



Report on the BA Festival 2007

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Summary

- The responses to the Event Feedback Form, from 382 people, show a generally positive response, with few negative judgements.
- There are areas where higher ratings of 'excellent' or 'exceeded expectations' would be desirable, especially in the extent to which the event is 'participative', and in whether scientific information is new to the audience, the degree of interaction with the audience, being pitched at the right level, and relevance to the individual's interests.
- Write-in comments indicate that *most enjoyable* aspects were how interesting and engaging the topic was, the quality of the speakers, and the general ambience and organisation. Aspects that were *least enjoyable* were, especially, delivery style and comprehensibility, followed by speaker quality and the interest or engagement of the topic
- The pattern of positive and less positive responses varied quite considerably according to the reasons given for attending the Festival. Those who came for mainly casual reasons – dropping in, brought by a friend, looking for entertainment – and those who had a personal interest in the topic, expressed greatest satisfaction. Those with a professional interest in the subject and those who came on school trips expressed least satisfaction.
- Those who found out about the Festival because they are BA members expressed a rather higher level of satisfaction than those who found out about the Festival by other means.
- Nearly six in ten came because they had an interest in science in general or a personal interest in a topic. Three in ten came because of professional interest, study or as part of a school trip.
- A third found out about the Festival from being BA members. Three in ten heard about it through work, school or the University of York. One in six saw a programme or other print media. One in six 'dropped in' or found out by 'other' means. Only one in 20 saw the BA website.
- Three quarters intended to go to other events as well as the one they were rating. Of these, 97% expected to go to two or more, and 58% had a week pass.
- Only 2% said that the event put them off future science events. 57% said they were more likely to attend future science events as a consequence of their experience. The rest were neutral. This related both to their reasons for attending, and their ratings of the event.

Conclusions

- Overall the results are positive but we perhaps need to enhance participation and audience interaction.
- We seem to be meeting the expectations and needs of those who come out of personal interest or more spontaneous 'dropping in' but are less successful with school parties and science professionals. This may be a matter of better labelling of sessions regarding level etc, or better briefing of speakers.

What makes for a good experience?

The strongest rating for the event was for being 'informative', with more than six in ten rating this as 'excellent'. Half gave an 'excellent' rating to 'enjoyable'. The least positive rating was for 'participative' with nearly one in five rating this as 'poor' or 'very poor'.
Table 1

Table 1: Rating	Excellent	Good	Poor/very poor
<i>Total number of responses=318</i>			
Informative	62%	35%	3%
Enjoyable	49%	44%	7%
Overall organisation	44%	48%	8%
Clarity of science	42%	52%	6%
Participative	32%	50%	18%

Less than half felt the event exceeded their expectations on any criterion, the best being the quality of speakers at 46%. Around half felt that their expectations had been met on all the criteria. Around 10% felt that their expectations were not met with regard to audience interaction, pitching the right level, and being relevant. *Table 2*

Table 2: Meeting expectations	Exceeded	Met	Did not meet	No expectations
<i>Total number of responses=318</i>				
Quality of speakers	46%	47%	5%	3%
Interesting topic	44%	46%	7%	3%
Quality of graphics/images	41%	46%	6%	7%
Scientific information new to me	35%	51%	6%	9%
Interaction with audience	31%	49%	10%	10%
Right level for audience	29%	57%	9%	5%
Relevant to my interests	26%	53%	9%	12%

The quality of speakers was a factor in both what people wrote in that they enjoyed most and least. An engaging and interesting topic with new material was most important for enjoyment, and delivery and comprehensibility contributed most to lack of enjoyment.

Table 3: What did you most/least enjoy about the event? (Coding of open-ended responses)	Most	Least
<i>Total number of responses</i>	185	77
Interesting/relevant/ new/engaging	38%	22%
Quality of speaker, interaction with audience	28%	29%
Delivery/comprehensibility of material	5%	49%
Ambience – comfort, organisation	28%	0

There was a strong and clear relationship between the various criteria on how the event was rated and met expectations. People who rated the event as very enjoyable,

informative and participative, and reported that the quality of speakers exceeded expectations, were significantly likely to give very positive ratings on all the other characteristics on the list. Those who gave less positive ratings tended to do so on all characteristics, suggesting a 'halo' effect of generally positive or less positive responses.

How did people hear about the Festival and why did they come?

A third of those who responded had heard about the Festival because they were BA members, though only one in twenty had seen the BA website. One in five had heard about it through work or schools and one in ten through the University of York channels. A surprising 17% just 'dropped in' or heard by 'other' means. Print media and email, including household distribution of the Programme, accounted for 17%.

Table 4: How did you hear about the Festival of Science?

Total number of responses= 282

As a BA member	33%
Through work/school	19%
Dropped in/other	17%
Programme delivered to door or picked up	10%
Through University of York channels	10%
Printed media/poster/email	7%
BA website	4%

The main reason for attending was given (by a third) as 'interest in science in general'. A quarter expressed a personal interest in the topic. One in six had a professional reason for coming, including study.

Table 5: Reasons for attending the Festival

Interested in science in general	33%
Personal interest in topic	24%
Professional interest in subject	17%
School trip	14%
Dropped in, brought by friend,	8%
Entertainment	4%

What is the relationship between reasons for attending, source of information about the Festival and the quality of their experience?

There was a quite strong relationship between how the event was viewed and whether it met expectations, and the reasons given for attending the Festival. It would appear that there are distinct constituencies, and we are serving some better than others. Overall, those who cited 'personal interest', 'dropped in/brought by friend', or 'entertainment' had a considerably more positive perception than those who came on a school trip or from professional interest.

This suggests that people who come with a personal commitment to some aspect of science, or because they want to be stimulated, enjoy the present style of Festival more than those for whom science input is part of a more structured education or professional information package.

Table 6	Reason for attending Festival	
<i>The event was...</i>	Most positive groups	Least positive groups
Enjoyable	Entertainment Dropped in	School trip Professional interest/studying subject
Informative	Dropped in Personal interest in subject	Professional interest School trip
Participative	Entertainment Personal interest	School trip Professional interest
Clarity of science	Personal interest Dropped in	Professional interest School trip
<i>The event met my expectations with regard to....</i>		
Interesting topic	Personal interest Entertainment	School trip Professional interest
Quality of speaker	Personal interest Entertainment	Professional interest Interest in science in general
Relevant or useful to my interests	Personal interest Dropped in	School trip Professional interest
Pitched at right level	Personal interest Dropped in	School trip Professional interest
Scientific information new to me	School trip Dropped in	Professional interest Entertainment
Quality of graphics/images	Dropped in Entertainment	Professional interest Interest in science in general

We also compared those who heard about the Festival as BA members (33% of the total) with those who had other sources of information; BA members, compared to those who heard about the festival from other routes, found the event significantly more *enjoyable*, *informative* and *participative*, and were more happy with the *organisaton*.

Were they turned on or off by the experience?

While the decision to attend single or multiple events probably preceded the experience on which they were reporting, nevertheless it is useful to know the pattern of people's choices. Three quarters expect to attend more than one event, and the Week Pass still seems popular.

Table 7: Other Festival events

Attending other events besides this one	76%
Week pass	58%
5-10 other events	18%
2-5 other events	23%
1 other event	3%

The key question was whether attending the event affected their motivation to attend future events. It would appear that nearly six in ten were inspired, but that two in five were unaffected either way.

Table 8: Has attending this event made you:

Total number of responses=261

More likely to attend a science event again	57%
Less likely to attend a science event again	2%
Neither more nor less likely	42%

More than seven in ten of those who came to the Festival out of a personal interest in the topic, for entertainment, or were brought along by someone else or dropped in, said that they were more likely to attend a science event again. Those giving other reasons for attending were fairly evenly divided between 'more likely' and 'neither more nor less likely' to attend a future event.

Table 8: Reasons for attending	Personal interest in topic	Brought by others/ dropped in	Interest in science in general	Profession or study interest	School trip
Likely to attend a science event again					
More likely	72	71	52	45	41
Neither more nor less likely	28	29	48	55	59

The reported likelihood of attending future science events was associated with all the criteria and with the extent to which the event met expectations; those who were more likely to attend, rated the event significantly higher on all criteria.

Conclusions

The results show a generally positive picture of the 2007 Festival, with a few areas that perhaps need attention. The strong relationship between likelihood of future attendance – a proxy measure of the extent to which they were stimulated by the event – and the ratings of the event on the eleven criteria used, suggests that the criteria chosen do tap dimensions that are meaningful for Festival visitors.

Somewhat more surprising is the relationship between reported reasons for attending, and both ratings on the criteria and overall likelihood of future attendance. The data suggest that different constituencies of Festival visitors do have different expectations about the Festival, and that in 2007 these were met to varying degrees.

A Note: All results reported here are statistically significant; in other words, they are real effects or differences, not just trends, and could not have occurred by mere chance.