

Emerging adults use of alcohol and social networking sites during a large street festival: A real-time interview study

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Abstract

Background Emerging adults have high rates of heavy episodic drinking (binge drinking) and related risks including alcohol-impaired driving. To understand whether social networking sites (SNSs) used on mobile devices represent a viable platform for real-time interventions, this study measured emerging adults use of two popular SNSs (Facebook and Twitter) during the Mifflin Street Block Party. This annual festival is held in Madison, Wisconsin and is known for high alcohol consumption. Findings Event attendees ages 18-23 years were recruited by young adult research assistants (>21 years). Participants completed a brief in-person interview assessing drinking intensity, use of SNSs, and use of SNSs to plan transportation. Analyses included t-tests, chi-squared tests, and Fishers exact tests. At the event, nearly all of the 200 participants (97%) consumed alcohol and 18% met criteria for heavy episodic drinking. Approximately one-third of participants had used Facebook or Twitter on the day of the event. Facebook use (23%) was more prevalent than Twitter use (18%), especially among heavy episodic drinkers. Use of either SNS was 41% among females and 24% among males ($\chi^2=6.01$ $df=1$ $p=0.01$).

Plans to use a SNS to arrange transportation were relatively uncommon (4%), but this was more frequent among heavy episodic drinkers (11%) compared to non-heavy episodic drinkers (2%) (Fishers exact $p=0.02$). Conclusions These results indicate that SNSs are used during alcohol consumption and warrant exploration as a way to facilitate connections to resources like safe ride services.

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