



Allure of band clubs defies culture shift

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BAND clubs and village feasts continue to thrive in Malta despite naysayers having 'predicted' for years the eradication of the village culture by the onslaught of technology and globalisation.

With 23,000 current members, 6.5% of the population, band clubs are not going anywhere, although it is important to understand how perception is changing as to what the clubs do and how they can remain relevant in the future.

The fact is that 51.6% of the population believe band clubs are actually good for Maltese culture and traditions while many others think they are indispensable in the organisation of village feasts.

As things stand today, band clubs remain most relevant among people over 56 years of age but younger people, in four different age groups between 18 and 55, also find them relevant, MaltaToday has learned.

A study by Dr Vincent Marmara published yesterday, found that when asked to rate the relevance of band clubs on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being very relevant), persons between 18 and 25 years of age rated clubs' relevance at 3.18.

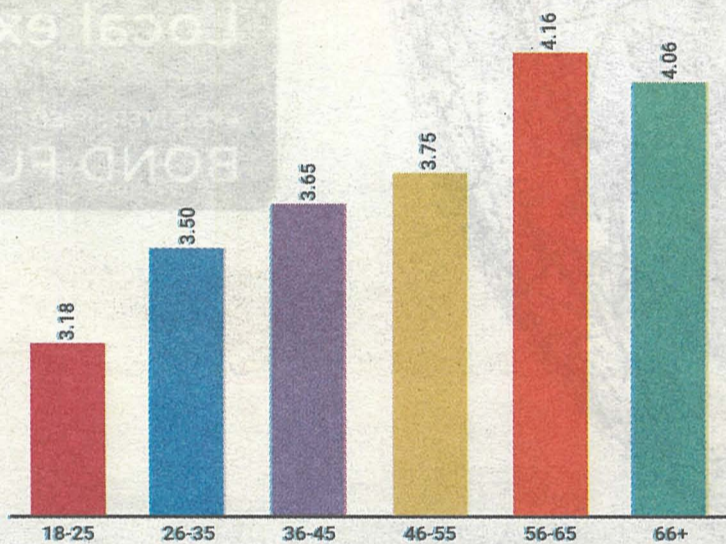
The highest relevance was recorded among people between 56 and 65 years old (4.16) and those above 66 (4.06).

Indicatively – but not surprising to those who follow band clubs and village festas – it is Gozitans who feel the strongest about band clubs at 4.83. Respondents from the northern district of Malta – Mosta, Naxxar, Gharghur, Mgarr, St Paul's Bay and Mellieha – only rated band clubs at 3.29.

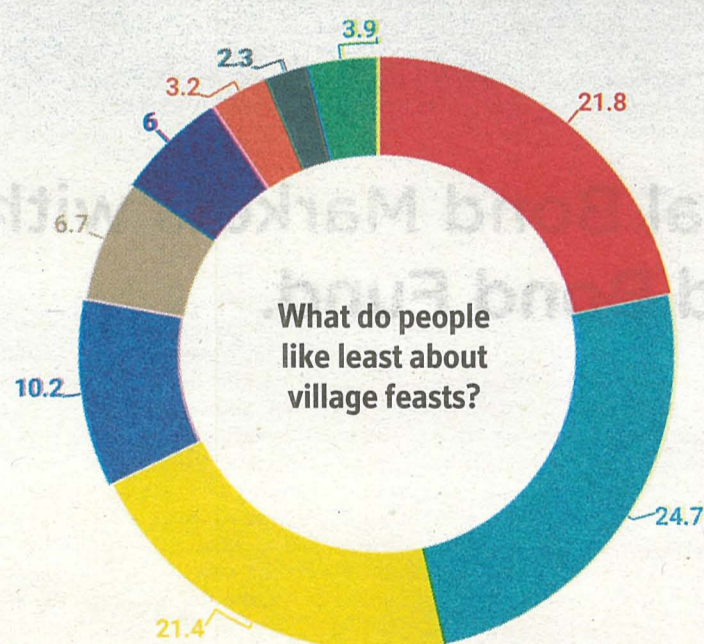
The study also found that 18.9% of Maltese associate band clubs with feasts, followed by a place where musicians meet and learn music (17.7%), music (10.9%) and as a place of recreation (9.2%).

Despite their popularity, the raison d'être of band clubs is not something that is commonly appreciated.

26.4% of respondents believe band clubs are there to teach music to children and youths and to organise feasts. Ironically, a further 23.1% believe clubs are there solely to teach



Above: The relevance of band clubs, on a scale of 1 to 5 for people of different age groups



- Noise from fireworks
- Nothing
- Arguments & insults
- Too fanatic
- Too much alcohol
- Everything
- Lack of parking
- Dirty roads
- Others

music. 17% of respondents, on the other hand, believe the role of band clubs is to play music during feasts, with 2.3% believing clubs are there to enhance the Maltese culture.

But there is no doubt that Maltese

love their band clubs.

When people were asked what they would like to change in band clubs, 35% said they were unsure if there was anything they would, in fact, change. 23.1% insisted they

would change nothing.

But, more importantly, 18% of respondents recognised the need to do away with the arguments between clubs. This was more apparent (29.6%) among people in the southern-eastern district – Birzebbugia, Gudja, Ghaxaq, Kirkop, Safi, Marsaskala, Mqabba, Qrendi, Zejtun and Zurrieq.

Those aged between 18 and 25 are the most unsure (44.1%) about what they would change in band clubs, while persons over 66 felt the most need for less fighting among clubs.

Many believe band clubs are a positive factor because of the unity they nurture among members. This feeling is most predominant in Gozo (58.6%) and in the western (50.9%) and southern harbour (50.5%) districts.

When people were asked what other activities were organised by band clubs throughout the year, coffee mornings were the top activity associated with the clubs at 25.8%. Social and cultural events (18.2%), concerts (12.3%) and bingo (10%) were also mentioned.

43.2% of people interviewed said they could not think of what could be done to encourage more people to visit and involve themselves in band clubs. 53.5% said that more promotional material, like leaflets, needed to be distributed to generate more awareness about events organised by band clubs.

Gozitans are those who believe the most that more unity and less arguments among clubs is key to encouraging more people to visit and get involved in the band clubs.

There is a general agreement across all age groups that there should be greater media awareness about events which are organised.

With regards to sources of information on events related to village feasts, TV is the most important at 51%, followed by word of mouth (40%) and radio (34%).

Internet and social media lagged behind traditional media, except for newspapers, which people agreed provided hardly – if any – news related to feasts. The internet was – understandably – most popular only among people aged between 18 and 25.

The trend was bucked in Gozo, where radio is what most people

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turn to for news about feasts and related activities. In fact, 79% of Gozitans said they got their news from the radio, further evidence of the strength and popularity of local community radio stations on the sister island.

None of the Gozitan respondents said that they referred to Facebook or newspapers for updates on feasts.

With regards to village feasts, the study found that for most Maltese (37.2%) fireworks was the feature they enjoyed most about village feasts. 11.7% said they liked religious functions best, with 10.6% specifying they liked the procession out of all activities organised.

When asked what they did not like about feasts, fireworks once again topped the list with 21.8% of respondents complaining fireworks make too much noise.

21.4% said they did not appreciate the arguments, insults and lack of unity often apparent between different clubs and neighbouring villages.

It is mostly the younger generation that does not appreciate anything from village feasts (20.6%) while elderly people find the feasts more interesting.

Religious functions and processions, most liked by people over 66 years of age, were hardly mentioned by those aged between 18 and 25.

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