

**Festivals and Product Life Cycle:
An Exploratory Study in the Rhône-Alpes Region**

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Abstract :

The purpose of this study was to assess the validity of the product life cycle concept with a cultural product such as festivals. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with festival directors in the Rhône-Alpes region. Results indicate that marketing strategies vary with respect to the age of the festival and that the life of a festival can be extended by using appropriate marketing actions.

Key words: marketing, festivals, product life cycle

Résumé :

L'objectif de cette étude était de vérifier dans quelle mesure le concept de cycle de vie du produit peut s'appliquer à un produit culturel tel le festival. Des entretiens individuels en profondeur ont été réalisés auprès de directeurs de festivals en Rhône-Alpes afin de dégager leurs stratégies marketing. Les résultats de ces entretiens confirment que les stratégies appliquées varient selon l'âge du festival et que la vie d'un festival peut être prolongée grâce à des actions marketing spécifiques.

Mots clés : marketing, festivals, cycle de vie du produit

Introduction

The number of festivals in France has increased significantly in the last few decades. In 1992, Mollard (1993, p.13) mentioned 1000 festivals, while in August 2005, the website of the Ministry of Culture contained over 3000 entries under the heading "festival", a threefold increase in 13 years.

The word "festival" originally referred to a religious event; in its contemporary meaning, a festival is "an organized series of concerts, films, etc., typically one held annually in the same place" (Oxford English Dictionary). A festival is thus characterized by its periodical recurrence (generally annual or biennial) during a limited time period, a set of performances related to one genre, a specific location. Genres present at festivals range from traditional performing arts – theatre, music, dance – to cultural activities, such as movies, books, but also gastronomy or rodeos.

Grisel (1993, p. 4) identified three categories of festivals. The first category includes creative festivals, whose objective is purely cultural or artistic, and aims at presenting original work or discovering new talents. These festivals usually have a national if not international reach. The second category is represented by tourist festivals whose objective is to create an event in specific locations, monuments or tourist sites and thereby attracting a new audience. The third category concerns image festivals which seek to increase the awareness or improve the image of certain locations in order to capitalize on media coverage. While neither mutually exclusive nor static, these categories nevertheless allow to classify festivals according to their main mission at one point in time. For example, the Cannes film festival can probably be categorized as an image festival for the city of Cannes, but it is mainly a creative festival. Similarly, the theatre festival in Avignon, held in the Cour des Papes, contributed to increasing the number of visitors to this heritage site, thus falling under the tourist festival category. It is nevertheless a creative festival. Alternatively, the street performance festival in Aurillac started off as an image festival for this small town in the centre of France, but evolved to being a truly creative festival in this up-and-coming genre.

Given these three different missions, festivals provide significant cultural outcomes as well as economical and social ones. The increase in out-of-town visitors during a festival has a significant impact on tourism-related incomes for the venue. New jobs are created, either in the cultural or the tourism sector, but in addition, many smaller municipalities benefit from the presence of a festival as it tends to reverse rural depopulation and give them a new boost.

As early as 1993, Grisel indicated that the burning question was to find out how festivals could be made to last (p. 5). This is indeed a fascinating question, because what factors can account for the longevity of some festivals, such as Cannes, jazz in Antibes, or Vaison-la-Romaine (created in 1922)? Similarly, what made the comic strips festival in Angoulême, the street festival in Aurillac, or Jazz in Marciac so successful, despite being held in towns which are not traditional tourist destinations? According to Grisel, the artistic quality of the festival, its integration in the local life, support from local authorities, adequate promotion, and proper funding are some key factors of their duration.

The question of maintaining festivals is still relevant in 2005, if not more so. Our attempt in this paper, is to go beyond some of the generic success factors mentioned above, and in particular, apply the marketing concept of product life cycle to festivals.

We will start by reviewing some of the main ideas behind product life cycle, after which the results of an exploratory study conducted in the Rhône-Alpes region will be presented and discussed. We will conclude by suggesting some new avenues of research designed to increase our understanding of success factors for festivals.

Product Life Cycle

Overview

Few concepts in marketing have been as much lauded and criticized as the product life cycle concept. Made popular thanks to the publication of Levitt's article in the Harvard Business Review (1965), the product life cycle concept has been included in most basic marketing textbooks. Based on the biological life cycle, the concept suggests that a product evolves over time and covers four distinct phases, introduction, growth, maturity, and decline, before disappearing. These four different phases are characterized by a specific growth rate for sales; during the introduction phase, sales grow only slightly but become exponential as the product reaches the growth phase. When the growth rate reaches its point of inflexion and becomes marginally negative, i.e. increasing at a decreasing rate, the product is said to reach maturity. The final phase, decline, is reached when sales begin an outright negative growth. Graphically, these four phases of sales over time can be represented by an S-shaped curve.

The evolution of growth rates is directly linked to the rate of adoption of new products as discussed in Roger's theory of diffusion of innovations (1962). According to this theory, sales during the introduction phase are dependent of purchases made by the innovator segment, representing about 2.5% of the population; during the growth phase, sales are made to the early adopters (13.5%) and the early majority (34%) segments. Sales at maturity are made to the late majority (34%) or to the previous segments, in a situation of repurchase.

The product life cycle concept also suggests specific marketing actions according to each phase (see Table 1).

The product life cycle concept has nevertheless been criticized at various levels. Firstly, the idea itself of a life cycle for a product is not as clear cut, as many examples can be found of products that have existed for generations and do not appear to disappear, e.g. pieces of furniture, refrigerators, automobiles as well as museums or theatres. Secondly, it is difficult to

evaluate in which phase a product is and, concurrently, at which point a product evolves from one phase to another. It is therefore difficult to apply the recommended strategies for each phase of the life cycle.

Thirdly, authors do not agree on the unit of analysis to be used when attempting to apply the product life cycle. For some, e.g. Wind (1982, p. 49), it can be applied at the product class, product form, product line or brand level. For Day (1986, p. 61) and Lambkin and Day (1989, p. 4), the product life cycle is only valid at the product class level, which is the unique combination of the “application of a distinct *technology* to the provision of a particular *function* for a specific customer *group*” (Day, 1986, p. 61). Hooley (1995) and Golder and Tellis (2004) performed their study using this unit of analysis to identify the various characteristics of each of the phases of the product life cycle. Dhalla and Yuspeh (1976), alternatively, indicate that the product life cycle can neither be considered at the class nor the form level. Moon (2005), for example, uses individual brands to discuss product life cycle issues.

Fourthly, the S-shaped curve has been often criticized in the literature as well as the length of each phase. As early as 1967, Cox (cited in Wind, 1982, p. 51) identified at least six different shapes of life cycles, among which the polynomial function, i.e. a cycle and re-cycle shape, in his study of 258 pharmaceutical products. A number of authors report more than four phases in the life cycle: Booz, Allen & Hamilton (cited in Wind, 1982, p. 53) and Day (1986, p. 90) present five phases, although not identical.

Fifthly, a fundamental criticism was formulated by Dhalla and Yuspeh (1976) with respect to the validity of the product life cycle concept. These authors argue that the shape of the sales-time function is determined by the marketing actions of the manager and that, consequently, generic recommendations for each phase are irrelevant. In other words, the product life cycle concept suffers from a “chicken-and-egg” problem.

We feel that these critics and comments can be summarized as follows. First, it is important to distinguish the product life cycle according to whether one seeks, on the one hand, to validate its shape and phases on existing sales data, and on the other hand, to use it as a managerial decision-making tool. In the first case, most empirical studies find that there is more than one shape to describe the evolution of sales over time (Cox, 1967; Polli and Cook, 1969; Dhalla

and Yuspeh, 1976). In the second case, studies show that managers tend to apply the generic strategies recommended in textbooks (e.g. McDonald, 1992; Kinra, 1993; Hooley, 1995).

Furthermore, we believe that the debate surrounding which unit of analysis should be considered when discussing the product life cycle concept is directly related to what was mentioned above. Indeed, empirical validation of the product life cycle provides better results when performed on a product class compared to other units of analysis. Alternatively, managerial decisions at each phase of the life cycle occur at a brand level, regardless of product class. Finally, we believe it is important to accept the idea that not all products go through a life cycle, that some products, some brands or some product classes will never disappear, either because some changes in technology, customer groups, or product function will allow them to go through a new cycle and therefore also remain on the market.

The Product Life Cycle in the Cultural Sector

As with many other marketing concepts, the product life cycle has been introduced in textbooks dealing with arts marketing (e.g. Kotler and Scheff, 1997, p. 209; Kolb, 2000, p. 12; Colbert, 2000, p. 38). These textbooks provide essentially the same concepts as in general marketing texts, i.e. the S-shaped curve for audience (in replacement for sales), four phases of the life cycle as well as general guidelines for the appropriate actions for each phase.

A number of cultural institutions have applied specific strategies to deal with an issue related to the product life cycle. For example, London's Tate Gallery applied a "brand extension" strategy when it opened the Tate Modern, a complementary product to an existing one. Another example is the Opéra National de Lyon, which introduced seats priced at 8€ for people aged under 28, in order to attract a younger audience.

Examples abound in the festival area. Most new festivals are relatively simple events, consisting of a limited number of performances, launched by one or two aficionados in the field. A counter-example, however, is the Festival de la Côte d'Opale. Indeed, when it was initiated by the Nord-Pas de Calais region in 1975, it covered 25 municipalities of the region, with a wide variety of events in various disciplines. Needless to say, such a large-scale event led to major organizational problems as well as huge financial problems. As a consequence, the festival's organizers decided to decrease the number of venues from 25 to 11 and to focus the festival on music, essentially jazz and popular rock (Drehan, 1993).

Once the festival has been launched and becomes popular, a very common evolution is the addition of new activities, such as theatre workshops, musical stages, “off” performances as well as developing merchandising sold on location. In addition, during the growth phase of a festival, increased attention is devoted to the quality of performers. Jazz in Marciac, for instance, created in 1978 with only one concert, invited world-famous jazz musicians only a few years after its inception. This strategy allowed the festival to become one of the most sought-after jazz events in the South-West region of France. Alternatively, other festivals seem to stagnate during their growth phase. The theatre festival of Arlempdes, created in 1995, for example, had a very successful introduction period, in terms of both the quality of the artistic programme and the number of people it attracted. Nevertheless, it has not attracted a larger audience in the past few years in spite of its seating capacity. Among the reasons for this situation is a deliberate refusal by its director to turn the festival into a mass event for fear of losing its cosy “ambiance”.

During the maturity stage, many festivals tend to stick to their strategies with little variation. Quite often, there is a change in visual identity, either to reinforce their image or to slightly reposition it, as well as changes in pricing policies. In many cases, festival directors seek to insure a permanent inflow of cash through partnerships with private sponsors in order to diversify their sources of income.

Similarly to any product category, the decline phase of a festival calls for crucial decisions. A typical strategy when the festival audience decreases is to look for rationalization opportunities: focus on core artistic disciplines, decrease the number of performances, shorten the duration of the festival, lower the periodicity, etc.. Obviously, festivals disappear each year, but other festivals manage to overcome their difficulties and rebound. The Festival of Vaison-la-Romaine, created in 1922, went through a major crisis in the late 1980s. It started with the resignation of its artistic director and with him, a large number of major sponsors. In addition, public funding was seriously cut which resulted in the entire cancellation of the 1990 edition of the festival (Blanc, 1993). It was only after a few years of haphazard activities that the festival was reinstated, in 1996, with a focus on dance and movement. Since then, the audience has kept growing and the 2005 edition included major figures of contemporary dance, such as Martha Graham and Maurice Béjart.

If we consider the entire marketing mix, marketing strategies for festivals can be established as follows. The programming (i.e. the “product”) during the introduction stage should be basic, which implies, for example, to focus on one discipline, to have a limited number of performances, to be held in one location, etc.. Once into the growth stage, the festival programming should become more important both with respect to the number of performances and their quality. In addition, there can be an increase in the number of performance locations as well as the introduction of services. Once the festival has reached its maturity stage, a typical strategy should be to diversify the artistic disciplines or genres in order to attract a larger audience. During the decline stage, festivals should only keep the most popular performances.

It is a common fact that pricing policies in the arts sector do not always abide by the same rules as in the commercial sector. Two main characteristics of cultural activities are responsible for this difference: firstly, economies of scale cannot be achieved easily, in particular for performing arts as the cost of a performance remains identical regardless of the number of performances. Secondly, cultural activities are often subsidized, at least in part, by public monies, which excludes a profit-making objective. In spite of this, both typical pricing strategies applied during the introduction stage of a product are relevant in the cultural sector. Festivals can thus opt for a penetration strategy, which implies a low price – or even free admission – in order to attract a large audience, or they can opt for a skimming strategy, where price is based on a cost-plus approach and which thus ensures that at least part of the production costs are covered. One should expect a penetration strategy in situations where public funding is important and, alternatively, a skimming strategy when there is little or no public funding. During the growth stage, the pricing strategy should evolve in such ways that financial incentives are given to the audience to increase their loyalty to the event, for example by means of a pass. Furthermore, if the quality of the programming improves, there should be an increase in price for performances by better known artists. At maturity, festivals should attempt to pre-sell a large number of seats before the event, which can be made easier if prices are lower than during the festival. During the decline stage, the pricing policy should be set so as to insure that seats are filled, for example by selling tickets at last minute prices.

With respect to the number of locations where tickets should be sold, one should expect that during the early stage of the life cycle, tickets will only be available at the location of the performance, while during the growth stage alternative locations should handle part of the

sale. At maturity, the number of points of sale should be rationalized in order to keep only those that contribute significantly to the sale of tickets. During the decline stage, sale of tickets should be made at the performance location only.

Communication objectives and budgets should evolve in the same fashion as commercial products. This means that during the introduction stage, communication objectives should be to achieve awareness and the communication budget should be established according to available means. During the growth stage, awareness continues to be an issue in order to attract a larger audience, while at the same time stimulating loyalty. The communication budget should represent around 20% of the total budget of the festival. Public relation activities are crucial during both stages. During the maturity stage, the communication strategy should include all available tools in order to reach the widest possible audience but also to keep a loyal customer base. The proportion of the total budget allocated to communication should decrease compared to the growth stage. When in the declining phase, the communication objective should be to keep awareness, but the budget should decrease.

At this point, we can only speculate on these guidelines as no formal study has been identified dealing with this topic. We therefore decided to design a study to evaluate whether festival marketing strategies concur with our assumptions. The study is described below.

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to identify marketing strategies applied by festival managers and to classify these strategies according to the date of inception of the festival. The study involved a number of steps. The first step was to compile a list of festivals from which a sample of potential respondents would be chosen. Since no such list exists at the national level, the decision was made to restrict the analysis to the Rhône-Alpes region, the second-most important French region after Ile-de-France (Paris). But even for the region, it was difficult to obtain an exhaustive list of festivals. It was finally through a publication of the Agence de la Musique et de la Danse Rhône-Alpes (AMDRA) that a listing was established of more than 150 performing arts festivals. This listing contained various data for each festival, such as its location, contact information, discipline, dates of performances as well as year of inception.

A basic operation on the data base resulted in the distribution of festival creation between 1968 and 2003, as shown in Figure 1. There is a steady increase in the number of festivals until 1996, after which new creations decline, with the noticeable exception of 1999, the year during which 21 new festivals were created. While no definite explanation exists for this outlying value, it may be in anticipation of the celebrations of the year 2000.

The second step in the study called for the selection of a sample of festivals representative of various stages of the product life cycle. Given the difficulty of precisely identifying at which stage a festival stands, a more empirical method had to be used to classify the festivals in one of the four stages of the product life cycle. The decision was made to use date of creation as a proxy for stage in the life cycle. This, however, brought another difficulty since 25 festivals had a missing value for date of creation. Consequently, rather than sampling from four sub-groups (introduction, growth, maturity, decline), we considered the missing-value group as a separate sub-group from which to sample.

For lack of a better method, the decision was made to divide the data base into four groups of equivalent size, i.e. according to quartiles. These were found to be at 1992, 1997, and 1999. Using these thresholds, we hypothesized that the 33 festivals created between 1968 and 1992 would be in the decline stage; the 41 festivals created between 1993 and 1997 in the maturity stage; the 30 festivals created in 1998 and 1999 in the growth stage; and the 23 festivals created after 2000 in the introduction stage. Although these sub-samples should – by definition – be of equal size, it is evidently not the case here and is due to the problem of dealing with integers.

Festivals in each group were then sorted into alphabetical order and five festivals were randomly selected in each of the five groups resulting in a sample of 25 festivals. All festival directors were contacted in Spring 2005 either by phone or by e-mail to ask for their participation in the study. Only nine directors agreed, but due to scheduling problems, eight of them could be interviewed. A summary of these festivals is presented in Table 2. In spite of this small sample, all (presumed) stages of the life cycle are represented, there is also a variation with respect to the location of the festival – in major cities and in rural areas – the type of discipline – contemporary and classical music, theatre, street theatre, dance – , and the category of festival – creative, tourist, image.

Being of an exploratory nature, the data collection called for face-to-face or telephone interviews with festival or marketing directors. A semi-structured questionnaire was constructed to probe into the marketing actions and orientations of the festival. The first part of the questionnaire contained general questions on the festival: name, date of creation, address, name and function of the person interviewed. The second part of the questionnaire dealt with aspects related to the programming: types of disciplines, duration of the festival, locations of the performances, nature of the performances (creation or existing productions), nature of the artists (professional or amateur), origin of the performers, nature of additional services and festival merchandise. The third part of the questionnaire dealt with pricing issues, such as the general admission price, preferential pricing policies, special combination offers, and evolution of the price. The fourth and fifth parts of the questionnaire concerned distribution and price issues, respectively. The sixth part dealt with audiences, such as the size and origin of the audience as well as socio-demographic profile. The seventh part of the questionnaire probed into financing matters, with questions on the size of the total budget, private and public funding partners, nature of corporate sponsorship if any. The next section investigated competition, while the last part was concerned with past and future objectives and problems encountered.

Results

Festivals in the Introduction Stage

“Friture sur le festival” takes place in Quincieux, a small town located 30 km northwest of Lyon, with a population of 3000, over three consecutive days in June. Launched in 2000 to create a local animation, this festival is typical of an image festival. About 15 performances are scheduled outdoors and in a big top; these are mainly musical performances of any type. In addition, there are a number of theatre performances as well as programmes for young audiences. The audience is mainly local and about 500 people attend each year. All age groups are represented. There is a single entrance fee of 8 € and there is also a possibility to buy a subscription. Reduced rates are available for students, seniors, and the unemployed. The entrance fee has not changed since the festival was launched. Tickets are available in five different locations as well as on location. They are on sale two months before the start of the festival. Due to a limited budget, communication in traditional media is kept to a minimum, while most of the effort is placed on media relations. The objective of the communication is

to attract a large audience and to build awareness. Most of the funding is private. Future projects are being planned – although not revealed – which should give the event a wider scope. The interview clearly demonstrated that the organizers are searching for a viable, long-term orientation.

“Nuits sonores” completed its third edition in May 2005; a five-day event in Lyon devoted exclusively to electronic music. About 150 activities were scheduled, in open air, in bars, clubs, and in performance halls. In addition, movies and exhibits were scheduled with national and international artists. The total audience, close to 25,000 people, originates from all parts of France and from abroad. It is largely a young audience, under the age of 45. Many performances are free, otherwise the entrance fees range from 15 to 25 € depending on the type of performance. Reduced rates are available for students, seniors, and unemployed people, and a pass system enables ticket buying at a discount rate. There are also special offers such as a free meal with the purchase of a ticket. Prices have not varied since its inception. Tickets are available two months before the start of the festival in nine different locations. Communication is done in all traditional media to achieve awareness. Its budget represents approximately 20% of the total budget. Financing is both public and private. A large number of media are sponsors of the event, which enables good coverage of the festival. This festival is classified as a creative festival.

“Concerts en balade et scènes aux champs” is a summer festival which takes place each Thursday in the months of July and August in the Parc du Pilat, a regional conservation area located about 30 km south of Lyon and 15 km east of Saint-Etienne, the second-largest city in the region. The festival offers a formula combining a hike in the park followed by a performance and a meal and is directly targeted at families. The performances alternate between theatre, music, street performances, and circus. During its 2004 edition, the festival attracted more than 1,700 people, on average 240 people for each performance. The audience is mainly regional. There is no entrance fee, therefore no distribution network. Communication represents about 10% of the total budget and is aimed at increasing knowledge by placing advertisements in regional media. The event is entirely funded by public money. It is a tourist festival whose objective is to develop the Pilat heritage.

Festivals in the Growth Stage

“La rue des artistes” takes place in Saint-Chamond, a large suburb of Saint-Etienne, on the banks of the Gier river, over a weekend in June. The festival was created in 1998 mainly to develop cultural activities in the area, making it therefore an image festival. Performances were initially concentrated on music, but other disciplines were added, such as theatre, street performances, and for the first time in 2005, visual arts. Both national and international artists are represented. All age groups are represented in the audience, but it is mainly a local one. In 2004, approximately 5000 people attended one of the performances. Access to all performances is free, but food and drinks stands generate a considerable amount of revenue for the festival. The objective of the communication is to attract audiences from a wider geographic area. To achieve this objective, 20% of the budget is allocated to advertisements in traditional media. A large number of public relations activities are also organized. Funding is mainly public, but there is also a number of private sponsors providing services and merchandise for the festival.

“Jazz à Montbrison” is a musical festival taking place in mid-March with a series of jazz concerts. It is part of the regular programming of the cultural service of the Montbrison municipality and takes place in a theatre. Montbrison lies about 20 km northwest of Saint-Etienne and has a population of 20,000. French and international artists are invited to perform. The audience is mainly local, with the 25-60 age group largely represented. The 2004 edition of the festival attracted 600 people. Ticket prices vary depending on the type of performance; special discounts are offered to students, the unemployed, and senior citizens. There are also subscriptions available for the regular performances which include the festival and there is a pass system, which enables concert ticket purchasing at lower prices. In addition to the theatre’s box office, points of sale exist at various locations. Sales made at these locations represent 30% of total ticket sales. Communication aims at widening the audience and is done in traditional media. The communication budget is included in the yearly budget of the cultural service.

Festival at the Maturity Stage

“Les Nuits de Fourvière” has existed since 1993 under that denomination, but as a festival, it dates back to 1946. The purpose of the festival is to organize cultural performances in the Roman theatres of the Fourvière archeological site in Lyon. The festival is held between mid-June and early August, with daily performances of theatre, dance, all types of music, and

cinema. A large number of well-known national and international artists are invited to perform. More than 80,000 tickets are sold each year, although they are mainly from the region. Ticket prices vary from 7 to 39 € depending on the type of performance. Reduced rates are available to students, the unemployed, and seniors, and a pass system is also available. About 40% of the tickets are sold through national sales networks. Communication is done in all traditional media to inform the public on the performances and to increase awareness. The communication budget represents 15% of the total budget of the festival. Financing is mainly public, but many private sponsors contribute either financially or in nature. Although the festival schedules a number of artistic creations, the festival is mainly tourist.

Festivals in the Decline Stage

“Été musical Loire en Rhône-Alpes” was created in 1984 by the cultural service of the local government of the Loire. It takes place during the summer months in various heritage locations of the area. The performances are mainly classical music concerts. The objective of the festival is to encourage the population to visit these heritage sites and is therefore classified as a tourist festival. On average, the festival attracts 4,000 visitors, mainly in the 50+ age group. In order to attract a younger audience, the last editions of the festival included other styles of music, such as jazz, as well as dance and theatre performances. The entrance fee is set at 15 €, regardless of the performance. Tickets are sold – in addition to the locations of the performances – in nine other locations, which account for 10% of total ticket sale. Financing is exclusively public.

“Est-Ouest” is a festival in Die, a small community in the southern part of the region. The festival takes place over 10 days in September. It was created in 1989 to develop activities in the area during the tourist shoulder season, it can be classified as an image festival. Events are multidisciplinary but revolve around a central or eastern European country. Many French and foreign artists are invited to perform. It attracts approximately 20,000 people for each edition, of all ages and mainly from the region. The entrance fee is set at 12 € for each performance; there are reduced prices and a pass system. Tickets are sold exclusively at the venue. The communication objective is to increase awareness of the festival in order to attract a larger audience. The communication budget has been lowered to 10% of the total budget. Public financing represents about 80% of the budget, the remainder being private sponsors. After the 2004 edition, a large number of board members resigned from their position, leaving the

current team with only limited room for new developments. But the team is also short of new ideas. As a consequence, the decision has been taken to switch to a biennial event.

Discussion

As expected, these case studies show that different commercial activities are planned depending on the date of creation of the festival. In addition, the marketing actions that have been identified, correspond to what was described in the previous section regarding programming, pricing, sales channels, and communication. Moreover, there seems to be a close relationship between date of inception and stage of the life cycle, with two exceptions. These are, on the one hand, the festival “Nuits sonores” and, on the other hand, “Eté musical en Loire”. In the first case, given the date of creation, we assumed that it would be in the introduction stage. However, with its 150 events and 25,000 spectators, it should rather be considered in the growth stage. In the second case, we hypothesized that the festival would be in the decline stage, but the current conditions indicate that it is still in the maturity stage. Indeed, by deciding to diversify the musical genres, the festival organizers managed to attract a new audience thereby extending the life cycle of the festival. These actions – typical of what is expected to introduce for a product in a declining trend – have been effective.

Although we only have a limited number of cases on which to base our analysis, it seems clear that applying different marketing actions depending on the age of the festival, enables to ensure its longevity, and thereby its success. Similarly, the absence of corrective actions at the appropriate time can endanger the existence of the festival, as is the case for “Est-Ouest”. The analysis also shows that the debate surrounding the concept of the product life cycle remains for festivals. For instance, the fact that “Nuits sonores” is already in its growth stage although more recent than “Friture sur le festival” immediately refers to the issue of the length of each stage. This, in turn, poses the “chicken-and-egg” issue: is the success of “Nuits sonores” due to its marketing actions or to an endogenous popularity? The S-shape of the product life cycle should probably also be scrutinized; indeed, the festival “Eté musical en Loire”, which has existed for more than 20 years, continues to attract a large audience. A more detailed analysis of tickets sold would likely show a polynomial shape of cycle and recycle. It is, however, too early to draw conclusions based on such a limited sample and a wider survey seems necessary to generalize the results.

Furthermore, the success of a festival cannot be measured solely through its marketing actions. As mentioned at the beginning, other criteria must be met to ensure a successful festival. More specifically, we suggest the four following aspects: uniqueness, quality, legal structure, and financing. Uniqueness can be measured by the artistic discipline presented during the festival, but also the uniqueness of the location, or its format. For instance, “Nuits sonores” is a festival devoted to electronic music, a musical genre that is in full development but with a limited number of events. We feel that this uniqueness contributes a lot to the success of the festival. A similar case can be made for the street performance festival in Aurillac or the comic strip festival in Angoulême. Uniqueness of the location can also contribute to success: heritage sites, archaeological sites, churches, or chateaux are always a big draw for the audience. The format of the festival can also be a success factor, in “Concerts en balade” which combines an outdoor activity with a cultural activity. Similarly, the success of “Nuits sonores” may be partly due to the fact that many performances are scheduled after 10 p.m. and go well into the night, if not morning.

A second success factor is the quality of the festival. Although artistic quality is paramount, one should also pay attention to the quality of the organization, quality of the relations with the audience as well as with artists, and quality of the performance space. Most festivals resort to volunteers to help out with the logistics of the festival. For the director of “La rue des artistes”, the actions of these volunteers are key to the success of the event. The manner in which artists are welcomed on the festival location is similarly important. In some cases, especially in small communities, the local population houses and/or feeds the artists. This aspect is often considered by artists in their choice of accepting to perform during a festival.

A third factor relates to the legal form of the festival. Whether established as an association or a cultural institution, the structure of the festival bears important consequences on its functioning, its management, and its opportunities to benefit from public funding. A more professional attitude of the event is often a stronger guarantee of its success.

Finally, the fourth factor has to do with financing of the festival. Even though many sources of funding exist, either at the municipal, regional, or national levels, many festivals are also supported by private donors, either directly or indirectly. But the search for appropriate funding can be a time-consuming activity and it is therefore important to funnel resources in an efficient manner.

These various comments have been established based on the various interviews with festival directors and readings on the topic. We feel that a general and more complete model can be elaborated enabling current and future festival directors to better define and anticipate the issues they may face. As mentioned earlier, festivals are cultural activities which provide important artistic, economic, and social value and it is therefore worthwhile studying them in more depth.

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Table 1**Marketing Strategies and Product Life Cycle**

	Introduction	Growth	Maturity	Decline
Product	Basic	Offer extensions, services	Diversity of brands and models	Phase out weaker items
Price	Cost-plus	Lower price for market-broadening	Defensive	Maintain profit margin
Distribution	Selective	Intensive	Intensive and extensive	Selective
Communication	Create awareness	Stimulate wider trial	Stress brand differences and benefits	Reminder

Adapted from Day, 1986, p. 90

Table 2**Description of the Sample**

Stage	Name	Creation	Discipline	Location	Category
Introduction	Friture sur le festival	2000	Music	Quincieux	Image
Introduction	Nuits sonores	2003	Electronic music	Lyon	Creation
Introduction	Concerts en balade	2003	Music and theatre	Parc du Pilat	Tourist
Growth	La rue des artistes	1998	Multidisciplinary	Saint-Chamond	Image
Growth	Jazz à Montbrison	1999	Music	Montbrison	Creation
Maturity	Nuits de Fourvière	1996	Multidisciplinary	Lyon	Tourist
Decline	Est-Ouest	1989	Multidisciplinary	Die	Image
Decline	Été musical en Loire	1984	Music	Loire department	Tourist

Figure 1

Festival Creation in Rhône-Alpes Region

1968-2003

