

Produced by ISACS 2014
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Supported by Arts Audiences Ireland.



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ISACS - Audience Aware

STREET ARTS HANDBOOK



Spraoi - Vadrafjord 2014 - Photographer Patrick Browne

A guide for collecting, understanding and using audience information.

Audience Development

Audience Development is a planned process which involves building and developing relationships between arts organisations and their audiences.

ISACS are currently working with 'Arts Audiences Ireland' on an initiative to enable it's members to begin this process. It is recommended that the sector gather attendance estimations as the first part of the programme. The size of the audience is a key piece of data for planning your event, evaluating its success and reporting to funders and partners.

Capturing insight about audiences in an outdoor setting is not without its challenges. but since street arts often attract large audiences, it is essential that the sector provide evidence to demonstrate this impact.

Practical implementation of the programme requires the gathering and collating of information. There are various methods for collecting audience data, and it is vital to consider what key methods you are able to implement in order to produce accurate and reliable data.

Audience Size Estimation

The audience estimation is a three part process involving:

- a) estimating audience size in advance
- b) producing an estimation on the day and
- c) submitting the results to a dedicated website.

Estimating the number of people expected to attend a show, an event or a festival is a key part of the planning process as you often have to give an indication of numbers of attenders when applying for licenses, funding and sponsorship. It is also vital in the production planning e.g. facilities, staffing, transport needs, size of site, egress and exit routes etc.

There are a number of approaches to consider for producing an accurate estimation on the day and each are dependent on your resources including; staff, site, site access, audience capacity, type of show/event. Each method has it's pros and cons.

Submitting the results involves uploading your figures onto a shared survey facility on the ISACS website.

Approaches for audience estimation

1) Stickers - hand a sticker to each person entering the event, at the end of the day how many remain.

Pros	Cons
Easy to administer	Only suitable if site has defined entrance points
Fun for the audience	Can cause crowd congestion
Can brand stickers to enhance event identity	
Small margin of error	

2) Clickers - Have counters on each entrance point counting people entering the site. Can be manual clickers or automated counters.

Pros	Cons
Fairly easy to administer	Only suitable if site has defined entrance points
May be a health and safety requirement	Can over count if using automated counters
Can exit count rather than entrance count	Can be difficult to count if lots of people arrive at same time
	Can double count audience members

3) Head-counts - At key points do a head-count of the site.

Pros	Cons
Useful where site doesn't have defined entrance and exit points	Time intensive
Relatively simple to brief staff or volunteers	Relatively large margin of error
	Need to know dwell time for best estimates

4) People per square metre - Estimate density of people and multiply by size of site.

Pros	Cons
Useful where site doesn't have defined entrance and exit points	Need to have an accurate estimate of density - any errors are magnified once multiplied across the site
Very simple if you have a good idea of crowd density and site size	Density may vary throughout the site and throughout the event duration
Crowd density estimates already exist for scenarios such as concerts and parades	Doesn't work well when density is low

5) Photographs - take photographs throughout event from good vantage point

Pros	Cons
Useful where site doesn't have defined entrance and exit points	Need to know dwell time for best estimates
May be better than a head-count if there are lots of people in a small space	Photographs have to be of good quality

It is important to be able to show how the estimation was achieved and why a particular method was chosen. Demonstrating the use of a robust method for estimating audience size strengthens the evaluation and report and is more useful for planning future events.

Advance estimations can help to predict an accurate and robust figure. Considerations include; content and context of event, location, capacity and turnover, comparison of previous and/or similar events and comparative information from other parties such as An Garda Síochána and/or production and promotion company figures.