

Study of The Perception of Alternate Names for the Same Facility

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The first study ("The Connotations of Facility Names") reported in this issue of *Visitor Behavior* demonstrated that art museum, science museum, history museum, natural history museum, historic site, and state park each have their own meaning to people in terms of what features/programs are likely to be found and the quality of their experience. The purpose of the current study was to assess the impact of various names on how a specific type of facility is perceived. If different titles for the same facility connote different features and programs, then care should be taken when selecting a facility's name.

The current study explored respondents' expectations associated with several facility names. A new facility under the administration of the North Carolina Historic Site was the inspiration for this study. The major concern was "Which name (living history farm, living historic farm, state historic site, rural heritage farm, or farm museum) best communicates, in terms of its connotation, what features and programs will be found at the facility?"

Method

A survey was administered to 55 students from Jacksonville State University. Respondents were asked to answer

"yes" or "no" depending on whether they expected exhibits, audiovisual presentation, historic building, guided tour, self-guided tour, demonstrations, historic marker, and picnicking. For approximately one-half of the respondents, the name "Horne Creek" was used for all names except for the title, "North Carolina Heritage Center." For the other half, fictitious names were used for each facility name. The name manipulations were used in order to ensure that the name "Horne Creek" did not influence the respondents' answers. There was no difference in responding for the two groups suggesting that the other terms of the name (e.g., living history farm, historic site, farm museum) were the important factors for communicating expectations.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents who answered "yes" to each cell of the table. The results clearly show that there was a difference in expectation based on the name. The major results are summarized below:

1. The names "Living History Farm" and "State Historical Site" were less likely to suggest exhibits than the other titles.

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Table 1
Percent of Respondents Answering "Yes" to Expectation of Features/Programs (Total = 55)

Feature/Program	Living History Farm	Living Historical Farm	State Historical Site	Rural Heritage Center	N.C. Rural Heritage Center	Farm Museum
Exhibits	76.4%	85.5	78.2	85.5	85.5	90.9
Audiovisuals	56.4	52.7	56.4	40.0	36.4	41.8
Guided Tour	69.1	69.1	58.2	70.9	70.9	69.1
Demonstrations	47.3	52.7	40.0	52.7	45.5	65.5
Historical building	72.7	83.6	92.7	61.8	65.5	45.5
Self-guided tour	72.7	69.1	74.6	70.9	65.6	69.1
Historic marker	60.1	85.5	90.9	72.7	67.3	52.7
Picnicking	85.5	81.8	78.2	56.4	49.1	54.6

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Dear Colleague:

I would like to introduce you to the newly organized Visitor Studies Association (membership form on the other side of this letter). A strong association is essential to promote visitor studies as a profession. The Association will serve many functions. It will assume sponsorship of the Annual Visitor Studies Conference. It will help to network visitor-oriented professionals from various organizations (e.g., American Association of Museums, American Association of State and Local History, American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums, Canadian Museum Association, Museum Education Roundtable, National Association of Interpreters). It will facilitate professional standards and training for those involved in visitor studies. It will stimulate the dissemination of information on visitor studies through its newsletter *Visitor Behavior* and other publications.

Why do we need another association? The major reason is that there is no single organization that represents all professionals who have a primary interest in visitors. Professionals engaged in visitor studies activities come from a wide variety of organizations and institutions. In many of the current associations, some individuals (e.g., consultants and university researchers) are treated as second class citizens and denied the right to hold office or chair sessions at conferences. The Visitor Studies Association will not make such restrictions to its membership. All members will have the same rights.

Association membership will be beneficial in several ways. One of the major benefits will be the opportunity to interact with others who share your interest in visitors. In addition, only members of the Visitor Studies Association will be given a discounted registration fee at the 1991 Visitor Studies Conference. Members will also receive *Visitor Behavior* and the *Membership Directory*. Other benefits will include discounts on professional workshops and discounts on publications.

If you believe, as we do, that visitor studies should be supported as a profession, then we hope you will join today.

Sincerely,

Stephen C. Bitgood, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
Jacksonville State University
and
President, Center for Social Design

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM ON REVERSE SIDE