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Practices of Design

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Music Festival Litter and Cleanup

It's a warm sunny day and you are standing in a field punctuated by piles of garbage; Plastic bags and food wrappers flying in the air off to some unknown destination. Various party and show flyers, lost shoes, broken camp chairs, the occasional decorated doll head on the end of a stick, abandoned signs, sunglasses and a whole litany of other types of garbage are in every direction you look. Where are you, at a garbage dump? No, what you are seeing is in fact the aftermath of a multi-day music festival campground. Not only is the mess left behind at such festivals unsightly, it also has negative environmental and social impacts as well.

Clean up of such messes can be costly and the mess can leave neighbors of the festival with a negative view of the festival and its attendees. Many festivals have tried to offset these negatives by relying on clean up volunteers and trash trade-in programs, which have had some success. However, most festivals still struggle with how to clean up the mess that is left behind. According to Christopher Polk at CBS News; "By all accounts the festival scene is thriving, with concert ticket sales tripling from \$1.5 billion to \$4.6 billion between 1999 and 2009.", the problem is only likely to get worse as attendance continues to rise.

Is there a way to improve upon the programs already in place and take them to the next level? Can interaction design be used to encourage festival goers to behave in a more responsible manner? I believe so, and that is what I aim to prove.

Although some people may say this problem is not an issue of design, but rather one of education, Design can be used to help encourage specific behaviors. One way behavior can be encouraged through Design is the use of Gamification, which offers some kind of incentive or reward for someone to complete the desired behavior.

“Gamification is about amplifying the effect of an existing, core experience by applying the motivational techniques that make games so engaging.” (Bunchball) For example, offering bragging rights, social status, or a variety of other incentives that may be more audience specific, can make specified behaviors more desirable to perform.

Gamification has already been used with some success at festivals. Two examples of this are the Coachella 10 for 1 water exchange program and the Electricity program at Electric Forest.

Coachella Water Exchange Program

In 2006, I attended the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival for the first time. One thing that stuck out in my memory of the festival was at the end of each day, the polo fields on which the festival was held were destroyed. Upon review of the attached photo, you may notice that a good percentage of this trash is plastic water bottles. In an attempt to address the issue of trash, the next year, Coachella implemented 2 programs; a reusable water bottle was sold with exclusive cold-water refill stations, and the TRASHed used water bottle recycling program managed by the Global Inheritance

Initiative. The refillable water bottle offered an exclusive, souvenir bottle for a small fee of \$20, which included access to water that was cold (a very enticing incentive for a festival held in the SoCal desert) and was extremely popular.

The Global Inheritance TRASHed used water bottle recycling program provided the incentive to festival participants to pick up after themselves by offering 1 free bottle of water for every ten empty bottles festival goers brought to designated recycling stations. According to the Global Inheritance website; "Since 2004, the TRASHed Recycling Store has collected over 13 million bottles, cans and biodegradable cups at the biggest festivals in North America."

Both programs are still in use at Coachella today, and have even been expanded to and copied at other festivals which is a testament to the success of the programs.

Electric-ology

Similar to the 10 for 1 water bottle exchange program at Coachella, Electric-ology provides incentives for festival-goers who engage in helping to keep the festival grounds litter free. From the festival's description of Electric-ology on their website: "When you bring your recycling to our EcoZones in the campgrounds and properly dispose of your waste inside the venue, you'll earn EcoPoints to redeem at the Electricology Store. The Electricology Store, located at the festival entrance, is the only place to WIN signed artist merchandise, festival vendor prizes, tickets to Electric Forest 2014, private shows and more!" (Electric Forest). Although exact figures for this

program are not currently available, the Electric Forest festival considers this program a success.

Primarily, these programs offer real-world, and sometimes exclusive rewards for performing the desired behavior of recycling and helping to keep the festival grounds litter and trash free. However, there are some disadvantages to these programs as they exist today. With the Coachella water bottle exchange, participants must take the fresh bottle of water at the time of exchange, there is no way to bank the credits received for recycling empty bottles. The ability to bank points could be an incentive for festival attendees to recycle even more bottles

With Electric-ology, recycling points can be saved up, but participants must hold onto and keep track of points coupons, which in itself is another piece of trash or litter added to the festival. If the program moved to an electronic method of tracking and redeeming points, it would reduce the amount of litter generated and could have an impact on the number of people participating in the program.

Both Coachella and Electric Forest have smartphone apps to provide information, schedules and updates to festival goers. Why not include these programs in the Festival apps and introduce more elements of gamification that moving to an interactive application would allow? Expanding upon the existing reward and increasing gamification of these programs could increase their effectiveness and take them to the next level. For example, if festival participants were able to track their current recycling balance, an element of competition could be introduced by generating leader boards

and public acknowledgment of the most prolific recyclers. The element of competition can be a powerful motivator and could be successful if implemented properly.

Another opportunity is presented by the chipped wristbands used by most festivals for admittance. Could these wristbands be used as a wearable element that stores and tracks information about festival-goers recycling behavior? The benefits to the festival-goer could be quite appealing; in addition to tracking recycling balances, if participants could load credit card and ID information onto these chips, the possibility exists they could be used as a digital wallet. This would allow festival-goers to leave their actual physical wallets in a secure location, reducing the chances of theft or loss. In addition to this, it is also quite appealing to think about not having as much stuff to carry around in your pockets. In addition to a virtual wallet, there are many other interactive applications that could be introduced; location tracking via check in points, miles walked, or virtual badges for bands seen or stages visited. The possibilities are numerous.

From the stand point of the festival, the data that could be provided by implementing interactive wristband chip applications could be extremely valuable for logistics and planning. The data could be used to track and forecast foot traffic patterns, determine the best locations for vendors, help determine appropriate staffing and security needs, as well as just providing general demographic information. Many of these same advantages could also be derived from including sustainability programs into the festival apps themselves.

With these imagined interactive possibilities, it is a worthwhile effort to explore and investigate how interactive design can influence festival-goers to behave in a more responsible manner.

Works Cited

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