Sustainability at Festival Events

Emma McCully

Throughout this paper Environmental Sustainability shall be discussed, specifically focusing on festival events and discussing the current state of the environment. This paper's focus will be on the issue of sustainability. Sustainability began to become topical in the 1960's. I will discuss legislation and guidelines that were created then, along with a comparison to those of the present day. The triple bottom line framework will be discussed in relation to Festival Events, focusing on Glastonbury, and the work the organisation has put in to becoming a green and environmentally friendly festival. Alongside that, alternative festivals, which have the opposite effect, will also be considered. Finally, future recommendations and conclusions will be given.

It can be suggested that planet earth may look very different in the 21st century then it possibly did even fifty years ago, well known surroundings that we admire and travel to will soon be unrecognisable due to the population of over 7 billion people impacting the environment, for the worse. (Myers & Patz, 2009) As guests on earth no consideration is given to the impacts that new houses, new outdoor spaces and new technology have on the environment, the notion of travel will become scarce. The severity of the problem is hitting consumers in the face and it has currently become a topical issue. However, sustainability has been discussed since the 1960s, with legislations and guidelines created to assist organisations; these will be discussed in detail throughout this paper. Regardless of the small steps taken, the planet is dying and it is time to change things. (Chasek et al.,2010)

Sustainability covers a range of different elements including business stability in the economy and survival, along with environmental aspects. With growing concerns about environmental wellbeing, several aspects need to be considered, such as ocean and air pollution, climate and temperature change, bio-diversity and the numbers of plants and animals becoming extinct. Other areas include the burning of fossil fuels, water pollution,

and noise pollution. (Chasek et al.,2010) The catastrophic amount of devastation and destruction on the planet has not been anticipated by consumers.

Along with the consideration of elements which may be impacted, being sustainable includes the action of promoting recycling within lifestyles, reusing, using less waste and a focus on using what you have. For hundreds of years people have lived off home grown elements and incorporated this into later life, passing this on to generations, which may result in some consumers choosing to be more selective in way they dispose of waste (Viney, 2014). In 2016 the UK recycling rate for house hold waste was 45.2% which was a slight rise from 44.6% in 2015, (Gov.uk 2018) although minor improvements can be noted the statistics need to rise significantly.73% of UK Homeowners would like to see new homes fitted with solar panels, whilst 67% think that it is important that energy suppliers ensure they provide greener energy (Mintel,2018). Roughly 29 billion tons of carbon dioxide is produced each year from burning fossil fuels like coal and oil, we are relying on these things for transport, power, and production, but are not considering the impacts consumers are having on the planet.

In 2014, 3.17 million UK festival goers produced 23,500 tonnes of waste, 68% of this went to landfills; those landfills have already started overflowing and the space for the waste is running out. The Environmental Protection Agency states that on average a person produces 4.4 pounds of waste every day, of which 2.3 ends up in landfill. Although the proportion of waste that has ended up in landfill has significantly decreased, from a high 89% in the 1980s to 53% in 2014, the full life cycle of this waste needs to be considered by event organisers and consumers. (EPA 2014)

 Some UK festivals are attempting to become more sustainable and environmentally friendly, in order to gain a competitive edge. Reading festival in 2014 was said to have sent 74% of its waste to landfill, offering a scheme of a 10p deposit for cups used at the festival. However, the cups that consumers do not bring back were not put in bins, instead they would be left on the ground. In 2014 it was said that Leeds festival did recycle 82.4% of the waste at the festival which shows a great effort to be Green. (Diss,2018) The Office of National Statistics has also suggested that transport accounts for most greenhouse gas emissions, at 26% (ONS, 2018). Furthermore, travel is a vital aspect of events that needs to

be investigated and considered as not only is this down to consumers getting to the various locations it is also an issue for traders, suppliers and the onsite event team. With the rapid growth of the population the demand for the earth's resources will continue to increase. In prehistoric times people-built fires or destroyed land to create farmland or pastures, consumers are destroying land to throw rubbish in and have a sense of escapism, which is having devastating effects on the planet. Attendees are putting their normal routines on hold, temporarily, to attend these events spaces, which can take months of repair and recovery for the weekend of escapism they have provided for consumers. (Colombo, 2017)

Festival Republic, a UK music promoter who produces several festivals including Reading, Leeds and Latitude, claim to have between 100 to 150 people running recycling initiatives and educating attendees about sustainability and the environment. Although seeing organisers show initiative and incorporating such elements within their events may not be the most strategic method, as attendees are generally intoxicated and may not be interested in the topic of environmental destruction. Alternative methods such as Green Workshops, or incentives whilst attending the events, could be programmed within the event schedule (Festival republic/Green,2018). Festival Republic run a range of different events and if sustainable education is provided and implemented within these events it could be very beneficial for consumers. However, if the Green aspects are not correctly implemented within the event this will have a knock-on effect and waste resources.

Some areas that Festival Republic have focused on, to make environmental alternatives available, include reusable cups, bottle and paper cup carrying a 10p deposit, strict packaging protocols with traders, working with charities such as Green Peace and becoming part of the Festival Vision 2025 (Powerful-thinking 2015). Festival Vision 2025 is a vision for a sustainable festival industry which was created as part of the Show Must Go On report which was a response to the 2015 global climate change talks in Paris. The aim is to turn festivals into environmentally responsible events, to work with suppliers and those alike in the industry to be part of one of the most important conversations ever to take place (Powerful-thinking 2015).

Along with organisations understanding the importance of sustainability in different forms a consideration for the importance of corporate social responsibility becoming a crucial part of the business is also essential. Davis(1973, quoted in Kamango & Bello, 2018) discusses how businesses need to look beyond the economic, technological and legal requirements of a firm to establish how they can accomplish social and environmental benefits along with the tradition of economic gain. Within this paper the focus of the triple bottom line will be on how environmental responsibility touches on financial and social aspects of the business.

Elkington (2013) was very interested in the idea of measuring sustainability, specifically in relation to accounting. His framework was designed to measure profits and returns on investment. The framework is called the triple bottom line and focuses on the social, financial and environmental responsibilities that organisations have.

Glastonbury is known to be one of the first festivals involved in the mainstream music scene. Beginning in the 1970s, the festival takes place on Worthy farm which is an active farming plot. Every five years the festival takes a break for land restoration. The festival is known to be an inspiration for many other festivals and events who are wanting consider sustainability and their impact on the environment. Considering how important travel is, discussion of how public transport can be an option, along with car share, is important. Glastonbury also encourages its consumers to consider the amount of waste onsite, limiting what is brought in. Its Bring it Home campaign also challenges festival attendees to considering the wastage of tents that are brought to the event (Glastonbury,2017).

In 2014 Glastonbury recycled 114 tonnes of composted organic waste, 23 tonnes of glass, 85 tonnes of cans and plastic bottles, and 983 tonnes of other waste; this represents 54% of all the festival's waste – so there is still room for improvement. £780,000 was spent on rubbish disposal, which could have been used to restore the current site or put towards the charities that Glastonbury prides itself in being heavily involved with. Glastonbury have also begun to use hybrid generators and solar panels, along with that it has banned plastic bags and uses Fairtrade products; it remains the world's biggest donor to Green Peace. Glastonbury continue work outside of the festival site involving themselves in the restoration of local community buildings and housing. However, Glastonbury, amongst many other festivals and

events, still have a long way to go to encourage consumers to make every day more sustainable. (Glastonbury,2017) Glastonbury's actions can be integrated within the triple bottom line sustainability framework, with the focus being on environmental factors. However, social and economic aspects are also present, such as funding the local community. Profit made from the festival are used to maintain it, along with social aspects such as involving the local community. (Elkington,2013)

In comparison to Glastonbury, who heavily encourage and promote sustainability, Burning Man is a well-known festival that has said, regardless of the activities which occur at the event, they do not leave a trace after the event. In 2006 Burning Man generated 27,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, this includes transport, as the event is held in the American desert, and onsite power supplies. However, Burning Man have worked over the years to better the level of Green activity that is associated with the festival, having a 'Greening Your Burn' section on the website which gives attendees hints and tips on how to become Greener. (Burningman.org 2018)

Incorporating sustainability within an organisation seems to have the stigmatism attached to it of being very costly; however, businesses can save money by becoming more sustainable. For organisations, becoming sustainable involves simple steps such as checking that, as an establishment, you are using the right energy supplier. Taking action now, and considering factors such as water and energy, will become beneficial when energy bills continue to rise (Ringo HW Chiu/AP 2018).

Consumers are becoming more mindful of the way they behave, businesses and brands are trying to tackle environmental damage, organisations such as Google and Ban Colombia have launched a programme called 'Sustainability School' to help educate consumers on protecting natural resources, whilst other organisations are tackling packaging and recycling.
"Sustainability is about seeing and recognising [the] dynamic, cyclical and interdependent nature of all parts and pieces of life on earth" (Robertson, p3, 2014). Sustainability includes the ground we walk, on the carbon emissions and gases we can't see, our interactions with people, and the way we live. Robertson discusses Sustainability and how being sustainable is

not just avoiding use of plastic straws, or supporting recycling, it is about considering all factors in relation to the earth and people who habitat earth.

Layard et al (2002) state how, "Most sustainability literature chooses to be blissfully ignorant of the history of the concept" (p. 53). Sustainability is very much a contemporary issue in relation to its present rise in popularity and a sense of urgency for change. With the warning that has been broadcasted throughout news channels (Ringo HW Chiu/AP 2018) stating that we have twelve years to save the planet. Ignoring this puts us all at risk of flooding, draughts, and extreme temperatures, along with severe poverty. Layard has previously mentioned that people have ignored such warnings for decades, assuming the planet will save itself (in Watts,2018). Sustainability first became topical in the 1960s. Rachel Carson, a conservationist, was one of the first people that began to discuss the harmful effects businesses were having on nature and humanity; this led to activists founding organisations such as WWF and Green Peace (Earley, 2018).

 Throughout the 1980s and1990s global environmental problems were seen as minor concerns. However, several disasters did occur, such as nuclear disasters and oil spills, which caused uproar (Watts, 2018). Guidelines began being developed; such as the Fair Labour Association which, in 1999, started offering tools and resources to companies to ensure the correct training of staff, expecting transparency and help with management and assessments (fair labour, 2018).

In 1992, at the Rio Earth Summit (Sustainable-environment.org.uk, 2018), the United Nations decided that the best way to achieve sustainable development was at a local level; the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) programme emerged as a development from that summit (Buckingham & Percy, 1999). The aim of LA 21 was for each local area to have discussions with their citizens to select areas of importance, whilst also involving other sections of society. Sachs (1995, quoted in Layard et al., 2002) says, "Despite all the hype, the international commitment to sustainability proved less substantial than may have appeared possible in the aftermath of Rio". The local authorities were not given any resources to help implement the changes that LA21 would bring, therefore most of the ideas and initiatives were left unused as what limited resources there were began to run out (GDRC,2018).

In 1988 the intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was developed. This allows scientific research to be undertaken in relation to climate change and supports citizens in understanding the part they play in climate change (Caradonna, 2014). Despite the debate of how effective the guidelines and legislations have been the effort and drive were clearly present, helping to encourage businesses to use the support available to become more sustainable. However, the resources and support there was, was not sufficient (GDRC,2018).

On the other hand, some may say that the guidelines and legislations have inspired the next generation with sustainability becoming extremely topical currently within organisations such as Green Globe, which was developed to help those interested in measuring the environmental impact they are having, whilst reducing it (Green Globe,2018). The idea for the organisation began building its roots after the Rio earth summit. Green Globe works with businesses to establish how environmentally friendly they currently are, what they can do to change, and how to remain sustainable. It could be argued that many businesses would like to become 'sustainable' in order to obtain a competitive edge. Seeming to appeal and reach out to a wider market. Although Green Globe monitor how their clients are doing there is only so much, they can do to ensure that businesses wish to participate for the right reasons (Blowfield, 2013).

The International Standards Organisation (ISO) was created to help business operate safely, and make improvements, whilst educating people in many topics. A few specific guidelines have been designed focusing on sustainability. including ISO 37120 (Sustainable development of communities), ISO 26000 (Guidance of social responsibility) and the ISO 20121 (Sustainable events). (International Standards Organisation, 2018). Those guidelines were created to offer guidance and best practice for business to manage events, specifically around social, economic and environmental impacts.

As mentioned previously, Festival Vision 2025 was created in relation to The Show Must Go On report. which was created in 2010 in response to the United Nations framework on climate change, in Paris, in 2015 (UNFCCC,2015). The report included an outline of environmental impacts of UK festivals and how to combat such issues with an industry wide

approach. The top five priorities put forward by UK festival organisers are; having sustainable approaches to energy, a focus on packaging and reusable cups, a focus on waste management and travel. Although that report was specifically for festival events, event organisers and businesses could also use it to adapt other areas of sustainability on which to focus (Powerful-thinking 2015).

Each of the different guidelines created previously, and those that are newly developed, will continue to encourage businesses and organisations to treat staff fairly and safely along with incorporating sustainability within the work place (Moser, 2009). Although many businesses may become sustainable for the wrong reasons this will help encourage the incorporation of sustainability.

To conclude, sustainability is, at present, a very topical subject. With many industries concerned with economic growth, the events industry fails to fully understand and identify its contributions to environmental impacts.

Different guidelines currently exist and will continue to be established; however, it is of great importance to implement sustainable aspects within the daily lives of consumers as, otherwise, a disintegrated planet may be the future of the events industry. Resources should be readily available to allow for the creation of future legislation and guidelines.

A further recommendation would be for businesses to have a sustainability manager who would oversee the implementation of sustainable practices and help businesses become, and remain, sustainable. This paper gives a brief overview of current sustainable practices, and the participation of a handful of festival events, which needs to be correctly and appropriately placed within organisations.

A greater emphasis on the current frameworks available for sustainability was not discussed, as the Triple Bottom line worked well in relation to the Glastonbury case study, whilst discussing the positives and negatives of several other music festivals. A further recommendation would be for organisations to design a framework along with a sustainability handbook, which could identify the standards required for the industry. A large proportion of this paper was used to discuss the regulations; organisations seem to be

unaware how to become, or be, sustainable; therefore, education and implementation are of crucial importance.

References

BBC (2018) Reality Check: Are festivals bad for the environment? [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk> [Accessed 3 December 2018].

Blowfield, M. (2013) *Business and Sustainability*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buckingham, S. & Percy, S. (1999) *Constructing Local Environmental Agendas: People, Places and Participation*. London: Routledge.

Burningman.org (2018) Greening Your Burn [Internet]. Available from: <https://burningman.org> [Accessed 2 December 2018].

Caradonna, J. (2014) *Sustainability, A History*. United States, Oxford University Press.

Chasek, P., Downie, D. & Brown, J. *Global Environmental Politics*. 5th ed. United States of America, Westview Press.

Colombo, A. (2017) Music Festivals and Eventfulness: Examining Eventful Cities by Event Genres and Policy Agendas. *Event Management*, 21 (5), pp.563-573.

Davis, K. (1973). The case for and against business assumption of social responsibilities. *Academy of Management Journal*, 16(2), 312–323.

Kamanga, G. & Bello, F. (2018) Exploring Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Adoption in the tourism industry: The case of Malawi. *Tourism Review International*, 22 (2), pp.117-130.

Diss. (2018) Problems with Waste at UK festivals | Diss. [Internet]. Available from: <http://diss.ltd> [Accessed 1 December 2018].

Earley, K. (2018) From reaction to purpose: the evolution of business action on sustainability [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com > [Accessed 2 December 2018].

Elkington, J. (2013): Enter the triple bottom line. In: A. Henriques & J. Richardson (Eds.) *The Triple Bottom Line*. London: Routledge, p. 23-38.

EPA (2014) Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: 2014 Fact Sheet [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.epa.gov> [Accessed 5 December 2018].

Fair Labor (2018) Fair Labor Association [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.fairlabor.org/> [Accessed 2 December 2018].

FestivalRepublic.com (2018) Green [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.festivalrepublic.com> [Accessed 2 December 2018].

Glastonbury Festival. (2017) - Our green policies [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk> [Accessed 21 October 2018].

Gov.uk (2018) UK Statistics on Waste [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk> [Accessed 3 December 2018].

Green Globe (2018) About Green Globe - Green Globe [Internet]. Available from: <https://greenglobe.com> [Accessed 2 December 2018].

ILO (2018) About the ILO [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.ilo.org> [Accessed 2 December 2018].

International standards associations, (2018) Sustainability standards from ISO - [Internet]. Available from: <https://iso26000.info> [Accessed 30 October 2018].

Layard, A., Davoudi, S. & Batty, S . (Ed.) (2002) *Planning for a Sustainable Future*. London: Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Mintel(2018) Environmental Sustainability [Internet]. Available from: <http://academic.mintel.com> [Accessed 4 December 2018].

Moser, G. (2009) Quality of life and sustainability: Toward person–environment congruity. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 29 (3), pp.351-357.

Myers, S. & Patz, J. (2009) Emerging Threats to Human Health from Global Environmental Change. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 34 (1), pp.223-252.

ONS, (2018) Atmospheric emissions: greenhouse gas intensity - Office for National Statistics [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk> [Accessed 6 December 2018].

Pickering, K. & Owen, L. (1997) *Instructor's manual, an introduction to global environmental issues*. 2nd ed. London, Routledge.

Powerful-thinking (2015) The Show Must Go On Report - Powerful Thinking [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.powerful-thinking.org.uk> [Accessed 5 December 2018].

Ringo HW Chiu/AP (2018) A firefighter battles a fire in California. The world is currently 1C warmer than preindustrial levels. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com> [Accessed 16 October 2018].

Robertson, M. (2014) *Sustainability Principles and Practice*. New York, Routledge.

Sachs, W. (1995) *Global Ecology: A New Arena of Political Conflict*, London: Zed Books.

Layard, A., Davoudi, S. & Batty, S . (Ed.) (2002) *Planning for a Sustainable Future*. London: Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Sustainable-environment.org.uk, 2018 | Local Agenda 21 | Earth Summit [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.sustainable> [Accessed 1 December 2018].

Taylor, S., Ahmed, A. & Shrever, C. & Video Education Australasia. (2010) *Environmental sustainability in business*. Available from: <https://search-alexanderstreet-com> [Accessed 7 December 2018].

The Global development research **centre** (2018) The Local Agenda 21 [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.gdrc.org> [Accessed 1 December 2018].

 UNFCCC, (2015). Paris Climate Change Conference - November 2015 | UNFCCC [Internet]. Available from: <https://unfccc.int> [Accessed 4 December 2018].

Viney, W. (2014) *Waste - a Philosophy of Things*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Watts, J. (2018) We have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe, warns UN [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com > [Accessed 16 October 2018].