

Spring 2017

## **INCREASING ATTENDANCE OF EWU STUDENTS AT CHENEY MAYFEST: DOES SOCIAL MEDIA PLAY A ROLE?**

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INCREASING ATTENDANCE OF EWU STUDENTS AT CHENEY MAYFEST: DOES  
SOCIAL MEDIA PLAY A ROLE?

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A Thesis  
Presented To  
Eastern Washington University  
Cheney, Washington

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree  
Master of Science in Communications

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By  
Kyra M. Phelps  
Spring 2017

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MASTER'S THESIS

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**ABSTRACT****INCREASING ATTENDANCE OF EWU STUDENTS AT CHENEY MAYFEST: DOES  
SOCIAL MEDIA PLAY A ROLE?**

by

Kyra M. Phelps

Spring 2017

The non-profit organization, Cheney Mayfest, puts on an event each year to promote the community and its local businesses. Most of the Cheney community is Eastern Washington University (EWU) students. Cheney Mayfest's goal is to have an increase in EWU student attendance at Mayfest each year. In order to examine the best way to reach them, this study examines what motivates EWU students to attend and the barriers as to why they do not attend. Findings from this study indicate that most students do not know what Cheney Mayfest is and have not seen any marketing for the event. Understanding the different motivations and barriers for why they do not attend could help find a way to enhance the attendance of EWU students at Mayfest. This thesis seeks to identify why there is a low attendance of EWU students and whether a social media marketing plan can play a role in enhancing student attendance.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

Cheney Mayfest is an annual, two-day event located in Cheney, Washington. Mayfest takes place Mother's Day weekend each year. This event was started to promote the Cheney community and local businesses as well as the growth of Historic Downtown Cheney. The first Mayfest event was in 2012 when Douglas LaBar and his sister wanted to start downtown events to engage the community and support different non-profit organizations. For example, Cheney Mayfest's first event was to support Relay for Life. LaBar's motivation for starting this annual event was to get the community involved in downtown Cheney. After a few years, the purpose of Mayfest shifted and the goal is now to promote the community in Cheney and create an atmosphere showcasing what Cheney has to offer.

The city of Cheney is located about 20 miles southwest of Spokane in Spokane County, Washington. According to the 2010 census, the full-time resident population is 10,590. Eastern Washington University (EWU) is also located in Cheney. The population grows to around 17,600 people on a temporary basis when classes at EWU are in session. EWU students, therefore, comprise a very significant portion of the Cheney community for most of the year.

The goal for Cheney Mayfest in 2017 is to continue to raise the attendance and involvement of Cheney community members, including EWU students. Today, Mayfest is planned by five Cheney community members and/or local business owners. The committee consists of a president, two vice presidents, a secretary and a treasurer. Starting in December of each year, the committee meets to plan Mayfest, discuss the branding for the new year, strategize ways to market the event and discuss the events they plan to have at Mayfest that year. Events

like the cornhole tournament, vintage car show, art alley, craft vendors and more are staged to attract Cheney residents during Mayfest.

Each year, Cheney Mayfest holds a free raffle. On each raffle, attendees are asked to provide information about themselves. By doing this, the committee gets a sense of who is coming to Mayfest each year and an approximate estimate of how many people attend. Based on this process, it is estimated that roughly 350-400 people were in attendance in 2015. In 2016, the number was around 500. These numbers only include one day (Saturday) of the two-day event<sup>1</sup>.

## **THE PROBLEM**

A concern the Mayfest committee has is the lack of EWU student attendance at Cheney Mayfest every year. Since Mayfest occurs during spring quarter, the committee expects more student engagement at this annual event. To date, no research has been conducted on the question of why students tend not to participate in the Mayfest event. The perception of the committee is that the lack of student attendance and involvement is hindering the success of Mayfest.

On this issue, LaBar notes, “I definitely think it's hindering the growth since students make up a huge demographic of our town. If they were involved they would be more likely to come in groups which would greatly add to the atmosphere as well as what we could add to the event itself!”

According to LaBar, there are different factors that may explain why students tend not to participate: “I believe it's a combination of things such as awareness and involvement....we reach out to clubs and orgs at [E]astern but since it's an off campus event we don't seem to get much

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with Douglas LaBar, January 2017.



response. We also need a better way of advertising to students even though we put up flyers all around the campus.” He goes on: “I would also say laziness of students and the campus to integrate with the town of [C]heney. Same reason students don't support other events around town such as the art gallery, music nights, trivia etc. Another reason could be that [E]astern itself is constantly trying to host events for the students and activities which is overwhelming for the town to compete with” (personal communication, January 2017). An inquiry into why students tend not to participate in the event is a necessary pre-requisite for designing and implementing strategies that may increase their attendance.

### **A POSSIBLE ROLE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA?**

Depending on the results of such an inquiry, one way to reach out to students may be to utilize communication tools such as social media. I use the conditional or tentative “may” because it is important to avoid the pitfalls of “media centrism.” Media centrism involves making unwarranted *a priori* assumptions about the centrality of communication technology when it comes to explaining a problem (e.g., violence in society), creating social change (e.g., fomenting revolutions) or, in the case of the proposed research project, solving problems (i.e. boosting the attendance of students at Mayfest) (Morley, 1995; Morozov, 2011; Schlesinger, 1987; Shields, 1998). As Philip Schlesinger (1987) suggests, our inquiry should not begin with communication technology and its supposed powerful effects. Rather, we must first start with the constitution of the problem. Once we understand the nature of the problem we can then pose the question of what role communication technology might play in addressing the problem. The structure of this inquiry is based on Schlesinger’s approach.

Having said this, there are some baseline reasons to believe social media *may* have a role to play in increasing student attendance at Cheney Mayfest. For example, the relevant literature shows that organizations of various kinds have effectively incorporated social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) into their strategies of reaching out to various publics. According to Oh and Syn (2015), social media platforms have been used by a number of organizations and communities as a way of promoting activities and creating communication and interaction among their audience. Examples of local organizations that have incorporated social media into their communication strategies are Spokane Hoopfest and Bloomsday.

As Bailee Neyland, Marketing Director of Brand Strategy and Business Development at Spokane Hoopfest observes:

Social Media plays a huge role in our business, as it hits our target market. Being the largest 3-on-3 tournament in the world, there is a lot of great content to share – stories to tell, activations to show, partners/players/volunteers to highlight – and even more so the fact that there’s so much more to us than that one weekend. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, we are here 365 days of the year, not just 2, and we are able to educate people on that with the help of our social media sites – our #Hoopfest365 blog, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We utilize social media for the majority of our marketing, because (1) it has the greatest reach, (2) it hits our target market and (3) it’s highly effective with analytics to back it up.<sup>2</sup>

A second reason is that social media plays a central role in our daily activities and social life (del Fresno García, Daly & Segado Sánchez-Cabezudo, 2016). This is certainly the case for

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<sup>2</sup> Personal communication with Bailee Nyland, Marketing Director of Brand Strategy and Business Development at Spokane Hoopfest, April 2017.

college-age students. As of 2015, the percentage of college-aged users on social media platforms was more than 98% (Griffin, 2015). Moreover, the evidence shows that many social media users say they consider social media platforms to be credible and valuable sources of information as well as useful communication tools (Carr & Hayes, 2015). These different tools offer organizations ways to gain analytics, develop a following among multiple groups and individuals and target their main audiences (Carpenter & Lertpratchya, 2016).

If it is found that social media may have a role to play in addressing the problem of low student involvement, then it would be important to produce a social media marketing plan. A social media marketing plan for Cheney Mayfest could help increase the attendance and knowledge of Mayfest among EWU students and their community.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To recap, this research project will first seek to identify the reasons for why there is low EWU student attendance at Cheney Mayfest. Depending on the answer to this question, the project then suggests strategies, including communication and social media strategies, that may enhance EWU student attendance.

Specifically, the project addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: Why do EWU students attend or avoid attending events such as Cheney Mayfest?

RQ2: What specific factors do students give for not attending?

RQ3: What strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students?

RQ4: To the extent that communication strategies are relevant, is there a role for social media?

RQ5: If there is a role for social media, what best practices/guidelines can inform the development of a social media marketing plan to engage EWU students?

RQ6: What metrics would be used to determine the effectiveness of these strategies?

## **CHAPTER OUTLINE**

This project will consist of six chapters. Chapter One introduces the reader to the research problem and outlines the research questions that will guide this project. Chapter Two reviews the relevant scholarly and professional literature. This literature includes research that examines: the reasons that underlie low attendance and non-involvement in community and other events; the role of communication strategies in enhancing attendance and participation in community and other events. Chapter Three discusses the various methods I will be using to investigate the research questions outlined above. In Chapter Four, I will discuss my research findings. Based on these findings, the chapter will also propose various strategies for enhancing student attendance at Cheney Mayfest. This will include a discussion of communication and social media strategies if the findings warrant it. If the research and data warrant social media as a solution, Chapter Five will outline a social media marketing plan. Finally, in Chapter Six I conclude by discussing the research project and findings.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This literature review focuses on the relevant scholarly and professional research that has been conducted on the following: involvement and non-involvement of participants at events; the potential for social media to increase attendance at events; and the characteristics of college students and their use of social media. The information gathered helped inform the research questions posed at the end of Chapter One. The information gathered will also inform the choice of research methods used for this project.

As I sought to locate the relevant literature, I focused my searches strictly on the following: the involvement and non-involvement of participants at events; the potential for social media to increase attendance; how other organizations increase the knowledge of and attendance at their events and how social media could have a potential role in marketing events.

While searching for relevant articles and studies, I searched within the timeframe of 2005 through 2016. Using mainly EBSCOhost and Proquest, various keyword combinations that were used to identify the sources found included: “non-profit organizations,” “non-involvement at community events,” “community events,” “increasing attendance,” “increasing participation at events,” “event studies,” “motivation behind attending events,” “event promotion,” “marketing events,” “benefits of social media for event promotion,” “social media” and “best practices of social media for non-profits.”

### **UNDERSTANDING INVOLVEMENT/NON-INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY EVENTS**

One issue to consider when researching why EWU students may not attend Cheney Mayfest are the barriers and rationales that explain why people do or do not participate in events.

According to the study “Decision to Attend” conducted by the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE), the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) and The Experience Institute, there are a number of reasons why people may not attend events. These are described below. “Decision to Attend” is an extensive report that presents information collected from an online survey resulting in 7,171 responses from prospective or current attendees at different conventions and exhibits around the United States. The report helps establish a baseline for measuring the influences and barriers that affect people’s decisions to attend events (IAEE et al., 2015). The report found that only eight percent of the 7,171 respondents said “nothing” would convince them to attend an event. Although this may seem negative, the low percentage suggests that most potential attendees *can* be convinced to attend (IAEE et al., 2015).

Although this study was conducted for exhibition and convention events, some of the study’s findings can be taken into consideration when it comes to understanding the behaviors and dispositions of EWU students. According to the “Decision to Attend” study, the location of the event influenced 82 percent of potential attendees’ decisions to attend. Ninety-one percent of respondents who indicated they “never” or “occasionally” attend events said they are influenced by location (IAEE et al., 2015). Every year, Mayfest is located on 1<sup>st</sup> Street in Cheney, which is less than a mile away from campus. For EWU students that live on campus, one would think that location may not be a problem for their non-attendance. For EWU students that live off-campus in Spokane or the surrounding area, it may not be as convenient for them to attend.

The study found that the location of the event also impacts attendees’ decision to repeat their attendance in following years. Whether it is their first time attending or their third, every attendee has the potential to be a repeat attendee. If the location experience is positive, the

“Decision to Attend” study found that 84 percent of attendees are likely to attend the *same* meeting, conference or event at that location. The study also found that over three-quarters of the event participants will return for leisure travel if they have a positive experience. The point of Cheney Mayfest is to get the community together and promote the Historic Downtown Cheney. If Mayfest’s location has a positive impact on its attendees, this study suggests it is likely more people will come back to that location and visit the local businesses again. Previous or current attendees are more likely to tell others about their experience, regardless of whether the experience is positive or negative (IAEE et al., 2015).

Another reason the “Decision to Attend” study identified for why people do not attend events is because they are unaware of what the event is or what will happen there. Potential attendees may not want to go to an event unprepared, being incorrectly dressed for example, or because of the fear of the unknown. When the audience is well informed and knows what to expect, they are more likely to attend. Giving the prospective audience helpful information about the event can increase the participation in the event (Maci, 2016).

The “Decision to Attend” study also identified cost as a reason people do not want to attend an event. The overall cost of attending is rated as the highest barrier at 61 percent for all respondents (IAEE et al., 2015). Respondents cited high and rising hotel rates, high registration fees and overall travel costs as significant barriers as well. When millennials were asked what would convince them to attend an event, cost and location were the biggest factors with 60 percent stating some sort of discount or way of lowering the cost would influence their decision to attend. Cheney Mayfest is a free event to attend, but there are parts of Mayfest that have a cost to participate such as the 4 ½ Block Walk and the cornhole tournament. These costs are minimal, however, and it can be assumed that cost is not a relevant factor.

The final factor identified by the “Decision to Attend” study is that people will not attend an event if the topic or point of the event is not relevant to their interests. No matter the age of the attendees, 91 percent of respondents said staying up-to-date with their profession/industry is an equally important benefit to attending and influences their decision to attend or not. Networking opportunities is a factor too. The study found 75 percent of all respondents said that networking and making connections plays a factor in their decision-making process (IAEE et al., 2015).

A second study by Caudill and Payne (2014) conducted an empirical analysis that focused on the factors that motivate college students to attend church. The authors created a questionnaire using 19 Likert-type statements they developed based on their review of the relevant literature and a focus group they conducted with a diverse group of college students. Along with the Likert statements, the questionnaire ended with an open-ended question asking: “Please share anything else.”

The authors identified 18 incentives that motivate college students to attend church. Of the 259 questionnaires collected, 97.3 percent ranked “Have a ‘good’ experience” as the number one incentive to attending. The second highest ranked incentive or characteristic was that college students want to “feel welcomed.” According to Caudill and Payne (2014), having a good experience and feeling welcomed were “strongly agreed” with by more than two-thirds of their respondents. The location of the church was important too. The authors found that 94.2 percent of their respondents said they would attend if the church was located close by. This finding is consistent with the “Decision to Attend” study. When looking at the demographic information associated with the respondents, Caudill and Payne (2014) found no significant differences between students at different college levels (freshman, sophomore, junior or senior).



Chen (2011) conducted a study that focused on understanding why people attend festivals. For the purpose of the study, Chen focused on the Lotus World Music and Arts Festival held in Bloomington, Indiana. The subjects of the study were the largest population of residents in that area: Indiana University (IU) faculty, staff and graduate students. The author sent a survey to the subjects IU email addresses. The survey results identified five motivational factors behind the decision to attend: family togetherness; community support; novelty; relaxation and socialization. The level of importance of these factors was determined with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from, “very unimportant” to “very important.”

Chen’s (2011) analysis indicates that the most important motivation for participants to attend the Lotus Festival was “novelty”: to enjoy live music; to experience new and different things; and the festival atmosphere. The least important motivation was “socialization”: that is, to enjoy festival crowds and to meet new people. These results confirmed previous research findings that people tend to attend a festival for multiple reasons and that “novelty” was the top ranked motivation for 71 percent of participants to attend (Chen, 2011).

The purpose of Chen’s (2011) study is to understand why people attend events and what motivates them to attend, focusing on the Lotus Festival, which is similar to Cheney Mayfest. As such, Chen’s study appears to be especially relevant to my research project. Mayfest is a festival-type event and the goal is to find out why EWU students do or do not attend events, their motivations to attend and how attendance can be increased.

Understanding factors that explain why people do not attend events is essential when looking at how Cheney Mayfest can increase the attendance of EWU students. The different factors identified by the relevant literature provide factors to consider when marketing and promoting the event itself. The “Decision to Attend” study identified various barriers for not

attending and highlighted different factors that incentivize or attract new attendees and repeat attendees such as: location; awareness of event; cost and relevance to their interests. These insights will inform the questions asked in the survey to EWU students and interviews conducted with EWU faculty and staff members.

## **POTENTIAL FOR SOCIAL MEDIA TO INCREASE ATTENDANCE IN COMMUNITY EVENTS**

Many different organizations and professionals use social media to market to their specific audiences. Below, I will discuss studies and contexts where various organizations and professionals have used social media to increase knowledge and participation in events as well as address other needs for their organizations.

Maci (2016) states that a social media presence can help enhance participation at events. An event is not going to be successful unless people know about it and they attend. Social media can be a tool to help promote marketing of different activities happening at an event and create a sense of excitement that the event is coming up. Social media platforms can be used for promotion and engagement and build an online community around the event itself and establish a credibility.

The “Decision to Attend” study showed that most event participants will tell others about their experiences, whether they are positive or negative. This evidence is based on the professional experience of the researcher’s from “Decision to Attend” study. If the organization creates an online community around the event using social media as suggested by Cutler (2011), that could be a place where previous participants would share their experiences. This could lead

to future or potential attendees would go to find out more information. An online community is a group of people with common interests who use the internet to communicate (Volkman, 2011).

Since 2004, when Facebook was launched, it has been one of the most popular networking tools for college students. An estimated 85 percent of college students in the United States now have a Facebook profile (van Beynen & Swenson, 2016). Students primarily use Facebook for nonacademic purposes such as connecting with friends, family and other online communities. University libraries primarily use their Facebook pages to market events, resources and services, and to answer general questions for their users. Seeing why they use social media and how students use it in those types of situations may be similar to how Cheney Mayfest could use social media to market and communicate with EWU students. Of the different types of information distributed or exchanged on these pages, advertisements of library events were the most common and effective types of information posted (van Beynen & Swenson, 2016). Many libraries use social media platforms as an outreach tool. It is not uncommon for libraries to use Facebook and Twitter to communicate with their users (Booker & Bandyopadhyay, 2013). Analyzing libraries and their use of Facebook is relevant to this research project because university libraries communicate with and plan events for students.

Academic libraries have embraced this new technology and use it as a flexible channel to communicate with faculty, staff and students. Chiu and Lin's (2012) study investigated how Facebook is used by academic libraries to communicate with users and vice versa through leaving posts, comments and "likes." A content analysis was conducted to survey 10 Facebook profiles of academic libraries in Taiwan. The authors' analysis differentiates between types of information such as advertisements, multimedia broadcasting, library policies and references, and types of participation from their library users such as asking questions, posting comments

and library responses. The top three types of information shared by the libraries surveyed were marketing and advertising library activities, information about the library such as hours and closures and multimedia broadcasting. In addition to the posts from libraries available on Facebook, posts and comments from users indicated the variety of user participation in library activities. Almost half (48.2 percent) of the posts from users were personal, such as “Good job!” and “I wish I was there at the book club!” Users also asked questions on the social media pages and expected librarians to reply in a timely manner. The questions users asked covered a number of issues from circulation policy and library hours to requesting photos of library events and requesting information regarding library jobs (Chiu and Lin, 2012).

Libraries of all types have embraced the use of social media sites to communicate with users about their services. Embracing social media is one way for libraries to promote and improve the quality of their services to users (Booker & Bandyopadhyay, 2013). In the Booker and Bandyopadhyay (2013) study, data was collected from 164 library users from Midwestern University. Of those 164 respondents, 138 were students, 16 were staff and 10 were community members. These library users were surveyed about the following: their satisfaction level for certain social networking sites; how often they used social networking sites; whether they thought it was important for the library to market through social networking sites; and what social media sites they wanted to see information from the library.

According to Booker and Bandyopadhyay (2013), 86 percent of library users thought it was important for the library to use social media sites to market its services. Although most participants thought that it was important for the library to be on social media, they did not prefer to receive library-related information through social media sites. Among the preferred methods

of communication for library users, social media was ranked third behind the library website and newsletters (Booker & Bandyopadhyay, 2013).

The Chiu and Lin (2012) and Booker and Bandyopadhyay (2013) studies focus on an audience and types of information exchange that are relevant to the current research project. Specifically, given Mayfest's target audience is EWU students, these studies suggest the Mayfest committee could use social media to market the different activities occurring at the event and provide various kinds of information about the event. This could increase knowledge of the event. This, in turn, could lead to more participation and higher attendance.

Montana State University (MSU) conducted a study that focused on how social media can build a community (Young & Rossmann, 2015). The MSU library formed a social media group and implemented a social media guide with the goal of bringing an intentional, personality-rich and interaction-driven approach to its social media activity. The social media group, which consisted of three librarians and one library staff member, aimed to build a community of students on Twitter. To measure the effectiveness of the social media group and its strategies, they divided their Twitter activity into two different categories, phase one and phase two. Phase one showed the activity of users who followed the Twitter account before the social media group implemented its strategy and phase two showed the activity on Twitter after the social media group stepped in (Young & Rossmann, 2015).

There were three different approaches for evaluating the Twitter activity: user-type analysis; action-object mapping; and interaction analysis. User-type analysis aims to understand the community from a broad perspective by creating categories of users following MSU's library page. Action-object mapping is a quantitative method that describes the relationship between the performance of the activity in relation to the external phenomenon. Interaction analysis serves as

an extension of action-object mapping and aims to provide further details about the level of interaction between the system and its user (Young & Rossmann, 2015).

Analysis of user types in phase one revealed that 48 percent were business followers. In comparison, this percentage decreased to 30 percent in phase two. The student percentage increased from 6 percent in phase one to 28 percent in phase two, representing a 366 percent increase in student users. The increase in the percentage of students in the follower population and the decrease in the business percentage of the population suggest progress towards the social media group's goal (Young and Rossmann, 2015). The study's quantitative analysis reveals an increase in Twitter followers and interactions and how social media provides the opportunity to strengthen the libraries ties with academic communities.

Young and Rossmann's goal and the purpose of Cheney Mayfest are similar: they both want to promote and build their community. Moreover, Young and Rossmann (2015) wanted to build a community using social media. This is similar to the Mayfest committee's goal of increasing the attendance of EWU students that make up much of the Cheney community. Building an online community can reflect on the community of those who attend events (Volkman, 2011).

The "Decision to Attend" study makes clear that one reason why people do or do not attend an event has to do with whether they are aware of it (IAEE et al., 2015). For any event, including those like Cheney Mayfest, promotion "includes all of the marketing communications techniques of advertising, personal selling, sales promotions, merchandising and public relations" (Wymer, Knowles & Gomes, 2006, p. 152). Traditionally, promotion is thought of as advertising, which is an important part of any event. Advertising can also take the form of paid impersonal communication such as television, radio and outdoor media such as billboards and

bus benches, but in some cases, media companies provide free advertising spots as well as social media promotion (Wymer, Knowles & Gomes, 2006). Although social media marketing can be paid advertising, an organization needs a mechanism to generate media interest and this is where social media may play a role.

The “Decision to Attend” study shows that attendees will search local websites and social media platforms regarding potential events they are interested in attending. The study shows that seven out of ten respondents will search local websites to find out the objective of the event and nearly one-half will search social media to learn what others are saying about their previous event experiences (IAEE et al., 2015). The study found that when it came to social media communication, Facebook was the top ranked social media tool at 45 percent and the preferred method of communication over LinkedIn at 12 percent and Twitter at 10 percent. When looking at millennials, Twitter reached a percentage of 61 percent as the preferred method of communication (IAEE et al., 2015). According to the study, prospective attendees are more likely to make their decision about attendance after reviewing comments and posts on Facebook and Twitter from peers or other participants.

For example, attendees become event “journalists” when they post and describe their event experiences through social media (*Social media and meeting attendees*, 2015). This helps potential attendees decide whether it is an event that makes sense for them to attend or if they want to attend. This kind of content sharing, along with the organization itself joining in on the conversations, encourages community engagement and participation (*Social media and meeting attendees*, 2015).

As discussed in the previous section, the “Decision to Attend” study found that many people will not attend events if they do not know what the event is, do not know what to expect

at the event, or if they feel they are unprepared for the event itself. Social media is another platform to engage attendees before, during and after the event. It allows attendees to become aware of what the event is and interact with other attendees, the sponsors and speakers before arriving (*Social media and meeting attendees*, 2015). This engagement makes attendees feel like they are part of the event, exposing them to people, ideas and experiences they might not have previously known about. According to the “Decision to Attend” study, this type of social media experience helps strengthen the experience attendees have at the event itself and with a positive experience, it will lead to repeat attendees each year (IAEE et al., 2015; *Social media and meeting attendees*, 2015).

This section reviewed the literature that is relevant to understanding how social media may have the potential to enhance student attendance at events. Each study reviewed analyzed social media and the different potentials it could have to help their event or organization. The rationales behind the different studies were similar to Mayfest’s: increasing a community and marketing important information to their target audience. There was no specific evidence that social media increased the attendance of participants, but based on the successes of the different organizations, libraries and festivals that have used social media, it shows the potential role social media could have in increasing attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest. The current research project, then, not only seeks to address the practical issue of how to increase student attendance at Cheney Mayfest, it also seeks to contribute to the relevant literature that focuses on the role of social media in enhancing attendance at events.



## **COLLEGE STUDENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media has become increasingly popular among different user groups. Although used for social purposes, some social media platforms have been emerging as important information sources. It has also been found that more than 98 percent of college students use social media for their academics as well as their everyday-lives (Griffin, 2015; Kyung-Sun et al., 2014). It is important to recognize how social media may play a role in the lives of Cheney Mayfest's audience, namely college students.

Kyung-Sun, Sei-Ching and Yun Young's (2014) study examines what undergraduate students do when trying to find information of various kinds through social media. A questionnaire was distributed via email to all undergraduate students at a public university. A total of 833 students completed the survey. To identify which social media platforms were used as information sources, the authors asked participants whether they used a particular social media platform for finding or acquiring information. The number one social media platform participants said they used as an information source was Wikipedia with 98.6 percent. Facebook was ranked second with 95.7 percent of respondents stating they used these sites to acquire information.

Kyung-Sun, Sei-Ching and Yun Young's (2014) study shows that students use social media for various reasons. Some of the commonly cited reasons include "obtaining background information," "obtain others' opinions" and "finding solutions or how-to instructions" (Kyung-Sun et al., 2014). Although social media cannot replace some of the high-quality traditional media such as television, radio and newspaper whose quality is systematically controlled, they can be used to supplement such sources. Social media take advantage of the wide range of experiences and expertise that people have. While their quality varies, social media information

sources can provide information that traditional resources cannot efficiently provide (Kyung-Sun et al., 2014; Rodriguez, 2015). The cost of marketing on social media is much less expensive than the cost for traditional media. When it comes to accuracy, social media uses targeting to market to a specific audience. Traditional media does not have the ability to specifically target an audience. The media distributes the message out but the audience is not set so there is no way to know if the message is reaching the intended audience (Rodriguez, 2015).

Kim, Wang and Oh (2016) created an online survey at a public research university in the southeastern United States. Undergraduate students in communication courses were recruited to participate. According to the study, social media and mobile phone usage have been integrated into people's daily socialization activities. This study examined how college students' need to belong motivated their social media use and its effects on social engagement and how the need to belong contributes to social engagement by examining college students' social media use and smartphone use (Kim, Wang & Oh, 2016).

The results of this study show that college students' desire to belong plays an important role in motivating them to use social media and smartphones to communicate with others. The higher the levels of desire students have to be part of a social group, the higher the probability they will engage in communication through social media. College students use social media to interact with others to fulfill their psychological need (Kim, Wang & Oh, 2016).

Another finding in the Kim, Wang and Oh (2016) study was that the more college students use social media and smartphones to interact with others, the more they participated in social activities. Social media and smartphones can provide a platform for college students to interact with others, share information about school events or activities and talk about their college lives (Kim, Wang and Oh, 2016).

Based on the findings in the Kim, Wang and Oh (2016) study, it can be speculated that social media may be a significant tool to increase the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest. That is, this study shows that college students use social media to communicate with others and share information about events or activities happening around them. This may be one strategy to increase the attendance of EWU students at Mayfest.

Social media is considered a successful tool for communication and spreading information among college students and young adults. Millennials prefer real-time communication and instant access to information, and are commonly described as technologically savvy, creative and innovated (Stephens & Gunther, 2016). Facebook is the most-widely used of all major social media platforms with smaller percentages of young adults using sites such as Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and LinkedIn (PEW Fact Sheet, 2017).

According to the Pew Research Center (2016), seven out of ten Americans use social media to connect with one another, to engage with news content and to share information and entertainment. The Pew Research Center began tracking social media in 2005. At that time, only five percent of American adults used at least one social media platform. By 2011, that percentage had increased to 50 percent of adults using at least one social media platform, and by 2016, 69 percent of the public used some type of social media platform.

Young adults around the ages of 20-29 are among the earliest social media users and continue to use social media at high levels. Social media usage by older adults has also increased in the past few years (PEW Fact Sheet, 2017). As of November 2016, 86 percent of adults between the ages of 18-29 and 80 percent of adults between the ages of 30-40 used at least one social media site. Seventy-three percent of all social media users have an education level of some college, while 78 percent are college graduates (PEW Fact Sheet, 2017). The usage of social

media platforms varies depending on age, gender and educational status. For the purpose of this project, I am going to focus on social media users with an education level of some college because Cheney Mayfest would like to increase the attendance of EWU students who, in this case, may only have some college experience.

For many users, social media is part of their daily routine. Roughly 76 percent of Facebook users and 51 percent of Instagram users visit these platforms at least once a day (PEW Fact Sheet, 2017). With this high number of users on these channels daily, information posted to these sites can be shared with a large audience and the interaction with the content shared may also increase.

Cheney Mayfest currently has a Facebook page and an Instagram account, with plans to start a Snapchat account for events and activities occurring at Mayfest 2017. As of September 2016, the Facebook account had 687 likes while Instagram had 119 followers. Given the high number of social media users who are college students, the research previously discussed confirms that using Facebook and Instagram could well help spread the word about Cheney Mayfest to EWU students.

## **SUMMARY**

The relevant scholarly and professional research reviewed in this chapter focused on the involvement and non-involvement of participants at events, the potential for social media to increase attendance at events and the characteristics of college students and their use of social media. The different studies reviewed regarding the understanding of involvement/non-involvement in community events and the potential for social media to increase attendance in community events focus on factors that are relevant to Mayfest. Specifically, they focus on

factors such as wanting to create a community, increase participation and increase conversation. Moreover, some of the studies focused on understanding the motives behind why people attend or do not attend events.

Although the literature provides no specific evidence that social media increased the attendance of participants, the successes of each study shows the potential role social media could have in increasing attendance at events such as Cheney Mayfest. Various social media were shown to be beneficial based on the goals defined in each study.

Analyzing college students and their use of social media also suggested that social media could play a role in increasing attendance at Cheney Mayfest. Social media is considered a successful tool for communication and spreading information among college students (Stephens & Gunther, 2016). The Pew Research Center (2015) also stated that with a high number of users (76 percent) on social media channels daily, information can be shared with a larger audience and engagement with the posts may increase by using social media.

Current research, then, shows that social media may be highly relevant to increasing student attendance. But before this can be further assessed, the primary audience, EWU students, must be further evaluated. This review of the literature and its key findings guided the formulation of my research questions that are laid out in Chapter One.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study used mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative, to address the following research questions:

RQ1: Why do EWU students attend or avoid attending events such as Cheney Mayfest?

RQ2: What specific factors do students give for not attending?

RQ3: What strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students?

RQ4: To the extent that communication strategies are relevant, is there a role for social media?

RQ5: If there is a role for social media, what best practices/guidelines can inform the development of a social media marketing plan to engage EWU students?

RQ6: What metrics would be used to determine the effectiveness of these strategies?

The data from the survey and interviews was collected in March and April 2017. The research methods chosen only pertain to research questions 1-4. Questions 5-6 pertain to the social media strategy and will be addressed in Chapter Five.

First, a survey (Appendix A) was developed and distributed to EWU students through email. The survey was anonymous and consisted of 15 questions that were multiple choice responses, yes or no responses, and short answer responses. The email was sent to all students enrolled in classes through spring quarter 2017. The survey was created in Survs, an online survey tool that allows the creation, distribution and analysis of online surveys. The survey began with demographic questions and then followed with questions regarding the respondents'

communication preferences, their awareness of Cheney Mayfest and their reasons for attending or not attending.

The results populated anonymously to ensure that there was minimum contact with the individuals and only anonymous data was produced for this project. EWU students could take the survey on their own time and were able to stop participation at any time. The survey was open for participation for one week and closed at the end of the seventh day.

Once the survey closed, the data was gathered and evaluated. Many different responses and themes were found in the data. Survs has different functions built into the site to help analyze and filter the data based off the research questions listed above.

Second, interviews were conducted with seven different EWU staff/administrators from Student Affairs and other departments on campus who are responsible for organizing events for EWU students. According to Kvale (2007), the appropriate number of participants to interview is, “as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know” (p. 43). If the number is too small or too large, it will be difficult to make generalizations. The subject’s names and personal information are anonymous to the public. They were asked 11 questions (Appendix B) regarding their experiences with planning events for EWU students and the methods they use to market their events. The conversations were recorded and transcribed.

Discourse analysis was used to analyze the interviews. Discourse analysis is sometimes defined as the analysis of language 'beyond the sentence.' This kind of analysis analyzes 'naturally occurring' language use, not invented examples. Discourse analysis aims at revealing the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of a person (Wood & Kroger, 2000). With respect to the interviews, discourse analysis was used to examine the different thoughts that EWU faculty and staff experts have about why students attend or do not attend the annual local event, Cheney

Mayfest. It was also used to examine their views on the potential role social media can play in enhancing student attendance.

One method used to conduct the interviews was to use attentive hearing. Careful attention should be given to setting the stage for an interview, with a briefing before and a debriefing after the interview occurs (Kvale, 2007). Before the interview started, the IRB consent form was read to the interviewee and the purpose of the interview was explained. The interviewee was given a brief description of what to expect from the interview and told that at any time they could stop the interview or pass on any questions he/she was not comfortable answering. Once the interview was over, the participants were asked if they had any questions and were allowed more time if more discussion was necessary.

Another method used in the interview process was to ask simple questions. According to Kvale (2007), the interviewer's questions should be brief and simple. The questions asked were specific to the research questions listed above and related to the participants experiences and daily responsibilities in his/her job.

Coding was used to determine the different themes from the data gathered from both the survey and interviews. Coding is the process of identifying the themes and attaching labels to them (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This process showed similarities within the data and identified the different themes discussed in Chapter Four.

The mixed methods used in this research project will help gain a better understanding of the audience, namely EWU students. Specifically, they are used to address research questions 1-4. They research findings are discussed in the next chapter.



#### **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter will discuss the data produced from both the survey of EWU students and the interviews conducted with EWU faculty and staff experts. The goal of this study is to find out why EWU students attend or do not attend the annual local event, Cheney Mayfest, and if there is a potential role social media can play in enhancing student attendance at the event. This chapter will attempt to answer research questions 1-4 by analyzing the data from the survey and the interviews.

Both the survey and the interviews will address research questions 1-4 by tapping different perspectives. The survey illustrates the perspectives of the target audience, EWU students, that attend events on or near campus while the interviews tap the perspective of EWU faculty and staff members who plan events for the students.

#### **SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS**

A total of 726 EWU students participated in the survey (answering at least one question but did not complete survey) with 654 students completing all aspects of the survey. The decision was made to analyze only the surveys that were completed. The majority of survey participants were female (69 percent) with 30 percent being male and one percent who preferred not to answer. Most of the respondents (34 percent) were seniors, followed by 26 percent of respondents who were juniors, 13 percent sophomore and 15 percent were freshman. Only 13 percent of the surveyed students were graduate students. Table 1 outlines the demographics of the EWU students who participated in the survey.

**Table 1. Survey Sample Demographics**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>N=654</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	-	-
<i>Male</i>	195	30%
<i>Female</i>	454	69%
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	5	1%
<b>Year in School</b>	-	-
<i>Freshman</i>	99	15%
<i>Sophomore</i>	83	13%
<i>Junior</i>	169	26%
<i>Senior</i>	221	34%
<i>Graduate Student</i>	82	13%
<b>Location of Residency During School Year</b>	-	-
<i>On campus at EWU</i>	111	17%
<i>Off campus in Cheney</i>	250	38%
<i>Off campus in Spokane</i>	242	37%
<i>Other</i>	50	8%

## INTERVIEW DEMOGRAPHICS

The interviews were conducted with seven EWU faculty and staff members. They were selected from different departments on campus such as: Africana Studies, Housing and Residential Life, Eagle Entertainment and Student Activities, Involvement and Leadership (SAIL). These individuals were selected for this interview based on the roles they play in planning events for students at EWU. Each individual plans an average of 70 events per year. The events they plan vary and are usually social events, workshops or leadership and educational programs.

**RQ1: WHY DO EWU STUDENTS ATTEND OR AVOID ATTENDING EVENTS SUCH AS CHENEY MAYFEST?****Survey**

Based on the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, there are various reasons why people attend or do not attend events, such as: location, knowledge of the event and relevancy to their interest. This section will discuss the reasons why EWU students choose to attend or avoid attending events such as Cheney Mayfest. The reasons EWU students gave for attending or avoiding events were: location, knowledge of the event, sense of community and relevancy to their interests. These reasons seem to mirror closely to the “Decision to Attend” study discussed in Chapter Two.

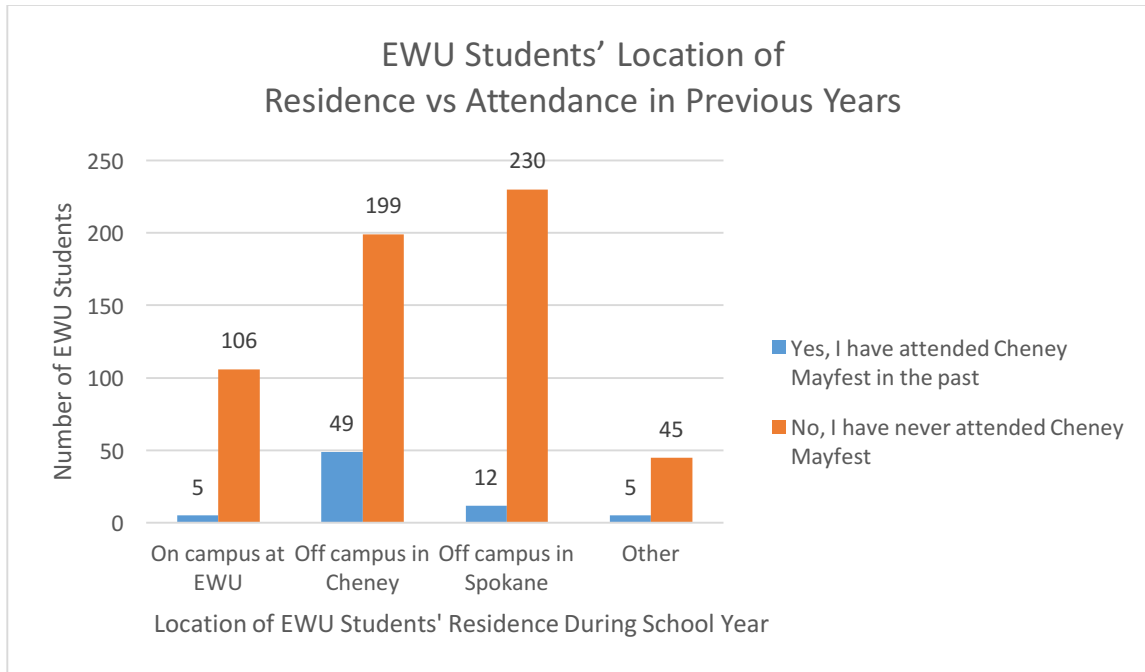
***Location***

As discussed in Chapter Two, the relevant literature notes that location may be a reason why people do not attend events (IAEE et al., 2015; Caudill and Payne, 2014). Due to this finding, it is important to analyze the data to see if there is a relationship between the location of the event and attendance. Survey question four asked, “During the school year, where do you live?” The survey found that 38 percent of respondents live off campus in Cheney with 37 percent living off campus in Spokane. Whether they live on campus at EWU or off campus in Cheney, it is important to note that 55 percent of the surveyed students live in Cheney. Table 1 outlines the location information of the participants in the survey.

Next, the relationship between location of residency during the school year and if the respondents have previously attended Cheney Mayfest was analyzed. Where EWU students live during the school year in comparison to if they have previously attended Cheney Mayfest is shown in Table 2. Only five EWU students stated that they live on campus and have previously

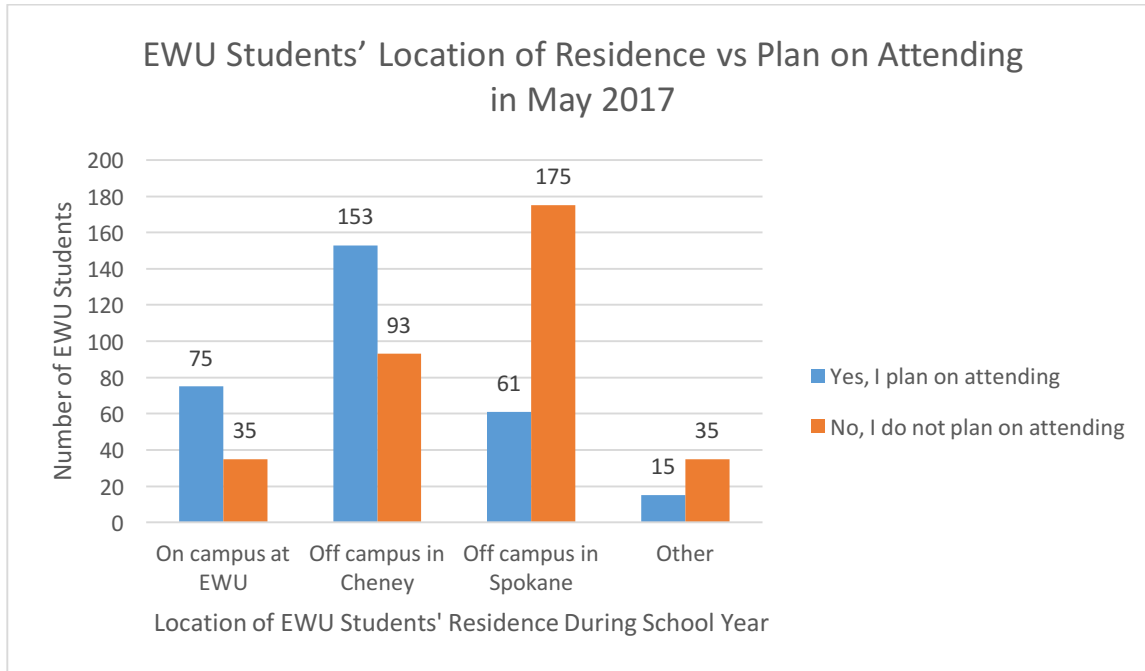
attended Cheney Mayfest, while 106 EWU students that live on campus said they did not attend. For the students that live off campus in Cheney, 49 said they had previously attended and 199 said they have not. It is important to note that the location of Cheney Mayfest is only 0.8 miles away from the dorms on EWU’s campus.

**Table 2. EWU Students’ Location of Residence vs Attendance in Previous Years**



For EWU students that live off campus in Spokane, only 12 students (5 percent) have previously attended Mayfest while 230 students (95 percent) have not. As for the students that live in locations off campus other than the Cheney or Spokane area, five (10 percent) have attended and 45 (90 percent) have not. Based on this data, it can be inferred that students that live on campus are less engaged in events happening in Cheney than students that live off campus in Cheney. Thus, it can be assumed that location may influence the decision to attend events.

**Table 3. EWU Students’ Location of Residence vs Plan on Attending in May 2017**



To see if location plays a factor in the intended attendance of EWU students for the upcoming 2017 event, location of residency during the school year was compared to intent of attending. Table 3 shows the comparison of EWU students’ location of residency during the school year and if they plan on attending Cheney Mayfest in May 2017.

Of the students that live in Cheney (both on and off campus), 228 said they would attend Mayfest this year while 128 students located in that area said they would not be attending. As for the students that live in Spokane and other locations other than Cheney and Spokane, only 76 students said they would attend with 210 saying they would not attend. This means that of the 654 EWU students that participated in the survey, only 304 (46 percent) plan on attending Mayfest in 2017. The percentage of students that said they would attend Cheney Mayfest in the future significantly increased 52 percent compared to EWU students that have not attended in the past. It can be assumed that this survey informed students of the event, influencing their decision to attend in the future.

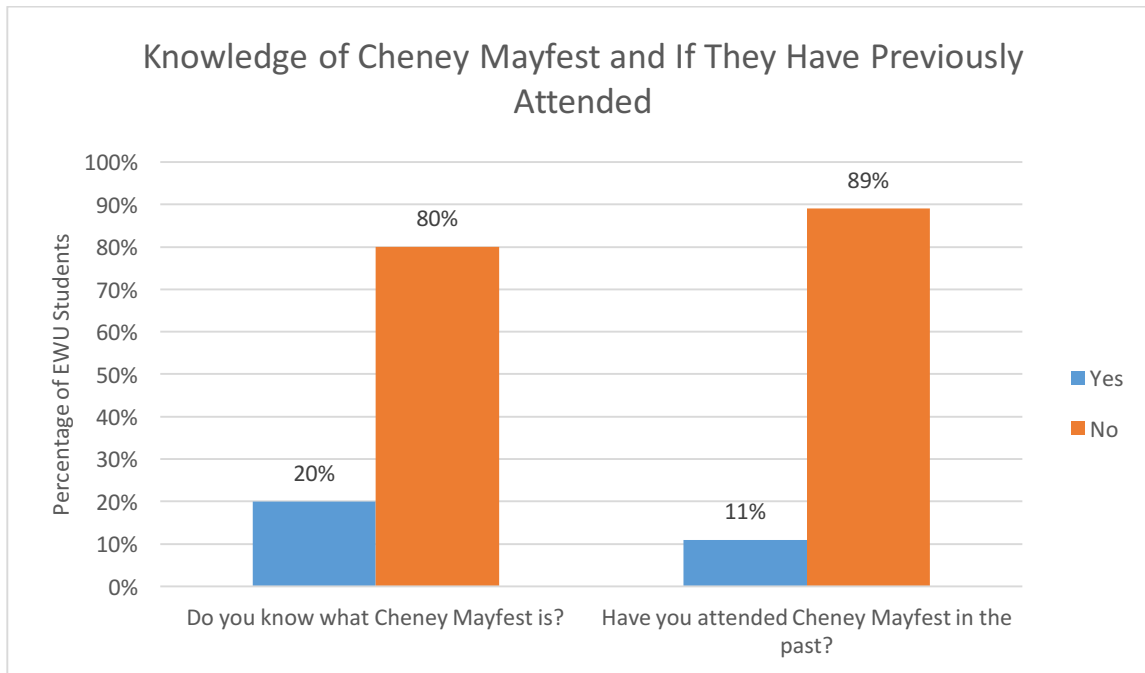
According to the data in tables 2 and 3, students that live in Cheney (both on campus and off campus) are more likely to attend Cheney Mayfest in 2017 than students that live in Spokane or other locations. Although other researchers find that location may be a reason people do or do not attend an event (IAEE et al., 2015; Caudill and Payne, 2014), the data from the survey and the location of Mayfest in comparison to the dorms on EWU's campus suggests that there may be other reasons or factors that are influencing EWU students' decision to attend.

### ***Knowledge of the Event***

Another reason the relevant scholarly and professional research found for why people do not attend events was that they were unaware of the event (IAEE et al., 2015; Maci, 2016). Survey questions 9-14 ask specific questions regarding Cheney Mayfest. These questions were yes or no, or open-ended questions and focused on EWU students' awareness of Cheney Mayfest.

One of the most important questions asked in the survey was if the participants know what Cheney Mayfest is. This is important to know because if they do know what Cheney Mayfest is, then ways to inform them can be evaluated. If they do not know what Mayfest is, ways to inform them of the event can be further evaluated. Table 4 shows how many survey respondents know what Cheney Mayfest is and if they have attended the event in the past.

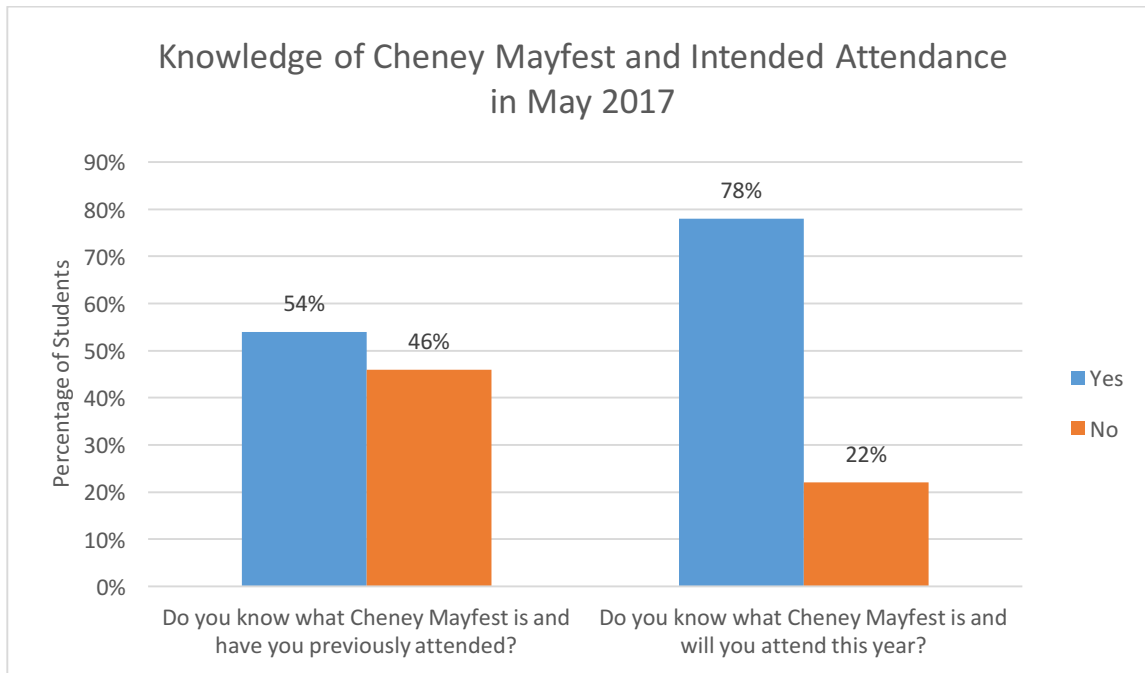
**Table 4. Knowledge of Cheney Mayfest and If They Have Previously Attended**



Based on this data, only 20 percent of respondents knew about Mayfest. Of that 20 percent, only 11 percent have previously attended the event. This suggests that not many EWU students know of Cheney Mayfest and the strategies for marketing events to EWU students need to be further evaluated. More than half of the survey participants were unaware of what Cheney Mayfest is.

Survey question 14 asked, “Do you think you will attend Cheney Mayfest this May?” Forty-seven percent said they would attend this year and 53 percent said they would not attend. Table 5 shows the comparison between respondents that know what Cheney Mayfest is and if they have previously attended the event versus respondents that know what Cheney Mayfest is and stated whether they will attend or not attend in 2017.

**Table 5. Knowledge of Cheney Mayfest and Intended Attendance in May 2017**



From comparing the data to the respondents that have prior knowledge about Mayfest and have previously attended, the percentage of respondents stating they will attend in 2017 rose 24 percent. This means 78 percent of respondents know what Cheney Mayfest is and plan to attend this year compared to 54 percent of respondents that know what Mayfest is and have previously attended. The percentage of not attending Mayfest dropped 24 percent, meaning that only 22 percent of respondents know about the event but will not attend in 2017. This data suggests that more EWU students plan on attending Cheney Mayfest in 2017 compared to previous years.

Being unaware of an event or unaware of what happens during an event may be a reason that EWU students have for not previously attending Cheney Mayfest. The data previously discussed suggests that knowledge of the event may play a role in why the attendance of EWU students has been low.



### *Sense of Community*

One factor found in the data that explains why EWU students have previously attended Cheney Mayfest is community. After analyzing the open-ended responses for question 11, “If you attended the event, why did you attend?” 40 percent of responses stated community as a reason they have previously attended. Other themes that appeared in the data but were not as prominent were: fun environment (20 percent); volunteering/working at the event (14 percent); had interest in the event (11 percent), family friendly (8 percent); and something to do (7 percent). As community is the main theme for this section, some of the other themes will also be seen in the responses of the students such as family friendly and fun environment.

A common reason why EWU students had previously attended Cheney Mayfest was due to the feeling of being a part of the community. For example, one respondent stated, “Because it sounds fun, and like a great opportunity to learn more about where I'm living.” To this student, participating in Mayfest gave him/her an opportunity to learn more about the place they live. This respondent also said that the event sounded fun, which is another reason that influenced their decision to attend.

Another student responded, “As a way for my daughter and I to do something fun and to learn more about the community of Cheney.” Learning about the community with his/her daughter was this student’s reason to attend Mayfest. This event gives them the opportunity to support and learn more about the community along with having fun together. The purpose of Cheney Mayfest is to promote the community and local businesses. For both students, these elements are important when they were deciding whether to attend Cheney Mayfest.

Another student used their background in the Cheney community as their reason to attend Mayfest: “I grew up in Cheney, still live around Cheney, and have kids, so I try to participate in

family friendly community events.” This respondent attended Mayfest to participate in the community, but also experience family-friendly events with their children. Being a community member and wanting to engage their family in the community played a role in this respondent’s decision to attend Cheney Mayfest.

This student reflected on the experience they had when previously attending Cheney Mayfest: “Concert and swing dancing on first street- so fun! Got a group of friends together and went. Also walked the town the next day to see all the vendors and stuff.” The fun experience this student had at the concert the first night of Cheney Mayfest made he/she want to attend Mayfest again the next day. This student got a group of their friends to go and walk around Cheney to visit and support the vendors in the community and other organized activities happening at Mayfest.

These students show that no matter the circumstances or who they are with, they participated in Mayfest because they wanted to be a part of and support the Cheney community. The impact that the community brings to the event influenced these students’ decisions to attend and also involve their families within the community. Because Cheney Mayfest is a family-friendly event, these students felt as though they could bring their children and participate in the event within their community.

### ***Relevant to Interests***

If the topic or point of the event is not relevant to their interests, people will not attend the event (IAEE et al., 2015; Maci, 2016). After analyzing the open-ended responses for question 13, “What would draw you to attend Cheney Mayfest this coming May?” 143 respondents stated the event must be “relevant to their interests” as their reason to potentially attend in the future.

Having activities that are relevant to the college-aged demographic is important for many of the participants. One student stated, “It would depend on the events and attractions that were available. It would have to be things that sounded fun & I thought college students would actually attend.” This student states that they would attend if the event itself would have to be relevant to his/her age and interests. It is important to this student for the events to “sound fun” and other college students to be in attendance. Cheney Mayfest must include things that are relevant to the target audiences’ interests for them to participate and attend.

Another student mentions that they would attend Cheney Mayfest if there was “more information and activities for college aged people to participate in.” This participant would be more likely to attend if they have more information about what to expect before they get there and know that there are activities relevant to their age group. If the activities are not relevant to their interests, they will be less likely to attend.

Each of these students state that if the event is relevant to their interests, they are more likely to attend Cheney Mayfest. Without awareness of the event, the location, having a sense of community or the event being relevant to their interests, EWU students are more likely to avoid attending.

## **Interviews**

The interview participants were asked, “Why do you think EWU students do not attend events on or near campus?” After conducting the interviews, transcribing and coding the responses from the interview participants (Kvale, 2007), the themes discovered were: experience, time and apathy.

### ***Experience***

A common reason that multiple EWU employees gave for why students do not attend events was the experience the event can give to the student. What students encounter or gain when they attend an event may be something that impacts their decision to attend. During one interview, when asked why they thought students do not attend events on or near campus, the participant said, "I think a lot of them don't value the event that's being presented as part of their needed experience. I feel like, they've devoted to studies what they can and have to and after that, they're calling the shots." From this interviewee's point of view, students choose how they use their free time when they are not using it for schoolwork. If the event does not benefit their personal or educational needs, they are less likely to attend. By saying, "...they're calling the shots," it is understood that the student has control over what they attend. Most events at EWU are not required for students to attend so the student ultimately decides whether the experience of attending the event is beneficial to them or not. Attendance at Cheney Mayfest is also not required so the perceived experience the student will have at the event should be considered.

Another interview participant stated,

I think the uniqueness of the event and what I mean by that is that something you don't get to experience all the time. I think that's why the campus drag show is so popular or our lip sync competition is popular. It's not something you just experience all the time. It's got a uniqueness factor to it.

This interviewee believes students choose to attend events that are different and if it is something they want to experience. An event with a "uniqueness factor" to it can impact the experience the student may have and their decision to attend. If the event is uncommon or different enough from other events happening around it, students are more likely to attend. Cheney Mayfest is a unique event in Cheney and there are not many like it in the area.

This interviewee states if the event relates to them or brings them a new experience, they will be more likely to attend:

Yeah, students will – are a hard nut to crack because they are obligated to their studies and when they're free, they want to be free. So what you have to do is present it in a way – present whatever your event is, that either relates to them or promises to them a new experience that's worth their time.

They believe that taking the value of the event and showing how it can benefit the students personally or educationally can help increase their attendance and participation. If the experience of the event or activity is not relevant to their interests, they are less likely to attend. This participant stated, “present [your event] in a way...that either relates to them or promises to them a new experience.” How Cheney Mayfest is marketed to EWU students must relate to their interests and show them the experiences they could have by attending are worth their time.

According to the interviewees' experiences, if the event experience is related to the students' interests and something they want to experience, students will be more likely to attend the event. If the event does not suggest that the experience will be valuable to them, it is unlikely that students will attend the event. The perceived experience that students may expect from events could very well impact their decision to attend.

### ***Time***

Another theme found in the data to help explain why students do not attend events is time. Based on the data gathered from the interviews, it is perceived that students use the time they spend outside of their classes studying as reasons to not attend events. For example, this interviewee stated,

I think part of the struggle with students not attending events is one, their schedules already. Specifically at Eastern, a lot of our students are working a job to help put them through school so that in addition to doing all of their course work is sometimes a little bit of an extra challenge because the time they have free is usually, 'I have to dedicate this to academics or I'm leaving for my job so I can't.'

As EWU students also stated in the survey, time constraints can play a factor in their decision to attend. Other responsibilities or prior commitments can ultimately make the decision for the student whether they should attend an event or not.

Another EWU staff member stated, "I think at Eastern, I find that our students tend to be very busy and what I mean by that is their either working a job or have an internship or part of a student organization so sometimes there is this element of time factor." This statement suggests that students take time into consideration when it comes to deciding whether to attend events on or near campus. Students consider their time to be valuable, so the significance of the event or the amount of time the event will add to their schedule is taken into consideration when deciding if they will attend other events or activities. This interviewee understands that "students tend to be very busy" and time plays a role when choosing what to attend.

The amount of time it takes for a student to get to the event plays a factor according to one interviewee: "EWU is a commuter campus meaning a large portion of our students, roughly 25 percent, commute from outside of Cheney. When students are done with classes they leave town and are very unlikely to stick around for a program at night or on the weekend." This statement suggests that if students commute and are home before the event begins, they are less likely to come back to Cheney for an additional event. Students consider their time to be

valuable, so adding travel time before and after an event can be a reason they do not attend. This statement not only suggests that time plays a factor, but also location, which was previously discussed as a reason why students may not do not attend.

The interviewees and surveyed EWU students both suggest that time can play a factor in their decision to attend an event. The amount of time spent on their education, work and other responsibilities or prior commitments can limit the amount of time they have to attend events. It is important to note the different things happening during Mayfest weekend. For example, that weekend is during midterms at EWU so students may prefer to spend their time studying or working on schoolwork. That weekend is also Mother's Day weekend, so many students whose parents do not live in the area may travel to visit for the holiday.

### *Apathy*<sup>3</sup>

The final theme to be discussed is apathy. Some students, especially ones that do not live on campus, may feel apathetic when it comes to attending events on or near campus. When speaking with an interview participant from Housing and Residential Life, they discussed what the different residents say when asked if they will attend an event,

There is sometimes just a degree of apathy of, 'I have to leave my room' or 'I have to maybe come back to campus' and that just doesn't feel necessary so it's easier to stay in the space that they feel comfortable in than even going to do something that seems like it would be fun just because they are already there.

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<sup>3</sup> Even though the participants use the word "apathy," it may not be the correct word to describe students. Apathy may be a reason why EWU faculty and staff give for students not attending their events, but students are not "apathetic." They may be interested in different things or there may be other things happening on campus that they choose to do over attending events off campus.

This interviewee experiences the different degrees of apathy from residents when it comes to deciding if they will attend events. The lack of interest the student may have for the event can play a role in the decision to attend or not attend. Having to leave their rooms or the comfort of their homes may impact their decision to attend. Cheney Mayfest is located off campus on a Friday night and much of the day on a Saturday. It is possible that students may not want to leave their homes and commute to the event at the start of their weekend.

Another interview participant stated, “A lot of times they just don’t see the value of going outside of their comfort zone, their routine and their horizon to be expanded.” Apathy plays role in this statement because if students have a lack of interest when it comes to going outside of their comfort zone or breaking their routine, they will not attend an event. Cheney Mayfest happens once a year so students may be apathetic to the idea of attending something out of their comfort zone.

The experience the student will have at the event, time constraints and apathy were discovered as reasons why EWU faculty and staff think EWU students decide to attend or do not attend events. If the experience of the event is not what the student is interested in, they will disregard the event and preserve their time for other responsibilities or commitments they have.

### **Summary**

To answer research question one, “Why do EWU students attend or avoid attending events such as Cheney Mayfest?” the data from the survey uncovers different reasons why EWU students attend or avoid attending events. The reasons respondents stated as to why they have or have not previously attended Cheney Mayfest were: location, knowledge of the event, sense of community and relevancy to their interests. Based on the findings of the literature review in Chapter Two, each of these factors were mentioned as a reason why people do or do not attend



an event. The “Decision to Attend” study, Maci (2016) and Chen (2011) found that these factors play a role in their attendees decision to attend an event.

The data gathered from the interviews uncover various perceptions as to why EWU students do or do not attend events on or near campus that are different from the reasons the students gave in the survey. The comments made by EWU faculty and staff revealed that the intended experience, time constraints and apathy play a perceived role in students’ decisions to attend events. Discussion of research question two will further evaluate the specific factors EWU students give for not attending.

## **RQ2: WHAT SPECIFIC FACTORS DO STUDENTS GIVE FOR NOT ATTENDING?**

To better understand the specific factors EWU students give for not attending Cheney Mayfest, the themes discovered from the survey responses need to be evaluated. It is important to note that the themes that were discovered are similar to the themes previously discussed in answering research question one. Research question one asks why students attend or avoid attending events, while research question two asks for specific reasons students give for not attending. The interview participant responses did not answer this research question because it is targeted specifically to the factors that EWU students give. The opinions of the interviewees and why they think EWU students do or do not attend events was discussed in the previous section.

After analyzing the data from survey question 12, “If you have not attended, why is this? That is, what were your reasons for not attending?” many themes were discovered as to why 89 percent (see Table 4) of the survey respondents have not previously attended Cheney Mayfest. The different themes discovered were: awareness of event, location and time constraints.

Seventy percent of the participants stated they were unaware of the event or the activities that happen at the event, followed by location with 11 percent, time constraints with 9 percent and relevancy to interests with 7 percent. Three percent of responses were “N/A,” meaning they have previously attended Cheney Mayfest. Reflecting on the research discussed in Chapter Two with respect to the reasons people do not attend event, the following themes will be discussed: awareness of the event, location and time.

### *Awareness of Event*

According to the “Decision to Attend” study, one reason people do not attend events is because they are unaware of what the event is or what will happen there. Similarly, being unaware of the event is the most prominent theme throughout the survey data as 70 percent of respondents stated they were unaware of Cheney Mayfest. For instance, one student said, “I don't spend a lot of time on campus so I don't hear about many events. If I don't receive an email about it I typically don't even know it exists.” This suggests it may be hard to become aware of events if students are not on campus often. This particular student states that they find out about events happening when they receive an email about it. If he/she does not receive an email, there is a possibility they will not find out about an event at all. The communication methods of EWU students need to be evaluated to understand the most successful way to communicate information to them.

Another student mentioned how their friends and other digital marketing increases their knowledge of events and impacts their decision to attend: “I have never heard of it before, no friends I know go to it and I never recall seeing it on email or social media.” This student was unaware of the event and did not see any advertising for it through their suggested methods of communication: email or social media. These factors were reasons why they had not previously

attended Cheney Mayfest. It is important for this student to know people attending and seeing the marketing for it through mediums they are most familiar with. Fortunately, Cheney Mayfest has a social media presence on Facebook and Instagram account that students and others can go to gain information.

Another student reflects how their schedule may be the reason they were unaware of the event and did not attend: "I never knew it existed because I go to school, work, then home. Have never seen flyers for it, social media posts, etc." He/she states that were unaware of Cheney Mayfest due to a busy schedule. They also note that they did not see any advertisements for Cheney Mayfest through social media, flyers and other forms of marketing. It is assumed that this student prefers to learn about events happening through social media and print marketing.

When asked the same question, another student responded, "I had no idea it existed. I would have loved to go, too. Did not see any flyers or know of anyone going or hear about it from others." Based on this quote, this student was unaware that Mayfest existed due to not seeing any advertising for the event. However, they noted that if they had known about it, they would have attended. He/she relies on advertisements and hearing from others to find out about events happening near them. The advertising of Mayfest needs to be considered based on the preferred communication methods of EWU students.

This student had heard about Cheney Mayfest, but was unaware of what it specifically was: "I never really knew what Mayfest was. I wasn't sure if the events would be fun to attend for people of my age or if it was more for younger children. I also might have just had other things going on." By not knowing more details about what Mayfest is and what the attendees should expect, this student did not attend. They were unaware if Cheney Mayfest had events for their age group and or if it was targeted for younger children. This concern suggests that the

marketing and advertising for Cheney Mayfest must raise the awareness of the event and explain what the attendees should expect before attending.

Being unaware of an event or what will take place at the event was one theme that EWU students stated as to why they did not attend Cheney Mayfest. This relates to the scholarly literature from Chapter Two, which finds that people do not attend events if they are unaware of the event or they are unaware of what will take place at the event (IAEE et al., 2015; Maci, 2016).

When analyzing the data to answer research question three, “What strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students?” the communication methods of the surveyed students need to be evaluated based on the responses in this section.

### ***Location***

Another reason people do or do not attend events is the location in which the event is held (IAEE et al., 2015). Fifty-six survey respondents (11 percent) stated that location played a factor in their decision to attend Cheney Mayfest in previous years.

One student stated, “I live pretty far away. I am a long-distance student who lives in Vancouver, WA.” For this student, living outside of Spokane County can make it hard to attend events that are not near them. Another respondent also mentioned, “My residency is in Hawaii.” It is important to note that EWU has around 3,000 online students each year.<sup>4</sup> Some of the EWU students that were surveyed may be online students and do not live in the surrounding area.

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<sup>4</sup> Personal communication, Jeannette Phillips, Director of Student and Faculty Support for Eastern Online at Eastern Washington University, April 2017.

Another student discussed how traveling to Cheney was not ideal for anything more than attending school: “My commute to Cheney is about 1 hour, which is not practical on non-school days.” Taking into consideration the distance many students may drive to attend EWU and the number of online students EWU has, it may not be possible for them to commute to Cheney for an event that does not relate to their education or their interests. Fifty survey participants stated, “Other” as their location of residency during the school year (Table 1). This means they do not live in Cheney or Spokane during the school year.

Looking at the demographic data presented in Table 1, another factor to take into consideration when considering location is the amount of freshman that participated in the survey. Ninety-nine survey respondents (15 percent) were freshman. This means that a number of these students may not have lived in the area during Cheney Mayfest. One student states, “I haven't lived here in May.” This suggests that the location of EWU students should be carefully evaluated and may play a small role as to why EWU students do not attend Cheney Mayfest.

As previously noted in the discussion addressing research question one, location may be one reason people do or do not attend an event (IAEE et al., 2015; Caudill and Payne, 2014). When comparing the location of Mayfest to the residency of the surveyed students, it can be assumed that there may be other reasons or factors that are influencing EWU students' decision to attend.

### ***Time***

Forty-five respondents (nine percent) from the survey data state how time influenced their decision to not attend Cheney Mayfest: “I've always worked and gone to college. So there isn't a lot of time for me to do extracurricular activities.” This student takes time into consideration when trying to decide whether he/she has time to do other activities while working

and going to school. The time commitment for work and academic studies suggests that how this student spends their time is important to him/her. His/her commitments to their education and work is prioritized over attending other events or activities. Cheney Mayfest is an all-day event on a Saturday. This may be when many students are at their jobs or working on schoolwork and they do not want to spend their time attending events or other activities.

Another student discusses how they worked during Mayfest in previous years, but they also did not know enough about the event: “In the past, I worked during Mayfest time and did not have time to attend. While I know what Mayfest is, I don't know too much about who is there and what they offer.” In this student's situation, not having the time due to work was a factor for why they did not attend Cheney Mayfest. Along with having time restrictions with work, they also mentioned how they knew what Mayfest is but did not know much about “who is there and what they offer.” This shows that time can be a factor as to why students do not attend, but awareness of what the event is and what it entails can also play a role in whether they attend or do not attend Cheney Mayfest.

Another student reflects on their home life and how the responsibilities they have at home influence how they spend their time:

I work full time and am taking 18 credits per quarter. I am also a homeowner, a husband, and have many livestock animals for which I care. This leaves very little time to attend events. I'm also not very involved in the Cheney community, only traveling to that area to attend class.

This student focuses on their prior responsibilities of being a full-time employee and student, a homeowner, husband and farmer. They use their time to tend to those different responsibilities. The amount time this student spends on his responsibilities influences his decision to attend and

takes priority over attending events in a community that he is not involved in. Cheney Mayfest promotes the Cheney community and because this student is not involved in the community, it is not important to them to use their time to attend.

These students show that their responsibilities and the amount of time those responsibilities take play a factor as to whether they are going to attend or not attend an event. Based on the survey research and the students' statements above, it is suggested that students' time is limited and they prioritize their responsibilities over other events happening around them. As the surveyed students stated they may be unaware of Cheney Mayfest or its activities, are not located in Cheney during Mayfest weekend, or may not have time to attend due to work, school or other prior responsibilities.

### **Summary**

After discussing the factors as to why EWU students do not attend Cheney Mayfest, research question two, "What specific factors do students give for not attending?" has been answered. The themes that were discovered from the responses from the surveys were: awareness of event, location and time. Being aware that the event is happening was the most common reason why EWU students have not previously attended Cheney Mayfest. As previously stated, 70 percent of respondents said they were unaware of the annual event or knew of the event, but had no information about it or what to expect. Next, location was a factor as to why EWU students have not previously attended. With online classes and other students living outside of Cheney and commuting to EWU, many students may be unaware of the event or choose to not attend due to the difference in location. Lastly, time plays a factor in their decision to attend events. Whether they are working and attending school, have families to take care of or other responsibilities, finding time to attend an event is not always possible for EWU students.

**RQ3: WHAT STRATEGIES, INCLUDING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES, MAY BE RELEVANT IN ADDRESSING THE FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS?**

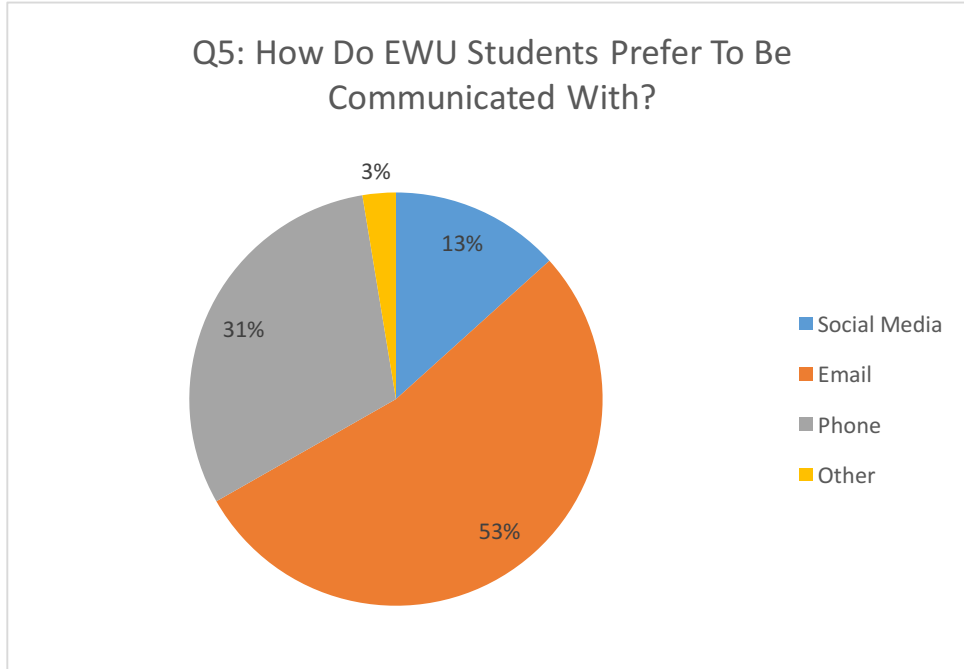
**Survey**

In the discussion of research question two, it was observed that many students mentioned that they were not aware of Cheney Mayfest and did not see advertising for it. To determine what strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by the surveyed students, the following analysis will reveal the different methods EWU students prefer to be communicated with. The preferred method of communication and how they learn about events happening near them can influence their decision to attend Cheney Mayfest.

***Communication Methods of EWU Students***

Survey question five asked EWU students, “How do you prefer to be communicated with?” The question did not ask students who would be communicating with them or what type of information would be communicated to them. Fifty-three percent responded with “Email” as their preferred method of communication with 31 percent who prefer to be communicated with by “Phone.” It is important to note the three percent of respondents that selected “Other.” There were multiple responses to “Other” stating that it depended on who was communicating with them. They gave responses such as: “Depends, if something professional then I'd prefer Email. If it's just friends then phone and social media,” “All of the above,” “Friends on the phone, everything else on email or social media,” “None” and “Any”. Table 6 shows the different percentages of how EWU students prefer to be communicated with.



**Table 6. Survey Question 5: How Do EWU Students Prefer To Be Communicated With?**

Looking at the 13 percent of respondents that selected social media as their preferred way of communication, Facebook was the most selected platform. Eighty-six percent of respondents chose Facebook, with Instagram at 57 percent and Snapchat at 48 percent. Twitter had the lowest amount of responses at 28 percent.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Facebook and Instagram are the top social media platforms used by college students daily with roughly 76 percent of college students using Facebook and 51 percent using Instagram (PEW Fact Sheet, 2017). The data collected from the survey shows that EWU students prefer Facebook and Instagram more than other platforms. Cheney Mayfest currently has a Facebook and Instagram accounts with plans to start a Snapchat account.

### ***How EWU Students Learn About Events***

Looking more specifically at how EWU students learn about events happening near them, survey question eight asked, “How do you learn about events near you?” Table 7 shows the

percentages of responses from students to this question. Forty-six percent of survey respondents said they learn about events through social media. Following social media, 34 percent of respondents said they learn about events “from a friend” and seven percent of respondents use the “internet” as a way to find events near them. If the participant selected “Other”, they were asked to specify how they learn about events near them, and gave answers such as: “Posters hung around campus, or with mass e-mails by the school or supporting organization,” “Posters posted around EWU's campus or the radio,” “Inlander, EWU event calendar,” or “Inlander.”

**Table 7. Survey Question 8: How Do EWU Students Learn About Events Near Them?**

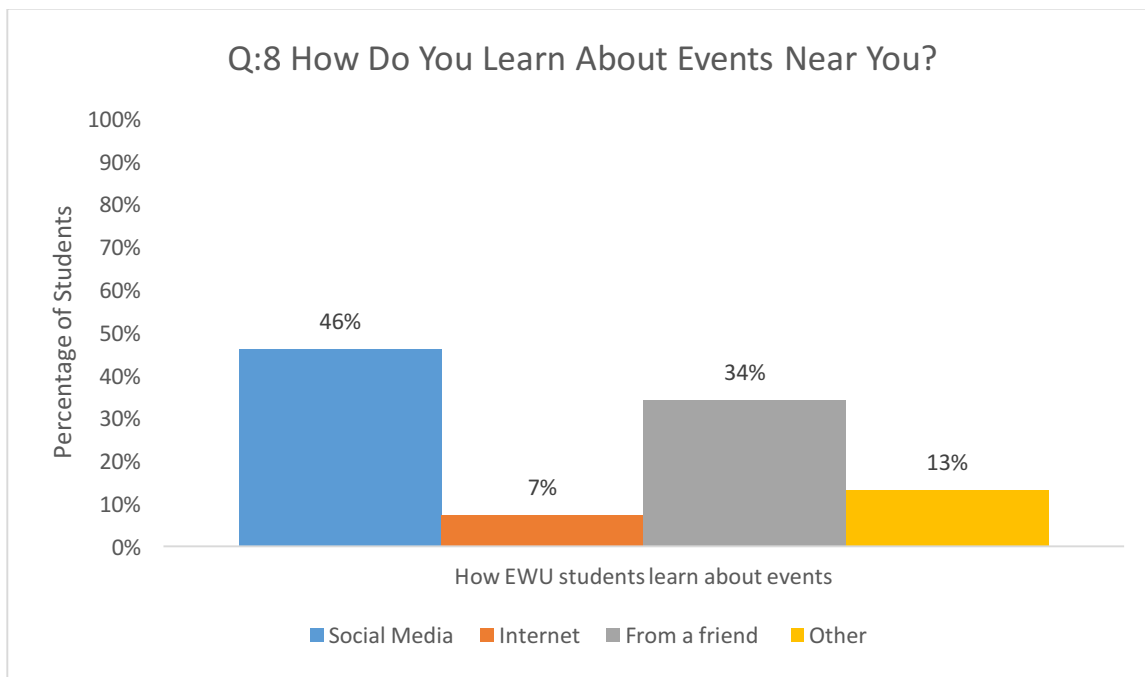


Table 7 shows the different communication strategies EWU students use to gain information about events near them. With 46 percent of EWU students saying they learn about events through social media, it can be assumed that social media may play a role in increasing attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest. It is interesting to note that EWU students’ preferred method of communication and how they learn about events happening near them are

different. This suggests that where they obtain information is different than how they prefer to communicate with others.

### ***The Need for Advertisement***

After analyzing the open-ended responses for question 13, “What would draw you to attend Cheney Mayfest this coming May?” the most dominant theme that appeared in the data was “advertising.” One hundred and twenty-three participants of 387 stated that they were unaware that Mayfest was happening or that it existed, and that advertising was a way for them to become aware and influence their decision to attend.

This student states the different methods he/she uses to learn about events happening near him/her and states that he/she would attend if they had more information about Cheney Mayfest:

I have never heard of Mayfest and have no idea what it is. With more information, I might attend if I can. I read my email and check Facebook regularly. Most of the community events I attend I hear about through Facebook. Most are events that pop up in my news feed and sound interesting.

Using different forms of advertisement can help spread the word and help other students become aware and informed of what Mayfest is and what they can expect. This student states that, “Most of the community events I attend I hear about through Facebook” which is the top method EWU students said they learn about events near them. Having a strong presence on social media can help Mayfest reach students that learn about events through social media.

Another student also said that seeing more information about the event would draw them into attending: “I would be drawn more to attend Cheney Mayfest if I see more information about it. In the past, I did not know about it because I just didn't know about it. I only found out

about Cheney Mayfest last year when my club was invited to perform!” As noted when addressing research questions 1-2, being aware of the event and what the event offers would help increase attendance. This student was not specific about how he/she would like to obtain information about Mayfest like other student responses from the data. Increasing advertising and marketing to EWU students by using their preferred method of communication or their method of obtaining information about events happening near them could help increase their attendance at Cheney Mayfest.

Another student states that advertising the event in a “convenient way” would draw them into attending Cheney Mayfest: “More advertising about it in convenient ways such as social media or emails.” Tapping into the platforms that EWU students are already using such as social media and email is one way to advertise to them. As shown in Table 6, 53 percent of surveyed students prefer to be communicated with by email and 13 percent by social media.

Advertisement of the event can help bring attention or knowledge of the event itself and can help get the details of the event out to the audience that may be unaware of it.

Taking advantage of the different methods of preferred communication and the means by which EWU students gain information about events happening near them is one way to reach out to this specific demographic. As recently discussed, EWU students rely on advertising for them to become aware of events happening around them.

### **Interviews**

Research question three asks what strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students. The EWU faculty and staff that were interviewed were asked, “How do you market your events to EWU students?” The information gathered from this questions shows the different strategies they use to reach EWU students,

based on their experiences. The interviewees explain what they perceive as successful and unsuccessful methods. Many different marketing strategies were discussed in their responses such as: creating flyers and posters, word of mouth, email and social media.

### *Flyers/Posters*

One form of marketing that was mentioned numerous times by EWU faculty and staff was flyers and/or posters. This participant stated that they do print marketing throughout campus and the residential halls:

We do print marketing, so flyers and posters that go around to the residence halls or other places on campus. Usually [flyers and posters] go to pretty public locations, so again, the PUB used to be an ideal place for that and they had the boards already set up in there but now Tawanka, I'd say, is probably now our main target audience because they have the open spaces.

Knowing where EWU students spend time help this interviewee decide where to put posters. This participant stated that they put flyers and posters up in Tawanka Hall, which is currently the university central dining facility. Many offices such as the Parking Services and Disability Support Services are located in Tawanka. Events are also held in the Tawanka conference rooms. By putting posters up in a common area where their target audience may spend a large amount of time, the marketing pieces are more likely to be seen.

Although flyers and posters are one of the most common form of marketing done between each of the staff members interviewed, not every department or organization said it was necessarily successful:

You know, good old flyers that you hang up on the wall, that's uh, that one doesn't work so well. I think email and flyers which is what the older generation grew up on, somewhat, or we transferred into. Now it's being left as an island unoccupied and so a lot of us are still there.

This interview participant feels as though flyers are for the older generation and the generation that EWU students are in may not respond to them as intended. Because many of the people planning events for EWU students may be older than the target audience, focusing on what the type of marketing students prefer to see may help in promoting events. However, it should be noted that flyers and posters were mentioned in the survey by EWU students as a way they would become aware of the event.

Another participant also felt as though flyers are not a successful marketing tool to communicate with EWU students: "Flyers. Flyers do not work. But we spend a lot of money on flyers around this campus. So I mean, Clubs and Orgs, they come here with flyers all the time, with mailbox stuffers. What happens is [the students] open them and they put them in the trash." This response suggests that if flyers are put in the mailboxes of students that live on campus, they are being seen but then thrown away. This interviewee states that flyers are not useful in getting out the event information to its intended audience.

Although flyers and posters seem to be the most used form of marketing to students at EWU, it may not be the most successful form of communicating information to them. The interview participants had mixed views on if it was a successful form of informing EWU students or not. It is interesting to note the faculty and staff members opinions on flyers and poster differ from those expressed by the students who were surveyed. EWU students stated that they would become more aware of Cheney Mayfest if they saw "Posters hung around campus, or

with mass e-mails by the school or supporting organization” and “Posters posted around EWU’s campus or the radio.”

### ***Word of Mouth***

Another form of marketing that the interview participants stated they use is word of mouth, or in-person promotion:

[Our student employees] also do quite a bit of, um, in-person promotion. They will, I would say this year in particular, have been doing a really good job with it, but like easily a couple days of the week at least, they’ll go around campus and try to pick different places and they’ll go and just talk to students an upcoming event or a couple upcoming events.

This department feels as though having their student employees reach out and start conversations with other students helps bring awareness of their upcoming events. This methods helps spread the word but also gives EWU students a way to ask questions and spread the information with others. Cheney Mayfest is not affiliated with EWU which makes it harder for the committee to do in-person promotion.

In the residential halls, word of mouth is primarily used. One interview participant stated, “So for me specifically, my biggest one is word-of-mouth because I think that’s just one of the easiest ways of, if I can spread the word that way, students hear it and they share it a lot easier.” Students can use the information they heard in a conversation with another student, which then can continue to be shared among other students. This participant believes the easiest form of spreading information to EWU students is word of mouth.

Another interviewee prefers to talk to EWU students about the event, but also leaves a print out of information for them to take with them: “I just talk to them about it and I print out

any documentation from like OrgSync that they need to know about the event and get residents to go to those events.” By leaving documentation with the students after talking to them, they have information to refer to in the future if they decide they want to go to the event. The lesson here is that students can share information with others via word of mouth, which in turn informs other students of events such as Cheney Mayfest.

### ***Email***

Email is a prominent communication tool used at EWU and many of the interview participants believe it is successful in reaching EWU students: “Email is probably the most successful since students check that almost every day.” One way to market events directly to students is on a tool they are using daily. This interview participant believes that students check their email regularly and one way to get them aware of upcoming events is by sending them an email. With email being the most preferred method of communication of EWU students, it can be assumed that it is a successful tool in communicating information to them.

To another interview participant, he/she feels as though if they do not use email, they will have poor attendance at their event:

If we do not post flyers around campus or do not email out to our students we will have a poor attendance. I rely on chapter presidents to pass on information to their chapter members and sometimes the presidents may not see my email or may not pass the event info on.

Spreading a large amount of information can be hard for departments that manage multiple organizations within a single department. This interview participant uses email to send information of events happening on or near campus to all the chapter presidents and relies on them to pass on information to their sorority and fraternity members. He/she stated, “If we do not



post flyers around campus or do not email out to our students we will have a poor attendance.” Along with email, this interviewee also believes that if they do not post flyers on campus they will have poor attendance at their events.

As previously discussed, 53 percent of the surveyed EWU students selected email as their top preferred method to be communicated with (Table 6). EWU faculty and staff and EWU students use email as a communication tool, but according to the data from the survey, the method they prefer may depend on who is communicating with them. The Mayfest committee needs to consider all communication methods when trying to reach EWU students.

### ***Social Media***

One marketing tool that each interview participant said their department or organization used was social media. How they used it, how often they used it and the platforms used varied between departments or organizations. EWU students stated that how they learn about events happening near them was through social media (46 percent).

One interviewee stated, “We use social media and so usually it is making a version of the posters or flyers we are sending out, um, and posting that to our social media with maybe a more in depth explanation.” By making a version of the posters or flyers already created and adding an “in depth explanation” in their social media posts, this participant is keeping the marketing materials consistent but reaching out to a larger audience by putting it on their social media channels. A more in-depth explanation about the event in the post can help answer questions students may have about the event that they may not have seen on other marketing materials. Cheney Mayfest creates a poster every year to promote the event. They could create social media posts that are visually similar to the posters and share them on their channels to reach a larger audience.

Another interviewee notes different ways he/she uses social media to get students to participate: “We also do social media, um, to varying levels of skill or varying levels of success... Sometimes we’ll do social media contests, um, sometimes we’ll – on like on our [event] promotion we’ll offer like raffles, just like other incentives to get people to participate.” This interviewee uses other methods to engage students to participate in his/her posts and attend their events through social media. Cheney Mayfest could run contests on their social media channels and have the winner receive their prize at the event itself.

Social media is a tool that college-aged students use daily (PEW Fact Sheet, 2017) and, according to the survey, 46 percent of EWU students use social media to gain information about events happening near them. When asked if their department used social media, all seven interview participants stated “yes.”

### **Summary**

In terms of answering research question three, “What strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students?” the data from the survey reveals that how students prefer to be communicated with and how they learn about events around them may differ. Some students stated their preferred way to be communicated with depended on who they were communicating with. Social media may not be how EWU students prefer to be communicated with by everyone, but when it comes to learning about the events happening around them, social media was the most used method of gaining this information.

The interview participants emphasized strategies such as flyers and posters, word of mouth, email and social media as forms of communication used to promote their events to EWU students. They are unaware of the factors identified by EWU students for attending or not

attending events in the survey, but use their past experiences and opinions about what is successful to market and promote events to EWU students.

The various communication strategies identified by both the survey respondents and the interview participants were similar. Social media, email, print advertising, word-of-mouth and phone are important to consider when determining the appropriate platforms to communicate with EWU students. There may be more than one successful communication method for reaching EWU students.

**RQ4: TO THE EXTENT THAT COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES ARE RELEVANT, IS THERE A ROLE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA?**

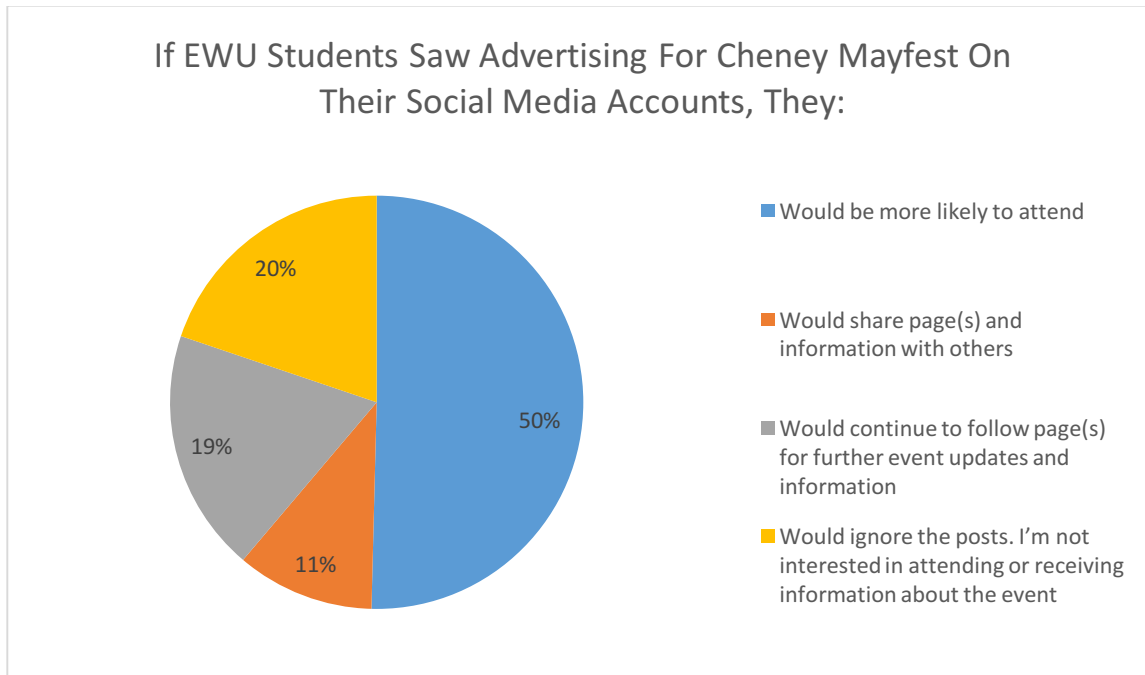
**Survey**

Based on the discussions in the previous sections, research question four can now be discussed. The previous research questions helped explain why EWU students do or do not attend Cheney Mayfest, how they prefer to be communicated with, how they gain information about events near them and what strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students. Research question four will assess whether there is a role for social media in increasing student attendance at Cheney Mayfest.

According to the data discussed in the section on research question three, it is clear that where students obtain information is different from how they expect to communicate with others. As shown in Table 7, 46 percent of EWU students learn about events near them through social media. This indicates that social media could play a role in increasing the knowledge of and attendance at Cheney Mayfest to EWU students.

Table 8 shows how EWU students would respond if they saw advertising of Cheney Mayfest on their social media channels (survey question 15).

**Table 8. Social Media Marketing**



Fifty percent of respondents said they would be more likely to attend if they saw Cheney Mayfest posts and advertisements on their social media accounts while 20 percent said they would ignore the posts because they are not interested in attending or receiving information about it.

Many of the respondents (123) quoted in the discussion of research question three stated that advertising is one way to draw them to attend Cheney Mayfest. Advertising can be conducted in different ways. Of the 123 respondents, 23 percent specifically noted “social media” as the form of advertising in their response.

**Interviews**

When EWU staff were asked if social media plays a role in the attendance of EWU students, three themes arose from the participants’ responses. The themes found were:

measurement, technology and engagement. The answers to this question varied depending on the amount the interviewees' departments or organizations use social media to market to EWU students.

### ***Measurement***

The first theme that appeared from the data was measurement. A concern that two interview participants had was that they could not measure if social media marketing impacted student attendance: "Eh, I actually don't know. Yeah, I don't know because I haven't – I don't know that I've ever heard a student say that I've been here, I'm here because I saw your event on Facebook." This participant states that they have not heard anyone say they saw the event on social media and that is what made them attend. They also stated that they do not have a way to check the analytics. Without knowledge of how to measure the return on investment (ROI), it is hard to say if social media marketing plays an impact or not. If Cheney Mayfest were to use social media to increase attendance, they would have to know how to measure the ROI to see if there is a relationship between the attendance and social media.

On the other hand, another interviewee believes social media does impact the attendance of EWU students at their events: "I feel like you hear a lot [through social media] and you can very easily see how they have their number crunching and the statistics." They believe that with the insights and analytic services that most social media platforms have, it makes it easier see the success of the post and the number of people in the specific target audience it has reached. With that information, the analytics can be compared to the success of the event itself. Cheney Mayfest holds a free raffle each year where attendees are asked to provide information about themselves. By doing this, the committee gets a sense of who is coming to Mayfest each year and an approximate estimate of how many people attend. This information could be compared

with the analytics gathered from the social media platforms used to determine if marketing on social media increased attendance.

Being able to measure the success of the social media marketing in comparison to the success of the event itself is important in determining whether it impacted the increase of attendance. Measuring how many people the posts reached and the amount of engagement people had with the posts compared to the amount of people that attend the event can help measure the success of the social media marketing.

### ***Technology***

Another theme that appeared when evaluating the data involves the growth of technology. When asked if this interviewee thought social media plays a factor in the attendance of EWU students at events they stated,

I really do, I really do. I think if you can paint it correctly and if you can promote it correctly through social media, that's the most – that's the air they breathe.

That's the water they swim in. We have to be able to swim in that same water.

And the – and the digital gap that exists between the established generation and the generation to come is pretty enormous, so we need to translate into vice, I think it's social media.

This EWU faculty member believes departments and organizations should take advantage of social media and technology because that is where their audience is already spending their time. As previously stated, the Pew Research Center found that roughly 76 percent of Facebook users and 51 percent of Instagram users visit these platforms at least once a day. Being aware of what the target audience uses helps easily reach that specific demographic.

Another participant also mentions how using social media and tapping into the medium that EWU students are already using is one way to market events and spread information:

I think it plays a factor in the concept that I think that's where students are living and gathering their information. And so it's really the marketing venue and I think it plays a factor in getting the word out...I just think social media is the vehicle now to get information out.

According to the data from the survey, 46 percent of EWU students gain information about events happening near them through social media. Because social media is one method where students gather information, using it as the platform to market events is one way for them to become aware of events. If marketing is done in other formats that they use less frequently or do not prefer, they may not see it or even be aware that the event is happening. This interviewee states, “[social media is] where students are living and gathering their information,” so having a presence on those channels may increase the knowledge of the event and their attendance.

This next interviewee believes that social media marketing *may* play a factor on the impact of attendance:

Social media can play a factor at times. If you watch our SAIL Facebook page we have around 3,000 followers but our posts only reach a few hundred. The algorithm that Facebook uses definitely messes with our viewership and we don't get to market on social media like we want to unless we pay for extra views.

This shows that there may be other factors that get in the way of reaching the potential audience that cannot be controlled. When posting to Facebook and other platforms that use an algorithm, it is important to note that not all the people that like the page will see the posts or the event. The algorithm social media platforms use scans and collects all posts in the last week by each of the

user's friends, followers and the pages they like. The algorithm then ranks the posts to what it believes to be the precise order of how likely the users are to find each post worthwhile. This can prevent the user seeing what some of the pages they like are posting (Oremus, 2016). One participant stated, "we don't get to market on social media like we want to unless we pay for extra views" because of how the algorithms work. This means a budget may be needed for social media marketing. Cheney Mayfest and other social media users should keep this information in mind when using platforms that use an algorithm.

Another interviewee discusses how technology may have an impact on EWU students not attending events: "I think that technology has really impacted student's willingness to go to events because everything that they want, they can get at the tip of their fingers with their smart phones and so I think that plays a factor." If students have access to something similar on the internet or their smartphones without having to leave their homes, they may be less likely to attend. The uniqueness of the event and whether they can receive the same experience "at the tip of their fingers with their smart phones" or not could impact their decision to attend. Technology has allowed people to learn about different things without having to go out and experience it themselves. Luckily, the experience that Cheney Mayfest can bring to its audience is unique and not something that can be found through technology. Technology and the use of social media is only a bridge to promote the event to EWU students.

Technology can impact the decisions people make due to the amount of information they can get from using it and how fast technology is changing. These interviewees believe social media can both play a role and not play a role in the attendance of EWU students at the event. The reasons given for why social media may not be successful in playing a role in the attendance of events is important to consider, but may not be reasons for Cheney Mayfest to avoid using it.



### *Engagement*

The last theme that emerged from the data is engagement. When asked if social media impacted the attendance of students at their events, this interview participant stated,

I do. Uh, it's usually our first go-to if we're doing a large scale event and maybe attendance hasn't gotten quite where we want. Maybe at the doors opening we'll send a blast out just to say like, 'hey don't forget this is happening' and we can usually expect another wave of people to show up for that.

As stated above, social media can be used as a tool to increase attendance once the event has already begun. Since students are already using social media for their own entertainment, using social media to remind them that an event is occurring near them worked to increase the attendance for this department's events. Engaging with their audience through social media helps remind them and bring awareness of the event. The demographic of Cheney Mayfest's target audience, EWU students, already use social media to gain information about events happening near them. With engagement on social media before and during the event, social media may help increase the attendance during Cheney Mayfest.

To this participant, it can be perceived that Facebook is the best social media platform to market to EWU students because their students allow more engagement of different communities on Facebook compared to other platforms:

Facebook seems the one that students are more open to having everybody a part of and then the other social medias are where they're more selective of who gets to be a part of that community. So, I think that's where Facebook has been more successful for us, um, just because it does allow those things to happen, so yeah, it does play a big role.

EWU students that follow this department on different social media platforms have revealed that Facebook is the platform where they allow the information they post or receive to be shared with others. Department accounts on platforms such as Snapchat or Twitter might not have as many students following them because they may not want that part of their social world to be more private. The platforms that Cheney Mayfest currently uses and may use in the future should take this perspective into consideration when monitoring the amount of engagement from their audience.

Social media has allowed this interview participant's department to reach out to another demographic, EWU students' parents, and create engagement between them and their children:

Because we post so many of our events on like Facebook and things like that, we actually have a lot of parents that will see that and then reach out to their child or their student and say, 'hey, like, you really love this thing, like go check this out. This sounds really cool' Um, and so it's been a really neat way of seeing families somehow still be involved in their child's life.

By promoting their events on Facebook, this department learned that more than just EWU students follow their pages which allows for more conversation and a larger audience to learn about their event. This also allows more engagement on their page to help reach a larger audience and spread the event information to their students. The current audience Cheney Mayfest has on their social media platforms consists of community members that may not be students at EWU. If others see information about the event and know EWU students in the Cheney/Spokane area, they may share that information with them and help increase the attendance of both community members and EWU students.

## **Summary**

To recap, research question 4 asked, “To the extent that communication strategies are relevant, is there a role for social media?” Based on the data from the survey and the interview participants, a role for social media has been identified. As previously discussed, the data in Table 8 shows that 50 percent of survey respondents would be likely to attend if they saw posts and advertisements about Cheney Mayfest on their social media accounts. Moreover, the survey results as shown in Table 7 shows 46 percent of respondents use social media as a way to learn about events happening near them. This data and the factors EWU students gave that would draw them to attend the event suggest that using social media as a way to reach EWU students could increase their attendance at Cheney Mayfest.

The interview participants have noted how social media can play a role in impacting student attendance at their events. The different themes that emerged from the responses of each participant about the role social media plays in attendance of events were measurement, technology and engagement. Although there were two interview participants that did not know how to measure the success of social media in comparison to the attendance at their events and felt that social media may not have increased the attendance, a majority of participants stated that social media can play a role in increasing attendance at events.

## **DISCUSSION**

Now that the research findings have been analyzed and discussed, research questions 1-4 have been answered and a role for social media has been identified. The answers to the research questions are based on the data collected from the surveyed EWU students and interviews conducted on EWU faculty and staff who regularly plan events for EWU students. The interview

responses are based on the experiences and opinions of the faculty and staff members as they do not know the specific factors that EWU students gave for attending or not attending events. The interviewee responses helped answer the research questions from a different perspective than the perspective of EWU students.

The reasons why EWU students attend or avoid attending events was similar to the factors that EWU students gave for not previously attending Cheney Mayfest. This was an interesting observation and it is important to note because some students may say that one factor, for example location, may be why they did not attend Mayfest in the past. This factor could also be a reason other students have previously attended or intend on attending Cheney Mayfest.

When comparing the data from both the survey responses and the interviews, there were differences and similarities to the answers to the research questions. For research question one, the perspective that the interviewees had about why EWU students attend or avoid attending events was different than the reasons EWU students gave in the survey. One reason both the students and employees gave was time. From the survey data, it is suggested that time constraints due to a busy schedule and other responsibilities are a factor as to why EWU students do not attend events. The interview participants discussed how time plays a role in the students they work with or plan events for and that students prioritize their time based on the other responsibilities they have such as school or work.

In comparison to the research findings discussed in Chapter Two, specifically focusing on the reasons why people do or do not attend events, the themes that were discovered in the survey data were similar. For example, location, awareness of the event, sense of community and relevancy to the audiences' interests were themes that were also discussed in Chapter Two emerged from the data. One reason that the literature found for why people do or do not attend

events that was not found in the survey data was cost. It can be assumed that cost is not a factor in the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest because the event is free to attend. The other factors mentioned above were important to EWU students when deciding whether to attend or not attend.

For research question three, “what strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students?” the interview participants emphasized strategies such as flyers and posters, word of mouth, email and social media are the form of communication they use to promote their events to EWU students. In the survey, EWU students mentioned the same forms of marketing as ways they obtain information about events near them. The interview participants were not exposed to the survey data, so it is interesting to note that their experiences and opinions are similar, with some differences to what EWU students prefer. Two interviewees stated that flyers and posters do not work as well when marketing their events to EWU students. According to survey question eight, “How do you learn about events near you?” students that noted “Other” stated reasons such as “posters hung around campus” as their way of learning about events near them.

In terms of research question four and if there is a role that social media can play in increasing the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest, both the survey and interviews suggest there is a role for social media to play in increasing the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest. EWU students prefer learning about events happening near them through social media. When asked what they would do if they saw posts and advertisements about Cheney Mayfest on social media, 50 percent of respondents said they would “be more likely to attend.” The survey data discussed and the factors EWU students gave for why they would or would not attend an event suggest that using social media as a way to reach EWU students could increase

their attendance. Looking at the interview responses, five of the seven participants stated that social media can play a role in increasing attendance of EWU students at events.

Now that research question four has been answered and a role for social media has been identified, the research questions pertaining to a social media strategy (RQ 5-6) can now be addressed. The different communication strategies EWU students prefer and the views of the interview participants regarding what are successful and unsuccessful ways to market to EWU students should be taken into consideration. Even though a role for social media was identified, it is not the only way to communicate information to EWU students or to increase attendance at events such as Cheney Mayfest. Other marketing and communication strategies discussed such as flyers, posters and emails should be taken into consideration when creating an overall marketing strategy for Cheney Mayfest.

## CHAPTER 5: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLAN

This chapter outlines a social media marketing plan for Cheney Mayfest based on the literature discussed in Chapter Two and the research conducted on EWU students, faculty and staff discussion in Chapter Four. The analysis of the data in Chapter Four provides a rationale for developing a social media marketing plan. The results from the survey and interviews concluded that social media may well play a role in increasing attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest. Research questions five and six are specifically related to a social media plan and will be answered in this chapter.

Although social media is one of the preferred methods EWU students gave for gaining information about events, it is not the only way to reach them. The following social media marketing plan is only one part of a successful marketing and communications plan. According to the survey data, students also learn about events from their friends, flyers and posters, email and internet searches. These marketing strategies can be incorporated with social media to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign and extend its reach to EWU students. These forms of advertising may also help promote the different social media accounts.

### **RQ5: IF THERE IS A ROLE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA, WHAT BEST PRACTICES/GUIDELINES CAN INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLAN TO ENGAGE EWU STUDENTS?**

To date, the Cheney Mayfest committee has had no plan or structure for their social media marketing. Previously, the Mayfest committee would post when they could and the content of the posts were not engaging or thought out enough to reach their target audience<sup>5</sup>. The

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<sup>5</sup> Personal communication with Douglas LaBar, January 2017.

following social media marketing plan was created based on the best practices of social media for non-profit organizations to develop a social media strategy. These best practices were gathered from multiple social media experts and are considered best practices based on their research and experiences. This plan will provide ways to increase the knowledge and participation of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest.

Based upon the research discussed in Chapters Two and Four, the following plan proposes the use of social media to increase the attendance of EWU students at Mayfest. The discussion consists of an overview of the proposed plan; identifying the target audience; current social presence; SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis; goals; strategies; platforms; implementation and engagement; monitoring; budget; tuning and return on investment.

### **Overview of Social Media Marketing Plan**

Cheney Mayfest uses different social media outlets to reach their target audience. The primary focus of this social media marketing plan is to use social media as an outlet to find, engage and motivate EWU students to attend Mayfest.

Social media best practices will be used to achieve the goals identified in this plan. Referring to research question five, “If there is a role for social media, what best practices/guidelines can inform the development of a social media marketing plan to engage EWU students?” the best practices for social media are discussed throughout this social media marketing plan. These best practices include identifying the audience; a SWOT analysis; determining goals; content strategy; choosing the right platforms; and engagement. The following plan also describes the process of how to track and measure the efforts which will help

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in answering research question six, “What metrics would be used to determine the effectiveness of these strategies?” The actions listed throughout this plan can help increase the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest.

As explained throughout this marketing plan, social media can be used to help observe, interact, engage and influence the current and future audience of Cheney Mayfest. These best practices are designed to help promote the event and increase the attendance of the target audience at the event.

### **Target Audience**

Identifying who the target audience is for non-profit organizations can be hard when most non-profits state that their audience is the “general public” (Johnston, 2015). Having the “general public” as the target audience means that the audience may be too broad and the information being promoted may not be seen by anyone that may be interested in attending.

As stated by Holt (2016), before creating the copy and content for future posts, it is important to think about how the target audience is using social media. For example, if they’re on Twitter, they’re probably looking for a small, quick amount of information. Knowing how to use each social media platform and understanding what type of content is best for each site is important when working within a specific target audience (Holt, 2016; Johnston, 2015).

Cheney Mayfest’s current audience on social media consists of current and past Mayfest attendees that are interested in the event in some capacity. Mayfest targets and captures the unique interest of many different ages. These ages can range from young children and their families wanting to attend and participate in Mayfest, the community of Cheney that likes to support local events and EWU students who are unaware of the event and members in other

surrounding areas. This social media marketing plan is designed for the target audience of EWU students with the intent of increasing their attendance at Cheney Mayfest.

### **Current Social Presence**

Cheney Mayfest began using social media in 2013. It is useful to examine how Mayfest is performing on the individual platforms they currently use. There are five key metrics for auditing the current social media presence: sentiment analysis; reach; post frequency; feedback and average response time (Barker et al., 2013). These metrics are based on the selected timeframe in which the platforms are being evaluated. A “sentiment analysis” shows the total percentage of positive, neutral and negative mentions or comments during the time frame evaluated. “Reach” indicates the total number of likes received on the posts and should be tracked as the audience increases to see the impact of the posts. “Post frequency” measures how often the organization posts on each platform. “Feedback” identifies the number of comments, likes or replies to content posted on the social media platforms. These numbers show how often the audiences engage in the social media efforts. “Average response time” measures the response time to audiences’ comments on the organizations different platforms (Barker et al., 2013). These key metrics should be taken into consideration when auditing Cheney Mayfest’s current social media presence. The results will help identify where the successes and pitfalls are of current and past efforts.

Based on these key metrics for auditing a social media presence, I audited Cheney Mayfest’s social media presence from the previous year, February-May 2016. The social presence during this time frame is shown in Table 9.

**Table 9. Social Presence from February-May 2016**

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Sentiment</b>	<b>Reach</b>	<b>Post Frequency</b>	<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Average Response Time</b>
Facebook	Positive: 80% Neutral: 15% Negative: 5%	105 likes	Average once a week (when active)	Average 1 like per post Average 1 comment per post	15 minutes
Instagram	Positive: 80% Neutral: 15% Negative: 5%	274 likes	Average once a week (when active)	Average 7 likes per post Average 1 comment per post	15 minutes

Cheney Mayfest’s social presence from February-May 2016 shows that their investment of time and engagement of their audience on social media is low. Between February and May 2016, Cheney Mayfest’s Facebook page received a total of 105 likes received on their posts. Mayfest’s Instagram account had 274 likes, showing there was more engagement with posts on Instagram than on Facebook. The post frequency shows that Cheney Mayfest posted on average once a week, but it should be noted that they were not consistent on posting throughout the timeframe analyzed. The amount of feedback received (likes, comments, etc.) was also low with an average of one post like and one comment on Facebook. The feedback increased on Instagram with seven likes per post and one comment per post. This social presence analysis shows that Mayfest’s Instagram account has more engagement than Facebook, but both are showing low efforts in reaching their audience on social media.

An audit of the social media presence should be reevaluated after the social media marketing plan has been implemented. Reevaluating the social media presence will help indicate

whether the social media efforts are improving and if the audiences, specifically EWU students, are being reached.

### **Current SWOT Analysis**

SWOT, which stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, is an analytical framework that shows a company or organizations challenges and new markets or opportunities (Fallon, 2017). SWOT analyses are often used during strategic planning. These analyses focus on the four elements that make the acronym (strength, weakness, opportunities and threats) and allow organizations to identify the forces influencing a strategy, action or initiative. Knowing these positive and negative elements of the organization can help non-profits more effectively communicate what parts of a plan need to be recognized (Fallon, 2017).

By assessing Cheney Mayfest's social media resources, the following Social Media SWOT Analysis (Table 10) identifies Mayfest's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats on the social media platforms they currently use: Facebook and Instagram. The SWOT analysis below was determined on the analysis of the current social media efforts of the Cheney Mayfest committee.

**Table 10. Cheney Mayfest Social Media SWOT Analysis**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast response time</li> <li>• Many different events and activities to post about</li> <li>• Presence on platforms that the target audience uses</li> <li>• Unique, small town event</li> <li>• Social media platforms are where audience goes for information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of posts</li> <li>• Lack of variety of posts</li> <li>• Minimal engagement with audience</li> <li>• Limited people to run accounts</li> <li>• Website is new so most information for the audience is taken from Facebook</li> <li>• Lack of advertising on social media platforms</li> <li>• Lack of social media management</li> <li>• Low knowledge of what event is</li> <li>• No measurement of ROI</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grow audience in Cheney community including EWU students</li> <li>• Grow audience in Spokane and surrounding areas</li> <li>• Larger presence on social media platforms</li> <li>• Inform audience of what to expect/activities happening at Mayfest</li> <li>• Can refer audience to website</li> <li>• Increase website traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occurs during Mother’s Day weekend</li> <li>• Other local events happening around the same time with a bigger following such as Bloomsday</li> </ul>

Developing a fuller awareness of Cheney Mayfest’s SWOT analysis can help focus on the strengths, identify the weaknesses and turn them into opportunities, minimize threats and take advantage of possible opportunities available. Strengths can identify what advantages Mayfest has, what makes them unique and what they are successful at. The weaknesses show what could be improved or avoided in future efforts. Having a new website can be considered a weakness because it does not have enough information to inform its audience and many people may not know it exists. Opportunities can take weaknesses and make them positive. For example, a weakness Mayfest has is the lack of posts or variety of posts. This can become an opportunity to

create posts that inform Cheney Mayfest's audience of what to expect and what activities are happening at Mayfest. The threats identified cannot be prevented because they cannot be controlled, but they should be kept in mind when considering the low attendance of EWU students (Fallon, 2017).

### **Goals**

Non-profit organizations are known to have goals which is what the event is usually created around. The goals of non-profits are clear and shown through different marketing strategies and at the event itself. Like non-profit organizations, social media strategies should also have a goal. According to Johnson (2015), it is important for the organization to determine what their goals are and how the goals will be accomplished using social media. Social media provides opportunities for connection that other marketing strategies may not, including the importance of using social media for community engagement (Johnston, 2015).

Social media should complement other marketing strategies, not replace them. Incorporating the event's social media presence into other marketing materials keeps the consistency and can lead the viewers to more information (*How to get more people to your events*, n.d.).

Based on the factors EWU students gave for attending events, the current social media presence (Table 9), the SWOT analysis (Table 10) and social media best practices for non-profits, the following social media goals are designed to help increase attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest:

- Motivate attendance and increase the knowledge of the event to EWU students
- Promoting Cheney Mayfest's purpose and day-of events to audiences
- Use the social media platforms preferred by the target audience

- Increase interaction with audiences through social media
- Measure and track effectiveness of social media

These social media goals will help bring awareness of the event to EWU students and may impact their decisions to attend.

### **Strategies**

Johnston (2015) states when creating a content strategy, focus on storytelling that gets the message across. A good place to start would be by examining past posts to see what has performed well and what types of content get the audience engaged (Johnston, 2015). Develop different content categories for social media that can be cycled through on a regular basis for more variety. Johnston (2015) suggests categories for non-profit events such as volunteer spotlights, different events taking place at the event, important information about the upcoming event and contests being held prior-to or during the event. According to the survey, EWU students are unaware of the different activities happening at Cheney Mayfest. Johnston's suggested categories for non-profit events could help inform students of what they can expect.

Johnston (2015) also states no matter which platform is being used, there should be a variety in the posts. Examples of this are pictures or graphics, videos, text and links. Visual content can often reach the audience emotionally in a way that text alone cannot. Capturing snapshots and short videos on phones or cameras creates content to share powerful moments from previous events which can give the audience a behind-the-scenes look at what they can expect at the next event (Johnston, 2015).

Another way Johnston (2015) suggests maintaining the content and staying organized is to create a social media content calendar. A content calendar helps plan and schedule social media posts in advance. If more than one person is working on the content for social media, a

content calendar will help manage planning of different campaigns and preparing materials in advance (Johnston, 2015).

Just because an event is over does not mean the conversation about the event must stop. At the very minimum, sharing the outcome of the event and thanking everyone that was involved in making it happen adds personality to the social media account and brings emotion to the posts. Sharing photos from the event can help encourage others to want to attend and participate next year (*How to get more people to your events*, n.d.; IAEE et al., 2015; Johnston, 2015). Photos show what they can expect from the event which helps increase the participation and attendance of the event (*How to get more people to your events*, n.d.; IAEE et al., 2015).

Cheney Mayfest should pursue a set of strategies for its social media marketing campaign to achieve the goals of the social media marketing plan. The following strategies are based on the best practices discussed above and can help meet the goals previously stated:

- Post information about Cheney Mayfest relating to the factors EWU students give for attending or not attending events
- Promote the purpose of the event and what will occur
- Create a posting calendar to plan for different types of posts and content
- Use platforms EWU students prefer to use, such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. The survey identified Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat as the social media platforms students prefer to be communicated with
- Staying up-to-date with social media to determine where Cheney Mayfest is being mentioned, who is talking about it and what attracts its audiences to Mayfest
- Engaging with the audiences by establishing a virtual community



These strategies will help meet the goals identified for this social media marketing plan to increase the knowledge of the event and the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest.

### **Platforms**

By identifying the target audience, this allows the organization to learn more about that audience and how they interact with social media. According to Johnston (2015), knowing who the demographic is can help identify what platforms they are most active on and which platforms the non-profit organization should be using. Using every social media platform is not as effective as only using the platforms the target audience prefer. This creates more work for the organization instead of focusing on the specific audience and their needs (Johnston, 2015). The Pew Research Center and Miller (2015) state that Facebook remains to be the top social media platform used with 96 percent of non-profit organizations ranking it in their top three used social media platforms.

The social media platforms suggested that Cheney Mayfest use have been chosen based on research conducted in Chapter Four. The survey results identified that the social media platforms students prefer to be communicated with most are Facebook (86 percent), Instagram (57 percent) and Snapchat (48 percent). Facebook and Instagram are the platforms which have the greatest ability to reach and interact with all audiences over all age groups. The Pew Research Center (2017) identified roughly 76 percent of Facebook users and 51 percent of Instagram users visit these platforms at least once a day. Snapchat would be a good platform to create a presence on based on the target audience.

### **Implementation and Engagement**

Social media is a place to capture people's attention, connect with supporters and build communities. Engagement should be a priority when using social media for non-profit

organizations (Johnston, 2015). While the tone may be more formal on other outlets, social media is a good place to cultivate a personable brand voice that helps supporters feel connected (Johnston, 2015). Social media focuses on people connecting with people so creating a persona and adding voice to all social media interactions helps build that connection.

Using hashtags is one way to create conversation around an event (*Top 10 best practices on how to use social media to promote your event*, 2010). Because of this, it is important to designate what the event hashtag will be before the event takes place. If not, the audience may not understand what the hashtag is for or get it confused with other hashtags similar to it (*Top 10 best practices on how to use social media to promote your event*, 2010). To reach the audience and become popular among the different social media platforms, advertise the hashtag in advance across all channels by putting it on posts and other marketing materials to reach a broader audience (Johnston, 2015; *Top 10 best practices on how to use social media to promote your event*, 2010). The hashtag will help increase all conversation around the event and help attendees connect and spread the word (*Top 10 best practices on how to use social media to promote your event*, 2010).

Creating an event on Facebook to help promote the non-profit event creates an easy way to invite friends and potential attendees and it also makes it easy for the audience to share with their friends. It creates a central location for attendees to begin to connect and share their excitement for the event and is an efficient way to get them engaged in the conversation (*Top 10 best practices on how to use social media to promote your event*, 2010).

The above goals, strategies and platforms have been taken into consideration when creating the following social media platform-specific strategies. This section of the social media marketing plan indicates how the content will be generated efficiently and effectively for each

social media platform. The platforms chosen below were chosen as the optimal means for implementing the Cheney Mayfest's social media goals and strategies based on the results from the research conducted on EWU students, faculty and staff in Chapter Four.

### ***Facebook***

Facebook is the most popular social media platform for college students (van Beynen & Swenson, 2016). It is the best suited platform for interacting with existing and potential users. Cheney Mayfest should use its presence on Facebook to strengthen the brand by improving brand awareness and recognition. Facebook can also help Mayfest interact with its audience to generate meaningful discussion and to receive feedback from their audience. Facebook can be a hub to other social media platforms which makes it the most interactive and receptive tool Mayfest has.

The following Facebook strategies will help achieve Cheney Mayfest's social media goals:

- Post content that brings awareness of the event and is relevant to the interests of EWU students and Mayfest's current audiences
- Post once a day
- Post a variety of content including photos, videos, articles and news releases
- Respond to the audiences' questions and comments in a timely fashion
- Create a Facebook event for Cheney Mayfest
- Encourage sharing and interaction with audience
- Monitor and track the analytics of each post to see what types of posts are more successful for the audiences

### ***Instagram***

Instagram is a free online photo sharing and social network platform that was acquired by Facebook in 2012 (Hiltin & Tan, 2012). Instagram allows members users to upload, edit and share photos and videos with other members. It is a platform relying on visual content. One way to reach specific audiences on Instagram is through hashtags. Including a hashtag in a post on Instagram creates a link that the audience can click and view all the posts that have been shared using that hashtag (Hiltin & Tan, 2012). Having an active Instagram account with useful and interesting content can increase the levels of engagement with your audience.

The following Instagram strategies will help achieve Cheney Mayfest's social media goals:

- Post content that brings awareness of the event and is relevant to the interests of EWU students and Mayfest's current audiences
- Post content 2-3 times a week
- Use hashtags relating to your content
- Encourage interaction with audience
- Post visually appealing images/videos
- Monitor and track the analytics of each post to see what types of posts are more successful for the audiences

### ***Snapchat***

Snapchat is a mobile app that allows users to send and receive "self-destructing" photos and videos (Magid, 2013). This social media platform can provide a live preview of the event and take the audience behind the scenes of planning the event or the event itself. Snapchat also encourages its audience to snap pictures or videos from an event that the organization is hosting

or sponsoring. User generated content will provide any organization with a unique perspective on what their audience views as important (Holtz, 2014).

The following Snapchat strategies will help achieve Cheney Mayfest's social media goals:

- Snap content that brings awareness of the event and is relevant to the interests of EWU students and Mayfest's current audiences
- Snap content 3-4 times a day the week before event
- Snap content of interest more heavily during Cheney Mayfest weekend and promote the activities happening at the event
- Create a Snapchat filter for the audience to interact with during Cheney Mayfest
- Monitor and track the analytics of each post to see what types of posts are more successful for the audiences

The factors EWU students gave for attending or not attending events such as Cheney Mayfest should be acknowledged in the different types of information posted across all platforms. For example, the purpose of the event should be promoted as well as the different activities happening at Mayfest and how it may be relevant to the audiences' interests. Encouraging engagement across all platforms can help establish a virtual community and gain valuable feedback from past and future Cheney Mayfest experiences.

### **Summary**

This social media marketing plan was created based on the best practices of social media for non-profit organizations and drew from multiple social media expert sources. The goals and strategies identified in this social media marketing plan should help increase the knowledge of the event and the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest. Social media can be used to help observe, interact, engage and influence the current and future audience of Cheney Mayfest.

The best practices used to design this marketing plan should help in achieving the goals of the social media marketing plan and help increase the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest.

The target audience has been identified, an audit of the current social media presence and a SWOT analysis has been conducted on Mayfest's previous social media efforts and the implementation of how the selected platforms should be used has been identified. The platforms chosen for this social media marketing plan were chosen as the optimal means for implementing the Cheney Mayfest's social media goals and strategies. These means were based on the results from the research conducted on EWU students, faculty and staff in Chapter Four. The next part of this plan will explain the different metrics to measure the success of the social media efforts.

#### **RQ6: WHAT METRICS WOULD BE USED TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE STRATEGIES?**

The following sections "monitoring," "tuning" and "measuring return on investment" will answer research question six, "What metrics would be used to determine the effectiveness of these strategies?" There are many different ways to measure the effectiveness of social media, and the different social media metrics can be broken down into two different categories: quantitative and qualitative (Turner, 2010). It is important to track all social media efforts to ensure that previous goals are being met. Demonstrating results from different posts and post types will show the importance of investing time and resources into social media and it will help adjust the content strategy to focus on the type of content that performs best (Johnston, 2015).

Quantitative metrics are the metrics that are data-intensive and number-oriented. These types of metrics might include unique visits, page views, followers, demographics and frequency

(Turner, 2010). Qualitative metrics are the metrics that have an emotional component to them (Turner, 2010). Another way to track the impact of all social media efforts and making the audience feel appreciated is to ask them for feedback. Invite them to give feedback about what they liked, what was missing and what they'd like to see next year. Respond to their comments in a personable, timely fashion also makes them feel appreciated and more likely to participate again in the future (*How to get more people to your events*, n.d.).

### **Monitoring**

Social media monitoring is the process of tracking, measuring and evaluating social media marketing efforts. Tracking helps identify who is talking about the event, what is being said and gains insight on the specific audience that is talking about the organization (Barker et al., 2013). By tracking this information, it can help Cheney Mayfest choose the type of information to post, add or remove social media platforms used based on the audiences' preferences and keywords to use based on what is being said about Mayfest's brand.

Measuring social media is a measurement of the volume of content and the sentiment analysis of Mayfest's brand on the different social media platforms. The volume of content is a quantitative measurement, while judging sentiment is a qualitative measurement (Turner, 2010). The number of posts, comments, likes and follows are instances of quantitative metrics, while mentions, comments, conversations and feedback about a brand are examples of qualitative metrics (Turner, 2010).

Only through establishing the relationship between social media metrics and the organizations goals can Cheney Mayfest properly analyze the impact and value of social media marketing. The result is to produce an in-depth and elaborate description of the progress of Cheney Mayfest's social media marketing efforts over time to reveal when strategies have

succeeded or when they require adjustment. This process will uncover an updated SWOT analysis, potential areas for improvement and possible new methods of action. Such analysis will allow the Mayfest team to see where it must focus its future social media efforts and resources. Cheney Mayfest plans to hire an intern to manage and maintain their social media accounts.

**Budget**

The budget is based on the amount that is allocated for social media marketing from the Cheney Mayfest team. Table 11 presents the estimated expenses for implementing this plan and achieving the goals stated previously for the following year.

**Table 11. Cheney Mayfest Social Media Budget**

<b>Intern</b>	School Credit
<b>Promoted posts/ads</b>	\$500
<b>Contests/Giveaways</b>	Donation(s)
<b>Total</b>	\$500

Table 11 was created based on the budget Cheney Mayfest has for 2018. The intern they hire will receive school credit for their time interning with the Mayfest committee. They have allocated \$500 for promoted posts and other social media advertising, and the contests or giveaways will be donations from local businesses in Cheney which will help promote the businesses in the community. This comes to a total of \$500 for Cheney Mayfest’s social media budget.

**Tuning**

Cheney Mayfest should be constantly monitoring and adjusting the elements of the plan to maximize the chances of increasing the attendance of EWU students. Cheney Mayfest’s progress in implementing its social media strategies should be continually assessed and then based on this assessment, strategies should be adjusted to reach the goals.

Tuning a social media strategy means the organization is constantly adjusting and improving the elements of the plan to maximize the chances of success (Barker et al., 2013). By



tuning the social media marketing plan, the organization can gain new followers that better fit the audience, increase the social media presence and increase engagement with the target audience. Reevaluating the goals, strategies and execution of the plan is necessary for a successful social media marketing plan because social media technologies are always changing and the marketing plan should accommodate the changes. Planning, tuning and executing social media marketing efforts is a never-ending process. The Cheney Mayfest team should be constantly monitoring and fine-tuning the plan to maximize results.

### **Measuring Return on Investment**

Because the social media goals for Cheney Mayfest are not directly connected to a monetary value, a standard return on investment (ROI) is not possible. Fortunately, there are different ways to measure the success on the ROI for the social media efforts of Cheney Mayfest.

Proxy ROIs measure the long-term impact of social media marketing investments on participant response. These include both quantitative and qualitative measurements, such as the number of views of the Mayfest's social media accounts, Mayfest's posting activity and response rates (Barker et al., 2013; Turner, 2010). This can include an updated SWOT analysis and social media presence audit. Proxy ROIs provide a meaningful way to judge the expected successes for investing in this plan.

The metrics below are a foundation for analyzing the effectiveness of the social media marketing plan itself and incorporate qualitative and quantitative measurements.

- Total number of new page likes
- Total reach of each post
- Post engagement (post clicks, reactions, comments and shares)
- What post types are most popular (text, photo, video, etc.)

## Summary

These metrics can be gathered from the different platforms used or by conducting an updated social media presence audit and SWOT analysis after the social media marketing plan has been implemented. The metrics identified in comparison to the metrics gathered before the social media marketing plan was implemented can be compared to see what tuning may need to happen to the strategies to reach the goals.

Research question six asked, “What metrics would be used to determine the effectiveness of these strategies?” Because the social media goals for Cheney Mayfest are not directly connected to sales, a standard ROI analysis is not possible. By establishing the relationship between social media metrics and the organizations goals, Cheney Mayfest can properly analyze the impact and value of social media marketing plan. This relationship will reveal what parts of the plan were successful and what should be adjusted to reach the set goals.

Gathering and analyzing the qualitative and quantitative measurements will show whether social media impacted the attendees’ decision to attend. It will not show whether the actual number of EWU students in attendance increased. Currently, the Cheney Mayfest committee conducts a free raffle to gather data about the attendees each year. This is one way to continue to gather that data and know who is attending Mayfest. Another way to monitor if social media helped increase the attendance of EWU students could be by emailing a questionnaire to all EWU students or conducting a survey through social media (Barker et al., 2013; Turner, 2010). According to the survey, 53 percent of EWU students prefer to be communicated with by email.

These different methods can ask the attendee if they are an EWU student, if they attended Cheney Mayfest, how they learned about the event (social media, posters, word-of-mouth, etc.)

and what influenced their decision to attend or not attend. These methods can also allow feedback from participants for future events (*Social media and meeting attendees*, 2015). The data collected should be kept and the results should be compared with future events to verify an increase in attendance or whether social media increased the knowledge of Cheney Mayfest to EWU students.

## **DISCUSSION**

Understanding the best practices of social media for non-profit organizations helps make social media marketing more successful. There is increasing recognition of the value of social media to non-profit organizations. Social media allows non-profits to build awareness of their mission, grow their influence and encourage their supporters to spread their message. Social media can also help non-profits meet their networking objectives. The large and diverse networks that exist on social media and the potential to build new networks using social media are critical access points for non-profits to engage with their audiences (Cole, 2014).

The best practices used in this social media marketing plan to help increase the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest were identifying the audience; a SWOT analysis; determining goals; content strategy; choosing the right platforms; engagement and measuring the success of the social media efforts. These best practices are ways that social media experts are creating successful social media marketing plans for their organizations.

Non-profit organizations have become increasingly “social” over the past decade, whether they are using a platform they are most comfortable with such as Facebook or starting new, unfamiliar platforms such as Snapchat (Johnston, 2015). Social media is a platform that allows non-profits an opportunity to tell a story, engage with event attendees and measure

results. Whether it is increasing attendance at the event or raising awareness of the event itself, social media can be beneficial to non-profit organizations (Miller, 2015).

The social media marketing plan in this chapter provides the foundation to help Cheney Mayfest increase the attendance of EWU students at the event. A strong social media presence can promote and highlight the decisions why EWU students attend events like increasing the knowledge of Cheney Mayfest, showing a relevancy to their interests and create a sense of community that could help increase the attendance of EWU students. A social media marketing plan can also address the factors that EWU students gave for not attending: awareness of the event, location and time constraints.

Social media is certainly not the only solution to increasing attendance. The other communication strategies revealed in the survey of EWU students should also be evaluated. A social media marketing plan is only one part of a successful marketing and communications plan and should be used in conjunction with other marketing strategies.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This research project was developed to understand why EWU students do not attend the annual, local event Cheney Mayfest and if social media could play a role in increasing the attendance and participation of EWU students. The Mayfest committee believes that the lack of student attendance and involvement is hindering the success of Mayfest. It was assumed by the committee that social media could play a role in increasing the attendance of EWU students at Mayfest. To avoid the pitfalls of media centrism, the problem, why EWU students do or do not attend events, needed to be analyzed first. Then, if it was found that there was a role for social media, a social media marketing plan would be created. An inquiry into why students tend not to participate in the event is a necessary pre-requisite for designing and implementing strategies that may increase their attendance.

To recap, this research project first identified the reasons for why there is low EWU student attendance at Cheney Mayfest. Based on the answer to this question, Chapter Five suggests social media strategies that could enhance EWU student attendance.

Specifically, the project addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: Why do EWU students attend or avoid attending events such as Cheney Mayfest?

RQ2: What specific factors do students give for not attending?

RQ3: What strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students?

RQ4: To the extent that communication strategies are relevant, is there a role for social media?

RQ5: If there is a role for social media, what best practices/guidelines can inform the development of a social media marketing plan to engage EWU students?

RQ6: What metrics would be used to determine the effectiveness of these strategies?

The review of literature in Chapter Two explored the involvement/non-involvement of people in community events, the potential for social media to increase attendance at community events and the relationship between college students and social media. Reasons found as to why people do or do not attend events were identified as location, awareness of the event, cost, relevancy to interests and community.

After reviewing the relevant literature concerning the potential for social media to increase attendance at events, many different studies showed how social media helped their organizations. Each study analyzed social media and the different potentials it could have to help their event or organization. The reasons behind the different studies were similar to Cheney Mayfest's purpose: increasing a community and marketing important information to their target audience. Although the different studies analyzed how they use social media, there was no specific evidence that social media increased the attendance of participants. Based on the successes of the different organizations, libraries and festivals that have used social media, the research showed the potential role social media could have in increasing attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest. The purpose of Cheney Mayfest and the key points from the research discussed in Chapter Two helped shape the questions asked in the survey of EWU students (Appendix A) and the interviews conducted with EWU faculty and staff (Appendix B).

The data gathered from the survey and interviews answered research questions 1-4, and revealed that social media can play a role in increasing the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest. To answer research question one, “Why do EWU students attend or avoid attending events such as Cheney Mayfest?” the data from the survey uncovered the reasons EWU students give for attending or not attending events. The reasons EWU students stated were location, knowledge of the event, sense of community and relevancy to their interests. Based on the research in Chapter Two, each of these factors were mentioned in the relevant literature as a reason why people do or do not attend an event. The data gathered from the interviews uncovered reasons the EWU faculty and staff gave as to why they believe EWU students do or do not attend events on or near campus. These reasons were different from the reasons the students gave in the survey. The comments made by EWU faculty and staff revealed that intended experience, time constraints and apathy play a role in students’ decision to attend events.

Research question two states, “What specific factors do students give for not attending?” The themes that were discovered after reading the responses from the surveys were awareness of event, location and time. Being aware that the event is happening was the most common reason why EWU students have not previously attended Cheney Mayfest. As previously stated, 70 percent of respondents said they were unaware of the annual event. Location was another factor EWU students gave for not previously attending. With EWU’s online classes and students living outside of Cheney, they may be unaware of the event or choose to not attend due to the difference in location. The final factor in EWU students’ decision to attend events was time. Whether they are working and attending school, have families to take care of or other responsibilities, finding time to attend an event is not always possible for EWU students.

Research question three was, “What strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students?” the data from the survey reveals that how students prefer to be communicated with and how they learn about events around them may differ. Some students stated that their preferred way to be communicated with depended on who they were communicating with. Social media may not be how EWU students prefer to be communicated with by everyone, but when it comes to learning about the events happening around them, social media was the most used method of gaining this information. Being unaware of the factors EWU students gave in the survey, the interview participants stated strategies such as flyers and posters, word of mouth, email and social media as forms of communication used to promote their events to EWU students. It was found that there may be more than one successful communication method for reaching EWU students.

The fourth research question was, “To the extent that communication strategies are relevant, is there a role for social media?” Based on the data received from the survey and the interview participants, a role for social media was identified. Shown in Chapter Four, the data in Table 8 shows that 50 percent of survey respondents would be likely to attend if they saw posts and advertisements about Cheney Mayfest on their social media accounts. The survey results as shown in Table 7 show 46 percent of respondents use social media to learn about events happening near them. This data and the factors EWU students gave that would draw them to attend the event suggest that using social media to reach EWU students could increase their attendance at Cheney Mayfest. The interview participants stated how social media plays a role in impacting student attendance at their events.

The proposed social media marketing plan in Chapter Five was developed based upon the best practices of social media for non-profit organizations and data from the surveys and



interviews conducted on EWU students, faculty and staff. Referring to research question five, “If there is a role for social media, what best practices/guidelines can inform the development of a social media marketing plan to engage EWU students?” the best practices of social media for non-profit organizations were discussed throughout the social media marketing plan. The best practices used to develop the plan included identifying the audience; a SWOT analysis; determining goals; content strategy; choosing the right platforms; engagement and the process of how to track and measure the success. These best practices were gathered from multiple social media experts and are considered best practices based on their research and experiences.

Although social media was identified as one way that students prefer to gain information about events, it is not the only way to reach EWU students. The social media marketing plan should be one part of a complete marketing and communications plan. According to the data, students also learn about events from their friends, flyers and posters around campus, email and internet searches. These other marketing strategies can be incorporated with social media to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign and extend its reach to EWU students. This project does not implement the social media marketing plan, therefore, it cannot be determined whether it is effective or not.

Research question six asked, “What metrics would be used to determine the effectiveness of these strategies?” Because the social media goals for Cheney Mayfest are not directly connected to sales, a standard ROI analysis is not possible. There are different metrics to analyze the social media marketing efforts that will measure the effectiveness of the plan such as looking at the total number of new page likes, total reach of each post, post engagement, clicks, reactions, comments and shares, and the most popular posts.

Gathering and analyzing the qualitative and quantitative measurements will only evaluate whether the target audience is becoming aware of Cheney Mayfest and engaging in the posts. It will not show whether attendance was increased at the event. Currently, the Cheney Mayfest committee conducts a free raffle to gather data about Mayfest attendees each year. This is one way to continually gather data and know who is attending Cheney Mayfest. There are other ways to examine if the attendance of EWU students was increased based on social media such as by sending a questionnaire out to all EWU students emails or conducting a survey on social media (Barker et al., 2013). These different methods can ask and identify if the attendee is an EWU student, if they chose to attend Cheney Mayfest, how they learned about the event (social media, posters, word-of-mouth, etc.) and what influenced them to attend.

This research project discussed the use of social media to increase the attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest and a proposed social media marketing plan to do so. The findings of this study suggest several different conclusions on how to communicate to and motivate EWU students to attend events, therefore, it is important to analyze and track this social media marketing plan to see how it has impacted EWU student's decision to attend. It may also be valuable to analyze the different marketing strategies that the target audience suggested in the survey to see how social media compares with the other forms of advertising to EWU students. As with any technology and emerging trend, information and strategies become outdated, therefore, this plan and the research presented should be a starting point for moving forward.

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**APPENDIX A: EWU STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONS**

1. Are you a male or female?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Prefer not to answer
  
2. Are you a current Eastern Washington University (EWU) student?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
3. How far in school are you?
  - a. Freshman
  - b. Sophomore
  - c. Junior
  - d. Senior
  - e. Graduate Student
  
4. During the school year, where do you live?
  - a. On campus at EWU
  - b. Off campus in Cheney
  - c. Off campus in Spokane
  - d. Other: [text box]
  
5. How do you prefer to be communicated with?
  - a. Social media
  - b. Email
  - c. Phone
  - d. Other: [text box]
  
6. If you prefer to use social media, what platforms would you prefer to be communicated on? Check all that apply:
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Instagram
  - Snapchat
  - Other: [text box]
  
7. How often do you attend events outside of EWU's campus?
  - a. once a week
  - b. once a month
  - c. 2-3 times a year
  - d. once a year
  - e. never

8. How do you learn about events near you?
  - a. Internet search
  - b. Social media marketing
  - c. From a friend
  - d. Other: [text box]
  
9. Do you know what Cheney Mayfest is?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
10. Have you attended Cheney Mayfest in the past?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
11. If you attended the event, why did you attend?  
[text box]
  
12. If you have not attended, why is this? That is, what were your reasons for not attending?  
[text box]
  
13. What would draw you to attend Cheney Mayfest this coming May?  
[text box]
  
14. Do you think you will attend Cheney Mayfest in May?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
15. Check which apply to you if you saw advertising for Cheney Mayfest on your social media accounts:
  - I would be more likely to attend
  - I would share page(s) and information with others
  - I would continue to follow page(s) for further event updates and information
  - Ignore the posts. I'm not interested in attending or receiving information about the event

**APPENDIX B: EWU FACULTY/STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Where do you work and what is your role?
2. How many events a year do you coordinate?
3. What type of events are they?
4. What do you think is the best way to get students to participate and attend events on or near campus?
5. Why do you think students do not attend events (on or off campus)?
6. How do you market your events to EWU students?
7. Does your organization/department use social media?
8. In what capacity do you use social media to market your events to EWU students?
9. Do you think social media plays a factor in attendance of EWU students to your events? Why?
10. What platforms do you perceive to be most successful in reaching EWU students? Why?
11. What do you perceive to be less useful? Why?

**APPENDIX C: POWERPOINT PRESENTATION SLIDES**

# Increasing Attendance Of EWU Students At Cheney Mayfest: Does Social Media Play A Role?

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KYRA PHELPS  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES  
DEFENSE | SPRING 2017

## Introduction

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**Problem:** The Cheney Mayfest committee believes that there is a lack in attendance of EWU students at Cheney Mayfest each year.

**Goal:** Identify why EWU students do not attend and what communication strategies may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students.

**Approach:** Avoid media centrism

## Research Questions

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**RQ1:** Why do EWU students attend or avoid attending events such as Cheney Mayfest?

**RQ2:** What specific factors do students give for not attending?

**RQ3:** What strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students?

**RQ4:** To the extent that communication strategies are relevant, is there a role for social media?

## Research Questions

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**RQ5:** If there is a role for social media, what best practices/guidelines can inform the development of a social media marketing plan to engage EWU students?

**RQ6:** What metrics would be used to determine the effectiveness of these strategies?

## Literature Review

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- Understanding involvement and non-involvement of participants at events
- The potential for social media to increase attendance at events
- Characteristics of college students and their use of social media

## Understanding Involvement/ Non-involvement in Community Events

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- Location
- Awareness
- Cost
- Relevant to personal/professional interests

## Potential for Social Media to Increase Attendance in Community Events

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Although the literature provides no specific evidence that social media increased the attendance of participants, the successes of each study shows the potential role social media could have in increasing attendance at events such as Cheney Mayfest. Various social media efforts were shown to be beneficial based on the goals defined in each study.

- Create a community, increase participation and increase conversation
- Social media platforms are built for promotion and engagement
- Used as an outreach tool

## College Students and Social Media

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- Social media is considered a successful tool for communication and spreading information with college students and young adults (Stephens & Gunther, 2016).
- The more college students use social media and smartphones to interact with others, the more they participated in social activities (Kim, Wang & Oh, 2016).
- The Pew Research Center (2015) also stated that with a high number of users on social media channels daily, information can be shared with a larger audience and engagement with posts may increase by using social media.

## Methods

- Mixed Methods
  - Survey of EWU students (Quantitative/Qualitative)
    - Sent to all EWU students
    - 15 questions

### Survey Demographics

Table 1.  
Survey Sample Demographics

Respondents	N=654	Percentage
Gender	-	-
Male	195	30%
Female	454	69%
Prefer not to answer	5	1%
Year in School	-	-
Freshman	99	15%
Sophomore	83	13%
Junior	169	26%
Senior	221	34%
Graduate Student	82	13%
Location of Residency During School Year	-	-
On campus at EWU	111	17%
Off campus in Cheney	250	38%
Off campus in Spokane	242	37%
Other	50	8%

## Methods

- Mixed Methods
  - Interviews on EWU Faculty and Staff (Qualitative)
    - Seven faculty and staff members
    - Africana Studies, Housing and Residential Life, Eagle Entertainment and Student Activities, Involvement and Leadership (SAIL)

## Interview Demographics

- 11 questions
- Each individual plans an average of 70 events per year
- Social events and workshops to leadership and educational programs

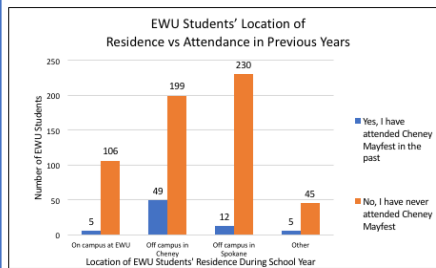
RQ1: Why do EWU students attend or avoid attending events such as Cheney Mayfest?

EWU students attend or avoid attending events such as Cheney Mayfest due to:

- location
- knowledge of the event
- sense of community
- relevancy to their interests

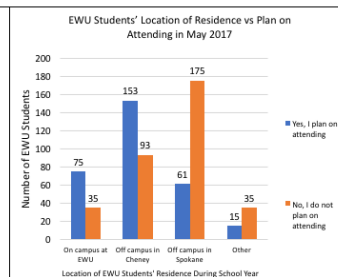
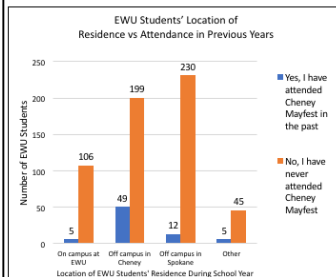
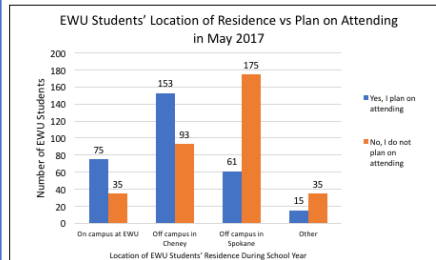
Survey Results: Location

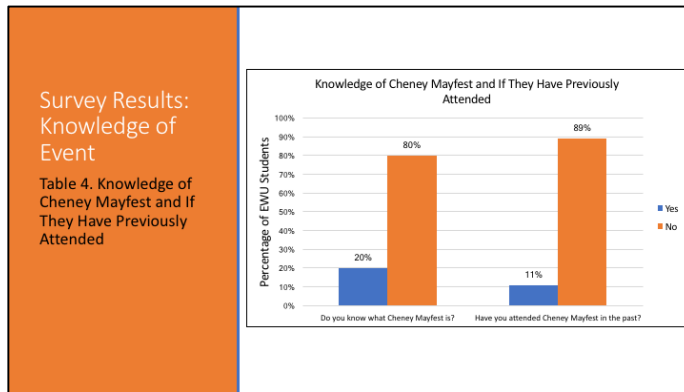
Table 2. EWU Students' Location of Residence vs Attendance in Previous Years



Survey Results: Location

Table 3. EWU Students' Location of Residence vs Plan on Attending in May 2017





### Sense of Community

- Feeling of being a part of the community
- Learning about the community
- Background in the Cheney community

### Relevancy of Interests

If the topic or point of the event is not relevant to their interests, people will not attend the event (IAEE et al., 2015; Maci, 2016).

- Important to students interests
- Activities relevant to their age group

### Interviews

- Experience
- Time
- Apathy\*

\*Even though the participants use the word "apathy," it may not be the correct word to describe students. Apathy may be a reason why EWU faculty and staff give for students not attending their events, but students are not "apathetic." They may be interested in different things or there may be other things happening on campus that they choose to do over attending events off campus.



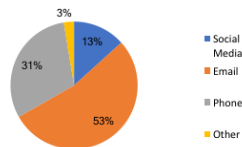
RQ2: What specific factors do students give for not attending?

The specific factors that EWU students gave for not attending were:

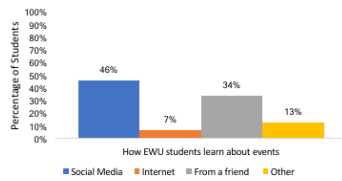
- awareness of event
- location
- time

RQ3: What strategies, including communication strategies, may be relevant in addressing the factors identified by students?

Q5: How Do EWU Students Prefer To Be Communicated With?



Q:8 How Do You Learn About Events Near You?



Interviews

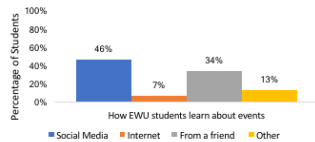
- Creating flyers and posters
- Word of mouth
- Email
- Social Media

RQ4: To the extent that communication strategies are relevant, is there a role for social media?

If EWU Students Saw Advertising For Cheney Mayfest On Their Social Media Accounts, They:



Q:8 How Do You Learn About Events Near You?



## Interviews

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- Measurement
- Technology
- Engagement

RQ5: If there is a role for social media, what best practices/guidelines can inform the development of a social media marketing plan to engage EWU students?

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The best practices used to develop the plan included:

- identifying the audience
- a SWOT analysis
- determining goals
- content strategy
- choosing the right platforms
- engagement
- tracking and measuring success

RQ6: What metrics would be used to determine the effectiveness of these strategies?

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There are different metrics to analyze the social media marketing efforts that will measure the effectiveness of the plan such as:

- looking at the total number of new page likes
- total reach of each post
- post engagement, clicks, reactions, comments and shares
- the most popular posts

RQ6: What metrics would be used to determine the effectiveness of these strategies?

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- Free raffle to collect data
- Send survey to EWU students through Eagles email
- Social media survey

## Conclusion

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The findings of this study suggest several different conclusions on how to communicate to and motivate EWU students to attend events, therefore, it is important to analyze and track this social media marketing plan to see how it has impacted student's decision to attend. It may also be valuable to analyze the different marketing strategies that the target audience suggested in the survey to see how social media compares with the other forms of advertising to EWU students. As with any technology and emerging trend, information and strategies become outdated, therefore, this plan and the research presented should be a starting point for moving forward.

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