2008 Profile of MN International Festival of Owls Attendees
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Introduction & Purpose

Birds attracted the largest following of wildlife watchers in the U.S. with 47.7 million viewers in 2006 (U.S. Department of the Interior, FWS, et. al., 2006). Among Minnesotan wildlife viewers, birds were the most frequent wildlife observed, fed or photographed & the most enjoyable type of wildlife to observe, feed or photograph (Schneider & Salk, 2002). Northern Wintering Owls were among the birds Minnesota wildlife viewing respondents indicated interest in viewing (Schneider & Salk, 2002).

A bird festival attracts the interests of wildlife viewers while providing benefits to the community. To maximize benefit & enhance events, organizers need to continually assess & evaluate their event & its market. In 2008, the Center for Urban & Regional Affairs (CURA) supported a profile of visitors to the International Festival of Owls in Houston, MN.

Methods

Sample & Instrument

--Visitors at the International Festival of Owls, 2008
--115 respondents (92.7% response rate)
--On-site questionnaire: motivations, demographics, expenditures

Data Collection

Trained volunteers used a systematic intercept sample with sampling throughout events & across activities

Analysis

Descriptive analysis in SPSS

Results: Respondents

Demographics

Age: Average 53.3, Range 23-91 years
Gender: 55.3% Female Race: 97.4% White
Average group size: 3 adults, 1 child
Income: 72.6% annual income $50,000 or more
Residence status: 70.4% non-resident
Level of birding experience

41.6% Beginner
24.8% Intermediate
18.6% Not a Birder
15.0% Advanced

What did they enjoy most?

Results

Information Sources

33.0% “Other” 20.9% Newspaper 17.4% Internet
23.5% Friends 20.9% Family

Expenditures

Discussion

Respondents & their experience

Respondents were demographically similar to wildlife viewers in MN
Consistent enjoyment of live owl programs suggests that increasing
interactions with owls will increase visitor satisfaction

Information sources

Word of mouth was an important vehicle for event marketing & mirrors
previous state & national findings
The newspaper & internet are also important information sources for wildlife
viewers. The radio & TV appear to be positive media opportunities as a
number of specifications in ‘other’ were the TV news & the radio. Increased
marketing in these areas may attract attendees.

Expenditures

Lodging accounted for the highest expenditure yet just more than a quarter of
respondents indicated an overnight stay & just over a quarter of them
indicated using lodging facilities in Houston. Efforts to increase overnight
stays & the use of lodging facilities in Houston will increase spending at the
festival as well as benefit the community. Expanding & improving souvenirs
& food & beverage choices at the festival will also increase expenditures.