

The Power of Brand Presence at Festivals & Events

By Marc Goulet

South by Southwest and Coachella attendees likely noticed an uptick in brand presence this year, as event sponsorships, branded experiences, and the usage of guerrilla marketing tactics appeared to be everywhere.

- Examples that had people talking include:
- GE's BBQ Research Center that enabled the brand to demonstrate its scientific prowess via Austin's all-compassing love of barbecue.
 - HBO and A&E both bringing hit shows to life with the Game of Thrones & Bates Motel experiences.
 - Heineken becoming the center of the Coachella experience by hosting some of the festival's hottest acts at the Heineken House.

With the 2015 festival circuit now in full swing, Russell Research conducted a survey among a sample of 578, 18-39 year olds and focused on the nearly one-third of adults between the ages of 18 and 39 (31%) who have attended at least one cultural event or festival in the past three years. This was accomplished by measuring past three-year attendance of 25 events that spanned across three major categories:

- **Arts Festivals:** Influential events such as Sundance Film Festival, Art Basel, South by Southwest, and Comic-Con International
- **Sports:** Major events such as the Super Bowl, Kentucky Derby, and X Games
- **Music Festivals:** Popular U.S. music festivals including Coachella, Lollapalooza, Jazz Fest, and Austin City Limits.

So who attends cultural events and festivals, and why are they so important for brands?

1. They are Early Adopters

Festival and event goers are in search of the next big thing. More than one-quarter of recent event/festival attendees (27%) are usually one of the first to know about and purchase new products — nearly double the percentage of non-attendees (14%) who consider themselves early adopters. This is a natural fit for brands launching a new product or service.

2. They Have Large Social Circles & Followings

Not only are attendees the first to try new products, they are more involved

in social media with built-in audiences to which they can broadcast their experiences.

Festival and event attendees are significantly more likely to be on Instagram (61% vs. 44% of non-attendees) and Twitter (61% vs. 51%), have significantly larger followings on both sites, and on top of it — more Facebook friends:

Average Number of Followers & Friends

- Twitter Followers: 230 among attendees vs. 122 for non-attendees
- Instagram Followers: 268 among attendees vs. 169 for non-attendees
- Facebook Friends: 397 among attendees vs. 293 for non-attendees.

Further, event attendees are more than twice as likely to have substantial follower counts — 12% have 500+ followers on Twitter (vs. 5% of non-attendees) and 17% have 500+ followers on Instagram (vs. 7% of non-attendees).

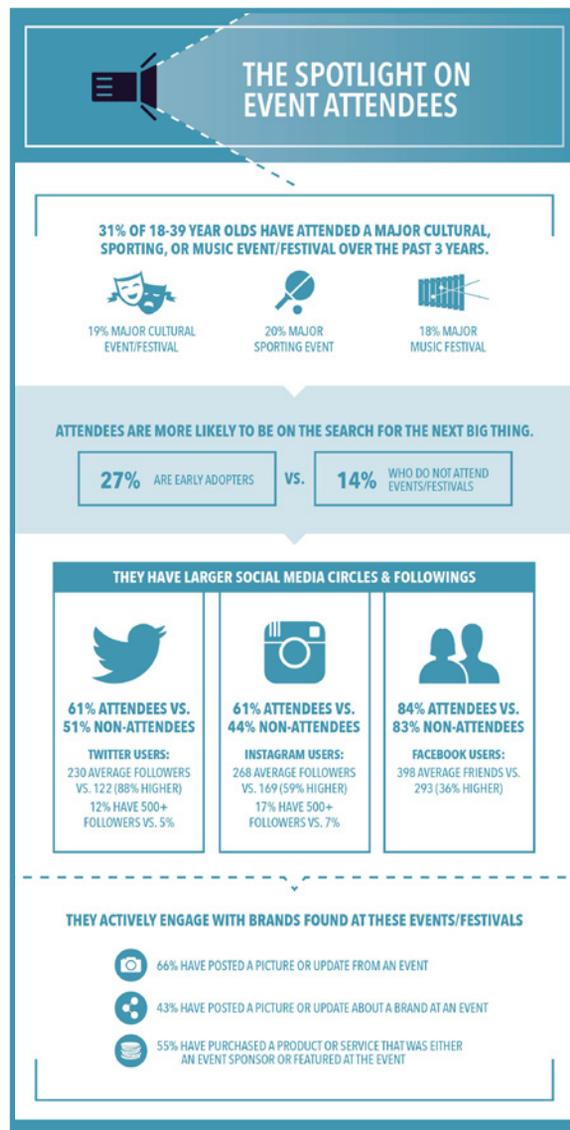
In other words, they have a large, engaged audience.

3. They Serve as Brand Ambassadors

The final piece of the puzzle is whether attendees are willing to talk about what they see and hear at major events. Fortunately, the answer is a resounding YES, as results are staggeringly attractive for brands:

- 66% have posted a picture or update from an event
- 43% have posted a picture or update about a brand at an event
- 55% have purchased a product or service that was featured at the event or by an event sponsor

Key Implication: If consumer-facing brands can find smart and creative ways to be a positive part of the event experience, it becomes an opportunity to make a lasting impression, among both attendees and their extensive social media circles.



The study was conducted online by Russell Research from April 3 – 12, 2015, among 578 adults between the ages of 18 and 39. Figures for gender, age, and geography were weighted where necessary to match their actual proportions in the population. In theory, with probability samples of this size, one could say with 95-percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 4.1 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy.

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