



Birr Festivals Collective



**ENGAGING AUDIENCES
THROUGH CONSOLIDATED
DIGITAL MARKETING**



The development of this Strategy was funded through the Arts Council of Ireland's Capacity Building Support Scheme.

Strategy & Audience Development Consultant: TOM LAWLOR
Marketing & Audience Development Management: REBECCA KELLY
Document Prepared by Tom Lawlor and Rebecca Kelly for **BIRR FESTIVALS COLLECTIVE**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Birr Festivals Collective, via funding received from the Arts Council of Ireland, engaged a Marketing & Audience Development Consultant to lead a marketing and audience development project, focused on collective harnessing, developing and improving the digital infrastructure of each festival in order to maximise budgets, reach wider audiences and improve the regional and national profile of each festival.

This work focused on an initial audit of the existing digital infrastructures of each festival across all social and digital channels, with a view for implementation of all recommendations to be carried out by an experienced Marketing & Audience Development Manager.

At the start of the research and planning period, the strategic goals for this work were defined over a series of group zoom meetings at which representatives from each festival gave insights into their existing marketing, audience development and digital engagement strategies and resources. These findings were further developed over a series of individual meetings with each festival, during which more detail on the problems they found individually with marketing, audience development and digital engagement were discussed.

These planning meetings shaped the direction of the work and the scope and methodology required to result in a digital marketing strategy and audience development plan which leveraged each festival's reach and budget to maximum effect.

OVERVIEW - STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Working with the consortia, a clear vision for audience development, retention and consolidation across the five festivals was agreed.

To reach those goals, the work was segmented into the following workflows:

- Research and implementation on integration and cross-marketing functions to each festival's current and potential audience
- Development of the best-performing audience development strategies previously executed by individual festivals and the adoption of key learnings into a consortia-led, shared strategy
- Creation of digital audience profiles, which in time can be accessed by all five festivals, narrowing the existing audience profile and allowing for the creation of data-led 'lookalike' audiences for more effective digital engagement
- Development of audience profiles for potential and lookalike audiences within the festivals' immediate catchment areas and nationally
- Development of recommended social and digital campaigns to effectively target and cross sell to loyal, new, lapsed and potential audiences
- Regular hosting of workshops and training meetings with the consortia and relevant reps to ensure all team-members with either budgetary management or implementation responsibilities understand each development/marketing tactic or approach

As these objectives were put in motion, work was carried out to ensure the most up-to-date data was being used in the development of all plans. The data sets included each festival's social media data, email newsletter database, ticketing data where relevant and website data.

This required:

- an audit of all existing audience data and audience data capture tools currently in use
- workshops with the consortia as a whole and individual meetings to determine the group's goals and objectives, each festival's distinct objectives and any gaps/opportunities identified via this process

Given the nature of festival production and delivering in 2021, it was agreed that the 2021 festivals were not the ideal benchmarks to use for this work which seeks to maximise the potential for audience data to inform budgeting, planning, programming, marketing and local and regional development - the hybrid model of presentation in this year prevented reasonable data sets from being established, and booking trends and patterns (across the country) were such that they could not provide accurate data on booking trends outside of Covid restrictions. In 2021 and 2022, each festival incorporated elements of the developing digital strategy into their marketing and all festivals provided post-event data.

After the last festival in the calendar, a period of measurement began, with a focus on developing this strategy to allow for robust audience data capture in the next few years.



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PROJECT BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

One of the key opportunities identified in the 2020 report, *Seeing the Beyond / Birr Festivals Shared Planning for the Future*, was for Birr's festivals to work collaboratively to address strategic goals in strengthening the town's position as an attractive and accessible cultural destination.

With this in mind, in 2021, the Birr Festivals Collective (BFC) set about combining their current marketing assets and expanding these digitally by engaging a professional Marketing & Audience Development Consultant and an experienced Marketing & Audience Development Manager to develop a new Digital Marketing Strategy. This would include training to enable the five festivals to collaborate on and streamline common digital marketing processes.

While each festival has its own audience, there is a geographic and diaspora base that all the festivals share.

In line with the report's recommendations, the BFC identified a joint need to:

- **Reach hidden overlapping audiences** (e.g. parents who are patrons of OFFline might also be interested in Hullabaloo! Offaly's Children's Arts Festival Festival)
- **Reach minority audiences** (e.g. Youth and Eastern European) currently not accessed by any Festival

With these joint needs in mind, the objective of this new Strategy is to build solid foundations and introduce digital marketing best-practices and processes that will sustain how the festivals communicate, both individually and as the BFC, now and into the future.

In this document, we present initial findings and make recommendations - all focus on how to leverage each festival's existing and potential audiences to create cross-sell opportunities and run targeted campaigns. Depending on the success of each campaign (determined by data analysis) festivals can alter programming accordingly and test this new content on various audience segments – both online and at physical events in the future.

The key areas of focus are:

- Increasing the capacity of contact-base management
- Strengthening the current digital channels currently used by the each festival
- Establishing and enabling a more collaborative style of communication and,
- Recommending how to move forward with the BFC 'brand' in the medium to long-term

The aim of this Strategy is to consolidate audience bases and build engagement and festival growth opportunities with all five festivals harnessing common resources and learning how to build new audiences through bespoke digital marketing training and strategies.

There was continuity of marketing staff over the period, which allowed for the development of bespoke digital marketing strategies specifically for the five festivals which cross-promoted the others.

By implementing this Strategy, the BFC and its members will also be able to initiate responsive and collaborative programming based on the analysis of the digital marketing strategies and its level of success in reaching desired audiences.

RESEARCH & AUDITS

Before building the core elements of this strategy, the starting point was to conduct detailed audits of:

- How current digital channels are being used to communicate
- Current databases in use by each festival
- How these databases are maintained/used to communicate

Doing a deep-dive on all current digital channels in use by each festival helps to ensure the final overarching digital marketing strategy as well as the bespoke digital marketing strategies for each individual festival are data-driven, responsive to audiences, encourage increased engagement and reach new/untapped audiences in Birr, the wider hinterland, the Midlands region and nationally.

The digital channels and type of content reviewed were:

- All Festival Websites
- Current Email Marketing capabilities
- All Social Media Platforms
- Current Branding & Collateral
- Current Software in use
- Chain of Command/Access
 - Who has access to festival websites & social accounts
 - Who is responsible for updating website content
 - Who is responsible for creating and posting content to Social

FINDINGS

- Each festival currently has its own website & two content management systems (CMS) are in operation. OFFline Film Festival and Hullabaloo! Offaly's Children's Arts Festival are the most user-friendly while Birr Festival of Music, Scripts and Vintage Week need to be restructured and updated
OFFline = Wordpress
Others = Wix
- All Festivals have Social Media Profiles but are operating on different platforms - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Vimeo, Linktree etc
- All have Email Marketing capabilities except Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival while Scripts & Hullabaloo! sit within Birr Theatre & Arts Centre (BTAC) currently using a mix Mailchimp and MailerLite for Email Marketing purposes

DATABASES & CONTACT MANAGEMENT

Databases and the management of contacts are at different levels across all five festivals.

OFFline Film Festival communicates sporadically with their subscribers through email, Scripts and Hullabaloo! less often and Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival have yet to implement an Email Marketing process.

One key and vitally important constant is that BTAC has acted as the ticketing agent for all five festivals and stores all data relating to previous ticket buyers.

Each individual festival has additional/more niche lists that require constant auditing and maintenance, e.g The Trench Award Callout list for Birr Festival of Music, OFFline's Filmmaker and Animation Residency list and Scripts' Callout for Playwrights.

DATA SHARING

BTAC has acted as the ticketing agent for four of the festivals since the very beginning. Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival is the exception as the majority of these events are free and booking is not required.

Previously, due to the GDPR policy in place at BTAC, it was not possible to share historical/current festival ticket buyer contact information with the four festivals concerned. This meant direct communication between each individual festival and their ticket purchasers was not possible.

This was an area of considerable concern for the consortia as the only direct channel to target this group was limited to Social channels where many of these historic ticket buyers may not be active.

Given the nature of the festivals in Birr, a significant opportunity exists to cross-promote to each festival's existing and potential audiences. Until this point, cross promotion has been ad-hoc and reactive - the goal of this project was to develop a digital infrastructure which allowed for festivals to speak directly to their ticket-buying audiences, and for each festival to leverage those audiences as part of audience development.

Festivals with tickets for purchase available have historically not been able to communicate with their previous ticket-buyers directly - this data has been held by BTAC (a standard practice across many festivals nationally).

In consultation with BTAC, the collective will now move to a model which facilitates direct access to their audiences, by:

- Establishing a new relationship and process with BTAC to share ticket-buyer information with the Collective so this data can be added to the individual Festival Mailchimp accounts (in early Q2 2023) and added to the Birr Festivals Collective Mailchimp (by end Q4). This will allow direct communication between each festival and their ticket-buying audiences. BTAC has kindly agreed to update the Ts & Cs of their own GDPR policy to facilitate this
- While a potential BFC Mailchimp account is being investigated, each festival will include any appropriate Birr Festivals news in their own individual Mailchimp communication to their mailing lists until that can be established
- If a BFC Mailchimp account is possible, a sign-up/opt-in function at newsletter sign-up stage which allows existing and future ticket buyers to opt in to communications from each and/or all festivals will be investigated

Co-ownership of this data with BTAC will allow each festival to track its customer sales journey, make data-responsive decisions and maximise marketing budgets in the future.

COMMON CONTACTS

Each Festival contacts the same groups regularly (schools, businesses, creches, community groups etc), so it's vitally important there is a clear understanding of common contacts, a process for sourcing and maintaining the most up-to-date contacts, storing these in a centralised hub that can be accessed by those tasked with communicating about the festivals and a schedule of when communications are to be issued from each festival.

The updating of these core lists is a key priority for 2023 and beyond, with annual updating of the lists essential.

Birr Town & Hinterland will be used as the starting point enabling a deeper exploration and understanding of the different parts of the community (from nursery to nursing home) that the festivals are currently communicating with and to identify any gaps.

Phase 1 | Birr Town & Hinterland

Creche/Montessori	Sports Clubs	Healthcare Settings
National Schools	Community Groups	Religious Congregations
Secondary Schools	Venues	Migrant Groups
Parents Associations	Potential Venues	Council Workers/Depts
Teachers Unions	Businesses/Major Employers	Non-profit
Other education/training	Politicians	Financial Institutions
Tourism/Local Development	Artists/Creatives/Influencers	Political Groups
State/Semi-State Bodies	Musicians	Media

This process will be used to focus on the Birr Hinterland, Offaly county, the wider Midlands region and key national contacts.

Significant groundwork has already been laid by BTAC, the Birr Festivals Project Coordinator and the Birr Festivals Collective Marketing & Audience Development Manager in this area but a further examination of the makeup of the Town (as listed below) is required in 2023.

It's an opportunity to forge new relationships in the town and will also be a useful way for communication from each festival and the BFC to be tracked so major crossovers in promotion are rare and different asks (including sponsorship, volunteers etc) can be strategically aligned and planned.

CURRENT BRANDING & COLLATERAL

A crucial part of any Digital Strategy is branding and all the core visual elements used to communicate with different target audiences. Following the conclusion of the Birr Festival Season in late October 2021, an audit of current festival brands was also conducted.

This included an examination of all current branding assets in use by the five festivals:

- Mother brands
- Sub-brands
- Logos
- Brand colours
- Brand fonts
- Descriptors
- Illustrations & shapes and Image banks

AUDIT RESULTS

- Each of the festivals are at different levels in terms of branding currently with some having a unique look & feel while, for others, a more defined brand needs to be developed
- All festivals have a defined logo and access to extensive image banks
- All need to have an extensive branding suite developed along with clear brand guidelines including logos in different formats and extensive work conducted on sub-brands and other annual callouts across the Birr Festival Season e.g Birr Young Voices and the Offline Animation Residency

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are in place to deliver for each festival in 2023, as follows:

- A defined style & suite of assets
- Consistency across all channels & content (traditional & digital)
- Mission and vision statements to facilitate easier transitions of key festival team members, volunteers and contractors etc in future, shape tone of voice and refine each festival's USP before marketing

DIGITAL SOFTWARE

We have established, there is a need to examine centralised digital software for email marketing (Mailchimp) and a similar process for in-house graphic design is also required. Currently there is a range of different software being used across all five festivals with different logins and passwords. These include Mailchimp, Mailerlite and Canva.

As mentioned previously, the five festivals contact the same groups of people regularly and there are also ample opportunities for cross-promoting events on festival Social platforms.

With that in mind, we are recommending the BFC also invest in the following:

1. A professional Canva account to centralise all design of any required Festival assets in-house.

Cost to the BFC: €109.99 per annum

Investing in Canva Pro in the short term, will mean a more strategic and efficient approach to digital design; saving on time dramatically in developing and scheduling digital content across all the festivals and managing the timing of each piece of promotion. Canva Pro also allows each festival to upload their branding suites (logos, colours, fonts, shapes and social media templates). This will ensure brand integrity and consistency in all festival digital design.

2. Mailchimp Costs: €93 per month for Standard Business account, which allows for 5000 contacts in total - 15% discount for non-profits
€79.05 per month | €189 annually per festival

A NEW APPROACH

There are two key building blocks in strategic communication for the BFC moving forward:

- Building capacity to communicate as an individual festival
- Building capacity to communicate as the Birr Festivals Collective

Building capacity to communicate as an individual festival

Although the festivals are well established on the town's cultural calendar as events, considerable work needs to be done in relation to their own individual brands and digital marketing best-practices as outlined in the Research & Audits section.

Each festival should develop further plans in 2023 for developing:

1. Branding
2. Websites
3. Contacts & Email Marketing Capabilities
4. Social Content Creation & Implementation

Branding

Branding is the key priority in the short term for each festival ensuring they have a clear individual brand with a core suite of marketing collateral, brand guidelines and an image bank. These will help demonstrate their uniqueness, make them instantly recognisable to the different target audiences (locally and nationally), and ensure there is consistency across all channels and content. This will help build a sense of trust and loyalty amongst current festival attendees and new audiences as well as clear guidance for those tasked with Marketing & Audience Development for each festival to support them in designing different assets, paid social advertising campaigns, email marketing campaigns etc.

Websites

Once the branding is in place and subject to funding, a development plan for each individual festival website needs to be put in place. The website is the next most important marketing element as it's more often than not, the first point of contact for audiences, patrons, sponsors, partners etc.

Recommendation: Establish with Ireland's Hidden Heartlands (Fáilte Ireland) and Visit Offaly (or potentially Offaly Local Development Company) whether there will be any upcoming funding opportunities to support the BFC in developing some of their websites.

Website development can be hugely costly both financially and resource-wise. Currently, 4 out of the five Festivals websites use Wix and OFFLINE was professionally developed in late 2021 using Wordpress.

The cost for the redevelopment of the OFFLINE website was 5K + VAT. Using this as a baseline, funding should be sought to develop websites for Birr Festival of Music and Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival in 2023 and if required, for Scripts & Hullabaloo! in consultation with BTAC.

Website plans should include processes for:

• Website Optimisation

- Site Architecture (Reviewing pages and navigation)
- Implementing Updated Branding
- Updating | Content (Adding images and text)
- Optimising | Site Speed etc

• SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)

- Keyword Research
- Organic Search figures highly on Website Traffic Acquisition
 - This type of traffic is free
 - Important to understand what exactly audiences are looking for
 - Google Page Ranking and Indexing
- Nurturing referral traffic & backlinks

Contacts & Email Marketing Capabilities

Plans for the sourcing, updating and management of contacts for each individual festival are also crucial in developing a more strategic process of communicating. In advance of a potential centralised Mailchimp Account being put in place;

Those with Email Marketing should:

- Import/update lists; ticket buyers 2022, patrons, sponsors, advertisers, etc
- Tidy-up other lists already in place
- Update Festival email templates
- Audience Segmentation Optimisation
- Automation optimisation

Those without Email Marketing:

- Set up Email Marketing accounts
- Import lists
- Audience Segmentation
- Build Email Marketing Templates
- Automation Optimisation
- Website Plugins

Social Content Creation & Implementation

Social Media is a hugely important but time-consuming activity for each festival.

To help those who will be tasked with this particular part of the digital marketing strategy, the following is recommended:

- Workback calendar - working back from first day of festival to last day of previous festival
- Scheduling posts that can be done in advance is the key to success
- Assign realistic time for content creation
- Using brand assets and guidelines cuts down on guesswork
- Strong, branded assets supplied as templates for social content
- Social media planner
- Allows your marketing team to work at their best
- A process for supplying content from across the organisation; programming, volunteers, business engagement, patrons, history of the festival etc

Building capacity to communicate as the Birr Festivals Collective

Apart from the publication of the Seeing the Beyond Report in early 2021, the BFC has not yet had a substantial opportunity to communicate in a major way with the public about their work due to public health restrictions from March 2020 until late January 2022. With the majority of COVID-19 measures now lifted and audiences turning once again to cultural events, the BFC now has the potential to capture local, regional and national audiences in a brand-new way.

Short-term

- Adding details of the BFC to each individual festival website
- New relationships developed with key local stakeholders; Offaly County Council, Visit Offaly, Visit Birr, Birr Castle, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Midlandsireland.ie, local businesses, etc
- Leveraging individual festival Social Accounts to send out messages in relation to the BFC in advance, during and post each festival

Medium to long-term

Developing the Birr Festival Season campaign With processes in place to build capacity individually and the short-term recommendations for the BFC in place in 2022 and 2023, the goal for 2024 onwards should be to build a campaign around the 'Birr Festival Season' thus solidifying the aims of this strategy.

As audiences readjust to attending live cultural events this year now that restrictions have eased, the BFC has a huge opportunity to devise, plan and implement this new campaign next year to further bolster excitement about and participation in Birr's thriving festival calendar across all target audiences in Birr, the hinterland, the wider Midlands region and nationally.

Key steps:

- Develop a basic brand for the Birr Festivals Collective for key moments of communication with key funders and other partners/collaborators
- Develop a look & feel for the Birr Festival Season campaign
- Develop the key messages including the Birr Volunteer Strategy and for joint Patrons/ Sponsorship opportunities
- Consider a physical launch in early 2024
- Devise the digital campaign to run from early 2024 until the end of the Birr Festival Season in November
- Develop a centralised social content folder and social calendar
- Explore employing one company to do photography/video for the entire season

The campaign should be brand-new and highly-visual, capturing the uniqueness of what the Birr Festival Season has to offer; celebrating all its artistic offerings and community-participation opportunities from April until November.

The aim is to create anticipation (well in advance of the start of the season) amongst all our audiences through a consolidated, coordinated and collaborative campaign encompassing all five Festivals built firmly on the short-term goals in 2022 and 2023 to introduce the BFC initiative to audiences.

The Birr Festival Season Look & Feel

As discussed previously, the importance of clear and consistent branding is paramount to any digital strategy. Developing a clear and engaging identity for the Birr Festival Season ensures a cohesive aesthetic and memorable branding which is then communicated via marketing, advertising, content and PR to target audiences, key partners and funders etc through the individual festivals and by the BFC. It will focus on the dates of each festival and what each has to individually offer.

WORKSHOPS & TRAINING

Over the course of this work, a series of workshops took place as well as training for a marketing and PR executive who worked across each festival, to ensure each festival is ready to implement a digital marketing strategy to its best potential.

The first workshop, a Marketing and PR Seminar, introduced each festival to the primary objectives of this shared digital strategy and opened a dialogue which allowed for tailored marketing activity by the marketing executive for each festival.

The findings of the complete digital audit, conducted by the marketing lead, were presented as well as each festival's digital and marketing activity to date, currently-used digital resources, as and insights into branding, PR, budgeting and analytics measurements. Each area of discussion was based on research into each festival's existing output/resources and followed up with recommended next steps.

This included insights on and recommendations for the future across:

Branding

- Introduction to the importance of branding and a unique brand proposition for each festival
- This followed an analysis of each festival's existing brand, including Logos, fonts, colours, illustrations and shapes in use, mission and vision statements, image bank and planned development of brand guidelines, with recommendations on next steps

Digital | Website, Social, Email

- An analysis of each festival's existing digital infrastructures
- Introduction to key areas for consideration across all existing digital infrastructures

Analytics & Measurement

- Analysis of measurement tools in place across social, web, ticket-sales data and previous audience research
- Recommendations on harnessing the future shared data for each festival's audience analysis and tips on how to benchmark and use this data

Social Media Audits

PR

Timelines

Funding & Budgets

The outstanding workshops, which will take place in 2023 Q1, will cover Audience Segmentation Tools and a more comprehensive and in-depth look at budgeting for and tools available within paid social media marketing and remarketing.

CONSOLIDATED DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

The research period allowed for the below short-term, medium-term and long-term goals to be established for each festival.

Short-Term

Each individual festival

- **Branding:** Formalising each individual festival brand; including brand guidelines, fonts, colours, logos etc
- **Websites:** Immediate SEO-optimisation, formatting and information architecture across all festival websites
- **Further auditing** of contacts & Email Marketing capabilities
- **Social Platforms:** updating with all correct branding and centralising of all passwords and who has access to each account
- **Enabling Skills Sets:** Clarifying resources and training required for key festival staff to ensure the outlined recommendations are realistic, measurable and work to a timeline

2022 & 2023 Campaigns

- **Bespoke digital strategies** including objectives, channel strategy, content strategy, media strategy, tactics and spend
- **Campaign reporting;** including the setting up of Google Analytics, Facebook Pixels, UTM-tracking capabilities, etc
- **Operation and content populating of the individual festival websites** in a benefit-led, audience-focused way, featuring strong visuals, video content and the overall programme of events
- **Ensure communication with stakeholders,** participant organisations, funders, partners and leveraging of their marketing channels and assets.

Medium-Term

- **Email Marketing Software:** Establishing a shared Mailchimp account, segmented by each festival's customer and sign-up list, allowing for easy cross promotion by each festival year-round. This will further develop the Birr Festival's Collective and increase the profile of each festival
- **Establishing a shared professional Canvas Account** where all the individual festival brands and templates are stored and allowing for cohesive in-house design
- **Website Development;** fine-tuning current websites, including SEO optimisation, updating branding and creating processes for patrons/ sponsors to sign-up and pay online.

Long-term goals

- **Branding:** Brand & identity for the BFC to be established and developed (pending availability of budget for each festival to engage a third party designer / agency with experience in festival branding and identity)
- **BFC Website:** Establishing a Birr Festivals Collective website which can be used as an introduction to each festival for regional and national audiences as well as potential sponsors and funders. This website would also allow for remarketing activity year-round.
- **BFC PR & Marketing Team:** Recruitment of a year-round Marketing & Audience Development Lead working across all five festivals, to be supported at key calendar points by a Marketing & PR Officer along with the support of volunteers at festival time.

KEY MESSAGES | THE BIRR FESTIVAL SEASON

- Provides employment to artists and arts workers
- Develops new and high-quality arts experiences by diverse artists across multiple disciplines
- Speaks to diverse audiences and provides inclusive arts experiences while also adhering to any government guidelines that may be in place at the time
- Celebrates Birr and its rich culture, history and stories

The campaign should include PR for festival events, ensuring communication between PR & Marketing representatives from each festival, Birr Theatre & Arts Centre and the BFC Marketing & Audience Development Lead.

Key Marketing Dates/Themes

- Jan - March | Festival callouts
- April + May | Classical Music
- June + July | Playwriting
- July + August | Heritage, Community Participation
- September + October | Filmmaking
- October + December | Children's Arts

Researched & Recommended Media Partners

With the BFC making such great strides in 2022, there is also another prime opportunity to source local and national media partners for 2023 onwards. This should include developing connections with local media; Offaly Express, Midland Tribune, Offaly Independent and Midlands 103 and nationally with RTÉ Supporting The Arts.

DIGITAL MARKETING ACTIVITY

The Digital Strategy for the Birr Festival Season in 2023 will be the driving impetus. This approach provides ample opportunities to profile each festival, reach multiple target audiences, identify crossover audiences and promote engagement with the festivals across easily-targeted and segmented audiences.

The tent-poles within the Strategy will include:

Website

Subject to funding from either the Just Transition Tourism Allocation Fund or Offaly Local Development Company, rebuilding/redesigning of some of the Festival websites and frequent updates of content including programming and excitement-generating social and video content, with a focus on the core values of each Festival as they will be understood by our audience.

Social Media

Utilising multiple channels to create well thought-out creative content (driven by programme highlights and unique attractiveness of Birr as a cultural destination) and ensure engaging interaction for each target audience. Messaging and content will be applicable to the chosen tool, be it Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube or other platforms.

Social Media will play a key role in attracting a local audience and central to our social campaign will be video content, amplified by participating artists, festival volunteers and the town of Birr itself.

Social Media Management will incorporate content creation, paid advertising, content scheduling and community management for all five Festivals.

It will include:

- Design, development and promotion of all social media for all five festivals
- Content Creation and Management and Community Management across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube
- Investigating new Social Platforms that could be utilised by each Festival
- Analytics reports from each post-festival

Email Marketing

A key part of the Digital Marketing Strategy will be to ensure all festivals have these in place in advance of the launch of the Birr Festival Season in early 2023.

This has included:

- Review and auditing of all current contacts/ subscriber lists (to be done annually going forward)

The next steps on this process are:

- Inputting audited data into Email Marketing Software Platforms
- Designing new Email Marketing Campaign templates for each festival
- Management of email newsletters for all festivals

SEO & Digital Advertising

To ensure maximum awareness, we will ensure all online and social activity utilises SEO and user tracking via Google Analytics and Facebook pixel integration within each Festival website, allowing precision spend across online, search and social media advertising.

TARGET AUDIENCES

The diverse audience targets of the Birr Festival Season will require a segmented Marketing & PR campaign. We will identify event audiences and create a dedicated strategy to connect the audience to Birr Festival events.

Delivering the festival message to the key target markets will form the foundation of the online, social, PR and advertising campaigns, particularly through our PR strategy.

We will utilise all data currently available to the Festivals as well as ensuring we reach new and previously untapped audiences in the town of Birr, the wider hinterland, regionally and nationally through contact base management and the auditing and management of databases to determine the broadest possible audience for the Birr Festival Season.

These will be segmented into various audience personas, each with their own marketing strategy to drive awareness, anticipation and ultimately, conversion and attendance.

Key target markets will include:

- **Local and Regional Attendees** targeted via participant companies (culturally-hungry, regular arts attendees)
- **Entertainment fans** - from film to music, who may not call themselves or consider themselves 'arts attendees' but who consume media voraciously
- **Domestic tourists** planning trips
- **Minority/non-Irish/ underrepresented groups** within the Birr community and wider hinterland
- **Younger audiences** particularly those aged between 18-35

Social Media Themes | Birr Festival Season

Festival	Month	Quantity of Posts	Paid Ads
Birr Festival of Music	April/May	360+	x8
Scripts	June/July	360+	x8
Birr Vintage Week	July/August	360+	x8
OFFline Film Festival	Sept/Oct	360+	x8
Hullabaloo!	Oct/Nov	360+	x8
Year in Review	Dec/January	150+	N/A

The channels & tactics should include:

- **Website & SEO marketing:** utilising Analytics to determine data-led advertising and responsive/ emergent audience profiling and targeting
- **Search marketing:** to ensure the Birr Festival Season is in top rank searches
- **Digital Marketing:** to include creative digital partnerships with online media organisations and sponsors
- **OOH Marketing:** to include where possible, leveraged access to OOH locations via venues, sponsors and partners organisations
- **Media partnerships:** including local print and radio and national radio partnerships
- **Print Media including:** printed programmes, posters, flyers etc
- **PR and Media Strategy:** rooted in awareness generation for the Birr Festival Season and more sales-focused PR tactics for individual festivals in consultation with Festival Committees

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

Recommendations for next steps across all areas of marketing for each festival have now been made and budget-depending will be implemented through late 2022 and into 2023, as each festival begins its marketing activity for their next editions.

Branding

Q4 2022 & Q1 2023

- Finish sourcing all remaining outstanding assets
- Define and source budgets to develop Festival Branding Suites
- Write creative briefs per Festival including all assets required and source quotes from potential branding agencies/third party designers
- Further Image Bank Audits to incorporate 2022 imagery

Q1 & Q2 2023

Begin and complete immediate work on branding and/or sub-branding for

- Birr Festival of Music & Birr Young Voices
- Birr Vintage Week
- OFFLINE Film Festival

Note: Scripts Ireland's Playwriting Festival will be changing its structure in 2023. The BFC should work in collaboration with BTAC to establish branding requirements and support the development and implementation of these from Q2 2023 onwards, if required.

Q2 & Q3 2023

- Only if required, work with BTAC to establish any branding requirements and development needed for Scripts and Hullabaloo!

Website Development

For current websites

Q1 2023

- Website Optimisation
 - Site Architecture (Reviewing pages and navigation)
 - Updating | Content (Adding images and text)
 - Optimising | Site Speed etc
 - Implementing any updated Branding
 - Building processes and structures to allow patrons/sponsors to sign-up and pay online

Q2 2023

- SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)
 - Keyword Research
 - > Organic Search figures highly on Website Traffic Acquisition
 - > Google Page Ranking and Indexing for each festival
 - > Nurturing referral traffic & backlinks

Note: The building of any new websites will be subject to discussions with Fáilte Ireland in relation to the Just Transition Tourism Allocation Fund or potentially with Offaly Local Development Company. If funding can be secured, planning for any potential building of new websites should take place in **Q3 & Q4 2023** to ensure websites are live for the 2024 Birr Festival Season.

Email Marketing

For festivals with existing email marketing:

- Confirm GDPR agreement between BTAC and festivals [COMPLETE]
- Import/update lists; ticket buyers 2022, patrons, sponsors, advertisers, etc [Q1 2023]
- Tidy-up other lists already in place [Q1 2023]
- Update Festival email templates [Q2 2023]
- Audience Segmentation Optimisation [Q1 2023]
- Automation optimisation [Q2 2023]

For festivals without email marketing:

Q2 2023 | For Birr Vintage Week & Arts Festival (if BFC Mailchimp doesn't happen)

- Set up Email Marketing account
- Import lists
- Audience Segmentation
- Build Email Marketing Templates
- Automation Optimisation
- Website Plugin

Database Management

- Budget depending, wrap-up of work on implementing a festival wide Mailchimp account [Q1 2023]
- Handover meetings with BTAC and Festival Project Coordinator on data control and analysis of previous festival's data [COMPLETE]
- Consolidation, updating and development of lists [COMPLETE]
- Develop timeline of core communications and key dates for key messages from each festival [Q1 2023]

CONCLUSION

The development of this strategy follows more than a year of communication between the Birr Festivals Collective and the Marketing and Audience Development Consultant, and 9+ months of implementation of findings by the Marketing & Audience Development Manager. The COVID-19 event restrictions that were in place throughout 2020, 2021 and early 2022 allowed for this extended period of time to be spent on analysing each festival's real resources and requirements for resourcing and budgeting in the future to meet the demands of a shared digital marketing strategy.

Given the likely improvement to event capacities and audience interaction from 2022 onwards, the initial findings and recommendations in this strategy can now be implemented confidently by each festival.

As a result of this work, the Birr Festival's Collective will now see the benefit of cross-promotion, improved access to their audiences, access to each other's audiences and improved understanding of the potential for digital marketing to fundamentally shift a festival's potential for growth and financial stability as a result of data-driven marketing and audience development strategies. An area of key consideration now, given the on-going implementation of the findings of this work, is to develop a three year audience development plan in tandem with fund work on inclusion and diversity within the festival's audiences.