

# John G. Shedd Aquarium

## Audience Research and Evaluation

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# **The plan for this morning....**

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**This session will cover three areas**

- **Types of audience research**
- **How it is used (Shedd examples)**
- **Ways to get started**

# Useful Information

## A. Market Research



# Useful Information

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## B. Experience Research



# Useful Information

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## A. Market Research

- *Numbers*
- Visitor Profile
- Visitors' Decision to Come
- Defining Target Audiences
- Image



# Shedd Aquarium Attendance Patterns

## Annual Attendance

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2003	2,088,687
2004	1,945,557
2005	1,887,879
2006	2,076,063
2007	2,012,417

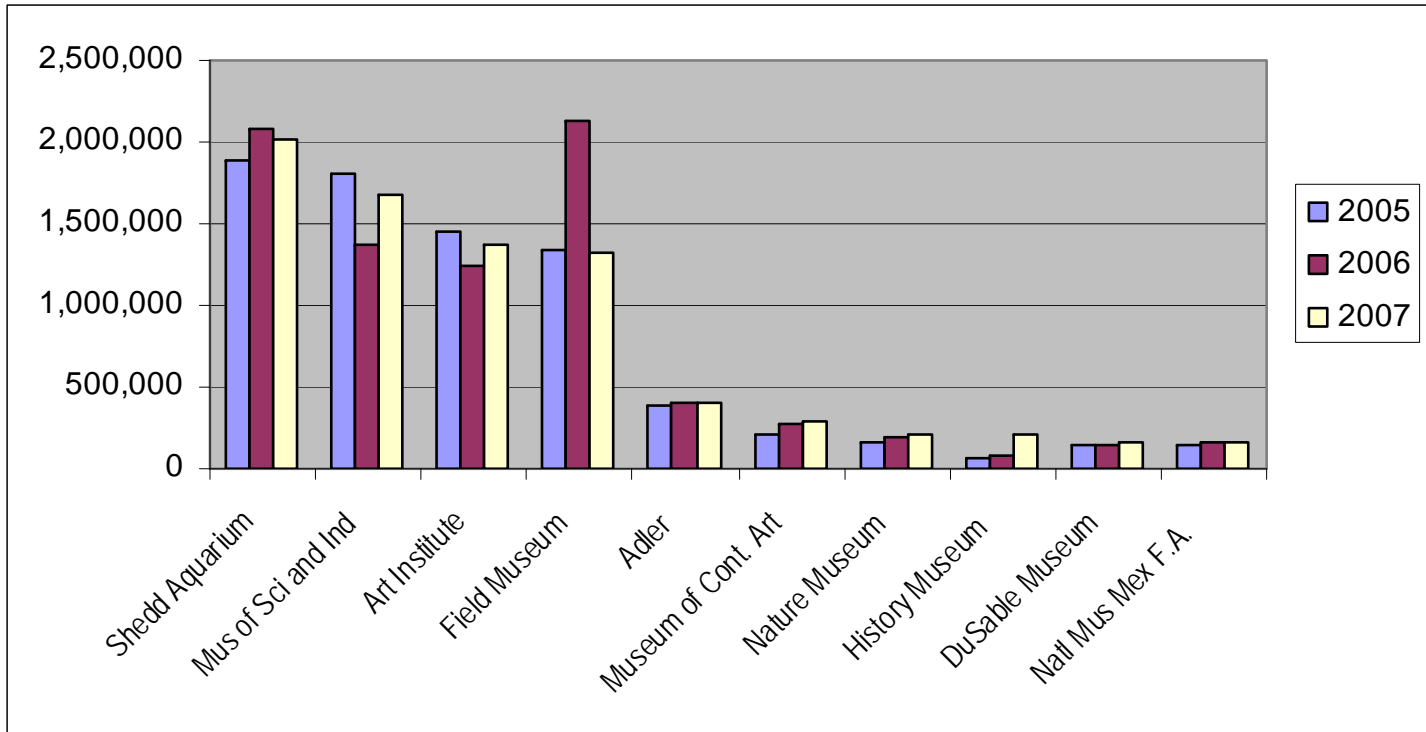
**Total Shedd Attendance 1930-2007: 96,148,690**



# Attendance Patterns

## Annual Attendance of Chicago Museums

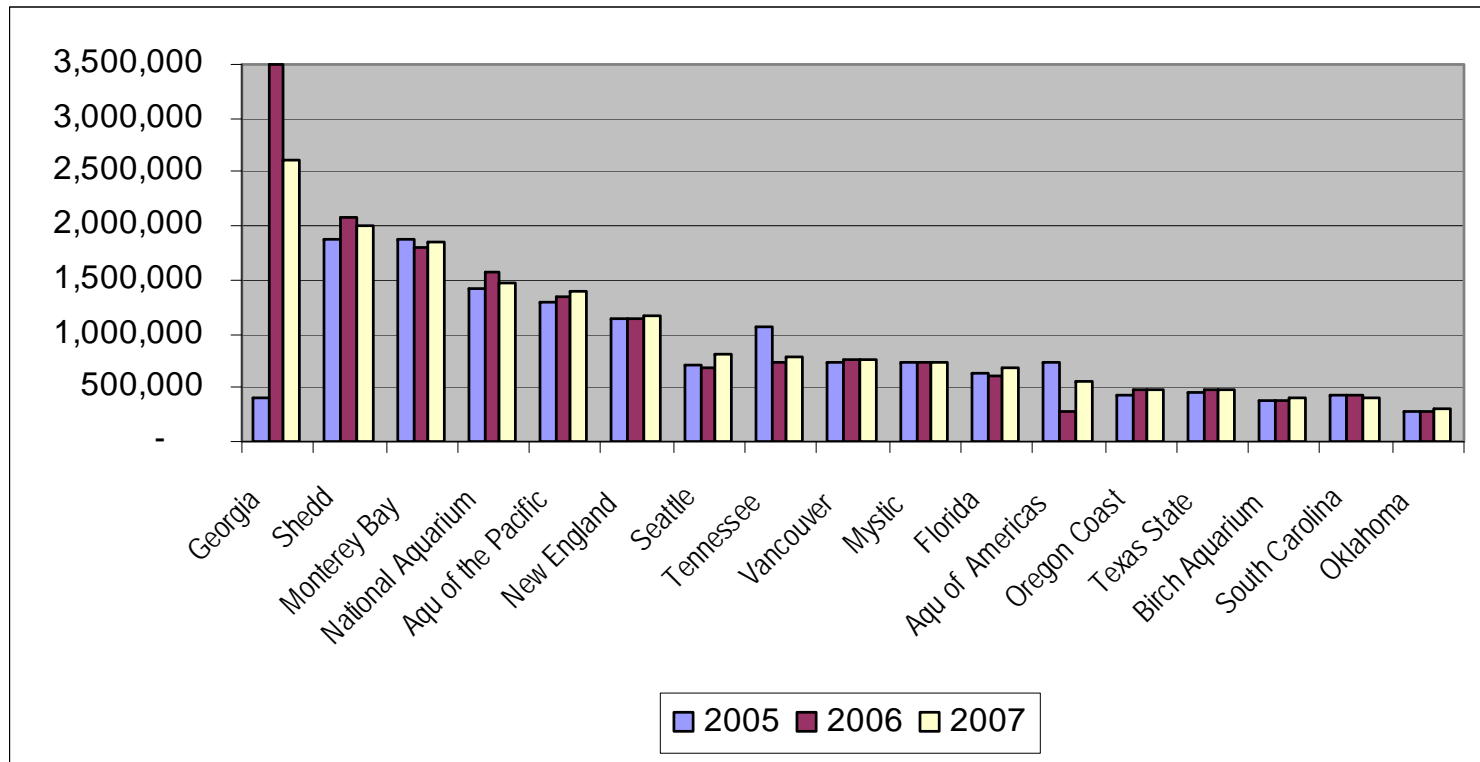
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**There are four big museums and six others in Chicago that get public tax support**

# Attendance Patterns

## Annual Attendance of U.S. Aquariums



**Aquariums are by their nature large institutions.  
Most have an attendance of 750,000 or above**

# Useful Information

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## A. Market Research

➤ Numbers

➤ ***Visitor Profile***

➤ Visitors' Decision to Come

➤ Defining Target Audiences

➤ Image



# Visitor Profile

## Track and Compare Demographics

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### ★ Where visitors come from

60% tourists

### ★ How often they visit, and when

Half are first-time visitors and 65% visit in Spring / Summer

### ★ Age profile

36% children

### ★ Gender and ethnicity

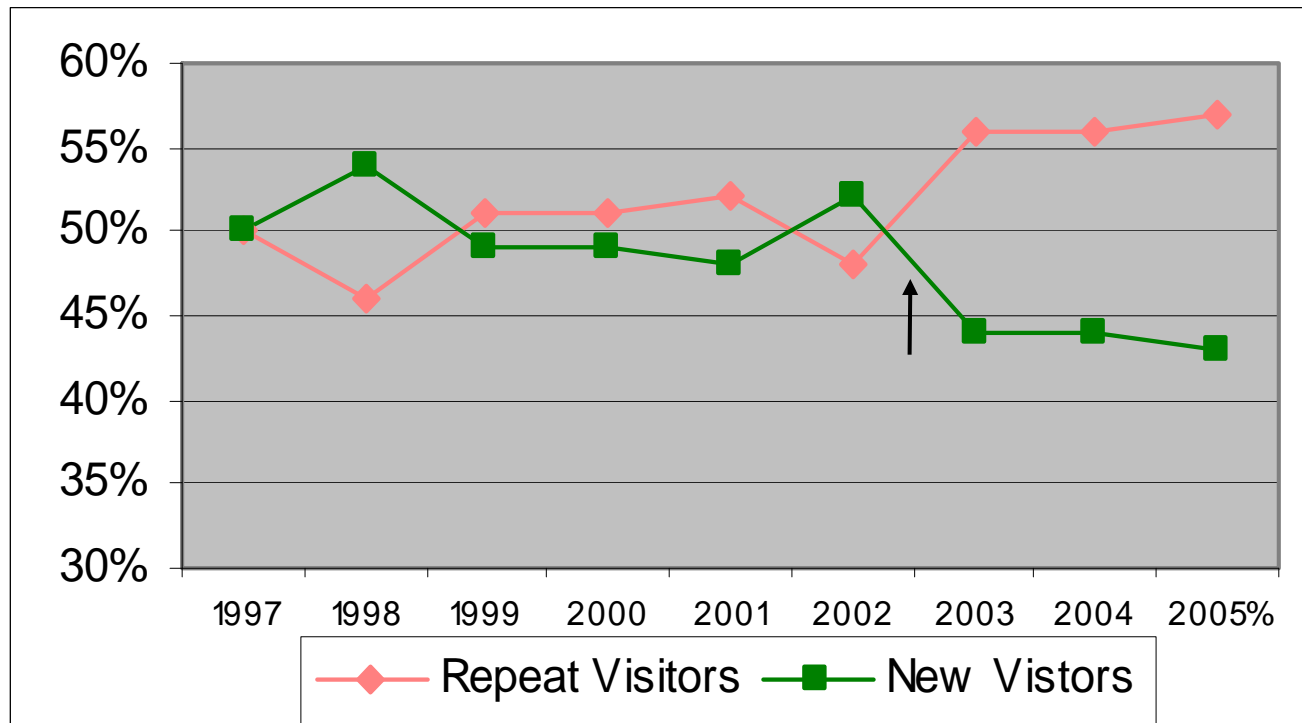
★ 56% female and 76% Caucasian

### ★ Education and income

Above average in both

# Visitor Profile

## New vs. Repeat visitors



**When Wild Reef opened attendance went up, especially among repeat visitors. While attendance remains up, the pattern has returned to about 50% new visitors each year.**

# Useful Information

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## A. Market Research

- Numbers
- Visitor Profile
- ***Visitors' Decision to Come***
- Defining Target Audiences
- Image



# Visitors' Decision to Come

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- Most come for the overall experience – including iconic animals
- “Value” has become a critical measurement
  - ✓ Experience Evaluation
  - ✓ Aeffect Inc. Value study



# Visitors' Decision to Come

How did we communicate with them?

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- We especially track the impact of marketing initiatives
- Internet usage
- Brochures
- Advertising



# Useful Information

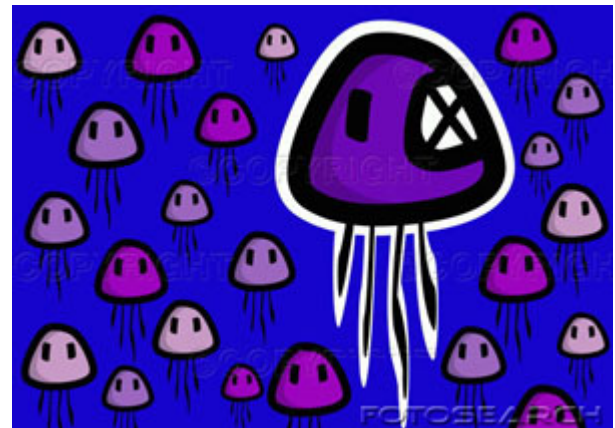
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## A. Market Research

- Numbers
- Visitor Profile
- Visitors' Decision to Come

➤ ***Defining Target Audiences***

- Image



# Defining Target Audiences

## Balance of Multiple Viewpoints

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- **Brand target** of women 25-54 with children
- **National psychological profile** of leisure participants based on age (Experience Evaluation)
- **Custom segmentation** of local audience

# Defining Target Audiences

Know your market, not just your visitors

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	<u>Market*</u>	<u>Guests</u>
Edutainment Enthusiast	23%	29%
Enrichment Seeker	20%	25%
Fun-Lovers	14%	17%
Young Explorer	9%	14%
Idle Empty Nesters	12%	10%
Shedd Critics	21%	4%

**\*Market includes only those members who fit into a user segment. Does not include the 10% of community who do not come downtown.**



# Useful Information

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## A. Market Research

- Numbers
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- Defining Target Audiences

➤ ***Image***

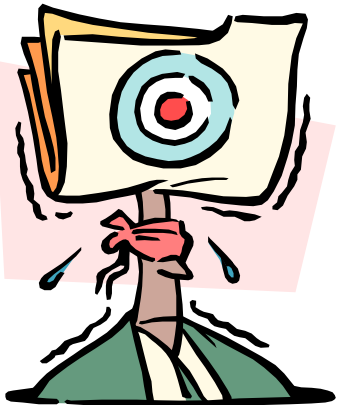


# Image of Shedd Aquarium

## Periodic brand monitoring study of the local region

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- ★ Strongest brand attributes are 'beautiful', 'fun', 'popular', and 'colorful'. Those who have seen Shedd advertising or media coverage are more positive.
- ★ Significant increase in % saying Shedd is extremely or very enjoyable
- ★ Those who have visited Shedd in the last two years are more positive.
- ★ Shedd leadership in conservation is strongly assumed



# Image of Shedd Aquarium

## Measuring satisfaction with care

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- Visitor satisfaction collected on a daily basis, “net promoter score”
- Used to track image of Shedd -- for scorecard, to compare time periods and to assess changes
- Reviewed on a monthly, seasonal and yearly basis

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## **A. Market Research**

- **Get counts and zip codes when you sell tickets**
- **Use volunteers to collect demographic information**
- **You can use comment cards but don't let visitors self-select**
- **Develop a bare-bones segmentation on your own over time**
- **Use Excel to enter your data and purchase a student version of SPSS to get basic tables**

# Useful Information

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## B. Experience Research

- *Visitor Journey*
- Experience Quality
- Experience Quantity
- Experience Value
- Social Marketing



# Visitor Journey

## Thinking on a bigger scale

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You need information on the entire sequence involved in visiting, not just when they are looking at your exhibits

- Anticipation
- Arrival
- Ticketing
- Preparations
- Making Decisions
- Immersion
- Transitions
- Departure/Extensions

**57% of our visitors drive to Shedd, and they are not happy with the parking**

**Most of the aquarium is easy to navigate – but not all of it**

**We established SheddHeads to encourage visitors to share photos online**



# Visitor Journey

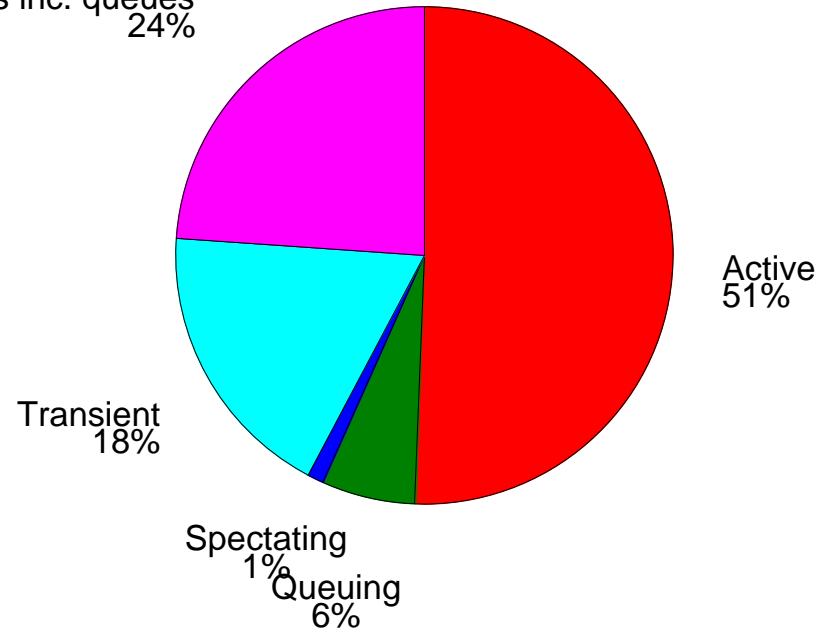
## Not all time is spent equally

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Leisure time is a valuable resource, and knowing how visitor time is being spent is valuable information. ... amid changing trends, a fickle public, and increased competition for the leisure dollar.



Amenities inc. queues  
24%



# Useful Information

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## B. Experience Research

- Visitor Journey
- ***Experience Quality***
- Experience Quantity
- Experience Value
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# Experience Quality

'Quality' from your organization's viewpoint

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- ★ **Front end studies**

What do visitors know about the animals and/or the subject?

- ★ **Formative studies**

Will your plans work?

- ★ **Summative studies**

Conducted after an exhibit is open. What have you learned?



# Experience Quality

‘Quality’ from your visitors’ viewpoint

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**Skills & Senses  
Action & Activity  
Emotion or Reaction  
Learning**

- ★ **Mental intensity is too linear.**  
Need to give relief – some high in intensity and some low
- ★ **More diverse psychological elements.**  
More use of senses, activity
- ★ **End with a higher intensity component.**  
Need a real “WOW” activity
- ★ **Need better balance of learning styles.**  
Too much reliance on learning by reading and listening



# Useful Information

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## B. Experience Research

- Visitor Journey
- Experience Quality
- ***Experience Quantity***
- Experience Value
- Social Marketing



# Experience Quantity

Programs are part of exhibits

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- 73% of visitors attended a Marine Mammal Presentation, 30% a Caribbean Reef Dive
- We studied the emotional impact of programs and established ‘best practices’ in winter and spring programming
- In 2008 We’re experimenting with ‘Playscapes’ to connect activity with the exhibits



# Experience Quantity

Look at connections between exhibits too

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- We're looking at older Galleries as a few exhibits rather than individual displays
- We're revising and simplifying some areas



# Useful Information

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## B. Experience Research

- Visitor Journey
- Experience Quality
- Experience Quantity
- ***Experience Value***
- Social Marketing



# Experience Value

“No margin, no mission”

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- ★ **Temporary Exhibits** are family-oriented attendance drivers and experiments for permanent exhibits
- ★ **Permanent Exhibits** may have more information on concepts as well as animals, and serve both attendance and mission
- ★ **Visitor value proposition(s)** can be changed by their experience



# Useful Information

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## B. Experience Research

- Visitor Journey
- Experience Quality
- Experience Quantity
- Experience Value
- ***Social Marketing***



# Social Marketing and Impact

How do you know if you've made a difference?

- **Logic models** for programs and exhibits clarify theory of change and outcomes.
- **Best practices** review for Great Lakes Campaign points to our overall role in the process of conservation action.
- **Outcome alignment** to specific audiences in Education. Now we're working on indicators and measures.



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## **B. Experience Research**

- **Give ‘journals’ to a sample of your visitors and ask them to note where they go and total time in your building**
- **Look at trends in leisure behavior and culture**
- **Watch your visitors at your place and at your competition**
- **Get more out of those grant evaluations to inform your overall plan**
- **Structure how your staff chats with your visitors to get a constant stream of information**

# What have we learned?

## We've learned how to be useful

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Anything you cannot relinquish when it has outlived its usefulness possesses you, *Peace Pilgrim*

Take what you can use and let the rest go by. *Ken Kesey*

The useful and the beautiful are never separated.  
*Periander of Corinth*

Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives. *William Foster*

Our chief usefulness to humanity rests on our combining power with high purpose. Power undirected by high purpose spells calamity, and high purpose by itself is utterly useless if the power to put it into effect is lacking. *Theodore Roosevelt*

**Thank you!**

