavior; festival; tourist experience

Introduction

Music festivals are factors of attractiveness for territories. As such they are part of their tourism strategies (Getz, 1991). In France, 84% of the 2018 music festivals took place during the touristic summer season. They sometimes even become a tourist product in itself like Tomorrowland Winter in Alpe d'Huez, a ski resort in the French Alps. During seven days, the ski resort is only accessible for the festival-goers. In 2019, Alpe d'Huez was fully filled with 23,000 tourists from 131 different countries who booked their holidays to enjoy skiing and concerts during that special event, and 36,000 people were on the waiting list.

Provoking a spatio-temporal rupture with everyday life (Chaney, 2011), significant in leisure or tourist practices, festivals allow experiencing a real re-enchantment of the world and everyday life. According to the post-modern approach, the phenomenon of society around festivals, illustrated by the growth in festival demographics (in the number of participants but also in the number of events) (Négrier et al., 2013), can be considered in the global context of a return to festive alchemy and the cult of pleasure, with a powerful return to affect and emotion. This festival craze is significant for the "triumph of the collective will to live over the individual" (Maffesoli, 2012: 115). However, this collective dimension of emotions has received limited attention in marketing (Didry & Giannelloni, 2019). In addition, although accompaniment has often been analyzed in consumer behavior (Debenedetti, 2003), few studies consider the collective context in which consumers are immersed in their experience. If a festival experience is lived in a collective way, which behaviors do festival consumers develop to engage in emotional interactions with others? The challenge here is to bring a new reading of the experience of collective consumption through emotional transfers to fill a gap in the marketing literature. More specifically, it is a question of assessing how the need for emotional interactions will influence the festival-goer's behavior.

Theoretical framework and contribution

The literature shows that the festival experience must be seen from a social and emotional perspective. A festival is to be approached through the notions of link (Cova, 1995) and community, insofar as it responds, through the value of the link, to the need of 'postmodern' individuals to satisfy their desire for community (Badot & Cova, 2009). Participation in a festival is then seen as a tribal phenomenon (Cova & Cova, 2002) in which festivals

constitute “cultural transhumance, or festive nomadism” (Maffesoli, 1988). In these tribes, even ephemeral ones, what will prevail is to be connected to the other, “to develop a common feeling and, together, make it the heart of these gatherings” (Ferrand, 2009: 30).

Collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912), through emotional communion, can, from a postmodern approach, be considered as a central, even as an essential component of the festival. Consumption experience depends on the nature and intensity of the emotions people experience (Addis & Holbrook, 2001). Festivals are synonymous of sharing emotions and bonds, and festival-goers come with their companions (Collin-Lachaud, 2010). According to Rimé (2007), emotional experiences are systematically shared with others. Sharing emotions is an opportunity sought by individuals even more so that living emotions for themselves (Rimé, 2005). Any emotion expressed in the presence of others can trigger emotional interactions (Barsade, 2002). Pulh et al. (2005) highlighted the value of social links in the experience of social connection at three levels, the value of social interaction, social practice, and social communion. We propose here to deepen this analysis from an emotional point of view to fill this gap in the marketing literature.

That is why we will focus on the processes of emotion transfer that can explain festival-goers’ behaviors. There are two types of emotional diffusion processes within groups (Didry & Giannelloni, 2019):

- 1) the social sharing of emotions, which is a voluntary evoking of emotions in a socially shared form (Rimé, 2005); and
- 2) the phenomenon of emotional contagion, which is a tendency to automatically synchronize facial and vocal expressions, postures and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to converge emotionally (Hatfield et al., 2009).

These two concepts relating to the diffusion of emotions are placed within the overall collective emotional dynamics’ framework (Didry & Giannelloni, 2019). Those emotional transfers have a direct effect on the ambiance of the audience, also called ‘emotional atmosphere’, which is a short-term emotional state resulting from the average emotional responses of members of a group to a common event (De Riviera, 1992).

From a conceptual point of view, it emerges that the social and cultural dimensions are inherent in the concept of emotion. These emotions are a real communication tool for social regulation and cultural identification. The processes of exchange and diffusion of emotions (sharing of emotions,