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TALLAHASSEE JUNIOR MUSEUM
A VISITOR PROFILE AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY
OF THE
"BACK TO THE DINOSAURS" EXHIBIT

BY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the economic impact a seasonal exhibit had upon Tallahassee, Florida, during the Summer of 1989. In addition, the study obtained information that was considered useful in the development of effective marketing strategies aimed at increasing levels of visitor satisfaction. The study also established a successful methodology for data collection purposes at on-going events that attract large numbers of daily attendees.

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INTRODUCTION

The Tallahassee Junion Museum is a non-profit organization which was founded 30 years ago. During the summer of 1989, the museum sponsored an exhibit entitled "Back to the Dinosaurs". The exhibit opened on June 10, 1989 and ended on August 27, 1989. A California corporation, Dinamation, was contracted to provide six different types of dinosaurs: a sabre-toothed tiger, a woolly mammoth, an apatosaurus, a triceratops, a tyrannosaurus, and a pteranodon. Dinamation conducted extensive prior research to assure the exhibit's accuracy and authenticity. Each animal was either a full-scale or half-scale replica of their original size. The exhibit was held indoors on the premises in a building with a total area of approximately 1200 square feet. Approximately 109,000 visitors saw the exhibit.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was 1) to determine the economic impact that the "Back to the Dinosaurs" exhibit had on the Tallahassee, Florida, area, and 2) to provide a better understanding of the visitor market attending the "Back to the Dinosaurs" exhibit. In this manner, information was obtained and analyzed so that effective marketing strategies could be developed and monitored. Market strategies aimed at increasing levels of visitor satisfaction could favorably impact repeat visitation and also contribute to the formation of a positive image of future exhibits as wholesome and enjoyable events.

The project was designed to accomplish specific objectives including:

1. The establishment of a methodology for collecting data from exhibit attendees.

2. The collection of preliminary economic data used to develop an estimate of the economic impact of the "Back to the Dinosaurs" exhibit on Tallahassee, including estimated and actual on-site and area expenditures.

3. The collection of preliminary data used to develop a profile of "Back to the Dinosaurs" visitors including area of residence, group size, preference for accommodations, perceived positive aspects, perceived negative aspects, and media awareness.

The randomness of the design was important so that a representative sampling of attendees could be obtained. Approximately 785 interviews were completed for the purposes of this study. In order to achieve an error estimate of +/- 5 percent and a confidence level of 95 percent, a total of 383 usable surveys were needed. Because nearly twice as many surveys were collected (n=785) and entered into the computer (n=722), the error estimate of +/- 5 percent is deemed conservative (1-6).

METHODOLOGY

On-site interviews were conducted by trained volunteers under the supervision of staff member the Junior Museum's Director of Marketing. The volunteers were stationed at the exit gates and surveyed participants as they departed the museum grounds. Interviews were conducted between the hours of 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. and took each participant an average of 3 minutes to complete. A total of 28 days were selected for interviews, but due to adverse weather conditions (rain), interviewing took place on 16 days (Table 1). Of the 785 surveys collected, only 722 were deemed usable for analysis.

RESULTS

Attendance at the Tallahassee Junior Museum between the dates of June 10 and August 27, 1989 totaled 109,000 visitors. Overall, 88 percent of those visitors indicated that they came specifically to see the "Back to the Dinosaurs" exhibit. Of those surveyed, 62.9 percent came on weekends (Saturday and Sunday) and 37.1 percent came during the week (Monday through Friday) (Table 2).

Final results showed that 84.2 percent of attendees were from Florida. Georgia (9.8 percent) and Alabama (1.5 percent) represented the second and third major areas (Table 3). Of those from Florida, 69.7 percent indicated that they originated from the Tallahassee area.

Approximately 41.9 percent of those attendees from outside the Tallahassee area indicated that they were staying overnight in the Tallahassee area. Seventy-five percent indicated that they stayed with friends or relatives while visiting. A total of 17.9 percent of overnight visitors stayed in local hotels or motels (Table 4). Over half (52.1 percent) of all visitors staying overnight indicated that they stayed one or two nights (Table 5).

The average group size that visited the museum was 4.34 persons per group. The average adult group size was 2.33 and average number of children per group was 2.01.

Over 40 percent of visitors to Tallahassee indicated they spent up to \$20 per day while in the area. Nearly 20 percent indicated expenditures ranging from \$41 to \$60 per day (Table 8).

With respect to group expenditures on the museum site, nearly 83 percent of all visitors spent less than \$20 while 14 percent of surveyed visitors indicated spending up to \$40 per visit (Table 9).

When asked what visitors liked the most about their museum experience, nearly 68 percent of the respondents said that nature trails, wild animals, and farm animals were liked the most (Table 10). When asked specifically what they liked most about the exhibit, sixty percent indicated that the realism of the dinosaurs was what they liked most. Over half indicated that nothing was disappointing about the exhibit (Table 11 and 12).

The majority of visitors (55.4 percent) indicated that they had a positive experience and "nothing" could have made the on-site experience better. Suggestions for improvement were mostly climate/weather related. For instance, some respondents (20.5 percent) expressed disappointment with the dried lake and heat which could be associated. Other minor responses suggested disappointment with the small size of the snake exhibit (2.1 percent), the limited store merchandise available for sale (2.4 percent), and the abundance of insects (2.6 percent). Although these percentages appear to be insignificant, it may be useful when planning for future events and exhibits (Table 13).

Nearly 60 percent of the visitors indicated that they heard about

the "Back to the Dinosaurs" exhibit through television commercials. Newspaper ads were the next most effective form of media awareness where 10 percent of the respondents read about the exhibit (Table 14).

When respondents were asked about their prior visits to the museum, over one-third indicated this was their first visit. Of the two thirds who had previously visited the museum, 31.3 percent indicated they visited up to 3 times during the past 12 months (Table 15). Although 45.6 percent indicated zero for the number of times they visited the museum in the past 12 months, the possibility exists that they have visited the museum in the past.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The amount of visitor expenditures that remains in an area is considered the direct effect of visitor expenditures. This is because it provides a direct source of income to residents and businesses. The total direct area impact for the "Back to the Dinosaurs" exhibit was estimated by utilizing visitor expenditure information. This included on-site spending and Tallahassee area spending for those attendees staying overnight. Also, data was collected from costs associated with concessions including food, drinks, and other merchandise. Information was collected specifically on estimated expenses in preparation for the event including advertising, actual gross receipts, and net profit. Results indicated that the "Back to the Dinosaurs" exhibit generated a total direct area impact of \$802,423 for the three month event (Table 16).

CONCLUSIONS

This study was initiated to provide the Tallahassee Junior Museum with information that would assist the museum in planning, marketing, and managing future exhibits. It was also intended to provide a framework for expanding the scope of the study to include specific data on visitor demographics, life styles, needs, perceptions, and impact.

Based upon the results, several major conclusions can be generalized.

1. The Tallahassee Junior Museum dinosaur exhibit attracted predominantly weekend visitors from the local area.
2. Most individuals spent less than \$20 at the museum site.
3. Television was the most effective form of advertisement.
4. Reptiles and farm animals and the nature trails were liked most aside from the dinosaur exhibit.
5. Over 20 percent of museum respondents can be considered frequent

visitors which represents interesting marketing challenges.

6. Visitors were willing to complete survey information. Therefore, the opportunity exists to expand upon the original survey instrument and explore dimensions associated with levels of satisfaction, benefits sought and life style characteristics.

HOW THE STUDY RESULTS WERE UTILIZED

1. Because the results indicated that television was the most effective form of advertisement, the marketing department has since focused 80 percent of all special events advertising on television. Regardless of the event, television advertising has been proven to be successful.
2. Utilization of zip code data for direct mail and outdoor advertising had resulted in an increase in visitation for all subsequent events. Zip code data has successfully defined areas within major markets and has led to the strategic placement of billboard advertisements.
3. A direct mail system was implemented for the frequent visitors identified in the research project. Approximately 20 percent of the overall attendance is represented by this market.
4. The research project identified several benefits sought by visitors unfamiliar with the museum. These benefits have been emphasized in all advertising efforts and results indicate an increase in attendance for first time visitors.
5. The original survey instrument has been modified and expanded for on-going marketing research. In this matter market segments are compared according to type of event, level of visitation, media effectiveness, and level of satisfaction. In addition, life style characteristics have been used to isolate market segment benefits. For instance, winter visitors have demonstrated many differences when compared with visitors from other seasons. Because expectations of visitors change during different seasons, advertising has been created specific to seasonal benefits.
6. Weekend advertising (Friday, Saturday) in the local area has proven to be successful in attracting more weekend visitors. On-going research has identified that weekend visitors decide to visit the museum less than 24 hours in advance.

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Table 1
Actual Survey Dates

	Usable Number	Percent
June 10	99	13.7%
June 11	99	13.7
June 14	42	5.8
June 16	32	4.4
June 17	99	13.4
June 19	15	2.1
June 22	57	7.9
June 27	51	7.1
June 28	26	3.6
June 29	16	2.2
July 2	55	7.6
July 4	9	1.2
July 22	20	2.8
August 15	20	2.8
August 19	72	10.0
August 26	10	1.4
TOTAL USABLE	722	100.0%

Table 2
Day of the Week Attendance

	Number	Percent
Weekend	444	61.5%
Weekday	278	38.5
TOTAL	722	100.0%

Table 3
State of Residence

	Number	Percent
Florida	607	84.2%
Georgia	71	9.8
Alabama	11	1.5
Other	32	4.5
TOTAL	721	100.0%

Other Included: Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia

Table 4
Accommodations Used by Overnight Visitors

	Number	Percent
Friends/Relatives	63	75.0%
Hotel/Motel	15	17.9
Other	6	7.2
TOTAL	84	100.1%*

* NOTE: Percentages may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Table 5
Length of Stay of Overnight Visitors

Number of Nights	Number	Percent
1	17	23.3%
2	21	28.8
3	13	17.8
4	4	5.5
5	5	6.8
6	2	2.7
7	5	6.8
8	1	1.4
10	2	2.7
14	1	1.4
21	1	1.4
30	1	1.4
TOTAL	73	100.0%

Table 6
Number of Adults Per Group

Number of Adults Per Group	Number	Percent
1	168	23.4%
2	372	51.9
3	89	12.4
4	53	7.4
5	17	2.4
6 or more	17	2.4
TOTAL	717	99.9%

Table 7
Number of Children Per Group

Number of Children Per Group	Number	Percent
1	198	32.9%
2	212	35.2
3	98	16.3
4	45	7.5
5	21	3.5
6 or more	26	4.3
TOTAL	602	99.7%

Table 8
Visitor Expenditures Per Day in Tallahassee
(Excluding Museum Expenditures)

Dollar Amount	Number	Percent
\$0-20	47	41.9%
21-40	13	11.6
41-60	22	19.7
61-80	7	6.3
81-100	12	10.7
100+	11	9.9
TOTAL	112	100.1%

Table 9
Group Expenditures at the Museum

Dollar Amount	Number	Percent
\$0-20	595	82.7%
21-40	104	14.4
41-60	14	2.0
61-80	5	.6
81-100	2	.2
TOTAL	720	99.9%

Table 10
What Was Liked Most About the Visit to the Museum

	Number	Percent
Farm Animals	126	17.8%
Snakes/Alligators/Turtles	56	7.9
Nature Trails	191	27.1
Otters	26	3.7
Antiques	2	.3
Farmhouse and Buildings	31	4.4
Everything	52	7.4
Staff	3	.4
Wild Animals	161	22.8
Other	58	8.2
TOTAL	706	100.0%

Table 11
 What Was Liked Most About the Dinosaur Exhibit

	Number	Percent
Lifelike/Real	402	60.5%
Noise	2	.3
Professionally Done	34	5.1
Everything	124	18.7
Dinosaurs	7	1.1
Educational	3	.5
Air Conditioning	1	.2
Staff	5	.8
Nothing	86	13.0
TOTAL	664	100.2%

Table 12
 What Was Disappointing About the Dinosaur Exhibit

	Number	Percent
Nothing	389	56.0%
Scary	43	6.2
Too Short/Too Small	208	29.9
Unrealistic	21	3.0
Too Crowded	8	1.2
Overrated	9	1.3
Other	17	2.4
TOTAL	695	100.0%

Table 13

What Would Have Made Visit to the Museum Better

	Number	Percent
Nothing	387	55.4%
More Animals	2	.3
Heat	2	8.9
Dried Lake	143	20.5
Store	17	2.4
Snakes	15	2.1
Insects	18	2.6
Pollution	3	.4
Other	51	7.3
TOTAL	722	99.9%

Table 14

Media Awareness

Form of Media	Number	Percent
Television	287	55.2%
Radio	36	6.9
Newspaper	52	10.0
Billboard	6	1.2
Museum Newsletter	50	9.6
Word of Mouth	47	9.0
Other	42	8.1
TOTAL	520	100.0%

Table 15

Number of Visits to Museum in the Past 12 Months

Number of Visits	Number	Percent
0	328	45.6%
1-3	225	31.3
4-6	97	13.4
7 or more	69	9.4
TOTAL	719	99.7%

Table 16

Direct Economic Impact of the "Back to the Dinosaurs" Exhibit
 Tallahassee Junior Museum
 Tallahassee, Florida
 June 10 to August 27, 1989

Dates	Total Visitor Expenditures	Total Area Out-of-State Visitor Expenditures	Net Profit	Direct Impact
June 10 to August 27, 1989	\$331,266	\$399,000	\$72,157	\$802,423