

Creating online engagement in events through hashtagging

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<p>The objective of this study is to exam different factors affecting to the possibility of an event patron to post content on social media with a particular hashtag. The study focuses only on the event environment. The objective is achieved by identifying the use of hashtags and how to get consumers engaged to online activities. The engaging online activity in this study is posting photos on social media with hashtags. The study creates knowledge of online engagement during events and the strategic use of hashtags in events. The study is an inductive case study, and the data was collected at the Australian Open Tennis Tournament in January 2017.</p> <p>The theoretical framework defines what is social media, the current statistic and the phenomena around social media and what kind of challenges there are. The reasons to use social media are introduced, and the concept 'hashtagging' is explained. The theoretical framework assesses the decision-making process of consumers, and how social media has changed it.</p> <p>The data was collected using two qualitative working methods. The author worked at the Australian Open Tennis Tournament and wrote a work diary during the tournament. After the actual event, a questionnaire, created based on the findings of the work diary, was sent to the Australian Open Tennis Tournament's Social Media Park's volunteers.</p> <p>The study demonstrates that the hashtags must fill in certain requirements to be effective. The used social media platforms should be chosen according to the target audience. The customer service skills of the volunteers and the ability to communicate the idea of the hashtagging and the social media station are key features in engaging patrons to online activities in events. In addition, familiarity with social media and some technological skills are required from both the volunteers and the patrons. Moreover, the social media stations must appeal to the motives of the patrons to post photos online. The social media stations should show a presence, create emotions or get the patrons active.</p> <p>The study proposes also enhancements for Australian Open's social media park. In the future, the hashtags should be more visible at the event location and Australian Open should cut off the number of hashtags.</p> <p>The outcome of this study is a small manual for companies that plan to use hashtag marketing in events, what to consider before and on-spot at the event.</p>	
Keywords Hashtag, Social Media, Online Engagement, Events, Social Media Activities	

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1 Introduction

The objective of this study is to create understanding, which factors will affect to the possibility of a patron to post content with a particular hashtag on (a) social media platform(s) in an event environment. The final outcome of this study is a small manual of hashtag marketing in events.

Marketing has moved from old-fashioned channels to social media. Nowadays, sales and brand loyalty are gained through online interactions, which again has created a need for new resources and new ideas to reach online brand engagement. People use social media increasingly, even daily, and therefore, the marketers are focused on how to engage with their clients in virtual places (Sethi 12.1.2015; Statista 2017a). Social media and reasons to use it are discussed in more detail in section two.

Even though there are various positive sides of social media, there are also new challenges (Guidry, Messner, Jin & Medina-Messner 2014, 344–345; Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Füller 2013, 343). Guidry et al. (2014, 1–2, 354) argued that companies are only now realizing the need of crisis management in social media environment. Companies should focus on shaping the discussion in a manner that is suitable for the brand (Aula 2010, 44; Mangold & Faulds 2009, 359–361). One way of shaping online discussion is using hashtags. Hashtags are presented in chapters 2.5–2.8.

Moreover, the fast-developing mobile networks and mobile appliances have changed the process of decision-making (Kudeshia & Kumar 2017, 310–330). Digital presence has an enormous effect on companies' and events' success. The effects of social media to consumers' decision-making process is examined in section 3.

The importance of social media is also recognized in the event industry. The face-to-face media exists side-by-side with the virtual communication (IAEE 2015). In the future, more coexistence is needed because the competition of customer engagement increases. The International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE 2015, 11) believes, that engaging on the site will happen more and more through smartphone applications and virtual activities. Nevertheless, there are gaps in implementing social media to events. Companies do not have an actual social media plan for the event environment (Digital Playbook 2013). This study emphasizes online engagement in an event environment and the actual study was done in an event environment, at the Australian Open Tennis Tournament.

The study is qualitative and done as a case study at Australian Open (AO) Tennis Tournament. The gathering of the data happened at the AO's social media park, which had different social media stations. The stations and their ideas are showcased in Appendix 1 in detail. The empirical knowledge of the study was gathered through a work diary and a questionnaire (Appendix 2) in January 2017. The results of the study are gone through in the section six, and in section seven the results are discussed in a manner that the concept can be implemented to any occasion, where a company is trying to engage patrons to social media activities. The study concludes to recommendations and future research ideas for the Australian Open. As a result of the study, a small manual of hashtag marketing in events was created (Appendix 3).

1.1 The Australian Open Tennis Tournament

The Australian Open Tennis Tournament (AO) was played for the first time in 1905 (AUS Open 13.1.2016). It has been held in Melbourne since 1972 and the timing has now established to Mid-January, starting the year of the Grand Slams, and it lasts for two weeks (AUS Open 13.1.2016; AusOpen 2017 a). Australian Open gathers over 700 000 visitors yearly and the visitor number is increasing. Unofficially Australian Open is considered the most social, family-fun event among the Grand Slams, and it is seen, for example, in the emphasis on the social media park activities, Kids' zone, Family Day, AO Festival and on the various rest areas done in cooperation with their sponsors around the Melbourne Park and Birrarung Marr area. (Internal staff material of Australian Open.)

The Australian Open Tennis Tournament has a strong social media presence (Table 1). The official AO hashtags are (AusOpen 2017 b):

- #AusOpen
- #AOSelfie
- #KiaTennis
- #AOFestival
- #AOSocialpark
- #AOSocialSuite
- #SmashTheSecret

Table 1. The social media account numbers of Australian Open. Retrieved on 27.3.2017 from the official accounts of Australian Open

Channels	Followers / Fans / Subscribers	Special mentions
Twitter	1,5 million	47.7 thousand tweets
Facebook	1,9 million	Over 57 000 reviews, an average of 4.5 stars. 309 thousand check-ins.
Instagram	673 thousand	2933 posts
YouTube	181 008	The most watched clip has ~6,7 million views

1.2 The purpose of the Australian Open’s social media park

The social media stations were put up to create brand (event) awareness, to give sponsors visibility and to sell more tickets. The idea was to take photos of the patrons posing at the social media stations (Appendix 1) and to make sure, that they would post the photos online, with a particular hashtag. The stations were free of charge. Patrons sharing photos online would generate a word of mouth. Australian Open was aiming to word-of-mouth marketing and to intrigue people to come and buy the tickets. Through hashtagging, they would categorize photos, and also, gain sponsor visibility. Moreover, the hashtags were used as competition points, whereby sharing a photo with a particular hashtag, the patron would enter to a competition automatically.

1.3 Key concepts

Social media, social networking, and social media platforms are common terms used in this study and therefore, the definitions and the differences between them should be identified. Also, hashtags and online engagement are clarified.

Social media is the media to which a user or a company uploads his / hers / its content like infographics, videos, or images and therefore, owns the content (Burke 10.2.2013; Schauer 28.6.2015). Normally, a social media user uploads frequently and uses different kinds of contents; images, videos etc., and waits for other people’s reactions to the uploaded content (Schauer 28.6.2015). Through mobile and web-based technologies, social media is used for communication. The type of communication is sharing, co-creating, discussing and modifying user-generated content. (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre 2011, 241.)

Social networking is “the creation and maintenance of personal and business relationships online” and it calls for listening and engaging in other people actions (Schauer 28.6.2015).

Social networking is creating a greater network with followers and fans. LinkedIn is an example of social networking. (Burke 10.2.2013.)

Social media platforms are the places, like internet pages or mobile phone applications, where one shares social media content and expands one's social networks. According to Burke (10.2.2013), there are some platforms which are platforms and tools at the same time, for instance, Facebook can be used for networking but simultaneously, for advertising your business. Social media platforms can be divided to networking, promoting and sharing platforms (60 Second Marketer 2010). Platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn will help you to *network*, through YouTube and blogs one promotes things and via platforms like Instagram and Reddit one shares information. The sharing platform Snapchat is the fastest growing platform at the moment (Wertz 18.2.2017).

A hashtag is a form of metadata consisting of a keyword, a subject or a phrase prefixed with the symbol # (Lee 19.6.2014; Luckie 20.9.2012; TMEP 2017). The keyword together with the symbol # is called a hashtag which is used to sort out information, to optimize and to target messages (Kolowich 5.12.2014). In addition, hashtags are used to add humor, sarcasm or emotions to posts (Bruns & Burgess 2011, 1–8; Halavais 2013, 37; Miller 18.3.2014). Hashtags also give a context for a post and therefore, may tell more than the actual post containing the hashtag (Bruns & Stieglitz 2014, 69). Zappavigna (2015, 2) also pointed out that hashtags are created to make statements, not necessary for labelling information or to express feelings.

Earlier the success of an *online engagement* was counted as the number of followers or fans, but now it has moved to the actions of social media users, which are the situations when the consumers comment, like, retweet or share posts etc. The online engagement counts in active and passive actions, and the engagement involves a network of interactions with multiple factors at the same time. The factors can be brand sites, other individuals and/or several social media platforms (Dessart, Veloutsou & Morgan-Thomas 2015, 38; Gummerus, Liljander, Weman & Pihlström 2012, 860). The online user engagement rate is seen important, because it is believed that this sort of actions will lead more firmly to brand loyalty (Dessart et al. 2015, 28; Lee 19.6.2014).

2 Social media

Next, social media is introduced by describing its popularity. The reasons to use social media are reviewed through the studies of Whiting and Williams (2013) and Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre (2011). In addition, companies' reasons to use social media are explained. The harmful effects of social media are also outlined. The special feature of social media, hashtagging, is explained to get a better understanding of the topic. The section concludes to a special look of the current state of social media in events.

2.1 Social media is the new takeaway coffee

The usage of social media has become as common as drinking coffee (Zappavigna 2014). In average, 118 minutes per day was used to social networking in 2016, meaning the usage of forums, blogs, business networks, photo-sharing platforms, microblogs (Twitter), chat apps and social gaming applications (Statista 2017a). Facebook was the most popular social media platform in January 2017 (Figure 1). On average, people have 7.4 social/communication apps on their smartphones (Sethi 12.1.2015). The number of social media users is expected to rise to 2,95 billion by 2020. China and India will have the most accelerating growth in the number of users. (Statista 2016.)

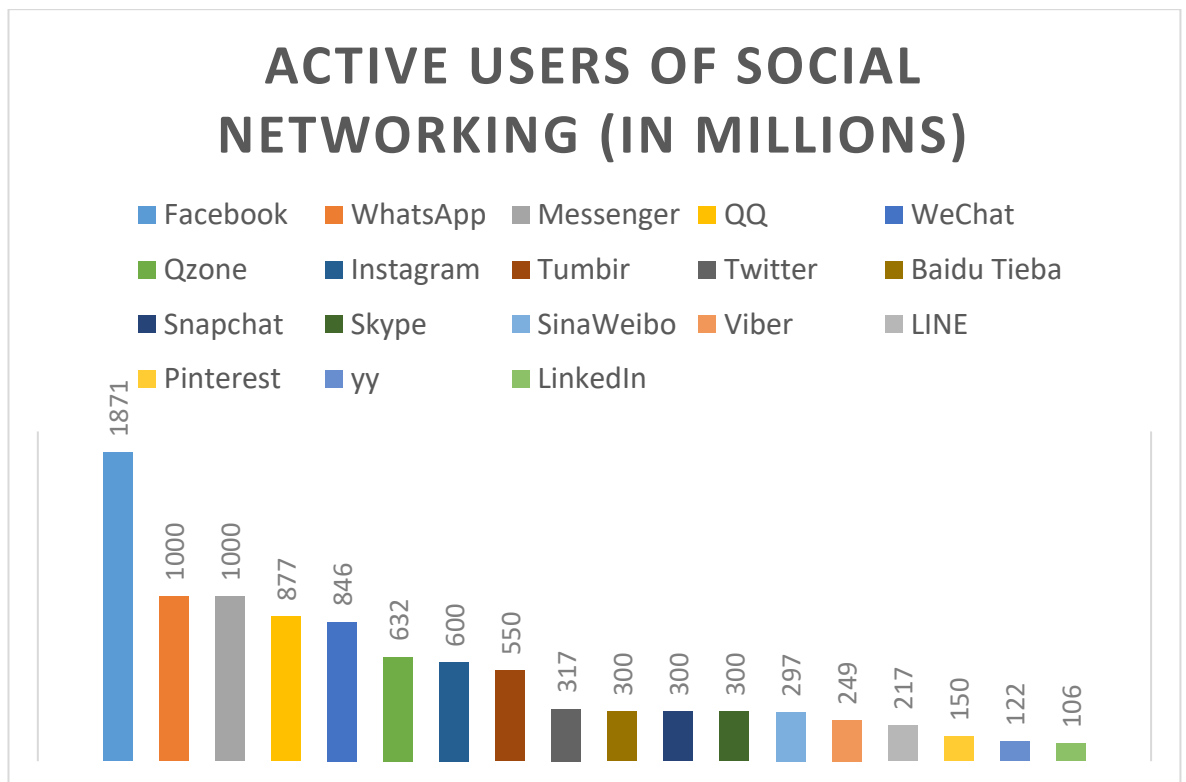


Figure 1. Leading social networking sites in January 2017. The number of active users in millions (Statista 2017b)

Social media is used increasingly through mobile phones, which has led to new trends and behaviors. Statista (2016) stated that mobile phones and tablets are the number one user appliance, and for instance, Facebook has over one billion mobile-only users and Facebook expects that number to grow. The fact that mobile web access has gotten easier and better worldwide, it has inspired to create social media platforms which work only in mobile, like Instagram and Snapchat. Now, mobile phones are used as a second screen: 47 million Americans use mobile phones while watching television and increasingly they are also live-tweeting (Statista 2017c; Picture 1). Live-tweeting is expressing opinions on Twitter, right-at-the-moment. Therefore, television advertisement includes more often hashtags. In 2016, the most popular event generating live-tweeting was the presidential debates which created over 83 million interactions on Facebook and Twitter alone (Statista 2017c).



Picture 1. Twitter comments made while watching the television show Bachelor. Searched with #Bachelor2017 (Twitter 2017a)

2.2 Individuals' reasons to use social media

There are several reasons why individuals use social media and social networking sites. Whiting and Williams (2013, 362–369) identified seven different reasons to use social media: (1) Social Interaction, (2) Information Seeking, (3) Time Passing, (4) Entertainment, (5) Relaxation, (6) a Way of Communication, and (7) Convenient of buying through social

media. Some people use social media because they feel they can communicate both positive and negative opinions through it and they feel that social media is a much faster way to communicate than the traditional grapevine (Hutter et al. 2013, 345).

Kietzmann et al. (2011, 241–251) developed “the honeycomb framework” which proposes motives why social media is so appealing to individuals (Figure 2). Kietzmann et al. (2011) argued that social media enables people to share content, but at the same time they can share only as much they wish to, and like this, the individuals can create an image that they want online. In addition, groups can be formed in social media for creating conversations and relationships. Moreover, through social media, the users will know where they or matters stand in the world, creating the reason of reputation to use social media. Lastly, social media creates a presence, and through some applications, one can be reached all the time or only when one wants to, and others will be aware of this. However, there is no clear explanation, for which reasons users use particular platforms (Weller 2016, 256–260).

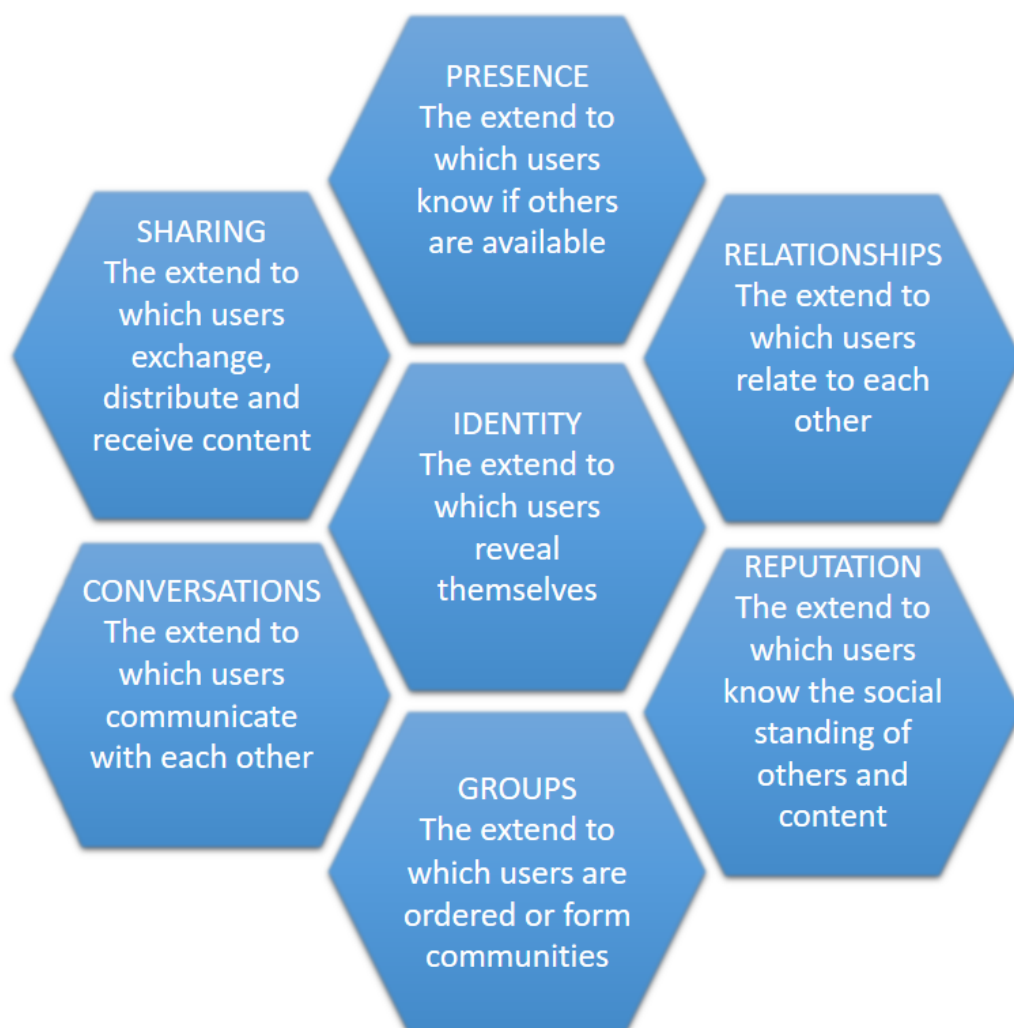


Figure 2. The Honeycomb of social media functionality according to Kietzmann et al. (2011, 243)

2.3 Companies' reasons to use social media

Companies have also several reasons to use social media, but unlike the individuals, they should use the platforms with more consideration and with more planned motives. In a study by MacKay, Barbe, Van Winkle & Halpenny (2017, 671–672), it was illustrated that companies use different platforms for different targets. For example, a restaurant may publish only food photos on their Instagram account to gain awareness, on their Facebook page they post events so that the followers can invite their friends to the events and on Snapchat, they share pictures of today's specials and behind the scenes photos to gain interaction. Therefore, companies should use different platforms for different audiences and targets to have the best cost-effective result.

Via social media platforms, companies share information, create impressions, influence on assessments of the company, and engage with their customers (Aula 2010, 46). Companies are trying to engage with their customers with social media content that is either informational, community-building, promotional or mobilizational (Saxton 22.4.2014). Companies' Facebook pages are considered increasingly more valuable resource of product information and according to Pöyry, Parvinen & Malmivaara (2013, 224–235), Facebook pages' influence on consumers' decision-making process.

2.4 The harmful effects of social media for companies

Companies are also experiencing setbacks in social media. The possibility to damage a company reputation is a major risk that companies are taking without understanding its effects on their competitiveness, media relations, local positioning, and stakeholder trust (Aula 2010, 44). The lack of experience is seen in social media strategies and trying to control the online dialog (Aula 2010, 44–46). Moreover, companies are badly prepared for the quickly widespread negative information in social media (Aula 2010, 42–43; Guidry et al. 2014, 1–2, 344–345, 354). The creation of fake news has been a current, new problem of social media (Aula 2012, 44; Zuckerberg 18.11.2016). For social media, critical thinking is essential, but unfortunately, people forget it but trust everything that they can find from social media (Aula 2010, 46; Fuchs 2014, 7). The crisis management of social media is only now emerging (Guidry et al. 2014, 1–2, 354).

2.5 The special features of a #hashtag

The definition of a hashtag was given in chapter 1.3. Burns & Stieglitz (2012) have defined three different type of hashtags: (1) Ad hocs, (2) Recurring and (3) Praeter hocs. Ad hoch hashtags response to a current situation, recurring are topics that have been discussed

before and praeter hoc hashtags are predetermined and often used for events or television shows, i.e. #MasterChefAustralia. Hashtags can be also divided between topical and nontopical hashtags (Bruns & Moe 2012). An example of a nontopical hashtag would be #facepalm.

Hashtags are often user-generated and no one supervises the creation of hashtags. The hashtagging itself is free, and therefore, it is leveraging marketing efforts. (Wang, Liu & Gao 2016, 853.) Hashtags facilitate ad hoc reactions collected under the same hashtag without having to create a specific “space” for commenting (Bruns & Burgess 2011, 1–8). Hashtags also increase engagement rate, for example, tweets with one or two hashtags have a 21 % higher engagement rate (The Sales Force Marketing Cloud 2012). Since the creation of hashtags in 2007, when a social technology expert Chris Messina tweeted out “*?how do you feel about using # (pound) for groups. As in #barcamp [msg]??*”, all the social media platforms have adopted the hashtag (Kolowich 5.12.2014; Messina, 25.8.2007). A free hashtag analyzing tool, Hashtagify (2017) indicated that from 2011 to 13th of April 2017, there are 66,139,598 hashtags in their encyclopedia.

Since 2013, The United States of America has had a trademark law for hashtags which allows to trademark a hashtag if “it functions as an identifier of the source of the applicant’s goods or services” (TMEP 2017). This shows how effective and important hashtags are considered. An example of a famous trademarked hashtag is the Olympics. The hashtags #Olympics and #Rio2016 were the first trademarked hashtags for the Olympics since the law became binding (Green 12.8.2016). This meant that companies were not allowed to use the hashtags in their materials nor communication if they were not the official partners of Rio 2016.

2.6 Hashtags create dialog

Hashtags are a “form of searchable talk” (Zappavigna 2011, 788–806). Hashtags have become popular because they are functional, one can look for parallel voices among different platforms and discuss relevant topics and events instantly (Van den Berg 2014, 1, 4; Doctor 30.5.2013). Hashtags even form communicating communities (Saxton, Niyirora, Guo & Waters 2015, 156). Hashtags are in a key role in live-tweeting (Bruns & Burgess 2011, 1–8; Lochrie & Coulton 2011). More importantly, information can be looked under the hashtags even though the searcher had not been engaged to the hashtag, the company or the person before (Bruns & Burgess 2011, 1–8; Lee 19.6.2014). Bruns & Burgess (2011, 1–8) argued that people posting with hashtags do not necessary even follow what other people are saying with the same hashtag but are, however, “an active process of

'audiencing'. If the hashtag stream works as a strong community, there will be more replies, retweeting or reposting (Bruns & Burgess 2011, 1–8). Discussions can actually be found online with hashtags and therefore, Zappavigna (2015) called the hashtags "searchable talk".

Through hashtagging, the circle of like-minded people can get their voices heard as hashtagging enables layovers between social groups (Gleason 2013, 966–982). By using a common hashtag, one can actually communicate to the group (Zappavigna 2015, 2). For example, if one has developed an interest in painting, posting photos of his/hers paintings with a hashtag, #painting, it would create communication with other people that are interested in painting. The communication would mean actions like liking, commenting or reposting. If one has a special interest in finger painting, adding also a hashtag, #finger-painting to the post, it will create layovers for the two groups. This means that the members of the two groups can develop a dialog through the hashtags.

2.7 Hashtags are viral

Wang et al. (2016, 862) argued that hashtags help matters to go viral instantly and therefore, they also create trending (Social media for Events a). Whether a hashtag will trend, it depends on what other topics are popular at the same time (Social media for Events a).

There are two different ways to get a hashtag viral: a bottom-up process and a top-down process (Wang et al. 2016, 862). The top-down process means that the content is planned and created by marketing professionals, the bottom-up process is generated by individuals. The bottom-up process is proven to be more powerful as it is based on self-motivated participants and the shared information is relevant and salient (Castells 2012; Nahon & Hemsley 2013).

According to Wang et al. (2016), to get a message viral with hashtags, there has to be an effective information flow throughout the idea/campaign/ad. For example, the women's product line Dove has successfully extended their world know Real Beauty campaign to the social media platforms through the hashtag #RealBeauty (Dove 2017a, Dove 2017b, Dove 2017c).

2.8 How to create and use hashtags

A hashtag should be short, maximum of 10 characters, but also descriptive as it will help to reach the right and even a new audience (Social media For Events b). Hashtags include very often abbreviations or concatenation, however, often the meaning of the abbreviated hashtag is not clear and those outside of the community will not be able to come as

a part of the conversation, especially if the context is not obvious (Posch, Wagner, Singer & Strohmaier 2013; Zappavigna 2015, 3). A hashtag should be something which cannot be misread, misspelled or create misinterpretation because a hashtag can also mean something else in another content (Lee 19.6.2014; Social media For Events b). In addition, too generic hashtags will not reach the target audience (Bruns & Burgess 2011; 1–8).

2.9 Introduction to event environment and social media

Companies have reported positive results of using social media in events and exhibitions. The Exhibitor Online's (2012 & 2014) surveys proved that the event professionals believe that social media has a moderate potential or a limitless potential in exhibit and event marketing.

The initial incentive to use social media for events seems to be cost cutting (The Digital Playbook 2013, 18–19). In addition, companies use social media for publicity, communications between exhibitors and patrons, engaging community, generating future sales, and for gathering feedback and data (Mehta 2012, slide 27; Selesnick 2014, slides 6–7).

Exhibitor Online (2014) reported that 71 % of companies have achieved better brand awareness and 32 % has improved their relationships with their clients with the help of social media. Other positive results were increased website or microblog traffic, booth traffic, additional press coverage, and increase in sales.

However, the interest to social media versus the professional implementation of it has challenges. Only three out of ten brand marketers are setting measurable online targets, indicating that there is not even clear way of saying was the social media strategy a success or not (Exhibitor Online 2014). Moreover, only 36 % of the brand marketers at events are measuring their digital tactic's ROI through social media mentions (Digital Playbook 2013, 10–13). The bad implementation of social media efforts results in disappointment: 26 % felt that social media tactics had felt short in their expectations (Digital Playbook 2013, 18–19).

Furthermore, in Digital Playbooks survey (2013, 14) it was demonstrated that companies are not striving for patron engagement during the event but usually after the event. However, gaining patron engagement through online activities during the event would be the best time as MacKay et al.'s (2017, 679) study about festivals and social media engagement proved: the major number of posts/tweets were done during the event, also by the patrons, meaning that information and emotions were shared actively. Thanks to better mobile connections and Wi-Fi, actions like live updates, tweets, images, and videos will generate buzz during the event and extend the reach of the event participation beyond the

physical patron (IAEE 2016, 14, 16–17; Mehta 2012, slide 20). Therefore, companies should reach to their clients also during the event to attain a better level of engagement.

Australian Open's social media park is an example, how hashtags can be used in event marketing. The hashtags are used as tools for digital and social media marketing. More importantly, Australian Open's social media park is an example of event marketing that it happening during the event. The social media stations, the Kia competition and the pre-planned hashtags together create hashtag marketing that should reach people interested in tennis and hopefully intrigue new visitors for the event.

3 Consumers' decision-making process and social media

Consumers are moving to social media platforms and it has changed the way consumers engage with brands. Therefore, it has also changed the decision-making process. This section outlines common concepts effecting the consumers' decision-making process, like the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Individuals' motives to engage to online interactions are discussed through the theories of Kaplan (2014) and Hollabeek, Glynn & Brodie (2014). Kaplan (2014) explains what should be considered when planning social media engagement and Hollabeek et al. (2014) outlines what kind of social media content attracts individuals.

3.1 Social media's influence on consumers' decision-making process

According to Keller (1993, 1–22), brand awareness has a major role in a decision-making process. Through social media, brand awareness is easily gained and the more there is engagement to online brand activities, the more there is brand awareness (Hutter et al. 2013, 342–345). Therefore, online engagement is what companies should strive for to reach brand awareness and to influence on consumers' decision-making. Online engagement is the perfect way to reach brand engagement, which will, in turn, facilitate other organizational outcomes (Hollabeek et al. 2014, 150) (Figure 3).

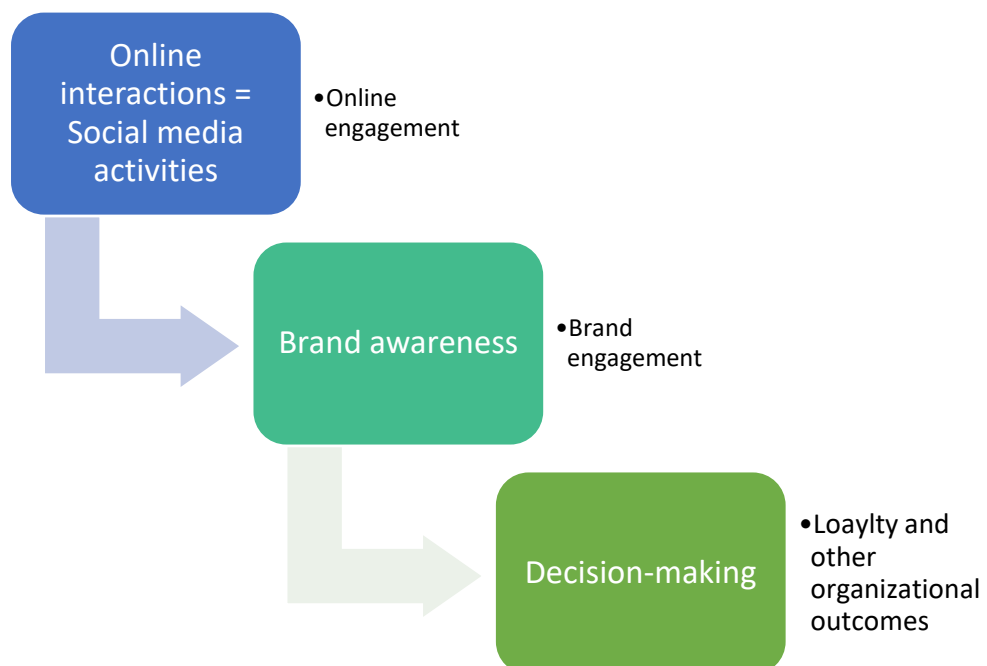


Figure 3. Social media's influence on consumers' decision-making process

3.2 The different forms of online interactions

The social media activities have to be strategic to gain online brand engagement. But first, to be able to understand, how to gain online engagement, one should know what kind of social media activities lead to online engagement. Social media activities are re-tweeting, posting, favoriting, liking, clicking or commenting (Lee 19.6.2014; Mangold & Faulds 2009, 362). Moreover, consumers engage in non-interactive behaviors, like reading comments, which is proved to be even more engaging than being active. This way of interaction is very effective in the case of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). eWOM sites have become an influential factor on decision-making. (Kudeshia & Kumar 2017, 310–330.) The eWOM has moved away restrictions of time and place, which has changed the way of making purchase decisions (Kudeshia & Kumar 2017, 310–330; Graham & Havlena 2007, 427–435).

Increasingly, the eWOM is happening on the social networking platforms and it is called ***the social eWOM*** (Kudeshia & Kumar 2017, 314–315). The social networking sites have facilitated consumers to look easily and quickly product-related information and opinions within personal contacts (Kudeshia & Kumar 2017, 310–330).

Moreover, when people interact in online brand communities, it forms strong emotional links among the community members, which again generates brand loyalty, satisfaction, and trust (Bergami & Bagozzi 2000, 1528–1540; Brodie, Illic, Juric & Hollabeek 2011; Schau, Muniz & Arnould 2009, 30–51). Companies should try to add social features to their social media communities to leverage the member-to-member conversation (Gummerus et al. 2012).

3.3 Kaplan's theory of social media engagement

Kaplan (2014, 134–136) introduced four different ways to reach engagement through social media activities: Firstly, the brand's social media activities should be *integrated* into the consumers' social media activities, meaning that if the consumers prefer communication through Twitter, the brand should communicate through Twitter. Secondly, the shared information should be *individualized* so the same photo should not be posted to every single forum where the company is active. Thirdly, the shared information should generate interest and conversation so that the consumers would want to be *involved* in the brand's actions. All this will lead to the last preferred action: the *initiating* of word-of-mouth activities and generating content by the consumers. The user-generated content is extremely valuable for brand engagement and virality (Kaplan & Haenlein 2011, 253–263). By planning carefully and following Kaplan's four I's, better online engagement should be reached.

3.4 Hollabeek, Glynn & Brodie's engagement dimensions

Hollabeek, Glynn & Brodie (2014, 161) demonstrated that involving consumers to a specific type of online brand activities will have the highest impact on brand engagement. Hollabeek et al. (2014, 149–165) derived three dimensions: The dimensions were cognitive, affectional, and behavioral. The shared online content should be either appealing to the cognitive side of the individuals, which means that he or she is proud of the brand, or the content should be affectional, in other words, emotional. As a last choice, the content should be behavioral, asking the audience to be active. Hollabeek et al. (2014, 149–165) proved that especially actions that have “*affectional and/or activation dimensions will result as greater brand usage intent*”. This means, for example, that sharing an adorable photo of kittens on a sofa would be more affectional than a photo of a flower vase next to the sofa as the kitten photo will most likely gain a greater engagement by likes, shares, and comments.

3.5 Companies' online engagement challenges

Companies are striving for online engagement, but there are also challenges. It is possible that the already reached engagement level is lost by wrong kind of activities in social media or that the high engagement of a brand turns into negative engagement (Hutter et al. 2013; McCarthy, Rowley, Ashworth & Pioch 2014, 191).

The mobilization has made everything time and location sensitive, meaning that individuals are more feedback sensitive and that feedback can be given without any consideration, an even with false facts (Jalonen & Jussila 2016, 140). United Airlines lost its reputation in April 2017 when a passenger taped how security guards violently removed another passenger from an overbooked flight and then posted the video on social media (CNN 2017; Sasso, Bachman & Lin 11.4.2017).

In addition, Kudeshia & Kumar (2017, 314–315) assessed the danger of online trolls and hackers, who interdentally want to ruin a company's image. In 2011, hackers stole the personal data of over 100 million PlayStation players from Sony's gamer network (Bartz & Finkle 4.5.2011).

4 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework should describe visually the theories and assumptions that supports and informs one's research and what is their relationship. A conceptual framework is a model of what is being studied. A researcher will construct a framework based on to his or her study and therefore, it is not a ready-made framework that exists. (Maxwell 2012, 39–41.)

Figure 4 presents the theories and assumptions used in this study and how they are linked to the actual research question “Which factors will affect to the possibility of a patron to post a photo with a particular hashtag on (a) social media platform(s)”. The framework is based to the literature review. The framework includes online engagement, event environment's special needs, understanding the reasons for social media activity and the actual social media activities, which in this study are hashtags.

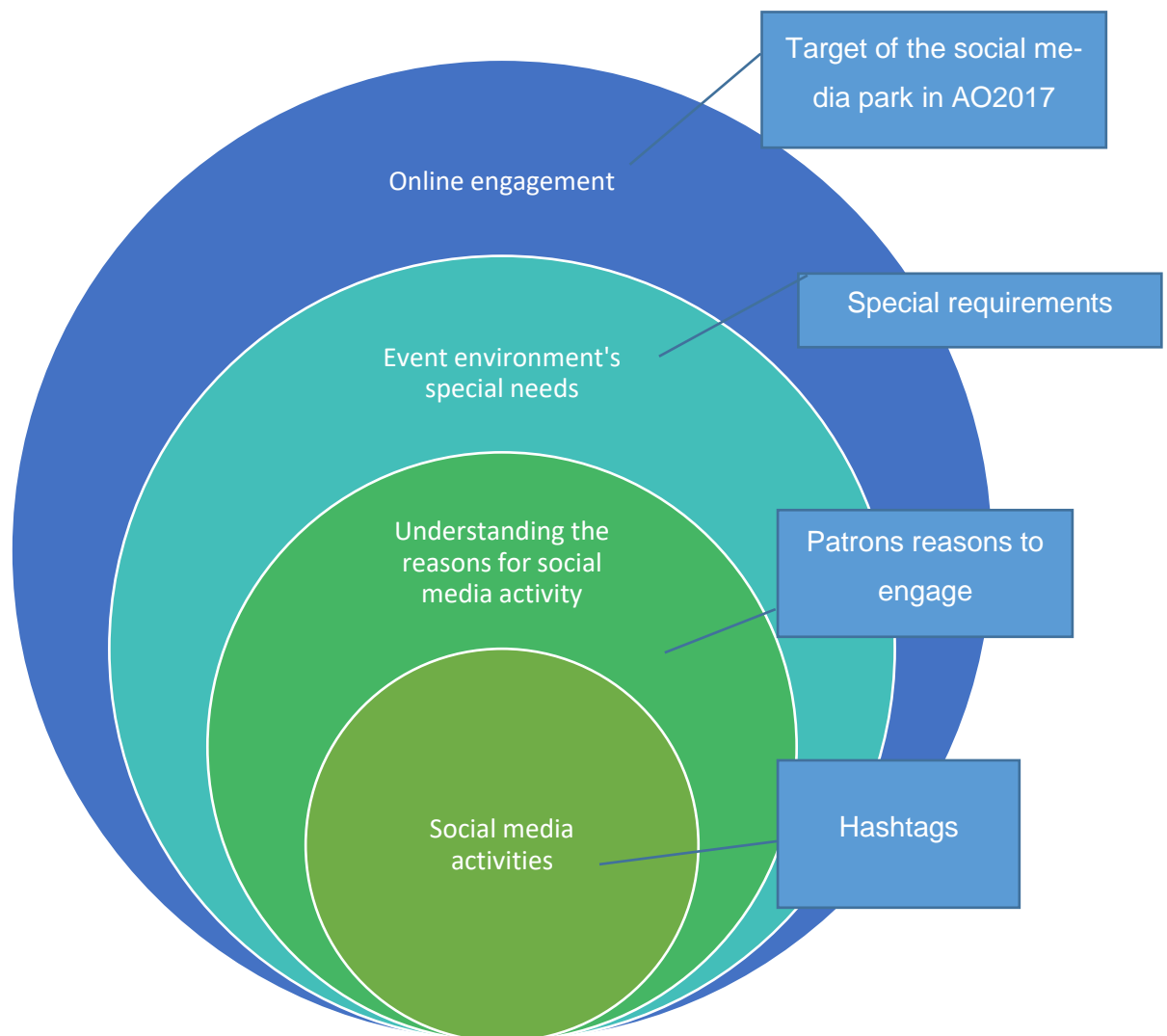


Figure 4. The conceptual framework of the study and how it links to the key concepts of the study

5 Research methodology

This section presents details of the qualitative study. The objectives and the methodology are explained and also, the limitations of the study are clarified. In addition, the credibility and validity of the study are examined and the starting point of the study is described. The key concepts of the study were explained in chapter 1.3.

5.1 Study objective

The objective of this study is to examine what kind of factors effect on the success of the engagement happening at the social media stations in Australian Open. The research question is: Which factors will affect to the possibility of a patron to post a photo with a particular hashtag on (a) social media platform(s).

There is current knowledge of events, social media and hashtags, however, there is no research about how to engage patrons to use particular hashtags in events. This study generates new knowledge of factors to take in notice, when planning social media engagement with hashtags in event environment, what are the challenges, and the best practices and moreover, the study provides insight for event exhibitors and/or event organizers on the strategic use of particular hashtags for increasing online engagement during events.

This report is a case study and it is inductive (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 61). The case study is explanatory, aiming to produce comprehensive descriptions of the encounters to find new perspectives and changing variables at the social media park's stations during the Australian Open Tennis Tournament (Saunders et al. 2009, 140).

Social media engagement can be created in different ways at events but this study focuses on engagement created through hashtags (Saunders et al. 2009, 61). Moreover, the study has been conducted from the organizer's point of view, and therefore, the personnel of the social media park was chosen to be interviewed to examine the process at the stations.

5.2 Research philosophy and approach

As social media is a phenomenon, which is created through the actions of individuals, the study is subjective (Saunders et al. 2009, 111). The motives derive from the internal needs and therefore, the study's epistemology is the interpretivist philosophy. Social media posts, photos, and videos are matters that people post online through platforms, but not until individuals interpret the posted materials according to their own personality and

motives, it becomes social media, and therefore, the study exams critical realism. (Saunders et al. 2009, 115). The several motives for social media engagement have been discussed in the literature review to be able to understand how it works at the AO's social media stations. In the end of the study, the relationship between existing literature and the study findings is being discussed to find new practices and therefore, the approach is inductive (Saunders et al. 2009, 125–126).

5.3 Research methods

The study is using multi-methods by having two qualitative data collection methods. A work diary and a questionnaire were chosen as data collection methods to produce qualitative data. The data collection methods were using different time horizons (Saunders et al. 2009, 153–155). To reaffirm the work diary observations, the topics that rose from the data were then presented to the social media park's volunteers. For a study that is descriptive, a questionnaire gives the perfect way to exam variability between phenomena (Saunders et al. 2009, 360–365).

The first data collection method was a work diary, which was held by the researcher who was working at the social media park during the Australian Open 2017. A work diary gathers primary observations, which are descriptive, from the actual work at the social media stations (Saunders et al. 2009, 293). Observation is a systematic method to record people's behavior and it gives the change to analysis behavior and to find new knowledge that has not been reported before (Saunders et al. 2009, 288, 290). The researcher was a practitioner (Saunders et al. 2009, 150).

The work diary was held from the 14th of January 2017 to the 29th of January 2017, excepting the two days when there was no work. The time frame makes the work diary longitudinal (Saunders et al. 2009, 155). The researcher did the morning shifts, four hours on average a day. A general run of the days, challenges, and special notes were written up every day after the work shift (Saunders et al. 2009, 297).

The work diary was using different methods of observation (Saunders et al. 2009, 296). The social media park was new for the whole team, so the work diary started with primary observations, paying attention, what was happening or said. After a few days of work, when the whole social media park team was getting used to the work, the team members began to make comments about the functionality of the park, patrons or other things mattering to the work. In this point, the work diary changed to making more secondary observations. Finally, the diary also included experiential data. The remarks of the work diary were held as the basis of the volunteer questionnaire which was conducted after the

event. As the researcher worked with three or five other people at the same time, the comments, observations, and opinions recorded in the work diary are separate comments from the team members throughout the whole event. By creating the questionnaire questions based on the work diary findings, the questionnaire would either prove or negate the findings of the work diary. When there is a pattern between the work diary findings and questionnaire results, it can be determined, if there is found an actual challenge or a best practice.

The second data collecting method was a questionnaire, which is a good way of asking the same questions from a large portion of people under a tight time regime. Therefore, a questionnaire is commonly used data collection method. (Saunders et al. 2009, 360–365.) For this reason, a questionnaire was chosen as a data collection method as the social media park's volunteers lived all around Australia and many of them left straight after the event. The volunteers would have been impossible to reach for interviews because of the diverse locations (Saunders et al. 2009, 365). This part of the study was cross-sectional (Saunders et al. 2009, 155).

The self-administered questionnaire was sent to the 21 volunteers working at the social media park during the event (Saunders et al. 2009, 362). The questionnaire (Appendix 2) was sent to each volunteers' personal email, which the Australian Open supplied, as a link and they were given two weeks' time to answer.

The volunteers answered anonymously to the questionnaire, but given the notice that the results would be handed to the Australian Open's social media team even though the questionnaire was done by a HAAGA-HELIA master student. The researcher did not fill in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire questions were either multi-choice questions, dichotomous questions, open-ended questions or ranking order questions (QuestionPro 2017). The questions were structured so that the answers would be based on the respondents' own thoughts, opinions, and conclusions to avoid any uninformed responses (Saunders et al. 2009, 363). Besides the volunteers' opinions, also questions about the volunteers' behavior at the stations were placed to find out details of the interaction at the social media stations (Saunders et al. 2009, 368). The data was analyzed manually as the sample was a reasonable size to do so.

5.4 The credibility and validity of the study

Several actions were taken to increase the credibility and validity of the study. Another researcher could make the same observations, but there is always a small chance that some of the findings would be different, however, some findings at the social media park were obvious and these major dilemmas would have risen with another researcher as well. The social media park's volunteers were aware of the researcher special position as a participant observer, and it would make the study more reliable. Moreover, all the work diary notes were done straight after the work shift to ensure that no valuable data would be forgotten. (Saunders et al. 2009, 156 - 157.)

The work diary was a base for the questionnaire, to make sure that the findings from the work diary would be either fortified or denied throughout the questionnaire. The questionnaire was tested, the questions were reformed several times to ensure that the questions would be simple, understandable and creating answers with value (Saunders et al. 2009, 362).

As stated before, the volunteers were informed clearly, that answering to the questionnaire was done anonymously, but the results would be handed to the Australian Open social media team. Like this, the volunteers were encouraged to answer truthfully and the risk of volunteers answering pleasing the AO was minimized. (Saunders et al. 2009, 363, 365.)

As the questionnaire is based on the work diary findings, that includes notes from conversations with the volunteers and observations throughout the event, the overall findings should have a relationship. Moreover, the questionnaire was sent two days after the event, so that any possible emotional reactions would have decreased but the answers would be more rational. These prosecutions will increase the validity. (Saunders et al. 2009, 157.) Moreover, as AO is a major event, the case study will provide good external validity (Saunders et al. 2009, 158).

5.5 The starting point of the study at the AO2017

The volunteers were handpicked through an online application in late 2016. The applicants were called for a group interview in Melbourne to give a short briefing. Additional information was supplied through the extranet. A short test was conducted after reading the online materials of what the event was about. The social media park team got together a few days before the event, to inspect the work areas. The team members worked about four to eight hours a day, depending on the personal agreements with the organization.



Picture 2. The social media park at the Garden Square on the opening day. The #AusOpen letters on the left side of the photo

The social media park was divided into two locations. One area was at the entrance at Birrarung Marr, it was called the AO Festival Area. It included four stations: The Beach Totem, The Social Suite, The Up-side-down-booth and the Kia Check-In. The second area was inside the event area, next to the main tennis arena and the main entrance and it was called the Garden Square (Picture 2). The Garden Square had four stations. The Kia Check-In, AusOpen letters, and The Victory Path which included the Signature Booth and the Trophy photo point. Some of the stations had instruction on the walls, how to use the station, some did not. The detailed descriptions of the stations are in Appendix 1, but summed up here, in Table 2.

Table 2. The social media stations of AO2017

Station name	Hashtags promoted	Social media platforms	Competition	Instructions on the wall
The Beach Totem	#AOSelfie #Kiatennis	Any	No	Yes
The Social Suite	#AOSocialSuite	Twitter and Instagram	Yes	Yes
The Up-side-Down Booth	None	Any	No	No
Kia Check Ins	#AOSelfie #Kiatennis	Twitter and Instagram	Yes, also instant prices	Yes

The AusOpen letters	None	Any	No	No
The Signature Booth	#AOSocialPark #AOSelfie #AusOpen	Any	No	Yes
Photos with trophies	None	Any	No	No

Each station had one volunteer working and the places were rotated during the day between the stations (not between the locations). The volunteers were allocated to the stations according to first-in-first-served-principle.

The work itself was taking photos of the patrons at the stations. The photos were taken with the patrons' cameras, phones or tablets. The Kia Stations in both locations and the Signature Booth at the Garden Square had an iPad, which would take the photo/video on behalf of the volunteers, and the photo was then sent to the patron's phone.

Besides taking the photos, the volunteers were supposed to encourage patrons to come and be photographed. **However, the most important thing was to make sure that the patrons would share that photo online, on one of the chosen social media platforms, with the particular hashtags** (Table 2). The volunteers were supposed to advertise different hashtags depending on the stations where they were working. Moreover, the emphasis was on the hashtags #AOSelfie and #Kiatennis, which were both integrated to a draw of a new Kia car. Kia Motors was the biggest sponsor of the event (AusOpen 2017 a).

6 Results of the study

Section six introduces the key findings from the data collection. The work diary was examined manually, finding occasions that kept re-occurring or standing out for some reason. The examination of the work diary generated five different topics. The questionnaire questions origin straight from the work diary findings and the theory. Therefore, in chapter 6.2, the purpose of the questionnaire questions is explained shortly, followed by the results of the questionnaire in chapter 6.3.

6.1 The work diary findings

The first key finding was the challenges in communication with the patrons. According to the work diary, the communication at the stations was mainly describing the activity of the station, luring in patrons to the stations or throwing in patrons to the Kia Stations.

The second finding was the challenges with technology and the design of the stations. In the work diary, it was stated, that the stations were not ready on the opening morning and there were some design faults as well. Moreover, it was stated that the researcher was not using Twitter in her personal time, which meant that she could not help patrons regarding on problems with Twitter.

The next findings regarded how to engage patrons to social media, and how to engage patrons to hashtags? Some patrons were not familiar with Twitter and/or Instagram, the platforms which a patron needed to participate in the AO competitions. According to the work diary, the patrons were so excited about the event that they would not really pay attention to what was said to them about the competition and hashtags rules. A few times during the AO, there were points written to the diary, that the hashtags should be printed more clearly on the stations walls. However, according to the work diary, sometimes it was not necessary to actually communicate the hashtags.

There is no requirements to remind the people to share the video as the text that they will receive for their phone will remind them for us (Work diary 17.1.2017).

Lastly, the work diary suggested that the work was not demanding enough for the volunteers:

The AO Festival is more quiet and I can see that the volunteers are getting a bit bored. Some of them are not happy with how demanding the job is. It means that the quality of work is worse and they do not seem to engage people so much for the activities. (Work diary 19.1.2017.)

In discussion with others, also the monotone side of the job is getting the best of the volunteers. Few wondered why they did not mention the real content of the job in the advertisement but felt misled by the "have to have knowledge of social media when

it all meant that you need to know how to take photos. We also discussed whether an incentive or salary would engage us more. (Work diary 22.1.2017.)

6.2 The relationship between the work diary findings and questionnaire questions

There were notes in the work diary that the volunteers were inexperienced in communication with the patrons and with promotion work. Therefore, the questionnaire started with questions of their previous work experience. It was found out if the volunteers had any experience of similar jobs before the AO2017. In addition, it was asked whether the introduction to the work could have been better to facilitate the volunteers' work and if the volunteers were familiar with AO's social media platforms as the researcher ran into the problems with Twitter and Boomerang.

The volunteers were asked about the communication of the hashtags to find out if the communication was succeeding. Some volunteers were not able to communicate the idea and because the volunteers' activity in communicating the hashtags and the competition idea would have an enormous effect on the success of the social media engagement. Hence, it was tried to find out, how active the volunteers were communicating or would there be better ways to be active.

According to the work diary, the whole encountering with the patrons was challenging. Therefore, it was asked, if the volunteers noticed a pattern between the patrons. Also, the appeal of the stations was a major factor in luring in the patrons, thus, the volunteers' opinions on the station appeal were asked.

Lastly, it was found out, if the volunteers were posting photos from the event with the hashtags (it was also encouraged by the AO), and were they following the hashtags as it would have given them a straight feedback of their work during the event. Moreover, because the motivation of the staff was lowering throughout the event, it was also asked, whether an incentive would have made a difference.

6.3 Results of the questionnaire

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) was sent to the 21 volunteers' personal email addresses. The response rate of the study was 90 %. Altogether there were 12 female respondents and 7 male respondents. Throughout the results of the questionnaire there was no significant distribution between the responses of men and women.

There were 12 female respondents of which six had done a similar kind of job before, and 7 male respondents, of which four had previous experience of promotion work. This

means that roughly half of the volunteers had some previous experience. About half of the respondents felt confident after the work introduction. However, five out of ten, who had done a similar kind of job before, felt they could have done more training. Key challenges were the lack of customer service and technological skills according to the questionnaire results. The volunteers were mostly familiar with Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The Asian social media platforms Weibo and WeChat were uncommon to the volunteers. 15 volunteers were posting photos from AO2017 and using also the hashtags. 14 volunteers mentioned, that they were also following, what other people were posting with the AO hashtags on social media.

One of the key tasks of the volunteers was to communicate the right hashtags for the patrons. A key finding was that the volunteers were unsure about the hashtags as there seemed to be too many of them. The volunteers were asked to list the hashtags which were introduced at the social media park, and the most common answers were: #kiatennis (14 answers), #AOSelfie (12), #AusOpen (8) and #AOSocialSuite (8). Eight out of 19 were actively reminding the patrons about the hashtags. Also, when asked, what could have been done better to improve the AO2017 visibility in social media, the volunteers strongly suggested that the hashtags should be written more clearly to the walls of the stations, clearer instructions and call for actions.

A great deal of patrons did not possess some of the social media platforms on which the photos were supposed to be posted. According to the volunteers, Twitter, Instagram, and Boomerang were unfamiliar to patrons, and many of the patrons were unfamiliar with the concept of a hashtag and the older patrons would not know what is a selfie. Seven volunteers had problems to communicate the hashtag instructions and the ideas of the stations.

It was also find out what kind of patrons it was the easiest to approach to. The respondents highlighted that young people, from teenagers to late 30's, were easy to engage with, no separation with the gender. The patrons, who were older than 50, were harder to engage with and explaining the idea of the stations was described problematic as many of the patrons above 50 did not have any experience on hashtags.

The volunteers had come up with several different ways to approach the patrons. The most common pick-up lines were about "wanting to win a car or an instant price". The volunteers also mentioned that their own attitude was the key for a success and it was highlighted that by being friendly and smiley, they could easily approach the patrons.

The volunteers believed, that the most common reason to post a photo on social media was the chance to win something, or let other people know that they were having fun in

AO2017. The volunteers did not think that they had a major effect on if the photo was posted or not.

The AusOpen letters were the most popular station according to the volunteers and hence, the volunteers believed that the patrons were mostly sharing photos taken at the AusOpen letters. The reason for the popularity of the AusOpen letters was that the letters were “cool”, and the idea was simple but by taking a photo, one would show his or her presence at the event. Kia Station was the second most appealing station, most likely for the competition and the instant prizes combined with the idea of the station. The volunteers felt that The Totem Tennis and The Fake Trophies were not appealing to the patrons, and the stations were described as “boring” and “lame”.

Lastly, it was asked about the motivation of the volunteers that rose strongly through the work diary findings (Figure 5). The result was that seven out of 19 felt that they would have tried to engage more, but also seven volunteers stated that the experience to work at the AO2017 was enough and an incentive would not have increased their enthusiasm. Five stated that it was indifferent.

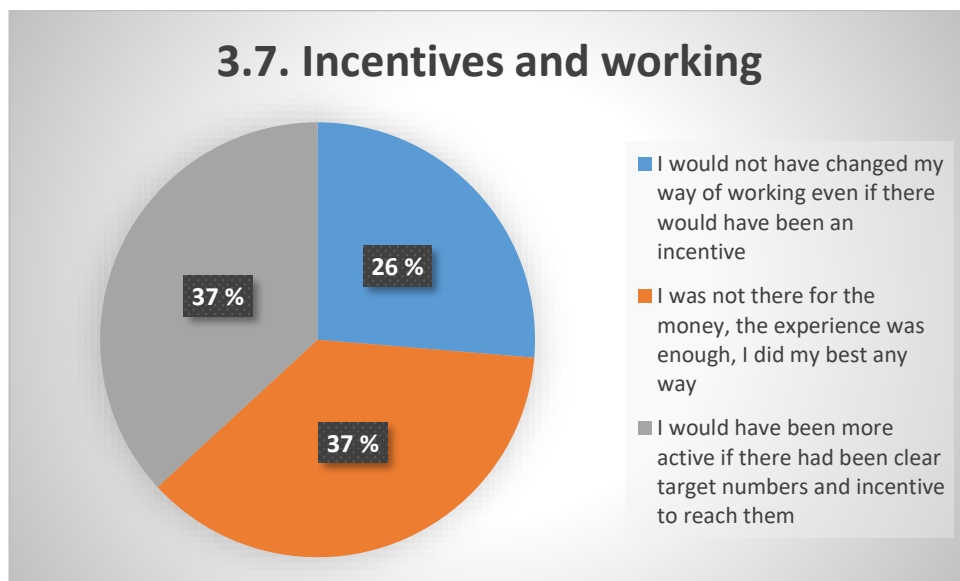


Figure 5. The AO volunteers motive to work at the social media stations

7 How to engage patrons to social media with hashtags in events

In this section, practical advices are given, how to engage patrons to social media with hashtags according to the study results. It is explained, how to communicate the idea of the social media station and what to take in notice to attract patrons to visit the station, and how to intrigue the motives of patrons to post photos online. In addition, the discussion includes the evaluation of hashtags, and the assessment of the competencies of the volunteers working at the stations.

7.1 The concept of the social media stations

The study demonstrated that the easier the concept is, the better the results are. At the AO2017, the volunteers ranked the #AusOpen station high in the popularity of the stations, because they felt that the concept worked. The Signature Booth was ranked low, because the volunteers felt the idea of the Signature Booth was hard to explain. The Kia Check-in Stations did not have an actual Check-In to do, but to take a photo, which meant, that the concept was not fully working. As one of the volunteers expressed it:

"Perhaps the Kia Rio site could've been re-worded differently. To say, 'check-in to win', you didn't actually do any 'check-ins' at all. A check-in would imply that you tagged where you were within your social media post. Perhaps it could've been, 'snap a selfie to win' and then it would've made more sense.

The photos taken at the stations should be appealing to the three dimensions of Hollabeek et al. (2014, 9), however, the study argued that the photo content was merely the third motive for posting photos online. It seems that a social media competition and instant prizes were a better way to attract patrons. According to the questionnaire results, communicating the idea of the social media competition was fairly easy. The volunteers believed that the competitions were the most important reason to post photos online. The volunteers thought that if there would be a competition, the photo would be posted, even though the content of the photo would not be that appealing.

In addition, it should be also considered, what kind of patrons the event will have. Many of the AO volunteers mentioned that the older patrons were hard to engage with, but the social media stations should attract families as it seems that kids and the parents, who would be most likely about in their 40's, are the easiest approach to.

7.2 Creating a working #hashtag

The information flow of the hashtag is important; what is the actual idea of the hashtag, what are you trying to achieve with it (Wang et al. 2016)? In the study, two hashtags were proven to be logical; #AOSelfie, and #AusOpen. #AusOpen demonstrated that the post

would have something to do with the Australian Open Tennis Tournament, and #AOSelfie confirmed that the patron is at the event. Moreover, the hashtags included the abbreviation AO, which would not be understood by a person, who is not familiar with The Australian Open Tennis Tournament, however, it is understandable to use it, when one thinks the full name of the event. However, a hashtag #AOTennis would possibly give a better indication of what the hashtag is about. This would increase the possibility to get new members into the community because the word tennis in the hashtag would make sure that it will find the right audience (Bruns & Burgess 2011, 1–8; Posh et al. 2013; Zappavigna 2014, 5).

The number and the length of hashtags should be also assessed. It could be argued that less is more. With two hashtags per post, the interactions are the greatest (Miller 18.4.2014). The study at the AO2017 supports this aspect. The volunteers were unsure, how many hashtags there were, and what was the point of all of them. They requested fewer hashtags. Ten characters is the recommended maximum number of the characters in a hashtag. The study demonstrated that the hashtags #AOSocialSuite and #AOSocial-Park were too long to be used as hashtags.

In addition, it should be considered which social media platforms are used, how many of them, or is there a platform that his recommended to use. The fact that the patrons, visiting the AO2017, were not that familiar with the social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram and Boomerang), nor familiar with the special features of social media (hashtags and selfies), it created a communication challenge for the volunteers because they needed to explain either the vocabulary or work their way around the patrons who were wondering the social media platforms and hashtags and selfies.

Lastly, the study proved that the usage of the hashtags in social media post could be increased by printing the hashtags on the walls, so that they would be also visible in the photos.

7.3 The volunteers' impact

If there are volunteers working at the social media station, they should be familiar with the chosen social media channels. If a volunteer at the station does not use social media, most likely he or she cannot address the patron coming to the station. Familiarity with the platforms and the usage of hashtags would help the volunteers to work at the stations. In addition, if there is technology used at the station (i.e. iPad), the volunteers should be familiar with it.

Even more importantly, it should be clear, what kind of the job the volunteer is coming to do at the station. The work diary had entries that the volunteers were losing their motivation over the job, however, the questionnaire's results indicated that most of the volunteers were at the AO for the experience and an incentive would have not changed the way they were working. It should be clear for the volunteers what kind of tasks the volunteer work includes to avoid the disappointments and the decrease of motivation.

However, the lack of motivation was not a real challenge for the volunteers to perform their duties at the stations, but the lack of promotional and customer service skills. The study demonstrated that there should be introduction to customer service and/or promotional work. Nevertheless, the volunteers highlighted that through a positive attitude it was easy to approach the patrons.

7.4 Key findings

The key findings will answer to the research question; which factors will affect to the possibility of a patron to post a photo with a particular hashtag on (a) social media platform(s). The framework of the study together with the results of the study are introduced in Figure 6.

The used hashtag(s) should meet certain criteria. Moreover, the overall idea of the hashtag and the idea of the social media station should work together. The used platforms and the technology should be familiar for the patrons and the volunteers. Moreover, the hashtags should be visible at the stations.

Patrons will post photos if their overall motives to post photos online are met. For AO this meant that the photos were showing presence, the patrons were sharing experiences and emotions from the event and the photo content was entertaining. Moreover, the chance to win something increased the willingness to post something online.

The age of the patrons will affect. Patrons under 40, no difference between the gender, and more likely with kids, are keener on engaging to the social media stations.

The work experience and the social media knowledge of the volunteers influence how the communication flows at the stations and how they can give instructions. It also influences on showing how to use the social media platforms, and explaining what are hashtags. In addition to experience with social media and technology, the volunteers should have experience with promotional work and customer service.

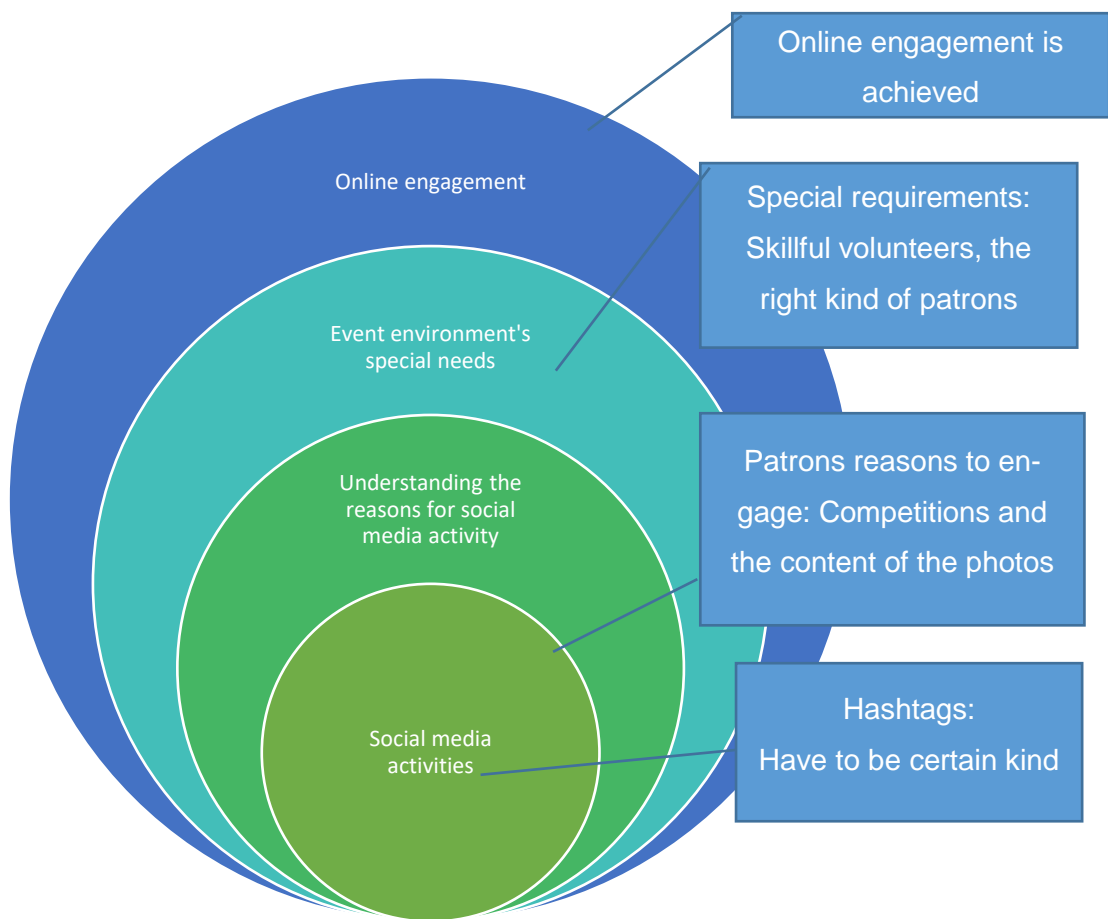


Figure 6. The conceptual framework of the study and the results of the study

7.5 Recommendations for AO

Based to the study, Australian Open should

- Decrease the number of hashtags and the be aware of the length of the hashtags
- Have simpler ideas for the social media stations and better, visible instructions
- Train the volunteers working at the stations to customer service work
- Make sure that the chosen social media platforms and concepts (selfies/hashtags) are familiar to the patrons and the volunteers

7.6 Future research ideas

This study made an overall look to the factors affecting to the online engagement with hashtags in an event environment. If the AO keeps striving for online engagement through hashtags, the AO could exam the popularity of the hashtags year by year and look for de-nominators that have affected to the popularity of the hashtags.

Moreover, the study was done from the point of the event organizer. In the future, it could be asked from the patrons, how the experience the social media stations and the hashtags.

It could also be studied whether the social media stations of the Australian Open are enough to create online engagement, how many photos there is actually been posted during the event from the stations. The final suggestion for a future research is the content of the posted photos; what kind of photos are the most popular and like this, guide the upcoming content planning of social media stations.

8 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to create understanding, which factors will affect to the possibility of a patron to post a photo with a particular hashtag on (a) social media platform(s) in an event environment.

The factors facilitating the possibility of a patron to post a photo with a particular hashtag on a social media platform are that the used hashtags meet certain criteria, that the motives of the patron are met, that the patron is a certain age and that there are no technological issues. Moreover, there should be professional communication at the social media station and the volunteers working at the social media stations should possess customer service skills and knowledge of social media.

Based to the study findings, a manual for hashtag marketing was created (Appendix 3). The manual will help any company, participating to an event, to increase their visibility at social media with hashtagging.

8.1 Reflections on learning

To be able to choose a topic, that was interesting for the author, certainly affected to the prompt completion of the thesis. The real-life case study was an important factor for the motivation. The time table was followed well and the motivation was high trough out the study. The author kept two longer pauses in the process to be able to review the study better, however, the second pause prolonged due personal reasons.

Even though the field of social media develops fast, the study of the overall motives to use social media and how social media can actually effect on people's decision-making process was eye opening. The author learned a great deal about social media through the extensive literature review and the simultaneously done studies (15 ETC) supported the orientation for the topic. The framework was hard to choose because there are so many interesting topics in social media. Moreover, finding printed materials was a worry as the materials of social media, that are valid at the moment, are more likely to be blog posts.

In the beginning, the author had a bit too wide angle to the topic but after a meeting with the advisor, the author was able to find a better focus on her topic. The study has produced detailed information for companies that would like to make better use of hashtag marketing in events.

There was something that could have done differently. The structure of the volunteer questionnaire could have been shorter. In addition, the author made a study about the AO hashtag visibility with free online tools which, in the end, did not supply relevant enough information and was therefore cut out of the study. The author spent six months studying in Australian University, where she was reading tens of studies that are not similar to the polytechnical thesis criteria. Therefore, the structure of the thesis was done wrongly in the beginning. By being better aware of the polytechnical thesis assessment criteria, it would have given more support for the process.

The contact person from the AO's Social Media Team did not continue in his position at the AO. Therefore, the contact to the AO was lost and it was not able to test the recommendations done for AO in the next year.

The author was also surprised how light the report of the study is supposed be, with no actual discussion, grounding nor justification. The author experienced that the discussion does not reflect to the profound weighing of things behind the study. To the great surprise of the author, the emphasis seemed to be on explaining why some research methods were chosen which again would not bring any new knowledge but paraphrased text from research books. The author experienced this very frustrating.

In the beginning of the process, the author was working at a company where she could have used the new knowledge broadly, however, she will have some advantage of the study at the current work as well. Moreover, she continues working with events and the social media will carry on affecting the marketing of events. The target was to learn something new, that would benefit the author on her professional level but also to produce new, useful knowledge for the area events. These targets were accomplished. Moreover, the author will discuss the use of her manual at her current employer's social media workshops for exhibitors exhibiting at Helsinki Exhibition Center.

Resources

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Appendix

Appendix 1. The social media stations at the AO2017

THE AO FESTIVAL AREA

Four stations (Picture 1 & 2). In three of them the volunteers were supposed to take photos with the patrons' phones. There were different hashtags used in the stations and two of the stations had a competition.



Picture 1. The AO Festival Area's social media stations, on the left, the Totem Tennis and on the right, The Social Suite Station.

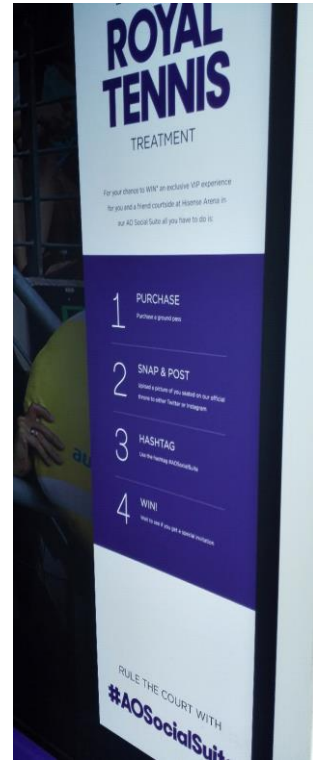


Picture 2. The AO Festival Area's social media stations, in the middle (light blue), the Up-Side-Down-Booth and on the right, The Kia Station.

Station nro 1: The Totem Tennis

The volunteers took photos of the patrons playing the totem tennis. The instructions on the wall suggested using Boomerang for making a funny video clip (Picture 3). The instructions encouraged to post the photo online.

- No competition
- #aoselfie, #kiatennis



Picture 3. Instructions printed on the walls, how to use the Totem Tennis (left) and Social Suite (right) Station.

Station nro 2. The Social Suite

Photos taken dressed up as a king or a queen (Picture 4). If a patron posted the picture on Instagram or Twitter with the hashtag #AOSocialSuite, he or she might win an exclusive VIP experience at the Hisense Arena.



Picture 4. A public Instagram post by jacqbg02 from Australian Open on January 22, 2017.

Station nro 3. The Up-Side-Down-Booth

The Station looked like a locker room of a tennis club, but everything was up-side-down (Picture 5). Photos taken with the giant racquet.

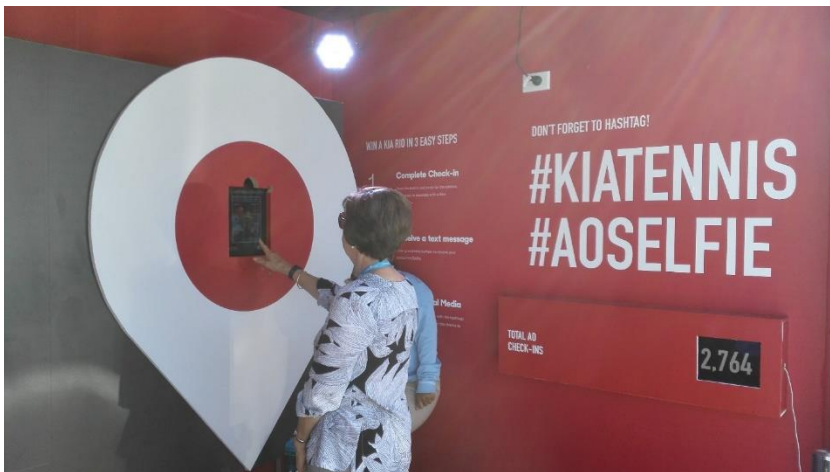
- No competition
- No hashtags



Picture 5. A photo taken at the Up-Side-Down-Booth

Station nro 4. The Kia Check-In Station

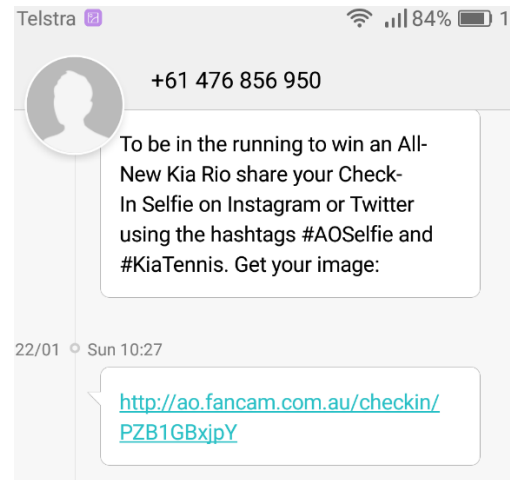
The advertisement asks to check-in, but in reality, an iPad took a photo of the patron and after that, the patron put a funny filter on top of the photo (Picture 6 and 7). After choosing the filter, the patron filled in his or her phone number to receive the photo as a text message with an online link (Picture 7). The application worked only with an Australian number.



Picture 6. A patron participating to the Kia Station activity. Notice the instructions and hashtags on the wall.

The station had a competition, a chance to win a car. The patrons were encouraged to post the photo on Twitter or Instagram with the hashtags #aoselfie and #kiatennis to be part of the competition.

Moreover, the station had instant prizes. 28 small prizes like pens, mugs, towels, magnets and teddy bears were drawn daily, straight after filling in the phone number.

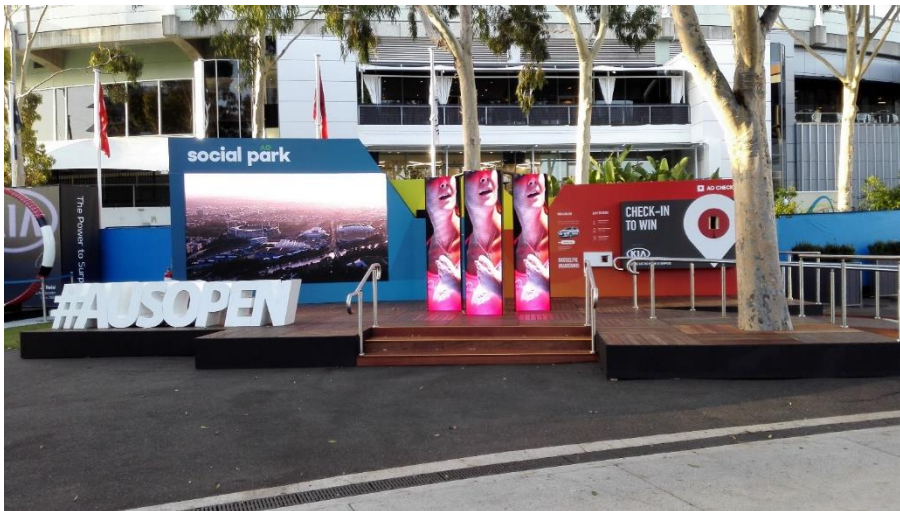


Picture 7. An example of a photo, taken at the Kia Station, with filters used on it. On the right hand side, an example of the text that the iPad applications would sent to the patrons.

THE GARDEN SQUARE STATIONS

At the Garden Square the four stations were divided to two locations, but only about 10 meters apart. The first area had the #AusOpen letters and the Kia Check-In Station (Picture 8). In the back of the #AusOpen letters was the giant screen, where AO would show social media posts with the official hashtags.

The Kia Station was exactly the same kind of than at the AO Festival Area, but with slightly different wall prints (Picture 8).



Picture 8. The Garden Square Station.

Station nro 5. The #AusOpen letters

At the #AusOpen letters station photos were taken of patrons posing with the letters (Picture 9). No instructions, but the installation hints by itself to use the hashtag #AusOpen.

- No competition
- No “clear” instructions but the letters themselves



Picture 9. The AusOpen letters were a huge success during the event.

The two other stations were in a cargo trunk, about 10 m left from the first two stations (Picture 10). The two stations in the cargo trunk formed together The Victory Path.



Picture 10. Manager Chris introducing the Victory Path to the volunteers.

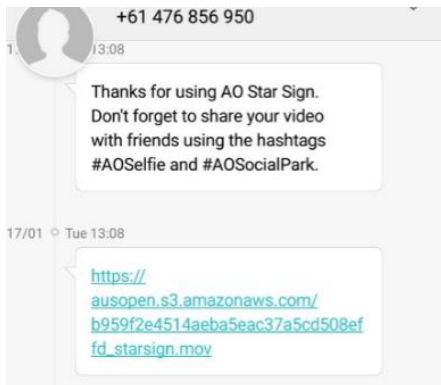
Station nro 6. The Signature Booth

The Signature Booth recorded the patron writing on a screen his or her name (Picture 11). It was copying the idea of the winners of the tennis matches signing up the camera lens after the game. The station used an iPad and an application for the activity. After doing the short video clip, the patron would fill in their phone number to receive the video clip. The instructions on the wall encouraged the patrons to post the video clip with the hashtag #AusOpen, but there was no indication of the Social media Platform. However, when the patron would receive the text message, it included two other hashtags than mentioned on the wall (Picture 12). There was no competition combined to the station.

- No competition
- #AusOpen, #AOSocialPark, #AOSelfie



Picture 11. The Signature Booth's iPad solution

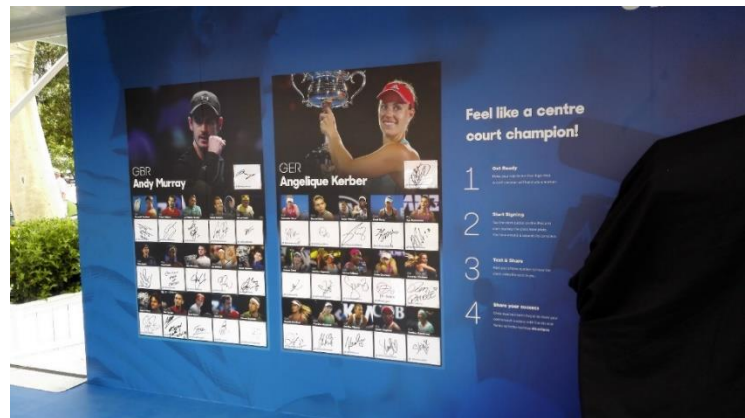


Picture 12. The text message which the patrons received after participating to the Signature Booth's activity.

Station nro 7. The Fake Trophies

At this station, photos of the patrons holding the fake trophies was taken. The patrons could pose in two places, with a background of a tennis court or with the signatures of the best players in the world (Picture 13).

- No hashtags
- No competition



Picture 13. On the left: an example photo from the Fake Trophies station. On the right: the signatures of the winners and the instructions of the Signature Booth.

Appendix 2. The social media park's volunteer questionnaire

A0 2017 VOLUNTEER SURVEY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA SHACK

ENGAGING PATRONS TO SOCIAL MEDIA WITH PARTICULAR HASHTAGS IN EVENTS

The purpose of this Survey is the find out, how you were engaging the patrons to social media, what kind of challenges there were to engage them and did you come up with best practices. The survey is done anonymously and it is used to a study conducted at a Finnish University. The results will be shared with Tennis Australia and the Social Media Shack managers.

* Required

1. 1.0 Background details *

Mark only one oval.

- Female
 Male

2. 1.1. Have you done similar work (promotion) previously? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

3. 1.2. Please choose which social media platforms / applications you use AND which ones you know but do not actively use

Mark only one oval per row.

	I use this one	I know this one, but I do not use it
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instagram	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snapchat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youtube	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Periscope	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boomerang	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weibo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wechat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. 1.3. Was the introduction to the functions of the stations and initial training provided sufficient in helping you to work and communicate clearly with the patrons? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, the training was clear and comprehensive
 I could perform my duties but it would have been useful to have more training
 No, the training was insufficient for me to perform

5. 1.4. If you believed it would have been useful to have more training, what was missing?

The Social Media Stations and the Hashtags

This section is about working at the Social Media stations and engaging patrons to social media with hashtags.

6. 2.0 How many hashtags in total were you instructed to use or reference in all work stations? *

Mark only one oval.

- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five

7. 2.1. Please list the hashtags. *

8. 2.2 How often did you mention “Share the photo on social media with the hashtags xxx” or equivalent during one shift if you were working somewhere other than the Kia Stations? *

Mark only one oval.

- As often as possible, to every patron or every third at least
- To about every fifth
- Few times a day
- I often forgot to mention this

9. 2.3. How often did you mention “Share it on social media with the hashtags #aoselfie and #kiatennis” during one shift at the Kia Station? *

Mark only one oval.

- As often as possible, to every patron or every third at least
- To about every fifth
- Few times a day
- I often forgot to mention this

10. 2.4. How often did you remember to mention the social media competitions? The competitions were the Kia competition and the Social Suite competition. *

Mark only one oval.

- As often as possible, to every patron or every third at least
- To about every fifth
- Few times a day
- I often forgot to mention this

The patrons and engaging with them

The point of this section is to find out what types of patrons are interested in social media activities. We are also trying to find out, what factors effect to the quality of the engagement.

11. 3.0 In your opinion, what kind of patrons it were the easiest to engage with? Think about i.e. gender, age, nationality, type of groups and personality. *

12. 3.1. In your opinion, what kind of patrons it were the hardest to engage to? Think about i.e. gender, age, nationality, type of groups and personality. *

13. 3.2. In your experience, what kind of approach was the best with the patrons? Did you, for example, create an opening line or use something else to lure people to the stations? Give examples of your ideas. *

14. 3.3. What do you think were the two most common reasons why patrons posted a photo on social media?

Mark only one oval per row.

	The most important reason	The second reason
The volunteer encouraged to do it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The patron could win something	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The photo was cool	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The patron wanted people to know he or she was having fun at	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

AO2017

15. **3.4. In your opinion, which were the most and least appealing stations for photo opportunities? The most and least appealing being the station attracting patrons to take pictures, not considering if photos were shared online.**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Most Appealing	Least Appealing
The Kia Stations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The totem tennis at AO Festival area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Social Suite at AO Festival area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The up-side-down booth at AO Festival area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Signature Video at Garden Square	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Photos taken with the fake trophies at Garden Square	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The #AUSOPEN letters at Garden Square	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. **3.5. In your opinion, from which stations were the most and least shared photos in social media?**

Mark only one oval per row.

	The most shared photos in social media	The least shared photos in social media
The Kia Stations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The totem tennis at AO Festival area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Social Suite at AO Festival area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The up-side-down booth at AO Festival area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Signature Video at Garden Square	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Photos taken with the fake trophies at Garden Square	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The #AUSOPEN letters at Garden Square	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. **3.6. Why do you think there were so many/few shared pictures on social media in the stations that you answered in 3.5. ? ***

18. **3.7. If there had been an incentive to achieve a set target when working (for example, if there would have been 2000 posts with a certain hashtag by the end of the first week, everyone would have received a ticket to a chosen Rod Laver Arena game), would you have more actively reminded patrons of the hashtags and posting photos online? ***

Mark only one oval.

- I would have been more active if there had been clear target and incentive to reach them
- I was not there for the money, the experience was enough, I did my best any way
- I would not have changed my way of working even if there would have been an incentive

19. 3.8. From your expertise after working on the stations for two weeks, is there something that could have been done differently in order to improve visibility in social media?

Challenges that affected your work

This section is all about developing the concept.

20. 4.0 Did you experience any challenges with... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes	No
communicating the hashtags instructions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
communicating competition rules	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
communicating the idea of the station?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
the social media applications? They were i.e. unfamiliar to the patrons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. 4.1. What kind of challenges did you have?

Your engagement to AO2017 Social Media

22. 5.0 Did you post any photos from AO2017? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, at least every second day
- A few times during the two weeks
- I did not

23. 5.1. If you posted photos, did you use any of the AO2017 hashtags?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, several ones
- Yes, usually one or two hashtags per photo
- No I did not use hashtags

24. 5.2. Did you follow what other people were posting with the AO hashtags in social media?

*

Mark only one oval.

Yes I did

No I did not

The final word

Please notice, that this question is about engaging patrons to Social Media.

25. 6.0 Is there anything else, that you would like to comment about engaging people to social media at AO2017?

#HASHTAG MARKETING IN EVENTS

BY HEIDI SONKKILA

This manual will give you *IDEAS*, how to successfully execute hashtag marketing in an events environment. Hashtags are convenient way to engage with patrons in events. By using suitable hashtags, a company can engage with their patrons before, during and after an event. This manual will give *IDEAS*, how to engage with patrons during the event and what to consider when planning the social media activity at the event.

WHY SHOULD YOU USE HASHTAGS?

Hashtags help to categorize information, and to create layovers over audiences. This means, that when patrons are looking for information through hashtags, they will find all the posts done with that particular hashtag in the social media platform that the patron is using.

For example, if a company makes a post, where they use their own hashtag and the event hashtag, they will increase the possibility to be found from the internet. Then the patron might get intrigued by your hashtag and check what kind of information has been shared. In the best case, it will lead to engagement, like reposting, commenting or liking. That online engagement can then lead to brand engagement. Brand engagement creates sales, loyalty and advocacy.

LET'S GET STARTED!

WHO IS YOUR PATRON?

The first thing to consider is **WHAT KIND OF PATRONS** you are trying to engage with. This will effect on the choice of activity and the social media platforms where the hashtag is going to be used. Hashtags can be used on all the social media platforms; however, it is recommendable to choose only a few platforms as the main communication channels to keep it simple and in control.

The social media platform choice depends on the patrons you are trying to engage with. For example, business oriented people may prefer Twitter as the main choice of a platform, however, in an event with lots of teenagers, SnapChat might be a better way to engage with the audience.

GET THE PATRONS' ATTENTION

There must be **A REASON** for the patrons to post something online, and this is something that you must consider closely when planning the social media station at the event. Why would the patron want to post anything from your station?



Your station has to have one of the three major appeal points:

- # **SHOW A PRESENCE:** Get your logo visible! The patrons want to let their friends know where they are and the background should be recognizable.
- # Patrons want to show **EMOTIONS** to their social media contacts: We are having fun here!
- # Get the patrons **ACTIVE!** The station can be connected to a social media contest, ask the patrons to make a funny pose at the station or ask them to check-in to redeem a coffee coupon. You can even get a Twitter feed on a screen at your station, so the patrons will see their posts on spot!

CREATING THE HASHTAG

SIMPLE

Choose only few official hashtags that you want to use. Remember that the bigger the event, the more there is other companies making hashtag marketing. One good one should be enough.

SHORT

Keep it short. The hashtags should be short, maximum of 10 characters. Check if someone has had the same idea before, or if the hashtag actually has a bad association.

LOGIC

There should be an idea behind the hashtag, which will connect the hashtag to your company, or to on-going campaign and/or to the event participation. Think, if the hashtag can be something that only people, who know the trade will get it, or should it be something more general?

COMMUNICATE YOUR HASHTAG!

#BEVISIBLE

Let the patrons to know that there is a special hashtag used for the event. The hashtag should be used when appropriate in your own social media posts, in printed materials and at the event, *ESPECIALLY* on the spot. The patrons cannot connect with you, if you don't let them know there is a simple way to do it!

TRAIN YOUR STAFF

Make sure, that your *STAFF IS ON TOP OF SOCIAL MEDIA.*

Besides encouraging the event staff to make their own social media posts with your chosen hashtag, they should be able to create conversation on spot about the social media activity.

The staff should be bold enough to get the patrons to engage with the activity and then post it online. If the staff does not get the idea of your social media activity, they cannot engage the patrons in it either. Paying for a social media activity at an event, which no one is using, is the biggest waste of your money.