

Enhancing and Measuring the Tourism Impact of Your Event

- Market Research -

Things to Think About...

1. What do you really need to know to satisfy requirements of the Tompkins County Tourism Program and (as long as you're doing a survey anyway) your own information needs?
2. How will you use the information you collect?
 - Make sure each question has a specific purpose. If you're asking just because you're curious and you wouldn't change anything as a result, then eliminate from the survey.
 - Keep the survey as short as possible while still making sure you're asking everything you need to know.
3. Are you able to be unbiased?
 - If possible, administer the survey to a few people who are not closely involved in the process to make sure it:
 - Flows well – order of questions makes sense, skips when questions are not applicable
 - Is clear and understandable
 - Is not written in such a way that it encourages people to give a particular answer
4. What is the best way to collect this information (administration method)?
 - a. Intercept – done in-person in real time, best response rate, if not done properly can bias results (see "Survey Administration Instructions for Intercept Interviews")
 - b. Email – cheapest, easiest, but lowest response rate
 - c. Phone – have to collect phone numbers, most expensive, but most unbiased

NOTE: Do not be afraid to attempt to collect as much contact information from event/project participants (email, phone, etc.) as possible when you're interacting with people (e.g., during the registration for the event, purchasing of tickets, etc.). This will give you more options for which administration method you choose for the research.
5. How big does it need to be? When you do more surveys, the results become more trustworthy. You want the lowest margin of error possible. A minimum of 100 surveys collected is a good goal. Example maximum margins of error:

<u>Number of surveys</u>	<u>Maximum margin of error</u>
25	19.6%
50	13.9%
100	9.8%
400	4.9%

6. Do you have the staffing needed to implement the research?
 - a. Questionnaire design
 - b. Collecting the data (administering survey via intercept or phone; programming of web survey)
 - c. Coding of open-ended responses (categorizing for easier analysis), if applicable
 - d. Data entry (getting the responses into the computer)
 - e. Analysis/Report (figuring out what it all means and how to effectively use the results)

NOTE: Consider establishing a "surveyor" volunteer role, and recruit a couple of people to do this work when you are recruiting general volunteers. Survey collection can also be a good intern role.

Survey Administration Instructions for Intercept Interviews

1. Approach people randomly. One of the easiest errors made in intercept surveys is biasing who participates based on the interviewer's comfort level. Either approach every n th (e.g., every 3rd) person you encounter, or approach the very next person you encounter after completing each survey. You can't base it on who they are, how they look, or whether you think they will want to participate. If you bias the participants, you may unknowingly skew the results so they aren't actually representative of the entire population who attended your event.
2. Only allow 1 person per group to participate. This is especially important if other members of the group are standing nearby as you're surveying someone. Only accept answers from 1 person for the whole survey (even if others try to weigh in). And, since often members of the same group will have consistent thoughts/perceptions, it's best not to survey another member of the same group. If you need to do so, at least make sure they are completely independent – i.e., that they aren't listening as you're surveying other group members.
3. Be persistent, but not aggressive. If you only do the survey with people who are enthusiastic, your results will be skewed, so it's important to encourage everyone you encounter to participate, regardless of whether they think they have anything important to say. But, obviously you don't want the survey itself to negatively impact the experience, so it's a delicate balance.
4. Interviewers (volunteers/staff) should be very familiar with the survey. Go over the survey with each of the interviewers ahead of time. Make sure they have ample opportunity to ask questions before administering it to event participants. It's especially important to cover the "skip patterns" (i.e., whether a question is asked can sometimes be based on previous answers to other questions).
5. Do NOT let the participant see the survey. For some questions you might have a list of possible responses just to make it easier for you to mark their answer (so you don't have to write it all out). If you let them see these possible responses, it will skew the results towards those answers.
6. Read the questions exactly as they're written. If you stray from the script at all, it's very easy to change the meaning/intent of the question – or to subconsciously affect how someone answers it – without being aware that it's happening. It's safest (in terms of the integrity of the data) to just stick exactly to the script.
7. Get extras, if at all possible. Once you go through the editing process (see "Analysis"), you may find that some surveys have to be discarded. If you're shooting for a particular number, it's best to get a few more just to be safe.

Analysis

1. Edit the surveys to make sure it was completed correctly. Check to see that the appropriate questions were asked/skipped as appropriate and that there aren't any illogical responses. If you don't do this step, it is likely that you will end up with some illogical data, which will be confusing during the analysis.
2. Enter the data into a computer. There are special programs for this, but you will likely use Excel (example spreadsheets are attached). Next to each text response in the survey is a "code" (numerical value connected with that response). "Actual values" (e.g., dollar amounts) will typically be entered as whole numbers (no fractions or decimals). *NOTE: Decimals are possible, but the example spreadsheets provided here are set up for whole numbers. In most cases this is a sufficient level of detail.*

Analysis (continued)

3. Code open-ended responses. Questions that don't have a pre-listed set of responses are "open-ended." You can read through the list of answers and try to make sense of them, but you'll find it's often difficult to truly understand the magnitude of common answers until they can be quantified. So, you identify patterns or categories of responses and attach a "code" (numeric value) to each category. This can be a time-consuming process.
4. Calculate % of attendees giving each response. There are also special programs for this – cross-tabulations can be created that the data to be dissected at a finer level (e.g., are women's perceptions/behavior different than men's?). Using the simple Excel sheets provided will only show the results on an overall basis, without this type of subgroup analysis. See "Resources" for support doing more complex analyses.
5. Use charts to illustrate the findings. Charts (tables and graphs) can easily be created in Excel or PowerPoint. For many users of market research, this is a much easier way to see/understand the results.

Assistance

For questions about data collection and grant reporting for the Tompkins County Tourism Program, please contact Tom Knipe, Senior Planner / Tourism Coordinator, tknipe@tompkins-co.org, 607-274-5560. Information is also available on the Tourism Program website – www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism

Additional Resources

This information has been developed with assistance from WBA Research. For more than 25 years, WBA Research has provided full-service support to its market research clients across the country. In Ithaca since 2006, WBA is committed to supporting organizations in this community. They have special "community" rates for any of the following services:

- Questionnaire development/review
- Data collection (interviewing – intercept, telephone, online, mail, focus groups, etc.)
- Coding of open-ended questions
- Data entry
- Cross-tabulations
- Report/Presentation (PowerPoint)

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