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22nd Urbanna Oyster Festival: Analysis of Patrons and Expenditures

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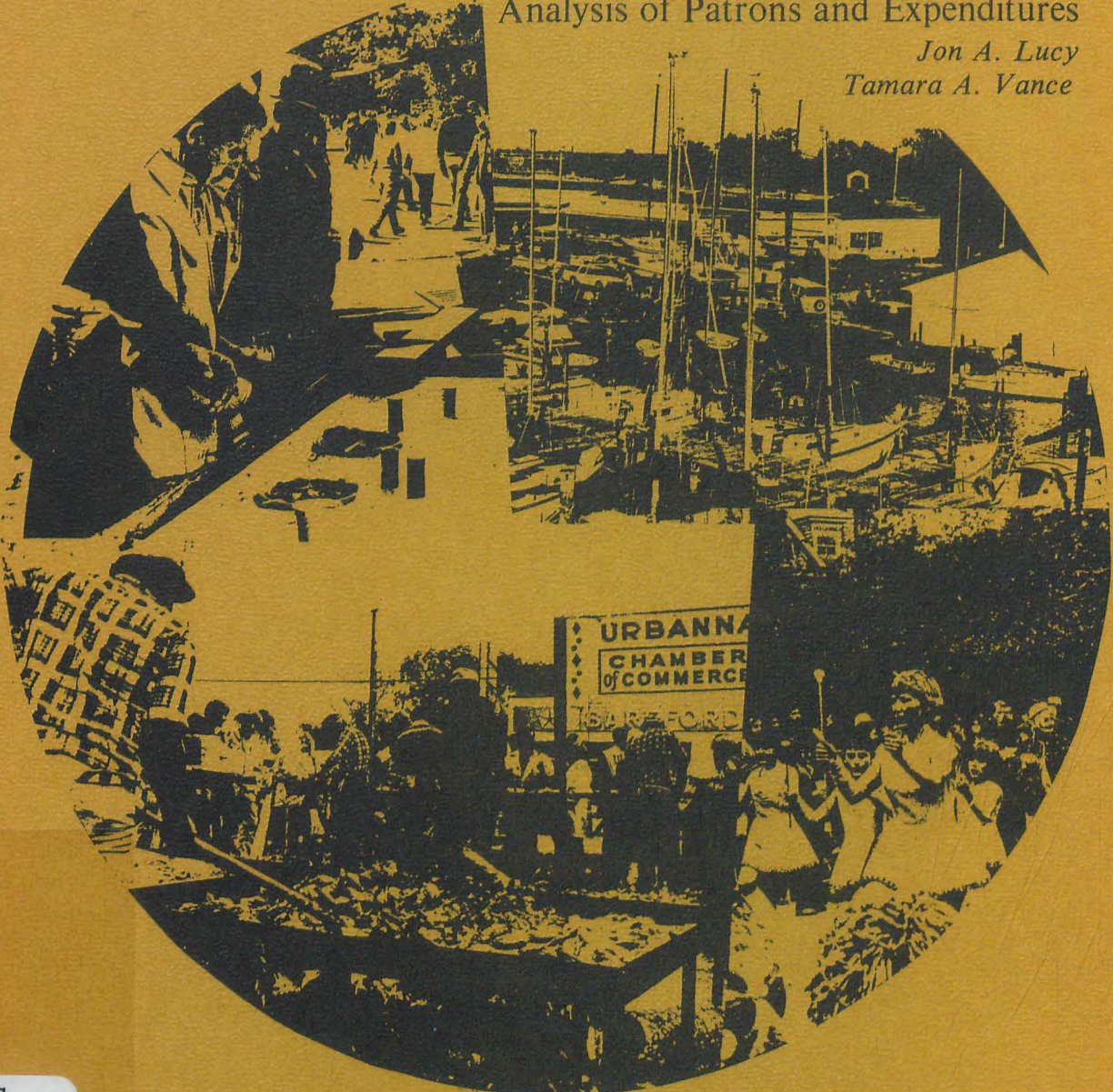
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Analysis of Patrons and Expenditures

*Jon A. Lucy
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AT VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE/COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

22ND URBANNA OYSTER FESTIVAL:

Analysis of Patrons and Expenditures

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PREFACE

The study of the 1979 22nd Urbanna Oyster Festival was conducted as part of an independent research project sponsored by the College of William and Mary's Committee for Faculty Research, the Department of Economics and the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Services of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). The study was completed and a report submitted in fulfillment of requirements for the Department of Economics course Economics 490. This report is an adaptation and enhancement of that initial report.

The Virginia Sea Grant Program, through VIMS, helped fund the Urbanna study to provide its Marine Advisory Program with information on a waterfront festival significantly different in character and magnitude from Norfolk's Harborfest, subject of a similar study (Lucy and Baker, 1979). Festival managers were able to use the results of the Urbanna study in planning the tricentennial celebration Oyster Festival in 1980, and continue to use the study in evaluating their annual event. Perhaps other waterfront communities can compare the results of this study to their own existing or planned festivals to aid them in making their events economically rewarding as well as enjoyable to the broadest spectrum of people.

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the Virginia Sea Grant Program through Project No. 544106. The U.S. Government is authorized to produce and distribute reprints for governmental purposes, notwithstanding any copyright that may appear hereon.

Photographs used in composing the cover of this report were obtained from the Southside Sentinel newspaper in Urbanna, Virginia. The cover was designed by Dick Cook, Sea Grant Editor, VIMS. Drafts and final copy of this report were prepared by the VIMS Report Center.

INTRODUCTION

The Urbanna Oyster Festival, formerly called "Oyster Days," is traditionally sponsored by the Town of Urbanna's Chamber of Commerce. The day-and-a-half festival originated as a promotion and bargain sales day for local merchants. The idea was to promote the economic growth of Urbanna. Now the festival is frequented annually by thousands, as local civic organizations, church groups, artists and others set up sales stands along the streets of Urbanna. Ten percent of the sales from the booths go to the Chamber of Commerce, which uses the income to sponsor the following year's festival, as well as promoting Urbanna year-round. The festival features a carnival, musical entertainment, a parade, a 7-mile race, a Junior Miss Pageant, an art show and, of course, oysters --- "anyway you like them." (See Appendix A for the Festival's "Calendar of Events").

METHODOLOGY

Patrons of the festival were surveyed on both Friday afternoon and Saturday (November 2-3, 1979) using personal interview techniques (Appendix B). Five survey collection boxes were also set up along the main street, accompanied by questionnaires to be filled out voluntarily by festival patrons. The presence of the survey boxes and interviewers was well publicized by the Chamber, which created patron cooperation in providing often-considered personal information about their expenditures and preferences.

The State Department of Highways and Transportation provided automated car-counters on both access roads leading to Urbanna to help in estimating land arrival attendance (as opposed to boat arrivals). Unfortunately, the equipment was vandalized on Saturday morning and no meaningful traffic count information was obtained. Estimates of overall attendance were made by conducting a random telephone survey of Middlesex County households.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of Festival Publicity Campaign

Most oyster festival patrons found out about the event by word of mouth. The next most frequently indicated sources of publicity were newspapers and the sign on Route 33 at Cook's Corner. The long track record of the festival as a fun, family-oriented event obviously has resulted in a favorable reputation perpetuated by word of mouth (Table I).

Table I. How Patrons Found Out About the Oyster Festival

<u>Source of Information</u>	<u>Mode of Transportation</u>	
	<u>Land Arrivals</u>	<u>Boat Arrivals</u>
Word of Mouth	70%	67%
Newspaper	14%	8%
Sign on Route 33	7%	10%
Native to Area	4%	10%
Town Marinas Where Boat Kept	-	5%
TV, Magazines, Radio Camper Club, etc.	5%	-

Geographical Origin of Patrons (Table II)

Out-of-state residents comprised 8% of Urbanna's festival patrons. Residents of the City of Richmond represented 23% of those surveyed. The southern Hampton Roads area (Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Portsmouth) contributed 12% of the patrons, while 6% came from the Lower Peninsula (Hampton and Newport News). Residents of Middlesex County, including Urbanna, accounted for 9% of those surveyed. Out-of-state residents ranged from North Carolina to New Hampshire to Nevada to Texas. Of the out-of-state patrons, 65% were from North Carolina.

Table II. Place of Residence of Oyster Festival Patrons

<u>Residence</u>	<u>Response Rate</u>
Richmond, City	23%
Henrico County	9%
Middlesex County	9%
Out-of-State	8%
Hanover County	6%
Virginia Beach	5%
Newport News	4%
Gloucester County	3%
Chesapeake	2%
Norfolk	2%
Hampton	2%
York County	2%
Other Virginia Localities	22%

While Table II indicates the ranking of communities according to their residents' participation in the festival, Table III provides another perspective by converting the ranking in Table II to actual attendance from each community (percent of crowd X total festival attendance). From Table III it is obvious that Middlesex County contributed the greatest relative number of participants in comparison to its actual population since slightly better than one out of every four persons in the county attended the Oyster Festival.

Table III. Proportion of Communities' Population Attending Oyster Festival

<u>City or County</u>	<u>Population^a (1978)</u>	<u>Estimated Attendance From Each Locality</u>	<u>Percent of Residents Attending</u>
Richmond, City	219,600	4,910	2.2%
Henrico County	173,900	1,922	1.1%
Middlesex County (including Urbanna)	7,400	1,922	26.0%
Hanover County	52,100	1,281	2.5%
Virginia Beach	242,000	1,068	0.4%
Newport News	143,700	854	0.6%
Gloucester County	18,000	640	3.6%

^aSource: 1978 Tayloe Murphy Institute Population Estimates, Charlottesville, Virginia, May 1979.

Festival Patron Opinions

Most patrons indicated that they enjoyed the food more than any other attraction of the festival. The "people" were the next most attractive element. Land and water arrivals both indicated "the small

town atmosphere" as a desirable feature. Also cited as popular were the parade, the art show and "everything" (equal frequency) (Table IV).

As far as undesirable elements of the festival, patrons complained most of the bad weather and crowds. Another problem mentioned was the lack of beer concessions, yet some people complained about the drinking in public. Nothing was indicated as undesirable about the festival by 31% of the land arrivals and 32% of the water arrivals. Land arrivals often complained of parking problems (9%). Other less often mentioned problems included the lack of sanitary facilities, too many state police, too much garbage and high prices. Even with these complaints, only 5% of the patrons said they would not return in future years. Most patrons seemed enthusiastic and 91% said they would return, while 4% said "maybe" (Most of these were from out of state). Since the majority of the festival activities occurred on Saturday, 65% of the patrons indicated attending the festival for only one day. Of the patrons surveyed 66% had attended previously.

Estimates of Attendance and Expenditures

In order to estimate attendance at the festival, a random telephone survey was conducted of Middlesex County. Seventy-five random calls produced 41 responses with the variation in positive responses being essentially constant. Knowing the total number of households with phones in the county (3,041), on the basis of the random telephone survey it was estimated that 2,024 persons from Middlesex attended the festival. Since 9.48% of the surveyed patrons

Table IV. Oyster Festival Patrons' Response Rates Concerning Desirable and Undesirable Features of the Event.

A. Desirable features of the Festival indicated by patrons:

<u>Festival Features</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Mode of Transportation*</u>		<u>Overall</u>
		<u>Water</u>	<u>Air</u>	
Food	68%	46%	89%	70%
People	8%	21%	<u>10%</u>	10%
Small-Town Atmosphere	6%	18%		8%
Parade	4%	<u>7%</u>		5%
Art Show/Crafts	4%			4%
Race	2%			2%
Everything	2%			2%

B. Undesirable features of the Festival as indicated by patrons:

<u>Festival Features (Problems)</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Mode of Transportation*</u>		<u>Overall</u>
		<u>Water</u>	<u>Air</u>	
None	31%	32%	22%	35%
Crowds	14%	28%	56%	19%
Weather	15%	16%	11%	17%
Sanitary Facilities	6%	8%	<u>11%</u>	7%
No Beer Concessions	6%	8%		7%
Police Presence	3%	<u>8%</u>		4%
Parking	9%			6%
Garbage	3%			3%
Prices	1%			1%

*Based on:

- 356 land surveys
- 29 water surveys
- 6 air surveys

at the festival were Middlesex County residents, total attendance was estimated to be 21,350 ($2,024 \div 0.0948$).

Boat counts at the three marinas and waterfront restaurant in Urbanna Creek indicated 114 boats were occupied during the festival. Surveys of boat-arrival patrons showed that average boat party size was four persons. These 456 boat arrival patrons spent \$29.31 per person on the average for a total boatman-related expenditure of \$13,365. The estimated 20,894 land-arrival patrons spent an average of \$21.43 each during the festival for a total expenditure of \$447,757. Therefore total estimated expenditures made by festival patrons were \$461,122 (Table V).

Table V. Patron Expenditures

Boat Arrivals:

Food and Beverages	\$ 7,792
Lodging (marina fees)	3,555
Misc.	<u>\$ 2,018</u>
Subtotal	\$ 13,365

Land Arrivals:

Food and Beverages	\$274,129
Camper's fees	15,670
Other lodging	58,503
Misc.	<u>99,455</u>
Subtotal	\$447,757

TOTAL \$461,122

All local campgrounds were completely full for the weekend of the festival, as were local motels extending into neighboring counties.

Occupancy levels are not normally this high during the fall season, except during the oyster festival.

Initial patron expenditures stimulate further purchases in the local economy. These additional purchases create what is called a multiplier effect. In lieu of previous research in Virginia to determine an appropriate tourist expenditure multiplier, a multiplier of 1.25 was used to estimate additional economic impact from tourist dollars (Archer and Owen, 1971). This means that for every tourist dollar spent, an extra \$0.25 is generated for second round transfers such as inventory purchases, local wages and salaries, or increased employment. To estimate the total economic impact associated with festival expenditures, the value of the second-round transfers must be added to actual expenditures.

Therefore, since \$43,374 is estimated to have been spent by Middlesex County patrons, expenditures by persons living outside the county (so called tourist expenditures) amounted to \$417,748. These expenditures resulted in a second round of spending equivalent to \$104,437 ($\$522,185 - \$417,748$). The total economic impact of Oyster Festival patron expenditures is therefore \$565,559 ($\$461,122 + \$104,437$).

Conclusions

This study helps to document both the aesthetic and economic benefits that accrue to a community when it carefully plans and carries out a festival. The study also serves to provide festival organizers with a patron-solicited ranking of problems associated with

festival crowds. For waterfront communities such as the Town of Urbanna, an event like the oyster festival helps to maintain the interest of local citizens in the heritage of the area. It also reminds citizens of the important role a major tributary like the Rappahannock River continues to play in their daily lives. Finally, for first-time visitors drawn to the community by the festival, it provides a potpourri of experiences, any of which may result in a return visit, and thereby another possible contribution to the local economy.

References

- Archer, B. and C. Owen. 1971. Towards a Tourist Regional Multiplier. Regional Studies 5, No. 4 (Dec.):289-294.
- Lucy, J. and S. Baker. 1979. Harborfest '79 Norfolk, Virginia: An Analysis of Patrons and their Expenditures. Special Report in Applied Marine Science and Ocean Engineering No. 226, Virginia Sea Grant Program, VIMS, College of William and Mary, 25 p.

Appendix A: Urbanna Oyster Festival Calendar of Events¹

Friday, November 2 - Street Sales

- Bluegrass Concert featuring "Uncle LeRoy
and the Pike County Partners"
- Middlesex Woman's Club Art Show

Saturday, November 3 - 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

- Carnival
- Street Sales
- Oysters Served
- Urbanna Oyster Festival
- Seven Mile Run

2:00 PM

- Parade

All Afternoon

- Carnival
- Street Sales
- Oysters Served
- Art Show

¹Taken from Chamber of Commerce promotional flyer: "A Salute to the Oyster"

Appendix B: Urbanna Oyster Festival Patron Survey

The College of William and Mary and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science are conducting a patron survey of the Urbanna Oyster Festival. Please answer the following questions about your visit.

1. What is your place of residence? City or County _____
State _____ Zip _____
2. Have you attended this festival previously? _____
Will you come back? _____
3. How did you find out about the Urbanna Oyster Festival?
(newspapers, word of mouth, etc.)
4. How did you get here? Boat? _____ Car? _____ Other? _____
5. Will you be here for just Friday? _____ just Saturday? _____ Both? _____
6. What do you find are the most desirable features about the festival?
7. What do you find are the least desirable features of the festival?
8. How many people in your party are you bearing expenses for? _____
9. How much will you spend for lodging for your party? _____
Are you staying at a local campground? _____
10. How much will you spend for food and beverages for your party? _____
11. What other expenditures will you make in the greater Urbanna area as a result of the Oyster Festival? (souvenirs, transportation, etc.)

The College of  William & Mary

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