Strengthening tourism through education & research

2005 Art Meander: Market identification & event enhancement

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Introduction & Purpose

An attractive & emerging travel market are those engaged in nature-based or cultural & heritage based tourism (Hargrove 2004; Hollinshead 1996; Luzar, Diagne, Gan, & Henning 1998; Nicholls, Vogt, & Jun 2004; TIA 2003). Based on national data, a total of 118.1 million U.S. adults participated in cultural or heritage tourism in 2002 (TIA 2003). Additionally, over three quarters (81%) of US adults took at least one trip greater than fifty miles that included at least one cultural activity or event.

One event seeking this market is The Upper Minnesota River Art Crawl Meander. Created in 2004, this project sought to showcase the work of local artists, draw visitors to the area, enrich citizens' social & cultural lives, & build the brand identity of the Upper Minnesota Valley Region as associated with the arts. The Meander was held September 30 to October 2 in a a five-county area in Western MN. More than 50 artists participated at 38 designated sites.

The purpose of this project was to assess visitor perceptions of the Meander and understand their interest in cultural/heritage travel.

Methods

Sample & Instrument

Visitors at venues of the Minnesota River Art Crawl Meander On-site questionnaire (see below)

Data Collection

• Random two stage cluster approach: surveying conducted across four clusters, with sites randomly chosen within each cluster

• A total of 231 parties were contacted & resulted in 178 usable questionnaires (77.1% response rate)

Analysis

• Descriptive analysis in SPSS with cleaned data

Results: Respondents

Demographics:

Age: Average 51.1, Range 18-88 years

Gender: 81.1% Female

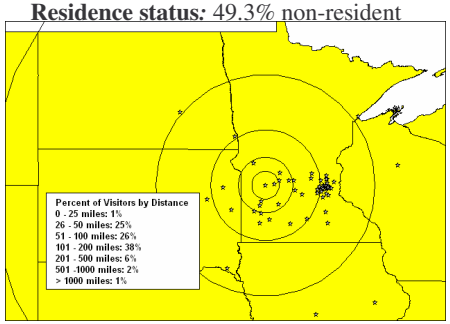
Household composition:

44.2% couple with children >18

Income:

61.4% annual income $50,000 or more

Residence status: 49.3% non-resident



Results:

Meander Art Crawl Experience

Attendance: 64.6% attended 1 day (80.3% Saturday)

Sites visited: Average 3.9 at time of capture, 1-12 sites

Party size: Average 3.7, Range 1 to 30 people

Sources influencing decision to attend Meander:

Recommendation from friends/relatives 43.8%

Brochure at a location 27%

Most satisfied attributes:

Interaction with the artists & Quality of the art

Will recommend to friends/family: 85.9% very likely

Likelihood of attendance next year: 73.6% very likely

Suggestions to improve: 1) timing; 2) quality, quantity, & diversity of the art; 3) suggestions of routes with varied themes, & 4) more information on general visitor services

Cultural/heritage experience

Previous experience: 88.2% engaged in cultural or historic activities/events in previous twelve months

Most frequently cited: visit to art museum or antique establishment (76.4%) & historic activity/event (73.0%)

Discussion

Overall, the Meander was a success from the visitor viewpoint as indicated by: 1) positive ratings of key elements, 2) a majority were very likely to recommend to a friend, 3) a majority were very likely to attend next year. Still, improvements in communication, breadth of art & general visitor information will enhance their experiences.

Similar to TIA (2003) findings, a majority of all respondents had engaged in travel that included some type of historic or cultural experience in the previous 12 months. Residential differences identify a support limited to the local population about the area's attractions to enhance their lives as well as their personal marketing of the area.

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