

Over the last two decades there has been a steady decline in the general attendance in large and medium sized music and entertainment events. As local scenes have continued to blow up, nationwide tours and concerts have consistently seen a drop in popularity. This isn't due to a shift in our culture or a lack of interest in attending public events. Rather, there are two factors to consider: the rising costs associated with such an event, and the value of convenience over attendance. Time and resources have become scarce for a large percentage of the concert going population, and practicality is now one of the larger factors at play when deciding on events to go to.

When considering the possibilities of going to a public event, the myriad of associated costs is one of the forerunning thoughts on the minds of attendees. Thanks to shifting profit streams as a result of streaming and piracy, ticket prices have increased by more than 250% since 1996, drastically outpacing normal inflation (Shaw). Artists now have to make the bulk of their revenues through live shows and merchandise sold at the shows, leading to astronomical ticket prices. Couple this with the costs of putting on a spectacle show (such as Travis Scott's indoor roller coaster or Kanye West's flying stage) and the rise of monopoly services such as Ticketmaster and LiveNation passing costs off to the consumer, and it is easy to see how ticket prices could rise so dramatically. This is without even considering the costs assigned to transportation and parking, merchandise, and concessions (merchandise costs rose at much the same pace as tickets, driving as much as 30% of artist revenue) (Ruvo).

In addition to the price pressure shown by live events, it is important to understand the markets that live music appeals to. According to a LiveNation survey, more than two-thirds of people ages 18-49 attend music events, with 62% saying they attended both a concert and a festival in the last year (Lavigne-Delville). However, this is the same demographic that is currently the most economically downtrodden in decades. Generation X (38-50) and Millennials (22-37) only hold 19% of the nation's wealth, at 16% and 3% respectively (Pesce). Meanwhile, Baby Boomers account for over 55% of the wealth. What does this mean for our attendees? It indicates that accessibility to large concerts is trending downwards, with a large portion of price entry points higher than the average concert goer can afford. In fact, nearly one third of Millennials took on debt to attend a music festival in 2019 (Hoffower). Despite the increasing disparity between music fans and promoters, ticket, merchandise, and concessions prices continue to rise.

Related to this is the growing importance of convenience to the average attendee. For many, attending a large scale live event has lost its appeal. In addition to all of the costs mentioned prior, more and more people are choosing to support a smaller, local music scene due to its proximity and accessibility. Small shows in clubs and smaller indoor venues are becoming increasingly popular because they afford fans a live music experience while maintaining an intimate atmosphere and a more personal connection. Performances at clubs and bars offer fans the chance to attend more than one event in a week at a fraction of the cost of major shows. They also showcase undiscovered local talent, something you won't find at a Beyonce concert.

Ticket price and accessibility is likely the driving factor in the decline in live attendance seen in the last decade. However, since tickets are still selling at higher and higher prices, this is a trend that may continue to get worse before it is remedied.

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