CultureCase

Music festivals can really boost the notoriety of lesser known artists

This research was conducted by **Juan D. Montoro-Ponsa** and **Manuel Cuadrado-García** at **Universitat de València, Spain**

Summary

This paper shows how artists on the bill of a high profile music festival do or do not grab the attention of the wider public as a result of their performance. The researchers used Google Trends to measure the impact of performing at Primavera Sound festival in Barcelona in 2018. By observing how 73 acts fared in the Trends Index before and after three years of the festival they show that 77 per cent of the performers experienced ‘a rise in the volume of searches one week after the festival’ and the effect was ‘still significant for 60 per cent of the performers three weeks after the event’. They also show that the ‘magnitude of this increase’ in the Trends Index is ‘less for better-known artists and superstars’. This means the lesser-known acts get a bigger than average jump in exposure and notoriety.

Festivals are increasingly important in the musical life of the developed world

Festivals do not just bring acts and audiences together, they ‘co-produce’ a cultural product by curating a lineup, they hunt out new talent and package it, and ultimately this helps shape public taste in music. In Spain festival-goers made up ‘5 per cent of the total attendance of popular music performances in 2008’ now it is more than 20 per cent. Similarly, ‘large festivals represent in 2017 over 50 per cent of total income in the sector, up from 20 per cent in 2008’. The 2018 Primavera Sound Festival in Barcelona attracted an audience of over 208,000 for 242 performances.

The findings are useful for artists; but even more useful for the big music festivals

They show that participating in high profile events which have a strong brand and credible reputation can give a big awareness boost to smaller and lesser known acts. The festivals could use this information to their advantage by negotiating lower performance fees for emerging artists.

Keywords

music **spain** **festivals**

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