

12-18-2018

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Survey of Washington County Residents for Purposes of Increasing Local Festival Attendance

Sharon Hernandez, Crysta Bourque

University of Maine at Machias

December 18, 2018

Author Note:

This research was conducted in collaboration with community partner Robert McCollum, of the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Committee.

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Biographies

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Crysta Bourque is a student at the University of Maine at Machias majoring in psychology and community studies. She is a member of a research team studying the economic impact of local festivals in Washington County. Crysta is currently working her way through college as the manager of a local discount store. She plans to travel and pursue a career in case management.

Sharon Hernandez is currently a Psychology and Community Studies major at the University of Maine at Machias. She has lived in Machias for the past five years and is currently also currently working at a local business. Prior to that she spent a year working in Bar Harbor, and three years working as a Residential Care Aid. She graduates from UMM this spring and would like to use her Behavioral Health Professional certification in Maine.

Abstract

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Two students enrolled in the Psychology and Community Studies program at the University of Maine at Machias conducted research to determine the successions, concerns, and overall impact of local festivals in the Washington County area. More specifically, the research performed focused in closely on the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival which has been held three consecutive years in Machias beginning in 2016. Mr. Bob McCollum, the community partner in this research study, is an active member of the planning committee for this festival. Mccollum emphasized the problematic shortcomings with the committee in not being able to attract young adults. Therefore, this research favors creating more of an attraction for adults within the 18-30 year age group. A survey was created in order to obtain some detail oriented information from previous, current, and potentially future participants of the Bold Coast Sea and Sky festival. The survey was split into sections that included both demographics and event based questions. The survey sought to only consider the responses of Washington County residents and allowed for participants to express their opinions about the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival specifically. The research conducted in this study also involved an analysis of sales numbers of a local retail business. This business, which wished to remain unnamed, showed a drastic impact in its sales in comparison to the sales of other various weekends. This suggests that the growth in tourism within the time frame of the festival remains a factor for potential growth in festival participation. Conclusively from this study, we can assume that there are many improvements that can be made to this festival whilst there are certain aspects that should remain the same. Some improvements to be recommended to the planning committee for the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival to incorporate into their agenda are better advertisement, new bands, more activities for younger children as well as more activities for adults, better seating arrangements, and more vendors. The results also did not favor the helicopter rides which the committee had believed

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were a huge success. Over 30% of survey participants simply had no interest in the event while another over 40% just felt as though it was too expensive. Though the research did suggest improvisations, the successions and enjoyable events expressed were activities like the kite flying, foosball, and the craft fair portion of the festival. The Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival is a relatively new experience with much room for development, but it's small victories will help to keep this festival unique when compared to the rest of the festivals held in the Washington County area.

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Evaluating the Impact of Local Festivals in Washington County

Festivals are emerging as a sector of tourism and have significant economic impact on the areas in which they flourish (Arcodia & Whitford 2006). These events aim to promote community engagement including attracting tourism, trade, and talent to the destination (McCartney & Kei 2018). Festivals depend their successions on the experiences of festival visitors, ensuring that visitor satisfactions are enhanced, and re-visits to future festivals facilitated (Yan, Zhang & Li 2012). Local festivals have great impact on their community but often times also serve as events that market an area's unique qualities to tourists that live hours, or possibly even states away (DiSalvo 2001). Washington County holds more than 50 festivals throughout the course of a year, each featuring their own unique events and vendors (Lubec Maine, 2018). Though there are few studies published which focus on the social impacts of festivals (Arcodia & Whitford 2006), the research in the pursuit of this paper seeks to determine how to reach out and attract participants. Advertisement is still an aspect that remains threatened while some local festivals lack a model of online pleasure travel planning (Beldona 2003). With growing numbers of festivals in the Washington County area, this research provides the knowledge that improving attendees' awareness is a key factor in hosting an advantageous occasion (Manthiou, Kang & Schrier 2014).

Methods

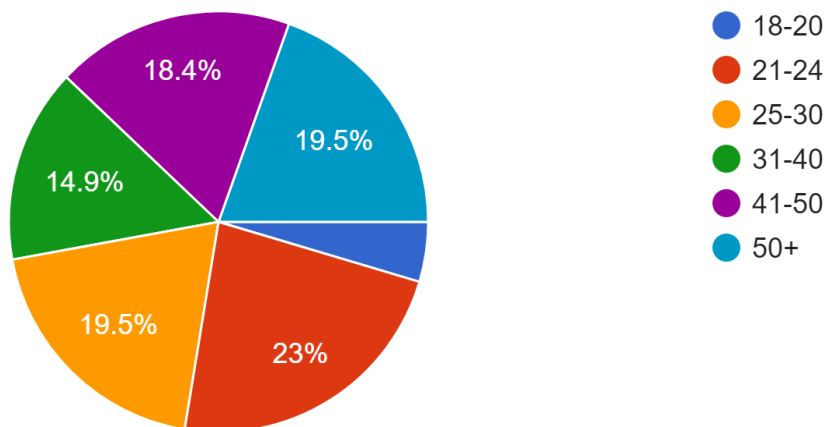
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Participants

Our survey was able to reach 87 participants. Most of our survey participants (98.9%) were year-round Washington County residents, with majority of our participant age ranges from 21-50 years old. While 39.7% of our participants did not have children, 34.4% have children who are in grades kindergarten through 12th and 16.1% have an infant or toddler in their homes.

2. How old are you?

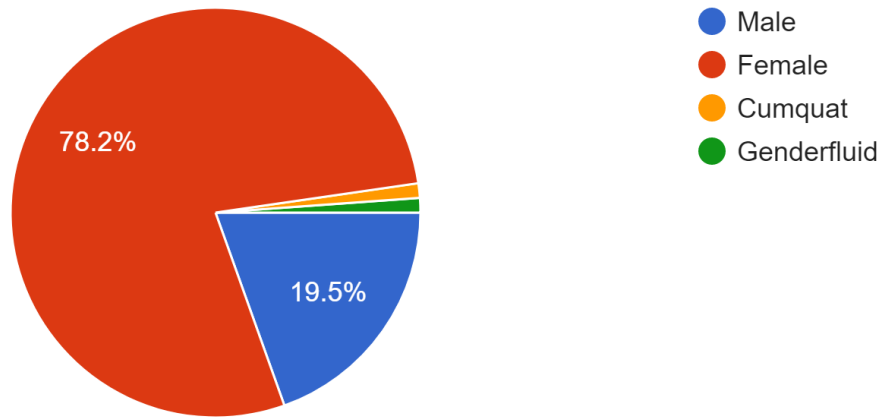
87 responses



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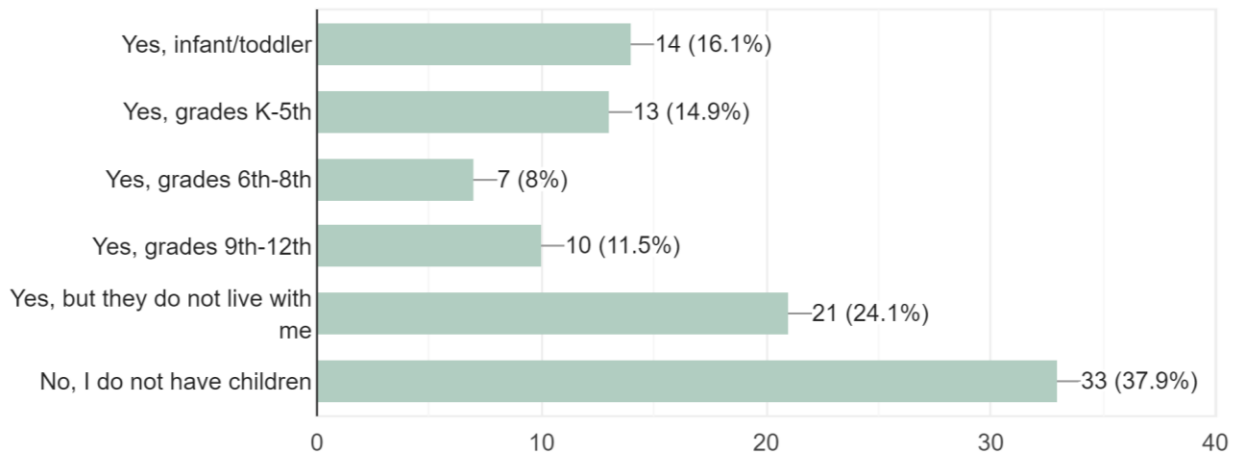
3. How do you identify?

87 responses



Do you have children? Please check all that apply.

87 responses



Materials

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For our project, we thought it would be best to do a survey that could be sent out and used on several social media platforms. We made our survey using a Google Forms format, the survey is a twenty-one multiple choice and multiple answer survey used to help the Bold Coast Sea and Sky festival pull information from Washington County residents on what their opinions on the festival were or if they had an suggestion for future years. Our survey also asked demographic questions about age, work schedule, and about children, if they had any. The point of those questions is to get a general idea of who their audience is, around what age they are and their interest. Please see Appendix A for the survey.

Procedure

Firstly, we had to meet with our community sponsor, Robert McCullum, who is on the committee for the Bold Coast Sea and Sky, our first meeting with him we were able to talk about the festival itself, he gave us some background on the festival, including how it started and who some of the members of the committee were. We also discussed how we could hopefully help him and the committee drum up more attendance for the festival by getting the opinions of Washington County residents. He wanted us to focus on learning what people in their 20's to 30's would enjoy, along with what families would enjoy, what changes could be made in future years, and what forms of advertising worked or would be the best to reach more people.

We were then able to put together a survey that hit all of the marks Robert wanted us to hit when trying to find out information, but before we could launch the survey, we had to run a pilot test of our survey with our class and see if they had an suggestions we could make. The first time we shared the survey, we ran into an issue with a broken link. After we were able to fix this issue, our classmates made suggestions as to how some of our wording could be made more

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clear to the participant and to change some of the multiple choice options so they could be more specific.

Our next and final step before we launched our survey to the public, was that we had to run our survey by our IRB representatives board which consists of the full-time faculty members in the Psychology & Community Studies program.

Our survey was posted on both of our personal Facebook accounts, as well as a community page for Washington County residents and also the Psychology and Community Studies page for the University of Maine at Machias, we both shared the survey multiple times over the course of the survey being open to responses. We were able to get eighty-seven responses from the community to add to our data. Our survey included questions at the start to gather the responders background information like their age, work habits, and whether or not they had families of their own. We also wanted to determine if they attended other Bold Coast Sea and Sky festival in past years, and also if they went to other festivals around the Washington County area. The survey allowed for participants to voice their reflections of the festival. Responses to what they did like and what they didn't like were completely open ended short answer questions, giving the freedom to express their opinion without fear of judgement or confrontation.

Throughout the course of this research project, we also attended a tourism conference with Mr. McCollum. This conference took place at the Lee Pellon Center in Machias. The purpose of this conference was to justify the importance of tourism and just how drastically it affects communities all over the state of Maine.

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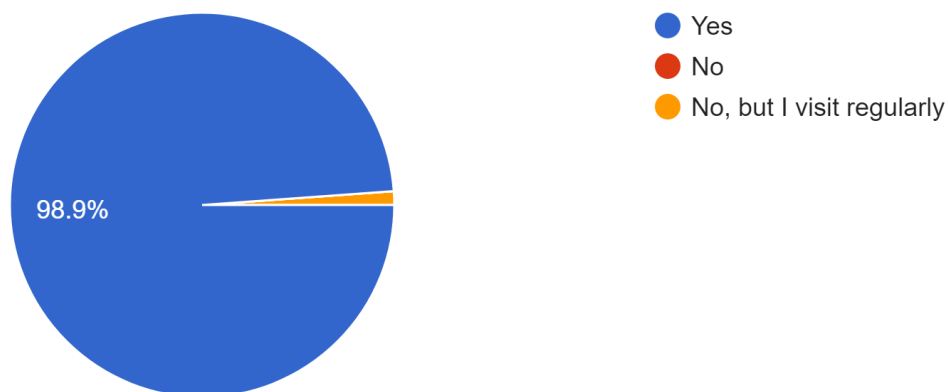
Another piece of our research involved comparing some numbers in a local retail store. This store, which wishes to remain unnamed, allowed us to compare sales numbers from the weekend that the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival is held to a few weeks before Christmas, which has also proven to be a busy time in Washington County.

Results

The research conducted brought about various results within each aspect of the festival. The survey itself examined specific issues that arose, as well as allowed for suggestions to be made by participants. By both us students posting it to our Facebook pages as well as a couple community Facebook pages, we were able to draw in 87 participants. Of the 87 participants, 86 of them were residents of Washington County.

1. Do you live in Washington County?

87 responses



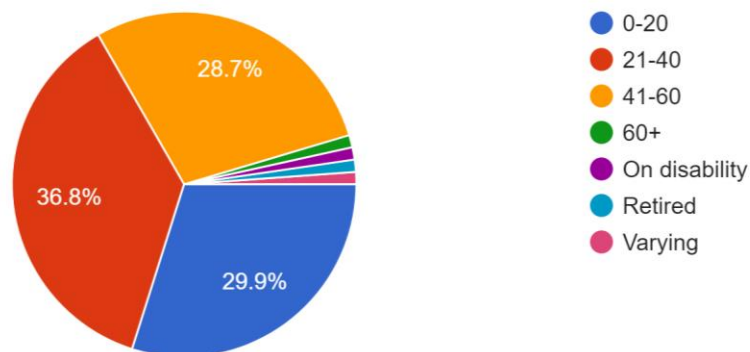
We included a variance in the age ranges to get more accurate data. Of the participants, 4 were in the 18-20 age group, 20 were in the 21-24 age group, 17 were in the 25-30 age group, 13

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were in the 31-40 age group, 16 were in the 41-50 age group, and 17 were in the 50+ age group. This means that nearly half of our participants fell under the category of the 18-30 year old age group that we were originally seeking to gain data from. 68 of participants were female meaning they answered the majority at 78.2%. 19.5% of responses were from males while there was one Genderfluid response and one invalid response. 33 surveyed participants did not have children while the other 54 did. 26 participants responded that they worked 0-20 hours a week during the summer months at 29.9% of the total results, 32 responded that they worked 21-40 hours at 36.8%, 26 responded they worked 41+ hours at 29.8%, and the remaining 3.5% of responses included being on disability, retired, and 'varying.' Social media websites very clearly had a huge impact of the advertisement portion of the festival.

Approximately how many hours do you work a week during the summer months?

87 responses

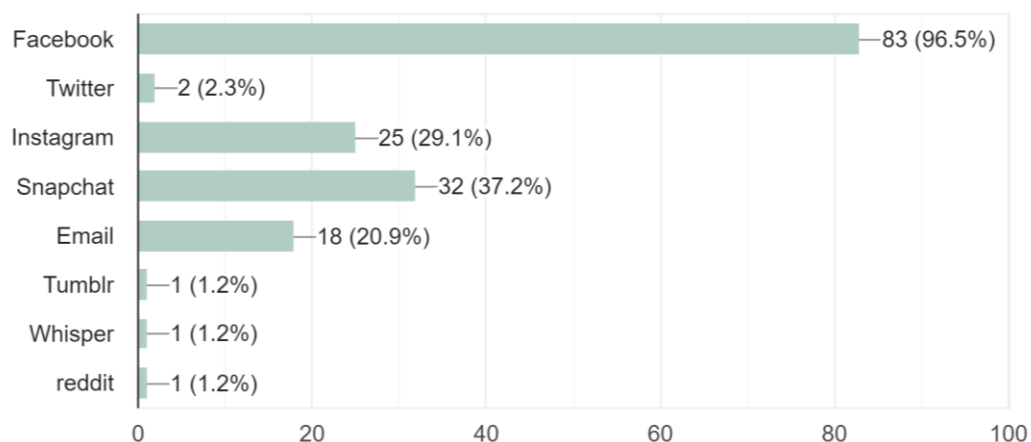


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Facebook was the number one social media network used, with 83 participants saying they used it at least occasionally. This means that 96.5% of our participants said they had used Facebook. Other social media websites/apps that proved to be influential were Instagram (29.1%), Snapchat (37.2%), and Email (20.9%).

6. What website or social network do you spend most of your time on? Please check all that apply.

86 responses



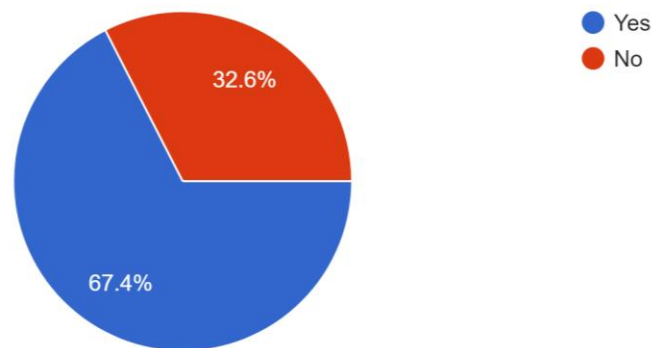
In the interest of knowing our participants' previous festival attendance history, we asked what festivals they generally attend in Washington County. The trending answers included the Blueberry Festival, the Pirate Festival, and the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival.

Fifty-eight participants had previously heard of the festival, meaning that the remaining participants had not heard of this festival before engaging in the survey. Even though those 58 people had heard of the festival, surprisingly there was still 64 participants that hadn't attended the festival at all in the three years since it's been established.

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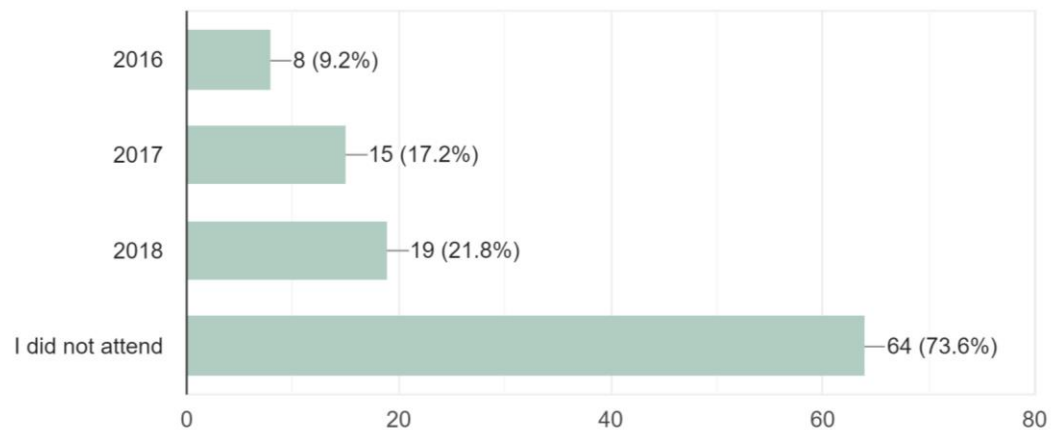
The Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival is a relatively new experience that's been brought to the Machias area and is... previously heard about this festival?

86 responses



9. Did you attend The Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival? If yes, which years did you attend? Please check all that apply.

87 responses



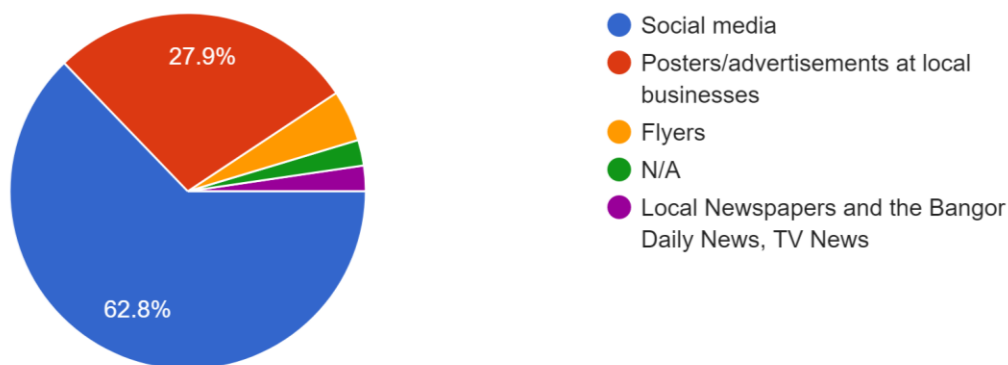
The next question was to see how people had heard about the festival, if they had. The biggest advertisements proved to be flyers, social media, businesses, and word of mouth.

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However, 19.8% of participants hadn't heard about the festival at all. Of the things that people enjoyed, the most common were the craft fair, foosball, the music, and the kite flying.

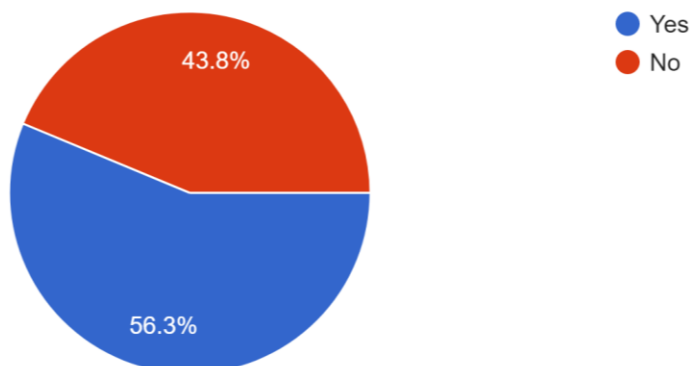
13. If you selected no, what advertising should we do more of?

43 responses



12. Did you feel as though the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival was advertised well?

80 responses

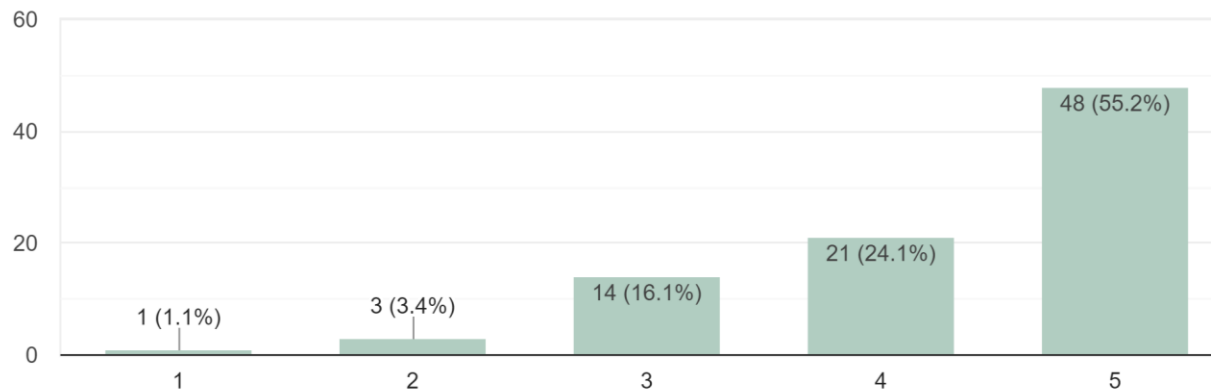


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The most common suggestions for improvement were more food vendors, more activities for kids as well as more activities for adults, newer and different bands, better seating arrangements, and more scheduling information. Just slightly less than half of participants felt as though the Bold Coast Sea and Sky festival was not advertised well and the suggested methods of advertisements were more with social media and involving local businesses. 79.3% of participants responded that they felt as though local festivals were extremely important to the local economy.

14. Do you believe that local festivals strongly support our local economy?

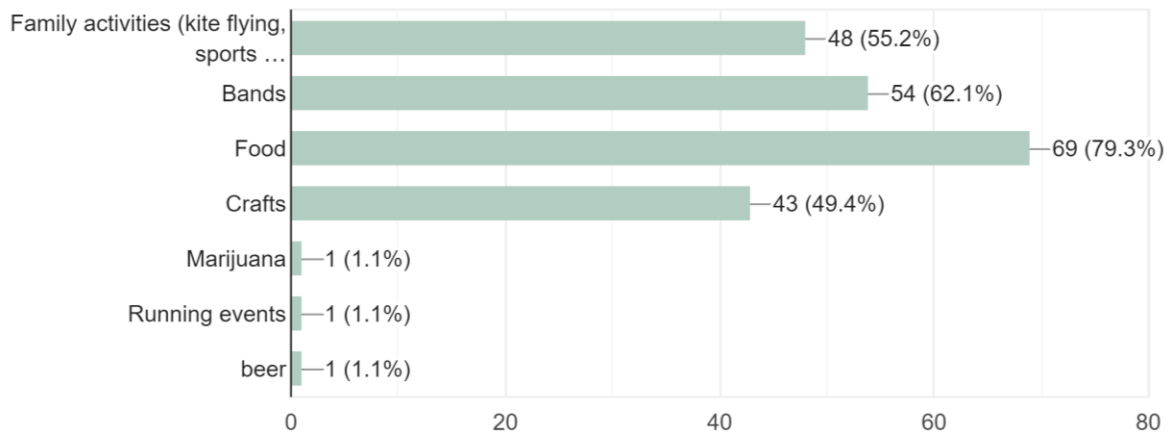
87 responses



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15. What would most likely make you want to attend a local festival? Please check all that apply.

87 responses

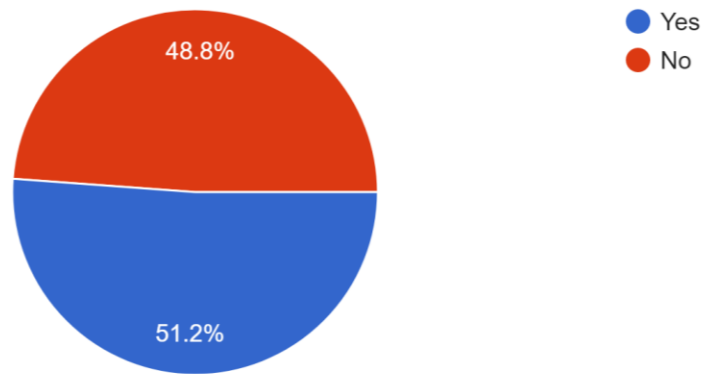


Over half of participants said they would be more likely to attend a festival if it featured a band or performer that they had never heard of before.

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16. Would you be more likely to attend a local festival if it featured a band/performer you had never heard of before?

86 responses

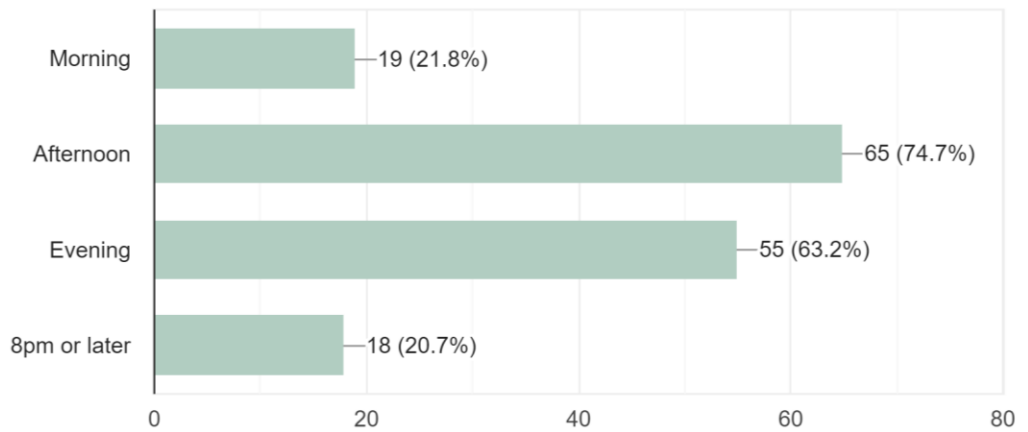


According to the responses collected, festivals would more than likely have more success if they had activities in the afternoon and evening.

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17. What times are you more likely to attend a festival? Please check all that apply.

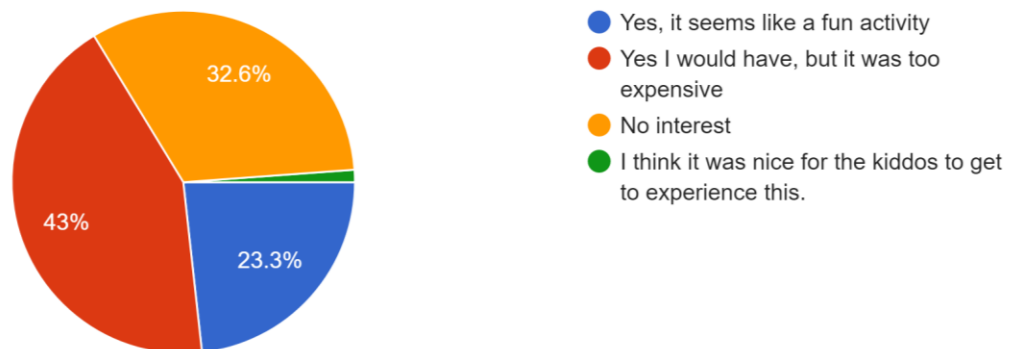
87 responses



Approximately 79% of participants agreed that the helicopter rides were too expensive or there was just simply nothing appealing about that activity to them.

18. This years Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival featured helicopter rides, which were \$50 each. Is this something you would like to participate in?

86 responses

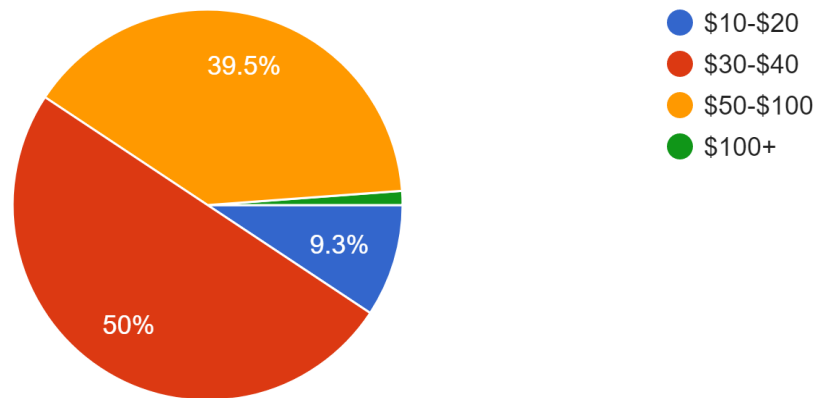


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When taking the relatively low income area that Machias is, we see that the budget for a festival, by 50% of people, was only \$30-\$40 and the helicopter rides alone were \$50 per person per ride.

19. What would your budget be when attending a local festival?

86 responses



Local Business Sales

In regards to the numbers we obtained from a local retailer, we saw a drastic impact in the sales numbers. Taking into consideration that Christmas is in December, it would be a safe assumption to say that this would be one of the busier times of the year for local businesses. On December 8, 2018 this store made a total of \$6,497.22 and following that day on December 9, 2018 the store made 4,665.73. Much like the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival, this was a Saturday and a Sunday. On July 20, 2018 (first day of the festival) the stores sales totaled at \$9,625.41 and on that following Sunday (second day of the festival) the stores sales were \$8,999.16. The December weekend came to be \$11,162.95 and the July weekend added up to \$18,624.57. This is

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a dramatic increase of 83.2% proving that tourism shows great potential for the future of the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival.

Discussion

Even from just our first initial meeting with Mr. McCollum, we knew we had our work cut out for us. One of us had heard of the festival and one of us hadn't, so hearing about the issues in relation to the festival sent our minds in a million different directions. Since the both of us fall under that category of young adulthood, McCollum was especially interested in the suggestions that we initially made. Our own personal questions made their way into the survey and proved to give us some factual information. Growing up and living in the area for years, this gave us an advancement on the project, already sort of knowing our population. We were able to alter our questions in such a way to gain data that is useful not only to us, but also to the planning committee for the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival.

Since we chose to do a couple of different activities, we learned a lot in a short period of time. The survey we created gave us answers based solely on the success and failures of the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival. Attending the tourism conference at the Lee Pellon Center and analyzing sales data from a local retail store allow us to justify the benefits of tourism.

Our research taught us many different things. A major issue it brought about was the fact that we see a large portion of our participants believed that local festivals are an important part of the success of our local economy but not many chose to participate.

Conclusion\ Recommendations

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From our research we are able to make a list of suggestions that we thought would be effective for the future successions of the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival.

One of our first recommendations is to pursue the idea of a map. We had spoken to McCollum about this idea, as he had first mentioned it. Amongst our research the idea came up more than once as well as the want for better scheduling clarity and organization as far as a seating arrangement goes. A map could include all of these areas, helping improve the overall morale of the festival.

Another recommendation that our research proves that would be helpful would be more advertisement. Living in a small community, we often rely too much on word of mouth. Based on survey results, 34.9% of the people that had heard of the festival had heard of it this way. This advertisement doesn't have to just be before the festival is happening, there is other tools that can be used while the festival itself is actually happening. A live stream of festival activity or drone footage of the festival in action would draw in more people. By using social media as well as local businesses more efficiently, this festival could reach people who may not even be from this area, therefore utilizing the tourism aspect of our research.

We would also recommend that the committee try to designate activities to certain age groups. We believe it would be effective to perhaps schedule activities for children throughout the day, and then have time for the parents to relax at night time. From our research, we can conclude that the activities planned, for the most part, have been enjoyed. However, if the committee could somehow plan more, there may be more of a turn out. More events means more interest.

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Entertainment wise, we recommend bringing in someone new. This doesn't even necessarily just mean music or a new band. The both of us personally had speculations about whether or not people would be interested in seeing a new act or band. According to survey results, just over 50% of participants would prefer to see someone new. We live in a town where everybody knows everybody. More often than not, the performers that are featured at an event are someone we've seen at least two or three times. If the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival brought new acts or bands to the area, this would certainly set it apart from the rest of it's competing festivals.

The Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival has made several small victories over the past three years it's been hosted. With the help of our community partner, we were able to research the various problematic shortcomings associated with the festival in an attempt to provide suggestions for future successful festivals. Tourism remains a giant factor in the participation of local festivals and growing numbers of festival participants proves to be an economically substantial part of our community's well being. While there is room for improvement, the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival has become and will remain an influential event of Washington County.

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Appendix A

Summer Festival Interest and Attendance Survey

Hello everyone, and thank you for your time. This survey was created by two students at the University of Maine at Machias with the help of a local community partner, we hope to learn more about what young people and families like to do at summer festivals.

Specifically speaking, our research will benefit the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival. Though the festival has become progressively successful over the years, we, as well as our community partner, would like to learn how we can make it even more successful. That's where you come in!

This survey should only take about 20 minutes and is composed mostly of multiple choice questions. The very last question is an open ended short answer question. Please don't leave that one blank!

This survey is intended only for adults over the age of 18 and is based solely on voluntary participation.

Any questions regarding this survey and/or the research being conducted can be directed to Lois-Ann Kuntz at lkuntz@maine.edu.

Again, thank you for your time, we appreciate you!

* Required

By clicking yes, you consent to taking this survey and acknowledge that you are 18 or older.

By clicking no, you are saying that you do not consent to take the survey and are younger than 18. *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No (If no please click "NEXT" and then "submit" so that we know this survey was seen) Stop filling out this form.

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We Are Interested In Surveying Washington County Residents.

1. Do you live in Washington County? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No Skip to "Thank You For Your Participation. ."
- No, but I visit regularly

Age

2. How old are you? *

Mark only one oval.

- 18-20
- 21-24
- 25-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 50+

A Little More About You...

3. How do you identify?

Mark only one oval.

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- Male
- Female
- Other:

4. Do you have children? Please check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- Yes, infant/toddler
- Yes, grades K-5th
- Yes, grades 6th-8th
- Yes, grades 9th-12th
- Yes, but they do not live with me
- No, I do not have children

5. Approximately how many hours do you work a week during the summer months?

Mark only one oval.

- 0-20
- 21-40
- 41-60
- 60+
- Other:

6. What website or social network do you spend most of your time on? Please check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- Facebook
- Twitter

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- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Email
- Other:

Summer Festivals

7. Do you usually attend any local summer festivals? If yes, which ones?

(See Appendix C)

8. The Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival is a relatively new experience that's been brought to the Machias area and is celebrated the third weekend in July. First celebrated in 2016 as well as the two consecutive years following, the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival offers a variety of family entertainment which has included, kite flying, laser tag, and helicopter rides. This festival also offers plenty of attractions for adults including vendors and live local bands in the evening. Had you previously heard about this festival?

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Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

9. Did you attend The Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival? If yes, which years did you attend?

Please check all that apply.

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Check all that apply.

- 2016
- 2017
- 2018
- I did not attend

10. How did you hear about the Bold Coast Sea and Sky festival ? Please check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- Flyers
- Social Media
- Businesses
- Word of Mouth
- I did not know about the festival
- Other:

11. If you did attend, what did you enjoy most?

(See Appendix C)

12. If you did attend, what could be improved?

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(See Appendix C)

13. Did you feel as though the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival was advertised well?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

14. If you selected no, what advertising should we do more of?

Mark only one oval.

- Social media
- Posters/advertisements at local businesses
- Flyers
- Other:

15. Do you believe that local festivals strongly support our local economy?

Mark only one oval.

INCREASING LOCAL FESTIVAL ATTENDANCE

Not important to the local
economy

Very important to the local
economy

16. What would most likely make you want to attend a local festival? Please check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- Family activities (kite flying, sports events)
- Bands
- Food
- Crafts
- Other:

17. Would you be more likely to attend a local festival if it featured a band/performer you had never heard of before?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

18. What times are you more likely to attend a festival? Please check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- Morning
- Afternoon
- Evening
- 8pm or later

INCREASING LOCAL FESTIVAL ATTENDANCE

19. This years Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival featured helicopter rides, which were \$50 each. Is this something you would like to participate in?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, it seems like a fun activity
- Yes I would have, but it was too expensive
- No interest
- Other:

20. What would your budget be when attending a local festival?

Mark only one oval.

- \$10-\$20
- \$30-\$40
- \$50-\$100
- \$100+

21. Do you have any suggestions or critiques for future Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festivals? (i.e activities of interest? Bands to look into?)

(See Appendix C)

INCREASING LOCAL FESTIVAL ATTENDANCE

Stop filling out this form.

Thank You For Your Participation.

We appreciate your time, this survey is currently limited to Washington County residents aged 18-30.

INCREASING LOCAL FESTIVAL ATTENDANCE

Appendix B

Recruitment Material

Facebook Prompt :

“Hello Friends and Family of Downeast Maine!

Our SCC 420 class is partnering with Robert McCullum, and the Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival, to produce a survey for people of Washington County to share your input on the this Festival. With your help we will be able to begin to get the information we need to improve the festival, and potentially create a bigger and better sense of comradery within the community”

This post was posted to the following pages:

Psychology and Community Studies University of Maine at Machias

Machias Area Swap and Barter

Our Personal Facebook Pages which was then shared by 2 people and reached 87 responses.

INCREASING LOCAL FESTIVAL ATTENDANCE

Appendix C

Open Ended Questions & Responses

7. Do you usually attend any local summer festivals? If yes, which ones?(53 responses)

Blueberry festival

No

Blueberry

Blueberry Festival

Blueberry festival

Blueberry Festival, Blackfly Ball

I attend all of them with my client for work.

Blueberry festival and sea and sky festival

Blueberry fest and black fly ball

blueberry festival/blackfly ball

Yes

Yes, Blueberry.

Yes Moosabec Summer Festival

4th of July

Blueberry, sea&sky, harvest

blueberry festival

Black Fly Ball/ Blueberry Festival

International, blueberry, pirate festivals

Calais International Fest, Machais [sic] Blueberry Fest, Grand Lake Stream Folk Art Fest.

Blueberry Festival, Blackfly Ball, Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival.

Blueberry and sea sky

Blueberry festival pirate festival

Not as often as I would like

Yes, blueberry festival, blue hill, bold coast

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Sky festival, blueberry

Bold coast

Blueberry festival milbridge days

No I don't. I'd like to but I'm too busy.

I've only had one summer in the area so, I haven't gone to much.

Blueberry Festival, Sea and Sky Festival

Mostly just the big fairs

Blueberry festival, International festival

yes

Yes. Parts of blueberry, sea and sky

Blueberry Festival, Cherryfield Days, Margareta Days,

Yes - Bold Coast Sea & Sky Festival, Blueberry Festival

Yes blackfly ball but now it is in the fall

Blueberry Festival, Fourth of July Celebrations, Pirate Festival

Blueberry Festival and Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festival

11. If you did attend, what did you enjoy most?(20 responses)

The vendors

The kites were cool

Vendors

Nothing

Fly a drone

Vendors, Live bands, The helicopter rides for the kids

Fooseball [sic]

Fantastic kid area

Not much

Activities

Kite flying and music

Helicopter rides

Evening music

Music

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craft fair

The live music

The entire experience

All of the kid's activities

Venues

12. If you did attend, what could be improved? 16 responses

More seating in the shade

More activities for younger kids

More information on schedules, more vendors, adult activities [sic]

Food, Activities & Music

Nothing

need food vendors!

?

Vendors, very little food vendors [sic]

Whole thing overall

Not sure

Vendors site

Can't think of anything - it was fun

More food options provided

More food trucks

More adult activities

Spread out the venues

21. Do you have any suggestions or critiques for future Bold Coast Sea and Sky Festivals? (i.e activities of interest? Bands to look into?) (19 responses)

None

We need a local festival that supports and promotes marijuana.

LiveWire

ADVERTISE MORE

Nothing

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please have Food vendors and all activities, craft booths, food, music etc in one area not as spread out

Focus on quality nit [sic] quantity

?

No

Local musicians of all genres

Make a map of where the events are taking place; maybe have a trivia night at Pats; have some raffles on gift baskets;

Should do a sea themed sugar cookie decorating table for kids with a small \$2 fee to cover costs.

No I do not

I just enjoy the variety.

No, I have never been able to attend due to travel.

Coverage in the Calais area

Hot Air Balloon Rides (Again), Present Machias Area Looking Down from Drone Footage

Would love to hear new bands and even bands that are frequent to the area.