

1. Defining and Interpreting Loyalty in the Case of Music Festivals

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Loyal customers have key importance for scientific and business sector as well. For companies, customer retention can maintain high profitability, and for customers, being loyal can reduce searching costs and risks as well. However, there are numerous descriptions for loyalty; therefore examining the phenomenon can be difficult due to the variety of definitions.

The aim of this paper is to define loyalty in a case of a special service: in a case of music festivals. Answering this question, a literature overview will be introduced about the approaches and definitions of loyalty, and music festival loyalty models will be described.

Keywords: loyalty, music festivals, loyal customers

1. Introduction

Loyal customer base takes a crucial part in achieving long term success for companies (Curran – Healy 2014, Hetesi 2007, Reichheld 2003). Furthermore, loyalty has a key importance for customers as well. Searching costs and risks of a new choice can be reduced by repeated purchases. Customers can establish a connection with the brand through loyalty; moreover, loyalty can contribute to evolve self-concept or reach an ideal self-concept (Prónay 2011).

However, it can be said that loyalty is an important phenomenon but accompanied by several questions. How can loyalty be interpreted generally? Or how can loyalty be described in the case of a given product or service? The question of this paper is how loyalty can be defined and interpreted in case of a special service: in the case of a music festival. Finding an answer for this question, this study gives a literature overview about the phenomenon, about the development and about the occurrence of loyalty in the case of music festivals. Interpreting loyalty in the case of music festival, first, it is necessary to define loyalty at a broader context. The general definition and approaches can be followed by the introduction of loyalty definitions of music festival literatures. Finally, an assessment framework and definition can be described in the case of music festivals

2. Definitions of loyalty

One of the most important papers concerning the phenomenon of loyalty is Hirschmann's *Exit, Voice, Loyalty* from 1970. His study focuses not only on loyalty, but the possible consequences of quality-deterioration occur in his paper as well. These consequences could be exit, voice and loyalty. Exit means leaving the given company or the given brand. In the case of voice, customers have not left the company or brand yet; however, they express their voice against quality-deterioration hoping a possible positive change in quality. Loyalty reflects to the stay besides quality-deterioration but without expressing voice. According to Hirschmann (1995), those are loyal customers who insist on a company or on a brand against quality-deterioration. In this interpretation, loyalty seems to be irrational, because customers are loyal to a company or to a brand which do not deserve their commitment. The author (Hirschmann 1995) also highlights that loyal customers should not be considered as losers; their commitment can increase the chances for a possible quality improvement. Loyal customers can be losers if there is not any improvement against their insistence.

Hirschmann (1995) describes the definition of loyalty aptly; however, this definition shows the customer in the case of quality-deterioration, which is an extreme situation. It can be questionable, how customers behave in the case of companies which offer continuous, high quality. It also can be interesting, whether it is possible to apply a unified definition for loyalty. Based on the more decades long literature of loyalty, a standard definition is cannot be found. The definitions of loyalty can be grouped into three main approaches: behavioral, attitudinal and a complex approach can be distinguished (Touzani – Temessek 2009, Prónay 2011).

2.1 Behavioral loyalty

Loyalty can be identified as repurchase from the point of view of behavioral approach (Bandyopadhyay – Martell 2007, Touzani – Temessek 2009, Prónay 2011). McConnell (1968) describes loyalty tightly and simply, according to which „brand loyalty or brand preference has most frequently been defined as the consumer's repeat purchase probability of a particular brand, varying between 0 and 1” (McConnell 1968, 14. p.). Mentioning different examples, Tucker (1964) catches the phenomenon by a sequence of repurchases and Tellis (1988) identifies loyalty as a repurchasing intention measured by the relative frequencies of

repurchases from a brand during a given period. Besides the definitions mentioned above, (repurchasing rate, probability of repurchasing, sequence of repurchases) a brand's repurchasing ratio in a product group can also be applied for measuring loyalty (Touzani – Temessek 2009).

One of the advantages of behavioral approach is measurability; definitions can be easily operationalized, which makes measuring the definition of loyalty easier. However, some disadvantages of the approach can be mentioned. The behavioral approach is not able to explore influencing factors behind loyalty and it cannot be applied for forecasting repurchasing intentions (Touzani – Temessek 2007, Prónay 2011). Furthermore, it is not sure that the lack of a repurchase or a low repurchasing rate occurs due to the lack of loyalty; any other factors can play role in the emergence of a low repurchasing rate. Bandyopadhyay and Martell (2007) mention situational factors (stock-out or non-availability), intrinsic factors (individual fortitude) and socio-cultural factors (social bonding) among the other loyalty influencing elements. Dick and Basu (1994) also highlighted that a high repurchasing rate can reflect situational factors: the repurchasing rate can increase due to a stock decreasing sale; or a low repurchasing rate can occur because of the lack of brand preference or because of variability seeking intentions as well. Furthermore, the authors (Dick – Basu 1994) emphasize that behavioral definitions are not suitable for explaining the development and transformation of the loyalty concept. Based on the behavioral approach, the definition of loyalty is simple and easily measurable but it is not able to describe motivations explaining the phenomenon: the attitudinal approach can be applied for that.

2.2. Attitudinal loyalty

The essence of the attitudinal approach, how loyal customers feel and think. The basis of attitudinal loyalty research is that loyalty is not parallel to repurchase, it is more, including emotional elements as well (Prónay 2011). In the frame of attitudinal approach, Jacoby and Kyner (1973) pointed out the drawbacks of behavioral approach and they created a complex definition of loyalty. They draw up six conditions, according to which „brand loyalty is (1) the biased (i.e., nonrandom), (2) behavioral response (i.e., purchase), (3) expressed over time, (4) by some decision-making unit, (5) with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and (6) is a function of psychological (decision-making, evaluative) processes” (Jacoby – Kyner 1973, 2. p.). The sixth condition has a key importance; according to Jacoby and Kyner (1973), psychological processes behind loyalty are more complex than a

simple „I like the brand” statement. As a result of decision making and evaluation processes, the customer develop a kind of commitment towards the brand. In fact, this can be considered as loyalty. The authors (Jacoby – Kyner 1973) deem that the concept of commitment enables understanding the difference between loyalty and the different forms of repurchase.

Dick and Basu (1994) think also that it is not enough focusing on repurchase, the concept of loyalty should be broadened by emotional elements. The relative attitude connected to a brand or to a product has a key importance in their model. According to the authors (Dick – Basu 1994), attitudes are relative because they cannot be identified in an isolated way, attitudes can be interpreted in a given consumption situation. The essence of their theory, that loyal customers have positive beliefs and emotions towards a given brand.

However, the attitudinal approach has limitations as well. Touzani and Temessek (2009) point out that the attitudinal approach do not consider all of the influencing factors behind loyalty. Comparing to the behavioral approach, the only difference is that the indicator of loyalty is the strength of attitudes instead of behavior. Bandyopadhyay and Martell (2007) emphasize that the attitudinal approach’s effort is to understand loyalty better; however, the meaning and the operationalization of loyalty cannot be understood entirely in the frame of the approach. Based on the statements above, it cannot be stated that application of behavioral or attitudinal approach could be more suitable. Both of the approaches have advantages and disadvantages as well, and a complex approach can be described, which is combining the elements of behavioral and attitudinal approach as well.

2.3. The complex approach of loyalty

The complex (or composite) approach interpret loyalty in multiple levels combining the elements of behavioral and attitudinal approach. Touzani and Temessek (2009) show that the essence of complex approach is that loyalty includes positive attitudes toward the brand (appearing through commitment) and repurchase of the brand as well. Several interpretation and definition have created in the frame of complex approach, furthermore, the relation among the levels or elements of loyalty are not unified too.

Bloemer and Kasper (1995) make a difference between true loyalty and spurious loyalty, based on the definition Jacoby and Kyner (1973). In the case of true loyalty, repurchase is a result of psychological processes, thus the basis is commitment; while in the case of spurious loyalty, and repurchase is a manifestation of inertia. True loyalty has attitudinal and behavioral component too: a true brand loyal customer is committed toward

the brand. The customer insists on the brand due to this commitment and the customer also feels a necessity for repurchasing the given brand. According to the authors (Bloemer – Kasper 1995), commitment is not enough, a committed customer can be considered as a true loyal customer if he or she repurchases the brand.

Zeithaml et al. (1996) focus on service quality in their study, but some behavioral intentions appear as consequences of quality. One of these intentions is loyalty, but besides that, brand-switch, pay more, external response (complaining to other customers) and internal response (complaining to the employees of the company) dimensions can be mentioned. The authors (Zeithaml et al. 1996) mention that loyalty can occur in several different ways; brand preference, recommendation of the brand and positive word-of-mouth about the brand appear also in their loyalty concept. In their study (Zeithaml et al. 1996), loyalty, as an attitudinal element, is a part of a complex behavioral answer for the consequences of quality.

Pritchard et al. (1999) examine behavioral and attitudinal loyalty too. Their paper focuses on commitment and its reasons; they interpret loyalty as an outcome of commitment. According to the authors (Pritchard et al. 1999), commitment is a strong emotional bond, which consists of such an elements like relationship with a brand or with a company, or identification with a brand or with a company. Loyalty can be measured by loyal attitudes and by repurchasing rate in this study.

One of the most widespread complex approaches was written by Oliver (1999), who distinguished different levels of loyalty:

- The first level is cognitive loyalty, according to which the consumer knows that the given brand or product is better than the rival ones. This knowledge manifests itself in the available information about the product mentioning price or different features of the product. This level has the weakest intensity.
- The second level is affective or emotional loyalty, where preferences toward the brand occur. Consumers buy because they like the brand. In this level, satisfaction with the brand play an important role, however, there is a possibility for brand switching, which also highlights the contradictory relationship between loyalty and satisfaction (Oliver 1999). Commitment can be interpreted by identification with emotions and liking, however, a deeper commitment would be necessary due to the risk of brand switching.
- The third level is conative loyalty, where customers have an intention for buying of which basis is a positive feeling towards the brand. In the case of conative loyalty, there is commitment but its cause is motivation: consumers want to repurchase but it is not realized always.

- The fourth level is action loyalty. In this level, repurchasing intention is coupled by action. Consumers do not only intend to buy, but they are ready to handle obstacles occurring against purchase.

However, Oliver (1999) defines a higher level above the previous described ones: that is ultimate loyalty of which basis is a deeply held commitment. In the case of ultimate loyalty, consumers are willing to purchase the product at any kind of prices and under any circumstances; moreover, they are ready for making sacrifices for the purchase too.

Besides the role of commitment, Oliver (1999) highlights the role of environment. Up to the level of individual commitment and up to the social support for loyalty, different situations can be described. If individual commitment and social support are low, the basis of loyalty is only product superiority. If individual commitment is weak but social support is high, individuals are passive acceptors of the environment – having a fear of the negative consequences of refusing loyalty. If individual commitment is strong but social support is low, that is the case of determined self-identity. Oliver (1999) compares this case to brand-love or brand-adoration, thus the basis of commitment is a personal, internal motivation. If individual commitment and social support are strong, we can mention the case of strong loyalty. The individual brand-adoration and brand commitment are enhanced by the society. The consumer identifies with a community of which the brand is a part. It is important to mention that in the cases of high social support, we can talk about consumption communities, brand communities; differences in high social support cases can be found in the level of individual commitment. First and last, Oliver's (1999) loyalty approach is based on cognitive and affective elements and ends in behavioral elements. The ultimate loyalty, built in a deeply held commitment, stands above all of the loyalty components. However, societal support is necessary for establishing ultimate loyalty.

Besides Oliver's (1999) study, it is worth mentioning other interpretations in the frame of the complex approach of loyalty. According to Aksoy (2013), a special relationship is necessary for the existence of loyalty. This relationship can be interpreted as a bond, furthermore, there is a need for action to defend and enhance the relationship. Curran and Healy (2014) examine different phases of loyalty, based on the studies of Dick and Basu (1994) and Oliver (1999), lower-, intermediate- and high loyalty can be differentiated. Wang et al. (2014) described consumer loyalty related to a firm, where they applied the definition of Zeithaml et al. (1996). In their study (Wang et al. 2014), loyalty to a firm is influenced by the

loyalty to a salesperson through several dimensions such as affect transfer, social transfer, identification with the firm and behavioral component.

Among Hungarian literature, several studies can be mentioned in the frame of complex loyalty approach. Hetesi and Rekettye (2005) deal with behavioral and affective elements as well: they measure loyalty with the help of repurchase, brand-switch, price-sensitivity and recommendation of the brand. Hetesi (2007) highlights that defining loyalty is not a simple task – either in the case of consumer or in the case of business-to-business sector. Furthermore, several loyalty clusters can be identified, which occur in consumer and in business-to-business sector with different weights. It shows that interpreting and defining loyalty can be depending from products, sectors and environment. Hofmeister-Tóth (2006) considers consumer decisions based on loyalty as routine decisions. However, if preference and commitment (such as attitudinal elements) appear, it is more difficult to make the consumers switching to another brand. According to Hofmeister-Tóth (2006), consumers who prefer more brands and switch among more brands can be considered as quasi brand loyal consumers. Furthermore, we can talk about repeated purchase if there is only satisfaction without commitment. Töröcsik (2007) also makes differences between true and quasi brand loyalty. The first one is based on affective elements: true brand loyalty exists if there is a strong affective involvement and commitment. While the second one, the quasi brand loyalty refers to a weak affective involvement in the interpretation of Töröcsik (2007).

It is worth mentioning the loyalty definition by Prónay (2011). There are behavioral and attitudinal components in Prónay's (2011) approach as well; however, he does not draw a sharp boundary between the different components. Both of the mentioned elements play role in his loyalty definition, attitudes create a basis for action. According to Prónay (2011), the types of loyalty can be described based on behavior and the strength of attitudes. If the repurchase is infrequent and the attitude is weak, there is no loyalty. Frequent repurchase coupled by weak attitude means a simple repurchase or a routine purchase, which do not have any kind of affective bonds. Infrequent repurchase and strong, positive attitude refer to the case of commitment, which assume a strong emotional bond to the product or to the brand. Prónay (2011) emphasize that commitment can exist even if consumers have never bought a given brand and they can recommend the given brand to others too. Finally, we can talk about insistence if frequent repurchase is accompanied by strong, positive attitudes. This case is actually a kind of commitment which is coupled by purchase. Consumers identify with the meaning of the brand and they generate positive word-of-mouth about the brand. This situation is similar to Oliver's (1999) ultimate loyalty or to Töröcsik's (2007) true brand

loyalty. According to Prónay (2011), the broader concept of loyalty covers simple repurchase, commitment and insistence, while the narrower definition of loyalty focuses on insistence.

The approaches and definitions described above combine the advantages of behavioral and attitudinal approaches. However, the definitions and approaches propose further problems and questions due to their variety. Based on the mentioned approaches, the next chapter deals with the occurring interpretation problems.

2.4. Problems in interpretation of loyalty

The first question occurs because there are more approaches concerning the definition of loyalty. Behavioral or attitudinal approach is better? In my point of view, we cannot find an answer to this question. A complex approach is necessary to describe the concept of loyalty, but the complex approach still contains a wide range of definitions. A more relevant question is which elements are included in the complex approach. There are models where positive attitudes towards the brand, commitment and repurchase are needed (Bloemer – Kasper 1999, Pritchard et al. 1999). There are studies where higher levels of loyalty contain the concept of brand communities (Oliver 1999, Prónay 2011), but recommendation of the brand can also occur among definitions (Hetesi – Rekettye 2005, Zeithaml et al. 1996).

The next question can be how the loyalty components are related to each other. In Oliver's (1999) theory, cognitive and affective components cause behavioral consequences, but ultimate loyalty takes place above all of the elements. However, commitment can cause a need for a further repurchase according to Bloemer and Kasper (1995). Prithcard et al. (1999) have a similar approach: loyalty can be interpreted as an outcome or as a consequence of commitment. Furthermore, Oliver (1999) interpret brand communities as a manifestation of ultimate loyalty, but according to Drengner et al. (2012), the level of the psychological sense of a brand community influences repurchasing intentions. This contradiction can be led back to the previously described interpretation of loyalty. If we consider loyalty as an outcome, the intention for repurchase can be the consequence of belonging to a brand community.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that loyalty can be interpreted relatively. Dick and Basu (1994) pointed out that attitudes toward a brand can be interpreted relatively, which means a given buying or consumption situation. Different occurrence of loyalty in consumer and business-to-business sectors appeared in Hetesi's (2007) study as well. Prónay (2011) also highlights that repurchase can be interpreted relatively. A frequent repurchase is different for example in the case of clothes and in the case of a luxurious car or in the case of an

annually organized music festival. If brand communities are interpreted as a level of loyalty, which occurred in Oliver's (1999) study, another group consumption and brand community centered article (Hetesi – Prónay 2014) can be mentioned. The authors (Hetesi – Prónay 2014) draw different types of brand communities in a scale; in one end of the scale, the attractiveness of the brand is dominant. This is a case for simple brand communities, where Nokia or Apple brands can be mentioned for example (Hetesi – Prónay 2014). In the other end of the scale, the attractiveness of the community is dominant. This is the case of brand-subcultures, where the VW Beetle or the Harley-Davidson fan club can be said as an example. In my opinion, the first two described contradiction (elements of loyalty definition, relationship among the elements) cannot be resolved due to the relative interpretation of loyalty. A more exact definition of the loyalty can be described if the product and the situation are accurately known. Therefore, defining loyalty in the case of music festivals needs to interpret the phenomenon in the context of music festivals.

3. Loyalty in the case of music festivals

It is necessary to describe music festival models which have already examined loyalty to define loyalty in the case of music festivals. After that, a more accurate description of music festival loyalty can be drawn.

3.1. Approaches of music festival loyalty

Among studies concerning music festivals, there have been published articles dealing with satisfaction, branding issues or the success of festivals. However, studies focusing on music festival loyalty have been occurred infrequently. Yoon et al. (2010) defined loyalty as behavioral intention, which can be measured by positive word-of-mouth, recommendation of the event and re-attending intention.

Leenders (2010) deems that loyalty is a success factor of music festivals. Customer equity has a key importance in the case of music festivals in the long run, and the value of customers depends on loyalty mostly. The author (Leenders 2010) measured loyalty by re-attending intention: respondents had to evaluate how many times they intend to visit the festival again in the following five years. It is worth mentioning that there were positive emotions among loyalty influencing factors. Consequently, attitudes and behavioral elements also appeared in the model.

Grappi and Montanari (2011) highlighted that increasing consumer retention rate is necessary for enhancing music festival efficiency. Re-attendance has an important role in success, because loyal visitors are those who can recommend the festival to others. They pay less attention to the competitors and are more tolerant towards a lower level of satisfaction. The authors (Grappi – Montanari 2011) focus on re-attending intention, but highlights that in the case of cultural consumption, variety seeking is one of the motivations factors in attendance. Therefore, the role of loyalty is more important in the case of music festivals. Re-attending intention was based on the definition of Zeithaml et al. (1996), thus respondents had to evaluate whether they intend to re-visit the festival again, they recommend the festival to others, they encourage others to visit the festival and they say positive things about the festival. It is noticeable that items concerning recommendation of the festival have greater role in the definition than the ones concerning re-attending intentions.

The re-attending intention is in the focus in the study of Drengner et al. (2012) too. In their article (Drengner et al. 2012), loyalty is a strong commitment towards re-attending the event, because in the case of services, such as a music festival, future intentions of consumers have key importance. The authors (Drengner et al. (2012) measured re-attending intentions by its different phases.

In the studies concerning music festivals, the complex loyalty approach appeared where re-attending intention is a central factor. Recommendations about the event occurred as well, but it had a different role in the described studies. After describing the music festival loyalty models, a possible definition and assessment framework of music festival loyalty will be discussed.

3.2. Definition of music festival loyalty

It is necessary having a complex approach in the case of music festival loyalty, therefore attitudinal and behavioral components take place in my approach as well. It is apparent that affective elements and commitment should be considered in a music festival loyalty definition. However, it is also important when the consumers will re-attend the festival; therefore re-attending intention should also appear in a music festival loyalty definition. It is questionable whether the components of loyalty should be treated separately. The answer is yes, measuring attitudinal and behavioral loyalty separately is highly important. Furthermore, there are elements with different meanings even in the case of attitudinal approaches. There is a deeply held commitment in Oliver's (1999) ultimate loyalty definition,

but brand communities occur within the frame of the same definition as well. It is true that commitment or the sense of belonging to a brand community is a deep and strong positive emotion towards a brand. However, the role of a brand can be stronger in the case of commitment, and the sense of belonging to somewhere can be stronger in the case of brand communities. Due to the differences in meanings, it is worth treating even the attitudinal elements of loyalty separately.

Based on the statements above (Yoon et al. 2010, Leenders 2010, Drengner et al. 2012), the narrower definition of loyalty can be identified by re-attending intention. One of the advantages of applying re-attending intention that it refers to the future. Furthermore, in a case of music festivals, if a survey is conducted during or after the event, one of the most important questions can be the future re-visiting intention.

However, it is necessary consider the elements of attitudinal loyalty as well, where commitment and psychological sense of a brand community can be mentioned. Concerning the relationship between the narrow definition of loyalty and the affective elements, I accept the theories of Bloemer and Kasper (1995), Pritchard et al. (1999) and Drengner et al. (2012), according to which affective elements of loyalty can influence re-attending intention. The reason of my choice is that I defined the narrow concept of loyalty by re-attending intention. First, some kind of emotional bond should be exist to develop the intention for a future re-attendance. In my opinion, if visitors have positive attitudes and experiences about the festival; or if they sense it is good belonging to the community of the given festival (brand), there is a higher chance for visiting the festival again.

It can be questionable where the recommendation intention takes place in the described narrower and broader loyalty definitions. Based on the study of Grappi and Montanari (2011), it is worth measuring recommendation intention separately from re-attending intention, from commitment and from the sense of brand community. However, similar to re-attending intention, recommendation intention can be treated as an outcome of affective elements. I suppose, if a visitor has strong emotional bonds, there can be a higher chance for recommending the festival to others. However, describing the phenomenon of recommendation and word-of-mouth can be the goal of a different study.

4. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to describe the concept of loyalty in the case of music festivals. After a discussion about the loyalty approaches and general definitions, special

music festival loyalty models and definitions were taken into consideration. It can be concluded, that generally a complex approach is needed for examining loyalty. However, there are several differences even within complex approaches as well. These differences can be explained by a product- and situation depending interpretation of loyalty. In the case of music festival models, still there are some differences, but a frequently applied definition is the re-attending intention, which can be interpreted as an outcome of affective components. Based on the statements above, this paper suggests using re-attending intention as a narrow definition of loyalty. However, it is also important to include affective components (e.g. commitment, sense of a brand community) in a complex music festival loyalty model.

Examination of loyalty can be highly important for the managers of music festivals; besides efficiency considerations, an important question for music festival managers whether the visitors will attend the festival again. However, music festivals can be considered as a special service, which can be an interesting research field for the scientific sector as well. From the point of view of both sectors, this paper can offer a possible framework for further examinations.

However, there are some limitations of this study. If we consider loyalty as an outcome, besides the affective components, several other influencing factors can exist. This paper did not cover questions such as defining the relationship between loyalty and satisfaction in the case of music festivals, but it would be necessary for developing a complex music festival loyalty model. The concept of festival recommendation can also be mentioned among further research questions; and the clarification of the role of brand communities in the case of music festivals should be described in a more detailed way. This study offers a basis and a framework for the research questions mentioned above.

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