# Festival and Event Research: Lessons From the Field

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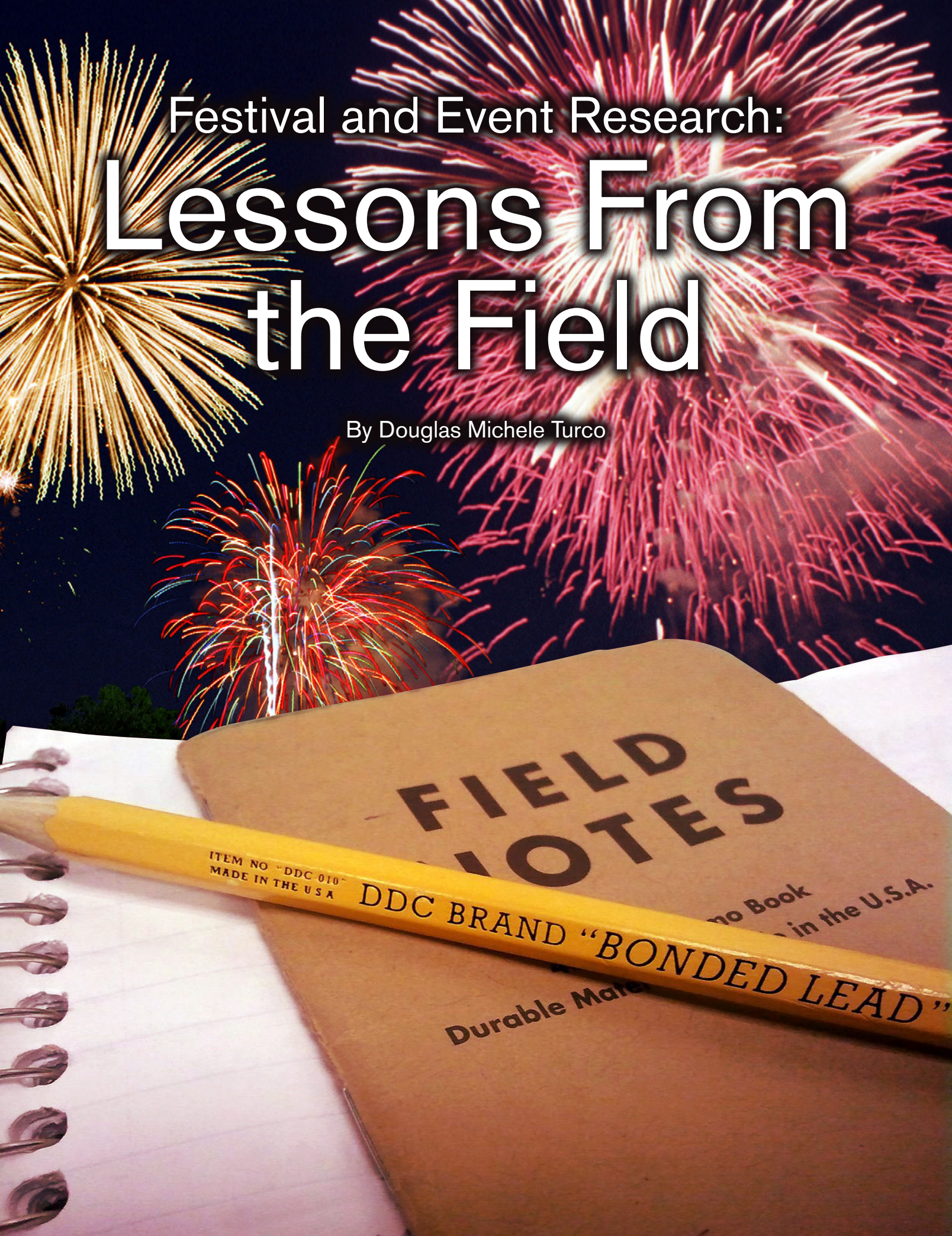

There are a number of reasons why festival and event marketers conduct research and reasons why they don't. Festival and event research including spectator market profiles, economic impact, and sponsorship effectiveness studies allow organizers to understand consumer behaviors, quantify event benefits, and determine the value of their operations. Among the stated reasons for not researching events are: I don't know how to do research. It's too time consuming, and costs too much money. It (research) doesn't tell me anything I don't already know.

For event managers who embrace research, knowledge is powerful. Brandon Igdalsky, President of the Pocono 500 Raceway, arranged for his NASCAR race fans in Pennsylvania to be queried during the 2009 economic recession to determine spending patterns, brand loyalty, and trip characteristics. The study also compared 2009 research findings with previous race research as well as national NASCAR fan data to gain further insights (Turco, 2009). In the 1980s, officials with the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta devised a long-term research agenda with assistance from scholars at the University of New Mexico. The research plan included annual spectator studies to profile the market, gauge sponsorship effectiveness, customer satisfaction, and spending behaviors. In addition, the AIBF, Inc. arranged for periodic surveys of the balloon pilots to improve safety and service quality. Lastly, a survey of Albuquerque residents was performed to gauge their perceived costs and benefits of the Balloon Fiesta, and support for a new Balloon Fiesta park and museum. Armed with sound data, AIBF, Inc. landed Kodak as title sponsor, and developed a new park and museum.

The body of knowledge in festival and event research is diverse and growing. Research areas covered in the staged attractions literature include: Organizational theory and human resource management, consumer behavior, finance and economics, law, marketing and sponsorship, and sport tourism. Festival and event research is presented in several scholarly publications including the *International Journal of Event and Festival Management, Event Management, Journal of Travel Research, Journal of Sport Management, Journal of Sport and Tourism, International Journal of Sport Marketing and Sponsorship,* and *Sport Marketing Quarterly,* among others.

This article seeks to familiarize the reader with festival and event field research topics, common research procedures, research issues and proper ways to address them. Field research is the most direct approach to gather data from event consumers, and is conducted where the actions is – at the festival/event setting. There are numerous examples of field research and lessons from the field that can be learned. Besides the examples above, a spectator study at the 2009 U.S. Open Women's Golf Championship revealed a significant presence of golf moms – mothers of the professional golfers. This small market segment attended the tournament daily, stayed in high-priced accommodations, and spent more per capita in the host city than fans without a relationship to the players. Similarly, a study of fans at the Little League Baseball World Series found that those with a relative competing in the tournament attended more games and spent as much as three times more money than other fans.

The research methods described in this article may be applied to a range of festivals and events (arts, sport, gastronomic, heritage, cultural, etc.) where primary data from participants and spectators is needed. Ideally, research is performed to aid festival and event managers in their decision making with respect to planning, sponsorship, development, and marketing campaigns. An array of sampling techniques for festival and event research is described. A case or vignette is offered to demonstrate the application of key steps in the research process. It first involves the use of advanced spectator research technologies at the 2009 Pocono 500 NASCAR race.

## STEPS TO FESTIVAL / EVENT RESEARCH SUCCESS

*There are five key steps to field survey research for festival and event organisations*:

1. Developing the problem (defining and delimiting it);
2. formulating hypotheses or research questions;
3. research design;
4. data gathering, treatment and analysis; and
5. reporting. Each step is described in the following sections I to V.

### Step One
### Developing the Problem

At the outset, there must be something problematic for the firm to address. *What is the problem? Why must it be resolved?* Perhaps the firm needs to profile its spectators because potential sponsors demand this information before signing on. An event professional may wonder: *Why are people not returning? Are they (dis)satisfied with our services?* The answers may allow the organisation to take corrective action and satisfy and retain customers. Another event organisation may have a sponsor who wants to know if their sponsorship "works" before agreeing to a long-term contract. Once the research problem is identified it can be refined, and research questions or hypotheses formed and addressed to ultimately resolve the problem.

### Step Two
### Formulating Research Questions

Research questions drive a field study. As a festival/event marketer, *what do you want to know?* For example, the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Inc. wanted to know balloon pilots' satisfaction with event operations, facilities, and safety. The purpose of the 2007 and 2009 World Summer Universiade Games research was to compare the spending of participants across two events and continents (Turco, Papadimitrou, & Berber, 2011). Among other things, Pocono 500 NASCAR race officials also wanted to know the radio music preferences of spectators, so as to leverage a media rights deal with an appropriate company (Turco, 2009).

#### Hypotheses

Research hypotheses are anticipated outcomes for a study. They can be posed directionally or in the null. For example, a null hypothesis for an event tourism study is: *There will be no significant difference in the per capita per day spent by spectators with or without relatives or friends competing in the event.* In many cases, the direction of an anticipated outcome may be surmised from previous research. In the previous example, research has shown that

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event tourists with direct association to competitors do spend more money than other event tourists (Scott & Turco, 2007). Therefore, a directional hypothesis is more appropriate: *H1 - Visitors with relatives or friends competing in the event will spend significantly more money in the host economy per capita per day than other event visitors.*

### Definitions

Certain terms or conditions must be defined for field research. For festival and event economic impact study, one of the first parameters to be defined is the economy. Economic costs and benefits from festivals and events may occur at the national, regional/provincial, state, county, metropolitan, district, city, and/or neighborhood levels. Often, geopolitical boundaries are used to define economies for impact studies since governments maintain tax records and multiplier coefficients are computed for various jurisdictions. Likewise, an *event tourist* study must operationalize who is and who is not an event tourist. The definition of a *tourist* may seem fairly straightforward but that is not the case. Place of visitor origin, length of stay, distance travelled, and mode of transport are variables that influence the *tourist* definition.

## Step Three – Research Design

Once the purpose and research questions for a study are confirmed, it must be determined how the data will be obtained, where, when, and by whom – key questions in research design. Options include observation, surveys, mining secondary data, etc. This article focuses on survey research, the most common approach in festival and event research. Decisions concerning instrumentation, logistics, scheduling, research methods and resources are to be made during this stage. Most field studies gather information from a sample of subjects, unless a total population can be queried. Subject sampling, procedures and protocols for data gathering and treatment must be prepared and practiced in advance of the event to ensure reliability.

### FIELD SURVEY DATA COLLECTION APPROACHES

There are several methods to collect participant and spectator data at festivals and events: on-site interview, mail-back survey, self-administered diary, two-stage approach, and e-mail survey, each with relative advantages and disadvantages as briefly described below.

#### 1. On-site approaches

Gathering data at festival/event sites permit immediate data acquisition as opposed to traditional or electronic mail surveys that may take several weeks for responses to be received, if ever. In addition, the on-site survey allows the interviewer to reinterpret a question for a subject should the need arise. With mail surveys, if a subject does not understand a question s/he may be more likely to skip it and/or discontinue the survey altogether. A disadvantage of the on-site data collection approach is that it may intrude on participant's leisure experience, particularly if subjects are approached during a featured attraction. On-site interviews are labor intensive and for international events, multilingual interviewers may be required and prove difficult and/or costly to obtain.

For participant studies, it may be possible to gather data from surveys distributed by other means at the event venue. For marathons and triathlons, it is common for participants to receive race gift bags filled with "goodies" including a t-shirt, race number, and instructions. Placing a survey in each racer's bag is an easy method of distribution. The problem is getting a high percentage of the racers to complete and return the questionnaires. An incentive to complete the survey i.e., free registration for next year's event, cash, etc. may elicit a higher rate of return.

A self-administered visitor log or diary requires subjects to record their transactions and other consumer behaviors on and away from the event venue. Subjects are intercepted at or around the event site early on and asked to participate in the study. Often an incentive to complete the survey is used to encourage and maintain participation. While this approach has the potential to generate accurate information, diaries or logs have the highest mortality or drop-out rate (Yu & Turco, 2000). It has also been found that by recording their transactions, subjects have a heightened awareness of their spending and may alter subsequent purchase decisions. Most often they cut back on spending for the remainder of the visit.

#### 2. Knock-knock: Going door-to-door

In an era of instantaneous drive-through windows and electronic communication i.e., Facebook, Twitter, texting, and electronic mail, the old-fashioned approach to field survey research – going door-to-door - is making a comeback! Some people still appreciate direct face-to-face communication over new media forms. Door-to-door surveys of residents with homes adjacent to an event venue have been employed in several studies including the Ice Climbing World Cup, Tour de France, and Winter Olympic Games (Turco & Dinu, 2009; Bull & Lovell, 2007; Ritchie & Lyons, 1990). In the case of Le Tour de France study, a cluster sample of homes along the racecourse was drawn. Field researchers conducted the surveys before and after the event and compared the results pre- to post-event. Going door-to-door may involve interviews or simply leaving a questionnaire with the head of household to complete and return either in a return addressed, postage paid envelope or to be collected by field researchers at a designated day/time.

#### 3. The Skier Lift Technique

Granted, few festivals and events are held at ski areas…but there are lessons to be learned from the field survey data collection approach often used at ski resorts - the skier lift technique. Here, subjects in chair lift lines are asked to participate in

the study by trained interviewers on skis. Upon consent, the interview is performed while they ride the lift to the top of the ski run. The interviewer poses the questions and records the responses. At the end of the lift, the interviewer skis down the hill and returns to the lift line to select another subject. To enhance external validity, the sample is drawn in proportion to the volume of skiers who typically ride lifts to hills that designated for beginner, intermediate and advanced. Of course, the approach works equally as well for snowboarders. Advantages of the skier lift technique are (1) subjects are a "captive" audience since they cannot escape the interviewer, leading to high response rate; (2) no intrusion on the leisure time of subjects; and (3) easy to recruit volunteer interviews since they get to ski as part of their assignment.

## Research Vignette: The Need for Speed

Speed was of the essence for researchers at the 2009 Pocono 500 NASCAR race at Pocono Raceway, Long Pond, Pennsylvania. With only a few hours before the race to interview spectators, researchers used high-tech, handheld devices for data collection and analysis. The researchers performed the interviews on the Raceway grounds at the Sponsors' Village prior to race start using the i-Pod touch and Surveyor application. Questions posed were to ascertain spectators' geographic and socio-demographic characteristics, and spending in the Pocono Mountain area. Spectator data were entered and immediately uploaded in WiFi zones for analysis. At the conclusion of the data-gathering phase, preliminary findings were sent to the race organizers via electronic mail before the green flag was waved for the race to begin. The entire process was paperless.

**Among the key findings of the study were:**

**Small groups**: Spectator groups to the 2009 Pocono 500 averaged 3.87 persons in size. Groups were comprised primarily of family (46.7%), family and friends (24.5%), and friends (22.3%).

**Short stays**: Among visitors staying overnight in the Poconos, the average length of stay was one night. Accommodations used by visitors included hotel/motel (22.3%), camping (14.1%), private residence of friends/relatives (11.4%), and other (18.5%).

**Local spending**: Visitor groups spent a total of $462.12 in the Poconos (off-site). Visitors spent $141.70 for lodging, $149.79 for food and beverage, $117.35 for shopping, and $53.28 for other expenses. Per person spending off-site averaged $119.41.

**Experience counts**: Spectators had attended an average of 6.5 Pocono Raceway races prior to the 2009 Pocono 500. Repeat visitation is a significant indicator of customer satisfaction.

**Radio**: Spectators favored country music (37%), and classic rock (32.6%) for radio entertainment. Other favored radio entertainment included pop/contemporary (7.6%), news (4.9%), talk (4.3%), and other (9.2%).

**Race information**: Spectators primarily relied on the official NASCAR website for information on the Pocono 500 (41.3%), the official Pocono 500 website (22.8%), Speed Channel (13%), NASCAR radio (3.8%), and other sources (13%).

**Profile**: Spectators ranged in age from 16 to 72 years with a mean age of 39.4 years. Sixty one percent of subjects were male and 39% were female. Nationwide, NASCAR fans 18-44 years comprised 49% of the spectator market. In general, NASCAR fans at raceways mirror the Pocono gender profile: 60% are male and 40% are female. Approximately 28% of spectators interviewed had children under the age of 18 years. Nationally, 43% of NASCAR fans have children under the age of 18 years. Approximately 36 percent of Pocono 500 spectators had 2008 household incomes over $50,000; 21.5% has incomes below $50,000. Forty-eight percent of NASCAR fans across the country $50,000+ per year.

### 4. Traditional mail-back surveys

The traditional mail survey is useful when a relatively large population or subject group(s) are geographically dispersed and post-event evaluation is desired. Mail-back surveys are low labor intensity in terms of labor intensity but the costs for photocopying and postage can add up, particularly with large sample sizes and follow-up mailings that may be necessary to gain an appropriate response rate. The time lag between a subject's behavior and survey response may be considerable, contributing to inaccuracies (recall bias). Low response rates have plagued the mail-back surveys.

Turco (2001) has employed a combination of the on-site and mail-back approaches whereby subjects are systematically sampled at the sport venue and asked a brief set of qualifying questions. For example, *Are you a visitor to this city? Would you be willing to respond to a mail survey about the event upon your return home?* If so, the subject's name, physical and electronic mail addresses and telephone numbers are recorded. The survey questionnaire and cover letter are sent at once to the subjects, with a postage paid, return address envelope. The two-stage approach permits reliability checks for variables asked on-site and post-event. Further, higher response rates are achieved as subjects have given their word that they would respond to the mail-back survey. Most people, once reminded of their commitment, are true to their word and respond. Of course, this approach is time consuming and costly but the questions is, *how much are you willing to spend on your survey to achieve a high response rate?*

### 5. E-surveys

Electronic mail surveys can lead to fast and low cost survey distribution. Pre-registered event participants or ticket buyers may be asked for their e-addresses, providing a ready-made list for surveying. With corresponding software for analyses, their survey responses can be uploaded immediately, permitting real-time results. Acquiring the e-addresses of a certain population may not be possible, as some subjects may not have access to e-mail. Further, those with e-addresses may possess characteristics

that differ from other members of the population i.e., computer savvy, younger, more education, income, etc., thereby limiting the external validity of the study. Using multiple methods of data collection and comparing findings from each may address this issue.

### 6. Unobtrusive Measures

What one says they will do may not always be what they *actually do*. Thus we can learn a great deal about people simply by observing them, capturing their actions rather than their stated ones. Watching people as the proverbial "fly on the wall" allows subjects to behave naturally and without inhibition. Unobtrusive measures include video and audio recording, photography, and personal observation. These records are time consuming to gather and review, and time is money. Disadvantages of unobtrusive measures are inconsistent interpretations of the data, invasion of subject privacy, and confidentiality.

## INSTRUMENTATION: WRITING THE SURVEY

Asking the right questions is essential to the success of any field survey. Questions should be devised that will generate data necessary to respond directly to the study's key research objectives. Additional questions may be posed to further examine the responses given by different types of people. For example, responses to a spectator survey on the effects of sponsorship on purchase intentions can be cross tabulated with data from the survey's socio-demographic questions i.e., gender, age, occupation, highest level of education attained, etc., to shed light on the extent to which there are differences in how males and females, young and older adults, etc. may be induced to purchase an event sponsor's products. For an event economic impact study, at a minimum, the following survey information should be obtained to calculate visitor spending: (1) residency; (2) primary reason for visiting designated economy; and, (3) local spending by visitors.

## SURVEY SAMPLING

### 1. Sample Size

A common question concerning field research is: *How many sport event spectators should be surveyed?* The standard answer is: "*As many as possible,*" since the accuracy of survey data is linked to the number of respondents. Hallmark or large-scale sport events usually have spectator populations over 100,000 and are considered infinitely large, thereby requiring parametric sampling for enhanced external validity. Minimum sampling sizes of 38 persons will produce results accurate to within + 5% of the actual reported figure; a sample of 588 yields results + 4%; and a sample of 1,000 generates a + 3% ranges at the 95% confidence level. Since greater sample sizes often lead to additional time and financial costs, the researcher must decide how much variability s/he is willing to accept in the study. It is recommended that sample sizes for economic impact studies be large enough for a + 4% to + 5% tolerated error level (See Table 1). For participant surveys it may be practical to query all athletes or their coaches/managers unless the field is unusually large or difficult to access. Often, coaches or managers are capable of accurately providing spending information for an athlete or team since they act as fiscal agents during travel competitions.

### Table 1. Spectator Survey Sample Sizes And Precisions Levels

| | Precision Levels And Sample Sizes | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Attendance** | +3% | +4% | +5% | +10% |
| **Under 10,000** | 1,000 | 588 | 385 | 99 |
| **20,000** | 1,053 | 606 | 392 | 100 |
| **50,000** | 1,087 | 617 | 397 | 100 |
| **100,000** | 1,099 | 621 | 398 | 100 |
| **Over 100,000** | 1,111 | 625 | 400 | 100 |

**Source**: Yamane, T. (1967). Elementary sampling theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

### 2. Sample Subjects: Who to survey?

For visitor expenditure studies, field researchers should seek an adult decision maker or head of household to provide the requested information. Subjects should be instructed to divulge their own expenditures if traveling unaccompanied or those of their immediate travel group if traveling with others. If at all possible, subjects should be selected at random to avoid sample bias and ensure generalizability (external validity). True random sampling grants everyone in the designated population an equal chance to be selected. Most festival/event field studies do not include professional entertainers or elite athletes because they are limited for time and organizers do not want them distracted from their sport focus or exploited. Some "small-time" entertainers, artists, athletes may feel the same way, though they are generally willing to comply with purposeful research if it is not too intrusive.

## LOGISTICS: WHERE TO SURVEY?

Distinct spectator markets may attend events at different days and/or times, and congregate in certain areas of an event venue. For example, spectators in luxury skybox suites and those in general admission seating typically possess different socio-demographic characteristics and spending behaviors. Samples drawn exclusively from an event location

subjects should be selected at random to avoid sample bias and ensure generalizability

Field surveys should not be conducted during active periods of a match or contest. After all, spectators and participants are involved in a particular sport for a reason

frequented by a distinct market segment diminishes the study's external validity and its termed sample location bias.

### SCHEDULING: WHEN TO SURVEY?

It is not practical or necessary to sample participants or event spectators during every hour of operation. Determining the proper times to survey is important for the same reasons as where to survey. The days and hours of operation to sample event spectators must control for sampling bias and assure generalization of results to the total population. For example, young adults are more likely to attend late night events than older adults or families with young children. If event spectators were surveyed only during late evening hours, the sample would likely be skewed younger than the true spectator population. For multiple day events with at least eight hours of operation per day, a recommended survey schedule is to establish time blocks to conduct the survey. These periods should be weighted by projected attendance and randomly selected from all possible hours of the event. Another survey scheduling technique is to stratify survey distribution based upon anticipated or past event attendance. For example approximately 20% of the total attendance at the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta occurred during the first day, whereas 14% occurred during the eighth day. Therefore, approximately 20% of the all surveys were administered during the first day and 14% during the eighth day. Therefore caution must be taken when scheduling times for field data collection to avoid sample bias.

Festivals and events that last a day (i.e., Kentucky Derby) a month (i.e., FIFA World Cup), or days in between, have a production lifecycle extending for months or years. For event impacts studies, it must be remembered that impacts occur prior to the event during bid preparation and planning, during the event, and post-event as part of the event legacy. Therefore, it must be decided *when* direct spending occurs and *when* it will be measured. Most economic impact studies include only the spending that occurs *during* the event though recent emphasis has been placed on measuring longer-term post-event impacts or legacies.

Gathering participant or spectator data in the field is dynamic and invasive. Weather dependent events may be altered due to climatic conditions, and field research may need to be altered accordingly. For example, if a concert or match was rained out during which time surveys were to be conducted, the data collection schedule must be revised. Field surveys should not be conducted during active periods of a match or contest. After all, spectators and participants are involved in a particular sport for a reason and should not be distracted by field researchers during competition. Few would want to be interrupted from a critical point in a match by a field researcher. Before or after matches and/or during intermissions when there is "down time" are the best times to query subjects at sport events. Using smart phones or WiFi enabled tablet-sized computers as data gathering tools eliminate the need for paper and photocopying expenses and permit immediate data entry and uploading for analyses.

Several recommendations are offered festival and event managers seeking to initiate a research program. First, contact a faculty member in a social sciences field at an area college to discuss the possibility of assisting with your festival/event research. Do so at least six months in advance of the planned research. Second, plan the research months in advance. Double the amount of time initially thought for the research project. Third, enlist and train volunteers to assist with data collection. Lastly, use the research findings for decision-making. Discuss the research findings and implications with the festival/event staff. Prepare festival/event plans based on the research.

### Step Four
### Data Treatment and Analysis

The fourth step in the field research process is treating and analyzing the data collected. Quantitative data may be coded into numeric values and entered into a computerized statistical package or software spreadsheet for analysis. Programs including Microsoft Excel, SPSS, and SAS are commonly used for data computation. Internet surveys may immediate upload responses and provide immediate analysis in real time.

For economic impact studies involving multi-day events and relying on survey data from visitors, it is necessary to adjust event attendance records to reflect the true number of distinct individuals attending rather than the total event attendance. Repeat attendance by visitors must be factored, as the amount visitors spend in the host economy is multiplied by the number of actual visitors. Failure to account for repeat visitors would obviously overinflate the total direct economic impact figures. To calculate the number of direct visitors at a sport event, several data points are required including event attendance, number of days/sessions visitors attended, whether or not attending the event was the primary reason for visiting, and average visitor group size. Accurate event attendance records are critical to the validity of any sport event field study. Some events tally individual visits by scanning barcodes on ticket passes but many do not. For multiple day

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or session events, total attendance must be adjusted to reflect the total number of primary visitors or visitor groups. To do so requires the following data:

- Total event attendance
- Average days/sessions attended
- Primary reason for visiting host economy – festival/event
- Average visitor group size.

Data collected from visitor surveys may be applied to the template below to adjust attendance totals taking into account repeat visitation and primary reason for visiting the host community. For a four-day event with an attendance of 100,000 and visitors attending 2.5 days, the total number of visitors would be 40,000. Primary visitors represented 50% of the sample and once applied to the total number of visitors (40,000) reveals a total of 20,000 primary visitors. The average visitor group size (4 persons) applied to the primary visitor total (20,000) produces a total of 5,000 primary visitor groups.

### Step Five
### Reporting

Once the field data are analysed and research questions addressed, the study findings may be reported internally and/or externally. Typically, a written report is prepared containing an executive summary, introduction, purpose statement, review of related research, methods, analysis, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations. Findings may be illustrated in tables, graphs, and narrative statements. A list of references cited and appendices that may contain maps and diagrams, sampling schedules, event information, questionnaires, etc. are contained in the final section of the report. Oral reports often follow the same sequential order as the written report with presentation slides containing key findings, tables, graphs, and photographs from the event.

## DISCUSSION
### Research Issues in the Field

At times, research may be conducted for political purposes and to a self-serving point. Crompton (2006) contends that many sport event economic impact studies are commissioned to justify a political position rather than to search for economic accuracy, resulting in the use of questionable procedures that produce bloated numbers. Among the questionable research procedures: including local resident spending; appropriate aggregation; inclusion of time-switchers and casuals; abuse of multipliers; ignoring costs borne by the local community; ignoring opportunity costs; ignoring displacement costs; expanding the project scope; exaggerating visitation numbers; and inclusion of consumer surplus. Regardless of the motives for conducting research, what is most important is that sound, systematic and ethical procedures are followed for data gathering and analysis. Internal validity or the extent to which a research instrument accurately measures what it purports to measure, is critical to any field study. Estimates or projections of festival/event tourist activity generally come from attendance figures, room occupancy rates, or some other system to measure tourism demand. Internal validity is threatened from poorly constructed and formatted questionnaires that produce responses of little worth. In short, a study will only be as accurate as the data collected - or as the saying goes, *Garbage in, garbage out*.

### Threats to Validity

A threat to external validity (how true what one found is of the general population) can occur when a survey reaches a high level of non-response bias, also contaminating its reliability. Non-respondents may differ from survey respondents in certain ways. For example, they may have spent less money, stayed fewer days, and/or been less satisfied with their experiences. Non-response bias may be unintentionally encouraged by researchers in a number of ways. For international events, the language used for field surveys may lead to non-response among those who are not fluent. Mail-back surveys without accompanying postage-paid, return addressed envelopes will also yield high non-response rates. The proliferation of junk mail and spam has made it very difficult for researchers conducting postal and electronic mail surveys to obtain high response rates.

*At what point (or response rate) does subject non-response compromise the generalizability of a study's findings?*

As a general rule, surveys with less than a 50% response rate are at risk of non-response bias. A common practice for addressing the issue is to randomly select a sub-sample of non-respondents and survey them by another method. If responses are statistically similar for this sub-sample as for the original respondents, it may be assumed that the response group is representative of the population and, therefore, the results may be generalized with greater confidence in their accuracy. If the responses differ significantly, such differences as well as resulting limitations to the study's generalizability should be described in the final research report. In the field, subjects are more likely to respond to polite, well-trained, well-groomed surveyors who are dressed in uniforms and possess official photo identification.

The accuracy of spectator studies may be limited by the amount of time that transpires between a subject's event attendance and the survey, inducing what is termed, recall bias. *Recall bias* is particularly acute in economic impact studies with mail-back surveys when a lengthy time lag between the event and survey has occurred. Visitors tend to underestimate their expenditures when asked for information after a considerable time has elapsed from their visit. They also tend to perceive their travel experiences more positively as time transpires. To address the issue of recall bias, visitors should be queried as soon after their experiences as possible; at least within one-two weeks of their visit. The flipside of recall bias is *projection bias*, which can occur when subjects are asked to estimate their spending early in their trip or visit. To address projection bias, visitor samples should be drawn near the end of or immediately after the event. A split-method research ap-

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proach may also be employed i.e., on-site interview and post-event e-mail survey, permitting spending comparisons based on when the surveys were conducted.

### Future of Festival and Event Research

Technology will play an increasingly important role in festival and event research in this decade. Smart phones and other small portable electronic devices will permit sport consumer research that is less intrusive and can collect data immediately. Some researchers are accessing event consumer data from large mines gathered by credit card companies. For example, Simon Chadwick has published research on football fans' spending behaviors and economic impacts at European championships based on data accessed from MasterCard. This direct, "top-down" approach to research offers advantages to the labor-intensive field research. The research topics or problems in sport business are enduring and will be facing scholars and managers in the future. Research will become more central to the strategic planning process as a new wave of well-educated managers enters the festival and event industry, armed with research skills and an appreciation for data-driven decision-making.

## CONCLUSION

This article sought to familiarize the reader with event research by describing the key steps to research success:

- Developing the problem;
- Formulating hypotheses or research questions;
- Research design;
- Data gathering, treatment and analysis;
- Reporting.

Several data collection approaches for festivals and events were described including on-site interviews, door-to-door, e-surveys, and the skier lift technique.

It must be remembered that research in the field is fluid and dynamic, and requires, at times, flexibility by the researchers. This lesson came across loud and clear for field researchers at the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. Fans blaring the vuvuzelas made spectators interviews at the stadium precincts extremely difficult. The survey schedules and locations were altered and additional surveys were gathered at the FIFA Fan Fests where the decibel levels were not as high.

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