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The Impact of Technology on Customer Service

'At Your Service' Spotlight: Leveraging social media at Bonnaroo Music Festival

Music festivals are big business. In the US, consulting firm Beacon Economics gauged the economic activity of music festivals run by dance-music promoter Insomniac to be around \$3.2 billion over 48 events between 2010-14. The 2015 report listed direct spending at around \$327 million, with festival attendees spending another \$866 million on transportation and hotels, and the remainder comprising of spin-off income and local business benefits. All this activity created the equivalent of 25,000 full-time jobs and contributed about \$180 million in state and local taxes.

One of the secrets to the success of music festivals is expert and, increasingly, innovative use of social media marketing aimed at promoting the festivals and encouraging customer loyalty. The Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival, held annually in Manchester, Tennessee, relies



Bonnaroo 2016. Photo courtesy of Bonnaroo - credit Andrew Jorgensen

heavily on aggressive digital marketing campaigns both to generate publicity and attract visitors. Tactics include establishing relationships with bloggers to stimulate excitement for the concerts, leveraging social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to achieve maximum exposure, and exploring mobile technology.

Set on a 700-acre farm, Bonnaroo typically attracts 85,000 attendees annually to its four-day camping festival each June. Ranked as one of the '50 Moments that Changed Rock & Roll' by *Rolling Stone* magazine, it was developed by Superfly Presents and AC Entertainment in 2002 and they continue to produce it annually, utilizing social media to sustain the momentum. Superfly's website says that it 'transformed bonnaroo.com from a website with information about the festival to a content-rich and socially-driven destination for "good stuff"'.

At Bonnaroo 2011, an air-conditioned barn in the middle of the festival ground, sponsored by Fuse TV, offered a private concert with an up-and-coming artist for those who checked into the barn via Foursquare. Once a visitor had checked in, their followers would be able to see that they were at the Fuse TV barn and then choose to go there themselves. Organizers provided the fans with a free buffet, ice-cold water, and a chance to see an intimate live show with just 40 other people. In return for their simple check-in on Foursquare, fans were rewarded with an experience not found anywhere else in the festival.

This music and camping festival, with added attractions such as an on-site salon sponsored by Garnier and a music academy courtesy of Red Bull, notched up over \$50 million in economic impact in 2012 according to a study by Greyhill Advisors. Also in 2012, instead of following the regular method and announcing the musical lineup on the official website, Bonnaroo announced its lineup on the music-streaming social media program Spotify. The initiative was a big success attracting over 25,000 subscribers who were able to listen to songs from all the attending bands and discover new, exciting acts playing at the festival.

But perhaps the organizers' greatest success with social media in 2012 was the use of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology to foster engagement. Each attendee was given a wristband which served as the only form of ticket to the festival. The wristbands had built-in RFID technology and could be swiped by attendees at one of 20 check-in portals around the venue. Scanning their wristbands at the towers would check visitors in on Facebook, enabling their friends to see exactly where they were and what band they were seeing. This could be used not only to share experiences, but also to provide a location so that friends at the festival could find them. At the end of the day, the system made a second post to each guest's Facebook: a recap of all of the acts the person had seen that day with a link to Spotify which provided each act's Bonnaroo set list and a playlist of studio tracks of those songs.

Now featuring 150 acts over 12 stages, Bonnaroo recently branched out into 'glamping', offering pre-pitched specialty tents, state-of-the-art cabanas and RVs. All of its annual

innovations are broadcast through its multi-prong social media presence via Tumblr, Twitter, Facebook, Spotify, YouTube and Instagram. Marketing initiatives, such as merchandise design contests, #Bonna-YOU story-sharing, a volunteer program, Ticketmaster's #FESTGOALS Sweepstakes to win free tickets, custom Bonnaroo shoes and 'Respect The Farm' environmental efforts, are all communicated through these outlets.

For non-music brands, Bonnaroo presents an opportunity to collaborate with social media stars to create brand-sponsored content while at the event. Because millions of social media users now rely on social platforms to experience festivals through the eyes of their favorite social media influencers, partnering with today's top Snapchatters, Instagrammers, and YouTubers can expand a brand's reach far beyond the festival's gates. In 2016, Red Bull for example, one of Bonnaroo's official sponsors, partnered with crossover social media star Megan Batoon to spread the word about the event. On one sponsored Instagram post, Batoon showed her followers around the festival and encouraged social media audiences to tune in to Red Bull's official live stream of Bonnaroo. The same year, lifestyle blogger and top Instagrammer Natalie Suarez collaborated with Reef to creatively showcase the surf brand's products to her large social media audience on Instagram. Not only did the social campaign generate high engagement (35,000 "likes"), Suarez also boosted exposure by creating a Snapchat Story around the event.

Source: Hudson et al. (2015)

The impact of technological developments on communication

In 1999, Steven Spielberg convened a three-day think tank to gather insights from 23 top futurists for the making of his sci-fi thriller *Minority Report* which depicted the world of 2054. The goal was to create a realistic view of a plausible future. Projecting out from the present day's marketing and media technologies – Web cookies, GPS devices, Bluetooth-enabled cell phones, TiVo personal video recorders, and barcode scanners – the filmmakers gave shape to an advertising-saturated society where billboards call out to you on a first-name basis, cereal boxes broadcast animated commercials, newspapers deliver news instantly over a broadband wireless network, holographic hosts greet you at retail stores, and biometric retina scans deduct the cost of goods from your bank account.

The technologies portrayed in the film were far from science fiction (Mathieson, 2002), and today many are in use or are in development – an indication of the rapid pace of technological progress. Wireless newspapers and magazines that stream news updates – like the *USA Today* seen in the film – are extensions of 'digital paper' technologies currently being developed. Meanwhile, today's GPS and wireless network technologies are close to the place-based, personalized