

# Fear for Festivals

***By Poppy Surplice, Intern, Centre for Brexit Studies***

It's nearly been a whole year since festivals were around, attracting millions of visitors per year. In recent news, major festivals such as Glastonbury and Parklife announced for the second year running that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they will not be going ahead. The impact of festivals in 2020 and continuance into 2021 has been devastating for all stakeholders involved (Intermiles, 2020). Let's hope these festivals can once be experienced again. In this blog post, a discussion into sociological and economic issues will be explored by stakeholders in the festival industry.

According to a recent article from the Independent, the pandemic has had an "absolutely decimating" effect on the UK's festival industry (O'Connor, 2021). Representatives for well-known festivals such as Parklife and Boomtown have told MPs how the pandemic could affect their future prospects in the music industry. The drastic effects of the pandemic have caused huge impact on festivals, as millions of revenue is made each year from ticket purchases. Sacha Lord, co-founder of Park life festival, believes that if the UK festival industry suffered 2 consecutive barren years, the future of festivals could be ruined.

The rapidly developing global COVID-19 pandemic crisis continues to have a severe effect on the ways in which societies operate, both in terms of economic activity and in relation to how people spend their leisure time (Davis, 2020). They have become a part of global society, attracting millions of tourists per year. In terms of the future outlook on festivals, many believe there will be a sudden boom post-covid. On the other hand, some researchers believe the damaging effects of the pandemic could cause the vast majority of stakeholders to disappear (Sacha Lord, 2021).

In recent news, organisers announced the cancellation of Glastonbury for the second year running. Despite the disappointing news for both event organisers and customers, many feared losing ticket purchases. Luckily like other festivals, tickets can be rolled over to a like-for-like booking to attend the 2022 festival, or money back (Glastonbury, 2021). With cases rising again and new variants of the coronavirus

emerging, even with news of the vaccine being approved, it was impossible to run the 2021 event.

Many festivals are not insured against pandemics; therefore, many have been forced to cancel or postpone throughout the pandemic (Szatan, 2020). Festivals are also at a high risk in other ways; due to the total number of people that attend, which requires a huge focus on health and safety regulations and crisis management (Silvers, 2013; Getz & Page, 2016). In order to comply with the government guidelines, social distancing measures are impossible to control at any festival.

One efficient way to broadcast music festivals is to stream virtually. According to a recent article by the Guardian, online festivals are stepping up as new COVID restrictions bite (Wilson, 2020). Although audiences don't get the thrill of being in a crowd, performances can still take place using virtual platforms like zoom! Many festivals, like Glastonbury, organised a virtual online event in 2020, to highlight the importance music festivals have on experiences.

Festivals are a celebration of bringing together communities and cultures at a given moment (Mair, 2020). Festivalgoers attend these events to experience and embrace music culture in the UK. Not only has the pandemic socially affected stakeholders but has economically damaged the events sector. British music festivals were attended by a staggering 27.7 billion people, and over 10.4 million music tourists spent directly 2.3 billion (Eventbrite, 2020). Therefore festivals are a major revenue stream for the UK, which includes ticket purchasing, transportation and hospitality purchases at the venue.

Festivals create many jobs including temporary, zero-hour contracts and sometimes permanent roles. Furthermore, festivals are great for the local economy with many tourists booking hotels, restaurants and using local shops close to the festival. With no festivals currently taking place, the whole supply chain is disrupted because there is no need to use suppliers. So, with festivals being cancelled, it will impact both small and large businesses that relied on festival organisers.

Of course, many local residents are pleased with the cancellation of many festivals due to the environmental impacts of rubbish being left behind and noise pollution. But without festivals such as Glastonbury

and Parklife, small independent shops and sole traders would find it hard to survive in the local area.

There is no certainty how the future of festivals will look like, but audiences are raving to get back to what they love attending. UK music festivals are recognised globally for being the best experiences any attendee could hope for. With the COVID pandemic still being a major issue globally, there is only hope to bring back the music festival industry in 2021!

### **References:**

Davies, K., (2020). Festivals Post Covid-19. Leisure Sciences, pp.1-6.

Mair, S. (2020). What will the world look like after coronavirus? Four possible futures. The Conversation.

Getz, D., & Page, S. J. (2016). Event studies; theory, research and policy for planned events (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Routledge.

Silvers, J. R. (2013). Risk management for meetings and events (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Routledge.

Szatan, G. (2020, April, 15). Should I stay or should I go: How coronavirus is jeopardising music festivals. The Guardian.

### **Website references:**

<https://www.intermiles.com/blog/everything-you-need-to-know-about-impact-of-covid20-on-festivals>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/music-festivals-uk-2021-coronavirus-b1782498.html>

<https://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk/a-statement-from-%C2%A7/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/oct/23/dance-parties-book-festivals-best-online-virtual-culture-this-autumn>

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/blog/academy/uk-event-industry-in-numbers-ds00/>