Digital marketing is a significant channel for communicating events to the public. Yet, for event planners, the fundamental issue becomes how to maximize social media as a critical marketing asset to secure higher participation rates for events. Although social media has demonstrated benefits such as cost efficiency, creating immediate access, and expanding consumer reach, strategy to achieve higher attendance is not clear. Accordingly, the purpose of this research was to address gaps in the literature to understand what factors motivate people notified about an event on social media to attend the event by examining the connection between their reasons for attending the event and the factors that attracted them to the event. Findings will provide event planners insights on marketing strategy, what social media channels are most appropriate, and factors that influence event attendance.

### INTRODUCTION

- Social media networks have become more and more complex (Moise & Crusceu, 2014).
- Social media platforms play a significant role in today’s communication, whether it is related to communicating at a mass level, to existing friends, or creating new paths for communication with old and new friends.
- Digital marketing has become a significant channel for communicating events to the public (Marine-Roig, Martin-Fuentes, & Daries-Ramon, 2017).
- Digital marketing promotes the event to the public by notifying people via email, social media, or through advertisements.
- This research examines the connection between individual’s reasons for attending events and the attributes of the event as promoted on social media.
- Event planners must uncover the process through which special event consumers come to accept social media as a channel in which they use to make decisions.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does social media affect an individual's motivation to attend an event?
2. What social media strategies increase intent to participate?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Evolution of Social Media

- Social media continues to evolve with other functionality that allows convenience and entertainment for its members, in what is now known as app-specific games, funds transfers, and market place capabilities created by social media platforms.
- Users have identified additional uses for social media platforms, including brand promotion, marketing, and now event planning and marketing.
- Social media networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, are great resources for creating pages for events with descriptive details, then opening it up for the public to see (Odhiambo, 2012).
- The power of social media to promote and organize collective action and enhance political empowerment has been acknowledged and widely researched because technology-enabled personal networks do not simply function as communication systems but also empower networks that allow rapid action and coordinated adjustments (Marine-Roig, Martin-Fuentes, & Daries-Ramon, 2017).

#### Capabilities of Social Media

- Social media sites offer new tools that contribute to a larger complexity of sociotechnical systems (Muss & Muner, 2012).
- Digital marketing integrates additional uses for social media for both personal and professional purposes, including branding, blogging, and now event planning and marketing.
- Social media networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, are great resources for creating pages for events with descriptive details, then opening it up for the public to see (Odhiambo, 2012).
- The power of social media to promote and coordinate collective action and enhance political empowerment has been acknowledged and widely researched because technology-enabled personal networks do not simply function as communication systems but also empower networks that allow rapid action and coordinated adjustments (Marine-Roig, Martin-Fuentes, & Daries-Ramon, 2017).

#### Social Media and Events

- Social media platforms have the ability to bring forth an event to the public through user interest.
- Social media platforms have introduced new types of events, such as Facebook Events, that can help event planners to “manage event participants and notify participants’ friends” (Bogaert, Ballings & Van den Poel, 2016).
- Events spontaneously generated by users through social media followed and became increasingly massive, exemplifying the converging power of social media and its potential to go viral.
- Preparation, planning and engagement throughout the event cycle results in substantial advantages (Glosby, 2015).
- The social media content, which may include photos, videos, and/or texts about the event, can be useful in helping potential attendees to identify and make decisions (Lee, et. al., 2012).
- Posts shared before the event may express the interest of the users in the upcoming event and their intention to attend (Munteco de Lira, et. al., 2017).
- Events wholly generated by users and promoted through social media have not only been growing, but have become more formal, organized and specialized in certain subjects, fostered by the generalizability and use of mobile devices (Marine-Roig, et. al., 2017).

### FINDINGS

#### Attending Social Media Events

- 71% women; 32% men (respondents).
- 100% of respondents answered “yes” to having attended an event where social media was involved in their decision making.

#### Source of Notification

- 50% of respondents were informed of an event via Twitter and Instagram.
- 70% of respondents identified Facebook as the primary social media platform that notified respondents of events.
- 30% were informed of an event via the event’s notification system (website, newsletters, etc.).
- Those informed via Facebook clarified the primary way they come across event listings was they appeared as an event occurring near their current location, while others were notified through friends sharing an event.

### CONCLUSION

- The connection between the surveyed respondents’ reasons for attending the event and the factors that attracted them to the event are directly linked to their interest in the event, the location of the event, and support for the event theme.
- Facebook is the primary social media platform used to notify and remind participants of events.
- Most respondents decided to attend events within a limited window which creates significant challenges for event planners.