



Event Advocacy: The Power to Influence



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“Nothing influences people more than a recommendation from a trusted friend.”

- Mark Zuckerberg

As FaceTime uncovered in our Power of Live research, experiencing a brand at an event improves perception of it by 21% - but how far can that positive influence travel beyond the event?

FaceTime commissioned event research specialists Explori to conduct a wide ranging study on the influence of event visitors. This included utilising Keller Fay’s well respected model for understanding “word of mouth” marketing.

We sought to find out how live events drive advocacy between networks of colleagues, acquaintances and friends and how this advocacy can influence purchasing decisions far beyond the show floor.

Aims

1: How do event visitors differ from those who don’t attend events?

- Are they more influential?
- Do they have greater reach?
- Do they have more “conversations” about topics that interest them?

In short, do they deliver more value for organisations than the general population?

2: Who are the most influential event visitors?

- How do they differ from other visitors?
- Do their objectives differ?
- How can organisers and exhibitors capture the power of this influence?



Event visitors have the X Factor

The study shows that people who attend events are different from those who don't – and they are more valuable to the brands who exhibit!

- They have more influence on and offline and are more likely to make recommendations to their peers.
- They have greater reach online, posting more frequently to a wider variety of platforms and are more likely to blog.
- Their posts are more compelling, driving more likes and re-posts.

Meet your Super Influencers

- Within an event community, there is a sub-group of super-high influence visitors with exceptional reach and influence. This group is of even greater value to an event and the organisations involved in it.
- Super-high influence visitors cannot be identified from traditional demographics such as age / job title / purchasing authority.
- At consumer events, high influencing visitors focus more on purchasing objectives and are more likely to have their future purchasing behaviour influenced by what they have seen at the event.



Key findings:



Visitor satisfaction is critical – the only way to benefit from advocacy is to deliver an event that truly satisfies your visitors' needs and allows them to meet their objectives – the research suggests this holds true, from the most influential visitors to the least.



The research findings show that 32% of consumer show visitors and 34% of trade show visitors are high influence visitors who spend double the amount other visitors spend up to 12 months after the event. In addition, they are advocates who go on to recommend the event and its exhibitors to others.

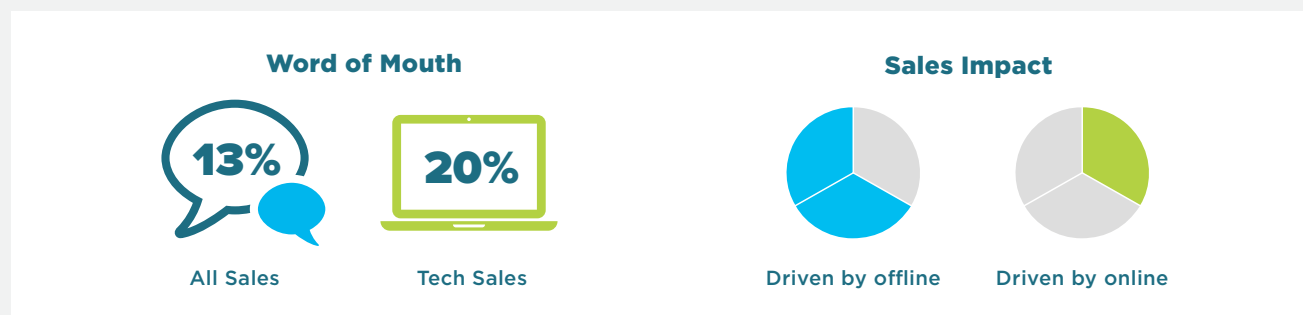


High influence visitors are noticeably more active on social media, including visual platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, so social media listening and social marketing campaigns are increasingly important.

What do we mean by Advocacy?

Simply put, advocacy is the willingness of an individual to spread a positive message to their network of friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

- Advocacy or word of mouth is “earned” from our customers when we satisfy their objectives and expectations.
- This “earned media” has previously been secondary to “owned media”, such as advertising and direct marketing, in terms of focus and investment. However, the influence of advocacy is growing as trust increases.
- Expectations created through advocacy underpin all other forms of event marketing.



*Source: Word of Mouth Marketing Association 2014

Understanding the advocates on our show floors

This wide-reaching research study was conducted by Explori over an eight month period on behalf of FaceTime.

 **13,366* study respondents**

*12,366 responses from visitors at participating events, plus 1,000 responses from the control group.

- Questions were included in post-event surveys for seven trade and five consumer events to profile UK event visitors, including questions capturing Conversation Catalyst™ and social media behaviours. Responses were gathered from 12,366 event-attending individuals.
- Panel research was conducted to establish a baseline profile for those who have not attended an event in the last two years - this was the control group
- Social media monitoring tools including Tweepi were used to define the influence of both groups using Klout Score™, the widely recognised measure of social influence
- Additional data was mined from the Explori global dataset of responses from over 1,600 trade and consumer shows globally



Selecting our control groups

To allow us to compare people who attended events with the general population, we identified two control groups who were as similar as possible to our trade and consumer show visitors, with one exception – they had not attended an event in the last two years.

Our consumer control group were matched for age and location, whilst our trade group was also matched for seniority of role. In total, over 1,000 additional responses were collected from the control groups.

About Conversation Catalysts™

Developed by the Keller Fay agency, Conversation Catalysts™ is a “system and method of identifying individuals of influence.”

It identifies a series of behaviours that increase an individual's likelihood of being an influencer in their (online and offline) social networks.

Influencers are everyday consumers who stand out because they have large social networks, they regularly keep up with what's new and emerging, and they are sought out by friends, family, and neighbours for advice and recommendations. Their advice and recommendations have 4x as much impact as the advice from average consumers.

For the purposes of this report we created an additional cluster of behaviours we called “Category Catalysts”. These individuals regularly give advice and make recommendations across their network, but unlike Conversation Catalysts™, who influence on a wide range of topics, Category Catalysts focus closely on one specific area or topic.

What is Klout Score™?

Klout Score™ measures social capital across a number of social platforms, including Twitter, Instagram, Google trends and Wikipedia ranking.

Whilst it takes number of followers / friends into account, it is more influenced by the actions in response to an individual's posts, such as retweets and mentions.

The influence of followers / friends is also taken into account, along with how “discerning” they are (how selective they are about responding to content).

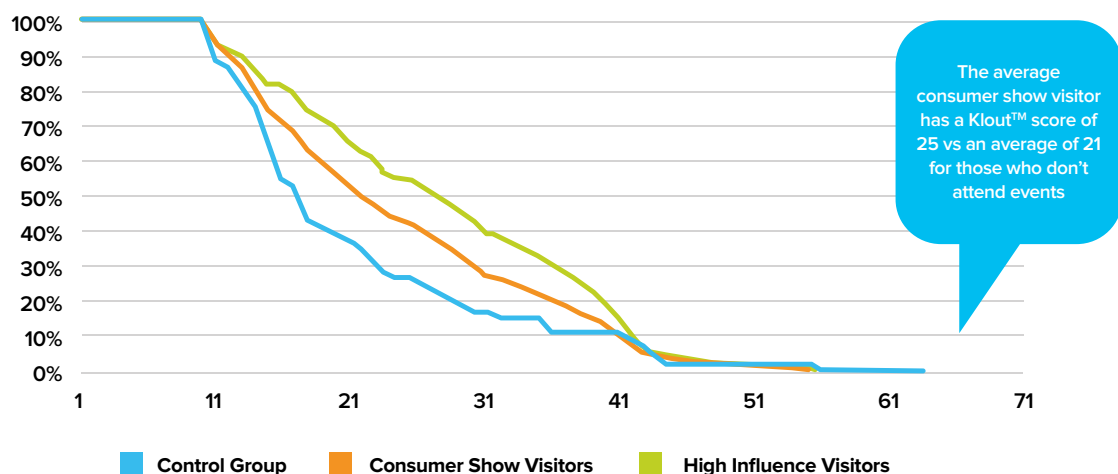


“Posting a thousand times and getting zero responses is not as influential as posting once and getting a thousand responses. It isn't about how much someone talks, but about how many people listen and respond.” - Joe Fernandez, Founder, Klout

Klout Score™ Research Findings

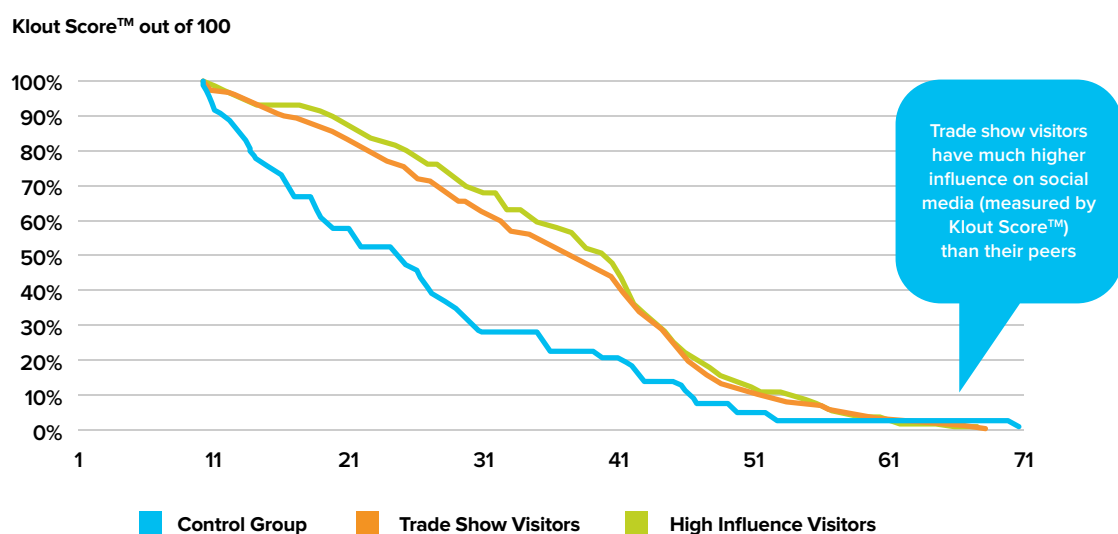
Consumer

Social Media Influence for Consumer Show Visitors



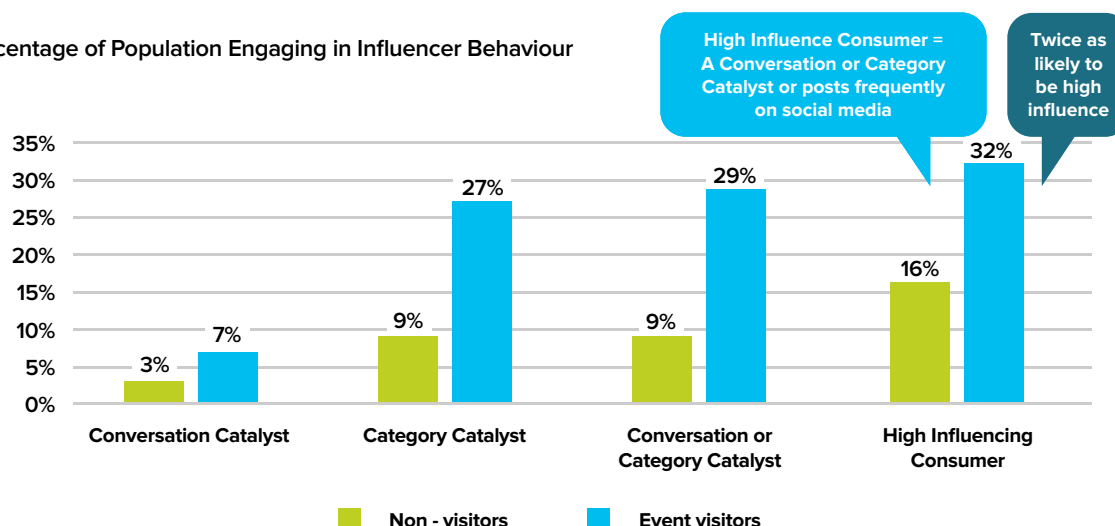
Trade

Social Media Influence for Trade Show Visitors



Understanding Consumer Show Visitors

Percentage of Population Engaging in Influencer Behaviour



Consumer Show Visitors Key Findings

 **32%**

32% are highly influential on and offline

x2

Double the number of high influencers compared to the control group

 **70%**

Event visitors have a **70% higher reach** on twitter than the control group

££

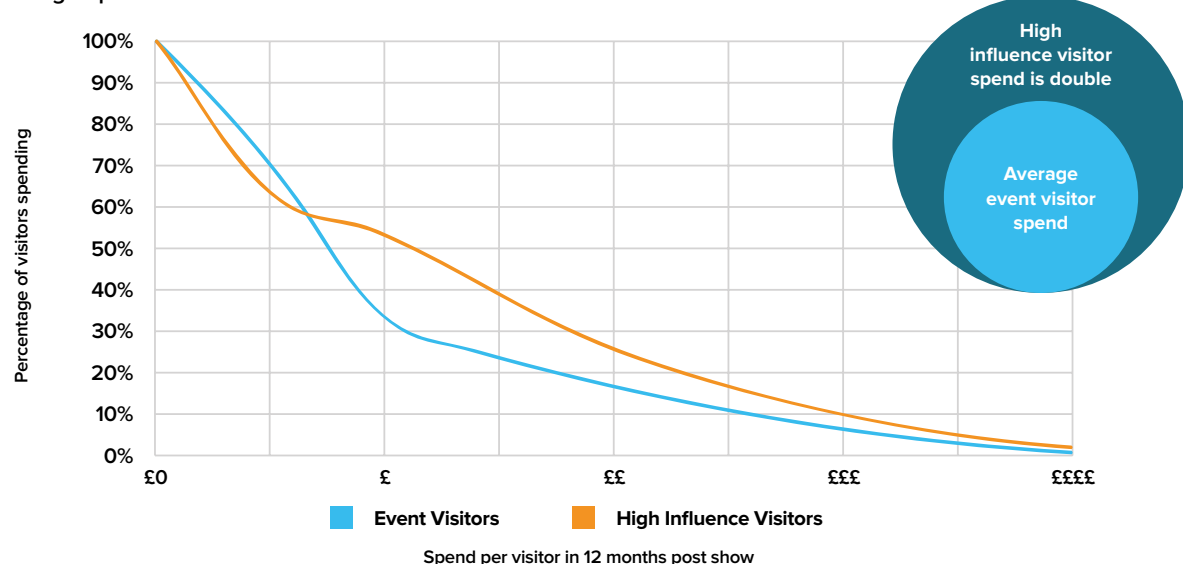
And **high influence visitors spend 2x** as much as less influential visitors

- Event visitors have a **20% higher Klout Score™** than the control group.
- High influence visitors are more likely to have **objectives linked to purchasing** (research products / see a particular company) than to want a general “good day out”.
- These influential visitors are much **more likely to adapt their purchasing behaviours** based on what they have seen at the event (39% considered purchases they would not otherwise have made vs 31% of other visitors).
- They are much **more likely to recommend specific exhibitors** to their peers (46% vs 34%).
- High influence visitors are more active across all social media platforms, this is most pronounced on visual platforms such as Instagram or YouTube, where they are **three times more likely to be active**.
- They are slightly **more likely than average to recommend** the event to their friends (Net Promoter Score of +50 vs +42 for the events measured).

“A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is—it is what consumers tell each other it is.” - Scott Cook, the founder and CEO of Intuit

Understanding Trade Show Visitors

Average Spend for Trade Show Visitors



Whilst total spend levels vary dramatically from event to event, importantly the results show that the 34% of visitors who are high influence, spend double the amount of their less influential counterparts in the 12 months following the show.



Reach **4 x more** people on social media

+13

Get **+13 – more social influence**, measured by Klout Score™

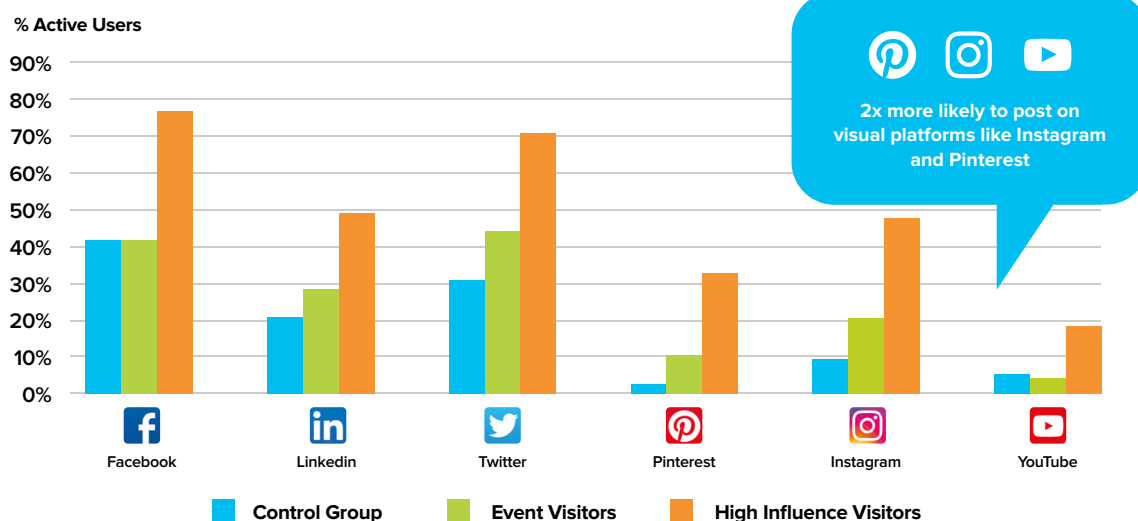
£x2

And the highest influence visitors **spend twice as much** as their peers as a result of attending the event

44%

And are much **more likely to recommend brands, products or services** they have seen (44% vs 37%)

Trade Visitors Are More Active on Social Media for Professional Purposes



So what's next?

This research throws up plenty of questions for event teams to consider in the context of their own sectors and audiences:

What is the potential ROI from targeting high influence individuals with high-impact / VIP style campaigns or referral programmes – is it possible to “lead score” and prioritise potential visitors?

What is the lifetime value of these visitors – what other questions could be asked at registration or within feedback surveys?

How can events deliver the right kind of content and experiences to support high influencer social media activity – especially on more visual platforms such as Instagram?

How can organisations involved in events capitalise on the full social reach of the event after the doors have closed?

Identifying high influencers

The research suggests it is not possible to identify high influencers through traditional demographics such as sector or seniority – so how can you find them?



High influencers are very active on social media in general so social media audits, implementing social listening and identifying and engaging with industry/leisure specific bloggers and interest forums are good starting points.



High influencers do also exist offline, they are the networkers and the joiners of events and social/leisure clubs. Trade influencers are also more likely to sit on industry panels, judge awards entries, publish white papers, articles and blogs and attend industry networking events. Partnerships with specialist media, member organisations and professional bodies could therefore be a good way of reaching them.



High influencers spend double the amount of other visitors during and after the event so organisers and exhibitors could work together by sharing outcomes and tracking spend to help identify them.



Point of purchase/referral initiatives such as digital/hard copy vouchers that can be tracked back to the event when activated could form part of exhibitor marketing campaigns.



Using these findings, how can organisers and exhibitors work together?

1. Organisers could set up a steering committee for the event to develop a strategy for identifying and engaging with existing and future high influence visitors.
2. Using past events and pre-registration intelligence as an indication, the number of potential buyers can be calculated and, more importantly, by taking the 32% consumer or 34% trade statistic, the number of higher spending, high influencers likely to be in attendance can be identified.

3. Can you identify the purchase potential of the event?

- 32% of your consumer show visitors are high influencers who spend on average an additional £4 in the year following the show for every £1 they spend on the show floor.
- In comparison, other visitors spend only £1.50 after the event for every £1 they spend at the show.
- The effect is even more marked for the 34% of your trade show visitors who are high influence and spend on average £4.64 post show for every pound spent on the show floor.
- What does this spend add up to at your show? How many buyers do you have and how many fall into the higher spending high influencer bracket?



4. Strong visual content and material that is easy to share across multiple social media channels should be developed by both organisers and exhibitors ahead of the event – this is important for trade as well as consumer events as the research shows that trade show visitors are using Pinterest and Instagram too!

It's easy to miss even simple steps like making the event hashtag an unmissable part of pre-show marketing or positioning logos on the show floor at a "selfie-friendly" height!

5. Dedicated marketing campaigns and offers should be developed to engage with high influencers and bloggers to track their resulting behaviour, this could include:

- Incentives for visitor referrals - recommend a friend discount/ vouchers with trackable links for them to share on their platforms
- Social gamification which rewards those who spread the word most – try creating a public league table with platforms such as Rise. Let battle commence for the top-spot!
- Early access to content or curated content such as tours or sessions that gives them something unique to post about
- Areas to sit quietly and post – social media influencers should get the same VIP treatment as press contacts
- Takeovers of the event's blog and social media streams by influencers both before and during the event



In summary:



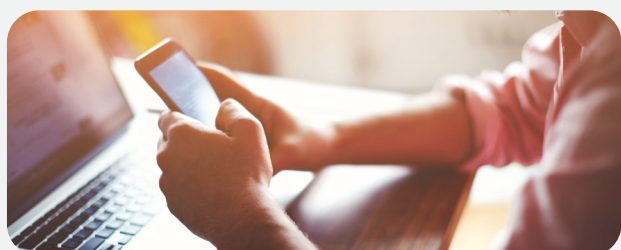
Start with an experience worth sharing

Customer experience is key. You will only benefit from the advocacy of your visitors if you provide them with a great experience that satisfies their objectives for coming to the event in the first place. Start tracking customer experience metrics and put them at the heart of your event strategy.



Understand the value of influencers

High influence visitors add significant value to an event, both by their recommendations and their own spend. Make sure you and your exhibitors know this value in the context of your event and are equipped to engage with visitors effectively.



Give them a reason to talk about you

When you have identified your most influential visitors, give them plenty of reasons to recommend you. Unique content, privileges and discounts will all help to drive the conversation. Arm your influencers with the latest news and sharable content.



Think beyond social media

Don't just think about people with large online reach when it comes to influencers – in-person conversations with friends and colleagues are equally important. Make sure you know where your brand stands with these real life influencers.



Reach people when they are ready to talk

Whilst many events strive to keep the conversation going 365 days a year, there is naturally a peak in activity around the event itself. Make sure you are ready to fully capitalise on this with easily sharable content and the resources available to actually engage in the social conversation with visitors around the event.



Bring online conversation face-to-face

Think about what you can do to turn the online conversation to face-to-face experience at the event, perhaps by creating a social or networking element for your influencers. And equally how the power of social media can be used to take those conversations beyond the show floor.

For more information on FaceTime or the findings of this study, please contact Jenni Jaques: jenni@aeo.org.uk

www.facetime.org.uk

About FaceTime

FaceTime, an initiative funded by AEO, was founded to provide expertise and guidance for marketers and businesses, explaining why face-to-face marketing works and how to get the very best out of it. We provide guides, training and expert help for businesses seeking excellence at events.

Authors



Rory Govan,
Associate Research Director,
Explori



Jenni Jaques,
Marketing Director,
AEO



Sophie Holt,
Head of Marketing and Communications,
Explori

With thanks to all the AEO members who contributed to the production of this report.

About Explori

Explori specialise in helping event organisers understand customer experience. They hold the largest global data set on visitor and exhibitor experience in the event industry, comprising data from over 1,600 trade and consumer shows - over two-million responses.

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