My brand, our festival – Exploring the impact of self-image congruency on loyalty in case of music festivals

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THE AIMS OF THE PAPER

We examine music festivals in our study, which can be considered one of the most important community building events nowadays. In our research, we examined how music festival loyalty is explained by self-concept congruency (1) and by psychological sense of a brand community (2). Based on our assumptions, music festival loyalty is stronger if there is a congruency between someone's self-concept and between the image of the festival (or the visitors of the festival). Moreover, a sense of connectedness with other festival visitors can also strengthen loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire survey was conducted in 2015 in the area of a popular music festival, the Youth Days of Szeged (SZIN). In the course of the survey, 707 responses were collected, and a PLS path analysis was applied to study the relationships between the concepts included in the research question.

MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS

Results show that self-image congruency affects the psychological sense of brand community, as well as attitudinal and behavioural loyalty; while the psychological sense of brand community has a significant impact only on attitudinal loyalty. On the basis of the model, the following impact chain (dominant path) is identified: self-image congruency – the psychological sense of brand community – attitudinal loyalty – behavioural loyalty. This can be interpreted as: an individual willingly identifies with a group similar to them, shows greater commitment to an event visited by this group, and thus more likely to return. Another interesting finding is that self-image congruency had a significant positive effect on each element of the model, so this is a key factor concerning festival-loyalty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results also draws the festival organizers' attention to that, besides arranging a high-quality programme, it should also be a priority to build a brand personality congruent with the self-image of the target group.

Keywords: self-concept congruency, brand community, loyalty, music festivals

INTRODUCTION

The postmodern society is characterized by a series of emptied-out stylizations that can then be consumed (Jameson 1991), where the brand choice usually carries a symbolic meaning (Belk 1996, Ligas & Cotte 1999, Töröcsik 2009). Well-known brands are consciously endowed with an attractive brand personality and brand image. Nowadays, however, this process has extended to services, and even to cultural events (Lee et al. 2008, Grappi & Montanari 2011). An event or a festival builds an own brand not merely for differentiation purposes but with a view to develop a loyal a fan base.

For people as "social animals" (Aronson 2008), social interactions and the sense of belonging to a community can be considered as basic needs. Social existence has undergone some changes over recent years; the sense of community has been transferred to the online space. In this transformation, the importance of certain group building institutions is decreasing, thus, for example, traditional religious and rural communities are being eroded. At the same time, however, communal forms of life emerge in a new context (Wattanasuwan 1999, 2005, Atkin 2004, McEwen 2005).

In our study, we examine a specific form of the sense of community developed through symbolic consumption: the loyal fan base of music festivals. Music festivals are considered an increasingly important event in our country as well, the number of visitors in most of the festivals increases year by year, and the best-known festivals (Sziget, Volt, Sound, SZIN, Part, EFOTT) have become brands. They represent a community building power not only on a few given days of the year, as they are present among their fans due to their Facebook and Instagram sites almost every day. To demonstrate the size of their community, it is worth mentioning that if we considered the visitors of their Facebook sites as the "population" of a particular event, the Sziget would be the 2nd (about 470,000 persons), while the VOLT would be the 4th (about 170,000 persons) largest cities of Hungary. In this sense, brand loyalty and brand community can also be interpreted in the context of music festivals as in this understanding the fan base is a special community that is loyal to the music festival.

Our research aims to find an answer to the question how music festival loyalty can be explained by factors related to symbolic consumption, specifically: by self-image congruency (1) and by the psychological sense of a brand community (2).

LITERATURE BASES, MODEL BUILDING

Brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001), brand subcultures (Schouten & McAlexander 1995), brand cults (Atkin 2004) and consumer tribes (Cova 1997), as the specific forms of consumer society, provide the psychological sense of a community through the symbolic act of consumption. The essence of these communities can be captured through the concept of symbolic consumption, according to which consumption is not only a functional, but also a symbolic interaction (Töröcsik 2011). The symbolic character of consumption here is manifested in an awareness of community among consumers developed by their brand choice (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001). As Muggleton and Weinzierl (2003) points out nowadays the subcultures are presented in such a fragmented way that it is hard to conceptualize the subculture itself. It should be underlined that not every brand provides the sense of belonging to a community, and it is thus practical to limit our research to the products that actually perform this role. Therefore, according to our approach, it is practical to focus on the brands the consumer are loyal too.

Brand loyalty traditionally was considered as a behavioral process that is rooted at satisfaction and results in repeated repurchase (Neal 1999, Oliver 1999). However this approach had several limitations (Reichheld 1996, 2000) and a more complex understanding arisen that conceptualized loyalty more than just a repeated purchase, as it *"implies that a consumer has some real prefer-ence for the brand"* (Mowen, Minor 2001, 212). The complex concept of loyalty covers both the behavioral (repeated purchase) and attitudinal (real preference and commitment) aspects of loyalty (Bandyopadhyay & Martell 2007). In our study we apply this complex concept and examine not just behavioral but also attitudinal aspects behind loyalty. The consumers who are loyal to a brand often feel the brand personality of the given brand (Sirgy 1982; Kressmann et al. 2006), and the other consumers of the brand (Sirgy et al. 2008) similar to their self-concept, moreover, the consumption of this brand gives them some sense of belonging to a group (Belk 1996, McEwen 2005, Rapaille 2006).

We consider self-image congruency model related to symbolic consumption as the theoretical framework of our study. Based on Sirgy et al. (2008, 1091) we interpret self-concept congruity as *„the match between consumers' self-concept (actual self, ideal self, etc.) and the user image of*

a given product, store, sponsorship event, etc. *Self-congruity is commonly used to mean self-image congruence"*. Examining the effects of self-concept congruity in the case of visiting music clubs, Goulding et al. (2002) found that if the image of a particular music club is congruent with an individual's self-concept, it has a positive influence on the sense of community with other visitors. This finding includes the other central concept of our study: the psychological sense of a brand community (PSBC), which refers to the phenomenon when the members of a community have a sense of community even without social interactions (Carlson et al. 2008). Correlations between self-concept congruency (1) and loyalty (2) have been proven by several studies (Kressmann et al. 2006, Sirgy et al. 2008, Prónay 2011), and we have also found examples for the existence of correlations between PSBC (3) and self-concept congruency (Kazár 2016). However, examining complex connections among these three concepts can be regarded novel. The central aim of our study was to identify relations among these concepts according to the following hypotheses:

Based on the above, we assumed that "self-image congruency – PSBC", and "self-image congruency – loyalty" relation pairs can also be verified in the case of music festivals. The more congruent an individual feels a particular festival with their self-concept, the more likely they will have a sense of connectedness with other festival visitors, and, in addition, the stronger attitudinal loyalty will characterize them, and the more likely they will re-attend the festival:

H1a: Self-image congruency has a positive effect on the psychological sense of a brand community.

H1b: Self-image congruency has a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty.

H1c: Self-image congruency has a positive effect on behavioral loyalty.

Behavioral loyalty (Bagozzi & Dholakia 2010, Scarpi 2010, Drengner et al. 2012), and attitudinal loyalty (Schouten & McAlexander 1995, Muniz & O'Guinn 2001, Carlson et al. 2008), both can be mentioned as an outcome of the psychological sense of a brand community. The more a festival visitor feels as a part of the community of the festival of a given brand, the more likely they will re-attend the event and develop loyalty towards the event:

H2a: The psychological sense of a brand community has a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty.

H2b: The psychological sense of a brand community has a positive effect on behavioral loyalty.

The connections between the attitudinal and behavioral elements of loyalty also need to be outlined in the case of the model. In the study, behavioral loyalty is understood as a re-attending intension, while attitudinal loyalty is seen as a commitment to the festival based on positive emotions. Attitudinal loyalty can influence behavioral loyalty in a positive way, as emotional commitment can be a motivation for re-purchasing intentions (Bloemer & Kasper 1995, Pritchard et al. 1999). The literature also includes examples where behavioral elements can be understood as outcomes of attitudinal elements in the case of music festivals (Lee et al. 2008, Grappi & Montanari 2011) and the attitude towards a music community can influence the behavior (Tófalvy et al. 2011). Based on this, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H3: Attitudinal loyalty has a positive effect on behavioral loyalty.

MEASUREMENT, METHODOLOGY

In the course of operationalizing the concepts included in the study, we relied on the literature review and we aimed to apply scales already validated in international research.

In the case of music festivals, *self-image congruency* is grasped by the extent of similarity of a particular festival visitor to the other festival visitors, as well as by the similarity of a festival visitor's taste in music to the music program of the festival, and by the similarity of a festival visitor's music style to the style of the festival. In the course of measurement, in the absence of articles on music festivals, we applied a one-dimensional approach. We measured self-image congruency with "similar to me" types of statements on the basis of studies on music consumption (Goulding et al. 2002, Larsen et al. 2009).

Brand community is formed by festival visitors who do not necessarily have social interactions, but there is a certain sense of connectedness related to other festival visitors. Based on all this, we used the psychological sense of a brand community (PSBC) variable in the model, and we applied the scale of Drengner et al. (2012) for its measurement.

We defined *attitudinal loyalty* as a positive attitude towards the festival and the preference of the festival to other festivals. We started out from Bloemer and Kasper's (1995) approach; however, the scale was used for tangible products by the

authors, thus we needed to modify the scale to be applicable to music festivals.

We defined *behavioral loyalty* as a re-attending intention related to the festival, which can be understood as an outcome of attitudinal loyalty (Bloemer & Kasper 1995, Pritchard et al. 1999). Understanding behavioral loyalty as a re-attending intention appeared in the model of Drengner et al. (2012), thus we applied the scale from their study for measurement.

The *questionnaire survey* was conducted in a popular music festival of Szeged, the Szegedi Ifjúsági Napok (SZIN) in August 2015. The questionnaires were completed between 25th August 2015 and 29th August 2015. As for a more specific time of completion, the interviewers surveyed the festival visitors between 2 pm and 7 pm each day. On the spot of the festival, eight interviewers conducted paper-based personal interviews in eight areas of equal size, thereby the effect of occasional incorrect completions by the festival visitors could be eliminated. Based on the map published by the festival organizers, several notable points (e.g. food and beverage outlets, exhibition or concert venues) could be separated within each territorial unit. As the first step of selecting the respondents, we randomly chose 3 points respectively within each territorial unit, and setting out from this point, every second festival visitor coming towards was approached. Every festival visitor had a chance to be involved in the sample in this way, resulting in a total of 707 respondents during the four days of the survey.

Testing the hypotheses requires the examination of the relations between latent variables, for which *PLS path analysis* can be applied (Hair et al. 2014), as the variables (indicators) cannot be considered normally distributed (also in the case of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, p<0.01 for each variable). We applied SmartPLS 3 (Ringle et al. 2015) software for PLS path analysis.

RESULTS

Regarding the composition of *respondents* according to gender, the proportion of men was 50.6 per cent, and the proportion of women was 49.4 per cent. As for permanent residence, the highest proportion (31.8 per cent) belonged to Csongrád County, followed by Pest County (19.9 per cent), Bács-Kiskun County (14.8 per cent) and Békés County (11.4 per cent). 15.0 per cent of the respondents gave other Hungarian counties and 7.2 per cent provided a foreign country/county as permanent residence. The majority of the visitors thus consisted of mostly Hungarian inhabitants in 2015. In terms of occupation, 45.1 per cent of the respondents do not work, 38.2 per cent have a permanent, full-time job, while 11.0 per cent have a student job. Examining the highest completed level of education, 25.8 per cent of the respondents have started tertiary education, an additional 24.5 per cent have completed tertiary education, and 24.9 per cent have a general certificate of secondary education. In terms of the respondents' age, 31.6 per cent are between 19 and 22, 25.7 per cent are between 12 and 18, 24.5 per cent are above 25 and the proportion of respondents between 23 and 25 is 18.2 per cent. The festival visitors thus mostly consist of young people under 25.

With regard to the results of the *outer (measurement) model*, we examined the reliability of the constructions with Cronbach's Alpha (>0.7) indicator and CR indicator (composite reliability>0.7), concerning which we find that criteria (Szűcs 2007, Hair et al. 2014) are fulfilled in the case of all four constructions (Table 1). For checking convergent validity, we considered standardized factor loadings (>0.5), AVE (average variance extracted, >0.5) indicators. Comparing minimal criterion values (Hair et al. 2014) to the indicators in Table 1, the existence of the four constructions can be verified.

Table 1: Latent variables and their indicators in the quantitative research

Latent variable (Cronbach's alpha, AVE, CR)	Item	Factor loading	Mean	Standard deviation
Self-concept congruency (α=0.819 AVE=0.728, CR=0.813)	The music program of the SZIN is similar to my taste in music.	0.809	3.699	1.052
	The visitors of the SZIN are similar to me.	0.842	3.579	1.041
	The style and atmosphere of the SZIN is congruent with my style.	0.906	3.858	0.991
PSBC (α=0.853, AVE=0.694, CR=0.901)	Attending the SZIN provides a certain sense of community for me.	0.823	3.91	0.995
	The SZIN means a kind of connection point with other visitors.	0.806	3.799	1.007
	I feel a strong bond among the visitors of the SZIN.	0.864	3.156	1.135
	There is a strong sense of camaraderie between me and other SZIN visitors.	0.837	3.115	1.191
Attitudinal loyalty (α=0.854, AVE=0.775, CR=0.912)	I feel a kind of attachment to the SZIN.	0.883	3.451	1.188
	The SZIN is of particular importance for me among festivals.	0.897	3.58	1.244
	I would be disappointed if I couldn't attend the SZIN.	0.859	3.769	1.268
Behavioral loyalty (α=0.864, AVE=0.787, CR=0.917)	I'm planning to attend the next SZIN too.	0.907	18.ápr	1.042
	It's very likely that I will re-attend the festival.	0.902	4.205	1.043
	Despite one or two less pleasant experiences, I would re-attend the festival.	0.851	4.107	0.978

Source: own construction

For checking discriminant validity, HTMT ratio of correlations can be applied (Henseler et al. 2015, Kovács – Bodnár 2016), which is lower for each variable pair compared to the criterion value of 0.9. Based on the results of the outer model, the existence of latent variables can be proven; furthermore, the indicators related to the given latent variables represent the same phenomenon. After describing the result of the outer model, the next step is the evaluation of the inner model.

In terms of the results of the *inner (structural) model*, it should be noted that due to the missing values emerging related to "I don't know" responses selectable in the case of scale variables, 596 respondents could be taken into account (the missing values were not substituted by the average of their variables). In the course of running PLS path analysis, the number of iterations was five. Testing the significance of the path coefficients

was conducted with bootstrap algorithm (Hair et al. 2014), where the number of applied sub-samples was 5000, and individual sign change option was set to manage sign change. As a result of the bootstrap algorithm applied for testing the significance of each path it can be established that, with the exception of one path, there is a significant effect at a significance level of 5 percent for each path. The psychological sense of a brand community does not have a significant effect on behavioral loyalty (p=0.145), thus it is practical to leave this path out of the model. After leaving out this path, we can establish that there is a significant effect in the case of each path (Table 2).

**Table 2: Testing the significance of path coefficients after leaving out PSBC →
behavioral loyalty path**

Path	Path coefficient (original sample)	Path coefficient's mean (from bootstrap samples)	Standard error	t-value	p-value
PSBC -> Att. loyalty	0.543	0.544	0.035	15.475	8.44*10-53
A. loyalty -> Beh. loyalty	0.590	0.590	0.034	17.310	3.06*10-65
Self-congruity. -> PSBC	0.447	0.448	0.036	12.460	4.08*10-35
Self-congruity -> Att. loyalty	0.186	0.185	0.036	5.142	2.82*10-7
Self-congruity.-> Beh. loyalty	0.162	0.162	0.035	4.666	3.15*10-6

Source: own construction

In the final model developed by taking account of the significant effects, in terms of direct effects it can be established on the basis of the standardized path coefficients in Figure 1 – on each arrow – that there is a positive effect between the latent variables in the case of every pairing. The following statement can be formulated regarding standardized path coefficients (β):

– Self-image congruency has a stronger effect on the psychological sense of a brand community (PSBC) (β=0.447) compared to its effects on attitudinal loyalty (β=0.186) or behavioral loyalty (β=0.162).

– PSBC (β=0.534) has a stronger effect on attitudinal loyalty compared to self-image congruency (β=0.186).

– Attitudinal loyalty (β=0.590) has a stronger effect on behavioral loyalty compared to self-image congruency (β=0.162).

**Figure 1: The effect of self-concept congruency and the psychological sense
of brand community on loyalty**
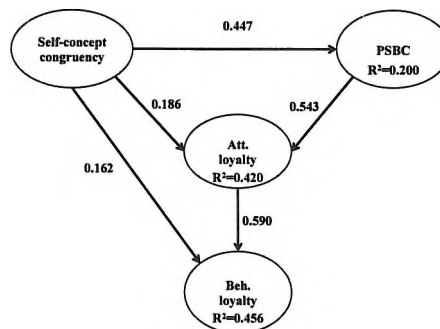
Source: own construction

Furthermore, based on the values in the ellipses in Figure 1, the total variances explained in the model can be regarded as medium. However, in the model it is worth mentioning the effect sizes between the variables based on the f^2 indicator, which examines the change in the coefficient of determination of an endogenous variable by omitting a given exogenous variable (Hair et al. 2014).

Table 3: Effect sizes between variables

Path	f^2
PSBC -> Att. loyalty	0.407
Att. loyalty -> Beh. loyalty	0.522
Self-congruity -> PSBC	0.250
Self-congruity -> Att. loyalty	0.048
Self-congruity-> Beh. loyalty	0.039

Source: own construction

Based on Table 3, the effect of PSBC on attitudinal loyalty ($f^2=0.407$), and the effect of attitudinal loyalty on behavioral loyalty ($f^2=0.522$) can be considered significant. Furthermore, in the case of the effect of self-image congruency on PSBC ($f^2=0.250$), the effect is medium. Thus based on the f^2 indicators, a self-image congruency – PSBC – attitudinal loyalty – behavioral loyalty path can be highlighted.

On the basis of the significant effects, with the exception of Hypothesis 2b, every hypothesis can be accepted; a direct effect of the psychological sense of a brand community on behavioral loyalty cannot be verified, but there is an indirect effect through attitudinal loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS

Our research aimed to highlight how self-image congruency and the psychological sense of a brand community influence attitudinal loyalty towards music festivals and re-attending intentions. Our approach counts as novel not only because we have approached the topics of the sense of community and loyalty through the specific example of music festivals, but also because we have put the 3 concepts analyzed in this topic – namely self-image congruency (1), loyalty (2) , psychological sense of a brand community (3) – in a new and complex context. The literature has already provided some examples of examining "self-image congruency – loyalty", or "self-image congruency – psychological sense of a brand community" correlation pairs, but connecting these three concepts in one model is a novel result.

According to our research findings, these concepts are interconnected, what is more, they constitute a relatively evident, successive relation. This pronounced "main path" is interesting since it overwrites the idea that everything is connected to everything in the case of these factors, as there is a logical order in this effect mechanism. According to this, self-image congruency has a positive effect on the psychological sense of a brand community, which has a positive effect on attitudinal loyalty, which has a positive effect on behavioral loyalty. We can interpret this as a process that encompasses the following three steps: an individual develops a certain sense of community with the audience of the festival congruent with the individual's self-concept (1), which contributes to forming emotional bonds towards the festival (2), which makes them gladly re-attend the festival (3).

The practical importance of the results lies in that not only good programs and well-known performers can be the key to success in the case of a music festival, but it is much rather the ability to develop a clear brand image and effectively mobilize the congruent community. As a consequence, instead of the general "one-size-fits-all" type of events, it may be much more efficient to build a loyal audience base through events that are better positioned and have a more pronounced image, about which a consumer can decide more easily to what extent it is congruent with their own self-concept. The resulting loyal audience is essential to popularize new festivals, as well as for the long-term success of already existing festivals.

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