

AUDIENCE

The easiest way to define your audience is: who this event is for? This question is so central that many events define their identity around it - like conferences for local game developers, for fans of a certain game company, and so on. Even when not intended to be the defining trait of a cultural event, it will always be pivotal to its identity in practice, and should always be considered seriously.

Different audiences come with different expectations and affordances. Below are a few known ones:

Professionals	People who make games, for a living or in another high capacity. This audience can find interest in education and skill-building events, as well as in networking. Professionals can further be divided to Indies and entrepreneurs, who have specific interest in business opportunities, and industry workers, who have specific interest in unionizing and worker rights.
Gamers	People who play games regularly and define themselves by their interest in games. This audience can find interest in fandom, competitions, new information about upcoming titles, and playable demos. They often have high game literacy, but often in specific games and genres, and may have a hard time finding interest in games beyond those they like.
Art and Culture Audience	Audiences that are not interested specifically in games but rather in a broader view of culture. They may be attracted by the venue (e.g. museum goers coming to see the latest exhibition) or by the context (e.g. geeks coming to see a medium that is adjacent to their geek culture, clubbers coming to the event for the party). This audience often has less game literacy, and thus requires more mediation; but often also less expectations, and thus can find interest in a more diverse array of games. For better or worse, arts and culture audiences will not judge your work by "game standards", but rather by a broader cultural standards and in comparison to other cultural expressions.
Specific Identities	An audience belonging to a specific geography, ethnicity, class, gender, or other identity. This audience might be sensitive to expressions that are hurtful to their group, and might delight in expressions that celebrate their group. In cases of underprivileged identities, they might respond well, or even require, a framework that empowers (e.g. spotlight showcases, speakers belonging to the group) and secures them (safe space policy and coordinators) (see more on this in the DIVERSITY chapter)

IMPORTANT: the assumptions above are useful, but shouldn't prohibit you from telling the story you want to tell! TRUST YOUR AUDIENCE to find interest in a story well-told and a event well-produced, even beyond their affinities. Respect your audience, don't pander to it.

In many cases, especially small events and professional events, the audience and participants can be from the same group, perhaps even the same people. This may determine many things, like how emotionally invested your audience is in the event, how much they feel a part of it.

Some events and exhibitions are designed for more than one type of audience, or evolve to include more than their original designated audience. Below are a few actual examples:

Casual Connect is a games business event mainly for the casual and mobile games industry; many of the attendees are profit-seeking business developers and game entrepreneurs, and the content is mostly business talks and presentations. But the investment opportunities attract small developers with a more expressive approach, and the event accommodates this audience via an exhibition/fair of small games and a global competition with prizes and grants.

A MAZE. / Berlin is perceived globally as a professional event for expressive and artistically-inclined game developers, but perceived locally by many Berliners as simply as a party/festival, with a videogame “twist”. Game developers from Europe and the world will value the affordability of attendance, the non-business networking, for which the dance parties are a supplement, while clubbers from Berlin will value the dance parties, for which the game exhibition is a supplement, and might completely miss the networking or the conference.

Print Screen Festival is a digital arts festival for a very broad, local audience. Playable games are displayed alongside many other types of artworks and performances, for an audience with varying degrees of tech literacy, but a generally-high degree of cultural literacy; this usually leads to favoring games with simple interfaces, but under more challenging curatorial themes.

Design / Play / Disrupt was a video games exhibition in the V&A museum in London. While the texts and the exhibition structure served to mediate games culture to general audiences, some exclusive artifacts and behind-the-scenes interviews from well-known video game productions were very enticing for more hard-core gamer crowds.

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