

Merging Worlds: The Influence of Digital Media and Communications on Live Concert Etiquette

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Abstract

Digital media has fundamentally altered how individuals communicate and interact, both online and in physical spaces. This paper argues that mobile communications allow individuals to experience everyday life as a continuum of online engagement, problematizing traditional notions of the public and private, production and reproduction. By investigating the transformative impact of online norms of platforms like Reddit, TikTok, and X (previously known as Twitter) on the “real-world” social dynamics of live music events, this research demonstrates how the behavioral norms of online fan communities impact in-person musical performances. Adapting the theoretical frameworks of Meyrowitz's situational geography and Goffman's theories of social performance, this study demonstrates how individuals navigate social norms across digital and physical realms - ultimately modifying the cultural production and experience of art performances with mobile technology.

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis of online fan communities with live concert participant observation. The examination of the influence of mobile communications on offline social interactions captures the nuanced ways in which online platforms facilitate fan engagement and shape unique modes of in person expression and interaction. Case studies of performances by JPEGMafia and Death Grips, known for incorporating glitch aesthetics and facilitating active online fandoms, demonstrate how online activity by both musical performers and fans shape both online communities and the behavior of in-person communities. These case studies serve as examples of how digital communication practices—such as meme referencing, slang usage, and digital conventions—impact face-to-face interactions. Mobile communications facilitate new social norms and modes of expression among live performance attendees.

Key findings highlight the blurring of boundaries between online and offline identities, as well as the adoption of digital communication norms in physical settings. The study reveals that mobile communications not only mediate fan interactions but also fundamentally transform cultural practices and social behaviors in in-person contexts. The research underscores how mobile communications enable physical social spaces and communities of live music events to be co-opted by online communities. This dynamic allows fans to simultaneously engage in the online and offline realms, bringing their digital communities, spaces, and norms directly into the live event. Mobile communication plays a critical role in shaping contemporary in person social dynamics and norms.

This study contributes to broader discussions in culture, media, and sociology studies by elucidating the profound impact of digital media and mobility on social life. Insights gleaned from this research have implications for understanding the evolving nature of communications practices in the digital age, emphasizing the role of mobility in shaping contemporary social interactions and cultural phenomena. This paper argues that digital communication norms, cultivated by online communities and enabled by the mobility of online activity, play a crucial role in reshaping social dynamics and cultural practices at live music events. The collision of online and offline communities disrupts long-practiced in-person norms of musical live performances. By examining the intersection of digital and physical realms, this study offers valuable insights into how digital media and mobility influence traditional in person social behaviors.

Keywords: mobile communications, digital media, social dynamics, online norms, cultural practices, concerts

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BIO

Shoshana Lowe graduated with honors this past May, from Eugene Lang College at the New School, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Culture and Media with a minor in Visual Studies. Consistently making the Dean's List, she was an active participant in the Social Science Fellowship Program, conducting significant research alongside her senior thesis. Her academic focus is on the impact of digital and mobile communications on social dynamics and cultural practices. Shoshana has presented her research on digital feminism at the Annual Conveying of Gender and Sexuality Institute as well as the Dean's Honors Symposium. She is now applying to PhD programs in Media Studies, aiming to advance her research and contribute to academia as a professor.