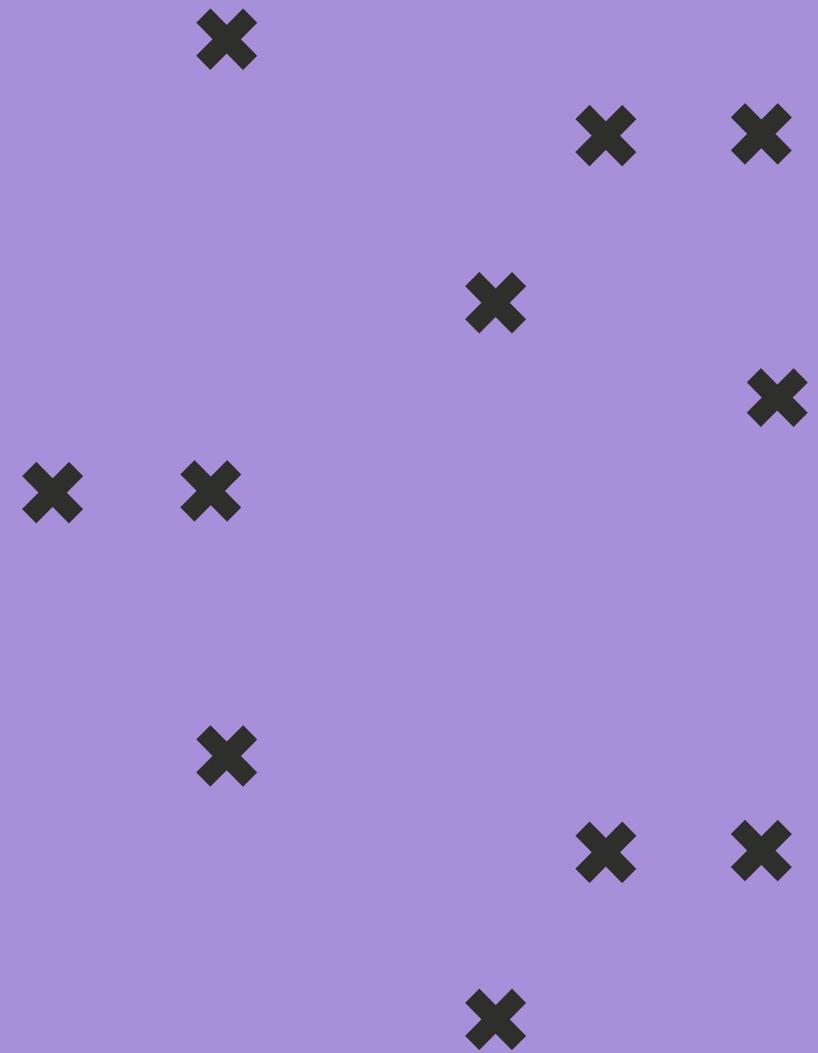


Festival Insights Report

The shared opinion of 145 festivals on marketing and the digital brand experience



It's clear from the insight that the marketing and digital experience plays a large part of the overall success of a festival.

It's wonderful to see so many festivals predicting great times ahead, but equally there's an opportunity for those who are a little less sure to make small changes that have a big impact on digital success.

Festivals can grow through more in depth targeting and engagement of their customers. This all starts with really granular performance tracking so that money is saved and the cost of customer acquisition reduces.

Festivals must always embrace some change, specifically from being so reliant on social media for yearly acquisition and engagement. But how do they do this? Do they develop their own channels? How will this impact the conversation between organiser and festival-goer? Are owned channels the way forward?

How should festivals work alongside third parties? It's important that festivals have timely, high quality design and development work and so they should be working with creatives and technology providers that have a track record of success and who employ very strict processes. By investing in technologies that decrease the reliance on third party support festivals will save also save spend.



Contents

Purpose	4
About the author	5
With thanks	7
Expert contributors	8
Insight in numbers	10
Insight results	11
Growth aspirations.....	11
Performance tracking	13
Most effective marketing methods.....	16
Least effective marketing methods.....	19
Social media reliance	21
Marketing issues	24
Digital experience	27
What are we enhancing now?	30
Website issues	32
Most important features	34
Third-party ticketing	36
Feelings about growth.....	39

PURPOSE

We want all festivals to do well.

Very simply put, having worked with lots of festivals, there are shared learnings that can benefit all. If we can facilitate and help build a community of festivals who help and share information for the greater good then we'll all feel pretty damn happy.

We want this insight report to be the start of many in depth insights that will help everyone get involved, learn and create action to better festival success.

In the spirit of community we'd like everyone who took part in this insight report and others involved in the running of festival marketing and digital experience to join our Facebook group, where we will share knowledge, learn and discuss all things festivals and marketing.

You can join the group here



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



My name is Christian and I founded Project Simply, an agency that helps events and festivals globally, delivering a positive impact with brand creation, illustration, design and the creation of the festival website.

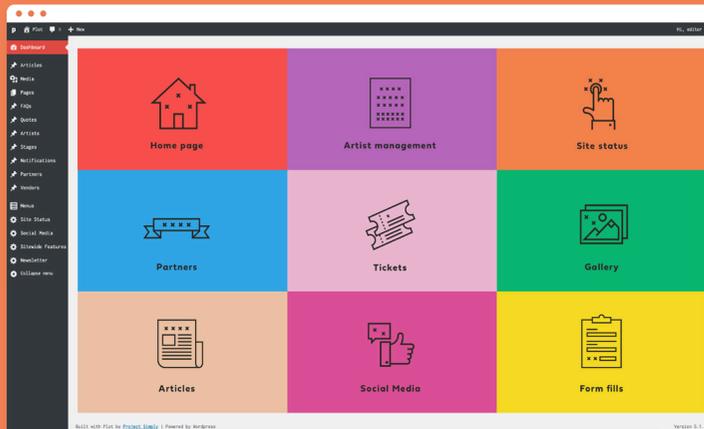


Regardless of recent innovations the festival website is still the cornerstone of marketing efforts, the key sales vehicle and the shareable asset that helps grow the social audience. From our experience working with a wide range of festivals we know it's vitally important to have:

- ✘ Exceptional design and front-end development talent to create websites that are stylish, unique and exciting to experience
- ✘ Development solutions that help us roll out bespoke websites in the quickest amount of time possible
- ✘ Content management systems designed for busy marketing teams, to allow for speedy, simple updates
- ✘ Increased flexibility so festival teams can manage their websites throughout the life-cycle of the event
- ✘ Longevity in our sites that provides a solid foundation to be improved year on year

We enjoy the creative freedom working with like-minded people and the work is loved, shared and very much appreciated by our clients. We want to help all festivals – whether they are a sell out 60,000 capacity, or in their first year hoping to sell 2,000 tickets.

plot



We also created Plot which is a festival and event-specific website technology, with a couple of major benefits:

- ✘ It reduces the time we spend on development when creating your festival website, which means we can spend more time on exceptional creative ideas and design
- ✘ It streamlines the way the festival marketing team set up and manage the festival website, saving loads of time and client side expense

By combining our expertise, creative talents and Plot, we create sales-ready, ticket selling machines that also generate buzz, shares and social kudos. Plot allows us to put more effort into stand-out creative for the bigger budget festivals, and also create something convincing and engaging for festivals with more conservative budgets.

WITH THANKS

We are proud to be supported on this adventure by some wonderful festivals and associations who gave their time and effort to produce this great insight, so a massive thanks goes out to:



Barnes Music Festival
Beaver Island Music Festival
Beccles Food & Drink Festival
Berlin Sci-Fi Filmfest
Between The Trees
Black Women In Comedy Festival
Brisk Festival
Bude & Stratton Folk Festival
Canadian Film Fest
Canadian International Fashion Film Festival
Coal Coast Film Festival
Commfest Global Community Film Festival
Crossroads Film Festival
Droitwich Spa Food And Drink Festival
Dublin Rocknroll Festival
Eat Cambridge
Edinburgh Short Film Festival
Festival Internacional De Cine Fantástico
Festival Puplico Classique
Field Day

Fire In The Mountain
Fresh Island Festival
Garden State Film Festival
Hoppin' John Old-Time & Bluegrass
Impact International Theatre Festival
Iris Prize LGBT+ Film Festival
Kinofilm
Light The Way
London Kurdish Film Festival
Lucidity Festival
Magical
Maine Science Festival
Malvern Festival Of Innovation
Margate Film Festival
Mid West Music Fest
Mikkeli Music Festival
Morristown Jazz & Blues Festival
Music Festival Wizard (Website)
Muslimfest
New Orleans Film Festival

North Atlantic Blues Festival
North Leeds Charity Beer Festival
Oktoberfest Brisbane
Oxford Film Festival
Oxjam Leeds Music Festival
Pasifika Festival (Vic)
Pilot Light Tv Festival
Queens World Film Festival
Raindance Film Festival
Reading Fringe Festival
Rebel Film Festival
Regina Folk Festival
Revelation Perth International Film Festival
Rothbury Traditional Music Festival
Scandinavian Film Festival
Sci-Fi-London
Sled Island Music & Arts Festival
Snowboxx & Kala
South Social Film Festival
Sydney Film Festival

Taiwan Film Festival In Sydney
Taos Shortz Film Festival
Taste Of Edmonton
Tenby Blues Festival
Threshold Festival
Toronto Cider Festival
Toronto Silent Film Festival
Upton Blues Festival
Vancouver Synthesizer Festival
Veg Food Fest
Waking Windows Winooski
Watchet Live Music Festival
Water Docs Film Festival
Wavelength Music Series
Wide Angle Film Festival
Winter Film Awards International Film Festival

And to the other 70 festivals who wished to remain anonymous, we salute you.

EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS



Jessie Atkinson
Second Screen

Jessie Atkinson works with festivals to increase app engagement and usage, and to make owned channels a more exciting and essential part of the event-goers' experience.

Second Screen are a London-based app developer specialising in event and festivals. They currently host forty live apps, including those for Boardmasters, Love Supreme and Notting Hill Carnival, and have over three million combined users. They work with promoters to help build communities, deliver original content and transform the live event experience.



Paul Stacey
Fatsoma

Paul always dreamt of starting a business. Inspired by the idea that everyone should be able to live the life they want, he set out to build the world's first social event and ticketing service. The vision was simple: be the place for people to discover, plan, and pay for their experiences. With this in mind Paul and his team started to build a new type of platform - one that would help event organisers use social and influencer technology to reduce costs and boost ticket sales.

Fatsoma is a new type of ticketing platform designed to help event organisers and venues take full control of their promotions. Instead of integrating with existing platforms, Fatsoma enables clients to build their own direct-to-customer promotion networks using social and influencer technology. Clients can instantly communicate upcoming events through these networks, boosting sales and reducing costs. And it works. Fatsoma have changed the way 10k+ event organisers and venues in the UK engage their customers and promote events, with over £100m tickets sold to date.

EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS



Ollie Hackett
Mustard Media

Oliver Hackett is the co-founder and creative director of Mustard Media. He has a background of heading up the marketing and promotion of music festivals across Europe for the past 10 years; as well as co-running several of his own festivals for the past five years.

Mustard Media is Europe's leading festivals & events accelerator; a team focused on empowering festivals & events with the strategy they need for growth. Taking learnings from over 10 years of heading up the marketing for festivals and events, the Mustard team developed several solutions which they have successfully been using on their own sell-out festivals; and now focus on offering these solutions to clients.

Martin Lucas & Emma Jackson The Customers Why

The Customers Why provide clear and pragmatic steps to accelerate revenue growth and reach, help develop customer segmentation for greater understanding of 'who' and 'why', providing direction and strategy steered by behavioural science, psychology & the data of human behaviour. Four years of research have culminated in a flexible model that produces results.



Martin's lifelong passion for understanding human behaviour and psychology aligns perfectly with his skillset of mathematical logic. He is three times published, has had three businesses and sees the world like The Matrix: 'everything is maths'.



Emma is a life coach and tech consultant with over ten years in startups, tech and advertising. Emma's passion is wherever art and science collide, and helping innovative companies disrupt the landscape.

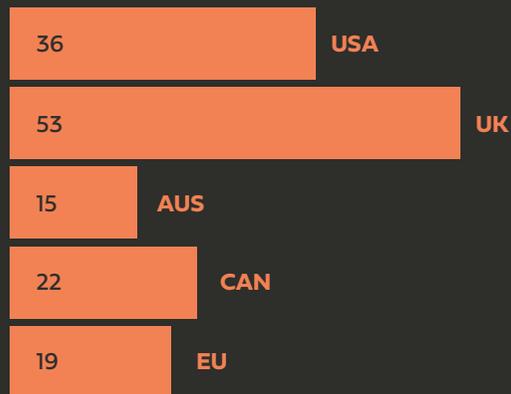
INSIGHT IN NUMBERS

This insight report is the culmination of 145 opinions of festival teams from around the world. Our goal was to create something that combined the learnings of different genres, sizes and cultures, and that's exactly what we got. Here's the breakdown of festivals in numbers:

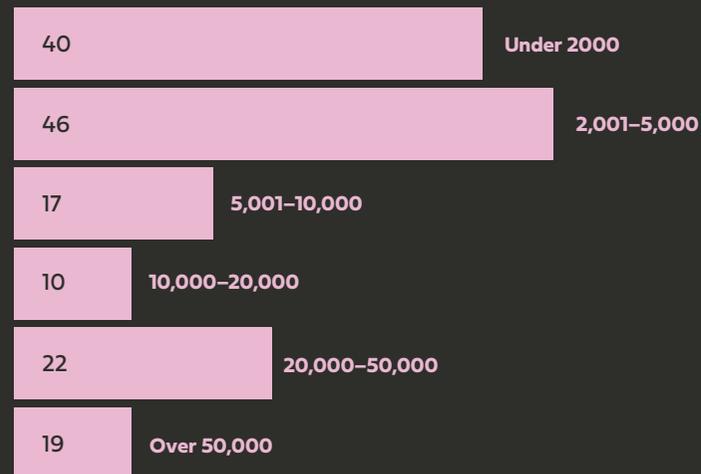
Total number of festivals:

145

By Geography



By Festival Size



By Genre



How much are you looking to grow next year?



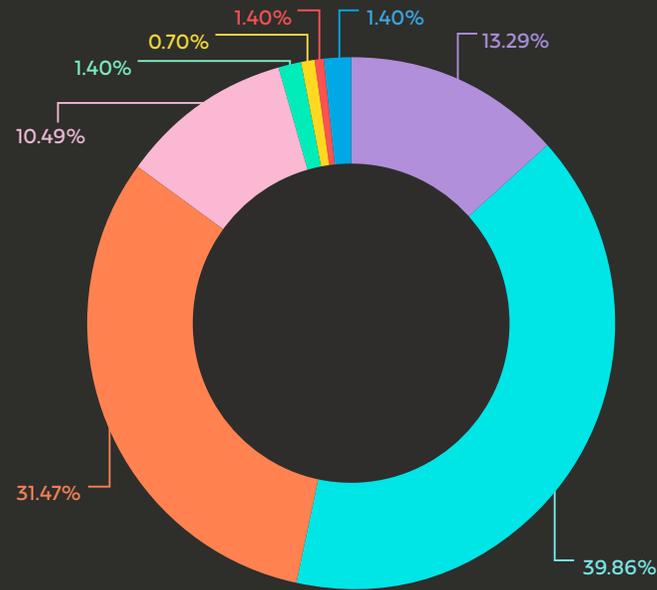
GROWTH ASPIRATIONS

I am so very pleased to see that growth aspirations are in full flow, with a solid 71% of all festivals saying they wish to grow up to 25% for next year. This decreases to 2.8% for over 50% growth which shows that on the whole festivals have a really good understanding of their capacity and reach in their respective communities.

It makes sense that the smaller festivals have grander aspirations in terms of yearly growth, as it's easier to manage an extra few thousand people than an extra fifty thousand.

What this says to me is that the market is buoyant and competitive, and festival owners clearly think that regardless of geopolitical, economic and competitive factors, people still have a desire to attend live experiences.

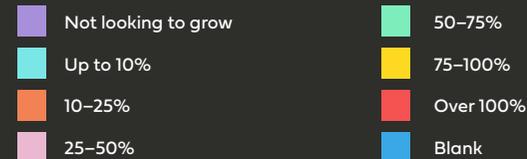
Overall



By festival size



Key



“A solid 71% of all festivals wish to grow up to 25% for next year.”

Christian Hill – Project Simply

Do you track and monitor which marketing and engagement methods are working best for you?



PERFORMANCE TRACKING

Our experience with festival marketers is that they tend to be very savvy in terms of marketing effectiveness but the data tells us that this is somewhat of a misnomer. Over 63% of festivals do 'very basic tracking,' which correlates highly with frustrations further in the report about social media 'not working' and 'costs escalating.'

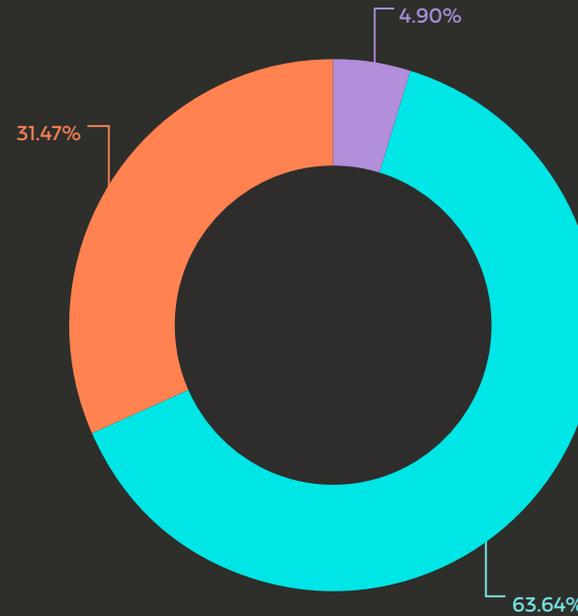
The data shows us that on the whole, the larger the festival, the better tracking and performance monitoring is in place, which makes sense as budgets and resources are generally more extensive. It's important to note that tracking and performance monitoring is no longer something reserved for the wealthy, and by using simple and free tracking tools sets, such as Google Analytics, you can easily granularise your performance and adjust your marketing to suit.

It's really important that smaller festivals really get to grips with proper tracking and performance monitoring to minimise wasted spend through more informed targeting and engagement.

"Over 63% of festivals do 'very basic tracking.'

Christian Hill – Project Simply

Overall



By festival size



Key

- Not at all
- Basic monitoring
- I track everything

Using tracking to get the best out of your marketing

As a starting point and bare minimum you should be doing the following to make sure you can analyse and performance manage your festival marketing.

- 1. Install tracking snippets from Google Analytics and tracking pixels from social on your website and third party ticketing platform, which will allow you to track the entire funnel from marketing campaign right through to ticket purchase.*
- 2. Give all marketing channels and sub campaigns different tracking links - this will allow you to analyse performance or variant audiences/creative and channels that drive traffic and engagement.*
- 3. Tag up all pages on your site so you can re-market based on user interest - specifically you will want to tag up artist/experience and ticket pages.*
- 4. Set up re-marketing to target people who visit the site but have not yet purchased.*

By doing the above you now have the ability to do the following, which will massively help you reduce cost wastage and improve cost per acquisition.

- 1. Assess channel performance and adopt quickly - regularly check which channels are performing better and which you can ditch. The likelihood is that you'll end up with a couple of top performing channels that drive most of your engagement and sales.*
- 2. Create lookalike audience campaigns in Facebook based on those who have purchased tickets.*
- 3. Set up specific creative re-marketing campaigns to target users based on specific interests (that they looked at on the website) - personalised approach will increase conversion.*
- 4. Start to exclude people who have converted from being sales targeted.*
- 5. Specifically target people who have visited the website ticket page as well as the 3rd party ticket page and have not yet converted.*



Paul Stacey
Fatsoma



Christian Hill
Project Simply

“The likelihood is that you’ll end up with a couple of top performing channels that drive most of your engagement and sales.”

What would you say are your three most effective marketing methods?



MOST EFFECTIVE MARKETING METHODS

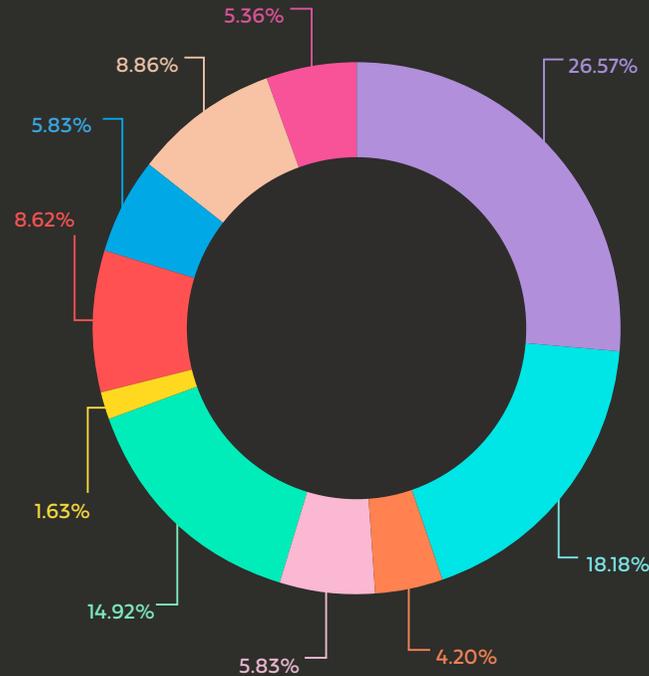
Social dominates when it comes to marketing effectiveness across both organic and paid, with organic taking the number one spot at 27% and paid social in a strong second with 18%. There is a feeling of over reliance on social channels, and that marketing costs seem to be spiralling upwards, and so festivals need to start using social as a mechanism to reach a target audience with a view to pulling them onto owned channels, such as festival apps.

Partnerships came third at 15% with a large weighting towards the larger festivals. I would advise festivals of all sizes to seek out co-beneficial partnerships to help with marketing reach and as a way to split marketing spend. It doesn't matter what size you are, there are partnerships there for you, and they are now an important part of helping festivals build connected communities and connected purpose, and when done right creates a win for both festival and brand.

“Collaborating with partners is our most effective form of ticket sales, as we can make use of shared audiences for negligible cost.”

Zoe Natress – Magical Festival, UK

Overall



By festival size



Key





Ollie Hackett
Mustard Media

“You don’t need to be on ALL social channels. Don’t spread yourself too thin. Do a few channels well, rather than run a load of channels half-baked.”

How to engage on social

There is no secret trickery here. Put in the time to communicate with your audience and engage in conversation with them. Be personable.

If someone takes a moment out of their day to communicate with you or your festival, take a moment to reply to them. Fortunately in the festival world we’re marketing and selling a product that people really look forward to; so naturally there are many comments from excited customers or potential customers which you can add even more delight to.

Social media success also hinges on consistency and momentum. Decide on your approach, your tone of voice, creative and channels, and then talk to your audience every single day. The more you do this, the more they do this, and it will snowball the social spread.

This really is low hanging fruit for a festival; if you can get those excited customers even more excited about your product, then they are more likely to talk about it with friends, and the word-of-mouth engine fires up.

Here’s my top social tips:

- *It’s called ‘social media’ for a reason. Be social and create two way conversations*
- *It’s all about consistency and momentum. Respond to your customers every day – for 30 minutes*
- *You don’t need to be on ALL social channels. Don’t spread yourself too thin. Do a few channels well, rather than run a load of channels half-baked*
- *Segment your audience and give them creative and updates based on their preferences and inherent needs*

What would you say are your three least effective marketing methods?



LEAST EFFECTIVE MARKETING METHODS

Joint top of the flops here are printed press and paid media. The availability and ability to instantly target and track via social means these more traditional methods do not hold the sway they once did.

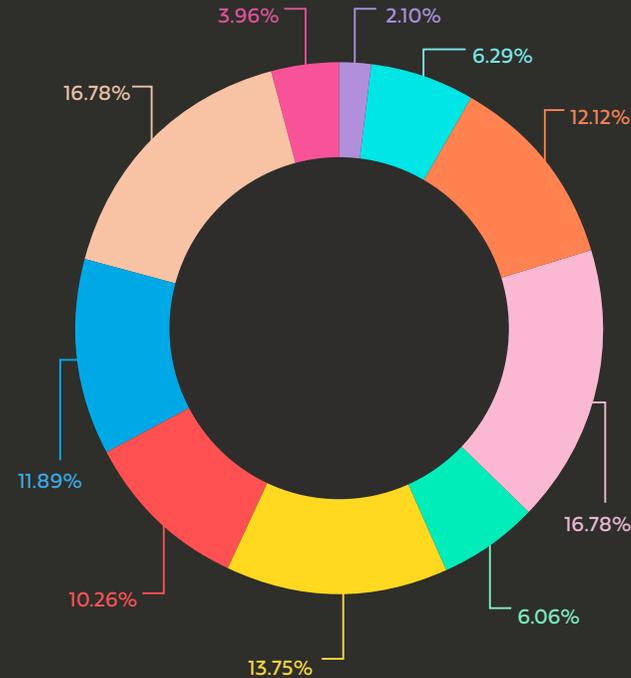
Third is SEO but between this and sixth there is less than 2% difference and collectively they are 48% of the results. They are SEO, PR, Reps and social influencers. This is an affirmation that your website (and maybe App) is where the story is controlled and getting people there is all about relevancy which is where social, social ads and partnerships win as they are all controllable and a more instantaneous and relevant conversation. You can tell more stories, offer more help and be more personable, instantly.

Personally we're surprised to see Reps so low as a way of marketing events. Our view here is that they are better suited to music festivals and that they aren't being managed and maintained effectively when used. We believe that the social influencers of the festival market ARE your friends, you know, the proactive organiser ones in any group, who make for great brand ambassadors and encourage their contacts to attend with them.

"We tried reps last year and it didn't amount to much. Didn't get much immediate sales uplift from printed ads even in major mags."

Festival Owner, UK

Overall



By festival size



Key



Do you feel you are overly reliant on social media networks to drive and retain customers?



SOCIAL MEDIA RELIANCE

A fairly even split on social media as to whether people are over reliant on using it or not, although reliance increases the smaller the festival. This is simply because larger festivals will more likely have stronger partnerships, more developed owned channels, a broader range of marketing methods and larger budgets.

Whilst it's unthinkable that festivals would ditch social in their marketing efforts, its apparent from the data that even the festivals who track correctly are seeing the cost of engagement going up as organic reach goes down. Will this stop? What happens if it doesn't?

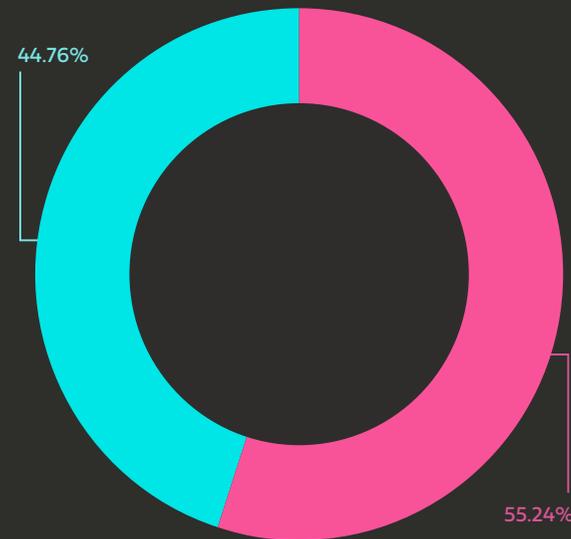
It's time for festivals of all sizes to really think about the role social plays in the acquisition and ongoing engagement of a customer. We are working with festivals who are realising that social plays a part in attracting a new audience, but the majority of sales should come from engaging its current fans through owned channels and value add personalised content. These same people then become the ambassadors and reps of tomorrow, generating new customer bases.

It's also time for festivals to embrace chatbots and apps, which can create more cost effective, personalised conversations with their fan base.

“We have built an audience that are hugely engaged and responsive on Insta and Facebook. Without it we'd have to rethink our marketing.”

Holli O'Brien – Oktoberfest Brisbane, AUS

Overall



By festival size

Under 2000



2,001–5,000



5,001–10,000



10,001–20,000



20,001–50,000



Over 50,000



Key



The benefits of Apps as owned channels

Last year, we saw 87% of festival-attendees download at least one festival app. Across forty live apps, we also saw an increase of 133% people using them. People posting on festival app news feeds also spiked last year, with user-generated content up 44% to 73,000. Here's some of the key reasons why we see festivals using Apps for their festivals.

1. *Engagement is high, as people have already proved their interest in the specific brand/event by downloading.*
2. *The spend of running an app is modest compared to percentage spend on social media marketing.*
3. *Communication is direct, as push notifications come directly to an opted-in user's phone.*
4. *An owned channel becomes a place that marketers can monetise by selling ad space, with strong potential to neutralise spend.*
5. *Control on users' content: moderation of comments etc.*
6. *The ability to introduce filters and stickers on the camera function, where on social channels this is reserved for brands with the biggest budgets.*
7. *Collection of invaluable data, thanks to geo-locational analysis on larger events.*
8. *A year-round medium for sharing news, merch and spin-off events with fans, without the need to cut through the noise of social channels.*



Jessie Atkinson
Second Screen

“The spend of running an app is modest compared to percentage spend on social media marketing.”

What are the biggest issues you face when marketing your festival?



MARKETING ISSUES

Ring the bell! Our winner by a few lengths is constantly increasing budgets, outranking 2nd place by a whopping 7.04%! That's the stress win by a distance. There's two things here: increased spend due to uncontrollable social costs and wasted budget – what are you spending on that you can't track or doesn't work?

Focus on using social to drive traffic, tracking everything to point of purchase. Re-market to all who fail to purchase to maximise return on the initial social click spend. Disregard or downgrade anything that you can't track or are unsure of in terms of marketing spend. Step your audience into an owned channel where you can be more conversational and personalised, and really learn about them whilst giving them lots of value based on their preferences. Turn attendees into brand advocates.

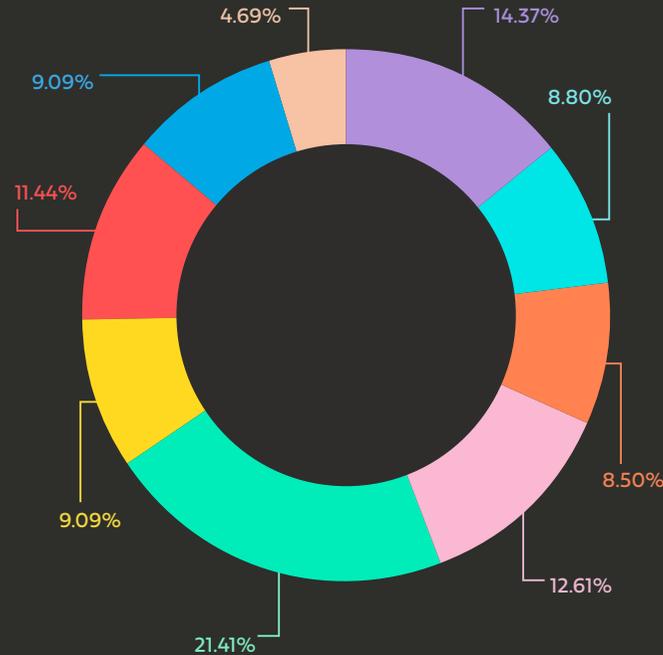
The next most stressful element is dealing with third parties; this has a direct link to the negative impact of Social Influencers, PR and SEO, as you don't get the results you desire and often you don't get reasoning or expectations set. The answer is clear, achievable, measurable goals in all the marketing we do.

Getting accurate performance data is third. The world is awash with this word 'data' – but perhaps it's become a buzzword – as our community can't get the relevant data to understand what is working and what is not. The days of attribution models in marketing are done, the simplest route is do this: make sure you track everything that can be, see the results – tweak – improve – repeat.

“The main issue is increased spend due to uncontrollable social costs and wasted budget – what are you spending on that you can't track or doesn't work?”

Christian Hill – Project Simply

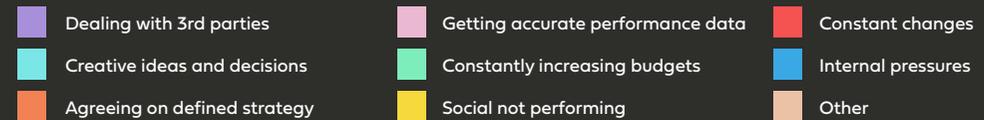
Overall



By festival size



Key





Martin Lucas & Emma Jackson
The Customers Why

“Outside of ad spend the ever increasing nature of festival budgets is a result of wastage in decision making, creative and web development.”

How to keep budgets under control without scrimping on performance

We'd consider a huge portion of the ever increasing nature of festival marketing budgets a result of wastage in decision making, creative and web development. Most of these can be made more efficient and therefore conserve spend. Let's break down each area into the problem and what we would say is the solution. Here goes:

Decision making - Festivals tend to have loads of decision makers, all with very creative ideas. This is good as lots of great opinion abounds. However, we always encourage clients to allocate one key decision maker on all aspects of the marketing and creative process. Run very rigid objective focused feedback sessions to reduce internal time wastage and lots of back and forth, which results in huge time and cost saving.

Creative - Poor briefing and inadequate brand guidelines are key perpetrators in escalating creative costs, and this becomes more pronounced when you have multiple designers creating different elements of the festival experience. Extended scope creep, revision changes combined with too many sign off stakeholders is a

recipe for some real budget slippage. I'd encourage all festivals to create a brand guide and Tone of Voice document that can be handed out to prospective in house and external agencies as well as very tight briefs for all projects. Combine this with a single sign off authority and you'll see the need for revisions reduce and thus your spend come down. Naturally work with people who have great design skills and understand what you are trying to achieve.

Web Development - Costs start to rack up when festivals require ongoing development support to make lots of ongoing but necessary changes. Its often the case that web development companies pay too little attention to the user experience and functionality on the back end of the website and marketing teams are left with a hard to understand, inflexible CMS that they can't edit or change themselves.

It's important to prioritise the tasks that your marketing team will need to accomplish on an ongoing basis and make sure these are built into the website CMS.

How important do you think the digital experience is in relation to the overall success of the festival?



DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

64.34% rank the digital experience as crucial (8, 9, 10 out of 10) to their success. 27.27% put it as being very important. Only 8.39% see it as not being that important or somewhat important.

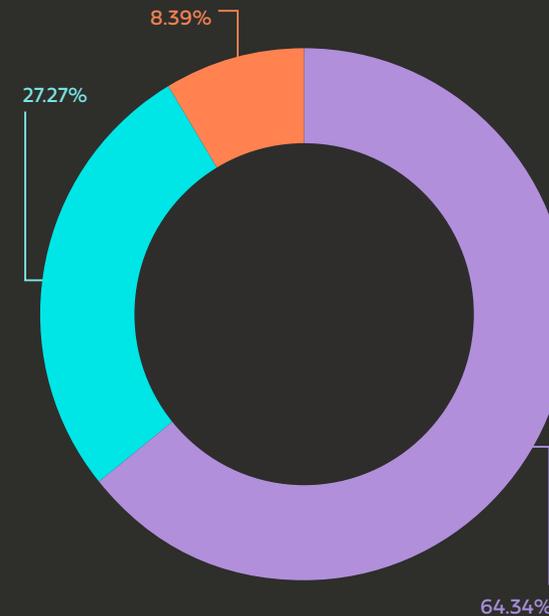
It's absolutely understandable that for very small localised community festivals, the digital experience is less of a driver of success, but for everyone else, in our opinion and confirmed by the data, that the digital experience is as important as the physical event.

In an era of intense competition from other festivals and non related entertainment choices, as well as information bombardment across all marketing channels, it's crucial that festivals get their messaging, creative, and user experience absolutely harmonious throughout the awareness, consideration and purchase stages of a buyer's journey. This ultimately leads back to knowing your target audience, and introducing personalisation as best you can to build stronger bonds and loyal advocates of your festival.

"The digital experience is as important as the physical event."

Christian Hill – Project Simply

Overall



By festival size



Key

- 8-10 Crucially important
- 5-7 Very important
- 1-4 Somewhat important

Top tips to enhance your digital experience

Over the years we've gathered some expertise on what constitutes a great digital festival experience. Here's our top 10 tips to give your festival a well needed experience boost:

- 1. Always push the creative envelope** – We've found that the festivals that are as creative as possible – whether it's through yearly theming or simply creating something absolutely stand-out – receive better initial social buzz, reach and kudos. Don't underestimate the power of strong branding and design.
- 2. Keep your ticketing process easy-peasy** – Don't over think the on-site ticketing process and options – be clear, be concise and let your customers make their selections on the ticket provider's portal. If you are doing on-site ticketing then the same rule applies: keep it simple. Too many times festivals confuse the user and this just leads to drop-offs.
- 3. Create for the team, not just the customer** – We've found that the digital festival experience can be a stressful one for those on the digital and marketing teams. By creating a content management system that's easy to use, provides loads of flexibility, and takes the headache out of the usual back and forth, it can make a project feel way more fun for all. Think about the long term and create digital tools that can grow with the festival; don't keep reinventing the wheel.
- 4. The mobile experience is crucial** – It's no shock that mobile is the most important experience in this space, so make sure you design it first. Focus on making sure your line-up & experiences are clear and make it a cinch to buy tickets at any point. Fixed full-width ticket buy buttons work beautifully.
- 5. Speed is key** – Most websites are image and video heavy, which is great, but make sure you are using the right image compression and hosting to make sure your site loads super fast. No one's sticking around for long loading times.
- 6. Remain objective** – We all do it – get lost in the excitement of what we want and just assume we are the customer. We aren't. Before you get going, map out your core users and the key objectives across the website and each individual page. Always check back to your objectives to make sure you are achieving them.
- 7. Get personal** – It's sometimes hard to jump in and plan out a personalised communications strategy...it even gives us the sweats. Start simple. During the sign up process ask one or two important questions that will allow you to personalise your relationship with your customers. Great starters are 'Favourite artist/music/film' and 'Favourite food and drink'. This opens the door to send relevant information that adds value.
- 8. Get chatty** – Email has served us well but the implied relationship is not personal or conversational. To really engage your customers it can help to introduce chat apps that have the ability to get very personal, relevant and timely. Again, start simple – create something that on-boards people, gives them easy access to important information, and ask a few pertinent questions that will allow you to send quality content. This is also a good way to sell merch and receive social shares through competitions and incentives.
- 9. Use video and great imagery** – Line-ups and key attractions are great but ultimately people just want to have the best festival experience with their friends. You need to convince a customer that your festival is going to give them this experience, so you'll need to show off with relevant and brilliant imagery & videos that people resonate with.
- 10. Think about the before and after** – Don't neglect the pre-registration and thank you pages. Put time, love and attention into these as they are key customer contact points that either encourage a desired action or elicit boredom.



Christian Hill
Project Simply

How are you currently enhancing your digital experience to stand out from your competition and engage your audience?



WHAT ARE WE ENHANCING NOW?

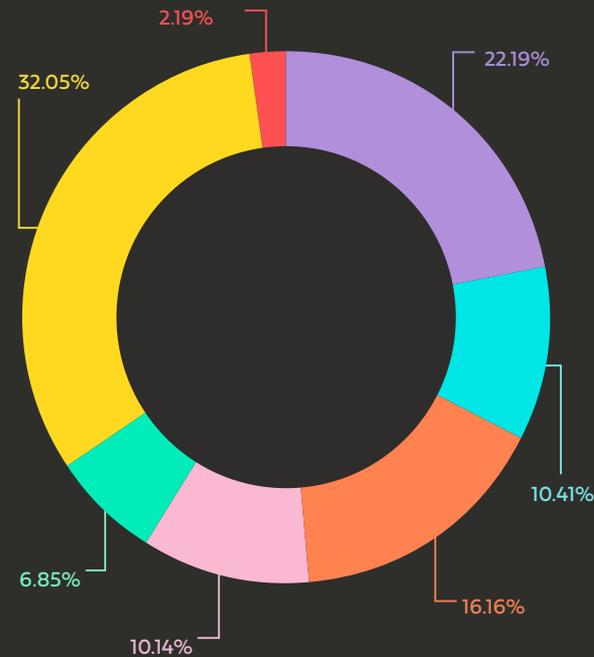
54.25% of festivals are investing in more stand-out creative and engaging social media. There seems to be an appreciation that a crowded marketplace and social media bombardment enforces previous results that highlight the importance of creating engaging messaging and creative on social. This should then lead to a seamless website experience and a simple ticketing process which 16% of festivals said they were also trying to improve.

It's positive to see that over 10% of festivals are investing in creating a mobile app for their festival, and 18% are looking to create more personalised user content. By combining owned channels and personalised content, festivals should be able to reduce reliance on social, reduce marketing spend, and improve brand equity amongst fans.

“We want unique creative that tells a story. It is key it doesn't look like any other festival and is fun and shareable.

Chris Palivan – Toronto Cider Festival, CAN

Overall



By festival size



Key

- Stand-out creative
- Personalising user content
- Improving ticket purchase process
- Using more rich media
- Using a festival mobile app
- More engaging social content
- Other

What are your biggest issues when creating and running your website, apps and customer communications?



ISSUES CREATING & RUNNING WEBSITE

Work taking too long to create and action, as well as spiralling costs, tops the charts of website issues. Creative and development work are two very different beasts. Creative work is very much about precise briefing, rigid processes, and definitive decision making. Development work, being less subjective, can be created and then handed back to the festival team with ongoing flexibility baked in, reducing time to create and deploy changes and lowering ongoing third party costs.

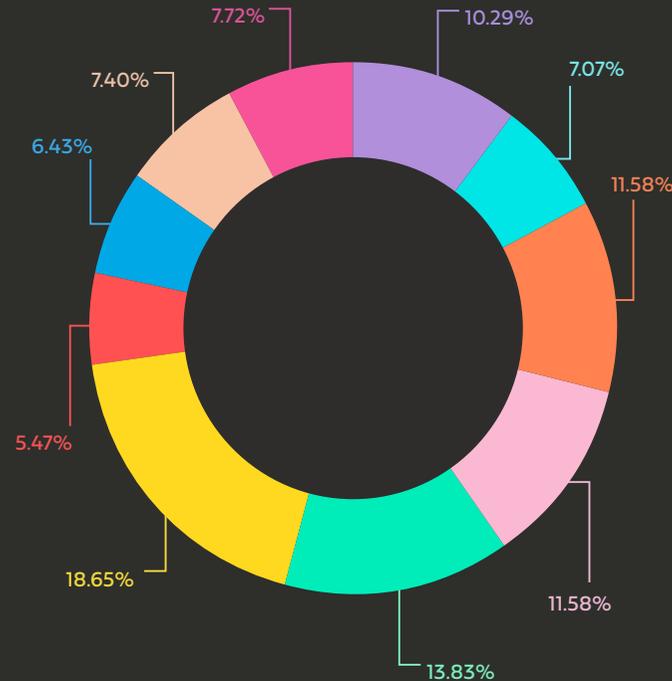
Spiralling costs are linked to over-dependence on third parties, on creative and particularly for development updates and changes. The life cycle of a festival website is one of constant changes, with back and forth adding to ongoing costs.

By working with creatives that have a well-trodden process and using a development platform that negates the need for 3rd party ongoing development you have a setup that reduces costs and internal frustrations.

“We are working with a third party website developer for layout issues, updates and bugs. It takes time and money to manage the back and forth and get issues fixed.”

Festival Owner, US

Overall



By festival size



Key

- Issues with creative
- Spiralling costs
- Website load speeds
- Quality of work
- Working taking too long to create
- Other
- Reliance on 3rd parties to make changes
- Missing deadlines
- 3rd parties not actioning changes quickly
- Hosting issues

Which features do you consider the most important on an event website?



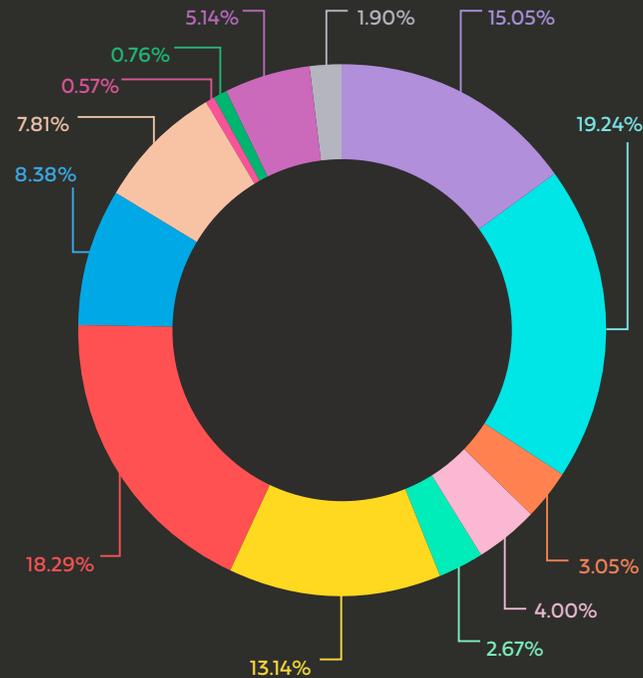
MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES

The top 3 make up 52%, which are Editable lineups, Event Schedules and On-site ticketing. It's clear that festivals care about the speed of delivering the latest news and having control over the ever changing lineups, which directly affect the interest and experience that the customers will have.

Festival teams feel frustrated by external agency work lag and expense and wish to have the toolsets to do much of the ongoing updates themselves. It's crucial that festivals start to invest in website systems that can give them the tools they need to self manage, saving loads of time and cost.

Live Chat is really low. I think we'll see that change in the next couple of years as website and in app chat bots become cheaper and easier to install and run.

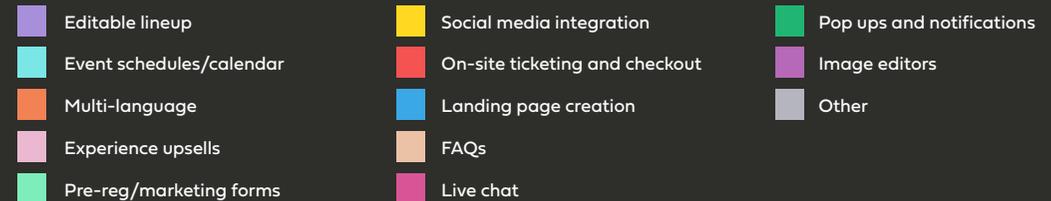
Overall



By festival size



Key



“It’s crucial that festivals start to invest in website systems that can give them the tools they need to self-manage, saving loads of time and cost.”

Christian Hill – Project Simply

Do you currently use a third party ticketing provider?



THIRD PARTY TICKETING

Third Party ticketing is a dominant win – the reality of a festival is that unless it is ticketless or not for profit, the majority use a ticketing third party.

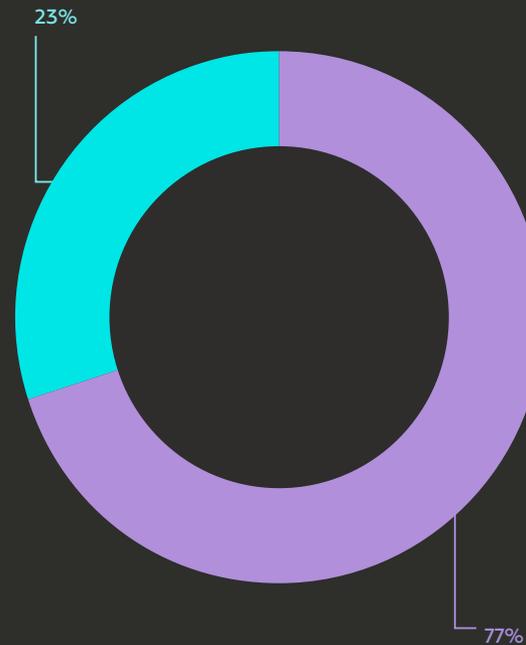
Whilst many festivals seem content with their ticketing provider, there are some shared thoughts around better website ticketing integrations to improve the user experience and reduce dropout rates, as well as reducing the price charged on a per-ticket basis. I think particularly for smaller festivals, it makes sense to have a flat fee ticketing model that helps save on costs in their early years of growth.

In this day and age it's important to find a ticketing provider that works for you in making sure your data is secure, as well as providing more extensive add ons in terms of assisting with marketing and reporting.

“We’d like ticketing companies to help promote the event and allow us more control over our communications.”

Kaya – Threshold Festival, UK

Overall



By festival size



Key



Beyond the ticket sale - how ticket providers can increase the chance of success

The potential value of a ticketing platform goes beyond the moment someone buys a ticket and commits to attending your festival. Many providers have a whole range of tools that can be used to help you drive sales and better understand your audience.

To give you a glimpse of this untapped potential, here are three ways ticketing providers can increase the likelihood of a successful event:



Paul Stacey
Fatsoma

1. Trackable Social Media Ads

In recent years, ads have become more central to marketing strategies on social platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Trackable social media ads can be linked directly to ticket sales, allowing you to re-target customers who have shown an interest but not converted. This also makes it easy to see which ads are most cost-effective, reducing your marketing spend.

2. Ambassador Platforms

Festivals are inherently social. Every customer is a potential ambassador for your brand, which makes it a no-brainer to mobilise your more influential customers to drive sales. There are two ways you can do this: build a dedicated ambassador team to spread the word, or incentivise the ticket buyer at the point of purchase to promote your event to their network. Incentives can include commission on sales generated, or even things such as free tickets or special VIP treatment. Either way, it gets customers promoting events to their friends with little financial investment on your behalf.

3. Custom Reports

Beyond the ticket sale (and the festival itself), you need access to insights that help you refine your sales and marketing strategy. Purchasing data is crucial when it comes to understanding your customers, and it's highly likely your ticketing company knows more about your audience than you think. Custom reports allow you to ask the right questions to get the information you need to work smarter when planning for the next phase or event.

Overall how do you feel about the growth of your festival through your marketing and digital experience?



FEELINGS ABOUT GROWTH

It's a very even split with 46.85% feeling great Vs 45.45% so-so and only 1.40% worried. Whilst the marketing and digital experience plays a part of the overall success of a festival, it's wonderful to see so many festivals seeing great times ahead, but equally concerning to see so many not quite sure how it's going to go.

Festivals need to embrace some change from being so reliant on social, and moving more into a hybrid model of social engagement for acquisition and using owned channels for improved conversation and personalisation.

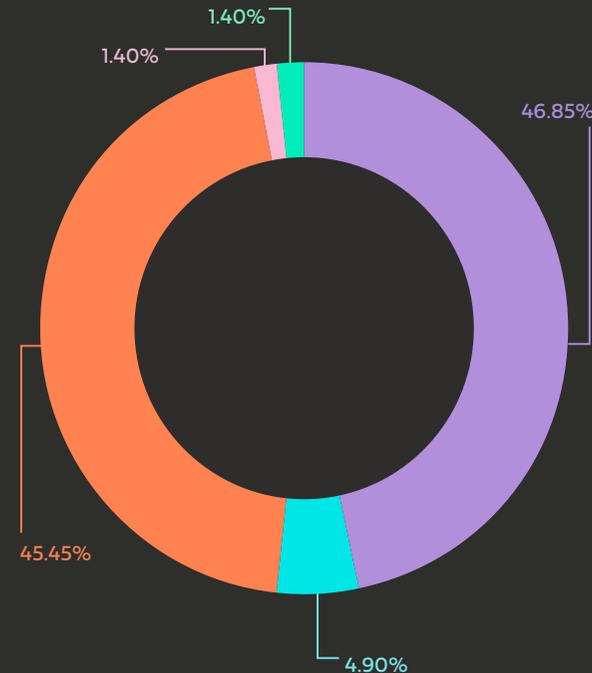
By working with creatives that have a track record of success with very strict processes as well as investing in affordable website technologies that reduce the reliance on 3rd parties for change is important.

I'm pleased to say that these people, technologies and processes already exist and can help ensure you festival becomes more successful whilst overall reducing costs and time constraints.

"I'd like to see online engagement relate to ticket sales, creating more predictability for us, as well as online audiences sharing our content with excitement to make us stand out as a festival of high reputation and influence."

Kate Williamson – Margate Film Festival, UK

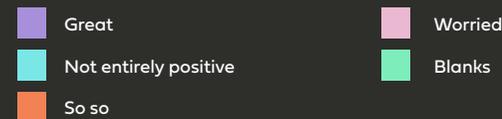
Overall



By festival size



Key



**Want to chat more about the insight or need advice on how to better grow your festival?
Let's chat.**

Our address

12 Hilton Street
Manchester
M1 1JF

Phone

0161 408 1023

Web

projectsimply.com

Email

enquiry@projectsimply.com