

Adventure Tourism: Impact of Tourists at RiverRocks Outdoor Festival



Introduction

Chattanooga is a quickly growing part of the recently emerged adventure tourism industry. In 2004, Chattanooga mayor Bob Corker launched an Outdoor Initiative with the explicit intent of promoting outdoor activities to enhance the health, environmental initiatives, attractiveness, and economy of the Hamilton County area. Since that initiative, there has been little research done regarding the impact of adventure tourism in Chattanooga. The purpose of this study is to answer these three questions:

- 1) Does the region an adventure tourist is from affect the spending habits of that person?
- 2) Are visitors who are determined to be more active, more inclined to shop locally and or/ spend more money?
- 3) Is there a difference between visitors and residents in the way that their income class affects spending and activity habits?

Methods

This study was conducted at the RiverRocks festival held in Chattanooga from October 2-13th, 2013. We formulated two different surveys, one for visitors and one for Hamilton County residents, including questions about spending habits, outdoor activities, and perceived impact of the festival. Volunteers, primarily UTC students, were trained to use the “stint sampling” method and sought out voluntary responses from people either participating in or spectating at 5 of the higher profile RiverRocks events. We accumulated 401 surveys, 202 from visitors to the area and 199 from Hamilton County residents. We had a 67% response rate.

Scottie Hill and Andrew W. Bailey, Ph.D.



Analysis

- Data were analyzed to find out if independent variables such as each specific activity, total number of activities, and relative distance from Hamilton County had an impact on dependent variables such as income, total spending while in Chattanooga, and likelihood of the person to shop locally.
- Data were analyzed using linear regression, ANOVA, and bivariate correlation.
- Tables below give a representation of data for a few categories

ANOVA analysis: Numerical value is the F ratio, which shows how much the independent factor (top row) affects the dependent factor (left row)

Economic Factors	Regional Distance	Total Activities
Shop local	*2.982	*2.055
Total Spending	*3.849	.597
Income	0.469	1.183

* p<.05, **p<.001

Means for each category, with separate tables for visitors and residents. (Shop Local on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being most likely to shop locally, 10 being most likely to shop at chains. Total activities is simply a count of how many activities each person reported participating in)

Visitors Income Class	Shop Local	Total Activities
Working Poor	2	2.2
Lower Middle Class	3.889	5.3061
Upper Middle Class	4.25	4.029
Upper Class	4.889	3.4254
Total	4.142	4.4444

Resident's Income Class	Shop Local	Total Activities
Working Poor	5	8.4
Lower Middle Class	5.157	5.8235
Upper Middle Class	4.763	6.1017
Upper Class	4.364	6.5455
Total	4.916	6.5577

Results

Question 1 Results from Table 1:

- Tourists who live outside the region of North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia tended to spend more money during their visit to Chattanooga
- Tourists who live outside the region of North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia were more likely to shop locally as opposed to at a large chain
- There is not a significant difference in income levels among people from all regions

Question 2 Results from Table 1:

- People who reported participating in more total activities were more likely to shop locally as opposed to at a large chain
- There was not a significant difference in the income level or amount of money spent during the tourists' visit based on their reported number of activities

Question 3 Results from Tables 2 and 3:

- For visitors, people in the poor working class were the most likely to shop locally, followed by the lower working class
- For visitors, there was no significant connection between a person's income class and the total number of activities they participated in
- For visitors, the lower middle income class reported participating in the most total activities, followed by the upper middle class, with the working poor participating in the least number of activities
- For residents, members of the upper income class were the most likely to shop locally, followed by the upper middle class
- For residents, members of the poor working class reported participating in more activities than any other class (differences between classes were statistically significant); members of the upper class ranked second in total number of activities
- Overall, visitors were more likely to shop local than residents, while residents participated in more total activities

Implications

- Adventure tourists who traveled from more distant regions for their visit to Chattanooga were more likely to shop locally and tended to spend more money on their visit
- As a whole, visitors participated in less total activities than residents but they were more likely to shop locally than residents
- Events like RiverRocks can be beneficial to the local community by bringing in tourists from all over the country who put money into Chattanooga's local economy.
- While Chattanooga has a very active population of residents, their likelihood to shop locally as opposed to at large chains seems uninspired in light of tourists' tendencies to do so
- To determine which activities to emphasize in the adventure tourism industry, a possible next step in research efforts would be to determine which activities are bringing in the most tourists, and the economic factors of these tourists