

Beyond Convenience | How Live Events Can Win in the Digital Age

5 MIN READ



The landscape we compete in for consumer's hearts and wallets has evolved, and attention has become nearly as valuable as dollars. The options of how to spend your time, attention, and hard earned money have become almost limitless. 83% of Americans subscribe to a streaming service that puts them one click away from tens of thousands of hours of content. The average American spends 2 hours and 14 minutes per day on social media. Platforms like YouTube and Tubi are "Free-With-Ads", while other's like Disney+ have seemingly endless "free-first-month" trials. The competition is for "eyeball-hours" now, not just dollars. With the seismic shift in entertainment options presented to consumers, live events organizations need to evolve faster than ever before.

But the situation is not doom and gloom...in fact it's quite the opposite. In the arena of entertainment choices, live events have advantages that digital content never can. Human connection with friends and strangers alike, a journey that starts before the event and continues long after, and the intangible magic of witnessing world-class performers from athletes to actors. It's time for live event organizations to double-down on what consumers love most, and close the gap where digital content has taken a lead.

To arm live event organizations in the battle for attention, we surveyed over 2,000 event-goers to understand their behaviors, motivations, and future plans. The following are some proven ways live event organizations can remind event-goers why they love live events, and hopefully get them out of their house and into your audience.

Adventure of a Lifetime

Picture this: you're having a night-out and starting with a delightful meal at a new restaurant, followed by a captivating performance or live event. This adventure is something digital content simply cannot provide, and is the preferred experience of over 55% of event-goers when they attend events. In fact, when asked, live event goers told us that dinner or drinks actually account for 45% of their budget when attending live events. That means that someone buying a \$100 ticket is typically spending \$81 on meals or drinks at bars and restaurants that night, so if live event organizations are only capturing ticket revenue, they're missing out on nearly half the revenue opportunity.

Someone buying a \$100 ticket is typically also spending \$81 on meals or drinks that night.

Partnering with local restaurants to offer enticing dinner packages could be a recipe for success. Maybe a 6:00pm prix-fixe seating before a 7:30pm showtime? Maybe a free patrons dessert, when diners show their tickets for that night? There are countless ways to entice event-goers to frequent local restaurants before an event, and only upside for both organizations who can split that new revenue.

Better yet, make your venue the dinner destination. Even without a full kitchen at your disposal, catered pre-event dinners or collaboration with popular food trucks that can park right outside your doors. These opportunities remove the decision making from the experience for consumers and add revenue opportunities for live event organizations. It's a win-win that a few leading venues have already started to discover...



The Hollywood Bowl – Los Angeles

Known for its iconic outdoor concerts, the Hollywood Bowl offers a diverse selection of gourmet picnic baskets curated by celebrity chefs. Patrons can pre-order these baskets and enjoy fine dining under the stars.



The Museum of Fine Arts – Boston

The museum occasionally features food trucks on its Huntington Avenue lawn, providing a convenient dining option for museum-goers.



Ravinia – Chicago

The Ravinia Market offers grab-and-go food and drinks as well as sit-down dining options both indoors and outdoors.

The Show Goes On

The show is over, the audience is on their feet, and they're debating what to do next. While most (61%) event-goers will head home, the #1 activity for the rest is to find a local bar or pub. But why leave the venue at all? Why not turn your venue into a social hub after the event? We know that one of the most impactful ways to get event-goers attending more events is to grow interest in live events from their family and friends. And what better way to have fun with new friends and old, than to have drinks with them at the venue, after the show?

Hosting post-show mixers or happy hours provides an excellent avenue for attendees to unwind, discuss the performance, and connect with fellow audience members. Or, even better, why not make it interactive? Cocktail-making classes led by your in-house bartenders invites patrons to have an engaging, hands-on experience with each other. Some venues will have the space and expertise to turn their venue into a social hub after the event, and some will not. For those that are limited by space, ability, or other factors, don't be afraid to get creative. The bars and restaurants in your neighborhood are always looking for new customers, so why not host a post-event trivia contest, meet-and-greet with the performers, or simply an evening soiree at neighboring bars?

This social bonding not only fosters a sense of community but also extends the magic of the event well into the night. It's a strategy that evolves the venue into a social destination, converts strangers into friends, and turns an average Friday night into an unforgettable occasion. It's something that cannot be replicated at home, on the couch, or in front of the television. It's completely unique to live events.

The #1 activity after a live event is to go for drinks at a bar or restaurant.





Embracing Premiumization

With growing mortgage rates and ballooning rent prices, it's not surprising that consumers are cutting back. What is surprising, however, is that live event experiences do not seem to fall into that category. Nearly 85% of live event goers plan on attending the same number of live events (if not more) in the coming 12 months than they did in the previous period. On top of that, ticket buyers are now looking for more than just tickets. They're willing to pay up for VIP-seating and performer meet-and-greets. In fact, **VIP seating is the #1 thing live event goers are interested in spending additional money on!**

Bundling VIP packages together can be a great option, rather than offering VIP add-ons a la carte. In fact, a recent study by Eventbrite showed that VIPs typically outspend the average patron by 2.5x. Bundling VIP packages enable you to strike the right balance between price and value for those patrons. A dedicated VIP entrance, for example, may not be worth much as an optional add-on. However, pair it with early-entry and a complimentary welcome drink, and suddenly the (typically) painful experience of entrance lines, beverage lines, and seat navigation melt away. And for many, that's worth paying for.

While not every event-goer will become your VIP patrons, some will. And that's where the opportunity lies. Whether it's swapping 10 old seats for 6 new recliners, or setting up post-performance meet-and-greets, crafting packages that your VIPs are excited by (and willing to pay for), offers an outsized opportunity to grow your revenue.

Kings of Convenience

In the age of convenience, consumers have UberEats to bring them food in 15 minutes, Amazon to deliver anything in under an hour, and Netflix on their phone to keep them company anywhere in the world. Live events are one of the last truly "human" ways that people connect, face-to-face, with strangers and friends alike to enjoy time outside of their house. That's a huge responsibility on all of us in the live events industry, not just to deliver elevated experiences, but to bring more people to more events, and help connect more people to each other. And what comes with great responsibility? Convenience of course. What did you think we were going to say?

While 70% of live event goers have started attending roughly the same (or even more) live events than they did pre-pandemic, 30% of live event goers are still attending fewer live events.

The #1 reason patrons attend fewer events is the perceived convenience of attending events has decreased

What does this mean for live event organizers? Well, it probably doesn't mean that event-goers are expecting you to deliver thousands of hours of instantly-accessible content, like Apple TV+ or Amazon Prime. It means

that the bar is higher nowadays for making the live event experience easy. From providing suggested routes to the venue, parking options, insider dining recommendations, and even restroom locations can make a significant difference. By offering valet parking and in-house childcare services, live event organizations like Tuacahn Center for the Arts are removing hurdles for event-goers and making attending an event easier than loading that next episode on Netflix. Well almost...

Social Cues

Convenience isn't something reserved for the night of, however. Convenience starts by evolving how live event goers discover the events they love. Tech-giants are beginning to understand their head start in this respect, with Spotify introducing it's Concerts feature and Netflix buying and renovating the famed Egyptian Theatre to screen the companies' films. As we saw above, the average internet user spends over 2 hours on social media each day. However, only 10% of live event goers discover the events they attend through social media. While social media is a substantial threat to live events, it may also be the largest untapped opportunity for those same live events. Times have changed, and whether it's a providing a sneak peek, a short interview with the performer, or promoted review videos, platforms like TikTok, SnapChat, and BeReal can quickly become catalysts for attendance growth.

We are in the digital age, with groundbreaking innovations like A.I. to V.R. evolving at break-neck speed. But that doesn't mean live events have to get left behind. Leveraging these new technologies to expand your reach, while evolving the convenience of attending events, will close the lead digital-content has. Doubling down on what makes live events so unique, by adding pre-event, post-event, and VIP experiences, will build even more inherent advantages. The battle for dollars and attention has just begun, and together we can put live events back on top.

Only 10% of live event goers discover the events they attend through social media.