New Trends Impacting Festival and Consumer Events

How consumer behavior and technological changes are fueling industry growth and better event experiences for audiences nationwide
The world of festivals and consumer events has evolved well beyond pie judging at the county fair, pitching a lawn chair at a concert, and ogling hot rods at a car show. Today, people come together to celebrate more unique interests, hobbies and passions from the newest animes coming out of Japan to electronic dance music and craft-brewed pilsners, stouts, and wheat beers through targeted, niche events.

What’s more, attendees and fans are enjoying personalized experiences as never before. Organizers are finding new ways to tailor packages and offer exclusive passes that cater to their audience’s growing appetite for customization and greater choice. Some organizers are even adding new categories to their events (think wine tasting at an art festival), to excite more people and boost attendance.

Technology is also reshaping the industry. Advances in data gathering and analysis and wireless technology vastly improve how events are planned and managed. Social networks have been a boon to event marketing and promotions, as fans build communities of like-minded friends and share their excitement far and wide.

All of these trends drive significant growth in the festivals and consumer events space around the world and it’s not going to be slowing down anytime soon. This Britepaper discusses how event directors and promoters can take advantage of what’s happening across the industry to plan smarter, operate with greater speed and flexibility, and develop new revenue sources for their events.
Trend 1:
Fans expect more choices and more personalized experiences

With consumers enjoying greater choice and variety in everything from food to travel to on-demand entertainment, people are increasingly expecting and demanding events that more closely match their passions and pursuits.

The festivals and consumer events industry reflects this drive for greater variety and a specialized focus. Aided by the far-reaching adoption of social media, fan communities easily spring up around unique, shared interests. Events like the San Antonio Cocktail Conference, the Celebrity Impersonators Expo, the Annual Psychic Fair and Witchcraft Expo, and the Oakland Internet Cat Video Festival can all find devoted and enthusiastic fan bases.

Lately, many promoters and event directors have been generating bigger audiences and extra revenue by offering one or more levels of VIP packages, season passes to a set of local events, and a variety of a la carte options. Speedy admission, behind-the-scenes access, premium food and beverages, and even VIP restrooms can help meet a growing demand for greater convenience and premium experiences.

Eventbrite estimates that VIP experiences account for a sizeable chunk of money —10% of ticket sales—and generate approximately 25% of revenue. This is a trend we expect to see grow.
The VIP Experience:
These popular festivals offer VIP experiences with packages that give
festival-goers extra value and cache and provide additional revenue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ticketing Strategy: Multiple VIP Levels</th>
<th>Ticketing Strategy: Enhanced, Full-Festival Experience</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>GLOBAL CITIZEN FESTIVAL</em></td>
<td><em>HOUSE OF CORPSE</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The largest syndicated charity concert in online and broadcast TV history</strong></td>
<td>Four-day film and music festival featuring more than 50 horror feature films, short films, and documentaries and 19 heavy metal bands</td>
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<td>While general admission tickets are distributed by lottery to people who complete a series of tasks to help combat poverty, in 2012, three Global VIP Experiences were also available. The VIP experiences of the 2012 Global Citizen Festival generated more than $1M in revenue for the event’s sponsoring charity.</td>
<td>Attendees are provided the option to purchase individual tickets to each screening and concert, or one of eight passes including the VIP All Access, The Nightstalker, Music+Film Combo, Music-only, Film-only, and Single Day passes for Friday, Saturday and Sunday.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The VIP All Access badges allow attendees first priority access to all film screenings and concerts throughout the festival, as well as parties on both opening and closing nights.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Ticketing Strategy: Exclusive Experience with Special Perks</th>
<th>Ticketing Strategy: Season Pass</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>EYEFEST</em></td>
<td><em>EyE SF</em></td>
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<td><strong>Two-day festival with over 200 beers from more than 70 breweries</strong></td>
<td>One-of-a-kind signature experiences, large scale concerts and holiday events throughout the year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A VIP pass includes admission to the &quot;Arts and Drafts&quot; Connoisseur Tasting showcasing specialty craft beers paired with local cuisine, Early Admission to the Grand Tasting, and a special tasting in the VIP tent with Dr. Bill Sysak from Stone Brewery.</td>
<td>Season pass holders receive access to all concerts during the season, and a 50% discount on VIP upgrades along with other perks and special offers.</td>
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<td>California Festival of Beers sold more than 85% of its VIP tickets in 2013, helping the festival achieve more than 34% growth in total attendance over 2012.</td>
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Today’s seemingly endless entertainment options mean fierce competition for consumer dollars, but savvy organizers can capitalize on the trend toward greater choice by spending time with fans on social media. Listen to what excites them, chat with them, and ask for ideas. This can help you think creatively about event programming and brainstorm VIP experiences that cater to a variety of tastes and budgets.
Trend 2: Hybrid festivals attract bigger audiences and bring in more revenue

As niche passions and hobbies spur new types of festivals and shows, another emerging trend is to broaden an event’s appeal by adding complementary activities and attractions. Within the industry, this is called “hybridization,” and many event organizers have already caught on.

For instance, the Rocky Mountain Cigar Festival casts a wider net by incorporating complementary lifestyle vendors and attractions such as craft beer, wine and spirits, exotic cars, food, and live music. In North Carolina, local restaurants create craft beer and cuisine pairings for Brew Durham, a benefit event for a local nonprofit. Seattle’s Bumbershoot festival has grown from a local music and arts event to a three-day carnival of world-class musical acts performing alongside more eclectic offerings such as the Bumbernationals Soapbox Derby, poetry slams, and the Grand Kabuki Theater of Japan.

Hybridization can benefit communities and stimulate tourism. The Daytona Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau, for example, has grown its annual Biketoberfest from a scenic motorcycle rally started in 1991, into a four-day celebration that involves local businesses and events. Biketoberfest includes live music, a swap meet, the “ROAR” Motorcycles for Women event, and dozens of food and drink choices offered at venues throughout the city.
More diverse attractions can also bring in a broader range of sponsors. California’s Gilroy Garlic Festival boasts McDonald’s and Pepsi as major sponsors of this annual event. Along with garlic-flavored food and drinks, the festival features live music, children’s activities, a beauty pageant, and arts and crafts. The Wanderlust Festival, with seven annual events across North America, has gained sponsorship from The North Face, Smartwater, Target, and Adidas. Catering to passionate yoga enthusiasts, Wanderlust offers four days of live yoga classes in addition to musical performances, dinners, wine tastings, films, and hikes.

One of the biggest success stories in hybridization is the South by Southwest Festival (SXSW) in Austin, Texas, which draws more than 60,000 people annually. Started in 1987 as a music festival, SXSW has now added conferences for film, interactive media, ecology, and video games. The multi-day festival attracts celebrities and innovators, and has been the launching point for international musical acts, high-impact indie and feature films, and many hit video games and mobile apps. Corporate sponsors include Samsung, AT&T, 3M, and American Airlines.

Hybridization can grow festivals and consumer events even in a down economy. Events that include a wide range of activities offer ways for people to spend their dollars wisely and have a good time without traveling too far from home. With more things to see and do, attendees are more likely to come with a larger group of friends and family, stay longer, spend more, and mark their calendars for your next event.
Trend 3:  
Online ticketing unlocks powerful data and insights like never before

Advances in technology are also changing the festivals and consumer events business in some pretty significant ways. Metrics gathered during your online sales can be invaluable in helping you make better decisions about when to staff up, what to expect in terms of attendee flow, and how to avoid shortfalls in planning and logistics. And when you open your gates, online ticketing data integrated with the latest check-in technology can help you quickly address bottlenecks and keep the lines flowing.

Data from online ticketing can also tell you how effective your marketing efforts are. That’s because it’s possible now to directly link a ticket transaction with the referral source, such as emails, online ads, search engines, and other websites. With this information, coupled with the available geographic data you can make smarter marketing decisions as you plan and tweak your marketing roadmap leading up to your event.

And once your event is over, your online ticketing and check-in data provides powerful historical data. You can evaluate your successes, see what could use improvement, and ultimately be better informed as you plan and promote your next event. In addition, we also recommend surveying your attendee base by using such services as Survey Monkey, an Eventbrite partner (www.eventbrite.com/surveymonkey). Gathering this valuable feedback and then acting upon it can great goodwill and establish long-term loyalty from your fans.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENTBRITE PROMOTION SOURCE</th>
<th>VISITS</th>
<th>TICKETS SOLD</th>
<th>SALES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook Newsfeed Register Link</td>
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<td>$0.00</td>
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A snapshot of the Eventbrite Sales Dashboard, which shows an organizer exactly how many visits and ticket sales were driven by various links and web promotions. Referrals can be an event page on Facebook, shared tweets on Twitter, embedded URLs in web advertisements, and Eventbrite’s built-in social media sharing tools.

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“
I look at the ticket count every hour...
We check ZIP Code reports every week...
We can see which ads are resulting in conversion to sales.

Eventbrite customer
Tim Russell, Partner, Founders Entertainment, organizers of the Governors Ball music festival, NYC

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Trend 4:
Mobile technology is dramatically improving the overall attendee experience

New mobile technology is changing the landscape of how onsite logistics is managed in a really big way. When equipped with smartphones and tablets armed with barcode scanners and check-in apps, such as Eventbrite’s Entry Manager, event staff can instantly verify tickets right at the gate, allowing for shorter lines and quicker entry. Fraudulent behavior is also virtually eliminated, and real-time entry data helps gate staff make on-the-spot decisions to manage bottlenecks. Once the event is over, this information helps organizers plan ahead for next year’s crowds.

With a simple credit card reader attachment, in-field mobile devices can also serve as mobile cash registers. Festivals like Governor’s Ball use Eventbrite’s At The Door app as a mobile box office to help them handle walk up sales and process second and third day passes for attendees who want to come back for more. Adding Eventbrite’s At the Door to your festival can also generate extra income from sales of t-shirts, souvenirs, food and beverages, and premium experiences.

Mobile apps can also help attendees get the most out of an event. One of Eventbrite’s partners, Xomo Digital, provides attendees with up-to-the-minute festival and event guides and directs them to e-commerce opportunities. Xomo also integrates with the Eventbrite platform by enabling event goers to download our free Eventbrite mobile app. At the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival in NYC, fans could view ticket availability directly within Eventbrite, and then easily purchase tickets to individual screenings.
Trend 5:
RFID technology and smart cards add value once inside the event

Aside from mobile phones and tablets, “wearable” technology is the trending tool used by festival-goers. This new technology not only enhances your fan’s experience, it can also spur more spending and greater marketing awareness and allows you to better know your audience.

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) built into wristbands worn by festival-goers, developed by companies like Intellitix, allows for ticketless entry and cashless in-festival purchases. Additionally, RFID bracelets can be synchronized with the wearer’s social networks. This turns your participants into promoters as the bracelet performs automatic check-ins and status updates.

Pre-paid smart cards carried by attendees are another new trend. These cards provide rapid entry, and can reduce lines at vendor stands, and simplify merchandise transactions. With pre-loaded funds or a linked bank account, there’s no need for cash to change hands. Festival attendees can make in-event purchases with the tap of the smart card, which generates more sales. Research shows that smart card bearers spend upward of 40% more when they’re not opening their purses and wallets to pay for food and merchandise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RFID WRISTBANDS</th>
<th>PREPAID SMART CARDS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="RFID Wristbands" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Smart Card" /></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| • Load funds in advance  
• Track attendee movements  
• Get accurate attendee profiling  
• Allow you to gain insight to improve venue design and attendee flow  
• Link to social networks for instant status updates and check-ins | • Doubles as entry ticket and method of payment for food and merchandise  
• Smart card users tend to spend 25%-40% more (“It’s not ‘real’ cash”)  
• Know what items sell faster and which vendors are more popular and profitable |

The data generated by RFID bracelets and smart cards gives you access to up-to-the-minute revenue totals and the ability to track hot-selling merchandise and top-performing vendors. This knowledge is invaluable when you plan your layout and product mix for future events. It can also help identify opportunities for increased sponsorship dollars and higher-performing vendor locations. “On-person” technology also gives vendors the added benefits of cashless transactions and granular sales data, along with the opportunity to offer interested customers special offers and marketing programs.
Trend 6: Social media provides hard cash benefits to event organizers

While technology has changed the face of planning and operating a festival and created better experiences for attendees, social media has definitely had a tangible impact on marketing awareness and revenue.

Social media has grown to be a major component in driving attendance at festivals and consumer events. Festival-goers can find one another quickly, and build communities around common interests and passions before, during, and after the show. Successful festivals use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Storify to generate excitement, encourage conversation and sharing, and build a following that can be promoted to year after year. When people “Like” your festival or post a photo, video, or update to your feed, they become instant promoters, driving more visits to your event page and ultimately more ticket sales. And the impact can be significant. As part of its Social Commerce Report for Festivals and Consumer Conventions, Eventbrite calculated the actual value of social media sharing in terms of awareness and ticket sales. Across all types of festivals and consumer events, we found that:

- Facebook shares were worth about $4.15 in future ticket sales, on average, and generated 15 views of the event’s ticketing page.

- Twitter drives nearly 28 event page views, or almost 2 times the number of views than Facebook and $2.18 per tweeted share.

Share and share alike: Among music festival-goers...

- 65% tweet or post to their social networks during a live concert
- 56% upload photos of the event
- 31% write reviews of their experience
Internationally-recognized festivals and events can have substantial followings. The Vans Warped Tour has more than 1 million Facebook “Likes” and more than 400,000 Twitter followers. The San Diego Comic-Con International has garnered more than 350,000 Likes and 300,000 Twitter followers. Even local and regional festivals such as the NYC Governors Ball and the Gilroy Garlic Festival have built respectable followings (65,000+ and 25,000+ Facebook Likes, respectively) that give them incredible visibility and promotional power.

One step beyond social sharing is relevancy. Having your fans share your event on your behalf is truly an incredible asset. What becomes even more powerful is when your event can be shared at the right time and to the right people by leveraging technology to your advantage. Eventbrite’s Social Notification emails, for example, automatically surface events to potential, interested ticket buyers when two or more people within the same social circle connected by Facebook purchase tickets to an event. These kinds of innovations further fuel FOMO “fear of missing out” which can drive even more advance ticket sales and that means more revenue for you.

Example Social Notification email which is automatically sent to potential ticket buyers when two or more of their friends connected to Facebook purchase tickets to the same event on Eventbrite.
Staying at the forefront of industry trends and innovation with Eventbrite

Keeping ahead of the breakneck pace of advancements in technology and the increasing fragmentation of consumer tastes is a pretty tall order. As a partner that understands your business, Eventbrite continually identifies, evaluates and helps you take advantage of the latest trends through updated best practices and advances in technology. With Eventbrite, you can plan and execute your event more wisely and achieve better results in an environment where you must compete to earn people’s time, attention, and dollars.

We’re excited to share this examination of the trends impacting the festivals and consumer events business and look forward to helping you stay on top of the latest opportunities to grow your business. If you’d like to know more or get started using Eventbrite for your event, give us a call at (800) 350-8850 or outside the US at (415) 694-7900.

About Eventbrite

Eventbrite provides a cost-effective, innovative ticketing platform to help festival, convention, and consumer event organizers set-up, manage, and sell out their events. Ticket buyers find it easy to search and buy tickets online, and then share their excitement with their community. With more than 139M tickets sold as of Oct 2013, Eventbrite is one of the fastest growing ticketing providers worldwide and has powered more than 100,000 festivals and consumer events since its inception in 2006.

To find out more, go to www.eventbrite.com/festival