



The impact of digital communication on promoting an event: defining personas and strategies

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ABSTRACT

Music festivals are significant drivers of cultural tourism and economic growth, drawing increasing attention due to their social and cultural impact. In this digital age, the internet and social media have transformed festival promotion, particularly among millennials and generation Z. As the festival landscape becomes more competitive, maintaining attendee loyalty has become vital for festival managers and investors. Tailored communication based on defining consumer segments is an effective approach for festivals success. Namely two axes of segmentation have proven to be relevant in communication process: one – based on loyalty (reflected in previous participation and duration of presence at the festival); and second – based on generation's peculiarities. Therefore, this study aims to identify effective communication channels for engaging these different segments of festival attendees. It analyzes attendee profiles, satisfaction levels, and loyalty across various generational groups and segmentation profiles. Social media emerges as a dominant channel, especially for Generation Z, highlighting the need for tailored marketing strategies. Findings provide practical insights for festival organizers, enabling them to select the most effective marketing channels for diverse audience segments. The research also suggests the importance of understanding Generation Y's preferences and exploring alternative communication channels and social networks. By aligning marketing efforts with attendee preferences, organizers can enhance satisfaction, foster loyalty, and ensure the continued success of music festivals in our evolving cultural landscape.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Social and professional topics** → User characteristic.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The social and cultural influence of music festivals is a topic that is gaining more attention in the literature [1]. The music festival industry is widely recognized as a vital catalyst for cultural tourism and a significant contributor to the economic growth of many regions across different countries [2-6].

It's evident that festivals provide opportunities for cultural engagement, often seen as integral components of local development strategies as by enhancing the reputation of the locations or cities they contribute to generation of the employment and revenue due to increased consumption in the hosting localities [7, 8].

Social media and the internet have played an integral part in promoting these events and increasing ticket sales, especially among millennials [9].

With the proliferation of festivals and a wider range of choices available to consumers, cultivating and maintaining consumer loyalty has become an increasingly crucial concern for music festival managers and investors [10, 1.].

To ensure a festival's sustainability and maximize its economic and social benefits, it is essential to recognize the importance of effective marketing planning, particularly through gaining deeper insights into attendees via market segmentation [8, 11-13].

Using festival audience segmentation as a potent tool for enhanced festival management involves comprehending distinct segments and leveraging this insight for more effective participant targeting [14].

Discovering optimal communication channels to boost awareness and engagement among diverse audience segments can assist festival organizers in shaping the festival's design and refining their marketing communication strategy and efforts [8, 15].

A crucial aspect of event management lies in understanding the communication tools at their disposal attract attendees [8, 16]. However, there is still a scarcity of research that examines how social media can foster engagement, especially among younger attendees [1].

Therefore, the objective of the present research is to understand communication methods that hold the greatest potential for effectively connecting with particular segments of music festival attendees.

We address the public of the 5th edition of North Festival, that took place from May 26th to May 28th, 2023 at the Alfândega do Porto, Portugal, which is known as an urban and eclectic festival. Having been a tradition since 2017, it has earned a reputation as the "first festival of the year" under the slogan "The Compass Points North." The North Festival 2023 drew approximately 50,000 attendees and made waves by featuring renowned and celebrated international musical headliners such as The Chemical Brothers, Ivete Sangalo, and Robbie Williams.

The paper is structured as follows: the second section provides theoretical background, the third – methodology; the fourth results and discussion; and at last, conclusions are drawn in section five.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND - IDENTIFYING PERSONAS

A critical factor in the success of a music festival lies in its proficiency in marketing communication, which not only impacts ticket sales but also influences its capacity to foster audience engagement and cultivate loyalty. A number of social and technological developments necessitate rethinking, refocusing, segmenting, and expanding marketing communication activities for festivals for successful marketing communication [8]. Traditional marketing tools like printed materials and mass media advertising have lost effectiveness in comparison to digital media, with electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) and online advertising/social media proving more impactful [27, 28]. Social media, in conjunction with online platforms and tools, is believed to have transformed traditional marketing communication [1].

To gain effectiveness marketing strategies/actions need to be tailored to the unique characteristics of different consumer segments [33, 34]. Segmentation of the festival's attendees within festival oriented studies is focused on the general characteristics of its participants while others specifically focus on their motivations, satisfaction and loyalty levels [17-20]. Commonly employed criterion for dividing festival attendees consists of categorizing them into two primary segments: newcomers (first-time participants) and returning participants [21, 22]. Repeat participants exhibit a more robust loyalty and spending levels compared to newcomers, making this segment a potentially attractive and cost-efficient audience for festivals [22, 23]. Significant differences between two segments are acknowledged, one consisting of first-time festival participants and the other of repeat attendees, in terms of their 'excitement' and 'novelty' motivational dimensions, with the latter segment displaying a higher satisfaction level [24].

Furthermore, it is evidenced that communication, brand equity and satisfactions differ among different generations segments [16]. Social media is ushering in profound transformations in the way

promotion, consumption, and information sharing occur in contemporary society [29], and are being placed as a dominant digital communications channel [30], especially for the Generation Z [31]. Generation Z stands out from older market groups, as they tend to be resistant to advertising, engage sporadically across various media channels, making them a challenging demographic to effectively communicate with [16]. The travel and festival choices of the younger generation are significantly shaped by social media, highlighting the substantial role of online marketing in connecting with this segment [32].

Therefore, the communication differs alongside the different profiles based on loyalty and generation. It raises a question – how digital communication impact on promoting an event across these different segments?

The responses to the research questions in the upcoming section could enhance festival marketing segmentation and communication theories. Furthermore, the findings can provide practical insights for festival organizers, helping them select the most effective marketing channels to engage diverse audience segments by understanding how traditional and digital media impact these groups.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data gathering

The study conducted among attendees of the 2023 North Festival, relied on the analysis of primary data gathered through questionnaire surveys. To collect this data, a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was utilized, and the questionnaires were administered through direct, face-to-face interviews. These interviews took place within the festival venue, the Alfândega do Porto, spanning all three days of the 5th edition of the North Festival, from May 26th to May 28th, 2023. A total of 1009 valid responses were collected, with 19.6% obtained on May 26th, 34.3% on May 27th, and 46.1% on May 28th.

The questionnaire addressed among others sociodemographic characteristics of the attendees, including aspects such as gender, age, marital status, educational background, and nationality. Furthermore, whether the attendees had previously participated in the festival's prior edition and the type of ticket purchased (1-day or 3-day passes), and the primary communication channels used to gather information about the festival, which included digital sources, television, radio, printed materials, and word-of-mouth. A 5-point Likert-type scale was employed, ranging from (1) "not at all important" to (5) "extremely important." Furthermore, the attendees were asked to assess their overall satisfaction with the event using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from (1) "very dissatisfied" to (5) "very satisfied." And at last, an intention to come back and recommend the festival rated according to the agreement scale "totally disagree" (1), "disagree" (2), "neither agree nor disagree" (3), "agree" (4), and "totally agree" (5).

In the data analysis methodology, we initially characterize the sample using descriptive statistics. Subsequently, we conducted a segmentation of the festival's audience, based on loyalty, which is evaluated by participation in the previous edition, and the intensity of participation, assessed by the number of days attended at the festival [20, 22, 23]. Next, we examined the distinctions between

Table 1: Sample description

Variable	%
Gender	
Male	41,2
Female	58,1
Marital status	
Single	45,2
Married/Non-marital partnership	45,5
Divorced	8,3
Widower	1,0
Education level	
Basic	6,7
Secondary	34,3
Bachelor	42,7
Masters	14,3
PhD	2,0
Nationality	
Portuguese	5,5
Other	94,5
Age	
Average	38,8
Generation	
BB	7,1
X	32,7
Y	39,6
Z	20,5
Profiles	
True blue	2,5
Interested	7,1
Potential Devotee	6,0
Curious	84,3

these segments, taking into account different means of communication where the knowledge about the festival was gathered, overall satisfaction, intention to come back and recommend the festival. To analyze these differences, we employed the non-parametric Chi-Square test, chosen because the data is measured on a nominal or ordinal scale. This test allows us to establish relationships between categorical variables using the chi-square statistic and determine if means of communication are significantly different between identified profiles.

3.2 Sample

In terms of gender composition, majority of the sample is composed by females (58,1%), quite evenly divided between married/non-marital partnership (45,5%) and single (45,2%). With 79% holding at least bachelor's degree. Most of the sample are Portuguese (94,5%) with average age of 38,8 years.

Distribution across generations is as follows: most of the sample is comprised by generation Y (39,6%), followed by X (32,7%), Z (20,5%), and finally BB (7,1%).

Among identified profiles, most of attendees represented by Curious – not present in previous edition with a 1-day pass (84,3%), Interested - present in previous edition with a 1-day pass (7,1%),

Potential Devotee (6,0%) – not present in previous edition with a 3-day pass, and True Blue – present in previous edition with a 3-day pass (2,5).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Profiles and Personas

In line with sample distribution among generational profiles, True Blue's profile is comprised mostly by generation Y – 52,0%, and X – 44,0%, and 4,0% attendees belonging to BB generation.

Interested profile is more heterogeneous comprised of BB – 11,1%, X – 34,7%, Y – 33,3%, and Z – 20,8%.

Potential Devotee's profile is represented by BB – 8,20%, X – 29,50%, Y – 27,90%, and Z – 34,40%. Highlighting the increasing percentage of Generation Z in this Profile, reflecting that this segment represents high potential for festival management.

Within Curious profile generation Y is predominant corresponding to 40,7%, meanwhile BB – 6,8%, X – 32,4%, and Z - 20,1%.

There is statistically significant difference between the profiles as Chi-square test was significant.

Comparatively among attendees' profiles, Baby Boomers are the most represented within the Interested profile, that is justified by the fact that they are loyal to the festival, but mostly driven by

Table 2: Profiles and Personnas

Variables	True Blue	Interested	Potential Devotee	Curious	Chi-Square test (p-value)
BB	4,0%	11,1%	8,2%	6,8%	18,433 ³ (0,030)**
X	44,0%	34,7%	29,5%	32,4%	
Y	52,0%	33,3%	27,9%	40,7%	
Z	0,0%	20,8%	34,4%	20,1%	

Note: significant at *** p < 0,01; * p < 0,1. Source: Own elaboration.

the specific performance of the favorite bands/musicians, therefore opting just for the 1-day attendance of the festival.

Participants belonging to the Generation X and Y, are most representative within True Blue profile, 44,0% and 52,0% respectively, being mature devotees of the festival.

Meanwhile participants form Z Generation are the predominant group of the Potential Devotee, that are easy adopters of festivals atmosphere and provided experience.

4.2 Means of communication among different attendees' profiles.

Means of communication form which attendees have gathered the knowledge are Social Networks (62,3%), form which 43,8% of North Festival's, 10,0% of Friend/Family's, 3,9% of Band's or musician's from Headliner/LineUp, 1,6% of Sponsoring brand and 6,1% other; furthermore is Recommendation / Word-of-mouth (8,5%), Press (newspapers, magazines) and Online press (information sites) (6,6%), Radio (6,5%), Television (3,4%), Posters/Mupis (2,7%) Email / Newsletter (0,8%) and others (9,1%).

Among different means of communication form which participants have gained the knowledge about the festival Social Networks received the most expression within Interested Profile (66,7%) and Curious (63,0%), that are driven by a specific experience of 1-day attendance. In relation to the generation's segmentations social networks are not surprisingly prevalent among Generation Z (68,1%), that is the most digital generation among the compared ones.

Comparatively, Interested are driven the most by North Festival's social network (58,3%), again being predominant among Generation Z (46,9%).

Meanwhile of friends and family (14,8%) are the most relevant for the potential devotees, with special relevance for the Generation X (90,6%) and Y (90,5%).

Band's or musician's from Headliner/LineUp for Curious (4,3%) and Generation Y, and Sponsoring brand for True Blue (8,0%) and Generation Z (2,4%). And other social network for curios (6,8%) and Generation X (7,9%).

Radio comparatively is the mostly appreciated by Potential Devotees (8,2%), attendees that belong to Generation X accompany their activities by listening to the radio and became motivated to participate (7,9%).

TV is means of communication that showed the most relevance comparatively among the profiles within curious one (3,5%). That on its turn is predominant among generation Z (4,3%).

Recommendation/word of mouth was the most expressive within Interested Profile, and interestingly not at all relevant for the True

Blue (0%), that shows that True Blue value their own decision, as long as Interested are more influenced by the surrounding friends and family. Nevertheless, for the Generation BB it has stronger expression.

On the other hand, Press (newspapers, magazines) and Online press (information sites) visibly more expressive within True Blue profile. That may be explained by the specific accompanying of the information of news the festival's site. News and information is relevant for this segment of BB generation (12,5%).

E-mail/Newsletter, despite its residual relevance generally across the sample, show slightly higher expression within Potential Devotee (1,6%), revealing potential for e-mail marketing across this segment, with special attention to the BB generation (1,4%).

Posters/Mupis are also a mean to reach out to the Potential Devotees (6,6%). Therefore, not revoking the relevance of traditional means of advertising, especially among BB generation (6,9%).

Other means have received the most expression within the Potential Devotee's profile (21,3%) and BB generation (13,9%).

Generally, difference within means of communication across different attendees' profiles is statistically significant as Chi-square test was significant, however addressing specifically types of Social Networks are significantly different only in case of North's Festival and Sponsoring brand, even though not overriding relevant conclusions generated from the analysis of other social network's types. Similarly, across different generations the difference was also statistically supported for means of communication, but not when analyzing specifically different social network's types.

4.3 Satisfaction and loyalty across the segments

Potential Devotees are more contained in expression of their satisfaction level – 49,2% of this segment providing classification of 4 out of 5 within satisfaction scale. Meanwhile Interested profile reveals higher level of the outmost satisfaction comparing with other profiles, that might be explained by a specific 1-day experience they have that is aligned with their expectations of specific band or musician.

The most devoted True Blue profile is reflected in intention to come back, where comparatively this segment is more expressed (62,5% - totally agree with this affirmation), alongside with recommendation intention that is more revealed along this segment (64,4%), confirming verified loyalty to this event.

Interestingly, comparing generations profile, generation Z shows to be the most adherent to developing highest satisfaction scores (as very satisfied 53,9%), alongside with coming back (51,8%) and recommendation (63,8%).

Table 3: Means of communication across profiles

Means of communication					%	
Social Networks:					62,3	
<i>North Festival's</i>					43,8	
<i>Friend/Family's</i>					10,0	
<i>Band's or musician's from Headliner/LineUp</i>					3,9	
<i>Sponsoring brand</i>					1,6	
<i>Other</i>					6,1	
Radio					6,5	
Television					3,4	
Recommendation / Word Pass					8,5	
Press (newspapers, magazines) and Online press (information sites)					6,6	
Email / Newsletter					,8	
Posters/Mupis					2,7	
Other					9,1	
Means of communication	Profile				Chi-Square test (p-value)	Chi-Square test (p-value)
	True Blue	Interested	Potential Devotee	Curious		
Social Networks:	60,0%	66,7%	49,2%	63,0%		30,599 ^a
<i>North Festival's</i>	44,0%	58,3%	32,8%	43,4%	9.251 ^a (,026)	(,081)*
<i>Friend/Family's</i>	8,0%	5,6%	14,8%	10,1%	3,231 ^a (0,357)	
<i>Band's or musician's from Headliner/LineUp</i>	4,0%	0,0%	1,6%	4,3%	4.243 ^a (0,236)	
<i>Sponsoring brand</i>	8,0%	2,8%	1,6%	1,3%	7.716 ^a (,0052)	
<i>Other</i>	8,0%	1,4%	1,6%	6,8%	5.784 ^a (0,123)	
Radio	4,0%	4,2%	8,2%	6,7%		
Television	4,0%	1,4%	3,3%	3,5%		
Recommendation / Word Pass	0,0%	11,1%	8,2%	8,6%		
Press (newspapers, magazines) and Online press (information sites)	16,0%	6,9%	1,6%	6,7%		
Email / Newsletter	0,0%	1,4%	1,6%	0,7%		
Posters/Mupis	0,0%	2,8%	6,6%	2,5%		
Other	16,0%	5,6%	21,3%	8,3%		
Means of communication	Generation				Chi-Square test (p-value)	Chi-Square test (p-value)
	BB	X	Y	Z		
Social Networks:	47,2%	61,8%	62,5%	68,1%		32.521 ^a (,0052)*
<i>North Festival's</i>	30,6%	44,2%	44,3%	46,9%	5.977 ^a (0,113)	
<i>Friend/Family's</i>	88,9%	90,6%	90,5%	88,4%	.928 ^a (0,819)	
<i>Band's or musician's from Headliner/LineUp</i>	2,8%	2,4%	5,0%	4,3%	3.589 ^a (0,309)	
<i>Sponsoring brand</i>	0,0%	0,9%	2,0%	2,4%	3.481 ^a (0,323)	
<i>Other</i>	6,9%	7,9%	4,8%	5,8%	3.193 ^a (0,363)	
Radio	4,2%	7,9%	5,3%	7,7%		
Television	4,2%	2,4%	3,5%	4,3%		
Recommendation / Word Pass	9,7%	8,2%	9,3%	7,2%		
Press (newspapers, magazines) and Online press (information sites)	12,5%	8,8%	6,3%	1,9%		
Email / Newsletter	1,4%	0,6%	0,8%	1,0%		
Posters/Mupis	6,9%	1,5%	3,3%	1,9%		
Other	13,9%	8,8%	9,3%	7,7%		

Note: significant at *** p < 0,01; * p < 0,1. Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4: Satisfaction and loyalty across profiles

Variable	Profile					Chi-Square test (p-value)
	True Blue	Interested	Potential Devotee	Curious	Total	
Level of satisfaction						
Satisfied	40,0%	41,7%	49,2%	45,8%	45,6%	4.236 ^a (0,895)
Very satisfied	48,0%	50,0%	39,3%	46,8%	46,6%	
Intention to Come back						
Agree	20,8%	22,9%	29,3%	36,2%	34,4%	16.252 ^a (0,180)
I totally agree	62,5%	58,6%	55,2%	44,5%	46,7%	
Recommendation						
Agree	16,0%	23,9%	29,5%	30,6%	26,9%	25.378 ^a (0,013)**
I totally agree	64,0%	59,2%	57,4%	52,6%	53,7%	
	Generation					Chi-Square test (p-value)
Variable	BB	X	Y	Z		
Level of satisfaction						
Satisfied	48,6%	47,4%	47,6%	37,9%	45,6%	12,920 ^a (0,166)
Very satisfied	37,1%	46,4%	44,5%	53,9%	46,6%	
Intention to Come back						
Agree	28,4%	34,8%	39,2%	26,7%	34,4%	18,111 ^a (0,112)
I totally agree	50,7%	47,4%	42,7%	51,8%	46,7%	
Recommendation						
Agree	29,0%	31,6%	32,2%	21,8%	29,6%	18,727 ^a (0,095)*
I totally agree	46,4%	51,3%	51,9%	63,4%	53,7%	

Notwithstanding the relevance of provided findings, only in case of recommendation, the difference found across different attendees' profiles and across generations segments is statistically supported.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Therefore, tailored communication based on defining consumer segments is an effective approach for festivals success. Namely two axes of segmentation have proven to be relevant in communication process: one – based on loyalty (reflected in previous participation and duration of presence at the festival); and second – based on generation's peculiarities.

Social Networks are the primary source of knowledge about the festival for most attendees as it is identified in previous studies [29, 30], and especially among the generation Z in line with identified in the literature [31]. Given the strong presence of Social Networks, for festival managers seems important to prioritize digital marketing efforts, especially for reaching Generation Z.

Further the most relevant means of communication are Recommendation/Word-of-Mouth and Press (newspapers, magazines) and Online press (information sites). The choice of communication channel varies among different attendee profiles and generations.

Segmentation confirms the need for communication channels to align with the characteristics of each attendee profile as it is indicated previously [17-22]. For example, focus on creating an enticing 1-day experience for Interested attendees, while emphasizing loyalty and recommendation for True Blue attendees is one of the

strategic suggestions. Additionally leverage the power of word-of-mouth marketing, particularly for Potential Devotees is a possible strategy. Nevertheless, it is considered important to don't disregard traditional advertising methods like posters/mupis, especially for reaching Potential Devotees and Baby Boomers.

Satisfaction levels vary among profiles, with the Interested profile expressing higher levels of satisfaction. True Blue attendees are more likely to intend to come back and recommend the festival. Generation Z appears to be highly satisfied and loyal to the festival. Given their high satisfaction and potential for loyalty, creating targeted experiences and marketing campaigns to cater to their preferences and interests is relevant.

Some further research direction arise from developed work. Due to the fact that Y generation is generally predominant within the festival attendees, this segment itself represent high variations in terms of it preferences requiring further exploration. Additionally, regarding means of communication, other means and other social networks have received a significant percentage, especially among the potential devotee's profile and curios respectively, making it relevant to explore more profoundly what other means of communication and other social networks might provide strategical relevance for festival organizers.

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