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The Significance Of Social Media And Website Use
In The Promotion Of Regional Festivals

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00191916



The Significance of Social Media and Website Use in the Promotion of Regional Festivals

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MA in Public Relations and New Media

Supervised by Mr. Emmett Coffey

July 2014

Submitted to the Cork Institute of Technology in part fulfilment of the requirements for
the MA in Public Relations with New Media.

Cork Instn
Technology

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of:

Master's Degree (MA) in Public Relations with New Media

is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for assessment for any academic purpose other than in partial fulfillment for that stated above.

Signed..... (Student)

Date.....

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the significance of social media and the use of website in the planning of an event. In any industry, communication is vital to the development process. This communication is especially important in the event planning industry. Communication with suppliers, civil servants, clients and general publics is an element of every event. Promotion falls under the communication process. This promotion can be done via: press releases; fliers; posters; word of mouth; traditional media and social media. Social media is a growing importance in relation to the promoting of events.

Those who have worked on the subject of social media being important for planning events include Nigel Jackson, Laurence Carter, N. Skye McCloud, W. Glynn Mangolda and David J. Fauldsb, Stephanie Marcus and Ben Parr. These works will be covered in the Literature Review section. These authors have analysed that social media and a company's website helps in the promotion of events.

What has not been done is the placing of significance of how vitally important social media and a helpful website is to the planning and promotion of an event. This research project aims to uncover the how social media and a website benefits an event, in the event planning process.

This thesis will proceed by critically analysing the works of others on the subject of social media in the planning of an event. This will be followed by my background theory of why social media is a significant value in the co-ordinating of an event. How information on social media being significant to events was found will be presented in the research methods section. Three case studies of events in which social media played a significant role will be

compared and contrasted and then discussed. My conclusions of my theory in which social media is significant in planning an event will finish the thesis.

Acknowledgements

The guidance of Mr. Emmett Coffey is appreciated; without his stories which all have a meaningful and helpful message to them to steer me in the right direction for this thesis, the writing of this research proposal would not be as enjoyable as it was.

Mr. Frank O'Donovan and his insightful stories and his teaching of how important stories are to grasp someone's attention has led to me making points via stories more than ever, especially this thesis.

My gratitude to those in the event industry who gave up their time to be interviewed. This thesis would not have been as enjoyable to write without these key people and this angle of research would not be present without them.

And last but not least, a thank you to my family for giving me the support and encouragement that they have given me. I appreciate the coffees my mother made to fuel the writing process of the thesis, as well as the quiet mornings while my sister was in bed – this was my prime time for researching and writing.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

“The cornerstone of all the promotion efforts is the event page or website.”

Andy Crestodina

This study is concerned with the significance of social media and website use in the promotion stage of organising regional festivals throughout Ireland.

In conjunction with the quote by Andy Crestodina above, this study seeks to explore the significance of social media and website use in the promotion of events. The types of events which are analysed within this study are regional festivals throughout Ireland. Regional festivals may be for socio-cultural, economic or political reasons; or for community development; or even for the survival of tourism: regional festivals are events for a community (Derrett, 2008).

There are diverse ways in which these regional festivals can be promoted; this study focuses on online platforms. The utilisation of the regional festivals' social media and websites for promotional purposes are analysed in this study. The contribution of these online platforms to each festival's success will be examined, to determine the significance of these online communication channels.

1.1 Research Objectives

Event Management is a type of Public Relations. Event management and the ways in which events are promoted evolve all the time and the angle of which events are promoted have changed in order to facilitate this technology driven world. The research objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the significance of social media and website usage in the promotion of regional festival events.
2. To gauge thoughts of professionals in the event industry and event managers of regional festival events in relation to the protruding significance of the use of social media and website use in promoting a regional festival.
3. To explore ways in which communication via social media and website use can be improved upon, in the promotion of regional festivals.

1.2 Research Questions

Questions which arose from the research objectives of this study involved, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **Social Media** – How are events in which the target audience is of an older age bracket and how are these events promoted?

Events for an older audience are targeted appropriately. Use of social media and website are important elements to the promotion of the event. There should be more emphasis on the more traditional forms of promotion such as a press release in the local newspaper. Older audiences use company and festival websites to gain knowledge on an upcoming event.

2. **Language and content** – Are the promotional posts on social media being hidden from newsfeeds?

The language and content of promotional posts on social media platforms should not be speaking at the audience. Promotional posts should not be one-way communication but two-way, symmetrical communication. The posts should be conversational and should ask a question, to encourage conversation between a social media page and its audience.

3. **Improving promotion of events online** – How can online promotion of regional festivals be improved? Can different forms of social media be used in the promotion of events?

This theme places emphasis on how promotional posts on social media can be improved. The improving of websites was explored through this theme. Different social media platforms were examined to study how the promotion of events can be broadened online.

1.3 Thesis Structure

Chapter Two explores how the tool of social media and website use is pivotal to the promoting of events. This consists of a review of previously published literatures. This review includes an analysis of theories, approaches, research, findings and conclusions in the field of study that is social media and web use as an important tool in the promotion of an event.

Chapter Three provides a description of the qualitative research methods which were utilized in order to collect, measure and analyse primary research data.

Chapter Four is a presentation of the findings of the primary research which was carried out in chapters two and three. The research method of qualitative data analysis is used to present the results.

Chapter Five explores the critical analysis around the results in Chapter Four. This chapter demonstrates the social media tactics employed by several regional festival managers and how this connects with the perspectives portrayed in the Literature Review in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six reviews the findings and conclusions of the primary research and the literature reviewed to gain strength in this field of study. Also in this chapter are suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the topic of social media and the use of online platforms such as websites playing significant roles in the promotion of a regional festival. Research, theories, approaches, results and conclusions of previously published works on this subject are examined in this chapter. Any gaps in this area of study will be filled via use of the literatures reviewed. An understanding of the significance of the use of social media and website use in the promotional process of an event will be gained from this chapter. The previously publicised literatures which are reviewed were chosen as these literatures place emphasis on social media and website use as promotional tools for regional festivals. Social media and websites are promotional tools within the Public Relations field and are therefore pivotal to the promotion of an event, driving the offline audience towards these online platforms for more information on an event and driving online audiences to these social media platforms. This study investigates how important the use of social media and websites are to the promotion of an event.

2.1 PR Importance of Event Management

The Event Management industry has been surging upwards since 2000, which led to the publishing of books on the subject of event planning and how an organisation can prepare and manage an event (Allen, 2009). 'Event Planning: The Ultimate Guide' was published in 2000 when companies of the event planning industry became more common. There has been an increase in the amount of Event Management courses since 2000 as universities also acknowledged the growth of interest in event management. Students of these courses are not limited to the field of Event Management, according to 'Event Planning: The Ultimate Guide To Successful Meetings, Corporate Events, Fundraising Galas, Conferences, Conventions, Incentives and Other Special Events'. Students who aspire to work in the fields of public relations, marketing, business and communications attend event management courses enrol in Event Management courses. Having the skill to manage events can be brought to these types of companies in the managing of corporate events (Allen, 2009).

In the past, the industry of event management revolved around working for an incentive house, meeting planning companies, and communications firms or in-house with a corporate client. Since 2000, the growth of the event management sector has increased dramatically. The event managers of today have set up boutique operations and are working in partnerships with hotels, resorts and venues (Allen, 2009). In 2000, the typical event manager was concerned with events such as: board meetings, conventions, business meetings, corporate

shows, client appreciation events, employee appreciation events, conferences and trade shows. As seen in 'Event Planning: The Ultimate Guide to Successful Meetings, Corporate Events, Fundraising Galas, Conferences and Conventions, Incentives and Other', the range of events has widened and event planners now organise and manage events of a broader spectrum such as: custom training seminars, executive retreats, gala fund raising events, incentive travel and premium programmes, naming rights, product launches, product placement, special events, teleconferencing and webcasts (Allen, 2009).

In 1986, Katherine Nelson defined events as involving people "in purposeful activities, and acting on objects and interacting with each other to achieve some result" (Goswami, 2011). An event aims to achieve a result; this may be a purchase of a product or service or to maintain a positive image of a company. Events are promotional tools and are an important aspect of Public Relations. The Body Shop which is an earth-friendly, pro-community cosmetic company which contains millions of dollars in sales works only with events in order to promote its business (Allen, 2006)

As stated by Franklin, Hogan et al. event management is an important tactic of Public Relations: "Traditional PR tactics are utilised such as event management, lobbying, media relations, speaker platforms, research and press conferences" (Franklin, Hogan, Langley, Mosdell, Pill, 2009). The process of event management includes the research, designing, planning, co-ordination and evaluation of events to result in a celebration, education, marketing and reunion (Pizam, Holcomb, 2013). Event management is a growing important form of Public Relations; 'International Dictionary of Hospitality Management' recently stated that: "According to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), event management is one of the fastest growing and most important trends in the public relations profession" (Pizam, Holcomb, 2013). As a significantly increasing trend in Public Relations, the subject of event management will be explored via means of cultural festivals in Ireland throughout this study.

2.2 Regional Festivals

There are numerous definitions of festivals throughout various pieces of literature. Examples of these include, but are not restricted to:

Festivals are defined by Durkheim as “The existence of a celebrating community, unanimity, independence of individuals, a measure of coercion — plus the keeping up of memories.” (Ozouf, 1991)

In 2002, Goldblatt described festivals as “Kaleidoscope of planned culture, sport and political and business occasion” (Getz, 1997).

In contrast to this was the brief definition given by Gursoy, Kim & Uysal (2004) that festivals are simply “unique tourist attractions” (Dwyer, Wickens, 2013).

In ‘Time Out Of Time: essays on the Festival’, Falassi (1987: 2) defined festivals as “a cultural event consisting of a series of performances of works in the fine arts, often devoted to a single artist of genre”. Falassi provided another definition of festivals which is: “Generic gaiety, conviviality, cheerfulness” (Getz, 2012).

The festivals researched in this study are regional, or cultural, festivals. Iowa State University defined cultural festivals as “Community-based cultural events bring people together in many ways that express their ideas, traditions and values” (2000). The regional festivals which are being researched in this study include Bray Summerfest, West Waterford Festival of Food and UCD Babytalk Festival. Each of these festivals centralises on the community; each festival joins people of a community together in an expression of concepts, morals and experiences.

2.3 Social Media as Promotional Tool

Social media is “the technology used to enable an individual reach a worldwide audience in an instant”, according to the Public Relations Institute of Ireland. A social media site consists of a group of people who interact via online networks, blogs, comments, sharing, checking in, reviews, and who use text, audio, photographs and video for social, professional and educational purposes (Safko, 2012). The goal of a social network is to build trust within an online community.

It is easy to build trust within friends: you converse one-on-one either publicly or privately and it is evident that there is a bond of trust. For businesses who communicate online, it is much harder to perceive if there is a level of trust built (Shankar, 2002). In order to build trust between an organisation and its audience, the social media site of the company should reflect the image which the company would like to portray (Parboteeah, Cullen, 2013). Creating and

portraying this image of the company will gain the attention of the target audience. Maintaining the image is a form of reputation management, which is a vital element of building trust between a company and its publics and in online communication tactics employed by a company (Harris, Moriarty, Wicks, 2014). The language used in social media sites should be of an informal but professional and helpful nature (O’Leary, Sheehan, Lentz, 2011). Employing this language will ensure that relationships can be formed and maintained with followers and visitors to the social media sites. Utilising of the correct language to maintain a positive image for the company and sustaining relationships with followers of a social media site is a part of reputation management, which is a key element to companies facilitating of social media platforms (Carroll, 2013).

According to ‘Social Media and Public Relations: Eight New Practices for the PR Professional’, there are eight new practices which will ensure a positive image for a company, thus making the company more trustworthy (Breakenridge, 2012). These eight practices include: the PR policymaker, the internal collaboration generator, the PR technology tester, the communications organizer, the pre-crisis doctor, the relationship analyser, the reputation task force member and the master of the metrics. These practices all work in tandem together.

The PR Policymaker creates and maintains policies for social media, training and governance. Once policy is created, the Internal Collaboration Generator collects data and content from internal departments within a company such as PR, HR, Advertising, Marketing, IT, Legal and Sales. Interacting with the audience should be the primary goal of having a social media site and in order to do this, the PR Technology Tester must constantly research the various types of social media to study which best suits a company and ensuring the company is reaching out and interacting with its audience to the best of its ability, using an appropriate social media site.

The implementation and new direction of a communication process is the work of the Communications Organizer. The Pre-Crisis Doctor prevents crisis via viewing any organized communications tactics and analysing if there are negative side effects to the proposed communication tactic. Studying how different audiences interact online is the sole job of the Relationship Analyzer. The job of the Reputation Task Force Member is to ensure a response on social media is immediate, accurate and transparent. Measuring of objectives for social media is analysed by the Master of the Metrics.

Utilising of this strategy in the promotion of regional festivals on social media can move a company to a different plateau. This strategy contributes to the maintenance of a company's positive image its upcoming festival; which is also of promotional value (Breakenridge, 2012)

2.4 Blog as a Promotional Tool

The face and voice of business communications is rapidly changing due to the phenomenon that is blogging. According to 'Blog Rules: A Business Guide to Managing Policy, Public Relations, and Legal Issues', the blogging sensation has penetrated through businesses in all industry sectors, globally (Flynn, 2006). Corporate blogging is defined as "the use of blogs [by business professionals] to further organizational goals" by consultant Debbie Weil (Puschmann, 2010). GuideWide Group and iUpload have surveyed corporation and research has shown that 89 per cent of corporations surveyed are currently blogging or are planning on blogging in the future (Blacharski, 2006). 81 per cent of small businesses intend to increase spending on blogs and other technological tools over the next two to three years; 10 per cent of these small businesses have blogging incorporated into the company's marketing strategy (Flynn, 2006). This method of communication is infiltrated within all types of businesses in diverse areas of industries.

Corporate blogs allow a company to write in a forthright, transparent and honest nature, this leads to building valuable relationships with their audience.. This new media form of promotion is different to a traditional method of promoting a product or service. Blog posts are different to traditional methods of promoting such as press releases because it is two-way communication (Delaney, 2013). Blog posts do follow guidelines in the creation of a post, however once published, these posts are open to communication between an audience and the business. Blogs are different to more traditional ways of promotion, such as corporate press releases and corporate financial statements, as blogs contain personality and can be dynamic and enriching.

2.5 Targeting Audience Online

One of the biggest challenges an organisation can face is generating traffic to a website or blog. In order to generate traffic, an organisation needs to know what type of traffic they want to visit their website. The traffic which will visit the site is people who have an interest in the

service or product which the company is promoting. This group of people are the target audience. Defining a target audience is a key element to any PR strategy so that an organisation can receive the best results from their promotional efforts. Messages can be effectively tailored to suit the appropriate target audience.

In the promotion of a festival, the promotion stage of the event should consider the target audience. Knowing the features of the target audience is essential to promote the event to the appropriate audience. Language, cultural values, patterns of thought, customs, communication styles and the target audience's cultural norms should all be considered in the planning stage of promoting an event of any type (Hendrix, Hayes, Kumar, 2012). In addition to knowing characteristics of the target audience, the promotion of the event should take into consideration the legal, educational, political and economic systems of a country in which the event is being held (Bechmann, 2009). The country of which is holding an event should be studied in relation to social structure, heritage and business communications (Diggs-Brown, 2011). Having knowledge of the features and systems which a country is comprised of will aid the promoting of an event, ensuring that the information shared is reaching the target audience of the event appropriately. The behaviours and attitudes of an audience, in tandem with the use of online resources and audience demographics should be researched before promoting a festival

2.6 Communicating Messages

In the modern, technology based world we have today, there are streams of different types of communication channels. The old forms of communication still exist and are used to converse, however no one will ever use all of the different channels of communication. When promoting an event, the PR practitioner who is promoting the event must know all of these communication channels. These communication channels will allow the practitioner to communicate with the target audience and permit the target audience to reply. At least one type of channel of communication will be deployed for the promotion of an event and this communication channel comes from a specialist third party.

There are seven elements to channels of communication: the medium; interactive elements; application; policy and optimization requirements; monitoring and evaluation; buy-in; planning and implementation (Phillips, 2009). The Medium element of communication channels refers to the media, these communication platforms include: Paper, PC, laptop, mobile phone, print and TV. Interactive elements are important to a communication channel

as it is measurable and the PR practitioner can easily analyse the efficiency of a communication channel in reaching relationship and communication goals of an organisation. Understanding how to use platforms for communication such as social media is the Applications element of communication channels. All of the communications employed by an organisation are guided by policy; optimization includes context, content, tone of voice, regularity of activity and interaction online. These policy and optimization elements of communications are requirements to communicating messages with a target audience. Monitoring communications is vital to a company and communications and the diverse channels of communication can be monitored via online monitoring services such as Factiva and Lexis Nexis.

According to Grunig and Repper (1992), there is a strategic approach that should be deployed in managing stakeholders (Ihlen, Bartlett, May, 2011). This strategic approach has seven steps and it portrays how to communicate with the different types of stakeholders of an organisation:

- 1) Stakeholder Stage: A relationship forms between an organisation and stakeholders due to the behaviour of an organisation or a stakeholder having consequences on one another. The communication with these stakeholders should be on-going; this will contribute to the building of a loyal, long-term relationship between a company and its stakeholders. This will also help to counteract any conflicts that may occur in this relationship.
- 2) Public Stage: When stakeholders recognise that there may be consequences of an organisation's decision and organise to confront this issue, they become publics. An organisation should communicate with these publics in the decision process of an organisation to prevent the ensuing of a conflict.
- 3) Issue Stage: Issues are created out of the problems which publics distinguish; this Issue Stage should be resolved or attempt to be resolved via communications programmes using the mass media.
- 4) Diverse objectives should be created to compliment the behaviour of the first three stages.
- 5) The formation of campaigns will aid these objectives in becoming achieved.
- 6) Technicians of Public Relations should implement the campaigns.
- 7) The effectiveness of campaigns and the reduction of conflict must be measured and evaluated.

This engagement with stakeholders and publics is a key element to the success of corporate communication (Theaker, 2012). These are the ways in which messages should be communicated to stakeholders, publics and target audience of a festival.

2.7 Promoting Festivals

Looking upon festivals and events of the past and how these events were promoted is something which PR practitioners of events should analyse. Historic festivals and events of the past were promoted in innovative and creative ways to create awareness and interest surrounding events (Hoyle, 2002). In the eras of the 1930s and 1940s, venues and concepts of a festival or event were unique but it is the event promotion tactics that were employed by these event managers which contributed to the success of an event. These promotion tactics are known as 'The Three E's: Entertainment, Excitement and Enterprise (Hoyle, 2002). Applying these tactics in the marketing of an event will contribute to the continual success of an event, after the event has finished. In order to drive potential attendees to an event, there must be a form of entertainment (Hoyle, 2002). According to Websters 'Unabridged Dictionary', enterprise is: "a readiness to take risks or try something untried: energy and initiative". The audience will leave their homes to attend the festival or event as the entertainment at the festival is entertainment which is not available to the attendees at home, this builds excitement of the each unique event for attendees.

2.8 Conclusion

Despite the recognition of social media being a part of promotions in an event or product or service, there is no major significance placed on social media. Social media plays a vital factor in the promotion of an event and in the eventual success of an event. There is a growing importance of social media in not only the event industry but legal, business and science industries too.

Due to the vast array of different types of social media, some organisations feel that the current amount of social media is overwhelming, that social media is not for businesses and that there are too many social networking platforms (Evans, 2010). Social media is alive and it is aiding businesses in reputation management and in promotions (Jones, 2011). Social media is not something to be ignored, especially for the event management industry.

Excitement, one of The Three E's of Event Promotion, can be built upon social media sites. Preparing potential attendees with hints or information to an event creates excitement. This excitement can evidently be seen on social media and this frisson of excitement can be shared with friends and followers efficiently.

Sharing information with stakeholders of an event is important as these are the target audience of an organisation. Despite a company sharing vital and appropriate messages with the target audience, a company should also communicate with publics in the area of a festival and ensure no conflicts arise at the time of the festival (Lester, 2010). Communication campaigns should be developed in the case of publics creating issues to concepts they view as problems (Kincaid, 2007). These communication campaigns should aim to combat the publics creating issues surrounding the event.

These topics and themes form the foundation of which the research of this study is built upon. Social media is noted as a tool in the promotion process of festivals, however there is no significance placed on the usage of social media in the lead-up to a festival. Social media plays a huge factor in the success of an event. The research methods and analysis which were adopted to examine these topics are outlined in Chapter Three (Research Methods).

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Chapter Three: Research Methodology

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3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is the explanation of the research methods used in this investigation in order to gain a conclusion on the question of: Is social media and website use significant in the planning of regional festivals? This chapter examines and illustrates the reasoning in selecting qualitative research methods to gather data. How the interviews and content analysis were carried out and the techniques executed in this data analysis are demonstrated in this chapter.

The method of investigation selected was a qualitative case study approach. Qualitative research was chosen as this type of research is associated with narrative, words and a description in the analysis. Quantitative research was not chosen for this study as numbers are the unit of analysis in quantitative research. This study focuses on the question of how significant social media is in the promotion of regional festivals. Narrative and description units of analysis are necessary to gauge this information; therefore qualitative research is an appropriate method of research for this study.

The aim of this chapter is to compare and contrast three regional festivals within Ireland. The use of social media in the promotion of the event will be analysed and assessed within these three festivals. The festivals which will be examined include: Waterford Festival of Food, Babytalk Festival in Dublin and Bray Summerfest. Interviewing and implementing these three diverse regional festivals will determine if the hypothesis is correct that social media plays a significant role in the promotion of regional festivals.

In the context of research, case studies are a method of research strategy. Yin defines a case study as: “empirical inquiries that investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context”. The contemporary phenomenon investigated in this chapter is the concept of the contemporary phenomenon that is social media within the real-life context of festival promotion.

Data was collected from professionals within the event industry, which have organised a regional festival, for the purpose of this study. Interviews were carried out with these professionals; these interviews were followed by case study research. This content analysis is presented in narrative form in this study. Triangulation is “the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing

findings” (Bryman, 2003). Using triangulation ensures that reliability and validity are met via more than one research method. In 2000, Joppe defined reliability as:

“The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable” (Grant, 2011).

The notion of reliability is the concept of reproducing the same results each time a research method is performed, whilst validity examines if the results remain true and real.

3.1 Qualitative Research

There are two types of social research, these are Qualitative and Quantitative. Quantitative research has a numerical focus; qualitative research centres on an analysis using narratives and words.

The seeking of understanding of social phenomena in relation to the participants' thoughts and experiences and the methods used are flexible, responsive, and open to contextual interpretation, within qualitative inquiry. The use of surveys and questionnaires which lead to results of numerical data which draw conclusions are the characteristics which compose quantitative methods (Merriam, 2002).

Participants' feelings, thoughts, experiences and perceptions are recorded in qualitative research; quantitative research methods are associated with measurements and statistics. This study concerns direct interaction between the researcher and the participants.

3.2 Research Methods and Techniques

Data is necessary in the answering of the research question for this study. Qualitative research methods were designed in order to collect this data. Qualitative data is comprised of words and narrative; these words and narrative must be treated in an equal and unbiased nature to reach results.

Three regional festivals were chosen to analyse the theme of social media being a prevalent element in the promotion of a regional festival. These three regional festivals include: Bray Summerfest, Babytalk Festival and the Waterford Festival of Food. These three regional festivals are of different natures and it is vital to this study to research the significance of

utilising social media in the promotion of these regional festivals. These festivals are in different regions such as Wicklow, Dublin and Waterford; the impact of social media on these regions and if the usage of social media led to successful regional festivals is researched.

Two research methods are used to collect primary research data: interviews and content analysis. The research methods employed in this study are of a reflective and exploratory nature (Davies, 2007) so that the narratives of the interviewees effectively form the qualitative data (Robson, 1995). The analysis of the results is treated in a fair, unbiased manner.

3.2.1 Interviews

The first research method applied was the interviews. In contrast to surveys and observations which provide vague answers, interviews provide in-depth analysis in detail. These interviews were easy to set up, as they were organised as phone interviews. Interviews are guided by the interviewer, to collect data and report this data as results. If managed efficiently and effectively, interviews can gain a rich understanding and insights of a person into the field of study.

In 1999, McNamara described interviews as: “particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant’s experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents’ questionnaires, e.g., to further investigate their responses” (McNamara, 1999)

In comparison to other forms of research methods, interviews are inexpensive to perform in this research study. As the interviews are primarily via phone or email, interviewing is cost-friendly and time efficient. Once a participant is interviewed, the interviewee will not be required any additional time after the interview takes place. These phone and email interviews aid the study in consisting of in-depth knowledge around the topic of study.

Three diverse regional festivals in Ireland were chosen to research the topic throughout Ireland. These different types of festivals include a festival with a focus on food; a baby orientated festival and a festival which centralises on music and family events. These three different types of festivals were chosen to analyse the topic of this research.

An interview, as described by Robson (2011), is: “A conversation with a purpose”. This research has four key focal points to it, these focal points centres on questions to address specific themes. These interviews are conversations with members of Bray Summerfest, West Waterford festival of Food and Babytalk Festival, with the purpose of identifying key themes in the promotion of the regional festivals. The first theme surrounds social media in the promotion of an event. The interviewer asked if social media is used in the run-up to an event and what types of social media are used to communicate promotional messages to the public, or target audience of a company holding a regional festival.

The second theme within the interview sessions addresses the usage of a company’s website as a promotional tool in the lead up to an event. Was the website redesigned with emphasis on the upcoming regional festival; is there a blog section on the website which informs potential attendees of what will be at the festival; is there social media links on the website; and measurement of clicks to the website in the pending of the regional festival are questions directed towards the interviewees.

Scaling the significance of both social media and website use is the third theme in the interview process. To gain an in-depth insight into how important the promotional tool of social media and the use of a company website is to an upcoming event, the question of how significant is social media and website use in the promotion of a regional festival is directly asked. The interviewer asks to place the use of social media and website use on a scale, number 0 being of no significance and number 10 being of the highest significance.

The theme of communicating messages and how a company could improve the communicating of messages is the final theme addresses in the interviews. The language and tone used; whether it is all promotional posts; how often a company posts and how the communicating of messages can be improved for the next regional festival are questions asked.

3.2.2 Conducting the Interviews

Questions were designed for the interviewing of diverse Irish regional festivals. The researcher emailed three different types of regional festivals from Ireland: Waterford Festival of Food, Bray Summerfest and UCD Babytalk Festival. On the confirmation of these regional festivals, interview times were set up. The Bray Summerfest and Babytalk Festival interviews took place via phone call and the Waterford Festival of Food interview transpired via email.

Before the interview took place, the researcher sent emails to the upcoming interviewees, with the themes which would be addressed entailed in the body of the emails.

Interview times via phone call and email were arranged. The questions and themes to be addressed were printed on a sheet on the researcher's end. The researcher also had a voice recorder in hand in order to ensure that all of the information was collected.

In an interview situation, the interviewer should refrain from speaking on the subject of an interviewee's answer to avoid tampering an answer and should remain neutral and unbiased for ethical reasons and to prevent the influencing of the interviewee's answer. This study did not require a structured interview. Semi-structured interviews were noted as the most appropriate form of research for this type of study undertaken. Although a list of themes and questions to be addressed were pre-prepared, the answers of the interviewees were open to discussion and the interviewees can use these questions to fill in any gaps in the knowledge of the researcher. The orders in which topics can be discussed are not rigid and themes can be addressed in a flexible order. This semi-structured interview form of research will lead to in-depth investigation on the topic of study, as experiences and feelings are explored of each interviewee (Denscombe, 2003).

The researcher noted that the interview process, research objectives and why the research is being executed must be entailed and described to the interviewees before the interview. The participant of the interview and the interviewer both signed an informed consent form before the execution of the interviews.

The researcher executed three semi-structured interviews with specifically selected promoters of diverse regional festivals throughout Ireland. The expectation of the researcher was that the unstructured interviews would follow the format of the interviewer introducing a topic and that the interviewee would elaborate on the answer and provide an insight of his/her own train of thought and proceed to develop the idea from a personal perspective. Extra enquiries can be asked of the interviewer in the scenario of a participant providing insights on a topic which was not originally addressed, this would provide an in-depth insight and the researcher would gain more knowledge and data on the field of study (Grix, 2010).

Questions were pre-prepared to help guide the interviews and ensure answers of uniformity and consistency to the answers provided from the different regional festivals. Denscombe stated that an important step in the structuring of an interview is to prepare a list of issues and

questions to be addressed in the interview (2003). The main themes of this field of study were addressed in the form of questions. Keeping the themes within a frame of questions contributed to the hypothesis not being lost within the interviews and it reminded the interviewee of the key themes which the study centralises on. Having the questions pre-prepared and having a rough structure to the interview aided meeting the criteria of repeatability. To ensure the accuracy of transcripts, two forms of voice recorders were used, these include: a tape recorder and the Voice Recorder application on a Samsung smart phone.

3.3 Ethical Issues

'How It's Done: An Invitation to Social Research' states that it is not always possible to collect anonymous data but advises that research ethics dictate to keep data confidential. As the names of the regional festivals are listed, the interviewee of the festival remains anonymous. Personal information such as name, job title, department and gender are kept confidential and safe by the researcher. This personal information will not be shared with anyone except with the research supervisors when appropriate.

Taking part in this research is all via the participants volunteering their information and are informed that the refusing to answer questions is perfectly acceptable and there are no consequences should this situation arise. The participants are informed of the themes within the interview, why they have been chosen and the research topic undertaken for the study. The signing of an informed consent form is required before the interview takes place. The researcher should be unbiased throughout the interview and fulfil the role of researcher to the highest ethical standards and respect the rights of the participants.

3.4 Content Analysis

For the case studies of the three regional festivals, qualitative content analysis was chosen to analyse the use of social media and website use in the promotion of the regional festivals. The use of Facebook was the primary source for the analysis. Content analysis provides insights into what may be on a company's future public agenda.

Qualitative content analysis, according to 'Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice' is a method which systematically describes the meaning of qualitative material. There are several

steps in qualitative content analysis, which contributed to the content analysis within this study. These steps include:

1. Deciding research question
2. Selecting material
3. Building a coding frame
4. Dividing material into units of coding
5. Trying out coding frame
6. Evaluating and modifying coding frame
7. Main analysis
8. Interpretation and presentation of findings

The interview questions with each of the regional festivals were built within a coding frame. These units of coding consisted of: Social Media, Website, Placing Significance and Language. Within each of these units were sub-units, such as within the website unit, there were sub-units of: Social Media Links, Measurement of Clicks, and Blog.

The data received from the interviews is analysed in a way in which the analysis of each regional festival is reliable and consistent. The consistency and reliability in content analysis is crucial to a study (Bryman, 2009).

3.5 Analysing and Evaluating Data

A Microsoft Excel database was created to store the data received from each interview. Information received from the interviews, along with extra notes during the interview were recorded in this database. Entering the data received in each interview into this Excel database allowed each interview to be portrayed in a structured fashion. This database portrays which themes of the interviews are similar and dissimilar. According to Soy (1997), analysing data to search for conflicting data is a part in evaluating data.

The audio recordings of the interviews supply the researcher with quotes, statements and thoughts directly from the interviewees. In addition to this, is note taking during the interview, which permits the interviewer to add feelings of the interviewee at the time, along with testimonies of a personal nature (Robson, 2011).

The validity and reliability of the study was ensured via triangulation. University of Southern California defines triangulation as: “using different methods in order to focus on the research topic from different viewpoints and to produce a multi-faceted set of data” (2012). There is a common misconception around the theory of triangulation, in which data received and approaches to the data should be done in order to reach a consistent conclusion (Patton,

2002). Triangulation is employed by researchers to establish validity in their studies by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2012).

Triangulation was used within this study, using interviews and content analysis to analyse the data from different perspectives, so that the conclusions are reliable and valid.

3.6 Conclusion

Within this chapter is an explanation of why qualitative research was the research method chosen for this topic of research that is: exploring the significance of social media and website use in the promotion of regional festivals. This qualitative research method used is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 1984).

Qualitative research methods were employed through conducting interviews and content analysis. These methods, via narrative, words, thoughts, feelings, perceptions and approaches, allow for contextual interpretation. Quantitative methods of research are more focused on numbers and measurement of statistics, in contrast is the qualitative method of research which contains elements of flexibility and interaction. Reliability and validity were explored, via methods of triangulation. These techniques of triangulation are explored in chapters four, five and six to ensure that the conclusion is valid and reliable.

Ethical issues were outlined within this chapter; personal information of the interviewees will not be shared, except with the supervisor of this study, when necessary.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter serves the purpose of presenting the findings portrayed in chapters two and three. The findings of the themes outlined in these previous chapters are displayed in this ‘Findings’ chapter. Qualitative research permits the researcher to build relationships with those who the researcher is studying; this allows for insightful and personal findings and results. The objective of the study is to examine how significant the use of social media and website use is in the promoting of a regional festival, utilising the case studies of West Waterford Festival of Food, Bray Summerfest and UCD Babytalk Festival.

As the research method employed is qualitative research, this chapter will display the findings of the interviews and content analysis in a narrative form. The identity of the participants is removed, and instead is referred to as:

Interviewee 1 – Babytalk Festival

Interviewee 2 – West Waterford Festival of Food

Interviewee 3 – Bray Summerfest

Due to confidentiality and anonymity, the job title, department, gender and name are not included in the data. Such details remain of a private nature, except the research supervisor when necessary.

4.1 Social Media as Promotional Tool

The purpose of this question focused on the social media tools employed in the publicity of a regional festival event. The types of online platforms in which social media managers or event marketers use in the promoting of the regional festivals were questioned. The researcher asked how the information of festivals is shared via online communication channels.

There was a consistent theory among the different event professionals of the regional festivals that there is a reliance on social media in the publicity of an event. The event professionals believed that social media is a significant tool in the promotion of regional festivals. It was a common consensus that social media is an important aspect of event promotion and that “social media is an integral feature of an event”.

- Facebook

The correct way in which to inform potential attendees of an event is via the Facebook communication channel. “Without Facebook, a large audience would not be reached” was a common theme throughout the interviews. The event professionals interviewed are all of the same mind-frame that most, if not all of, audiences are currently present on the Facebook social media site.

The Facebook Edgerank feature permits users to tailor a post to suit a certain audience, to submit the post when the majority of this audience are online and to ensure that the audience sees the post within a specific time-frame. Interviewee 3 stated that: “A full social media strategy is done up by the marketing team, this includes when and what posts are going to be made as well as what audience to target”. This is the eight practices which Breakenridge writes about in ‘Social Media and Public Relations: Eight New Practices for the PR Professional. Instead of each practice being carried out by eight different people, the social media manager of Bray Summerfest manages each of these practices via the Edgerank application of Facebook.

Private groups on Facebook were used for some of the regional festivals promotion. “Pregnancy is a private and personal experience. We wanted to ensure that prospective mothers could share their experiences and feelings within a forum”, is an answer given by Interviewee 1. The Babytalk organisers researched where their target audience of mothers and upcoming mothers existed online and their findings portrayed that this audience is mainly situated on Facebook. Creating a private group on Facebook is appreciated by prospective mothers, who do not wish to post publically on the topic of pregnancy. This private group formed by Babytalk Festival contributed to the pregnant women within this private group to gain a level of trust with Babytalk festival. As seen in ‘Business Ethics’, this building of trust between a company and its target audience plays a key role in reputation management.

- Twitter

This microblogging site permits users to share information in one hundred and forty characters. “We share information that is targeted to reach specific circles of people” was stated by Interviewee 2 and reciprocated in the various interviews. This echoes Bechmann’s concept in ‘The Social Integration of Science: Institutional and Epistemological Aspects of the Transformation of Knowledge in Modern Society’, in which information shared must be

tailored to suit specific audiences. Search engine optimisation (SEO) is something that many websites use in order to organically place a website or channel of communication at the top of a search page. This can be achieved by availing of key words on a site, along with many other elements. The event professionals of regional festivals are of the same theory that utilising of these key words will enable the optimisation of a social media channel and target the correct target audience. Interviewee 1 matched the thoughts of Phillips (2009), in that there are seven elements to communication, and that utilising the correct steps to communicating a message can optimise Search Engine Optimisation. This Interviewee 1 stated that the blog post on 'The Most Popular Girls and Boys Names in Ireland' has a high place on Google, due to structuring and following the correct steps in communicating the message.

- **Pinterest**

Pinterest's main audience consists of women and so an event which has a target audience of women can utilise this photo social media application in order to promote a regional festival. Pinterest was said, by Interviewee 1, to have "been useful and a nice thing to have" in the promotion of the event. Hendrix, Hayes and Kumar state in 'Public Relations Cases' that knowing the way in which the target audience think is an important part in the planning of and targeting the target audience. The Babytalk UCD Festival utilised Pinterest, to post photos of women who shared their experience with the festival, as it is helpful for other pregnant women. Babytalk Festival know what women want to see and facilitated to this, this is exactly what Hendrix, Hayes and Kumar suggested in 'Public Relations Cases' (2012).

- **Newsletters**

Newsletters within emails are a method of promoting a regional festival. The regional festivals can partner with organisations which are of a similar nature to the festival. A healthy food newsletter can promote the West Waterford Festival of Food; music gigs, upcoming events and general tourism newsletters can consist of the promotion of the Bray Summerfest. The promotion of Babytalk Festival was aided by the New Mom newsletter; the information of the Babytalk Festival was promoted to the newsletter's mailing list. Similar to newsletters, but in offline form are brochures, Interviewee 3 stated: "We distribute 60,000 brochures", this targets certain audiences such as a target audience who may not be active on social media platforms. Being aware of where a target audience lies is important, as stated by Diggs-Brown in 'Cengage Advantage Books: Strategic Public Relations: An Audience-Focused Approach'(2011).

4.2 Blog as a Promotional Tool

This theme had the focal point of investigating if a blog aided the promotion of an event. The central question to this theme was if a blog is incorporated in the website of a regional festival. “A blog gives you a platform to show your customers the inner workings of your brand, and let them understand your company better. With more freedom and versatility than a social network, and a less formal tone than traditional media, a blog can help you develop stronger, more personal connections with your audience” (Handsaker, 2012).

This question focused on if event professionals believed a blog is a promotional tool in the lead-up to an event. The second part to this question is where the blog is placed: if the blog has its own web page or if it is a section of a website. Within this theme is the measurement of clicks and if social media sites are linked on the website.

The three regional festivals interviewed all developed websites for the event and two of these three regional festival websites contains a blog section. The blog section is rich in content as it consists of images and video. Images and videos carry weight; this contributes to a higher place on a search page. Each blog post contains information on the upcoming regional festivals and acts as a teaser until the day/ days of the festivals. Bray Summerfest facilitates of the blog section of the website for “press releases and news updates”, as stated by Intervieww 3. A blog page can also be written by guests, serving information on the same or of a similar nature to the upcoming regional festival. Babytalk Festival had guest posts and Interviewee 1 said that this “Created a sense of community”. This not only gauges curiosity of potential attendees and builds excitement, but also builds trust between the organisation and its target audience (Handsakes, 2012).

Interviewee 1 from Babytalk Festival has the theory that “The Irish Blogging Network is a useful promotional tool for a regional festival. It’s Irish and generally, the people clicking into the site wish to learn more information on a certain topic. Even better if there’s a blog post on an event which will provide even more information for prospective mothers”.

Bray Summerfest, Babytalk Festival and West Waterford Festival of Food have all placed the social media links of the regional festival on the websites. Information can be shared on each of these online platforms and if Facebook is not the preferred social media site of someone, then it is most probable that Twitter is the appropriate social media site for that person.

The three different regional festivals measure the clicks on the website and blog posts. Google analytics and the website's insights and analytics permit the regional festivals to calculate the most viewed and highly ranked blog post. Interviewee 2 said that "The website's analytics is useful and easy to use". The most popular section of a website can also be viewed. Babytalk Festival found that the most clicked into blog post on the website was 'Most Popular Girls and Boys Names in Ireland'. This blog post is not promoting the Babytalk Festival directly, but it raises awareness of the festival and generates interest in the Babytalk Festival. Blog posts can be promotional but also targeting an audience via tailored key words in the blog post can help to raise awareness of a regional festival.

4.3 Promoting Festivals

This question is central to the study of examining the significance of social media in the promotion of regional festivals. The question focuses on assessing the importance of social media in the promotion of a regional festival. This question determines if social media and website use are vital elements in the publicising of regional festivals.

The various participants of the interviews all portrayed positive attitudes towards the usage of social media and website in the promoting of regional festivals. Interviewee 3 stated that: "Research we have done shows that 80% plus of attendees find out about events through social media and the website."

The perspective of Interviewee 2 is that "a good website which is easy to use portrays the information in an accessible way and is informative and reputable looking can all contribute to a positive festival experience".

Mentioned previous to this section is the SEO which many organisations and regional festival events wish to achieve. The infrastructure of a website, architecture, content and accessibility are major factors which contribute to a high-ranking SEO. Ensuring these features are in place on a website can contribute to a top position on a search engine and bring more traffic to a website. "As the festival runs over 5 weeks social media and the website are the main ways we interact and inform attendees about the festival" was stated by Interviewee 3.

To gain insight into the promoting of regional festivals in relation to social media and website use, two main questions were inquired. These questions are of a different nature to the previous questions as they are more direct and ensure a distinct and definite answer. Participants were invited to rank the significance of social media and website use in the

promoting of a regional festival. In the interview, the ranking of social media was a different request to the ranking of website use. The rank consisted of placing 1 as not very important and 10 being highly significant to the promotion of a regional festival. The findings portrayed that social media and website use are extremely significant to the publicising of regional festivals. Interviewee 1 placed the use of social media at 7 on the scale and website use ranked at number 9 on the significance scale. Interviewee 2 ranked social media as 8/ 10 and placed website use at 9 on the scale of significance in the promotion of the festival. Social media was ranked 9/10 and website use was placed at 7 out of 10 on the scale by Interviewee 3. From these rankings, it is evident that social media and the use of websites are critical aspects to the promotion of the regional festivals.

4.4 Communicating Messages

The final theme within the interviews focused on how messages are communicated via online channels of communication. This theme consists of three different sections: language, tone and any methods in which the social media site and websites can improve the means of communication. This final segment of the interview centres on how the diverse regional festivals communicate messages online, in regards to the language and tone employed in status updates or tweets.

Despite the diverse regional festivals, which consist of different target audiences and communicating messages of contrasting natures, the language employed by the Bray Summerfest, Babytalk Festival and West Waterford Festival of Food are all of the same style. The language used by these regional festivals is “welcoming, warm, friendly and informative”, this is to appeal to specific audiences (Grunig & Repper, 1992). Interviewee 3 said: “The language and tone we use is mainly a friendly descriptive one. We try to promote ourselves as a family friendly festival so we will also use fun and interactive posts.” Using this language to attract the correct audience is knowing what the target audience will react to, as seen in Cengage Advantage Books: Strategic Public Relations: An Audience-Focused Approach’ (Diggs-Brown, 2011). The regional festivals’ aims are to attract traffic to the online channels of communication and convert this online traffic into offline traffic so that this audience attends the regional festivals.

The tone applied to Facebook and Twitter is of an informal nature. The participants of the regional festivals are of the same mind-set that the tone used on social media sites should be informal yet welcoming and helpful. In contrast to this, the websites of the three festivals

consist of a “friendly, descriptive” tone. The websites follow the seven steps of communication which all other forms of channels of communications facilitate of, to achieve this appropriate tone (Grunig and Repper, 1992).

The improvements category of this section of the interview was met with surprising responses. As social media and the ways in which websites can be used are constantly changing and becoming more modernised, the researcher expected the responses of the participants to be different to the answers received. As there are new social media sites such as Vine, Tumblr and a protruding emphasis on Instagram, the researcher anticipated answers consisting of setting up profiles on these new social media sites.

The participants who symbolise the Bray Summerfest, West Waterford Festival of Food and Babytalk Festival all felt that their streams of online communication and the way in which they communicate their messages is appropriate to the way in which the regional festivals should communicate. The Bray Summerfest and West Waterford Festival of Food are annual regional festivals and there is a structure and system to the way in which these regional festivals promote the festivals online. Despite the new social media platforms, these annual regional festivals do not deem it necessary to join extra social media sites. These annual regional festivals have knowledge of what social media sites are appropriate for the festival and the target audience and wish to maintain the same communication channels each year. The Babytalk Festival had its first festival on March 22nd and 23rd February 2014; the representative of this festival responded to this section of the question with: “I think we actually made the festival and the promotional tools more elaborate than it needs to be. I think if we hold the festival again, we would actually draw back from everything a bit and just relax”.

The regional festivals chosen for this research are organised to the best of the event organisers abilities and the online promotion using social media and website use is availed of as much as is required in the planning stage of the event. The language and tone used in each, diverse festival is of the same calibre and style because the language and tone used by a business or organisation on social media should match the language and tone applied by users of social media sites and visitors to a website (Theaker, 2012). There is no room for improvement, as the events acknowledge which social media platforms are appropriate for the regional festivals and the target audience of the regional festivals. The communication tactics employed by the regional festivals are suitable for these events and their methods of

communication and so there are no noted improvements for the future of these regional festivals.

4.5 Conclusion

Findings were presented in this chapter, via the channel of qualitative data analysis. Information and perspectives from the interviews and content analysis were assessed and examined, in relation to regional festivals and the significance these festivals place on social media and website use in the promotion of these events. The purpose of this is to determine if social media and website use are key elements to the promotion of the regional festivals Bray Summerfest, Babytalk Festival and West Waterford Festival of Food. This chapter describes how reliant these regional festivals are on social media platforms and website use in the promotion of the events.

The findings examined the different types of communication channels which regional festivals employ to promote the festival to their target audiences. These findings highlight the use of Facebook and Twitter in the publicising of an event and communicating with target audiences of the regional festivals. There were positive perspectives around Facebook and its features to ensure that messages are communicated to the target audience of the regional festivals. Facebook and Twitter are the most prevalent forms of social media channels to communicate messages to the potential attendees of an event and allows the social media manager or event marketer to converse with these possible attendees. These social networks allow for two-way communication which is an important aspect of promotion.

In addition to social media sites as a promotional tool, the participants of the interview were of the consensus that partnering with newsletters of the same topic or target audience and being included in the body of the email to be sent to the mailing list is a promotional tool for events. The mailing lists are receiving these newsletters for a reason: to gain information. Partnering with newsletters will encourage this audience to attend a regional festival event to learn more education on the topic of the newsletter and festival.

Emphasis is placed on using a friendly, welcoming inclusive and helpful language and tone on the channels of online communication. This language and tone should be consistent throughout these social media platforms and website. These regional festivals do not see room for improvement for the following years, due to the events and online communication being organised, appropriate for each event and successful.

In the next chapter, the findings are contextualised under the headings which are maintained in chapter 2, the Literature Review, and chapter 3, Research Methods, in the form of a critical analysis. These contexts are portrayed in the structure of a discussion and examination. Through the interpretation of the researcher, an analysis of the research findings forms the purpose of chapter 5, Discussion and Analysis.

Chapter 5: Research and Analysis

1.0 Introduction

This chapter serves the purpose of presenting the critical analysis of the primary research in the Literature Review in chapter two and Research Methods in chapter three, outlining the various themes. This chapter will provide an analysis of any emerging hypotheses and theories within the literature review and the executed research. To produce findings, the researcher must interpret the data; this is typical of qualitative data research. The interpretation of the data is discussed and this is what this chapter centralises on.

Primary research data was collected via qualitative data research, via interviews and content analysis. The identities of the participants is anonymous and confidential, but are referred to as the name of the regional festival which they represent. The context of the literature reviewed and the methodologies of the study are examined to ensure reliability and validity in this discussion.

1.1 Social Media as Promotional Tool

As a means of understanding how social media is used as a promotional tool for regional festivals, we must first become acquainted with which social media platforms are most prevalent in festival promotion. Facebook emerged as the most dominantly used form of social media in the publicising of an event. Messages can be communicated to a company's audience and a company can partake in two-way communication with its audience. Facebook is the main communication tool to inform an audience of an upcoming event, and also any changes to the time of the event or details which an audience should be informed of. This was an expected finding; the nature of social media sites and its communicative features allows a company to converse with its audience. The Public Relations Institute of Ireland had said, as previously states in chapter three, that social media are "the technology used to enable an individual reach a worldwide audience in an instant". All of the newest and most popular social media sites, along with social media sites of old, such as Bebo and Myspace, contain this instantaneous aspect. The posting of a Facebook status, a tweet on Twitter, the pinning of a photo on Pinterest, the publishing of a video on YouTube, the editing and posting of a photo on Instagram, reblogging on Tumblr, video posting on Vine and even linking in with a professional on LinkedIn all have an instant message. A worldwide audience can be reached.

Research was carried out within the Bray Summerfest, West Waterford Festival of Food and Babytalk Festival via means of interviewing and content analysis to examine the use of social

media in the promoting of the regional festivals. The common consensus throughout the diverse regional festivals which were interviewed was that interaction is a key element in the promoting of an event. On this topic, one of the regional festivals, stated that “There should be a flow of communication; we wanted to ensure that we weren’t talking at our audience and that there was scope for our audience to converse with us. We liked to ask our audience questions on our social media sites, to encourage interaction”. This statement agrees with Deirdre K. Breakenridge’s theory that interacting with an audience should be the primary goal of an organisation. Before interaction can take place between an organisation and its audience, the eight practices for the PR professional must be taken into consideration and applied to the regional festival before interaction can occur.

The first step is researching an audience and assessing where this audience lies online. A regional festival, or any event, cannot communicate with its audience without researching where this target audience is, in order to communicate their messages. Without the PR Tester researching the target audience and where they exist online, it would be difficult to gain attendees at the regional festival. This is an important role in the planning stage of how an event will be promoted. A company should not spread itself thinly across all forms of social media platforms; instead a company should exist only on the social media sites in which its target audience facilitates of. This pivotal task is followed by the communication process, prevention of crises, analysing of relationships between the company and its audience, managing of reputation and measuring of the metrics of social media. One person may play these roles of: Communications Organiser, Pre-Crisis Doctor, Relationship Analyser, Reputation Task Force Member, and the Master of the Metrics, or these roles can be divided out between several different members, depending on the size of the organisation. Some regional festivals have a Marketing Manager such as Bray Summerfest, the Marketing Manager of this regional festival carried out these jobs single-handedly. In contrast to this, Babytalk Festival utilised a Public Relations company to aid in the promotion of the event so that the responsibility of the online promotion of the festival was shared. These eight practices are key to any event and the three regional festivals which were studied, Bray Summerfest, Babytalk Festival and West Waterford Festival of Food, used these eight practices in the promotion of their festivals.

The social media platforms Facebook and Twitter were the dominantly utilised social networking sites by West Waterford Festival of Food, Bray Summerfest and Babytalk Festival. These sites offer two-way communication which is crucial to maintain a positive

relationship between an organisation and its audience. The demonstration that public relations are a system of recurrent and complimentary interaction between an organisation and its target audience forms the concept of Grunig's two-way symmetrical model. This two-way symmetrical model encourages communication between an organisation and its publics via open channels of communication, which offers feedback to the organisation and its public (Denton, 2004).

1.2 Blog as Promotional Tool

Bray Summerfest, West Waterford Festival of Food and Babytalk Festival facilitate of blogging on their websites as a promotional tool. These regional festivals are of the 89% of corporation which use blogging as promotional tools, as according to GuideWide Group and iUpload. 10% of small businesses have blogging incorporated into the marketing strategy. Babytalk Festival consists of two businesswomen working behind the regional festival; this may constitute the corporation of Babytalk Festival as a small business, despite the large number of attendees. Babytalk Festival incorporated a blog in the Babytalk Festival website, which portrays that blogging is a part of the marketing strategy.

As stated in chapter three, blogs of a corporation should follow the structure and content of a forthright, transparent and honest nature. The regional festivals studied were all of the same mind-frame that their blogs are and will maintain the theme of honesty, being helpful and welcoming. Corporate blogs are recommended as a form of promotion for corporations as blogs are inexpensive, easy to establish, there is no necessity of having knowledge of HTML coding, promotion via blog posts is free, blog posts can be scheduled and RSS feeds push notifications of a new blog post to subscribers of the blog. Inexpensive methods of developing a blog can be built via the free Wordpress blog application or the Blogspot free blogging application. Corporations can facilitate of these free blogging applications, especially small businesses as these blogs are free to create, free to maintain and as the business gains more customers and money, the business can upgrade to a paid form of blogging. These inexpensive blogs can be placed on to a category or tab section of a website. Easy to establish, blogs can be set up by anyone with an interest in blogging.

Corporations should have this interest in blogging, to send messages to their publics and target audience. A blog is easy to develop and to maintain, and is an easy method of promotion for a business. Skills of HTML coding are not necessary in regards to blogging; the blogging application has a built in feature of HTML coding so that a business does not

need to learn skills of HTML coding. The content creator of blog posts within an organisation can ensure the posting of blog posts at certain times, without manually publishing the blog posts. Blog posts can be written prior to the time and date of the publishing of the post. In the editing section of a blog post, the time and date of the upcoming blog post can be scheduled. Once published, a notification is submitted to the subscribers of a blog, notifying the subscribers of a new blog post, via RSS feed. This reaches out to the audience of a corporate blog, ensuring that the blog will be shared with the target audience of the corporation.

A blog is similar to Facebook and Twitter in that it also offers two-way communication. A blog post is similar to a Facebook status or a tweet on Twitter, in that the business which is publishing content online invites the thoughts and perspectives of the audience which they are targeting. Blog posts, like Facebook statuses and tweets on Twitter, should not all be sales driven and should communicate a message to its audience which the audience can relate to. Under a blog, there is a space to write comments; this is the area which allows the audience to communicate their thoughts on the subject of the blog post to the organisation. The organisation can then reply to the comments in a two-way symmetrical communication fashion. Similar to Facebook and Twitter, this communication between the organisation and its publics should be consistent and correlative, to ensure the building and maintain of relationships between an organisation and its publics.

1.3 Targeting Audience

In a situation where there is no evident audience which is targeted, there can be an overall downfall to the company. Without a target audience, a regional festival will have: promotion not tailored to the needs and wants of a potential festival attendee, poor attendance, decreased sales and a negative reputation. Defining a target audience is necessary to the overall festival as promotion centralises around knowledge of the target audience. The target audience can be calculated via marketing research of which age group and gender has an interest in the topic of the regional festival. Once a target audience is defined, discovering where the target audience is most prevalent on social media platforms is crucial to promoting a regional festival to a target audience on social networking sites.

Once the target audience is retracted, based on the analysis of the different forms of social media sites, a business needs to generate traffic to the website, social media sites and blog. This traffic is generated via content rich blog posts, Facebook statuses, tweets on Twitter and an informative website. Each of these platforms should link to one another. A website should

consist of social media links; a tweet or Facebook status may direct the audience to a landing page of the blog section of a website. West Waterford festival of Food, along with the other two diverse regional festivals, connected their social media sites via the website. Also connected via the website is the blog, in which there is a tab consisting of the blog page on the website. The online platforms which a regional festival facilitate of should not be segregated from one another, these online channels of communications should be intertwined in order to generate and drive more traffic of a target audience to these mediums of online communication.

In the targeting of an audience, as stated by Hendrix, Hayes and Kumar in 2012 in the publication of 'Public Relations Cases', some key features must be considered before attempting to reach the target audience of a company, or regional festival. These features include but are not limited to: language, cultural values, patterns of thought, customers, communication styles and the targeting of an audience's cultural norms. The language used by a certain audience of publics should be considered in the creating of online content; the language used by a regional festival in the promoting of the festival to the target audience should be tailored and appropriate for the audience which will view the content. The values of a culture should be acknowledged prior to the creating of content; for example the values and culture of pregnant women were recognised by Babytalk Festival prior to creating the marketing strategy. In this marketing strategy, the patterns of thought, customs, communication styles and cultural norms of prospective mothers were intertwined within the communication process. The creation of content on the social media sites, blog and websites were considered in the targeting of audience.

Bray Summerfest, West Waterford Festival of Food and Babytalk UCD Festival are regional festivals within Ireland. Thus, the social structure, heritage and business communications within Ireland were considered for each regional festival in the targeting of audience. The social classes of an audience are considered prior to choosing the target audience. For example, a regional festival which has tickets priced over €100 targets middle – high social classes. The heritage of certain audiences are recognised prior to choosing which audience is the target audience; and a regional festival examines the way in which businesses communicate with their publics and how their publics respond in the gauging of a target audience.

Characteristics of individuals are considered in the decision of which audience will be targeted by an organisation. These characteristics include the legal perspectives of an individual, educational systems, political views and economic systems. The audience which is being targeted is tailored to these different types of systems in which an individual may be a part of and the perspectives of the individuals which are a part of the target audience.

The behaviours and attitudes are considered in the way in which an audience is targeted. IF an audience behaves a certain way or carries an attitude, a business will communicate messages to the target audience in the way in which the target audience will appreciate it. The Babytalk Festival targeted their audience via private groups on Facebook and communicated that all posts must be of a private and personal nature. Babytalk Festival researched prospective mothers and their behaviours and attitudes. The research showed that women prefer to keep pregnancy related questions or topics of a private nature, as a result of this, Babytalk Festival catered for the women's attitudes and behaviour.

1.4 Communicating Messages

Communicating messages between an organisation and its publics is a significant aspect to promotion of regional festivals. In order to communicate messages online, the content creator of the regional festival should have knowledge of the vast majority of communication channels. In the modernising world of the release and growing industry of new technology, a regional festival should be educated in the wide range of ways in which the festival can communicate with its target audience. Whilst knowledge of all communication channels should be recognised by a regional festival, not all of the communication channels are necessary in the communicating of messages.

It is advised that a company does not facilitate of all of the social media platforms in order to be on every social network. Instead, a company should first define their target audience and develop social media sites in which their target audience utilise. The regional festivals which are studied are all of diverse natures and consist of disparate target audiences.

The social media platforms employed by the regional festivals are appropriate for the audience in which they are targeting; Babytalk Festival facilitated of their website, the blog section of the website, Facebook, Twitter, Irish Blogging Network and Pinterest in order to communicate their core messages to the target audience of prospective mothers, new mothers and women who simply wanted to become educated on the topic of pregnancy and

motherhood. West Waterford Festival of Food utilised its website, the blog section of the website, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to communicate their key messages of the upcoming food festival and food related content to families and generally an audience interested in food. Instagram, Google+, Facebook and Twitter are the communication channels in which Bray Summerfest use in the annual promotion and communicating of messages to their target audience of families and the youth.

Bray Summerfest, Babytalk Festival and West Waterford Festival of Food utilised of elements: medium, interactive, application, policy and optimisation, monitoring and evaluation, buy-in, planning and implementation in the communication of the regional festival's core messages. Phillips stated in 'Online Public Relations: A Practical Guide to Developing an Online Strategy in the World of Social Media' that there are seven key elements to communicating messages.

Although the regional festivals: Bray Summerfest, West Waterford Festival of Food and Babytalk Festival used online channels of communication to promote the festivals, an element of medium was utilised in the promotion of the festivals too. Local newspapers were used for each regional festival, in which press releases of the various regional festivals were printed. Interaction was a vital element in the promotion of each regional festival; the social media sites and blogs were developed in order to interact with each regional festival's publics. An understanding of social media sites and how to use social media sites to the best of an organisation's ability is the application element. As previously stated, each regional festival utilised of social media sites and understood the features of the social media sites in order to promote the regional festivals. Communication tactics are guided by policy and the messages which are communicated are optimised via content, context, tone, consistency and interaction. These elements were strongly used by each of the researched regional festivals on their online channels of communication.

Monitoring communication is an important element as it allows the regionals festivals to gauge the amount of audience reached and assess which information is most viewed.

Babytalk Festival used the analytics of the website; in contrast Bray Summerfest and West Waterford festival of Food facilitated of Google Analytics to measure the communication of the regional festival online. Buy-in is "the acceptance of and commitment to a specific concept or course of action" (Martin, 2007). Bray Summerfest, Babytalk Festival and West Waterford Festival of Food accepted and committed to the communication tactics which

these regional festivals had created. The implementation of the communicative plans which these three diverse regional festivals were achieved via a host of social media platforms.

West Waterford Festival of Food, along with Bray Summerfest and Babytalk Festival UCD understand the importance of managing relationships with stakeholders during the promotion process of the regional festivals. Grunig and Repper distinguished the theory of 'Seven Stage Stakeholder Management', and this management of stakeholders theme is evident throughout the diverse festivals. The first stage is Stakeholder Management; the three regional festivals built and maintained relationships with their stakeholders via consistent interaction, and developing and maintaining long-term, loyal relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders. The three festivals ensured the building and maintenance of relationships with stakeholders via constant interaction.

Stakeholder Stage is the second stage of the 'Seven Stage Stakeholder Management' theory; this involves stakeholders finding possible consequences of an event. The festival co-ordinators should communicate with these publics in the decision making process, to prevent any conflict. Public Issue is the third stage and at this stage, festival co-ordinators should resolve any issues via communication and facilitating of the mass media. To complement the behaviour of the first three stages, contrasting communicative objectives should be developed, this is the fourth stage.

Babytalk Festival, West Waterford Festival of Food and Bray Summerfest developed diverse communicative objectives across the different social media platforms. The fifth stage is the formation of campaigns, which should contribute to these objectives being reached, which is followed then by the implementation of the campaigns, this is the sixth stage. Monitoring and measurement of the effectiveness of campaigns and the amount of reduced conflict was evaluated by Bray Summerfest, West Waterford Festival of Food and Babytalk Festival.

1.5 Promoting Festivals

The results of the research carried out exposes the expected number of events which facilitates of the Three E's of Event Marketing which was distinguished in historic times. In 'Event Marketing: How to Successfully Promote Events, Festivals, Conventions, and Expositions', Leonard H. Hoyle states that history is rich with events co-ordinated by geniuses who created unique events for the purpose of developing awareness and increasing sales for historic events. These events which were of a unique value and original nature were

co-ordinated via three main features: Entertainment, Excitement and Enterprise. These are otherwise known as 'The Three E's of Event Marketing'. The concept and venue in which an event may have been held in may be diverse and contrasting, but each festival and event followed the guidelines of The Three E's.

The Three E's of Event Promotion are not ignored in the present day, as each of the regional festivals followed this structure. The West Waterford Food Festival used national celebrity Paul Flynn, who demonstrated cooking; Bray Summerfest contained a host of different music gigs, along with the biggest water slide to date in Ireland and there was a wide variety of celebrity speakers at the Babytalk Festival.

The entertainment values of Babytalk Festival, West Waterford Festival of Food and Bray Summerfest create a frisson of excitement in itself, however added features on the day of the event added to the overall excitement of the attendees of the event. Babytalk Festival had a photoshoot section for mothers with babies, or children; there was a flash mob at the West Waterford Festival of Food and Bray Summerfest had fun fairs and trade and craft markets, to cater to the interests of children and adults.

The Babytalk Festival is a festival that is unique and original; it was the first event which offered unbiased information to prospective mothers; new mothers and mothers who wished to receive more information on motherhood. West Waterford Festival of Food is an annual festival in West Waterford, it has many different aspects to it which does not just include food; there are tours of the castle in the town of Dungarvan, walking tours around the harbour town and there are also shows on in the Town Hall, these different aspects to the food festival ensure that it is a food festival which has a willingness to stretch the bounds of reason. Bray Summerfest is also a regional festival; it is a unique regional festival as it caters for a wide audience range. There are funfairs and kids orientated activities, in addition to music gigs and adult activities. The new feature of the water slide ensures the Bray Summerfest sails into uncharted waters.

1.6 Conclusion

Through the researcher's interpretation, this chapter has explained the findings of chapter four and assessed via the background information in chapters two and three, the significance of utilising social media and websites in the promotion of regional festivals.

The results of this study provide evidence and support for the theory that social media and website use are vital tools in the promotion of regional festivals. This chapter distinguishes Facebook and Twitter as the most dominantly used social media sites in the communicating of messages of an organisation to its target audience. The language used on these sites is of a welcoming, friendly, helpful and less formal nature. Facebook and Twitter offer two-way symmetrical communication. Audiences prefer this type of communication as it permits the audience to converse with a company. This two-way communication ensures the building and maintaining of relationships between a company and its target audience.

A website and a 'Blog' section on a website are key communicative tools in the promotion of an event. Websites are of a helpful, informative and more formal nature. Websites are generally more trusted websites and are easily accessible to a regional festival's target audience. Websites of the regional festivals researched contains blog sections. Blogs are inexpensive, not difficult to develop or maintain and it aids reaching the target audience.

The target audience can be reached via tailoring messages to suit the particular audience, in terms of gender, age, language, cultural values, attitudes and other features and characteristics of a particular group of people and in relation to certain features of a country. Messages are communicated to the target audience in certain steps and elements across the communication channels which is appropriate to an organisation and its target audience. A festival should communicate messages which feature entertainment, excitement and enterprise.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.0 Drawing Conclusions: Introduction

This chapter provides a revision of the main findings of the research, in the context of the primary research questions which were originally formed. Concluding summaries are provided, based on the findings of the primary research which was executed and theorised in chapter two, the literature review, in which the aim of the research is to add depth to the concept of social media in the promotion of regional festivals.

The chapter consists of five recommendations, which regional festivals may consider to contribute to the promotion of the festivals via social media in the future. In total, three interviews together with content analysis were carried out. Four key themes and factors were derived from the research study.

6.1 General Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Social media is vital to the promotion of an event

Social media sites are crucial factors to the promoting of a regional festival, to reach target audience and general publics.

Conclusion 2: Website use is a crucial factor in event promoting

Use of website, correct helpful, welcoming, informative and slightly formal language aids promoting of an event and increases attendees of regional festivals.

Conclusion 3: Blog sections on websites aid the promotion of regional festivals

Informative, friendly, unbiased blogs raise awareness of an organisation and its upcoming regional festival and increases offline traffic to the regional festival.

Conclusion 4: Friendly and helpful language increase attendance at events

The evidence gathered portrays that the three diverse regional festivals employed a friendly, helpful, informative and welcoming language across the online channels of communication, which contributed to a high attendance at each regional festival.

Conclusion 5: Targeting audience

Targeting the correct audience on social networking sites and utilising of 'The Three E's of Event Marketing' towards that target audience raised awareness of the upcoming regional festivals.

6.2 Further Studies/ Research

Further research into the topic of promoting a regional festival could involve the angle of media relations in the promotion of an event. This might provide scope of how relationships with the diverse forms of media can affect a regional festival, in both positive and negative natures.

Poor relations with a newspaper may lead to negative perspectives around the regional festival. A positive relationship with a newspaper or radio station may develop in positive promotion of a regional festival.

A further study recommended would be to analyse how a regional festival can build and promote a positive reputation of a regional festival, without the use of online channels of communication. This could mean stripping back the layers of social media and any means of online communication, and using tradition PR techniques in the building and maintenance of reputation management. This research may be limited, due to a reliance on technology.

6.3 Introduction to Recommendations

It has been concluded that use of social media, website and blog use is highly significant to the promotion of regional festivals. These communicative channels permit two-way communication between the organisation and its audience. Messages are communicated in a tailored fashion in order to reach the target audience and to promote the regional festivals.

Facebook and Twitter are the most predominantly used forms of social media of Bray Summerfest, West Waterford festival of Food and Babytalk Festival. The target audience of these festivals exist on these social media sites. The content created on these platforms of communication are of a helpful, friendly, informative and informal manner.

The websites and blogs of each festival each consist of a welcoming, friendly, helpful and unbiased language too. The language used on each of the websites is slightly more formal than the social media sites and blog. The website, blog and social media sites are rich in content.

6.4 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Mailing lists

On the website, blog and social media sites, there should be a link to how publics can subscribe to a mailing list, in order to receive the newest updates on the upcoming regional festival. Research has shown that customer acquisitions has quadrupled to 7 per cent in the last four years via email marketing (Devaney and Stein, 10/01/13).

Recommendation 2: Teaser videos

The creation of videos of the preparation of the regional festivals can be posted on YouTube and shared on the blog, website and social media platforms. Videos are content heavy, which will heighten a regional festival's SEO and will build excitement in the form of 'teaser videos'.

Recommendation 3: Twitter competitions

Facebook does not permit 'Like & Share' competitions; but Twitter is a social media site in which competitions may be held, in the form of photos, hashtags or retweets. This will contribute to raising awareness of a regional festival, via online word-of-mouth

Recommendation 4: LinkedIn events

LinkedIn is a social media site which can build relationships between businesses. Connecting with businesses on LinkedIn permits businesses to talk with one another on the social networking site. There is a feature on LinkedIn, which allows a company to post an event and invite connections to the event. Regional festivals can connect with other businesses who may be interested in attending the event and inviting these businesses via LinkedIn

Recommendation 5: Foursquare deals

Foursquare is a mobile check-in application. Offering a deal to those who check in online raises awareness of the festival and encourages friends of the Foursquare users to attend the regional festival.

6.5 Overall Conclusion

During these modernising and rapidly changing, growing technology times, it is important that co-ordinators and the team of regional festival planners become educated on social media and the wide range of diverse communication channels. Social media, along with website and blog use are crucial factors to the promotion of regional festivals.

Targeting an audience via a language and tone appropriate to the audience, across all of the forms of communication channels employed, by a regional festival plays a factor in attendance of a festival.

The existing of a regional festival across social media platforms permits the audience and potential attendees to feel involved during the promotion of the event, and builds excitement towards the regional festival.

In the technology driven world of today, social media, websites and blogs are an important aspect to a wide range of audience's lives. Thus, the usage of social media, website and blogs are highly significant to a regional festival and the way in which it is promoted.

6.6 Reflective Paragraph

The MA in Public Relations and New Media is a course which has taught me skills which I will remember forever. I have always been a practical, more 'hands on' learner and all of the modules in the course, along with this thesis catered to this. I have learned and achieved skills which I never believed I could, from creating a photo essay to conducting research such as the interviews for this thesis. I have gained experience from this course that I could not gain from any other course, as it covered a wide range of subjects.

One of my favourite aspects of the course was the presentations. I have always loved giving presentations; it is like a performance. I have gained more knowledge and experience on giving presentations which is a life-long skill and can be used in the future.

"Presentation skills are key. People who work for you represent your brand. You want them to present themselves - and represent you - in a certain way."

- Marc Benioff

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Appendix A

From: Áine Organ

Sent: 17th June 2014 4.49pm

To: Babytalk Festival, West Waterford Festival of Food and Bray Summerfes

Subject: MA in Public Relations with New Media 2014 – Significance of Social Media and Online Platforms in the Promotion of Babytalk Festival

Dear (name of event)

You may remember our recent discussion when I mentioned to you that I am completing a Masters in Public Relations with New Media here in CIT.

As part of my research for my thesis I will run interviews, followed by consent analysis.

The title of my thesis will be ‘The Significance of Social Media and Website Use in the promotion of Regional Festivals’.

Themes covered in the questions include:

1. Types of social media used in run-up to event
2. Use of website in lead-up to event (redesigned? Blog? Social media links? Measurement of clicks?)
3. How significant is social media and website use as promotional tools?
4. Communicating messages and room for improvement?

Let me know if you are available to answer my questions and when an interview would suit you.

Please be assured that this data collection exercise is for research purposes only and will be treated with confidentiality, which will exclude the participants’ names.

Kindest Regards,
Áine

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in Interview

Master of Arts in Public Relations with New Media

Researcher: Áine Organ

I understand that this research is being carried out as part of a Master's thesis being completed by Áine Organ in Public Relations with New Media at Cork Institute of Technology (CIT).

The purpose of the interview and the nature of the questions have been explained to me.

I consent to take part in an interview about social media and the use of our event's website in the promotion of the event.

I also consent to being audio-recorded during this interview. The researcher has given his assurance that the audio files will be kept confidential, anonymous and secure.

None of my experiences or thoughts will be shared with anyone by the researcher prior to all identifying information being removed. My participation is voluntary and I understand that I am free to leave the interview at any time.

Please Print Your Name Date

Please Sign Your Name

Researcher Signature Date

Appendix C

Master of Arts in Public Relations with New Media

Interview Questions

Researcher: Áine Organ

Social Media

What types of social media was used in the promotion of your event?

How was the target audience reached?

Website

Is there a blog section on the event's website?

Are social media links visible on the website?

How were clicks into and around the website measured?

Scaling of Significance

On a scale of 1 – 10, how significant was:

- Social media
- Website use

in the promotion of the event?

Language and Tone

What is the language and tone used across the online platforms of your event?

Improvements

Is there any way you would improve the use of online platforms in the promotion of your event?

Appendix D

Interview Transcripts

Interviewee 1: Babytalk Festival

Was social media used in the promotion of Babytalk Festival?

Yes it was, we used Facebook, Twitter and we also had a Pinterest account. I'm not really sure if you could really count it as social media, but we had a blog too, with the Irish Blogging Network, which is a blogging network but I'm not sure if that really counts as social media. As for Pinterest, we didn't really have the time to use it properly and I think it would be beneficial for a larger, global event if you know what I mean. I'm saying that because it is very popular but just in Ireland because it's so local, we didn't get back much from it but it was a useful thing to have. Facebook worked very well, it was very useful. We ran competitions and that on Facebook which were very popular and people shared our quotes graphics and stuff, that worked well and created a sense of community between the Facebook fans. People would also message us if they had a question about any of the talks or anything like that. Twitter was a lot slower to get our message out there to our target audience, because our target audience are not really there and are more into Facebook. People don't really tweet about their pregnancy, that's more seen on Facebook and in private groups on Facebook. Facebook is more personal than Twitter. On an organisation level, exhibitors and speakers of the festival followed us more on Twitter and the moms and pregnant women interacted with us on Facebook. The New Moms newsletter was also used to target our target audience, it had a massive reach, they have 10,000 people on their mailing list and was one of the best ways to get the word out there because we had media partnership with them so that worked very well for us. Aside from that, Facebook, our website and the blog targeted the right audience. Also just kind of knowing people, because Rachel is very involved with that community, which is the National Childbirth Trust, they have groups scattered all over the country and because Rachel knows them, it was an interpersonal thing as well. It was old fashioned networking going on.

Is there a blog section on the website?

There is, we have blog posts of our own, guest blog posts from different people who were taking part in the festival, we also had a media partnership with Easy Parenting Magazine, they supplied us with contacts as well, it took a while to build up a community on the blog but after a while there were comments. People were more likely to comment on Facebook than on the blog and were more inclined to share the blog on Facebook as well. Our more popular blog post is 'The Most Popular Boys and Girls Names in Ireland', we're still getting traffic to that one. We have google analytics set up so we can see where the traffic is going and is useful to measure clicks and to see what brought people to the site.

On a scale of one to ten, how significant was social media in the promotion of Babytalk Festival?

Seven, and that really was primarily Facebook, because we were selling our tickets online, it was important to use Facebook.

On a scale of one to ten, how significant was website use in the promotion of the festival?

I would say nine, you have to have a website and because it was our first year, to give it any kind of credibility at all. Any of the people that came, did look at the website.

What was the language and tone used over the social media and website?

That took a lot of perfecting, it was a welcoming, non-judgemental, warm, friendly tone because the target audience can feel very sensitive about people judging them quite a bit, we were very very careful with our language to be inclusive and making sure everyone feel welcome and build a community kind of space, that was given a lot of attention as well, mainly to be light-hearted and informal.

Is there anything you would improve if you held it again next year?

I think maybe we over-worked ourselves a bit, we kind of made it more elaborate than it needs to be. We maybe would make it a little bit lighter, we probably spent a little more time on it than really was necessary, so we'd probably just draw back a little bit on that.

Interviewee 2: West Waterford Festival of Food

Was social media used in the promotion of West Waterford Festival of Food?

Yes, we used Facebook, Twitter and a small bit of YouTube.

How was target audience reached, via the social media?

There's different mediums, such as Facebook, that you can interact with and actually promote the festival. Twitter is about getting the right circles, friends and board members can help to get our tweets into the right circles; it was an excellent campaign this year. Youtube was used to let people know more about it and these videos were on the website. We used Pinterest just a little bit this year. All of the social media links are on the website and the #we'resocial and #jointhechat but it didn't really take off, interestingly enough.

How do you measure clicks?

Google analytics because it seems to be the best one.

On a scale of one to ten, how significant was social media in the promotion of West Waterford Festival of Food?

Eight.

How would you rank website use on the scale of significance in the promotion of the festival?

Eight or nine, I would say.

What is the language and tone used in the social media and on the website?

The website is a little more professional, but still friendly and welcoming and trying to encourage families to come along. Social media is similar, the tone is formal but yet not particularly professional, you know.

Is there anything you would improve for next year?

We could probably drive it a bit better next year.

Interviewee 3: Bray Summerfest

Was social media used in the promotion?

Yes a full social media strategy is done up by the marketing team, this includes when and what's posts are going to be made as well as what audience to target. We use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram as well as our mobile app.

Is there a blog section on the website?

Yes there is a blog section. It is used for press releases and news updates. The website homepage has integrated Twitter and Facebook feed as well as links on each page. Links to websites where measured through Google analytics.

On a scale of one to ten, how significant was social media in the promotion of Babytalk Festival?

As the festival runs over 5 weeks social media and the websites are the main ways we interact and inform attendees about the festival. We distribute 60,000 brochures as well but research we have done shows that 80% plus of attendees find out about events through social media and the website. Social media is 9/10.

On a scale of one to ten, how significant was website use in the promotion of the festival?

7/10

What was the language and tone used over the social media and website?

The language and tone we use is mainly a friendly descriptive one. We try to promote ourselves as a family friendly festival so we will also use fun and interactive posts.

Is there anything you would improve for next year?

No, don't think so.

