



Night Time
Industries
Association

Social media and digital content in the night time economy



Acknowledgement of Country

The board and staff of the NTIA acknowledge that we are on unceded land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and are privileged to celebrate a living culture of over 60,000 years.

Foreword

Every single day we are bombarded with thousands of messages. Some are obvious while many are subconscious, but they all have the intention to influence or motivate us towards an idea, a product or an action. In such a crowded environment, how on earth can a venue hope to cut through to the masses?

Our industries are in an advantageous position. What we are doing is visually compelling, it's exciting, it's engaging, and often it's got that cool factor.

Supported by the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner (O24HEC), the Night Time Industries Association (NTIA) has written this guidebook as a practical resource for the industry. Our aim is to support night time venues and their staff to become masters of social media to grow their customer base and to show the community just how exciting Sydney's night time economy is.

This guidebook provides actionable insights and strategies from industry leaders to help venue managers and their teams develop strong social media presences that attract and engage their target audiences.

Whether you are looking to create compelling content, engage with your community, or utilise paid advertising, this resource is designed to help you and your teams navigate the ever-evolving landscape of social media.

Regards,
Mick Gibb



Mick Gibb
CEO, Night Time Industries Association





Key considerations

Articulate a clear purpose for using social media for your venue

A strategic approach to social media includes understanding your goals, understanding your customer journey, and posting content that aligns with both of these considerations. By doing so, you can ensure that your social media activities are actually making an impact on your business.

Social media isn't just about having a presence; it's about using that presence to achieve specific business goals. Understanding why you are using social media is the first step in building and executing a successful strategy.

For night time venues, social media can contribute to:

- **Building brand awareness:** Letting people know who you are, where you are, and what makes you unique.
- **Engaging with your community:** Creating a sense of community and fostering loyalty among patrons to become a legion of regulars.
- **Driving patronage:** Promoting events, specials, and experiences to increase bookings.
- **Gathering feedback:** Understanding what your patrons like and don't like, and using this feedback to improve your service.

Map social media content against your customer journey

You may hear a customer journey referred to as a buyer journey, purchase journey, or marketing funnel. These are all terms used to describe the process of taking a potential customer from being aware of your brand through to actually making a purchase.

Content that is strategically planned to move potential customers through the customer journey is better placed to turn your social media audience into paying customers.

Your social media strategy should align with your customer journey to ensure that you deliver targeted content that meets the needs of your potential customers at each stage, from awareness to retention. This alignment helps you use resources efficiently, measure results effectively, and create a seamless customer journey.

Here is an example of how different platforms and content types can be utilised to address the needs of customers at different stages of the customer journey:

- **Awareness:** Use TikTok videos and Instagram Reels to introduce your venue to a broader audience. Focus on engaging and visually striking content that quickly captures the attention of potential customers who have not encountered your brand.
- **Consideration:** Use Facebook posts and Instagram Stories to share content that encourages interaction, such as polls, contests, and user-generated content (UGC).
- **Conversion:** Share posts that drive potential customers to take action, such as event RSVPs, bookings, and promotions. Use clear calls-to-action in your captions and make it easy for potential patrons to take the next step.
- **Retention:** Keep your existing patrons engaged with regular updates, exclusive offers, and personalised content. You may consider using platforms that allow for direct communication, such as Facebook Groups and Instagram Broadcast Channels.



Develop content that aligns with your goals

Once you have articulated your purpose for using social media and mapped out your customer journey, you can then plan the types of social media content that align with these goals. Don't be afraid to continually publish a few key types of content. Potential customers will need to see the same message many times before it sticks.

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We usually ask our clients, ‘why would someone watch that?’ If you just keep asking why, it works really well. When you are in a business and you are immersed and if you do some amazing stuff, you do become insular and you think everyone is interested.

Nathan Richman, Managing Partner, Elastic



It's still about consistency. You can choose the three or five things your brand talks about, and then you do it again and again and again. Stay the course for at least a quarter before you change anything.

Salina Alvaro, Communications and Programs Manager,
Night Time Industries Association

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Create the right content for the right platform

It's important to create content that fits each social media channel because each platform has unique features, audience behaviours, and expectations for what 'good content' looks like. By tailoring content to fit the specific style and format of platforms like TikTok, Instagram, or Facebook, venues can enhance engagement.

For example, funny videos that quickly capture attention typically shine on TikTok, while well laid out photogenic images continue to be popular on Instagram. Crafting content that aligns with these platform-specific nuances will allow you to build a more authentic and engaging presence, maximising the number of people your content reaches.



From a product perspective, who we provide the most value to is young people and people who go out all the time, often travellers and backpackers. With that conclusion: young people, where are they? They're on TikTok. Effectively, we just need to be on it.

Josh Stewart, Partner, Bondi Lines



Establish a strong brand identity

Establishing a strong brand identity allows night time venues to create a presence that resonates with their target audience and distinguishes them from competitors. A well-defined identity should include the venue's values, personality, visual elements, and messaging, which collectively shape patrons' perceptions of your brand. Consistency in brand identity across all touchpoints, including social media, marketing materials, and the in-venue experience, builds trust and loyalty, making patrons more likely to return and recommend the venue to others.



The venues that do really well on social media are those run by in-house venue teams, but also the venues that have a very clear vision and brand identity. That way, they can really align those content creators who are in-venue with who they are talking to. Two venues that really stand out are Monsoons in Darwin and the Court in Western Australia. They just have such a strong community that has been built up over years. I'd say the venues that do the best on social have that unique brand and vision.

Anita Marchionna, Group Digital and Insights Manager, Australian Venue Co



Maintain consistency

An effective use of social media for night time venues will often look like continually posting content that looks, feels, and sounds similar, rather than constantly generating brand new content ideas.

- Regular and cohesive posts reinforce the venue's identity and make it easier for patrons to connect with and remember the venue.
- Consistency can also foster a sense of reliability and anticipation as your social media channels become a dependable way for potential customers to stay engaged and informed about events, promotions, and updates about your venue.
- Algorithmically, consistent posting will typically improve your account's visibility and reach, making it more likely for your content to appear in people's feeds.

Build community

Social media presents a great opportunity to foster a sense of community among patrons, enhancing brand loyalty and driving repeat visits.

- By actively engaging with your potential and returning customers through comments, shares, and user-generated content, venues can create an engaged online presence that mirrors the sense of community experienced in their physical space.
- Community engagement allows you to strengthen your relationships with existing patrons and attract new visitors through word-of-mouth and social proof.
- An engaged online community can provide valuable feedback and insights, helping you to tailor your offerings to the market and improve the overall guest experience.



Some small accounts can be extremely effective. I think it's something around being able to reach the right people, capture them as followers, and if they're relevant and interested in your offering and content, they'll stay engaged and take actions. I think part of that is community. Basement, who run the weekly Saturday at Mary's Underground, run a really good Instagram account which is community first. They target DJs constantly, get active in the comments, and get their promoters active in the comments. It's super community driven.

Josh Stewart, Partner, Bondi Lines





Three approaches to content creation

Content is the lifeblood of any social media channel. Keeping up with the quality and quantity of content that each channel demands is often the most resource-intensive aspect of social media marketing. Here are three popular approaches to content creation to support you in maintaining active social media channels.

Working with your in-house team

Venues can leverage their in-house team, such as bartenders and floor staff, to create authentic and engaging social media content by empowering and involving them in the content creation process. Being on the front lines closest to the customer, in-house teams have unique insights into the venue's atmosphere and patron interactions, which can translate into strong content that aligns with customers' experience in-venue.

By providing training on brand guidelines and social media best practices, venues can ensure that the content produced by their team aligns with their brand's identity and strategic goals.

Additionally, featuring staff in posts, such as behind-the-scenes content, is an opportunity to personalise your brand and build a stronger connection with your customers.

To keep your in-house teams aligned to your brand, it's worthwhile investing time and resources into staff development programs and initiatives. This could be training sessions, resources, or even clear approval processes.



Working with creators

Venues can engage with influencers and user-generated content creators to create platform appropriate content for their venue. Creators have a strong understanding of the unique style of each social media platform and what resonates with their audience. When managed effectively, engaging creators to produce social media content for your brand allows you to benefit from creators' expertise in producing engaging content that resonates with online audiences.

If you're able to identify creators whose audience and content style are closely aligned with your brand's own, engaging these creators can be an effective approach to content creation.

If you have a budget for influencer marketing, creators can be engaged to produce and post the content which allows you to get in front of their audience as well. A lower-cost option is to engage creators to produce content without posting to their account.



Think of influencers as content creators, you don't always need to engage them for their audience but for their production skills. If you can find someone who creates content in a style that you really like, you can pay them to make a video. You don't have to pay them to post it to their own account.

**Salina Alvaro, Communications and Programs Manager,
Night Time Industries Association**



Working with agencies

Engaging an agency is another popular way to keep up with content creation. As with working with in-house teams or creators, it's important to clearly communicate your brand identity, goals, and target audience with your agency to ensure alignment and consistency.

It's best practice to provide a comprehensive brief to your agency that outlines your unique selling points, preferred visual and tonal style, and specific objectives such as increasing event attendance or enhancing community engagement. A good agency will be able to support you through this briefing process, or work with you to articulate your brand identity and goals if you haven't created these already.



I think sometimes agencies shape what the venue is versus understanding what it actually is. I think it's really important to listen from within and then have agencies amplify that rather than trying to change that.

Nathan Richman, Managing Partner, Elastic



Industry case study:

Anita Marchionna, Group Digital and Insights Manager at Australian Venue Co, on the in-house approach to content creation at their Darwin venue, Monsoons.

Interview with Anita Marchionna, Group Digital and Insights Manager.

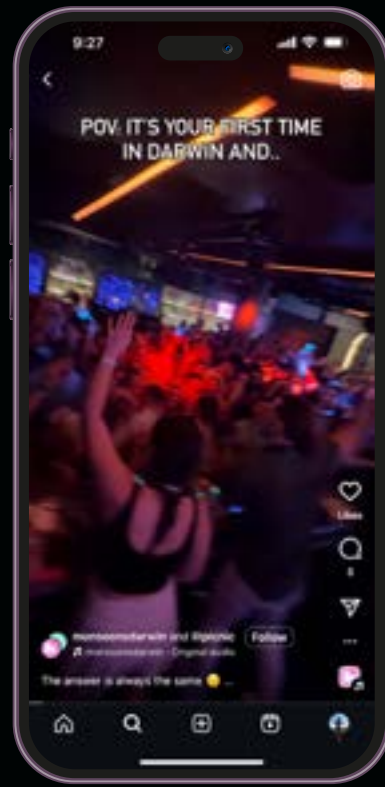


Image credit - @monsoonsdarwin

What types of content have been most effective for Monsoons' social media? Can you provide examples of content that performed particularly well?

We have found that timely and relevant content that capitalises on trends is most effective. A great example is the teaser content for the newly renovated venue which kept the audience engaged and excited for the new launch.

Secondly, content that shows you know the customer. When you understand your customer you can create content that is interesting to the target market to express the brand's voice.

How does Monsoons balance promotional content with other types of posts to keep its audience engaged?

If you make interesting content, it doesn't matter if it is a promotional item or an ad. The team at Monsoons also leverage what has worked well in the past to continue to create content that appeals to the target market and then amplifies it.

What are the key benefits of having an in-house team manage Monsoons' social media? Are there any challenges with this approach?

A benefit of an in-house team is that you can jump on trends and go out to market much quicker.

It allows for a more behind-the-scenes approach to give the brand or venue a personality.

However, one of the challenges is it is not a quick and easy job! And what is good or bad content can be very subjective. It helps to back it up with the key metrics and analytics that the platforms provide you with. Like anything, try to make sure everyone is on the same page about what success looks like for your venue.

How do you ensure that your in-house team stays aligned with Monsoons' brand identity and messaging?

They have been with the team for quite some time. They live and breathe and ultimately enjoy the venue which comes through in the content that is created that is very authentic to the brand.

How do you train and empower your in-house team to create high-quality, engaging content consistently?

Engagement and a sense of connection to the brand are crucial. You will find that a team that is connected to the brand and venue can create content that is unmatched. This not only enhances their enjoyment but also provides a valuable entry point into the marketing industry. Offering these opportunities can significantly benefit their future careers, even if they move to a different sector down the road.

What key lessons have you learned from your social media efforts that other night time venues could benefit from?

It doesn't need to be perfect. There are instances where you will find that your lo-fi content will outperform your hi-fi content because it comes through much more authentically.

You will also need to trial out different methods until you find the one that suits your brand and audience. You can always assume what will work but the results can sometimes show otherwise. Test, learn, and retest again.

And lastly, knowing and understanding that you can't be something for everyone. A distinct tone of voice will always be more effective than trying to appeal to everyone.

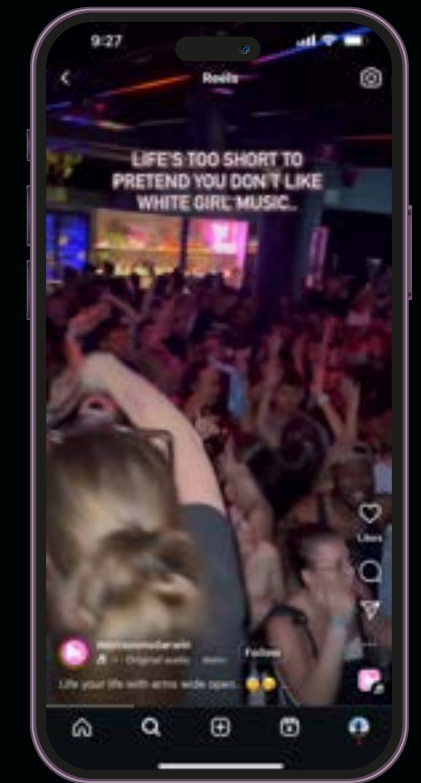


Image credit - @monsoonsdarwin



A practical guide to creating social media content for night time venues

Lighting techniques

Lighting is everything when it comes to photography and videography and that's especially true for night time venues that often swing between a dimly lit setting to blazing stage lights. Here's how to work with what you've got and maybe add a bit more:

- **Embrace ambient lighting:** Your venue's existing lights—neon signs, bar downlights, or even fairy lights—set the mood. Use these to create a warm, inviting glow. Warm tones tend to be more flattering and create a comfortable, intimate vibe.
- **Play with directional lighting:** Whether it's a spotlight on the DJ or a backlit drink at the bar, think about where your light is coming from and what you're highlighting. This can be as simple as adding an LED panel or positioning a table lamp to give that extra pop.
- **Ditch the harsh flash:** Flash tends to flatten out faces and cast harsh shadows. Instead, go for softer, diffused lighting or utilise your smartphone's "night mode" for better results.
- **Enhance with subtle highlights:** Add small, twinkling light sources like candles, string lights, or strategically placed LEDs. They give off a soft, attractive glow that looks great in photos and adds layers to your videos.

Framing and composition

How you frame your shots makes all the difference between a generic photo and one that truly captures the atmosphere. Here's how to get it right:

- **Follow the rule of thirds:** Picture your frame divided into nine equal parts. Position key elements—like a signature cocktail or someone having a great time—along these lines for a more balanced and appealing shot.
- **Include foreground and background details:** Whether it's tables, lighting fixtures, or the crowd, layering your composition with details from the foreground to the background adds depth and draws viewers into the scene.
- **Use leading lines:** A bar counter, dance floor lights, or even people queuing at the bar can act as lines that guide the viewer's eyes towards the main subject of your shot.
- **Symmetry and patterns:** Look out for repeating elements like row seating, light fixtures, or architectural features. Symmetry and patterns are naturally pleasing to the eye and can make your content stand out.



Smartphone photography and filmography

Smartphones are capable of producing stunning content. Here's how to make sure you're getting the most out of yours:

- **Use night mode on the camera:** Most smartphones have a night mode that automatically adjusts exposure and enhances detail in low-light scenes. Make sure you're taking advantage of it.
- **Keep it steady:** Blurry shots and shaky footage are the enemy in low light. Use a tripod, gimbal, or even a sturdy table to keep your phone steady.
- **Experiment with manual controls:** Learning to tweak settings like ISO, exposure, and shutter speed can really elevate your photos. Apps like ProCamera (iPhone) or Camera FV-5 (Android) give you more control over these settings.
- **Slow-mo and time-lapse:** Capture dynamic moments like people dancing, drinks being poured, or a busy bar in slow motion for dramatic effect. A time-lapse is great for showing the venue filling up over the night.
- **Portrait mode for depth:** When snapping close-ups of people, drinks, or small details, portrait mode is your friend. It keeps the subject sharp while subtly blurring the background for that professional look.

Devices and tools

While your smartphone is already pretty powerful, there are some extra tools that can really level up your content:

- **Portable LED lights:** These are perfect for low-light settings when you need a bit more glow.
- **Gimbals:** A gimbal stabiliser is great for keeping your videos smooth and stable, even when you're moving around the venue.
- **Clip-on lenses:** Expand your smartphone's capabilities with clip-on lenses. Wide-angle lenses are ideal for capturing large spaces like dance floors, while macro lenses let you focus on intricate details.
- **Tripods and mounts:** A compact tripod or a simple smartphone mount is essential for getting steady, hands-free shots. Perfect for setting up time-lapse videos or group photos.
- **External microphones:** High-quality sound is a game-changer for capturing performances or interviews. Plug-and-play mics attach directly to your phone and offer a big boost in audio clarity.

Top 10 tips

1 Get clear on your goals

Know why you're posting something and how you'll measure if it worked.

2 Create different content for different platforms

Tailor your posts to fit the style of each social media platform.

3 Decide what you're all about

Pick a few key topics or themes that represent what your venue is all about, like your unique cocktails, live music, or special events.

4 Stay consistent

Keep a similar style, tone, and vibe across your posts, and ideally choose a regular cadence for how often you're posting.

5 Same messages, different formats

Staying consistent doesn't need to mean being repetitive. Add variety by experimenting with different ways of delivering the same messages – curated photography, quick phone snaps, behind-the-scenes moments, and customer shoutouts.

6 Embrace authenticity

Don't worry about everything being perfect. Experiment with different ways of capturing content to keep things fresh and learn what resonates best.

7 Be social on social

Social media is social by design. Don't just post and forget – reply to comments, answer questions, and get involved in the discussions.

8 Encourage customers to get involved

Think about ways to encourage patrons to snap and share content to their own social media pages, from venue design that creates photo-moments to incentives for tagging your venue in their posts.

9 Build relationships within your community

Partner with influencers, DJs, suppliers, and local businesses that align with your brand to extend your reach. Cross-promoting with trusted names in your community can strengthen your relationships within the industry and introduce your venue to new audiences.

10 Listen to your audience

Pay attention to what content gets the best response from your ideal customers. The kind of content that you think is important may not be what they're drawn to. Be open to changing things up.

Working group participants

The Night Time Industries Association and the Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner would like to thank the working group of industry experts who shaped this guidebook by sharing their insights and experience.

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