http://www.diva-portal.org

This is the published version of a paper published in *Event Management*.

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

DESIGNING EVENTS FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION

ANDERS NORDVALL,* ROBERT PETTERSSON,* BO SVENSSON,* AND STEVE BROWN†

*European Tourism Research Institute (ETOUR), Mid-Sweden University, Östersund, Sweden
†Department of Tourism, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia

Socialization motivates people to visit events and social interactions between event visitors influence their experience of the event. Consumer-to-consumer interactions in service settings and leisure activities have received increased attention in research; however, very few studies have focused on and analyzed the impact of other visitors on an individual's event experience. The purpose of this study is to explore how interaction between event visitors influences the individual's total event experience and how events can be designed in respect to such social interactions. The conclusions are based on a literature review and empirical data collected at a Swedish music festival. The research found that social interactions between event visitors *are* an important part of the event experience and the level of satisfaction for the individual attending an event. Social interactions consist of three main types: known-group socialization; external socialization; audience socialization. Every part of the event (theme and program, setting, consumables, service) can be designed to facilitate positive experiences and to constrain negative experiences related to such interactions.

Key words: Event experience; Social interaction; Consumer-to-consumer interaction (CCI);
Event design; Music festival

Introduction

Every day thousands of planned events take place all over the world. Different types of organizations (public, for profit, and nonprofit) plan events of various forms (e.g., cultural, sport, business, political, and educational events) and sizes (local to global) for a variety of reasons. According to Getz (2012) "planned events are live, social events created to achieve specific outcomes, including those related to business, the economy, culture, society and

environment" (p. 40). People decide to visit events based on numerous shared and individual needs and motives, both for getting away from the everyday life and to experience something stimulating at the event (Li & Petrick, 2006). Motives for visiting events are often related to concepts such as novelty, escape, exploration, entertainment, and attractions (Formica & Uysal, 1996; Lee, Lee, & Wicks, 2004), but the most frequently cited dimensions in event motivation literature are those of socialization and family togetherness (Uysal & Li, 2008). Several studies

Address correspondence to Anders Nordvall, European Tourism Research Institute (ETOUR), Mid Sweden University SE-83125, Östersund, Sweden. Tel: +46 63 195814; Fax: +46 63 195810; E-mail: anders.nordvall@miun.se

have indicated that the social aspect of the event experience is an important motive for visiting events (e.g., Dodd, Yuan, Adams, & Kolysnikova, 2006; Nicholson & Pearce, 2001). People go to events to socialize with friends and family (e.g., Chang & Yuan, 2011), to meet new people (e.g., Crompton & McKay, 1997), or to experience the positive atmosphere that is created when people gather together to have fun (e.g., Gelder & Robinson, 2009). If social interactions between event visitors are related to what the audience wants to and, indeed, does experience, events should be designed for this purpose. The concept of event design is, therefore, central to any discussion of social interaction at events.

According to Brown (cited in Getz, 2012) event design is "the creation, conceptual development and staging of an event using event design principles and techniques to capture and engage the audience with a positive and meaningful experience" (p. 222). Based on the premise that the experience itself can't be designed, only suggested, facilitated, or constrained, Getz (2012) suggests four general categories that are the realm of the event designer: *theme and program* (scripted activities)*, setting* (site, venue, atmosphere)*, services* (service quality, staff/volunteers), and *consumables* (gastronomy, gifts). Few studies have discussed how to design events for facilitating social interactions between visitors (e.g., McMorland & Mactaggart, 2007; Morgan, 2008) and very few researchers have discussed the literature on consumer-to-consumer interactions (CCI) in the context of planned events (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2007; Levy, 2010).

The CCI research focuses on how other consumers sharing the same service environment influence the consumers' experience (Gummesson, 2006; Harris & Baron, 2004). It has been found that other consumers can contribute to satisfaction and enjoyment (Grove & Fisk, 1997; Huang & Hsu, 2010), but also to dissatisfaction (Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Wu, 2007). Researchers have argued that companies offering services should not neglect the impact of CCI but instead need to consider and manage such interactions. It can be argued that event environments and the visitors to that environment (the audience) should not be considered solely as commercial service environments consumed by customers (e.g., as would occur with a nonprofit organization communicating a noncommercial message). The

knowledge generated from CCI research can be used in the discussion of how to design events to attain the best possible experience for the audience, independent of the type of event organization and any desired commercial or other outcome that organization might have for the event.

This article studies the social aspects of event experiences. The main research questions are: i) what is the impact of other visitors on the individual's event experience, and ii) how can event producers use event design principles and techniques to influence the social dimensions of the event experience? To answer these questions the article discusses the existing literature on the social aspect of the event experience as well as reviewing the literature on CCI. Empirical data on the experience of a Swedish music festival are then presented and policy implications for an event design approach for the planning and staging event experiences are discussed.

The Social Aspect of the Event Experience

The importance of the social dimension for the overall event experience has (in event research) been concentrated in studies of event motivation (Crompton & McKay, 1997; McMorland & Mactaggart, 2007; Lee et al., 2004). Bowen and Daniels (2005) concluded in their study of motives for attending a rock music festival in Virginia (USA) that festival managers should not only rely on the music itself to draw large crowds, but that "equally important is creating a fun and festive atmosphere that offers ample opportunity to socialize and have new and nonmusical experiences" (p. 163). Similar findings were found by Gelder and Robinson (2009) in their study of two music festivals in the UK stating that socializing is a key motive for such events. Morgan (2008) studied a folk festival in the UK and concluded that "the key to a successful festival lies in creating a space where the social interactions and personal experiences of the visitors can take place" (p. 91). Nicholson and Pearce (2001) studied motivations for visiting four different events in New Zealand and concluded that multiple motivations were the norm, but socialization was common to them all, although socialization varied in its nature between the events.

The literature on event motivation describes two types of socialization as motives for visiting the

event: to socialize with friends and family (Chang & Yuan, 2011; Mason & Beaumont-Kerridge, 2004) and to meet new people (Crompton & McKay, 1997). The first type was the primary motive for visiting a taekwondo championship in Florida (USA) (Ko, Kim, & Kim, 2010) and, in a study of three events in Northeast Ohio by Scott (1996), to be together in the family group was one of the most important motives. Gelder and Robinson (2009) found socializing with friends and family to be the main motive for attending the Glastonbury music festival, and socializing was ranked third in motivations for attending the V Festival. The other type of socialization, to meet new people, is not as common as the known-group socialization motive, but the chance to make new friends when traveling to away games was included in a study of what is sought by event sport tourists (Chen, 2006).

Research also shows that social motives differ between types of visitors on the same event. For example, Formica and Uysal (1996) found a significant difference between the motivations of residents and nonresidents while studying a jazz festival in Italy. Entertainment was more important for the out-of-the-region visitors whereas residents were more motivated by the socialization. Wooten and Norman (2008) studied an art festival in Alabama (USA) and found that socialization was more important to visitors with prior experience of an event than first-time visitors. Gelder and Robinson (2009) in their research on music festivals in UK also found variations in how respondents ranked socialization. Older visitors to the Glastonbury Festival ranked socializing with friends and family higher, but for the V Festival it was the younger age group that ranked the same item high (perhaps unsurprisingly as the festival is targeted at a younger audience). For the V Festival it was also found that women ranked socializing much higher than men.

Consumer-to-Consumer Interactions

The concept of CCI covers both the direct interpersonal interactions between consumers sharing the same service or experience and the more indirect interactions when consumers affect one another by just being part of the same environment (Bitner, 1992; Grove & Fisk, 1997; Wu, 2007). CCI in service settings have received increased attention in research because the impact of other consumers has shown to be an important factor for the evaluation of the service or experience (Harris & Baron, 2004; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). In hedonic consumption situations (e.g., leisure and tourism settings) consumers are probably more interested in getting social benefits (Levy, 2010; Miao, Mattila, & Mount, 2011). However, there are few empirical studies on CCI interactions in leisure and tourism settings with high hedonic content (i.e., pleasure-oriented experiences) although such studies are increasing in number (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004; Grove & Fisk, 1997; Wu, 2007).

Several studies have discovered increased satisfaction and enjoyment as positive consequences of other people sharing the same leisure experience (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004; Arnould & Price, 1993; Grove & Fisk, 1997; Huang & Hsu, 2010; Levy, Getz, & Hudson, 2011; Wu, 2007). Studies showing direct relationships between CCI and loyalty behavior (Guenzi & Pelloni, 2004; Moore & Moore, 2005) (e.g., intentions to return to a professional association meeting) found these to be related to CCI (Gruen et al. 2007), but while consumer satisfaction and enjoyment do influence loyalty behavior, they do not necessarily lead to repeat purchase or positive word of mouth (Gitomer, 1998).

Other consumers can also have a negative effect on another's experience—for example, rude behavior and crowding (Grove & Fisk, 1997) or other negative behaviors by tour group members (Wu, 2007). Harris and Reynolds (2003) also stressed the potential negative consequences of CCI in their study of the consequences of "dysfunctional customers" (e.g., drunkenness and violence in hotels, restaurants, and bars) and how these behaviors may spoil other customers' consumption experience.

Factors Influencing CCI

To understand why other people sharing the same service or experience either contribute to satisfaction or dissatisfaction, researchers have presented different explanatory models. Common to them all is that CCI are affected by the characteristics of the person/group on the one side and by the characteristics of the service environment on the other side (see Table 1).

Table 1
Factors Influencing CCI

Person/Group	Environment	References
Demographic element; Values; Moods; Motives; Involvement; Group factors	Service employee actions/ inactions; Utilitarian/ hedonic; Duration; Weather	Harris and Baron (2004); Levy et al. (2011)
Temporal; Spatial; Relational	Temporal; Spatial	Miao et al. (2011); Price et al. (1995)
Motivation; Ability	Opportunity	Gruen et al. (2007); MacInnis et al. (1991)
Scripts/protocols; Emotional/ behavioral contagion		Miao et al. (2011); Gioia and Manz (1985); Ramanathan and McGill (2007)

Harris and Baron (2004) studied conversations between strangers in service environments and identified four stimuli for such conversations: the individual characteristics of the consumers; consumer needs; service employee actions/inactions; and the service environment. Levy et al. (2011) found these stimuli factors useful for understanding what influences the level and quality of CCI for a heritage tour experience. The individual characteristics in this setting were the demographic and personal and impersonal factors (e.g., values, moods); the consumer needs were represented by the social motives and level of consumer involvement and the service employees' actions/inactions were the ability of the personnel to facilitate CCI. The fourth stimuli, the different characteristics of the service environment, were the utilitarian or hedonic nature of the service, the duration of the service, group factors, and the weather.

To understand the impact of other consumers in restaurants, Miao et al. (2011) used ideas from Social Impact Theory (Latané, 1981) and Price, Arnould, and Deibler's (1995) conceptualization of dimensions of the service encounter. Miao et al. (2011) identified that three dimensions moderate the magnitude of consumer responses to the behaviors of others: temporal, spatial, and relational. The temporal dimension is the duration of the presence of other consumers, the spatial dimension is the crowd density, and the relational dimension describe the type of relationship (e.g., acquainted or unacquainted).

Gruen et al. (2007) used another conceptual model as a framework for studying the experience of those attending a professional association meeting. The concepts of Motivation, Opportunity and

Ability—the MOA model (MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski, 1991)—were used as an explanatory framework for how consumer-to-consumer exchanges are facilitated or impeded. Motivation was interpreted as the force that directs individuals towards goals. Opportunities reflect the extent to which a situation is conducive to achieving a desired outcome. Ability is the extent to which actors have the necessary resources (e.g., social competence). Gruen et al. (2007) found each of the MOA elements to play a role in the level of consumer-to-consumer exchange but that motivation had the greatest effect.

Why people react strongly to other people's behavior in certain situations can be explained by the ideas of scripts and protocols. Miao et al.'s (2011) study of restaurant guests shows that consumers' emotional responses towards other consumers are largely script based. This means that the behaviors of other consumers are judged against some mental schema of predetermined sets of activities or scripts (Gioia & Manz, 1985). Only script-incongruent behaviors in the Miao et al. (2011) study were found to have elicited salient emotional responses. Similarly, Grove and Fisk (1997) found that many of the negative effects that other visitors had on other visitors' theme park experiences were related to "protocol incidents." For example, rude behaviors of others while standing in lines violated expectations of protocol. Other people's behavior can also influence the consumer´s experience more unconsciously. The results of the study by Ramanathan and McGill (2007) show that sharing the experience of a television comedy show with another person may cause the direct evaluation to be become more like that of the other person. The phenomenon is

explained by emotional contagion, which means that peoples' expressions of emotions may "rub off on" each other during joint interactions, so that people acting together come to align with each others' moods (Neumann & Strack, 2000). Behaviors as well as emotions, however, can spread to other consumers. In Harris and Reynolds's (2003) study of dysfunctional customers, one of the negative consequences was found to be "the domino effect." That is, the bad behavior of one customer can spread or rub off to others. These studies indicate the different levels of how consumers influence each other. If emotional contagion and behavioral spreading are examples of how consumers influence each other on a more elusive level, scripts and protocols are examples of the more obvious level.

Managing CCI

In their 1991 research, Dunn Ross and Iso-Ahola (studying sightseeing tourist motivation and satisfaction) addressed the idea of managing CCI: "Social interaction, for example, was an important motive in the present study and suggests that tour companies have to try to facilitate social interaction and contacts through their services" (p. 236). Other studies also argued for managerial involvement in facilitating CCI (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999; Grove & Fisk, 1997; Levy, 2010), and Andersson and Mossberg (2004) argued for more research on how to facilitate CCI.

Several strategies and ideas have been proposed for how social interaction might be managed. Wu (2007) suggested that travel agencies should convey a clear position in the market place to help "compatible" customers to self-select into the service environment. To communicate for the code of behavior is an idea shared by researchers (Grove & Fisk, 1997; Miao et al., 2011; Wu, 2007), which can be realized verbally or through signs, symbols, and artifacts in the physical environment. Miao et al. (2011) suggested hospitality training programs for staff on how to handle negative interactions between customers. In Levy et al.'s (2011) study of a cultural heritage tour, several activities was found to successfully facilitate CCI, such as: producing name tags; shooting group photos; doing introductions; and conducting socially interactive games. Another list of activities was recommended

by Gruen et al. (2007) concerning the professional association meeting: "planners can structure meeting schedules to allow adequate time for members to interact, provide moderated exchange sessions at the meetings, create membership directories that list members' areas of expertise and interests, or provide a discussion board on their web site" (p. 548). Huang and Hsu (2010) suggest that cruise ship managers organize group activities that require team work, offer special interest activities that could bring like-minded people together, and organize welcome reception or singles' parties to help passengers to break the ice and open up communications. To incorporate changes to the physical setting has also been a strategy to enhance the quality of CCI proposed in Moore and Moore's (2005) study of the hair salon where it was suggested that positive perceptions of atmospherics could lead to positive CCI effects.

Researchers have to some extent discussed how to manage social interaction at events, including the practical implementations of such interactions. Nicholson and Pearce (2001) stressed the need to identify the form(s) of socialization desired by the targeted visitors to guide the design of the event. Considering the variations in motives of different groups of visitors visiting an event, Schofield and Thompson (2007) recommended to the organizers of a sport and culture festival in Mongolia the need to highlight the socialization dimension in their communication with potential domestic visitors. Wooten and Norman (2008) suggested the marketers of an art festival in Alabama (US) needed to communicate images of attendees eating and chatting at picnic tables while enjoying musical and theatrical performances to place emphasis on the opportunities for social activity at the festival. McMorland and Mactaggart (2007) gave examples of how organizers of traditional Scottish music events could facilitate social interaction by "having breaks between a band playing, spaces for people to network, and the chance to meet the performers or an opportunity to join traditional Scottish music clubs" (p. 67). For a UK folk festival Morgan (2008) identified places to meet, socialize, and wind down before and after the main performances as an overlooked element that should be provided by the event's management team. Levy (2010) also suggests that event planners can influence social interaction through

programming and "atmospherics" (e.g., cocktail hours, "icebreakers," face-to-face seating arrangements, and creating a cozy ambiance).

Methodology

Data Collection

The festival under investigation—the Storsjöyran Music Festival that is held late in summer each year in Östersund, Sweden—was approached primarily from the perspective of the event experience rather than (but not excluding) a customer service, commercial perspective. When analyzing the initial data the social dimension stood out as an area of special interest, and triggered a closer analysis of this dimension. This article focuses on data pertaining to the social dimensions of event experiences that were collected before (web questionnaire) and during the event (interviews).

Preevent (Questionnaire)

The questionnaire was conducted in late spring, 2 months before the festival was held. Potential visitors' motives and expectations were studied through a web-based questionnaire containing both questions using Likert-type scale and open-ended questions. This method opened up the possibility of obtaining a large amount of both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey included questions about:

• Demography (sex, age, home area, and connection to the festival site)
• Prior festival experiences of the event and other Swedish music festivals
• Expressed motives for visiting the event
• Desired experiences
• Unwanted experiences
• Estimated importance of different experiences on the event

The questionnaire was designed in the web-based computer program LUVIT e-Val 4.0 and was first tested by researchers, discussed with the event organizers, and then sent out to approximately 4,500 on the Storsjöyran festival's direct news mailing list on May 18, 2009. On May 19 the questionnaire was published on the Storsjöyran festival's homepage and the survey was then held open until June 5, 2009. All returned questionnaires were checked and three copies were deleted because of inconsistent or duplicated answers. The final number of useable cases was 701. Out of the 701 respondents, 580 respondents reported that they were likely to visit the festival and were consequently used in this study.

During Event (Interviews)

During the Storsjöyran music festival, visitors were interviewed by six interviewers (three researchers and three trained students) using a semistructured method. In the semistructured interviews the interviewer had a number of topics/problem areas that needed to be covered as well as some specific questions. From that base, the interviewer was free to generate new questions or ask the interviewee to develop his/her expressed ideas further, or to ask for additional information in relation to a question. This method was used to obtain as much depth as possible from the interviewees without the discussion losing focus or ignoring important aspects of the investigation. Single visitors, couples, and group of visitors were interviewed during each day and night of the festival. Potential respondents were randomly approached at the main festival area and also at the festival's camping site. All together 259 interviews were conducted. The interviews included questions about:

• Event visitors' positive experiences
• Event visitors' negative experiences
• Opinions about the festival's program, setting, service, and security
• Experiences in relation to expectations
• Price and value
• Recommendations to festival's organizers

The time spent on each interview was approximately 4–8 minutes. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

Respondents

A profile of respondents in each of the studies is presented in Table 2. The typical respondent was 20–25 years old, with women in the majority for both samples, before and during the event. More than half

Table 2

Overview of Respondents

Time of Study	Method	No. of Respondents	Women/Men (%)	Median Age	Regional/Tourist (%)
Preevent	Questionnaire	580	66/34	24	50/50
During event	Interview	259	55/45	20	39/61

the respondents were tourists (though approximately 40% of the tourists in the preevent web survey had previously lived in the region) and 92% in the preevent study had previously visited the festival. Most respondents visited the festival with others; the majority with friends (two thirds), with family/partner, or with a mix of friends/family/partner.

Social Interaction at the Storsjöyran Festival

Background to the Storsjöyran Festival

Storsjöyran is a Swedish music and community festival held in the center of the Mid-Swedish town Östersund during the last week in July every year. Östersund Municipality (60,000 inhabitants) is the county seat of the sparsely populated and Switzerland-sized Jämtland county (130,000 inhabitants). The festival is one of the biggest community music festivals staged in Sweden. One week before the actual festival, festivities start with a free program of street artists, theater, exhibitions, and movies. These activities are primarily concentrated to a festival area with temporary restaurants and nightclub tents. Activities are also programmed to take place in other parts of the town. Approximately 50,000 people visit the festival area and related activities during this period.

During the music festival, parts of the town center are fenced off and tickets are required for entry. During the last few years this part of the festival program (starting on Thursday night and lasting until Saturday night) has had about 25,000 paying visitors. Visitors are primarily from the region but also from other parts of Sweden. Many of the visitors are "home comers" or expatriates who used to live in the region. A small number are international visitors mainly from Norway. The festival has two large outdoor stages (25,000 and 10,000 audience capacity, respectively), and some midsized and smaller stages, two of which are indoors. The main attractions are the performing artists and bands, most of which are national or regional. Some international performers are also presented every year.

Motive, Expectations, and Worries (Preevent)

Two months before Storsjöyran 2009 was held, 580 people described the main reason they planned to visit the festival. The top three self-expressed motives for visiting Storsjöyran were: artists/music (51%), atmosphere (13%), and socializing (12%). The following comment is an example of a motive categorized as "atmosphere": "The atmosphere! Especially the spirit among the campers on the festival camp." From an analysis of how respondents used the word "atmosphere," it is reasonable to infer that respondents referred to the atmosphere that they had created themselves (social atmosphere) rather than the atmosphere or ambiance created by the programmed music, lighting, and décor. When respondents talk about the atmosphere as a prime motive for the visit, interaction with other visitors can be seen as crucial to the success of the event.

For "socializing" the subcategories were: known-group socialization (friends, old friends in town, family members, "meet up with friends who are scattered throughout the Nordic region"); partying and mingling; and external socialization (meet new people). Three other categories of motives were also identified: tradition/earlier experience; good event quality; and fun/amusing/nice. It is conceivable that socializing is the underlying motive in statements such as: "It is a tradition since 2001" (tradition/earlier experience), "It is the best festival in Sweden" (good event quality), or "Because it is so fun" (fun/amusing/nice).

Motivation was also measured by letting respondents indicate the importance of 13 items on a 5-point Likert scale ($1 = no$ $importance$, $5 = very$ $important$).

The items were developed with the festival organizers and represented typical episodes, conditions, or activities associated with the Storsjöyran festival experience. The list of items and their mean values is presented in Table 3. The results from the data collected during the festival align with the result of the self-expressed motives collected prevent, with atmosphere, socializing, and music ranking highest. The item "the atmosphere at the festival site" was graded and ranked very high by all groups of respondents regardless of sex, age, place of residence, number of earlier visits to Storsjöyran, or experience of other festivals. Age did affect how respondents graded the items "spend time with friends" and "meet new people." Spending time with friends was not as important for the older visitors (28+), but still (overall) one of the most important factors for a good festival experience. The extent to which respondents wished to meet new people varied even more between the age groups. Once again, the younger demographic (peaking for 18–19-year-old respondents) was more interested in meeting new people than the older demographic. However, it was the 28–34 age group,

not the very oldest respondents, that were least interested in meeting new people.

The respondents also described one important positive experience they expected during a visit to the Storsjöyran festival. Experiences categorized as "experience performance/music" were mentioned by 49% of the respondents, followed by "social experience" (19%) and "experience the atmosphere" (13%). As discussed previously, the category social experiences consist of three subcategories (with respondent comments in parentheses): meet friends ("Meet new and old friends!"); get new friends ("Getting to know at least three new people"); and be in a positive social environment ("That everyone is positive and happy, because it rubs off on everyone and everything").

The respondents were also asked: "Is there anything that could lead to a negative experience? If so, please mention ONE such a negative experience." There were 485 respondents who answered the question, and the total list of categorized potential negative experiences is presented in Table 4. Categories including experiences as a result of CCI were "fights/violence/threat," "drunkenness," "crowding," and "bad social experiences." These combined categories accounted for 44% of all responses. "Fights/violence/threat" were comments about potential incidents either affecting the respondent directly (e.g., victim of violence) or indirectly (e.g., watching the fight). The category "drunkenness" included comments of unwanted and extreme alcohol consumption of others (e.g., "Too many drunken people!"). Young people being too drunk were

Table 3

Importance of 13 Typical Storsjöyran Experiences for the Total Festival Experience ($n = 580$)

Typical Storsjöyran Experiences	Mean Value[a]
The atmosphere at the festival site	4.64
Spend time with friends	4.53
That someone/some of your favorite artists perform	4.49
The concerts on the major stages	4.32
Meet new people	3.80
The discovery of new artists	3.67
The president's speech[b]	3.56
The celebration of the County Jämtland	3.51
The concerts on smaller stages	3.45
Visit the Krogstråket area[c]	3.24
Eat good food	3.23
Drink alcohol	2.88
Visit the amusement park	2.04

[a]$1 = no\ importance$, $5 = very\ important$.
[b]The region is a self-proclaimed "republic" (started by the people behind the festival) and has its own president. The president's speech on the last night of the festival each year is a humorous spoof that is eagerly anticipated.
[c]Krogstråket is a temporary restaurant, nightclub, and beer tent area.

Table 4

Potential Negative Experiences During a Visit at Storsjöyran

Potential Negative Experience	n	% of Responses
Bad weather	97	20
Fights/violence/threat	96	20
Drunkenness	85	18
Poor performance/music	73	15
Poor service quality	55	11
High prices	18	4
Crowding	17	3
Bad social experience	16	3
Other	28	6
Total	485	100

frequently mentioned. "Bad social experiences" was concerned with the risk of meeting unpleasant people who might behave badly.

Actual Experiences (During the Event)

Data collection during the event comprised 259 interviews with event visitors. When asked "What's the best thing about this festival?" approximately 50% of the ordinary visitors (not staying at the festival camp) referred to some social aspect of the event experience, including those who emphasized both the social dimension and the music. These respondents referred mainly to two different social aspects of the Storsjöyran experience. First, the majority of respondents mentioned the special atmosphere that they experienced at the festival, an atmosphere that they primarily linked together with the (other) visitors. Both the number of visitors in the audience (approximately 25,000) and the behavior of the audience were important for the special atmosphere experienced. "That there are so many people and it's so great atmosphere" (female, 20 years) and "The atmosphere is actually the best thing, people are happy and it's just a nice atmosphere!" (female, 25 years).

To experience this social and special atmosphere and the positive values of being among happy people did not require close interaction with other visitors (e.g., talking with others), but the opportunity to spend time with friends, meet people (both friends whom they meet regularly and friends they have not seen for a long time), and to make new friends, does require close interaction. "First of all it is for the friends who you can hang out with . . . and to meet friends who revisit the town after many years away . . . and then it's for meeting new people" (male, 29 years).

The social dimension of the festival experience was even more important for those visitors who stayed at the festival campsite. When the question "What's the best thing about this festival?" was addressed to the campers, 80% highlighted the social dimension. To socialize, partying and have fun together at the campsite was for this group more important than going to concerts and listening to music. "This is what is best about the whole thing . . . this is what's funny . . . you want to come

here to stay at the festival camp!" (male, 25 years). During the festival nights when the concerts took place, there were people who spent more time at the campsite than on the actual festival site, even if they had paid for tickets for the concerts. "There is lots of action at the camp, we didn't visit the festival area yesterday" (woman, 18 years). Another aspect that differed between ordinary visitors and those who stayed at the campsite was that campers emphasized the feeling of togetherness. "The togetherness . . . everyone is so damn social!" (male, 18 years). It was found that the campsite had developed into a temporary community and that the members (the campers) received important positive values as an outcome. "You can go to a tent and talk to anyone, no one is unfriendly" (male, 18 years).

Respondents also provided information about what they thought was not good with festival experience and how they thought the event could be developed. Many comments were related to the social dimension of the experience. Visitors complained that they had to spend too much time in queues to get into the festival area, into beer tents, and into toilets. Standing in queues was perceived to be taking time from other things that the visitors wanted to do (e.g., socializing) and social exchange in the queues was described as more negative than positive. Young respondents thought that organizers should create more places where people could socialize. Visitors under 18 years did not have access to the beer tents, which had the unintended consequence that there was a lack of places for this group to socialize. "It should be a tent where you can stay if you are not 18 . . . being there with friends" (female, 15 years). Those under 18 wanted a café or dance hall.

Several respondents thought that there were not enough people at the festival and wanted the festival to be packed because this contributed to a positive atmosphere. "I think there are too little people here!" (female, 40 years). Other respondents perceived the same situation as too crowded and negative, and wanted more personal space, and there were those who complained that there were too many people and that the festival was crowded. "We walked away because it was such a mess. There were so many people there" (female, 60 years). The respondents' perceptions of audience

density were also dependent on the actual location within the festival site. In the audience area in front of stages, high density was desired. On the walks between stages, high density was often regarded as something negative.

A few respondents complained about other visitors' behaviors and attitudes (e.g., drinking behavior). High sound levels was a subject for discussion with some respondents saying that the sound levels were too high in the beer tents, making it difficult to talk (socialize).

The most common comment from campers regarding other visitors was that the number of visitors who lived at the camp was too few. "I think it's a too small camping" (male, 22 years). In comparison to other Swedish festival camps, the Storsjöyran camp is relatively small, but the number of visitors staying at the campsite was also fewer this year than the previous year, which was a consequence of a new ticket strategy. This year, visitors had to buy a 3-day ticket to the festival to have access to the campsite. People who only wanted to pay for single-day tickets or just wanted to hang out at the camp (without visiting the concerts) were not allowed access. On the other hand, respondents believed the system to some extent contributed to a better atmosphere at the camp, because troublemakers stayed away. The older campers (22–23 years) thought that too many young people stayed at the campsite. A suggestion from this group was to raise the minimum age for camping from 15 to 18 years. The camping area became littered and this was not appreciated among some respondents, although it was thought that the problem was not just about visitors' behavior but also about the insufficient number of bins on the campsite.

Visitors also discussed what they thought about the safety and security. In general, most felt safe and secure inside the festival area and had not experienced any problems with threats, violence, or fights. No respondent reported having been threatened or subjected to violence. However, respondents felt more insecure outside the festival area. "When I´m here in the festival area I feel safe, but not when I go from here" (female, 21 years). The festival organizers had made an increased investment in safety measures for this festival and the large number of guards and policemen visible contributed to the perception of safety and security. An additional and important factor was that the visitors liked the attitude of the security staff. "Extremely nice guards!" (female, 18 years). Another factor that also contributed to the sense of security was the mixture of younger and older visitors. "Here you can also find many older people also. Other Swedish music festivals just have people from 15 to 25 years" (male, 50 years).

Discussion and Conclusions

Understanding the Social Aspect of the Event Experience

In order to create events for best possible experiences for the audience, event designers need to understand the impact of other visitors on an individual's experience of the event.

Positive and Negative. Previous research has indicated and is supported by the analysis of the Storsjöyran experience, proving that other visitors can influence an individual's event experience both positively and negatively. Other visitors can contribute to strong, positive feelings of belonging and shared joy, but confrontation with unpleasant and threatening visitors can also contribute to insecurity and fears.

Differences Between Visitors. The social motives (to experience the social atmosphere, spend time with friends, and meet new people) were (besides musical experiences) the primary or secondary reason for visiting the Storsjöyran music festival. The priority for, and the manner of, socializing differed, however, between the different types of visitors. At Storsjöyran the motives of spending time with friends and meeting new people were especially important for younger visitors (27 years and under) than for older visitors (28 years and above). The research also showed that the visitors who stayed at the festival camp emphasized the social dimension of the experience a lot more than other visitors.

Worries Versus Actual Experiences. Visitors to Storsjöyran had more concerns about negative consequences of social interaction than was actually experienced at the event itself. Many respondents

had fights, violence, and drunkenness in mind when they were asked to mention potential negative experiences, but these were not experienced by respondents during the festival.

Three Types of Interactions at Storsjöyran. The impact of other visitors can be described by three different types of interactions: 1) known-group socialization, 2) external socialization, and 3) audience socialization.

1. **Known-group socialization**. These interactions are about spending time with friends and family and were seen by respondents as the second most important interaction required for the delivery a positive festival experience overall. Typical experiences for the visitors to the Storsjöyran festival were the opportunity to meet old friends not seen for a long time and also people who had left the town or region but had returned during the festival to also visit the city, family, and friends. To unexpectedly meet a dear friend from the past was described as one of the most positive experiences during the festival.
2. **External socialization**. Meeting new people was also found as a motive for attending the festival, although not as important as the known-group socialization motive. Some visitors expected to get new friends during the festival and some respondents confirmed that this had occurred. Young visitors had a greater interest in meeting new people than did older visitors. Getting in touch and socializing with new people was a common occurrence at the festival campsite.
3. **Audience socialization**. Interactions with and within the audience (the mass of other visitors) affects the experience for the individual. This occurs either by being part of the collective experience or by interactions with other visitors (anonymous, not friends or family) comprising the audience. The respondents, both before and during the event, talked about the special atmosphere existing at Storsjöyran. This was cited as a motive for visiting the festival, and some of the best moments experienced by visitors were related to atmosphere. The research showed that the event atmosphere was composed of two main factors: the total number of people in the

audience, and the behavior of the audience collectively and of audience members individually. For many visitors a large and happy crowd created a good atmosphere. The feeling of being one of many, to be part of the group, to be where the action is, and to meet many happy faces were all positive aspects of visitor-to-audience interactions. Negative incidents can also happen when people gather. Before the festival, respondents were concerned about crowding, drunkenness, fights, violence, and other forms of bad social experiences. During the festival, some of the negative experiences were connected to other visitors' behavior, but the incidents were not as serious as respondents' prior concerns.

Designing Events for Social Interaction

This study has revealed the importance of the social interactions that occur between event visitors and the need to design events for social interaction. That these interactions are so central to the kind of individual experience that an audience member might have suggests that these interactions should not only be managed during the event, but also designed for and facilitated (and, if necessary, constrained) proactively by the event designer.

The three types of interactions identified in this study provide a starting point for the ways in which an event can be designed for social interaction:

1. **Known-group socialization.** The event designer should create suitable conditions for the visitor to be able to socialize with friends and family. This might include chill-out areas that are low sound level areas with comfortable seating where talking is possible in an intimate setting. Marketing the event as a family-friendly event and/or detailing family-friendly locations and activities and social areas in the festival would also assist.
2. **External socialization.** The event designer should create opportunities for visitors to meet new people. The event design elements in place for facilitating known-group socialization are also appropriate for external socialization. To facilitate meeting new people, the event designer can also create purpose-built meeting places

with design and program elements that encourage audience members to interact.

3. **Audience socialization.** The event designer should make the individual visitor in a crowd feel comfortable, excited, and safe. Apart from visible safety measures (e.g., security staff), designing the program to reduce inappropriate behavior has been trialed effectively at the Big Day Out music festival in Australia (S. Sewell, personal communication, February 3, 2011), and event design techniques such as enclosure can influence an audience's sense of safety and security while not lessening the impact of the performance or programmed activity (Brown, 2010).

Factors Influencing Social Interaction. Research on CCI has identified several factors influencing interactions between consumers. Some factors are related to the characteristics of the person or group, whereas other are more related to the characteristics of the environment. It is these factors the event designer could and should play with to influence the social aspect of the event experience. Factors related to the environment are under the direct or indirect control of the event designer (e.g., employee actions, duration of experience, space, opportunities for socialization). But factors more related to the person/group could also be influenced

by the event designer. The program of the event attracts certain types of visitors (demographic elements, values, group factors, homogeneity). How the event is promoted affects motives and expectations. Information about how to behave may change the scripts and protocol used.

The Event Design Categories. Designing events for social interactions is to consciously design every part of the event for best possible social experience for its visitors. Based on the knowledge of factors influencing social interactions, the impact of other visitors for the individual´s experience, and the types of interactions that take place, a framework for the application of event design principles and techniques can be developed (Fig. 1).

The items listed in each category are suggestions based on data from the event study, a review of the literature, and a dialogue with representatives from the event organization. The lower part of the framework illustrates that the event design work needs to consider how any measure affect the different types of social interaction.

This framework for designing social interaction can be used to raise the consciousness of event organizers and designers on the possibilities of improving visitor experiences in terms of social interaction. Apart from an understanding of these possibilities, knowledge of visitors' motives and expectations at

Theme & Program	Setting	Consumables	Services

• Social activities
• Program planning
  - flows
  - atmosphere
  - duration
• Communicate opportunities for S.I.
	• Area planning
	  - high/low-density
	  - flows
	• Social spaces
	• Social spots
	• Watch points
	• Atmospherics
		• Food/Beverage
		  - social eating environments
		• Merchandise/ Giveaways
		  - fostering communitas
			• Communicate code of behavior
			• Meeting points
			• Waiting times
			• Sound levels
			• Smartphone applications incl. GPS function

Social interaction at events

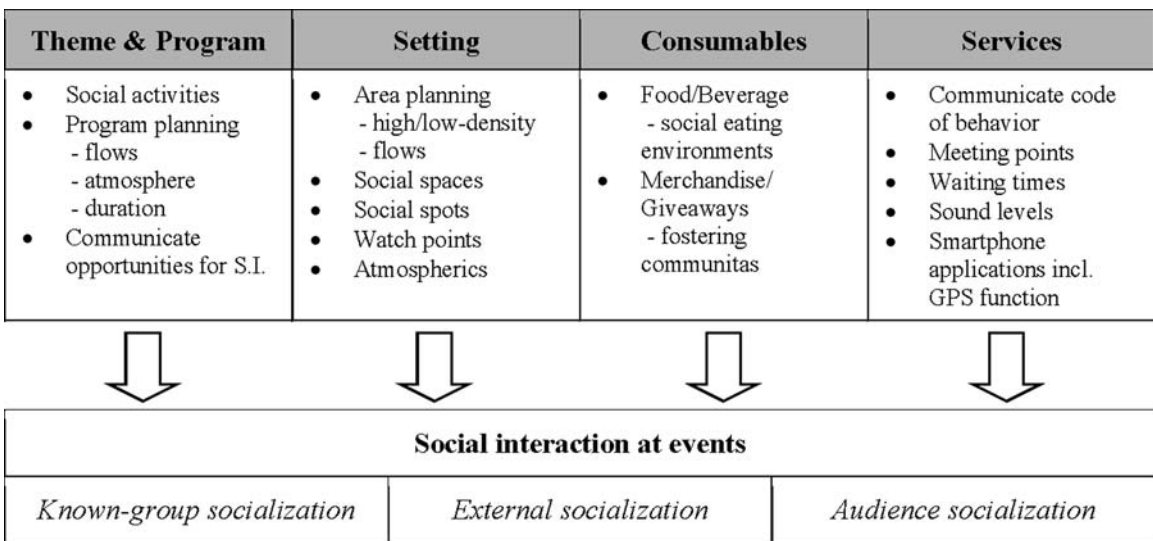| Known-group socialization	External socialization	Audience socialization

Figure 1. A framework for the process of designing events for social interactions.

the event is crucial for exploiting the potential of different kinds of measures at the event in question.

Given that socialization motivates people to visit events, and social interactions between event visitors influence their experience of the event, there is an opportunity for event designers to more readily capture and engage and positively influence the audience. Using themes, programs, settings, consumables, and services that are proactively and specifically designed to facilitate, enhance, and maximize positive social interactions should, therefore, become another essential principle and technique for the event designer.

References

Andersson, T. D., & Mossberg, L. (2004). The dining experience: Do restaurants satisfy customer needs? *Food service Technology, 4*, 171–177.

Arnould, E., & Price, L. (1993). River magic: Extraordinary experience and the extended service encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research, 20*, 24–45.

Aubert-Gamet, V., & Cova, B. (1999). Servicescapes: From modern non-places to postmodern common places. *Journal of Business Research, 44*, 37–45.

Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of marketing, 56*(2), 57–71.

Bowen, H. E., & Daniels, M. J. (2005). Does the music matter? Motivations for attending a music festival. *Event Management, 9*(3), 155–164.

Brown, S. (2010). *Event design—Creating and staging the event experience* (Vol. 1). Adelaide: Visible Management.

Chang, W., & Yuan, J. (2011). A taste of tourism: Visitors' motivations to attend a food festival. *Event Management, 15*(2), 13–23.

Chen, P-J. (2006). The attributes, consequences, and values associated with event sport tourists' behavior: A means-end chain approach. *Event Management, 10*(1), 1–22.

Crompton, J. L., & McKay, S. L. (1997). Motives of visitors attending festival events. *Annals of Tourism Research, 24*(2), 425–439.

Dodd, T., Yuan, J., Adams, C., & Kolysnikova (2006). Motivations of young people for visiting wine festivals. *Event Management, 10*(1), 23–33.

Dunn Ross, E. L., & Iso-Ahola, S. E. (1991). Sightseeing tourists' motivation and satisfaction. *Annals of Tourism Research, 18*, 226–237.

Formica, S., & Uysal, M. (1996). A market segmentation of festival visitors: Umbria Jazz Festival in Italy. *Festival Management & Event Tourism, 3*(4), 175–182.

Gelder, G., & Robinson, P. (2009). A critical comparative study of visitor motivations for attending music festivals: A case study of Glastonbury and V Festival. *Event Management, 13*(3), 181–196.

Getz, D. (2012). *Event studies, theory, research and policy for planned events*. New York: Routledge.

Gioia, D. A., & Manz, C. C. (1985). Linking cognition and behavior: A script-processing interpretation of vicarious learning. *Academy of Management Review, 10*(3), 527–539.

Gitomer, J. (1998). *Customer satisfaction is worthless: Customer loyalty is priceless*. Austin: Bard Press.

Grove, S. J., & Fisk, R. P. (1997). The impact of other customers on service exchanges: A critical incident examination of getting along. *Journal of Retailing, 73*(1), 63–85.

Gruen, T. W., Osmonbekov, T., & Czaplewski, A. J. (2007). Customer-to-customer exchange: Its MOA antecedents and impact on value creation and loyalty. *Journal of the Academic Marketing Science, 35*, 537–549.

Guenzi, P., & Pelloni, O. (2004). The impact of interpersonal relationships on customer satisfaction and loyalty to the service provider. *International Journal of Service Industry Management, 15*(4), 365–384.

Gummesson, E. (2006). Many to many marketing as grand theory: A Nordic school contribution. In R. F. Lusch & S. L. Vargo (Eds.), *The service-dominant logic of marketing: Dialog, debate, directions* (pp. 339–353). New York: Sharpe.

Harris, K., & Baron, S. (2004). Consumer-to-consumer conversations in service settings. *Journal of Service Research, 6*(3), 287–303.

Harris, K., & Reynolds, K. L. (2003). The consequences of dysfunctional customer behavior. *Journal of Service Research, 6*(2), 144–161.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., & Gremler, D. D. (2002). Understanding relationship marketing outcomes. An integration of relational benefits and relationships quality. *Journal of Service Research, 4*(3), 230–247.

Huang, J., & Hsu, C. H. C. (2010). The impact of customer-to-customer interaction on cruise experience and vacation satisfaction. *Journal of Travel Research, 49*(1), 79–92.

Ko, Y. J., Kim, M. K., & Kim, Y. K. (2010). Consumer satisfaction and event quality perception: A case of US Open Taekwondo Championship. *Event Management, 14*(3), 205–214.

Latané, B. (1981). The psychology of social impact. *American Psychologist, 36*, 343–356.

Lee, C-K., Lee, Y-K., & Wicks, B. E. (2004). Segmentation of festival motivation by nationality and satisfaction. *Tourism Management, 25*, 61–70.

Levy. S. E. (2010). The hospitality of the host: A cross-cultural examination of managerially facilitated consumer-to-consumer interactions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 29*, 319–327.

Levy, S. E., Getz, D., & Hudson, S. (2011). A field experimental investigation of managerially facilitated consumer-to-consumer interaction. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 28*, 656–674.

Li, R., & Petrick, J. (2006). A review of festival and event motivation studies. *Event Management, 9*(4): 239–245.

MacInnis, D. J. & Moorman, C., & Jaworski, B. J. (1991). Enhancing and measuring consumers' motivation, opportunity, and ability to process brand information from ads. *Journal of Marketing, 55*, 32–53.

Mason, P., & Beaumont-Kerridge, J. (2004). Motivations for attendance at the 2001 Sidmouth International Festival: Fun, family, friends, fulfillment or folk? In P. Long & M. Robinson (Eds.), *Festivals and tourism: Marketing, management and evaluation* (pp. 33–46). Sunderland: Business Education Publishers.

McAlexander, J. H., Schouten J. W., & Koenig, H. F. (2002). Building brand community. *The Journal of Marketing, 66*(1), 38–54.

McMorland, L-A., & Mactaggart, D. (2007). Traditional Scottish music events: Native Scots attendance motivations. *Event Management, 11*(1–2), 57–69.

Miao, L., Mattila, A. S., & Mount, D. (2011). Other consumers in service encounters: A script theoretical perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 30*, 933–941.

Moore, R., & Moore, M. L. (2005). The impact of customer-to-customer interactions in a high personal contact service setting. *Journal of Service Marketing, 19*(7), 482–491.

Morgan, M. (2008). What makes a good festival? Understanding the event experience. *Event Management, 12*(2), 81–93.

Neumann, R., & Strack, F. (2000). "Mood contagion": The automatic transfer of mood between persons. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*(2), 211–223.

Nicholson, R., & Pearce, D. (2001). Why do people attend events: A comparative analysis of visitor motivations at four South Island events. *Journal of Travel Research, 39*, 449–460.

Price, L. L., Arnould, E. J., & Deibler, S. L. (1995). Consumers' emotional responses to service encounters: The influence of the service provider. *International Journal of Service Industry Management, 6*(3), 34–63.

Ramanathan, S., & McGill, A. L. (2007). Consuming with others: Social influences on moment-to-moment and retrospective evaluations of an experience. *Journal of Consumer Research, 34*(4), 506–524.

Schofield, P., & Thompson, K. (2007). Visitor motivation, satisfaction and behavioural intentions: The 2005 Naadam Festival, Ulaanbaatar. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 9*, 329–344.

Scott, D. (1996). A comparison of visitors' motivations to attend three urban festivals. *Festival Management & Event Tourism, 3*, 121–128.

Uysal, M., & Li, X., (2008). Trends and critical issues in festival and event motivation. In A. Aktas et al. (Eds.), *International cultural and event tourism: Issues and debates* (pp. 10–20). Ankara: Detay Yayincilik.

Wooten M. H., & Norman, W. C. (2008). Differences in arts festival visitors based on level of past experience. *Event Management, 11*(3), 109–120.

Wu, C. H-J. (2007). The impact of customer-to-customer interaction and customer homogeneity on customer satisfaction in tourism service—The service encounter prospective. *Tourism Management, 28*, 1518–1528.