Visitor Motivations
How They Can Help Plan Experiences & Measure Success

Lisa Eldred
Tiffany Leason
Kari Ross Nelson
Understanding Visitors

New Zealand Government Web Tool Kit
“Audience research can be an irritant to those curators accustomed to developing the museum product as they see fit. It can provoke resistance where it challenges prefigured beliefs and assumptions. However, if museums acknowledge that they should be audience-centered, a properly resourced program of visitor studies should be an essential, systematic element of a museum’s activities.” (Black, pg. 10)
Falk’s Identity-Related Visitor Motivation Model

Explorers

• Curiosity driven.
• Generic interest in content.
• Expect to find something that will grab their attention and fuel learning.
Falk’s Identity-Related Visitor Motivation Model

Facilitators

• Socially motivated.
• Focused on primarily enabling the experience and learning of others in their group.
  • Social
  • Parental
Falk’s Identity-Related Visitor Motivation Model

Professional/hobbyists
• Feel a close tie between the content and their passions.
• Visits typically motivated by a desire to satisfy a specific content related objective.
Falk’s Identity-Related Visitor Motivation Model

**Experience Seekers**

- Motivated to visit because they perceive the (garden) as an important destination.
- Satisfaction primarily derives from the mere fact of having “been there and done that.”
Falk’s Identity-Related Visitor Motivation Model

Rechargers

• Primarily seeking to have a contemplative, spiritual, and/or restorative experience.
• Use the (garden) as a refuge from the work-a-day-world.
Falk’s Identity-Related Visitor Motivation Model

Respectful Pilgrims

• Visit out of sense of duty or obligation to honor the memory of those represented.
Falk’s Identity-Related Visitor Motivation Model

Affinity Seekers

• Motivated to visit because a particular (garden) speaks to their sense of heritage and/or personhood.
How: Monthly Exit Survey

What was your motivation for visiting? Please select one or two choices.

- I like to explore new things. I am a generally curious person, and this provides me with a place I can learn about new things.
- I am a parent/grandparent, and I am primarily interested in making sure my children/grandchildren have a meaningful experience while they are here.
- I attended with friends, coworkers, acquaintances, or with a spouse. I am primarily interested in socializing with my companion(s) in a compelling setting.
- I attended because it is a “must see” destination in the community. I came here because of the one-of-a-kind experience I can have here.
- I came here because I have a special interest, knowledge, or training in the content.
- I visited because of the spiritual, emotional, or physical recharge I get when I am here. I come for rejuvenation.
General Visitor Motivations, 2015-Current

- Explorer: 19%
- Facilitating Parent/Grandparent: 37%
- Facilitating Socializer: 27%
- Experience Seeker: 21%
- Professional/Hobbyist: 8%
- Recharger: 49%
General Visitors

- Explorer: 19%
- Facilitating Parent / Grandparent: 37%
- Facilitating Socializer: 27%
- Experience Seeker: 21%
- Professional / Hobbyist: 8%
- Recharger: 42%

Scarecrow Festival

- How it engaged me:
  - A personal, spiritual experience
  - A sense of community
  - A chance to learn
  - A chance to relax
  - A chance to connect

- What it was:
  - A festival
  - A community event
  - A personal moment
  - A social gathering

- What I appreciated:
  - The atmosphere
  - The food
  - The activities
  - The entertainment

- How it made me feel:
  - Happy
  - Relaxed
  - Inspired
  - Connected
  - Content
What: Where the Rubber Hits the Road

• Explorer Training
• Management when considering new large scale projects
Why: Extend Reach, Optimize Experiences