FINDING

User Research

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Start Here

Project Objective

Providing an interactive application for conference and convention attendees that allows for precise navigation and making connections using U1 chip technology.

Research Goals

We set out to determine the biggest challenges faced by attendees and organizers. We aimed to find the strengths and weaknesses of existing indoor navigation apps. It was important to conclude what should be improved upon in those existing apps.

The overarching question is: **What can U1 technology contribute?**

Methodology

To achieve these goals, we sent out a **general survey** for anyone who has attended a conference or convention. We **conducted interviews** with people who work at events or routinely attend them.
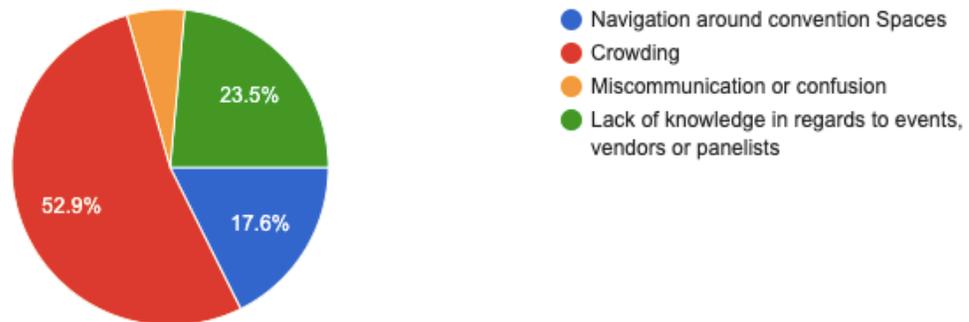
Survey Results

94% of survey participants have attended a conference or convention. 47.1% have attended 4 or more of these events.

70.5% of survey participants pointed to crowding and navigation issues as being the biggest challenge faced by event attendees.

In your opinion, what do you think would be the most frustrating part of attending a large event like a conference or convention?

17 responses

- Navigation around convention Spaces
- Crowding
- Miscommunication or confusion
- Lack of knowledge in regards to events, vendors or panelists

Respondents claimed that contributing factors for navigation difficulties were varying event locations from year to year, and lack of clear signage.

30% of those surveyed do not think conventions/conferences make event information easily accessible.

Noted reasons for accessibility issues were a lack of interactive and flexible schedules and maps. When events host their information on a website, cell service isn't always consistent. Information that is posted can be vague and unhelpful.

52.9% of those surveyed download the application associated with the event they attended.

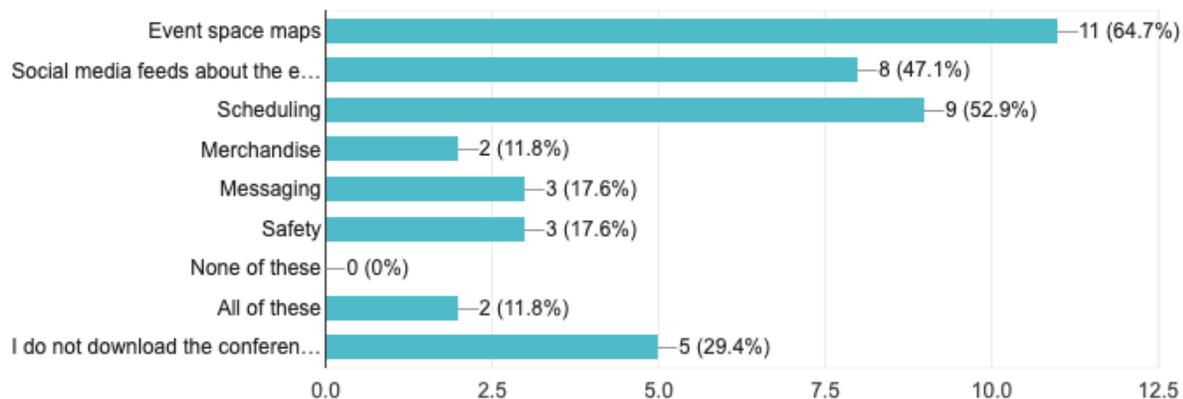## If you go to a large event, do you download the associated app?

17 responses

Yes
No

47.1%

52.9%
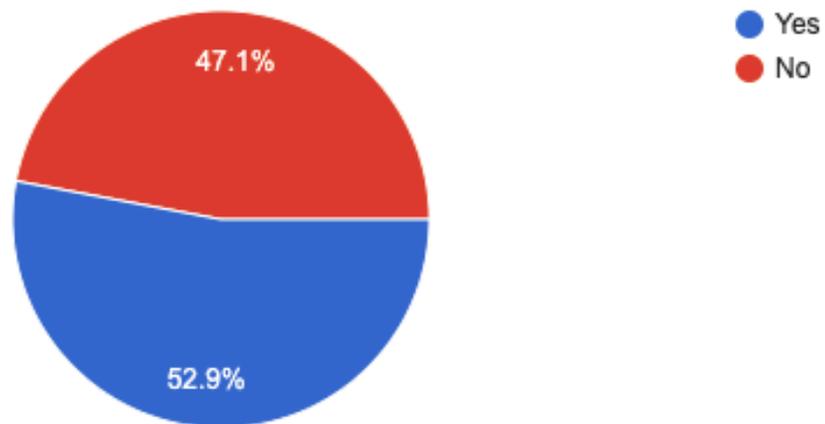
What features do you like most about existing event apps?

17 responses

Event space maps	11 (64.7%)
Social media feeds about the e…	8 (47.1%)
Scheduling	9 (52.9%)
Merchandise	2 (11.8%)
Messaging	3 (17.6%)
Safety	3 (17.6%)
None of these	0 (0%)
All of these	2 (11.8%)
I do not download the conferen…	5 (29.4%)

Features most liked in existing apps were event space maps, social media feeds with up-to-date information, and access to scheduling.

64.7% of those surveyed use conferences and conventions as a networking or social opportunity

Interview #1

Our first interview candidate is the vice president of marketing and communications for a large company. She sets up event booths for conferences and runs the booth with her marketing team.

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What is your biggest goal when attending a conference, and how does navigating the event space play into that?

There are typically two goals when we go to conferences – retain our current clients (keep them engaged with us vs having time to be wooed by a competitor) and generating new, qualified prospects. There are certain conferences that we will speak at just to position ourselves as thought leaders as well.

When choosing a place to set up a booth for a conference, what considerations do you make to determine the location, if any?

I always look at the flow of traffic – i.e. where are the conference rooms where the presentations will be taking place so I can determine which doors attendees will likely come into the exhibitor hall from. I try to get our booth as close to that entrance on a main walkway as possible.

What are strategies you use to drive people towards your booth/panel? What are some obstacles that you encounter when trying to do so?

You want your booth to have energy. We try to offer gifts that pertain to the location you are having the conference at or to the theme of the conference. We also just bought a kiosk to host our materials so we can send them to people as they come up to the booth vs having to carry something in their bag home. This also gets us their contact information. It also has a wheel of fortune game on it that you can spin for a higher-level prize. People tend to go out for dinners in the evenings a lot, so have been drinking more. We always have branded waters available at our booth. It has been a big hit over the years.

When you have attended conferences in the past, have you downloaded an app that is specific to the event for notifications and mapping?

I see conferences doing this more now. I really like being able to see on an app all the sessions that are going on at a particular time. We can start to customize what materials we are highlighting based on the presentation the folks are coming out of. For example, if someone just came out of a presentation on claims management, I could have a one pager on our claims management capabilities out vs a surety one pager knowing these folks are likely more interested in the first topic and it is in that moment top of mind.

If so, what app was it, what features did you like, and what could've been improved?

The ability to chat with folks attending a particular session vs the whole conference would be helpful. You could then sell sponsorships at the presentation level vs overarching conference level.

How do you think the overall experience of conferences could be improved? Could that be helped by having complementary technology event planners and attendees could use?

Any opportunities to personalize an experience for the attendees and give the sponsors more opportunity to get more specific with who they are targeting for their services creates a win for the conference host.

Are these issues specific to one conference, or is there an overlapping issue to be addressed across a number of them?

These are universal. You must attract attendees by putting on a worthwhile conference and you must attract sponsors to cover the costs of putting on a worthwhile conference. However, you have to prove ROI to sponsors to get that support. Anything that can be done to help the host sell their conference to either of these groups will bring significant value.

Interview #2

Our second interview candidate is an active convention participant and volunteer. As both a regular con-attendee and volunteer, she has niche insight into both aspects of conventions.

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What is your biggest goal when attending a comic convention, and how does navigating the event space play into that?

 I go to comic conventions to have fun and show off my cosplays. I like engaging with other fans of the stuff I like while also getting to proudly display the hard work I've put into my craft with other people. Getting around the convention spaces can be difficult. Especially at Dragon Con where the venues are in multiple hotels all within a block of each other, so it can be sorta crazy and difficult to get around if you don't know what you're doing.

When you have attended comic conventions in the past, have you downloaded an app that is specific to the event for notifications and mapping? If so, what app was it, what features did you like, and what could've been improved?

 Oh yeah, the apps are always so important. They usually have the schedules and locations of the panels that I wanna visit. I also do the same when going to Disney or any large space that has an app, usually it helps to condense all the con information into one place on my phone.

Most recently, I used the Dragon Con app. The layout and functionality is really buggy. Plus, the map of the event is basically useless since it's a static image. So many people came up to us at the booth to ask where rooms were because the map was so difficult to read when navigating the multiple hotel spaces. As for what I like? I do enjoy how it constantly updated the schedule for what was still going on around the con. So, it was useful for planning my day out, but that's pretty much it.

What features do you think would be important to include?

I think safety would be nice, especially for bigger cons like Dragon Con or any of the larger Comic Cons. I don't really do social media that much, so I might occasionally check the social media feed, but I would really just be looking for other cosplayers. I think the panel info is fine as is, but I think maybe some sorta integration with google maps or something could be nice to help clear confusion on where things are would be nice.

To what extent do you see Convention spaces as a place for socializing?

I mean, isn't the whole point of conventions to be a place for nerdy people to all meet up once or twice a year? I think thats all comic conventions are. Yeah, you go for the panels and stuff, but the interactions with other people is really what it's all about.

Would streamlining this into an app have any effect on your desire to socialize during convention days?

I think if the app had more coordination on when cosplay meetups were going to happen, I'd use it then? I don't really like gathering in large crowds unless there's a purpose, but I could definitely see a feature like that being used to help get fans of the same stuff together through ways that aren't word of mouth.

What We Learned

The demand for an app using U1 chip technology for indoor navigation settings certainly exists. Based on our survey responses, large events have run into accessibility issues when it comes to having concise and updated information available for their attendees. Crowding is contributing problem, and having precise navigation and an application that houses all relevant information would help provide a solution to these issues.

Additionally, we learned that both conferences and conventions are seen by attendees as social or professional networking opportunities. Having a way to connect with other attendees would be welcomed by those both surveyed and interviewed.

Where We Will Go

We will build an app that has navigational, scheduling, safety and social components for large events, specifically conferences and conventions. Originally, we planned on just focusing on navigation, but we learned that the benefit of consolidating lots of important information into the application would have even more benefit to the user.

Focusing on the U1 chip technology with a progressive enhancement approach, we will enable users to sync their contacts to find friends or colleagues in a large space. Our app will guide attendees to desired locations during their event experience.