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# Social Media Use in Festival and Daily Life Contexts

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## **Social Media Use in Festival and Daily Life Contexts**

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## Social Media Use in Festival and Daily Life Contexts

**ABSTRACT** Festivals are a popular way to make destinations come alive for residents and tourists alike. Advances in information technology driving social media are influencing the ways in which people interact with their environments. The purpose of this paper is to explore patterns of social media use in daily life and a festival setting, adding to understanding of social media use in everyday life domains and specific tourism sectors (festivals). Based on an intercept survey of 357 festival goers, findings point to higher use in daily life but different types of use in the festival setting. There is opportunity for festivals to increase their engagement of attendees through their mobile devices and social media.

### INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND LITERATURE

The ubiquitous use of information communication technology (ICT) and particularly mobile devices is permeating across life domains including every day and touristic experiences (Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2016). This phenomenon has been characterized as spillover or reverse spillover in the case where use behaviours were first adopted in a travel setting and then employed in daily life (MacKay & Vogt, 2012). Additionally, Pearce and Gretzel (2012) refer to “digital elasticity” as ICT blurring the distinctiveness of life domains. This omnipresence of mobile ICT is also driving increased social media (SM) usage and consequently, sector specific research on SM use in tourism to elucidate context specific utilization (Leung et al., 2013). Festivals are one such burgeoning area of sector research as the number of festivals integrating SM into their marketing strategies is growing as well as the variety of platforms employed to engage and share information with attendees. Research is needed to guide festival and event management regarding the adoption and use of technology-mediated communication as the use of ICT in settings where people are not required to use technology (such as at festivals) is less apparent than for companies and organizations whose consumers use technology on a daily basis. Research is surfacing to advise event managers to keep abreast with changes in technology, use these changes creatively in the marketing of their events (Devine & Devine, 2012), and to foster social atmospheres through SM (Kruger, Rootenber, & Ellis, 2013). Still, the tourism industry is struggling to facilitate interaction and engage consumers through the creation of online communities and many companies and organizations continue to employ SM more for promotional activities than engaging with consumers (Chan & Guillet, 2011). The purpose of this paper is to explore patterns of SM use and functions in daily life and at a festival setting, adding to understanding of SM use in everyday life domains and specific tourism sectors (festivals). The insights should assist festival organizers to capitalize on SM’s utility to engage patrons and promote the festival experience.

### METHOD

Data collection was an on-site intercept survey of festival attendees at a busker entertainment festival in a major Canadian city. For each of the four days the festival took place, four researchers conducted approximately 90 researcher administered questionnaires per day, for a total of 357 responses. A systematic sampling method was used and every 6th attendee within a five foot radius of the researcher was intercepted during the designated time period and location. Since the festival was not gated, locations were selected based on scheduled events and areas of high human traffic. The survey was conducted using an online platform and iPad Mini devices to allow immediate data storage and coding. The results were analyzed using SPSS 21 to illuminate patterns of mobile device and SM use in daily life and at the festival.

### FINDINGS

Most of the respondents were visiting the festival for the first time (66.4%) and attending with others (79.5%). Over half (51%) were attending with one other person, mainly with friends and family and were from the city the festival took place (64.3%). Half (50.5%) of the respondents are of the millennial generation, born between the years 1982 to 1999 and are female (53.0%). Of all attendees interviewed, 93.8% own or have access to a mobile device. Of all respondents who own or have access to a mobile device, 88.7% brought it to the festival. Those born in 1964 or earlier were less likely to bring their device

( $X^2=14.012$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). A smartphone was the most common device type owned and brought to the festival (78.5%).

Of the attendees that own/have access to a mobile device 78.2% use their device to access SM in daily life. Facebook (90.8%) is the most common SM platform among the respondents, followed by Instagram (52.3%) and Twitter (46.6%). Other types of SM platforms used include blogs, WeChat, WhatsApp, and SnapChat (18.0%). At the festival, 62.8% of attendees with a mobile device accessed or intended to access SM while there. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were the top three accessed. While viewing Facebook was far more common than posting (84.5% vs. 54.8%) at the festival, the difference was less pronounced for Instagram (47.6% vs. 40.5%) and Twitter (46.4% vs. 36.9%). Just over half (56.1%) of attendees with a mobile device accessed or intended to access online content. They mainly viewed the festival's website (65.5%) or app (37.8%), rather than posting to the website (45.4%) or app (29.4%).

Table 1 displays the means of how often attendees used their device for different purposes while at the festival and in daily life. Results of paired t-tests show in every usage, there is a significant difference, with daily life, not unexpectedly, having higher usage. At the festival, using a device for the purpose of capturing photos was the most frequent use versus texting in daily life; the same was true for capturing video. Viewing online content was far more frequent in daily life than at the festival. The least frequent form of use in daily life and at the festival was posting online content.

**Table 1**  
**Mobile Device Use in Daily Life and Festival**

Use	Setting	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Talk	Daily Life	3.73	1.197	12.501	201	.000
	Festival	2.56	1.367			
Text	Daily Life	4.31	1.008	11.180	202	.000
	Festival	3.13	1.451			
View online content	Daily Life	4.00	1.268	10.523	194	.000
	Festival	2.72	1.470			
Post content online	Daily Life	3.20	1.442	7.320	194	.000
	Festival	2.38	1.465			
Capture photo	Daily Life	4.10	1.084	4.348	195	.000
	Festival	3.65	1.371			
Capture video	Daily Life	3.33	1.370	3.328	191	.001
	Festival	2.98	1.519			
Other	Daily Life	3.06	1.292	4.918	98	.000
	Festival	2.35	1.223			

Note: 1 = never and 5 = very often

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results presented here show that there is ample opportunity for festivals to increase their engagement of attendees through their mobile devices and SM. High proportions of attendees bring their mobile devices to the festival and organizers are not taking full advantage of the opportunity. Results suggest individuals are more active on SM in their daily lives, particularly viewing online content. The visual nature of festivals is driving mobile device use on site and festival organizers should emphasize video and photographic elements in their SM to engage attendees. Instagram, being a visual focused SM platform (Weilenmann, Hillman & Jungselius, 2013), surpasses Twitter in utilization by patrons but research shows that across tourism sectors, Facebook and Twitter still dominate the industry's marketing focus (Hays et al., 2013). Recent literature supports higher intensity of individual's SM use with a company/organization with greater positive engagement and corporate reputation (Dijkmans et al., 2015), as well as repurchase behavior (Lariviere et al., 2013). These findings highlight patterns of similarity and difference in SM use in daily life and a festival context and provide initial directions for research and practice in SM marketing and participant/tourist engagement at festivals.

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