

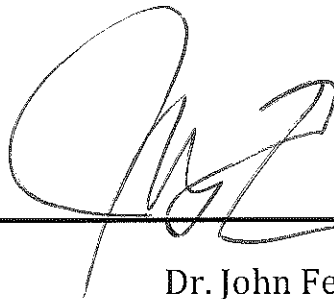
Catching up with The Social Media Trends in Film Festivals

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to explore the social media trends and patterns within film festivals and to provide recommendations for future film festival organizers to cultivate a more sophisticated social media engagement. This project discovered the benefits and challenges film festivals faced with social media, as well as the factors that affect film festival organizers' decision making on social media strategies. Information was obtained through an inventory research across 125 film festivals in North America, and a survey with some of the largest film festivals in the United States. E.g., Seattle International Film Festival, New Orleans Film Festival, and Napa Valley Film Festival. Additionally, by analyzing the statistical information that was collected from the inventory research along with survey responses, this project identifies five major social media trends within film festivals and three recommendations for future film festival organizers.

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Introduction

Purpose Statement

Audience reach is one of the greatest advantages of social media. A report on the *Business Insider* website shows that Americans spend an average of 37 minutes daily on social media, a higher period of time than any other major internet activity, including email (Adler, 2014). A number of studies focus on how an organization can utilize the social media to reach the audience and partnership with communities and increase brand awareness. For instance, how has social media have been integrated into the marketing communications of medium-sized enterprises? What are the benefits of social media utilization in medium-sized enterprises? (Bernhard, & Abukar, 2012). However, there are few studies focusing on the state of social media use by film festivals. To help address this gap in knowledge, I investigated how and why film festivals use social media through inventory research and online web survey with film festival organizers. This project discovered film festivals that are currently engaging with social media, mediums they choose, and how it benefits for their festivals.

During the past decades, many studies focused on how social media influences communication and society. Some proposed that the online connection tools changed the real world social lives (Tyler, 2002. Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010); others brought up the idea that social media even changed relationships among individuals (Kietzmann,

Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). However, there were not many studies approaching what changed and progressed in the social media use within art organizations.

Throughout this project, I discovered the benefits and challenges film festivals faced with social media. Moreover, I explored the factors that affect film festival organizers' decision making on social strategies such as how many platforms they cultivate, what the posting schedule is, and how they evaluate the outcomes of using this channel.

Conceptual Framework

The core concepts in this research are film festivals and social media. Social media assists different functions in society, including identity, sharing, communications, groups, reputations, and relationships (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). And a film festival is an organized, extended presentation of films in one or more cinemas or screening venues; mostly, it would carry a theme as well as other activities such as live performances or keynote speeches. For instance, the Chicago International Children's Film Festival is the first competitive festival for children in America. The impetus for the festival came from a need to introduce new, culturally diverse films for children to American children's audiences and to recognize excellence in children's filmmaking.

This research identifies the benefits and challenges of film festivals utilizing diversity social media platforms. Further, I probed the social

media trends within film festivals and drafted recommendations for future film festival organizers. I started with an inventory research on film festivals across the country. Through this inventory research, I identified 125 film festivals in North America and investigated in which social media channels they are actively engaging with. In addition, I produced an online survey for film festival organizers to address more details regarding the festivals' operating strategies toward the social media.

A broader topic area of my research is a film festival as an organization. In past years, film festivals have received surprisingly little and scattered attention within organizational and management studies despite a mounting interest among film and media scholars (Rüling, C, & Strandgaard, 2010, p. 318). Having knowledge of film festival programing, funding and marketing is crucial to understanding film festivals from an organizational perspective rather than an event that only occurs in a period of time.

Apart from research on film festivals, I also paid close attention to the current social media landscape. Many social media sites are designed primarily to facilitate conversations among individuals and groups, which could be seen as a powerful marketing tool. Therefore, the motivations and intentions for film festivals utilizing social media are worth exploring. One of the reasons is that social media is an increasingly appealing and low cost method for a small organization in comparison with traditional marketing tools such as television commercials and

printing materials. However, social media can become more competitive as the pros and cons of different social media platforms are emerging. Therefore, some platforms are growing rapidly while others are dwindling. One example is that nearly half of the current Facebook users said they would consider quitting the site and 61% of Facebook members say they have taken extended breaks from Facebook (Bosker, 2013). Will this phenomena affect film festivals thinking about continuing to use Facebook? Will they switch to other social media channel?

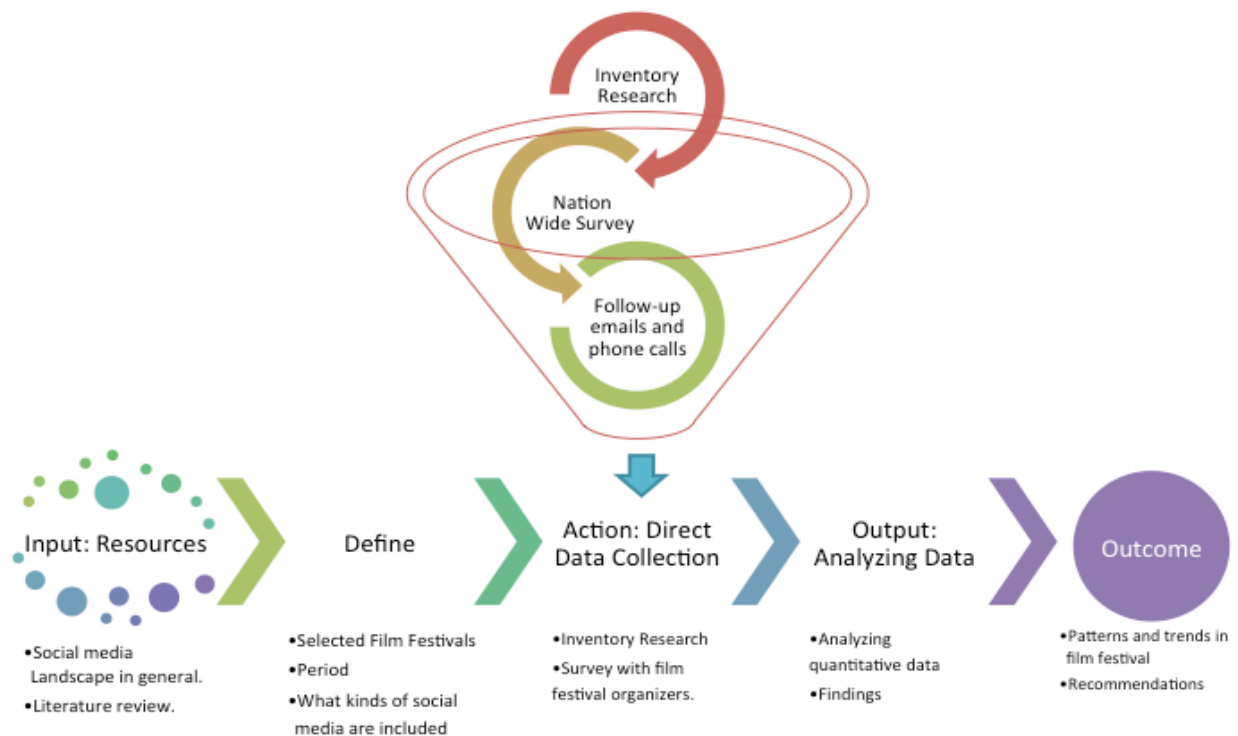
Research Design

The methodology for this research involved a literature review, an inventory research, and an online survey with film festival organizers. The literature review includes the history and characteristics of social media, the film festival as an organization, and social media as a marketing tool. After I built up fundamental knowledge in the social media and film festival I moved toward the data collection process. The inventory research and the online survey for film festival organizers are the cornerstones of this study.

Throughout the inventory research, I obtained statistics, such as there are 16 social media sites currently used by the 125 film festivals; there is only one festival that did not engage in any social media platforms. Towards the end of this data collection process, I conducted an online survey with the 125 selected film festivals. The purpose of this phase was to identify the benefits and challenges film festivals confront

with social media. There were 22 film festivals that replied to the online survey. Some of the festivals are well-known, like the Seattle international film festival, New Orleans Film Festival, and Napa Valley Film Festival. Others are more local base film festival such us Tally Shorts Film and Bend Film Festival. The positions of the respondents were: one festival founder, one festival board member, one business director, one programming director, two social media staff members, five marketing managers, and ten festival directors. I also followed up with further questions for the survey answers to receive more distinct experience and knowledge from each film festival.

○ Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Visual Schematic:



Main Research Question & Sub Research questions

As social media becomes more and more central within film festivals, the purpose of the study is to perceive the potential social media trends in film festivals and draft recommendations for future film festival organizers. The research questions can be found in the following sections.

- **Main research question:**

What are the social media trends in film festivals?

- **Sub questions:**

1. What are effective social media strategies for film festivals?
2. What kinds of social media platforms will festivals continue to use in the future?
3. What are the benefits and challenges of using social media in film festivals?

Benefits of the Study

The purpose of the research is to explore the social media trends and patterns within film festivals and to provide recommendations for social media practice to future film festival organizers. The research is aimed to assist not only film festivals, but also other arts and culture organizations with tight budgets and few staff members to gain knowledge from looking into how other organizations engaged with social media and what we could learn from their experiences.

Literature Review

History and characteristics of Social Media

It is not surprising that a large number of the articles have studied social media. Authors defined social media from different perspectives and some states that “social media are not a new phenomenon, but popular social network sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter have made social networking more accessible to the masses”(Plessis, 2010). Others states that “we suggest taking social media as an umbrella term, under which one can find various and very different cultural practices related to the online content and people who are involved with the content” (Lietsala, & Sirkkunen, 2008). In social media, anyone can be a producer or creator. People involved in social media identify themselves as participators in the world. In addition, social media benefit the organization in different levels. “Social media services, such as Twitter, enable commercial businesses to participate actively in online word-of-mouth communication” (Zhang, Bernard & Abdur, 2011, p. 163). Understanding different points of view for social media certainly arouses my interest to view social media not only from an art administrator perspective, but also from the public’s viewpoint.

Scholars have provided a sizable body of evidence that social media is dominating the entire online communication and marketing world; however, issues and concerns have emerged with the growth of social media. For instance, some studies show that scholars have started

to question the essence of social media and by identifying the main characteristics of social media (Lietsala, & Sirkkunen, 2008). Lietsala and Sirkkunen also looked at the role of social media in organizations. Other scholars have discovered the utilization of social media in the communication process as well as being a marketing instrument (Bernhard & Abukar, 2012). Bernhard and Abukar conducted a qualitative study with the goal of getting insights into how organizations utilize social media in their communications. The qualitative method offered the chance to get a better understanding of this research area. Yet, they adopted a case study to build a greater understanding of the role of social media in the communication process of medium-sized enterprises. This report implies several benefits of social media utilization in marketing communications, including enabling a faster communication and a more personal contact, and a cheaper communication tool. Bernhard and Abukar (2012) state that social media is an increasingly appealing and inexpensive method for small organization in comparison with traditional marketing in order to communicate effectively. Therefore, the low cost of using this marketing tool provided a fundamental reason that art organizations will keep exploiting social media in the future.

My research focus is how art organizations utilize social media to cultivate their audiences, especially within film festivals. The understanding of film festival programming is the fundamental to in-depth my research. Elizabeth Czach (2004) proposes that film festivals might be

considered one of the institutional mechanisms that contribute to the formation of a national cinema, and what issues arose from the intersections of film festivals, programming, and the building of a national cinema (Czach, 2004). Further, Czach conducted a historical narrative to explain the film festivals' programming and completed several interviews with the festival programmers and organizers to demonstrate the establishment of a film festival.

Film festival as an organization

From the oldest film festival in the world—the Venice Film Festival—to present, the history of film festival is over 80 years. North America's first and longest running short film festival is the Yorkton Film Festival, which was established in 1947 and continues today. There are around 3,000 film festivals currently active in the world. However, “Film festivals have received surprisingly little and scattered attention within organization and management studies despite a mounting interest among film and media scholars” (Rüling, C, & Strandgaard, 2010). Rüling and Strandgaard (2010) provide an introduction to the emerging literature on film festivals and argue for a research agenda within organizational studies by looking at film festivals as a new sector. Rüling and Strandgaard (2010) analyze the role of film festivals within the global film industries, studying film festivals as arts organizations. In order to contribute knowledge to the academic field, Rüling and Strandgaard (2010) highlight three different directions for organizationally informed

film festival research. The first orientation considers film festivals as a temporal organization that bring diverse professions, technologies, markets, and industries together. Second, they study festivals' impact and position within the global film industries. Film festivals provide organizations with opportunities to connect with other film professionals and partners. Also, film festivals provide young professionals and students opportunities to show their works. Third, they suggest studying festivals as organizations in their own domain. Festivals struggle for limited resources: films, funding, audiences, and media attention. In further elaborating about the limited resources, Ruling and Strandgaard (2010) argue, "They need to cater to multiple and diverse stakeholders within moving and highly uncertain environments at the boundary between art and commerce " (p. 322). Finally, they argue that film festivals are interesting repositories of knowledge that provide rich data for organization and management researchers (Rüling, C, & Strandgaard, 2010). The study illustrates that we should view film festivals as arts organizations like museums and art institutes, rather than a temporary event.

Social Media impact on Film Festivals

There is little research on the relationship between social media and film festivals. However, there were studies on social media as a marketing tool. In "Marketing meets Web 2.0, social media, and creative consumers: Implications for international marketing strategy", Berthon,

Pitt, Plangger, and Shapiro (2012) provide five useful principles for facilitators to understanding this new media as well as assisting my research to predict the social media trends in film festivals.

The first principal is that social media are always a function of the technology, culture, and government of a particular country or context. Therefore, the boundary had to be set before I started investigating. Second, local events rarely remain local. Hence, the connecting function of social media needs to be developed. Third, global events are likely to be (re)interpreted locally. Fourth, creative consumers' actions and creations are also dependent on technology, culture, and government. Lastly, technology is historically dependent, which means that different countries and cultures have different approaches toward marketing.

Data Analyses and Procedures

Introduction: the process of data collection

To conduct research on the current status of social media in film festivals, I developed two stages of data collection. The first stage is an inventory research to identify all the social media channels used by film festivals. The second stage is an online survey, which provides more details on how the festivals utilized social media.

To begin this process, I started with the inventory research on film festivals across the country. Through this inventory research, I identified 125 film festivals in North America that will happen in 2015. Once I secured these festivals, I started to examine the festivals' official websites and online databases to identify which social media channels they are actively engaging with. Before defining the term "engaging", I identified what it means for an organization to be considered "active" in social media channels for the purpose of precision. To fit into this "active" category, the festival must have updated information or post feeds within the past two months. In other words, a festival with a Facebook account that did not have any activity in the past two months would not be considered active with this channel.

Meanwhile, I collected potential survey contacts during the inventory research process. Most of the respondents were festival directors, marketing managers, and social media staff. After the

accomplishment of the inventory research, the second phase of the data collection was the online survey. The online questionnaires were sent via emails to the film festivals. The questionnaires addressed more details regarding the festivals' operating strategies toward social media. An example of a question is, "In a typical week, how often are you updating social media feeds?" Other questions were aimed at discovering the benefits and challenges of using social media for each festival. A full survey questionnaire is located in Appendix B.

Statistic of inventory research

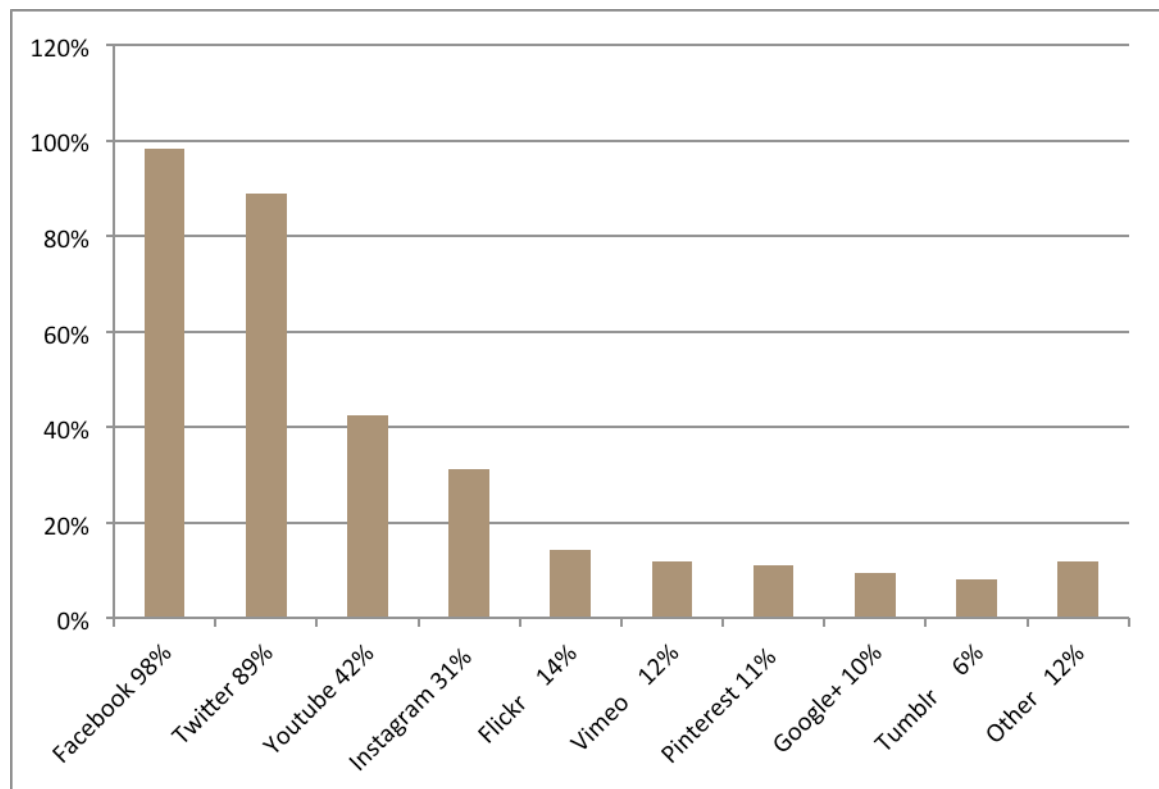
Based on the results of this inventory, I discovered several important trends of the social media status within film festivals across the country. First and foremost is the average number of social media platforms used by the 125 film festivals. Second, I discovered the proportion of festivals that are not using social media. Third, I identified the types of social media channels which are prevailing within film festivals and the percentage of each media platform. Last, I learned that several organizations utilize more niche social media platforms.

The average number of social media platforms is manageable for a organization, however, there is a gap between the numbers of platform used by each festival. According to my inventory, across these 125 film festivals, the average number of social media platforms is three. Sonoma International Film Festival, in California, has the highest ranking of using types of social media platforms. There are eight social media platforms

used by the festival, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Vimeo, Pinterest, Tumblr, and Flickr. On the other hand, nine of the 125 film festivals are only using one social media platform, and eight of the nine festivals selected Facebook as their only social media platform.

Against the tide of prevalent social media use by film festivals, only one festival did not engage in any platforms. Indianapolis International Film Festival has not utilized any social media platform—meaning that less than one percent of the selected film festivals choose not to engage their audience via social media.

In the general current social media landscape, there are over 20 different platforms dominating the personal and business use of social media. Through the selected film festivals in this project, I discovered 16 social media sites that are currently used by 125 film festivals. Some of the platforms are well-known by the general public, such as, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Vimeo, Pinterest, Tumblr, Flickr, Google+, MySpace, and LinkedIn. Other platforms are more likely to serve the film industries and festival communities such as FilmFreeway and Eventrbite. The percentage of each social media used by the 125 film festivals can be viewed in figure 3.1.



❖ Figure 3.1 Percentage of each social media platforms.

These statistics show that a tremendously high percentage of festivals used Facebook and Twitter. 98% of the festivals hold Facebook accounts and posted information within the past two months. 89% of the festivals use Twitter, updating the feed regularly. 42% to 11% of the festivals utilized visual social media tools such as YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, and Vimeo. 10% of the film festivals engaged in Google+. 6% of the film festivals chose Tumblr. Nevertheless, 12% of the festivals used five different platforms in addition to the more dominant ones.

To have a more comprehensive understanding of the film festival's social media landscape, I dug deeper into the fringe of social media, which is operated by 12% of the film festivals. One example could be

FilmFreeway, which is used by Bahamas International Film Festival, Bahamas; Columbus International Film & Video Festival, Ohio; Nevada Film Festival, Nevada; and Vegas Indie Film Festival, Nevada. This social media platform provides a service for the film festivals communities, especially in the submission process. Filmmakers can discover hundreds of film festivals around the world and identify the submission criteria and deadlines on this social media site. Moreover, film festivals can create their summary pages to introduce the festivals to the general public and also draw submission. Another example could be Keek, a social networking site that serves similar functions as YouTube.

Survey data analysis

Towards the end of this data collection procedure, I conducted an online survey with the 125 selected film festivals. The purpose of this phase was to identify the benefits and challenges film festivals confront with social media. Additionally, the survey allowed me to discover and clarify some of the current social media phenomena emerging within film festivals. There were 22 film festivals that replied to the survey. The positions of the respondents were: festival funder, one festival board member, one business directors, one programming directors, one publication and outreach manager, two social media staff members, five marketing managers, and ten festival directors.

One of the most valuable aspects of feedback was the answer to the question, “what are the benefits of using social media in your

festival?" The respondents were given guidance to select from "low cost," "easy to assess," "simple to operate," "target audiences more effectively," "receive instant feedback," and "any other benefits" that occurred in their festivals. In all, a full 100% of the respondents noted that "low cost" is the primary reason they take advantage of social media. 95% of the respondents stated that the social media assists them in targeting audiences more effectively. 81% of the festivals claim that "simple to operate" and 72% of the festivals claim that "easy to assess" are factors encouraging them consistently to use social media. 59% of the festivals reported that receiving instant feedback is benefiting their film festival. In addition to these beneficial results described above, several festivals indicated other advantages of using social media. For instance, Moondance International Film Festival Director Elizabeth English noted that international reach is one of the benefits for her festival when it comes to engaging social media. Another specific benefit mentioned by a survey respondent is the ability to reach some celebrities or film industry people. Adrienne Anderson, founder and festival director for the International Black Women's Film Festival, noted that this benefit has been important for her festival.

On the contrary, issues of concern arose with regards to the use of social media. Maintaining the consistency of the festival's image is on the top of the list, with 63% of the festivals claiming that keeping consistency of appearance on social media platforms is a major challenge for their festivals. Furthermore, festivals losing control of the information is a

dilemma for 39% of the festivals. For example, Arlington International Film Festival, Virginia; Dances with Films, California; Sedona International Film Festival, Arizona; Wisconsin Film Festival, Wisconsin; International Black Women's Film Festival, California; Tally Shorts Film Festival, Florida; and Napa Valley Film Festival, California all noted that they have concerns of losing the control of information.

Moreover, many organizers expressed concern about not having guidelines and policies for media use by staff, noting that such lack could jeopardize the festival. For example, Port Townsend Film Festival, in Washington, responded that “no guidelines and policy for social media staff” is the only issue of concern in the festival. In addition, Arlington International Film Festival, Virginia; Black Maria Film Festival, New Jersey; and NewFilmmakers Los Angeles, California indicated that privacy and ethical issues have been rising in their festivals. New Orleans Film Festival Marketing Manager Shira Pinsker noted, “Not having enough staff to effectively monitor the channel” makes her anxious (Pinsker, 2015). Moreover, Seattle International Festival stated that “Responding to conversations in a timely manner” is one of the issues of concern within their festival. However, certain festivals do not have issues of concerns discussed above. For example BendFilm Festival director Todd Looby answered “not really” in response to the survey question about concerns over social media use (Looby, 2015).

Regarding the operation side of using social media, every film festival has different practices on not only the posting schedule but also

the posting contents. However, there are similar patterns across festivals. One example can be that 77% of the festivals have been operating social media for three years and above.

Another pattern is that all festivals have their own festival calendar. The calendar is often divided between the festival's schedule and "off season" or "typical weeks."

In a typical week, 40% of the festivals update posts up to three times a week. 18% of the festivals update less than once a week or rarely posting information when they are not within the active festival calendar. However, 12% of the festivals maintain their activities four to six times a week during the entire year. On the other hand, 81% of the film festivals update feeds more than once a day or posting as needed and 13% of the festival update only once a day. Although the majority of the festivals aim to stay as active as they can during the festival season, Black Maria Film Festival, in New Jersey, responded that they rarely update information in the festival week.

For film festivals, the contents of social media posts can be as broad as the images of the festivals, behind-the-scenes photos, movie trailers, news, and ticketing information. Some festivals are willing to go further and be more creative, like when Port Townshend Film Festival shares items of interest to film buffs. Those who replied to the survey tended to give positive feedback regarding social media; they considered social media a mediator to connect with the film industry, a tool to

develop potential audiences, increase name recognition, strengthen public relationship, and a market for the festivals.

Because of the beneficial results generated from social media, film festivals began to explore various possibilities to audience development in social media. 72% of the festivals have utilized paid social media advertising, such as targeted Facebook Ads, but many organizations are still analyzing the impact of this strategy. The festivals that responded are also pondering the question of what kinds of social media they should abandon. The answers are quite different from festival to festival. For instance, Arlington International Film Festival and BendFilm Festival both stated that they would stop using Tumblr, Blogger, and Pinterest in the future. Sedona International Film Festival noted that Vimeo is not an option for future social media strategies. On the contrary, Wisconsin Film Festival, NewFilmmakers Los Angeles, FANTastic Horror Film Festival, Nantucket Film Festival, Black Maria Film Festival, and Moondance International Film Festival all stated that they will continue to use all of the social media channels they are currently engaging with. Further research should be conducted to discover the reasons behind why some festivals want to abandon a social media platform. For example, conducting a survey with targeted audience, tracking online traffic, or calculating the response and conversation rate would be useful ways to measure the effectiveness of social media.

Findings and Recommendations

Throughout this research, I explored patterns and trends in regard to film festivals using social media. I discovered five major social media trends in film festival and have produced three recommendations for future film festival organizers to cultivate a more sophisticated social media strategy.

Five Major Social Media Trends in Film Festivals

- **Operating Three Platforms**

According to my research, across these 125 film festivals, the average number of social media platforms is three. Despite some of the festivals engaging with more than six channels, the average number—three platforms— indicates that using three channels is most common and effective situation in film festivals. When considering how many social media channels a festival should use, I believe it depends on how many recourses the festivals have and what desire to achieve with social media's assistance. However, for film festivals to have social media staff members is a privilege. New Orleans Film Festival noted that they are facing the problem of not having enough staff to effectively monitor the social media channels. Film festivals often have limited personnel and resource. Thus, maintaining social media platforms usually added on tasks to the marketing and programming members. For example, Highway 61 Film Festival claimed that time spent on maintaining social

media could be spent in other areas. Consequently, festivals must select and evaluate the social media channels to optimize their work.

- **Facebook Still in and Twitter Is Catching up**

Facebook is by far the biggest social media network with 1.35 billion users as of 2014; it dominates the social media sphere in every part of the world. By way of illustration, there were 936 million daily active users reported for Facebook in March 2015, representing an increase of 17% annually (Facebook Reports First Quarter 2015.) Over half of the film festivals surveyed claimed that Facebook is the most active and efficient platform for their festivals. Moreover, the statistics indicate that Facebook is the most prominent platform across film festivals I have inventoried.

However, reports show that more users were swinging from Facebook to Twitter. However, for film festivals, Twitter is still second to Facebook. 23% of the survey respondents claimed that Twitter is the most active and efficient platform for their festivals.

- **Gap between Festival Season and off Season Posting Schedule**

Unlike museums and other arts organizations, film festivals have distinguished social media posting schedule between festival weeks and other days of the year. When festivals are in a typical day, the staff members are overwhelmed by the preparations for the festivals. They normally focus on programming, coordinating, scheduling, recruiting, and

budgeting. These activities are mainly concentrated internally. As a result, there are few activities going on in their social media channels. The survey shows that 40% of the festivals update posts up to three times a week and 27% of the festivals update less than once a week or rarely post information when they are not within the active festival calendar.

However, 78% of the film festivals update feeds more than once a day or posting as needed during festival seasons. Therefore, the gap between on and off-season posting schedule is established, meaning that when the organization is not on its festival week, there are fewer activities on the social media channels. The important lesson here is that being consistent is one of the biggest issues of concerns for the most responded film festivals. Being consistent, regardless the posting schedule or the contents, is vital to sustaining an active presence on social media.

- **Blog Style Social Media Platforms Have Declined**

Jason Kottke, one of the pioneering bloggers wrote, “The primary mode for the distribution of links has moved from the loosely connected network of blogs to tightly integrated services like Facebook and Twitter.” (Kottke, 2013). Similarly, film festival organizers have begun to evaluate and terminate their engagement with blog-style social media such as Blogger and Tumblr. Five of the respondents stated that they would not continue to utilize blog-style platforms in the future. Some of the reasons are simply “It’s too much” and “we don’t have a volunteer/intern to answer or to post constantly”(Arlington International Film Festival).

Further, Port Townsend Film Festival claimed, “Our donors and audience are 50 plus years old,” with the implication being they represent a population more familiar with traditional media such as radio and print materials. Moreover, the Publications and Outreach Manager, Laura Carlson from Calgary International Film Festival noted that she did not even consider engaging with Tumblr and Blogger when she took over the responsibility of social media. Because the social media staff members have enough to maintain, it would probably be a challenge to set up maintain a blog-style social media page due to staff members’ already busy schedules.

- **Video and Image Based Social Media Could Be the Next Facebook.**

Over the past several years, video has become more and more attractive to online users. In 2013, YouTube was identified as the second largest search engine in the world. Other video and image based social media sites, such as Instagram and Vimeo have been growing in popularity in recent years. Similarly, film festivals have begun to use video and image-based social media more frequently. From my inventory research, 78 of the 125 film festivals used at least one of the video and image based social media applications. The top five channels used across all film festivals are YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Pinterest, and Flickr. Moreover, 33 of the 125 film festivals used two or more video and image based social media platforms. Due to the increase in popularity of these social media sites, social media staff members must be familiar with the

idiosyncrasies of each platform to engage with these users. One example can understand the usage of “hushtags”. Another example can be how to link one social media site to another, like including a YouTube link in a Facebook post.

Three Recommendations for Future Film Festival Organizers

- **Get Rid of the Bad One! Choose 3-5 Social Media Sites That Most Suit Your Festival.**

It is obvious that maintaining social media sites can be an overwhelming task for the festival and marketing staff members. 90% of the festivals that responded to my survey have been using social media in their marketing and communications for more than two years. I believe that now is time for the festivals to narrow down to the most effective and efficient platforms. To fulfill this goal, festivals must spend time pinpointing their ideal audience, understanding their festivals’ audiences and communities, and tracking analytics of social media channels that could assist the most. Once the festivals identify the platforms most suited to their audience, the second step is to learn about users’ behaviors in those platforms and follow the pattern to increase traffic. For example, Twitter’s users expect to receive feedback or retweet post within a few hours. Thus, when festivals post information, they need to interact with the respondents within the next couple hours and not wait until the next day. As a result, much effort needs to be put into one social media site.

Festivals should spend their limited resource and energy on three to five social media channels that have great results for their festivals.

- **Try it! Take Advantage of Low Cost Social Media Ads**

Compared to major marketing campaigns, social media ads are relatively low cost and could be launched in a timely manner. In addition, these social media ads are aimed to assist organizations reach out to people who share similar interests and experiences and may result in helping develop audiences. One example could be Targeted Facebook Ads, which 76% of the responded festivals have used. This advertising provides options to target your audience by geographical, demographical, educational status, and personal interests. Moreover, it serves a great range of pricing that that helps festivals to not spend more money than they have. Social media ads are a great flexible marketing tool for small or seasonal run festivals.

- **Building a System! Start Making Policy and Hiring Social Media Staff.**

Every organization has policies and procedures toward its internal oversight of staff discipline or financial management. However, social media marketing and evaluation is a new area from a management aspect. Even so, festivals must start to concern that without policies it will be challenging to guide and train the staff members and also maintaining the consistency of festival's image.

Staffing is another central concern that film festivals must confront. Marketing manager of New Orleans Film Festival, Shira Pinsker (2015) noted that “not having enough staff to effectively monitor the social media channel” is her issue of concern using social media in the future. Therefore, I recommend that festivals organizers should start to allocate and analyze the workload of operating social media. The best cast scenario is hiring a full time, part time, volunteer, or intern who could take over the responsibility of social media. In cases where a festival cannot afford to hire dedicated staff, the organizers might consider developing a set of standard procedures.

Conclusion

Overall, I saw a trend toward film festivals continually engaging with social media. I believe the observation and recommendations I provide with this project could benefit current and future film festival organizers in three ways. First, understanding of what the social media trends are within film festivals. The percentage of each social media site usage and the different platforms each festival selected. Second, what strategies other festivals take to engage with social media. What the posting contents and schedule are. What benefits and challenges film festivals received. Last, the actions film festivals could do to take the advantage of social media; carefully select channels, try low cost social media advertisements, and make policies.

Social media trends shift constantly, even while I am finishing this project. Therefore, festival organizers must continuously and intentionally be aware of what is happening within this domain to keep up with the trends.

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Appendix: Online survey question

Film Festival and Social Media Survey

Dear film festival organizers

You are invited to participate in a research project titled Film Festival and Social Media, conducted by Yi Hsuan (Emma) Hsu from the University of Oregon's Arts and Administration Program. The purpose of this study is to perceive the potential social media platforms utilized by film festivals and what challenges and benefits for film festival to utilize social media. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdrawal from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. The procedure involves filling the online survey that will take approximately 10 -15 minutes. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be carefully and securely maintained. Your consent to participate in this survey, as indicated below, demonstrates your willingness to have your responses in any resulting documents and publications and to relinquish confidentiality. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. And the results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (541)-514-2126 or yhsu@uoregon.edu, or Dr. John Fenn at (541)-346-1774. Any questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Office for the Research Compliance Services, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346-2510

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that

- You have ready the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree

- Name of your Film Festival: _____

- Your position title

- ☐ Festival Director
- ☐ Marketing Manager
- ☐ Public Relationship
- ☐ Social Media Staff
- ☐ Intern
- ☐ Others_____

1) How long has your festival use social media?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 to 2 years
- ☐ 2 to 3 years
- ☐ 3 years and above
- ☐ Others_____

2) Which of the following social media tools does the festival use? (Please select all that apply)

- ☐ Twitter ☐ Facebook ☐ Vimeo ☐ Pinterest ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Instagram ☐ YouTube ☐ Google+ ☐ Blogger ☐ Flickr
- ☐ Others_____

3) Which of the following social media tools is the most active and efficient for your festival?

- ☐ Twitter ☐ Facebook ☐ Vimeo ☐ Pinterest ☐ Tumblr
☐ Instagram ☐ YouTube ☐ Google+ ☐ Blogger ☐ Flickr
☐ Others_____

4) Which of the following social media tools is the most active and efficient for your festival??

- ☐ Twitter ☐ Facebook ☐ Vimeo ☐ Pinterest ☐ Tumblr
☐ Instagram ☐ YouTube ☐ Google+ ☐ Blogger ☐ Flickr
☐ Others_____

5) In a typical week, how often are you updating social media feeds?

- ☐ More than once a day
☐ Once a day
☐ 2 to 3 times a week
☐ 4 to 6 times a week
☐ Others_____

6) In a festival week, how often are you updating feeds?

- ☐ More than once a day
☐ Once a day
☐ 2 to 3 times a week
☐ 4 to 6 times a week
☐ Others_____

7) What are the reasons for using social media in your festival? (Please select all that apply)

- ☐ Conversations with participants
- ☐ Connect with the film industry
- ☐ Develop potential audience
- ☐ Increased name recognition
- ☐ News announcement
- ☐ Public Relationship
- ☐ Marketing tools
- ☐ Others_____

8) What are the benefits of using social media in your festival?

- ☐ Low cost
- ☐ Easy to assess
- ☐ Simple to operate
- ☐ Target audiences more effectively
- ☐ Receive instant feedback
- ☐ Others_____

9) What are the issues of concern using social media in your festival?

- ☐ Losing control of information
- ☐ Copyright and trademark infringement
- ☐ Privacy and ethical issues
- ☐ No guidelines and policy for social media staff
- ☐ Maintaining the consistency of festival's image
- ☐ Others_____

10) What are the contents of your post?

- ☐ Images of the festival
- ☐ Behind-the-scenes photos
- ☐ Movie trailers
- ☐ Quotes
- ☐ News
- ☐ Ticketing information
- ☐ Link to other organizations or events
- ☐ Others_____

11) Has your festival use any paid social media advertising?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ we are considering it

12) If yes, what are they?

- ☐ Targeted Facebook Ads
- ☐ Twitter promoted tweets, promoted accounts, or promoted trends
- ☐ YouTube advertisements
- ☐ Others_____

13) Have you ever shared other film festivals' information?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14) What kinds of social media you don't want to continue utilizing?

- ☐ Twitter ☐ Facebook ☐ Vimeo ☐ Pinterest ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Instagram ☐ YouTube ☐ Google+ ☐ Blogger ☐ Flickr

☐ Others _____

15) Are you willing to be contacted for follow up questions? If so, please indicate the best way to reach you below.

16) Any other thoughts?

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THANK YOU!!