

How your phone can interrupt the good vibes of a summer music festival

June 7 2019, by Christine Van Winkle



A festival goer at the Positivus festival in Salacgrīva, Latvia is carefree without her phone. Credit: Kristis Luhaers/Unsplash

For many communities, summertime is festival season. Festivals allow us to escape our everyday lives. Whether it is time spent listening to music

outside with our friends or trying out food trucks on date night, community events are a valued part of social life.

As many people head to their favorite [festival](#) they will do so with their [mobile phone](#) safely tucked into their pocket. But what most people don't consider is how this will impact their experience —for better or worse.

We've come to accept [mobile devices](#) as part of our [everyday lives](#) and many of us cannot imagine a day without them. Our phones help us organize our work and families and help us to stay connected to friends. Many people feel safer if they have their [phone](#) with them.

Most people give little thought to how our devices impact the [experiences](#) we have. Recent [research by our team](#) has revealed that the habit of using our devices spills over into our festival visits and that while our phones may present benefits, they can also negatively affect our experiences. You might want to think about how much your mobile device features in the memories you make this summer.

For the past five years we have been studying how and why people use mobile devices at festivals. Our findings offer an opportunity to reflect on the choices we make and the effect they are having on our [leisure time](#).

Research results showed that mobile device habits formed in daily life influence use when visiting a festival. Some people may not be bothered by the [spillover of their phone into their festival experiences](#) but it is also possible that this habit is interfering with what we want to get out of attending events.

Leave home without your phone?

[Some people actively reject using their phones when attending an event](#) as a way to remain present in the festival experience. Other people find it unsettling to leave home without their phone and if they do take it along and the battery dies they are disappointed at the missed opportunity to take photos and text to connect with friends.

Interviews with people attending festivals revealed that other people can be a powerful trigger to initial phone use. Festival goers described sitting with friends who were texting or searching on their phones and suddenly they felt compelled to use their phone as well. This [mirroring behavior](#) is a well known response people have in social situations.

The research shows that when we decide to use our phones to check work email, to check up on the kids or any other activities that have nothing to do with the festival, our satisfaction with the experience goes down. When we do use our devices at festivals it doesn't [affect our satisfaction](#) with the event if we are using our phones for festival-related activities like looking at the festival schedule, the venue map or even texting to meet up with friends who are joining us.

So is it time to ditch our phones? We know that our phones offer us something we value but there are consequences to using them. The important take away is that we need to be intentional about how we integrate our phones into our lives.

Tips to using your phone less

This summer, when you wander down to your neighborhood fair or head out to your favorite music festival consider whether or not you want to invite your phone along. If you do decide the benefits outweigh the costs there are [some simple things you can do to help you stay engaged in the festival experience](#) and not be distracted by your phone.

Turn off work notifications

Selectively turn off notifications. While you might decide it's worth it to get a text from your friends that you want to meet up with while you are enjoying an event, it might not be worth it to get an email notification that your boss isn't pleased.

Hide apps you don't need

Reorganize your screens. It can be helpful to have the festival ticket and program information on your phone but all the other icons might tempt you to focus on your phone than your experience. Put the apps you want to access while at the event on your main screen and hide the rest on later screens.

Refrain from insta-posting on social media

Wait to post. It's fun to share your experience with your extended network but consider waiting until you return home. Sharing the memories captured on your phone after the experience gives you an opportunity to reflect on the day and prevents you from being distracted by other people's posts while you are at the event.

Consider not posting any images of your experience to [social media](#) at all—you might find it leads to more conversations with people when they ask about your weekend or summer. Often, once [people](#) have seen your post they assume they already know how your weekend was, robbing you of the opportunity to share your experience with them.

Allocate specific phone time

Make time. Rather than checking your phone whenever the urge strikes

consider dedicating specific times or locations to check your phone. Some performers have started using [services like Yondr to lock people out of their phones](#) requiring them to leave the performance before checking their phones.

In discussing her book [How to Break up with your Phone](#), journalist Catherine Price highlights the fact that [our lives are what we need to be paying attention to](#). What is it that you want to pay attention to the next time you attend a festival?

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