

A Comparison of Online and In Person Survey Methods Related to Direct Spending and a Large Volleyball Event

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Sport Commissions and Convention and Visitor Bureaus representing many cities from across the United States are actively involved in recruiting sporting events to their communities in order to reap the benefits of out of town tourist spending. The economic impact of large sporting events can be significant for host communities. In recent years, a number of economic impact studies (Crompton & McKay, 1994; Dolnicar, Laesser & Matus, 2009; Mondello & Riske, 2004) have been conducted in order to assess and validate community expenditures that are directed at attracting sporting events to selected communities. In the past, the most common method of collecting economic impact data has been to conduct an in person paper and pencil survey just prior to the start or during a sporting event. With advances in computer technology, a number of economic impact studies are now being conducted after the sporting event has ended. A major question has surfaced in recent years as to whether in person paper and pencil surveys conducted prior to or during a sporting event are more accurate and effective than post event online surveys. The purpose of this study was to examine the differences between in person and online survey methods while studying direct spending patterns at a large volleyball event held in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. A total of 396 (223 in person and 173 online) event attendees (e.g., parents and relatives of volleyball tournament participants) responded to the direct spending survey. In person surveys were collected during the three day volleyball tournament and online surveys were collected three days after the event ended. The average age of the respondents was 44.3 years (in person) and 45.3 years (online). The average travel party size was 5.3 (in person) and 4.4 (online). The round-trip distance traveled to the event was reported as 408.5 miles for the in person respondents and 430.9 for the online respondents. The average number of nights stayed in a hotel/motel was listed as 2.8 nights (in person) and 2.7 nights (online). A majority of respondents to the surveys were female (71.3% in person and 57.8% online). The primary racial group reported by the respondents was Caucasian (88.4% in person and 94.6% online). Both in person and online respondents indicated middle to upper middle family income levels. A t-test was performed on each of the direct spending variables for the in person and online respondents with $\alpha=.05$. Significant differences were found between in person and online responses to the direct spending categories of food and beverage, retail shopping, transportation, tourist attractions, and entertainment and recreation. Direct spending categories that usually receive advanced planning such as lodging and registration and fees showed no significant differences. Most of the in person during event surveys provided direct spending figures that were consistently higher than the post event online surveys. During event surveys were based primarily on estimates of

spending whereas the post event online surveys allowed respondents to review spending records once they returned home. As direct spending and economic impact surveys continue to be conducted in connection with sporting events, it appears that online direct spending surveys should be considered as a clear alternative to the traditional in person surveys that are conducted prior to or during sporting events.

References

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