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Dancing with the Algorithm: Gen Z's Social Media Practices on TikTok and Instagram and Their Influence on Music Festival Experiences

Anđelina Marić Stanković [1], Jovana Vuletić [2,*], Milan Miletić [2], Marija Bratić [2] and Ninoslav Golubović [2]

[1] State University of Novi Pazar, Department of Economic Sciences, Vuka Karadžića 9, 36300 Novi Pazar, Serbia

[2] Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Department of Geography and Tourism, University of Niš, Višegradska 33, 18000 Niš, Serbia

* Correspondence: jovana.vuletic1@pmf.edu.rs

Abstract

This study examines how Generation Z's digital practices on TikTok and Instagram shape their music festival experiences, focusing on event perception, engagement, and the development of collective identity. The aim is to identify key factors connecting online and offline aspects of festival participation. The research adopts a quantitative approach based on an online survey of 248 respondents born between 1995 and 2010 from various regions of Serbia. Data were analysed in SPSS 26.0 using Spearman correlation, quantile regression, and the Mann–Whitney test. Findings show that frequent social media use has a positive but limited effect on how important these platforms are perceived for the festival experience. However, user-generated content created by attendees plays a more significant role in shaping engagement and attitudes than influencer content. Influencer credibility also influences how festivals are interpreted digitally. The interplay between online interaction and offline participation motivates content sharing and reinforces a sense of community. Overall, the study concludes that social media and digital narratives are central to Generation Z's festival experience. Authentic, attendee-created content strongly contributes to collective identity, helping bridge digital and physical dimensions – insights valuable for festival organisers, influencers, and cultural tourism.

Keywords: Instagram; TikTok; Generation Z; music festivals; experiences; content

1. Introduction

Generation Z, born and raised in a digital environment, forms its identities and social practices within a context largely shaped by the presence and influence of social media. This generation has now reached adulthood, entered the labor market, and become an active participant in contemporary cultural and social trends, including the music festival industry (Barhate & Dirani, 2022). According to Rosenberg et al. (2025), Yılmaz et al. (2024), and others, Generation Z comprises individuals born between 1995 and 2010. Today, they make up approximately 24% of the world's population, making them one of the most significant demographic cohorts for analyzing cultural, media, and economic phenomena. Members of this generation represent a key segment of the festival audience, and understanding their motivational patterns and digital media habits is crucial for the future development of the festival industry (Dunne et al., 2023).

Generation Z is characterized by strong digital literacy, heightened environmental awareness, and social sensitivity. As the first generation to grow up entirely with the internet, mobile devices, and social media, it has a distinct communication and cognitive profile (Dabija et al., 2019), with a shorter attention span that influences how content is consumed and the effectiveness of promotional

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formats (Konieczna & Trybus-Borowiecka, 2025). The daily lives of this generation are closely linked to platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, which serve as primary spaces for expression, social interaction, and identity formation. TikTok encourages spontaneous and highly engaging communication through algorithmically curated content (Schellewald, 2023; Stiller, 2023), while Instagram remains the leading network for visually crafted narratives, aesthetic representations, and personal branding (Abidin, 2016; Lough, 2023). These digital environments directly shape cultural experiences, including those related to music festivals, which for Generation Z are hybrid events experienced simultaneously in physical and digital spaces (Collie & Wilson-Barnao, 2020).

Social media influencers have become key figures in the contemporary digital ecosystem, shaping the attitudes, preferences, and behavior of their followers (Bastrygina & Lim, 2023; Joshi et al., 2025). By creating content that emphasizes authenticity, accessibility, and community participation, influencers position themselves as trusted sources of recommendations (Boerman, 2020; Reinikainen et al., 2020). This relationship also influences the behavior of festival audiences, including festival brand perception, visitation decisions, and engagement during events (Caraka et al., 2022; Stiller, 2023).

Despite growing interest in the digital habits of Generation Z, the existing literature still lacks a clear distinction between influencer content and user-generated content (UGC) in the context of music festivals. Most research considers these phenomena together, without insight into their specific effects, and there are almost no studies examining this relationship in the context of Serbia and Generation Z as the primary festival audience. This gap is the central theoretical and empirical motivation for this study.

Therefore, this paper explicitly separates and compares the impacts of influencer content and UGC in the context of music festivals, addressing a clear research gap in the existing literature – especially regarding Generation Z in Serbia, where this type of analysis has not previously been conducted.

The aim of this research is to examine how the digital practices of Generation Z on TikTok and Instagram shape their experiences of music festivals. Particular attention is given to how algorithmic mechanisms and influencer-created content contribute to the perception of festivals, as well as how UGC created by visitors influences the collective narrative and digital representation of the festival experience. The study investigates the differences between these two types of content, their specific effects, and their roles in forming a sense of community belonging.

To achieve this aim, the research sets the following tasks:

1. To examine the impact of TikTok and Instagram on the perceptions and festival practices of Generation Z.
2. To analyze the effect of algorithmic mechanisms on the visibility, interpretation, and formation of digital narratives about festivals.
3. To determine the influence of influencer content on decisions regarding attendance, participation, and post-festival communication.
4. To examine the role and impact of UGC on the sense of belonging and collective identity among festival participants.
5. To compare the effects of influencer content and UGC on the perception of music festivals among Generation Z.
6. To analyze content-sharing activities and their contribution to the digital representation of festivals.

To empirically examine these tasks, the research was conducted as a quantitative study using an online survey with a purposive sample of Generation Z members. Data were collected via TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook between September and November 2025, resulting in 248 valid responses from various regions of Serbia. The questionnaire included socio-geographic data, platform usage habits, festival attendance frequency and motives, as well as four theoretically grounded measurement subscales. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, with non-parametric tests applied due to non-normal distribution.

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This paper makes a theoretical contribution by distinguishing and comparing the effects of influencer content and UGC within the context of Generation Z's festival experience – an area that has not been adequately explored to date. From a practical perspective, the research findings can directly benefit music festival organizers by enabling more precise digital strategy development, audience targeting, and the creation of content that fosters Generation Z engagement and loyalty. Thus, the results of this study provide operational guidelines for improving communication, promotion, and the design of the festival experience in the digital environment.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Music Festivals and Their Digital and Social Dimensions

Today, music festivals go beyond being mere musical events, serving as multisensory and social spaces whose meaning is increasingly shaped by digital media. In the context of "Instagrammable" and "TikTokable" experiences, visual documentation, algorithmic distribution, and online interactions are integral to the festival experience (Gilstrap et al., 2021; Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Yin et al., 2023). Among Generation Z, digital practices on TikTok and Instagram influence festival perceptions, expectations, and memories, blurring the boundary between physical and digital experiences (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Zhao, 2023).

Festivals are intersections between online and offline worlds, attracting visitors from different generations and fostering community formation and a sense of belonging (Wang et al., 2024; Bratić et al., 2024). Much of the audience actively shares content during the event, expanding the festival's visibility in digital spaces (Gilstrap et al., 2021; Garcia de Soto Camacho et al., 2023).

In addition to their cultural function, music festivals contribute to local identity, quality of life, tourism, and the economic development of destinations (Kitagawa et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021; Qiu et al., 2021; Armbrecht, 2021; Zhu et al., 2025). Due to diverse content and intensive promotion on social media, festivals are becoming more popular and attracting increasingly international audiences (Qiu et al., 2021; Yoo et al., 2015; Portugal et al., 2022).

Generation Z, the most digitally active cohort, relies on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat as primary sources of information (Statista, 2023; Blaži, 2025). Young people not only consume content but also actively participate in its creation, influencing collective narratives about festivals (Supratman, 2018; Harahap et al., 2023; Cohen et al., 2014; Blaži, 2025).

2.2. The Influence of Digital Influencers on Generation Z's Behavior and Perceptions

Influencer marketing is growing rapidly, as influencers shape public opinion and influence audience behavior across various media (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018). Social networks such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X, and LinkedIn are key communication channels between influencers and followers (Ren et al., 2023), with their impact often stronger than that of traditional advertising (Balaban & Mustățea, 2019; Sesar et al., 2022; Zhang & Choi, 2022; Hawkins & Saleem, 2024).

In academic literature, influencers are defined as individuals who continuously communicate with their audience and encourage engagement, contributing to brand value creation and influencing consumer behavior (Ren et al., 2023; Belanche et al., 2021; Hernández-Méndez & Baute-Díaz, 2024; Zniva et al., 2023). Their influence arises from a combination of reach, credibility, and the perception of closeness they establish with followers (Goldsmith, 2015; Schouten et al., 2020; Gomes et al., 2022).

Influencer credibility, determined by trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, is crucial for the effectiveness of their recommendations (Sesar et al., 2022; Belanche et al., 2021; Schouten et al., 2020; Janssen et al., 2022; AlFarraj et al., 2021). However, disclosing sponsored content can undermine authenticity (Schorn et al., 2022). The importance of influencers is particularly evident among younger users, who view influencers as relevant, authentic, and relatable (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018; Balaban & Mustățea, 2019; Sanchez-Fernandez & Jimenez-Castillo, 2021).

The influence of influencers on young people can be twofold: they may encourage positive practices and prosocial messages, but may also unintentionally promote risky behaviors (Alves de

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Castro et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding the role of influencers in shaping the perceptions of Generation Z is crucial for research into digital culture and media-mediated experiences.

3. Materials and Methods

In line with the defined aim and research tasks, and based on a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, the research hypotheses presented in Table 1 were formulated. A quantitative research approach was used to test these hypotheses. Data for statistical analysis were collected using the survey method with a self-developed questionnaire. Following the approach of Chang and Hung (2021), the scale development process involved establishing a theoretical framework and operational definitions, generating items, expert review, data collection, and factor analysis to confirm the structure and reliability of the measurement instrument. Statistical data processing was conducted using SPSS 26.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Table 1. Overview of Literature Topics and Corresponding Hypotheses.

Topic / Literature	Relevant Hypotheses
Music festivals are perceived as "Instagrammable" or "TikTokable" experiences; visual documentation and digital interaction shape audience expectations and memories (Gilstrap et al., 2021; Couldry and Mejias, 2019)	H_1: The frequency of Instagram or TikTok use is positively correlated with the overall importance of these platforms for the festival experience.
The influence of digital influencers on festival perception and the importance of social networks (Supratman, 2018; Harahap et al., 2023)	H_2: Perception of influencer-generated content about music festivals is positively associated with the perceived importance of Instagram and TikTok in shaping the festival experience.
The impact of festival content posted by visitors versus influencers (Cohen et al., 2014; Blaži, 2025)	H_3: Content about music festivals posted by attendees on Instagram and TikTok has a stronger influence on attitudes and interest in music festivals than content posted by influencers.
The perceived importance of social networks for the festival experience affects the frequency of festival content sharing (Yin et al., 2023)	H_4: The perception that Instagram and TikTok are important for the festival experience correlates positively with the frequency and activity of posting content about music festivals.
Gender difference in the perception of influencer impact (Schouten et al., 2020; Gomes et al., 2022)	H_5: Women report a greater perceived influence of influencers on Instagram and TikTok compared to men.

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

For this research, purposive sampling was used, targeting individuals born between 1995 and 2010 from all regions of Serbia. The online questionnaire was created using the free software Google Forms and distributed via a link on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook over a three-month period (September to November 2025). Facebook is a convenient channel for survey distribution because it features thematic groups that bring together people with similar characteristics or interests, facilitating access to the target population. Instagram and TikTok do not have a developed system for grouping users; instead, each user must be reached directly. When distributing the questionnaire, it was emphasized that the invitation to participate was intended only for members of Generation Z. However, a control question was included, requiring participants to enter their date of birth due to varying interpretations of the birth year range for Generation Z (Jayatissa, 2023). Of the 255 participants, 248 were born between 1995 and 2010. By activating the Google Forms option that allows the survey to be completed only once per email address, control over duplicate responses was ensured.

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3.2. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire comprises three parts. The first part collects socio-demographic data about participants, such as gender, age or year of birth, place of residence, and current employment or educational status. The second part examines participants' habits regarding the use of Instagram and TikTok, music festival attendance, and motives. It also includes a subscale measuring participants' general attitude towards music festivals (Music Festival Perception). The third part contains four theoretically defined subscales. The first subscale concerns the perception of music festivals under the influence of influencers (Influencer Content Perception). The second subscale addresses the perception and influence of content on Instagram and TikTok created by festival attendees (Attendee Content Perception). The third subscale relates to participants' activities as content creators for Instagram and TikTok during music festival visits (Content Sharing Activity), and the fourth subscale concerns participants' perception of the importance of using Instagram and TikTok in shaping the festival experience (Platform Importance). All subscales in the questionnaire use a five-point Likert agreement scale (1 – 'strongly disagree', 5 – 'strongly agree'), which participants used to indicate their level of agreement with the statements. All items in the scales were defined positively.

3.3. Statistical Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

The validity of the measurement scale was assessed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and the reliability of the scale was estimated using Cronbach's α coefficient. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis.

Participants' responses on the five-point Likert agreement scale were scored from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree'). The mean score for each subscale was calculated for every participant, these values were used in further statistical analyses. Higher values indicate more positive attitudes towards the constructs measured by the subscales.

The normality of the data distribution was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which indicated a non-normal distribution. Consequently, non-parametric tests were applied in the data analysis (Appendix A). Spearman's correlation was used to test the first, second, and fourth hypotheses, and the Mann-Whitney U test was used to test the fifth hypothesis. Due to the lack of a normal data distribution, quantile regression with the quantile set at 0.50 was used to test the third hypothesis, meaning the median of the dependent variable was examined to obtain stable estimates not influenced by extreme values. Since SPSS does not display VIF coefficients and tolerance values for quantile regression, a multicollinearity analysis was conducted using a standard linear regression model to determine whether a high linear relationship existed among the independent variables that could destabilize the quantile regression coefficient estimates.

4. Results

The distribution of the sample by socio-demographic variables is presented in Table 2. The gender composition of the participants is relatively balanced, as is the distribution across the defined age categories. The younger Generation Z (Little Zs) grew up in a digital environment, while the older members of Generation Z (Big Zs) experienced the transition from the analogue to the digital age. There is no universal consensus in the literature regarding generational boundaries. In this research, the period from 1995 to 2010 was adopted for Generation Z, as authors such as Rosenberg et al. (2025) and Yilmaz et al. (2024) state that individuals born during this period are "digital natives" – a generation that grew up with and spends most of its time using the internet and mobile technologies. Three-quarters of the participants live in urban areas, while one quarter live in rural areas. Half of the participants are students, and the smallest group comprises those who have graduated from university and are currently unemployed.

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Table 2. Sample distribution by socio-demographic variables.

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	113	45.6
	Female	134	54.0
	Prefer not to answer	1	0.4
Age	Big Zs (1995-2001)	110	44.4
	Little Zs (2002-2010)	138	55.6
Place of residence	City	188	75.8
	Village	60	24.2
Employment or Educational Status	Pupil	32	12.9
	Student	124	50.0
	Employed	76	30.6
	Unemployed	16	6.5

The results indicate that Generation Z uses Instagram more frequently than TikTok. The largest proportion of participants (55.2%) report using Instagram often, while a further 32.2% use it very often. A small percentage use it sometimes (6.9%), rarely (3.2%), or never (4.4%). In comparison, TikTok is used often by 32.2% of participants and very often by 21%. Over 30% of participants use TikTok rarely or never. Instagram is the dominant platform in the participants' daily digital habits (Figure 1).

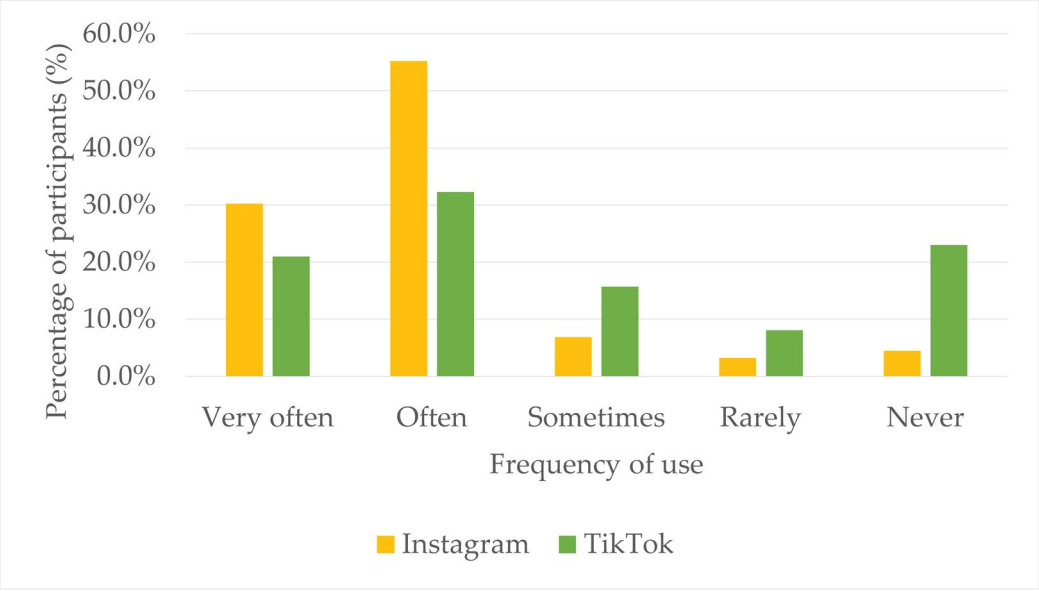

Figure 1. Distribution of responses to the question: How often do you use Instagram/TikTok?

Video clips (Reel/TikTok) are the most viewed content format on both Instagram and TikTok. Although photos were the main content format when Instagram was first launched, participants in this study now watch more video clips and Stories on the platform. TikTok is centered on sharing short video clips, which are by far the most viewed content format on that platform. Live streams are the least viewed content format on both social networks among participants. These results show a clear preference for short, visually dynamic formats over static posts (Figure 2).

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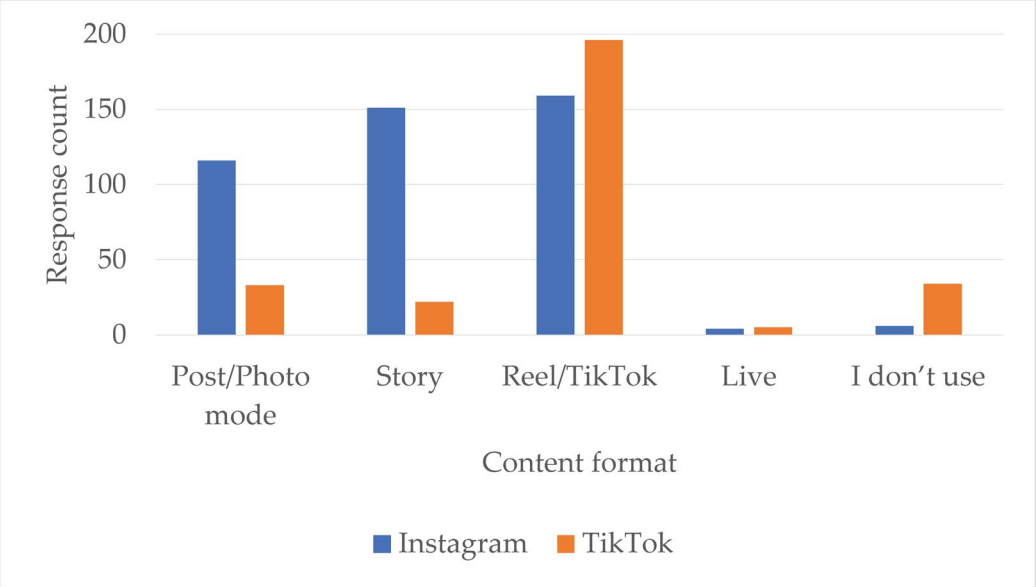

Figure 2. Frequency of responses to the question: Which content formats do you watch most on Instagram and TikTok?

The largest proportion of participants attended one or two music festivals in the previous three years, and the smallest number attended more than five. One-fifth of the participants did not attend any music festival in the previous three years (Figure 3).

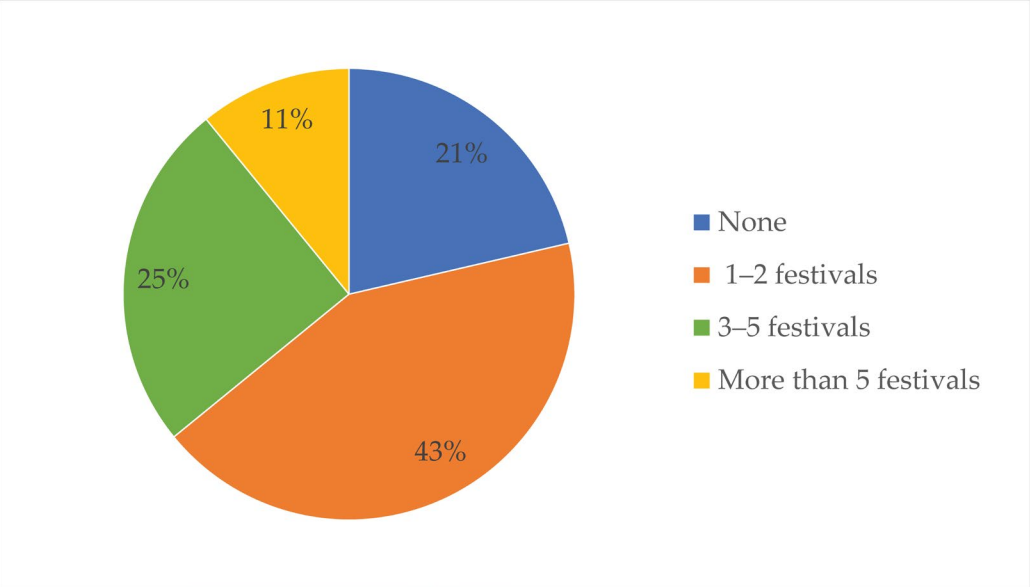

Figure 3. Distribution of responses to the question: How many music festivals have you attended in the past three years?

Among the motives for attending music festivals, music and performers (200 responses) and socializing with friends (175 responses) stand out the most. This demonstrates that the festival program and performers are key attractions, but also that music festivals are perceived as social and experiential events, not just musical ones. Responses related to social networks, such as aftermovie videos, influencer recommendations, content about music festivals on social media, or the opportunity to create and share new content, were not frequently chosen. Ten participants indicated that the fear of missing out (FOMO) on major music events is one of the most important motivating factors. FOMO (fear of missing out) is a psychological phenomenon describing an individual's fear

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of missing important experiences, events, or content that others are attending. This feeling arises and intensifies under the influence of social networks, due to the constant comparison of one's own life with the activities displayed by others (Montag & Markett, 2023) (Figure 4).

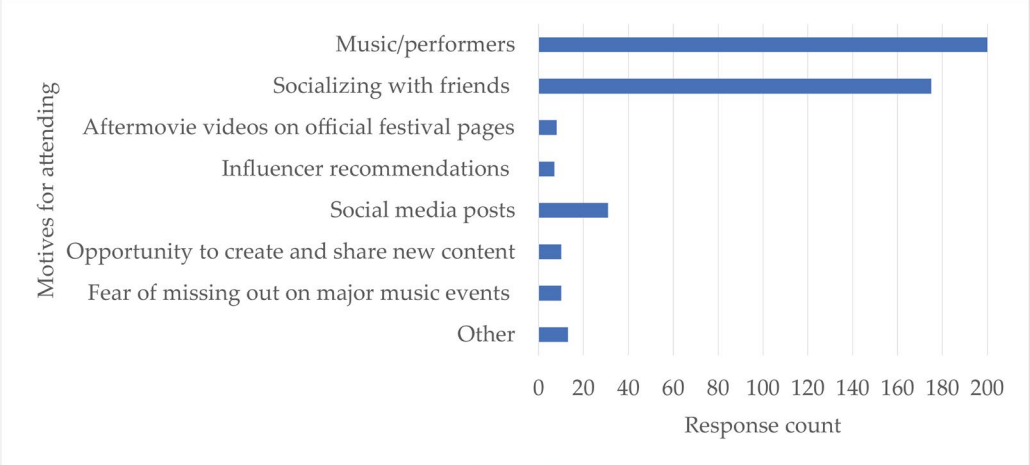

Figure 4. Frequency of responses to the question: What most motivates you to attend music festivals?

The construct validity of the questionnaire was assessed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The results indicated that the sample was adequate for factor analysis (KMO = 0.926), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4666.44$, $p = 0.000$), indicating sufficient correlation between the items to justify factor extraction (Appendix B). Based on the eigenvalue criterion (eigenvalue > 1), five factors were extracted, collectively explaining 67.79% of the total variance (Appendix C). Factor loadings for items within individual factors ranged from 0.504 to 0.833, indicating strong associations with the corresponding dimensions. The scale initially contained 28 items, theoretically distributed across five subscales (factors). Factor analysis also extracted five factors, but 25 items were retained. Three items were moved to different factors, where they demonstrated statistical belonging and conceptual consistency, while three items were removed from further analysis because they showed statistical affiliation to a factor with which they were not conceptually consistent (Table 3).

Table 3. Rotated component matrix.

Items	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
Music festivals are an important part of contemporary youth culture	.766				
I often consider which music festivals I could attend**					.505
The atmosphere at music festivals is an experience everyone should have	.794				
I am willing to spend a significant amount of money on festival tickets and travel	.611				
Attending music festivals is a great opportunity to spend time with friends and meet new people	.796				
I trust influencers' recommendations about music festivals		.826			
Influencers' posts on Instagram or TikTok increase my desire to attend music festivals		.829			
Thanks to influencers, music festivals seem attractive to me		.801			
Through influencers' posts, I receive useful and relevant information about music festivals		.782			
After seeing influencers' posts about a music festival, I actively research that event online		.570			
The content shared by festival attendees is authentic and realistic			.714		

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Through attendees' posts, I learn more about the real atmosphere and enjoyment at music festivals		.796		
When I see attendees posting content from music festivals, I also feel the desire to experience it myself*				.665
Watching content from music festivals posted by attendees motivates me to plan my own festival trip*				.711
Festival attendees' content inspires me because I can relate to their experiences*				.700
Attendees' recommendations about music festivals are very convincing to me		.504		
I actively use Instagram and/or TikTok to share content from music festivals			.671	
On Instagram and/or TikTok, I post more frequently than usual when I am at a festival			.741	
I create and share content from music festivals on Instagram and TikTok primarily to preserve memories			.714	
I put effort into editing and preparing festival content before posting it			.780	
I try to give my followers on Instagram and/or TikTok a sense of the festival atmosphere through my content			.833	
I post content from music festivals to show that I am part of the experience			.773	
Thanks to Instagram and/or TikTok, I can easily find information about music festivals**	.553			
Content on Instagram and/or TikTok increases my desire to attend music festivals				.564
On Instagram and/or TikTok, I can connect with other music festival enthusiasts**	.495			
Watching posts about music festivals on Instagram and/or TikTok sparks my curiosity to learn more about the event				.550
I enjoy the anticipation and following festival-related posts on Instagram and/or TikTok				.679
I feel I am missing out on something important if I do not keep up with festival happenings on Instagram and/or TikTok				.573

* items reassigned from factor 3 to factor 5; ** removed items.

The reliability of the scale and each subscale was assessed using Cronbach's α coefficient. Cronbach's alpha coefficient values above 0.79 (the lowest value for the 'Attendee Content Perception' subscale) indicate that the scale and subscales have very good reliability, meaning the items are interrelated and measure the same construct (Table 4).

Table 4. Values of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale and subscales.

	Cronbach's α coefficient
Music Festival Experience Scale	0.939
Music Festival Perception	0.827
Influencer Content Perception	0.901
Attendee Content Perception	0.791
Content Sharing Activity	0.902
Platform Importance	0.906

Spearman's correlation test showed a very weak positive correlation between the frequency of using Instagram and TikTok and the perceived importance of these platforms for the festival experience ($r_s = 0.169$, $p = 0.008$). Although the statistical results support the first hypothesis (H_1), the low coefficient value indicates a very weak relationship, meaning that the frequency of using these platforms explains only a small part of the variability in the perception of their significance for the festival experience (Appendix D).

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The correlation between the influence of content released by influencers regarding music festivals and the importance of Instagram and TikTok for the festival experience is positive and strong ($p = 0.000$, $r_s = 0.619$). This means that greater exposure to influencer content on social media is associated with a greater perceived importance of Instagram and TikTok for shaping the festival experience, thus confirming the second hypothesis (H_2) (Appendix E).

Quantile regression ($q = 0.50$) determined that content posted by music festival attendees (UGC) has a greater influence ($p = 0.000$, $\beta = 0.434$) on participants' attitudes and interest in music festivals than content published by influencers ($p > 0.05$). The results confirm the third hypothesis (H_3), indicating that content created by festival attendees attracts more attention than content created by influencers about music festivals. Multicollinearity analysis shows that there is no high linear correlation among the predictors (VIF = 1.222, Tolerance = 0.819), indicating that the quantile regression coefficient estimates are stable and reliable (Appendix F).

There is a moderate positive correlation between the perceived importance of Instagram and TikTok in shaping the festival experience and the frequency of creating and publishing content related to music festivals ($p = 0.000$, $rs = 0.576$). Participants who attribute greater importance to social networks as a factor in shaping the festival experience also share their own music festival experiences on Instagram and TikTok more frequently, thus confirming the fourth hypothesis (H_4) (Appendix G).

The Mann-Whitney U test showed that men and women differ statistically significantly ($p = 0.002$) in their perception of content published by influencers on social media. However, contrary to the fifth hypothesis (H_5), in this sample, men expressed more positive attitudes towards influencer content related to music festivals (Mdn = 3.0) than women (Mdn = 2.6) (Appendix H).

5. Discussion

5.1. Influence of Social Media Usage

The results indicate that the frequency of using Instagram and TikTok has a weak but statistically significant influence on perceptions of their importance for the festival experience. Although increased activity on these networks raises awareness of their role, frequency of use alone is not a decisive factor in shaping the festival experience. This finding aligns with earlier research suggesting that continuous exposure to personalized content contributes to the normalization of digital environments as an integral part of cultural participation (Yin et al., 2023). It is also important to note methodological limitations, as data on usage frequency are based on participants' self-assessment, which may introduce self-reporting and recall biases. Furthermore, due to the correlational design, it is not possible to assert that frequency of use causes the greater perceived importance of the platforms, as it is equally plausible that those who already consider social networks important use Instagram and TikTok more frequently.

5.2. Role of Influencers

The strong correlation between exposure to influencer content and the perceived importance of Instagram and TikTok indicates that influencers continue to play a significant role in shaping the digital framework through which young people interpret festivals. The credibility, visibility, and narrative style of influencers support previous findings on their impact on perceptions and online engagement (Supratman, 2018; Harahap et al., 2023; Sanchez-Fernandez & Jimenez-Castillo, 2021). However, a high correlation does not imply causality. It is equally plausible that users who already consider social networks highly important follow influencers more intensively, rather than influencers increasing the platforms' importance. Furthermore, self-assessment of influencer impact may be affected by social desirability bias, particularly among younger respondents who wish to appear more independent of digital trends.

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5.3. Authenticity and UGC

The results confirm that content created by festival attendees (UGC) has a stronger influence on attitudes and interest than content created by influencers. This finding supports theoretical premises regarding the importance of authenticity, spontaneous presentation, and peer relevance in digital practices (Cohen et al., 2014). UGC is perceived as more immediate and realistic, and the attribution of authenticity generates stronger emotional identification among Generation Z. However, it is important to note that the perception of authenticity is subjective, while algorithmic mechanisms that increase the visibility of certain posts may further shape impressions of their importance.

5.4. Gender Differences

Although a statistically significant difference was found between genders, the findings indicate that men have more positive attitudes towards influencer content related to music festivals, which contrasts with earlier research suggesting women's greater susceptibility to influencer communication (Schouten et al., 2020; Gomes et al., 2022). This result may be explained by the specificities of male music subcultures (EDM, trap, techno), where certain influencers, DJs, and promoters serve as authoritative figures within the scene. In these communities, influencer recommendations carry greater symbolic significance. Additionally, differences in the use of TikTok and Instagram by gender may contribute to this pattern. Men more frequently follow informational and musically oriented content, while women are more exposed to lifestyle and aesthetic narratives, which may affect the perceived expertise and relevance of influencers. These results should be interpreted with caution, considering the specificity of the sample and its characteristics within this research.

5.5. Theoretical Implications

The study confirms that Generation Z's festival experience results from the interaction of platform habits, algorithmic mechanisms, UGC and influencer narratives. This supports the thesis that digital spaces are becoming a significant element in the construction of cultural events, rather than merely serving as a medium for their communication (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Gilstrap et al., 2021). Authenticity and peer relevance are crucial, complementing existing theoretical frameworks on the digital reception of festivals. Furthermore, the identified gender difference highlights the need to include subcultural and gender dimensions in models of digital influence, moving beyond a homogeneous understanding of Generation Z's digital behavior.

5.6. Practical Implications

Practical observations indicate that promotional strategies based solely on influencers are insufficient. Involving attendees in content creation, encouraging participation, collaborative challenges, and peer-to-peer communication can be more effective in increasing engagement. The results also highlight the need to adapt communication strategies to specific subcultures and gender differences, as the impact of digital creators varies depending on the communities of interest. Organizers and marketing teams should note that high digital visibility does not necessarily indicate genuine changes in visitor motivation or loyalty, especially given the evolving nature of algorithmic distribution.

6. Conclusions

The theoretical contribution of this research is to demonstrate that members of Generation Z experience festivals through the interplay of their platform habits, algorithmic recommendations, and digital narratives, confirming TikTok and Instagram as key spaces where their cultural experiences are shaped. This supports the understanding that digital media are not merely communication channels but integral components in constructing the event itself. The empirical contribution stems from the finding that algorithms influence the visibility and interpretation of festival content, but

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exposure does not guarantee greater loyalty. Furthermore, UGC has a stronger influence on the sense of community, identity, and the decision to attend than influencers, whose effect is supplementary and conditioned by individual differences such as gender and communities of interest. The practical contribution includes the insight that promotion strategies based solely on influencers are insufficient, and that greater effectiveness is achieved through approaches encouraging active audience participation, collaborative challenges, and user-to-user communication. This results in a richer digital representation of festivals and a stronger connection between online and offline experiences, as well as the need to tailor messages to different subcultural and gender groups.

6.1. Limitations

A limitation of the study is the lack of normal data distribution in the sample, which prevents generalization. Although the number of participants is sufficient for the statistical analyses used, it is not representative of the entire Generation Z population in Serbia. The use of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) without confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) limits the ability to fully validate the factor structure. The survey was distributed via social networks, so it is likely that individuals who are generally more active on these platforms participated, which may introduce sample bias. Additionally, participants may have provided answers they considered socially desirable rather than their actual attitudes and behaviors. The research did not collect data on the time spent using social networks; instead, relative categorization was used, which limits the ability to assess in detail the influence of time spent on the platforms on respondents' attitudes.

6.2. Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should include more extensive and representative samples, as well as data from other countries, to enable analysis of differences in the digital practices of Generation Z across various cultural environments. The use of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) would provide further validation of the factor structure and facilitate investigation of causal relationships. Combining quantitative methods with a qualitative approach, such as interviews or focus groups, would offer a deeper understanding of the motives, emotions, and meanings that Generation Z attributes to content on Instagram and TikTok. Similar research could be applied to other tourist events, not only music festivals. A longitudinal study design could identify changes in digital habits over time. A comparative approach to researching the digital habits of Generations Y, Z, and Alpha would provide more detailed insight into intergenerational differences in digital culture and contribute to a more precise understanding of the role of social networks in the context of contemporary music festivals. An experimental study design could be used to examine the influence of different types of content (e.g., informational, entertaining, or promotional) on the attitudes and behavior of social media users regarding music festivals, thereby determining more precisely the strength and direction of the effect of specific content on interest and the decision to attend a festival.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy
UGC	User-Generated Content
FOMO	Fear of Missing Out

Appendix A

Table A. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Normality

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
frec_of_use	.174	248	.000	.928	248	.000
mus_fes_per	.156	248	.000	.922	248	.000
inf_con_per	.104	248	.000	.964	248	.000
att_con_per	.140	248	.000	.942	248	.000
con_sha_act	.097	248	.000	.953	248	.000
plat_impo	.100	248	.000	.961	248	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

Appendix B

Table B. Sampling Adequacy and Sphericity Tests.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.926
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4666.438
	df	378
	Sig.	.000

Appendix C

Table C. Variance Explained by Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Total Variance Explained									
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.698	41.778	41.778	11.698	41.778	41.778	4.400	15.715	15.715
2	2.585	9.233	51.012	2.585	9.233	51.012	4.357	15.561	31.276
3	2.033	7.260	58.271	2.033	7.260	58.271	3.935	14.054	45.330
4	1.475	5.269	63.540	1.475	5.269	63.540	3.843	13.726	59.056
5	1.191	4.254	67.795	1.191	4.254	67.795	2.447	8.738	67.795
6	.982	3.507	71.302						
7	.751	2.682	73.984						
8	.711	2.538	76.522						

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9	.571	2.038	78.560
10	.550	1.963	80.524
11	.499	1.783	82.306
12	.480	1.714	84.020
13	.432	1.543	85.564
14	.400	1.429	86.992
15	.371	1.324	88.316
16	.345	1.234	89.550
17	.331	1.181	90.732
18	.318	1.136	91.867
19	.303	1.083	92.950
20	.293	1.046	93.996
21	.263	.939	94.935
22	.251	.896	95.831
23	.232	.828	96.659
24	.230	.821	97.480
25	.214	.765	98.245
26	.195	.696	98.941
27	.171	.610	99.551
28	.126	.449	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Appendix D

Table D. Correlation Analysis for Hypothesis 1.

Correlations				
			frec_of_use	plat_impo
Spearman's rho	frec_of_use	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.169**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.008
		N	248	248
	plat_impo	Correlation Coefficient	.169**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.
		N	248	248

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix E

Table E. Correlation Analysis for Hypothesis 2.

Correlations				
			inf_con_per	plat_impo
Spearman's rho	inf_con_per	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.619**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	248	248
	plat_impo	Correlation Coefficient	.619**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	248	248

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Appendix F

Table F1. Quantile Regression Results.

Parameter Estimates (q=0.5)[a,b]							
Parameter	Coefficient	Std. Error	t	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Intercept)	2.039	.2739	7.446	245	.000	1.500	2.579
inf_con_per	.066	.0729	.902	245	.368	-.078	.209
att_con_per	.434	.0841	5.161	245	.000	.268	.600

a. Dependent Variable: mus_fes_per; b. Model: (Intercept), inf_con_per, att_con_per.

Table F2. Multicollinearity Analysis.

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.886	.221		8.519	.000		
	inf_con_per	.131	.059	.139	2.221	.027	.819	1.222
	att_con_per	.413	.068	.381	6.070	.000	.819	1.222

a. Dependent Variable: mus_fes_per.

Appendix G

Table G. Correlation Analysis for Hypothesis 4.

Correlations				
			plat_impo	con_sha_act
Spearman's rho	plat_impo	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.576**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	248	248
	con_sha_act	Correlation Coefficient	.576**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	248	248

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix H

Table H1. Group Comparison Using the Mann-Whitney U Test.

Test Statistics[a]	
	inf_con_per
Mann-Whitney U	5856.500
Wilcoxon W	14901.500
Z	-3.073
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.002

a. Grouping Variable: gender.

Table H2. Descriptive Statistics of Influencer Content Perception by Gender.

Descriptives[a]					
	gender			Statistic	Std. Error
inf_con_per	male	Mean		2.8814	.09230
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.6985	

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		Upper Bound	3.0643	
	5% Trimmed Mean		2.8794	
	Median		3.0000	
	Variance		.963	
	Std. Deviation		.98112	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		5.00	
	Range		4.00	
	Interquartile Range		1.50	
	Skewness		-.121	.227
	Kurtosis		-.655	.451
female	Mean		2.4821	.08499
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.3140	
		Upper Bound	2.6502	
	5% Trimmed Mean		2.4668	
	Median		2.6000	
	Variance		.968	
	Std. Deviation		.98384	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		4.80	
	Range		3.80	
	Interquartile Range		1.60	
	Skewness		-.014	.209
	Kurtosis		-.997	.416

a. inf_con_per is constant when gender = prefer not to answer. It has been omitted.

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