

Editor's Note

The last issue of *Visitor Behavior* contained references and summaries of master's theses and dissertations on visitor studies. This issue contains references to additional theses and dissertations that were not included in the previous issue. As usual, Molly Hood has contributed substantially to the issue with her bibliography and dissertation abstract. There is also a dissertation abstract by Barbara Soren and a master's thesis abstract by Rosalyn Rubenstein.

The remainder of this issue is a conglomeration of articles. The article by Van-Praet and Missud comparing visitors in different areas of the museum and at Le Louvre should stimulate some of you to look more closely at the demographics and behavior of your own visitors. The D'Amico and Pokorny article suggests that either the incoming perceptions of visitors may be resistant to change or that exhibits are not as effective as we might think in educating the public.

The article on the "visitor immersion experience" presents visitor data that attempts to explore how visitors experience "immersion" exhibits. The data suggests that when exhibits create a feeling of being in the time and place, they also are likely to be perceived as natural, exciting, and meaningful. Such exhibits may have a more powerful impact on visitors than those that do not create the "immersion experience."

Steve Bitgood, Editor

Adult Attitudes Toward Leisure Choices in Relation to Museum Participation

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Ph. D. Dissertation (1981)
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Because 60 years of studies of museum audiences have failed to identify why some persons go to museums and others do not, it was necessary to develop new techniques to ascertain the bases for adults' choice of museum participation. Whereas previous studies have been descriptive, concentrating on demographic characteristics and attendance patterns, this quasi-experimental study tested four hypotheses to determine the criteria adults use in making choices about leisure participation, including museum-going. A multi-attribute model, adopted from marketing theory, was the organizational framework for analysis of the relationship between critical attributes of leisure choices and audience preferences for selected activities, such as museum participation.

The research, which was carried out with the cooperation of the Toledo (Ohio) Museum of Art, identified why adults choose to be or not to be involved in museums, based on their leisure values. A probability sample of 502 persons in the Toledo metropolitan area was interviewed by telephone and a systematically-selected random sample of 69 visitors was interviewed at the Toledo Museum of Art, in April and May 1980. Both samples were queried about the importance in their leisure choice decisions of six major leisure concepts— which were derived from leisure science, sociology, psychology, and consumer behavior literature. Scales based on the six leisure concepts questioned respondents about the types of activities and places they preferred in their leisure time, and their attitudes toward art museums.

In addition, the respondents' socialization toward cultural, entertainment, active participation, and social interaction activities was measured by two scales, which identified respondents' frequency of participation in 22 activities, both as children and as adults. The relationship between the carryover of activities from childhood to adulthood to the six leisure concepts was also determined.

The study found that there are three distinctly different audience segments – frequent participants, occasional participants, and nonparticipants – and that each is seeking specifically different values and experiences through leisure activities and museum participation. Also, it was found that museum participation by each segment was more highly related to psychographic variables, (including attitudes toward leisure values) than to demographic variables, stage of family life cycle was not a dominant influence on leisure participation, and the more that adults valued the six important leisure concepts the more they participated in the Toledo Museum of Art. Using the multi-attribute model to evaluate criteria, profiles of the three audience segments were developed and marketing strategies to reach each group were identified.

It was demonstrated that empirically-based research on the values and attitudes involved in leisure choices, socialization patterns, and life style preferences can provide a more reliable, substantial basis for assessing leisure participation than repetitive investigation of demographics and attendance patterns. Use of the scales developed for this study and of the multi-attribute model as an analytical tool in a non-profit setting are recommended for future research in other leisure centers, outdoor as well as cultural. Detailed descriptions of development of the instruments, sample selections, training of museum volunteers as interviewers, and data collection offer guidelines for carrying out systematic survey research in other leisure centers.

Reprinted from DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS INTERNATIONAL, Volume 42, Number 5, 1981.

Copies of the complete dissertation are available from UMI, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. (800) 521-0600.