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# Capturing Emotions: Experience Sampling at Live Music Events

## INTRODUCTION

This research takes its lead from the work of Heath and Feldwick (2007) who convincingly argue that emotional resonance with marketing messages is significantly more effective than rational information processing through knowledge transmission. Starting from this premise we have selected an environment (live music events) where emotions are heightened and investigated methods for capturing the range and depth of emotions felt. A qualitative methodology is discussed, trialled and critiqued here with a view to developing a better understanding of consumers and their emotional responses within such environments.

As it is the live event *experience* which creates an emotional response it is useful to frame this research within the concept of experiential marketing. Experiential marketing entails creating an extraordinary, meaningful experience around the brand or product and therefore uses a number of tools ranging from test-drives to factory open days, product sampling to large scale music festivals. It has its roots in a number of areas including field marketing, sales promotion, retailing and, more recently, event marketing. The creation of an event with participants and/or an audience involving interaction with and immersion in the brand or social marketing message is undoubtedly a high impact form of marketing communication indeed. Close, Finney, Lacey & Sneath (2006) consider that through this type of marketing the consumer is able to engage with 'the company, its brands and the community.' (p.420). However, despite the increasing number of organisations spending large

amounts of money with a myriad of agencies (Jack Morton 2012) there appears to be little known about its effectiveness. What is 'known' tends to come from the event/experiential agencies themselves and is therefore unlikely to be entirely objective (Wood, 2009). This is particularly true when it comes to evidencing longer term attitude and behavioural changes where 'evidence' tends to be more anecdotal than factual. There appears to be a 'gut feeling' that they work but very little systematic evaluation of how well they work, what works and what doesn't and how best to use them within an integrated communications strategy.

Previous papers have considered what should be measured and the methods that could be employed but these tend to remain focused on shorter term impacts and 'traditional' advertising research techniques with a few exceptions, for example, Richins' (1997) attempt at measuring consumption emotion and Schmitt's (1999) simplistic yet practical ExPro scale. This paper seeks to open up debate around the concept of 'measuring experience' and draws mainly upon two methods used successfully in non-marketing fields, the *day-reconstruction method* and the *experience sampling method*. An adapted version of these methods was developed and a small-scale trial undertaken in an environment which was likely to create an emotional experience, a live music event. The paper concludes with a reflection on the findings of this trial and the appropriateness of the methods used.

## **EXPERIENCE AND LIVE EVENTS**

In their argument against the information processing model, Heath and Feldwick (2007) present empirical evidence that suggests that decision making is driven by emotion rather than reasoning and knowledge. Their research highlights the fact that “we are continually influenced by subconscious perception and therefore the decisions we make are always influenced by and sometimes entirely driven by emotions and feelings” (Heath and Feldwick, 2007:50 based on the work of Damasio 1994 and 2003). If this is the case in everyday life then it is likely to be even more applicable in a situation of heightened emotion, escapism and hedonism. The implications for communicating marketing messages within such liminal spaces (music events and festivals) appear largely positive, although there is also evidence to suggest that if branded inappropriately (a poor fit or over commercialisation) the image of both the event and the brand can suffer (Anderton, 2012). The previous research in this area suggests that audiences at live events are likely to be emotionally stimulated and perhaps therefore more responsive to brand or social marketing messages, either positively or negatively. To be successful, these messages would need to be creative yet subtle in their design in order to fit with the environment and be affective rather than cognitive in style stimulating subconscious rather than conscious responses. Many such examples exist where, for example, alcohol brands, link into the festival experience through increasingly innovative activation strategies. One that stands out is the Witness Festival where festival goers could buy several brands of beer, lager and cider but all were served in a black plastic pint container with a white band at the top - coloured to look like a pint of Guinness. As well as this creation of peer influence and subconscious immersion in the brand Guinness undertook several viral campaigns including sending ‘Guinness grannies’ into bars and pubs spreading ‘gossip’ about the festival. This humour,

quirkiness and product exposure all working together to create the desired emotional response within the hedonistic setting of a festival was viewed as highly successful resulting in both attitude and behavioural change and a repositioned brand image (Masterman and Wood, 2006). Although resulting attitudinal and behavioural changes are more difficult to assess and attribute to an event, Mason and Paggiaro's (2012) survey and SEM analysis at a food festival, shows a clear link between emotional response (to the event experience) and satisfaction. It appears that *what you say* is less important than *the way you say it* (Heath and Feldwick, 2007) in that it is the affective rather than cognitive response which has the greatest influence. The affective response is likely to be greater in an environment of shared and heightened emotion and therefore we can argue that *where you say it* is also a vital consideration.

The link between experience and emotion has become a key factor in the development of a company's brand within many industries (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2009) and it can therefore be argued that the development and success of live events needs also to consider this relationship. An 'extraordinary' experience has the ability to generate strength of feeling that other marketing tools struggle to achieve and it is this generated emotional response which is likely to affect future attitudes and behaviour. If we consider live events within the context of Schmitt's 'consumer psychology model of brands' it seems clear that events have the potential to create an environment where most of these factors and levels come in to play. For example, they can create an experience which is both 'object-centred' and 'self-centred' and which is inherently linked to 'social engagement' (Schmitt, 2012). They can create multi-sensory experiences with the brand or message, encouraging

participation and engagement. Furthermore, when events are fully integrated with social media platforms, they form what seems to be a highly effective way of leveraging brand attachment and a sense of community. These feelings can also be related to other messages or products that fit within the experience. In the case of live music events these may be the musicians themselves, the venue, the alcohol consumed, the promotional, sponsorship or social marketing messages within the event. Schmitt (2012) suggests using techniques developed in neuroscience as one way to understand the effects of brand experience. However, this is not easily achieved in a real time naturalistic setting without intruding upon and influencing the experience. In the case of live music events, a first hurdle still to overcome is identifying and understanding the effects of the emotions engendered by the experience.

Music events have been selected as the context for this research for a number of reasons. It is generally accepted that music can have a marked effect on emotion and mood (Clynes, 1977; Krumhansl 2002; Lewis, 2010,). It also appears that most of the emotions stimulated by music are pleasurable even when negative (eg fear, 'the chills', or suspense) and that the source of much of this pleasure is due to anticipation or expectancy (the brain rewards correct prediction of patterns with pleasure) (Vuust and Kringelbach, 2010). This neurological response is further enhanced by previous experience, memory and cultural background (all affecting the way we anticipate music). This therefore applies whilst listening to music at a live event and may be extended to anticipation of the music event itself.

The emotional power of music coupled with the 'connectedness' of a group or crowd gathering (as experienced at events and festivals) creates an environment of heightened emotion and arousal (Grant et al, 2012) which marketers can potentially tap in to. To do this however we need a better understanding of the range and strength of emotions felt, the emotional triggers and the longer term effects of those emotions. Goulding, Shankar and Elliott (2002) in their phenomenological study of raves suggest that the experience is closely linked to identity, the emergence of new communities, escape, engagement and prolonged hedonism. These resonate with Grant et al's (2012) findings and similarly suggest it is the experience of music in a group setting that creates these feelings. A common bond is created in the 'love of the music' and this in turn creates a *groupthink* state of being where ideas, identities and potentially attitudes and beliefs are reaffirmed, altered or created to fit with the shared view. It appears that the atmosphere of hedonism and escape experienced within a group increases the individual's willingness to take on new ideas, behaviours and even identities. These are all responses that are of particular interest to experiential and social marketers.

In order to understand emotion and its subsequent effects we need to consider how it is mediated by memory. Stone (2007) describes the connection between experience, emotion and memory through a categorisation of memory. Emotions are stored in *experiential memory* which is short lived, memories of emotions are stored in *episodic memory* and beliefs, formed partly due to those emotions, are stored in *semantic memory*. The experienced emotion can therefore be different to the remembered emotion and both will affect beliefs and possibly, attitudes and behaviour. This understanding already has implications for experiences at events

and how best to capture data on the emotions generated by those experiences. Is it more important to tap into an attendee's experiential memory before it is lost or focus on episodic or semantic memory? Which is a better predictor of behavioural change? Another useful view of experience is to consider the social meaning rather than the personal. Gupta and Vajic (2000) suggest that an 'activity' is the unit that captures the interrelationship between context and cognition, where context is both the physical environment and the social interaction and cognition is viewed as social meaning and collective representation. Context and cognition are seen as mutually constitutive in that they generate and transform each other. This would suggest that any study of experience at an event therefore needs to record the social context and the 'groupthink' rather than only gather individual memories after the event.

A more fundamental issue in studying experience however, is our inability to describe how that experience makes us feel. Hurlburt and Heavey's (2001) critique of approaches to researching inner experience concludes that some people have predominantly visual images with no verbal content, others have inner speech with no visual imagery, some have cognition with no images or words and others have very little conscious cognition. The quality of data from participants asked to describe their experience at an event will, therefore, be affected by their 'type' of inner experience expression and techniques need to be developed to elicit these appropriately.

These views of experience help in understanding what information can and should be captured about the event experience. The connection between experience and emotion is key and descriptions of attendees' experiences would be meaningless without knowing how this made them feel, what it made them think and what it makes them want to do. Some work in the related area of tourism was started in 1987 by



Mannell and Iso Ahola with a discussion of the 'immediate conscious experience' approach. This does not seem however, to have been developed further in terms of methods or applied within events. Recently, in a more closely related study, Mason and Paggiaro (2012) used structural equation modelling to consider the effect of 'festivalscape' on emotions, satisfaction and behavioural intention within the context of culinary tourism. They concluded that the festival (or event) experience is a good predictor of emotional response and satisfaction providing some empirical evidence that events are a useful medium for creating an emotional attachment to a brand.

Pullman and Gross (2004) in their research on the link between experience design and loyalty found that experiences will only engender loyalty if there is an emotional connection as well as a functional design. This is reflected in Wood and Masterman's (2007) work which suggests events which create an environment of emotional involvement, interaction and immersion, amongst others, will have a longer lasting positive effect on the participant. The concept of 'immersion' in the experience has been developed and discussed by a number of authors both in relation to the consumer experience and to wider human experience. For example, Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) 'flowstate', Pine and Gilmore's (1998) 'sweet spot' or Arnould and Price's (1993) 'extraordinary' experiences. Similarly, Zaltman (2003) and Heath and Feldwick (2007) indicate that the tangible attributes of a product have far less influence on consumer preference than the subconscious sensory and emotional elements derived from the total experience. All suggest then, that a high level of emotional intensity and immersion in the moment creates experiences that have the potential to change attitudes and behaviour.

## MEASURING EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

The methods for researching experience and emotion have been developed largely within psychology and social studies but have now been applied in a range of areas including communications and arts as well as health and psychiatry. Experiential memory (feelings, affective components) can be captured by *real-time* methods, *end of day* or *yesterday* recall. Bearing in mind Stone's categories of emotional memory we can see that the time at which the experience is reported will measure different aspects of emotional response. As the recall period increases there will be a shift from experiential memory to episodic to semantic. The experience sampling method (ESM) largely attributed to Csikszentmihalyi et al (2006) is one of the first methods developed to measure real-time subjective experience and therefore experiential memory. This can be seen as a quasi-naturalistic method in that a signal is sent to research subjects at random times throughout the day, often for a week or longer, asking them to report on the nature and quality of their experience. The resulting data are mainly quantitative using scales of response. Participants are asked to record what they are doing (eg at work, playing with kids, preparing meal) and then respond to a number of questions on how they feel at that moment. The main strengths of this method are its ability to show the link between stimulus or environment and response (feeling) and the use of a naturalistic setting rather than a laboratory or interview room. The quantitative scales also help to create methodological rigour and the ability to generalize from the findings (Scollon et al, 2003; Larsen and Kasimatis, 1993). The scales and questions utilised in the experience sampling method allow for the investigation of within-person processes such as the factors which affect emotion, and how emotions occur simultaneously or combine. The gathering of emotional data as it occurs also has the advantage of avoiding memory bias and the use of global

heuristics which is often the case when participants are asked to remember how they felt. Although there are drawbacks to this method the main strength of experience sampling lies in its ability to provide fine-grained, detailed pictures of human experience (Scollon et al, 2003; Cerin, Szabo, and Williams, 2001).

The quantitative nature of this method and the potential generalisability of the findings would appeal to many marketers looking to understand the effectiveness of their events. However, the costs involved in data collection and analysis could be prohibitive and there is also the potential to irritate both the participants and those around them at the event as they receive signals and have to stop whatever they are doing to complete a survey on a notepad or smart phone. Careful thought needs to be given to the size and selection of the sample the number and timing of prompts to respond to and the length and number of questions. The quality of experience sampling data is best when participants respond to signals immediately rather than wait for a quiet moment to complete the survey. Another drawback is that repeated assessments may lead people to pay unusual attention to their internal states leading to inflated responses and/or to feel annoyed due to the repetitiveness and intrusiveness of the exercise. Although in some studies participation in experience sampling was not found to increase negative mood (Cerin et al, 2001). The social context (Gupta and Vajic, 2000) may also affect the data. For example, if there is a perceived cultural norm that feeling negative emotions is undesirable in a given situation (eg at a fun event with the family) there may be a reluctance to report feelings of irritation, boredom or annoyance. A further drawback to the practicality of this method is the complexity of the captured data meaning that the statistical

strategies needed to analyse the resulting information can be highly specialised and challenging.

Although real time data capture may be possible at some events its use needs careful consideration. For example, a larger sample size with fewer questions may be more appropriate if this can be administered cost effectively. There are a number of experience sampling software packages available, for example, Barratt and Barratt's (2005) ESP (Experience Sampling Programme) and Froehlich, Chen, Consolvo, Harrison and Landay's (2007) MyExperience software. These can be adapted to run from web based client-servers to send the signals and questions to participants' own devices (smartphones, tablets) (Fischer, 2009). A consideration here would be the nature of the event and the activities that attendees may be engaged in. A beeping smartphone demanding attention may cause disruption to others and may affect the 'flowstate' of the individual. This highlights one of the problems with real-time experience sampling in that completing the survey, through the process of recording feelings, becomes an experience in itself and undoubtedly has an affect on feelings before (anticipation of the call to respond), during (disruptive when participant has to stop what they are doing to complete) and after (feelings of time wasted, lost track of what's happening at the event etc). One possibility is to accept this effect on emotion as inevitable and build the completion of the survey into the content/programming of the event.

As a response to some of the drawbacks of the experience sampling method Kahneman et al (2004) developed the day reconstruction method (DRM). This method has now been used and assessed in a number of experience situations from

working mother's communication needs to Japanese commuters' travel experiences. When using this method participants can be selected after the event and are provided with a pack (electronically or on paper) which helps them to systematically reconstruct their activities and experiences of the preceding day with procedures designed to reduce recall biases. Firstly they record the sequence of discrete 'episodes' that made up the day (eg dressing for the event, travelling to the event, queuing etc). This diary is then used by the participant only to help them recall more about the day in response to a series of questions about each episode. These gather data on the context as well as the emotional response. Data on the participants themselves is also gathered. The day reconstruction method is designed to overcome the recall bias of 'end-of-day' or 'yesterday' methods through the addition of the initial episodic diary. This then, enables the gathering of data related to a variety of activities and time periods rather than an aggregated, heuristic assessment of their feelings of the day. By undertaking the data gathering post-event there is less distraction and more time to reflect upon how they felt.

Although the day reconstruction method is more likely to measure episodic or semantic memories, rather than experiential, there is evidence to suggest that these may be more useful in predicting future behaviour. For example, Wirtz et al (2003) found, in their tourism based study, that only recalled affect, not real-time experience or expectations, directly and strongly predicted the desire to take a similar vacation in the future. Similarly, Oishi and Sullivan (2006) concluded that the strongest predictor for an enduring romantic relationship was not partners' daily reports during times spent together, but rather their retrospective reports of their experiences together. The potential for the day reconstruction method to result in predictive models of

behaviour makes it an attractive method for marketers wanting to evaluate the success and marketing potential of a live event.

Both the experience sampling method and the day reconstruction method rely on fairly large samples and quantitative data gathered through standardised scale questions. A relatively new method which combines both real time and post-event data gathering is the 'day experience method' developed by Matthew Riddle and Dr Michael Arnold as part of the Learning Landscape Project (2007). In this method both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered using a number of techniques. A mobile phone prompt is used to instruct participants to record answers to specific questions at irregular intervals. At the time of the message, they use a notebook, a camera and a voice recorder (if appropriate) to record answers to each of the questions and participants are informed that these responses need to be appropriately detailed.

A short time after the 'day experience', they are brought together for an informal focus group, where they show their photographs and describe their day. A member of the research team facilitates the discussion, which is taped using a video camera. Transcriptions of the recordings supplement the data gathered on the day. A benefit of this method is that it 'casts participants in the role of co-researchers, rather than as relatively passive sources of un-processed data. It sets out to enthuse and engage the participants in stimulating and amusing ways in order to make maximum use of their experience, intelligence and insight' (Riddle and Arnold, 2007). Further benefits include smaller sample sizes and the collection of useful qualitative insights which could be then used alongside other quantitative methods. The range of stimuli (photographs, video, diary etc) also allow for different 'inner experiences' to be captured, both those that experience in mainly visual imagery and those that have

more verbal or inner voice internalisations (Hurlburt and Heavey, 2001). Although not suitable for all events there are many types of event where participants would be willing and motivated to participate in this type of research (eg art and music festivals) and where being part of the research project could enhance rather than detract from their experience of the event.

## **VARIATIONS ON EXPERIENCE SAMPLING: THE TRIALLED METHOD**

The previous discussion and critique of existing methods can be summarised to suggest the *ideal* features of a revised experience sampling method for use at live events. The method needs to allow the cognitive and affective dimensions of an experience to be measured as well as the activities and contexts in which they occur (Gupta and Vajic, 2000). This requires some form of monitoring, observation in the naturalistic setting (the event) combined with a real-time self-assessment of emotional state (Hektner, Schmidt & Csikszentmihalyi 2007). The real-time data collection then needs to be combined with some form of reconstruction and reflection post-event (Kahneman et al, 2004, Riddle and Arnold, 2007). In order to be of practical use to event marketers the techniques need to overcome the issues of participant burden, the need for very large samples and the complexity of statistical analysis (Scollon et al, 2003) and yet still elicit sufficient data to allow for meaningful analysis and insights (Cerin, Szabo and Williams, 2001). It also seems necessary to gather this information not just within the event experience but also in the anticipation (pre-event) stage (Vuust and Kringelback, 2010) and the dissatisfaction/satisfaction (post-event) stage (Mason and Paggiaro, 2012). Consideration should also be given to gathering data on both the individual's emotional state and their feelings of

community and group identity (Goulding, Shankar and Elliott, 2002; Grant et al, 2012). This suggests that a combination of methods is required which gathers data both in real-time and, using some form of memory elicitation technique, after the experience. The data needs are summarised in Table 1.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

This study attempts to select the most appropriate aspects from each method to create an adapted technique which is particularly suitable for gathering data on emotional response at live events. Ideally this would combine both quantitative (gathered in real time during the experience) and qualitative methods designed to allow for greater explanation and reflection on the experience. We suggest that the quantitative data is gathered using a variation on Czikzentmihalyi's original experience sampling but reducing participant burden and complexity of analysis through the use of short surveys delivered via mobile/smartphone application. This quantitative method development is discussed further in Wood, Kenyon and Moss (2012). It is the qualitative aspect that we have focused on in the remainder of this paper and this has been developed in an attempt to address the data needs identified in Table 1.

The resulting trialled method required participants to record their activities, experiences, surroundings and feelings in the run up to, during and immediately after attendance at a live music event (in real-time) and then use these for memory elicitation, reflection and discussion in a small focus group soon after the event. Participants were recruited via Facebook, using a pre-selected live music event and were prompted to record their experiences and emotions by a trigger message sent via mobile phone and received at irregular intervals before, during and after the



event. Due to the ubiquity of mobile telephones, it was considered both convenient and cost effective to employ these as the signalling tools for this research. The participants were contacted via an SMS text message with the same message being sent to all participants at the same time (this coincided with the prompt to complete the parallel quantitative survey). They were asked to record their experiences on notepad, phone and/or camera and were encouraged to make these entries as detailed as possible within the constraints of the event.

Photographs and video are a very rich source of experiential data and with the development of mobile phone technology the majority of phones now contain a good quality camera (for the methodological replication, anything over 5 million mega pixels will provide suitable pictures, Riddle and Arnold, 2007). All the participants' phones contained a camera of at least this quality with a further advantage being that combining camera and alert system reduced the number of items the participants had to carry and coordinate at the event.

The selected context for the research was a small (300 people) live music event held at a venue in Leeds. The bands playing were known to the participants and the venue was easily accessible. It was felt that the size and type of event would create a suitable environment in which to trial the methods creating a shared experience with other like-minded people (Goulding, Shankar and Elliott, 2002) in an atmosphere that was known and comfortable to them but also held the potential for excitement, escapism and relaxation. The event was chosen before the participants were asked to join the research and while the sample was being collected the actual event remained undisclosed to them. It was believed that all participants attending the same event would elicit a more robust study with fewer variables.

To identify willing participants for this small-scale exploratory study a self-selecting sample was recruited via a Facebook message sent out to over 350 potential respondents (likely attendees at the chosen type of event). This message detailed the requirements of the study and offered them the opportunity to be a participant. Of the 350 potential participants, fifteen made initial contact and from these, six maintained contact and were interested in the opportunity to contribute. This was deemed acceptable for this exploratory qualitative study as it would provide an appropriate number for the focus group and would allow for sufficient insight into the phenomena being studied, and reflection on the methods employed. The acceptance of relatively small samples is supported by Hektner, Schmidt & Csikszentmihalyi (2007) who state that due to the richness of the data collected as few as five to ten participants can give sufficient insight.

The experience sampling, took place over the full day, starting at 10am before the event began to capture anticipation and expectancy (Vuust and Kringelbach, 2010) and for a number of hours afterwards, up until midnight, to allow for the gathering of data from the full range of experiences within that day. The questions that were sent to the phones were designed to create responses that could easily be explored at the focus group. These were open questions and included general questions as well as those specific to the time of day and the event. For example, 'What are you looking forward to today and why?', 'What are you doing now and how do you feel?', 'How is the music affecting you?', 'How do you feel now?', 'What are others around you doing? How does that make you feel?' and the prompt 'Take some photos that show what you and others are doing'.

A few days later participants were brought together in an easily accessible location using a room that was quiet and comfortable, free from interruptions and protected from observation by those not participating in the research (Kitzinger and Barbour 2001). The focus group involved the researcher facilitating a discussion in which all six participants expanded on their answers to the questions that had been sent to their phones at the event. The moderator explained how the focus group would operate, facilitating an open discussion between the participants by clarifying ambiguous statements, allowing unfinished sentences to be completed and allowing any unexpected and interesting discussion points to be fully explored (Kitzinger and Barbour 2001). Each question was taken in turn and all participants were offered the opportunity to expand upon the notes they had written and show and talk about the photographs they had taken. There was no formal time frame as it was felt more important to look at each question as thoroughly as possible but participants were told that it would take a maximum of two hours. It was felt that the discussion was not eliciting any new information after approximately one hour and forty five minutes and the focus group was brought to a close.

The written and photographic information taken at the time alongside the in-depth discussion of their experiences, feelings and emotions provided rich qualitative data for analysis. This would not have been achievable without the social interaction within the focus group. Here the method for eliciting emotional response fits well with the experience itself in that both involve sharing experiences and emotions with other like-minded people. Clearly, methods such as focus groups provide an ideal platform for providing insights into phenomena such as group identity, peer pressure,

conformance and the increased pleasure of an experience shared (Grant et al, 2012).

The fundamental issue addressed through the method is to ascertain how participants felt and why they felt the way they did. This is mainly achieved through the data gathered during the focus group discussions and not simply the recording of the experience at the event. The participants' real-time recorded experiences and notes served mainly as prompts to recall how they felt and to allow the researcher to probe the reasons behind these emotions and the effects of them. The combination of these techniques enables both episodic and semantic memory (Stone, 2007) of emotions to be gathered and analysed. A further benefit of the technique is that these self- created elicitation stimuli allowed the participants to feel comfortable, able to contribute and actively involved in the explanation of their experiences. Thus, the quality, depth and accuracy of the data were strengthened.

### **Data Analysis**

The data contained in the transcripts from the focus group were analysed using software (NVivo) that utilises a coding system to identify relationships amongst the elements contained within qualitative data providing a systematic and objective approach which strengthened the integrity, robustness and therefore, trustworthiness of the research (Given 2008). Firstly, following the transcribing of the focus group recording, data reduction took place by filtering the data to draw out only the discussion that related to emotion and satisfaction. Following this, the data was categorized and coded in order to classify the different emerging themes. In this

phase similar experiences, thoughts and feeling were pulled together to highlight similarities (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007). These were then coded using 'tree' nodes that branched off from one another allowing sub groups to be identified within the main themes. Using this structure and organisational tool it was possible to elaborate on the generalisations within the data. The themes captured significant and important data that had a degree of patterned response or meaning (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The nodes that became the substantive themes were characterised by generally shared (but varying in the detail) feelings. For example, frustration and stress were felt in the pre-event experiences and can be seen in phrases like '*I was harassed. I was really busy at work and had loads of meetings...*'. Anticipation of the event and varying degrees of anxiety and expectation formed another theme and is seen in responses like, '*I expect it will be a good laugh, I know very little about it so I'm really intrigued and worried I'll be too tired to enjoy it though.*' The sharing of common experiences at the event was also identified as a node as was the 'mood-enhancing' nature of the event. Both of these themes are illustrated by one participant's comment, '*My mood was lifted because I had plans for the evening, I thought, I'm going to be going out and doing something and I thought, 'that's great,' and 'I was looking forward to having a chance to switch my brain off and I was looking forward to just being out and amongst people*'.

## **OVERVIEW OF TRIAL FINDINGS**

Five substantive themes emerged from the data following the transcription of the focus group and the thematic analysis. The analysis was inductive in that the themes generated are strongly linked to the text. As well as this, because of the research's

preliminary and exploratory nature the themes were based on the semantic or surface meanings within the texts. The emergent themes were finally categorised as 'life stresses', 'a sense of anticipation,' 'the expectations of the event', 'the experience of the event' and 'post event satisfaction'.

The findings highlight the event as being experienced as something '*out of the ordinary*', '*a light at the end of the tunnel*', '*being lost in the moment*' and that sense of satisfaction that came from the participants feeling they had done something worthwhile. They show an emotional and dynamic sensation of satisfaction, changing with their experiences throughout the event. This further supports Mason and Paggiaro's (2012) findings relating to a causal link between emotional response and sense of satisfaction. The sense of satisfaction felt by the participants is acquired by experiencing new situations and through these the creation of temporal and transportative emotions. An example of this is the finding that 'life stresses' still impacted on the participants while they were at the event and this drew them away from the 'in the moment' sensation but they still reflected that it was a worthwhile and satisfying experience. Indeed, the contrast between the exogenous (outside of the immediate experience) life stresses and the endogenous enjoyment of the event appears to heighten those feelings of satisfaction. It was also clear that enjoyment came largely from the affective components of the experience and that the exogenous 'disturbing' elements (eg thinking about what had to be done at work the next day) related more closely to cognitive elements as suggested by Heath and Feldwick (2007).

Another theme, the expectations of the participants is not as clearly linked to satisfaction in this type of experience than has been found in other studies of expectation versus satisfaction (Mason and Paggiaro, 2012). A clearer link with satisfaction can be seen again between the contrast of pre-event negative feelings with during and post-event positive feelings. Here the expectations tended to be limited and inter-linked with anxiety and anticipation. For example, *'I just knew it was a really long day and didn't know how I was going to get through it all...I was apprehensive that I would get my work finished in time'*. Furthermore anger was another emotion that factored into the experience, *'I was incredibly annoyed because I'd just taken the morning off work to go and see the doctor and the doctor was on holiday when I got there and there was no one else I could see, so I was very, very, very angry'*. However, following the event the emotions expressed were much more positive, *'I feel really happy and lifted and calm'* and *'I felt, er, really invigorated... I felt really bouncy, I feel the best I have all day'*. Other participants felt positive in a different way, *'I felt settled and calm and contemplative...and it made me realise I'd chilled out a lot from the morning'* and *'I feel nostalgic, I think I've said this to a couple of you, but the last track of the encore was an old favourite from years ago and I'd completely forgotten about it... I just used to love that track, and just hearing it again was just spot on'*. The mood changing or enhancing nature of the experience appears to have a significant affect on satisfaction and this is partly determined by the pre-event experience ie the worse the mood beforehand the higher the satisfaction.

Emotional response is a much more dynamic entity in this type of situation in that emotions change often and rapidly throughout the event. Despite this, satisfaction

with the event was felt by all members of the focus group all with different expectations and experience of live events. It can be argued that, contrary to service and product satisfaction models, these types of events do not have to be aligned with expectations to generate feelings of satisfaction (Arnould & Price 1993). In addition, the findings show that satisfaction is linked to many emotions, for example, feelings of nostalgia and inspiration both affected the participants' feelings of satisfaction.

*'When I go and see bands, and especially if it's just a singer song writer, I just think about being at home and playing my guitar,' and 'my best was just er, some really nice guitar moments, when I was watching the music and what was going in and me going ahh, that's really nice-that works really well, I like the guitar sounds, that kinda thing, that kinda musician thing. Ooh that's nice...'*

The method provided data that suggests that the emotions engendered are contextual and endogenous in line with the work of Goulding, Shankar and Elliot (2002) and Grant et al (2012). The identified categories can firstly, impact on one another and secondly, because of the vacillating nature of these emotions, any one of them can be bypassed or indeed experienced in a smaller loop of emotion between just two or three of the identified emotion groupings. For example, the feeling of happiness, satisfaction and excitement can be lost because of negative emotions like anxiety, stress and fatigue. This may not be as a result of any experience at the event and is therefore outside of the event marketer's control. For example, *'Something just clicks back into thinking; I've got to do stuff tomorrow,'* was how one member of the group put it. Other members echoed that by saying, *'there must be a mid point in there that you are like having the best time, before it starts dropping off and you start thinking about the next day,'* and *'when you've got through*



*work and finally got out of that mode, you can 'get into it' but the next day started creeping in and it was like 'Oh, I'm in that mode again'.* This may suggest that previous methods used to gather data were too static to measure the emotions of satisfaction at live events and illustrates the need to incorporate reflection on feelings as well as real-time data capture (Riddle and Arnold, 2007). It appears to be the shifts in emotion and an explanation of the reasons for these that can be captured most successfully using this form of experience sampling. By putting the participants in the role of co-researchers, an active position rather than as a passive source of data they are able to better express their own thoughts and feelings. The methods employed, therefore, need to enthuse and engage the participants in stimulating and amusing ways in order to make maximum use of their experience, intelligence and insight (Riddle and Arnold, 2007). The range of stimuli and recording techniques (photographs, video, diary, phone) also allows for different 'inner experiences' or perhaps 'shifts in emotion' to be captured (Hulbert and Heavey, 2001) ensuring that all participants feel able to contribute. This type of experience sampling then, combines a range of data collection with the engagement of the participants and does so over a time frame that allows a deeper insight into emotions before during and after the event. In doing so it is possible to see how these emotions are connected with experiences and to gain an understanding of their dynamic and fluctuating nature. More importantly though the reflection on these emotions enables us to start to uncover how they subsequently affect attitude and behavioural intent.

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE METHOD**

The methodology used in this study provided rich and insightful data without undue participant burden however, if this research was to be repeated, there are

adaptations and improvements that could be made. This section of the paper will now consider these.

This research was designed as an exploratory study, and therefore the choices of a day sample, the use of mobile phones to send the messages and a simple pad and pen for the participants to record their responses was felt to be methodologically justifiable. It allowed for meaningful data to be gathered without an overly complicated approach which could have compromised the practicality of the study. The simplicity of the tasks and the clear link between task and participant behaviour/activity allowed them to become co-researchers within the study creating an additional depth of reflection and insights into the usually hidden workings of the mind. This was supported by the participants' feedback in that they did not feel the approach to be overly complicated, time consuming or distracting; their 'flowsate' was not broken by their involvement and the participants enjoyed their active role in the research.

As mentioned earlier, Scollon et al (2003) see three main strengths in this type of research method and the investigation undertaken here supports these. The research was able to show a link between environment and response in a way that a laboratory based approach could not, the data was significant and it identified a number of within-person processes. The focus group style interview session was a particularly insightful approach as this allowed the participants to respond to other people's feelings, phrases and descriptions which may have gone unstated in a more formal one-to-one arranged interview. At times this allowed 'group think' to emerge (Grant et al, 2012) and enabled the researcher to explore feelings of identity and

community within the emotional response (Goulding, Shankar and Elliott, 2002). For example, when asked if the event was in anyone's mind during the day,

*'Only in the fact that I had so much to do and I was thinking, 'oh my God, could do with just not having all this stuff to do.'* (Andrea)

*'Yeah, that was my feeling'* (Becky)

*'It felt like the day was more squeezed.'* (Andrea)

It could be argued that it was the conversational style of the focus group that helped produce the vocalization of the participants' deeper emotions. Using the notebooks, photographs and phones as prompts was an effective method in helping to counter any memory bias or degradation (Kahneman et al, 2004). It also helped to stimulate memories in other participants that may have been forgotten if the others had not been with them to expand upon these topics. It enabled the participants to discuss how their emotions changed through the period of the study, how they can oscillate, are dynamic and returned to. This complexity of emotional response is therefore unlikely to be fully understood through quantitative methods alone.

In future research, the method of data collection could be broadened to include a range of media, video or voice recording, to remove the more onerous task of writing down thoughts and feelings. We also suggest that future research includes some form of participant observation. This would allow for more accurate recording of the context and help to link emotional responses to elements of event programming and design. The sound recording and participant observation would also help to capture

some of the background noise and atmosphere and thus help provide different sensory stimuli and further memory triggers (Hurlburt and Heavey, 2001).

The trialled method discussed here utilized a day sampling method and a qualitative approach. It is recommended that future, full-scale, investigations could combine this technique with the use of an experience sampling method (ESM). This quantitative data gathered from a larger sample (Czikzentmihalyi et al, 2006) could provide further insights into the experienced emotion and the elements of the event that triggered those emotions.

Although exploratory it could be argued that the sample size limited the reliability of the findings. The non-probability, convenience sample of six participants did not allow for generalisations to be made. The research could only draw out themes surrounding how these individuals felt and consider any shared or common traits. While this approach has theoretical support for exploratory studies (Robson 2002), and this type of experience sampling is not designed to be representative (Hektner, Schmidt & Csikszentmihalyi 2007), it is also recognised that future studies should aim to increase the sample size and the number of focus groups. Recruitment of participants will be a challenge and it is difficult to envisage these being other than self-selecting. A further adaptation is recommended relating to participant recruitment. In this trial the participants attended the event to participate in the research rather than being selected to take part in the research because they were going to the event. This clearly affected their emotional responses, especially during the first part of the day. For example, *'It was something that had to be done...Perhaps just a sense of neutrality, we didn't know what it was going to be like,*

*we knew it was at the Brudenell, so promising, it showed promise' and 'I expect it will be a good laugh, I know very little about it so I'm really intrigued and worried I'll be too tired to enjoy it though.'*

This is possibly one of the reasons why the event was not considered, by the participants, as an extraordinary experience. While the dynamic emotions and sensations were clearly felt and expressed by the participants, it does raise the question of what would have been recorded if the participants had had a strong affiliation or connection with the band, performance or event they were going to see. A control group would provide an interesting insight into this affect. Despite this, the participants did offer support for the process and did not consider it to be a distraction. Moreover, they reported that they had found that it had provided them with a great deal of insight into how they spent their day and their emotions throughout it. Overall they felt that they had enjoyed and benefited from the opportunity to take part in the research.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Any of the experience sampling methods discussed earlier have the potential to inform better marketing event design as they allow for the emotional response to each episode/element to be fully assessed. The results of the trial show how one of these methods can be adapted successfully for use at a live event. However, a 'fun' event leaving people happy and satisfied may well have little effect on future brand related behaviour (Pullman and Gross, 2004) or response to social marketing messages. To understand the effect of experience on emotion and emotion on beliefs/attitudes we need to consider the mediating effects of episodic and semantic

memory (Stone, 2007). For example, the memory of the emotion may be quite different to the experienced emotion and the beliefs resulting from that experience may be unchanged from before the experience or so affected by other factors that attribution to the experiential event is impossible.

To conclude, the application of the method discussed here could provide useful insights into the felt emotions throughout an event experience but, on their own, will not give the return on investment data required by brands using events as part of their marketing campaigns (Wood, 2009). The relationship between these recorded experiences, attitude and behavioural change and the brand needs to be established. One future suggestion is that the challenges of attribution of change to a particular experience can be partially overcome through repeated longitudinal studies of this nature and through the inclusion of control groups who did not experience the event. It would also be useful to understand how emotions experienced at the time become moderated by further experiences and are remembered differently after the passage of time. This potential 'decay' effect would be an important component in assessing the marketing effectiveness of experiential events.

The day reconstruction method, experience sampling and their derivatives are a useful starting point and provide a depth of data not usually gathered through marketing research. The trial results show that experience stimulated emotions relating to Schmitt's (2012) object-centred, self-centred and social engagement can all be explored through this relatively simple method. The use of focus groups extends the 'social' element of the live event experience giving social context (Gupta and Vajic, 2000) and allowing for the emergence of any 'groupthink' element (Grant et al, 2012). The inclusion of photos and other memory recall stimuli also helps to

identify those elements of event design and programming that are affecting emotions (Pullman and Gross, 2004).

The application of similar methods would provide data to show how different consumers experience events differently and as a cross-comparison of the effectiveness of different types of experiential event. However, these need to be extended if they are to provide evidence of a relationship between emotions generated by the event experience and emotions felt for a brand or social marketing campaign connected with that experience.

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