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Perceptions of Mississippi as a Tourist Destination

By

Katie Diane Kaiser

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

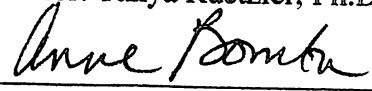
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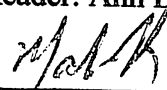
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Reader: Ann Bomba, Ph.D.



Reader: Mark Loftin, Ph.D.

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To my state that raised me with sweet southern comfort.

I carry you with me wherever I go.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend the warmest thank you to the Nutrition and Hospitality Management Department at Ole Miss for the joyful years of professional experience and invaluable education. Thank you to my thesis advisor, Dr. Tanya Ruetzler, whose experience in and passion for the hospitality industry inspired me continuously. Thank you for the generous time and effort you gave me. To her husband, Dr. James Taylor, thank you for your expert assistance. To my second reader, Dr. Ann Bomba, thank you for your help and kindness. To my third reader, Dr. Mark Loftin, I enjoy your wisdom and friendship.

To my family and friends for their constant support and encouragement before I even had words down on paper. Thank you for loving me and believing in me.

To my strength and redeemer, Jesus Christ. Nothing I do comes from me alone, but You who are in me.

ABSTRACT

KATIE DIANE KAISER: Perceptions of Mississippi as a Tourist Destination

Mississippi offers an array of tourism, but what do people who visit the state consider Mississippi has the best of? What are Mississippi's less known tourism offerings? This study hints that those who are experienced with Mississippi more positively perceive the state as a tourist destination, whereas those who are not familiar with Mississippi's offerings do not see the state as positively. A Qualtrics survey was conducted for students attending the University of Mississippi in the Lafayette/Oxford area asking demographic questions and a survey that measured 16 tourism criteria on a 5 point Likert scale. SPSS 17.0 Independent sample t-tests were run on data collected. Significant differences in 6 of the 16 areas of tourism studied were found. Mean scores showed that the students from Mississippi rated all but one of the six criteria higher than the students not from the state. Criteria rated higher by students from Mississippi: interesting and friendly people, suitable accommodations (hotels), great beaches and water sports, attractive casinos, and access to many state and national parks. Students not from Mississippi rated good nightlife and entertainment significantly higher. This study concludes that Mississippi may benefit from more advertising to reach out to those unfamiliar with our tourism destinations. Mississippi should continue highlighting destinations that were rated most positive by participants.

Preface: Personal Statement

Growing up in Mississippi has planted a love of fresh magnolias, catfish meals, and southern hospitality in my heart. Choosing to major in Hospitality Management at the University of Mississippi has been as instinctive to me as a bee's search for honey is to him. One of my loftiest goals is to experience true happiness in the quality and direction of my career. I can think of no better way to fuel that love affair than by thoroughly learning the past and present conditions in order to conjure up an even brighter proposal for my state's future economic growth. My decision to research this topic not only stems from my love and compassion for my home state, but also from my desire to help her be better understood and able to thrive on her resources.

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Introduction

One of Mississippi's favorite sons, William Faulkner, once said, "To understand the world, one must first understand a place like Mississippi" (Pettrash, n.d.). Our state's way of life is a world by itself.

From the highest natural point of Woodhall Mountain in Tishomingo County, to the Mississippi Delta's world famous rich farmlands, and on to the Biloxi beaches where Jefferson Davis built his retirement home, our land is varied and accommodating to all.

Mississippi is also friendly in our economy. New businesses are able to thrive in one of the lowest cost of living states in the nation. Agriculture and dairy remain a large part of our economy but manufacturing and technology now have a place too. There is the Nissan plant in Canton, Soligor silicone production in Lowndes County, and the Toyota plant in Blue Springs - to name a few.

We extend an open invitation to our 32 state and national parks, the bustling casinos, and the birthplace of the blues. Mississippi holds numerous "world capital" titles, some of which include Greenwood, known as "The Cotton Capital of the World" and Greenville, named "Hot Tamale Capital" in 2012. According to Governor Phil Bryant, every dollar Mississippi puts in to tourism, she sees six times that in profit (McDaniel, 2012). This proves how critical tourism is to our growing economy.

The people of Mississippi can be counted as an attraction, also. They are just as sweet as all that sugar we put in our iced tea. We want nothing more than to pull up a rocking chair on the porch for a long chat. Strangers are treated as kin, and the home-made food is plentiful. The simple things in life are celebrated here, and this may be the reason why we are the most giving out of all the states in charitable donations.

Mississippi hospitality is truly the world class attraction of this state and it beckons others from across the world to come and experience our place in the South. It is this premise that provides the foundation for this study, which will examine perceptions of Mississippi as a tourist destination. Authors Zaher Hallab and Kyungmi Kim (2005) report tourism as “a key contributor to Mississippi’s economy” in their study “US Travelers’ Images of the State of Mississippi as a Tourist Destination” (p. 394). This study will further examine perceptions of Mississippi tourism offerings between students attending the University of Mississippi who are from Mississippi and students who are not. Parallel to Hallab and Kim (2005) in their work, my research may be used “for the state of Mississippi to be able to take advantage of the growth in tourism, at the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental levels, and compete in the tourism industry” (p. 394). In order to do this, the state “has to have a clear vision of its image in the marketplace” (p. 394). When the state understands consumer perceptions, the destination is apt to “work on its image, improve it, and therefore be better positioned to gain market share” (Hallab & Kim, 2005, p. 394). Research that is done to understand consumer’s perceptions of a destination is vital for the marketing and tourism planners to be successful (p. 394).

Based on the following literature review, I hypothesized that those who are experienced with Mississippi will more positively perceive the state as a tourist destination, whereas those who are not familiar with Mississippi’s offerings will not see the state as positively as a tourist destination. Differences may be due to a lack of understanding in what Mississippi actually offers. According to Gunn (1998), those with negative perceptions are “heavily influenced by induced agents (e.g., independent reports,

media, advertisements, conversations, etc.)” that do not reflect accurate images of the state (Hallab & Kim, 2005, p. 394). Those with positive perceptions have developed unrefined images until they have experienced for themselves the offerings of Mississippi.

Literature Review

Fiscal Year 2011 – 2012

The Mississippi Development Authority (2010), which holds the lead in the state’s “economic and community development agency,” provides annual economic contribution reports for travel and tourism in the state of Mississippi (“Mississippi Development Authority”, para. 1). According to research performed by the Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Division (2012), the Mississippi Legislature budgeted “\$4.8 million for the purpose of supporting Mississippi Tourism Advertising and Promotion for Fiscal Year 2013” (Moor and Hyning, slide 4). Compared to travel and tourism FY 2011’s 82,000 direct jobs, FY 2012 is budgeting for 800 more direct statewide jobs, which are both an increase from the 78,485 direct jobs in FY 2010 (“Statistics”, slide 1). The state employs more and more people in the travel and tourism industry – an interesting increase of supply and demand in labor needed for the tourism industry to function. In 2012, there were a total of 20.8 million visitors, 73% of which were out-of-state in FY 2011 – a slight increase from the 19.5 million recorded in 2010, 78% of which were out-of-state – a 5% drop (summarized Moor and Hyning, 2012, “Statistics, slide 1,2).

Fiscal Year 2009 – 2010

According to “Travel and Tourism Fiscal Year 2010”, “Mississippi’s executive and legislative branches recognize that the Travel and Tourism area is a driving force in the state’s economic development efforts” and is “one of Mississippi’s largest export industries” that “directly affect[s] the entire state” with economic benefits (p. 4, 13). For Mississippi, an “estimated 19.5 million total visitors were recorded in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, which shows a 2.6% increase from FY 2009” (“Travel and Tourism Fiscal Year 2010”, p. 4). The “estimated portion of the Gross State Product (GSP)”, or measurement of the state’s economic production, increased from 4.0% in FY 2009 to 4.2% in FY 2010 (4). Under the “Visitor Profile Study”, an estimation of “19.5 million total visitors were recorded” to have spent a total of \$5.5 billion in FY 2010 (p. 17). 78% of the 19.5 million visitors were out-of-state visitors who “spent an estimated nearly \$4.8 billion in Mississippi, or 86.9% of the \$5.5 billion” (p. 13, 17). Continuing with these numbers, 84% were “reported as leisure travelers, or tourists; 8% business; and 7% personal business/other in FY 2010” (TNS, domestic visitation data provider via “Travel and Tourism FY 2010”, p. 17). Appendix D of the report shows that \$353,645,391 was Travel and Tourism’s General Fund for FY 2010 (p. 34). Considering these statistics, a significantly larger amount of revenue is continuously coming into the state for Mississippi tourism, further detailing how vital travel and tourism is in generating money. This research illuminates the strong relationship between travel and tourism and Mississippi economy.

Other

One source that reports on Mississippi's economy and tourism relationship is Zafar U. Ahmed's (1994) research, "Determination of the Components of a State's Tourist Image and Their Marketing Implications". Ahmed's work analyzes how an "actual and potential tourist's" image of a state "plays an important role in determining its competitiveness as a destination" (p. 56). He explores the problem statement "How is the tourist's decision to visit a particular state linked with the image of that state?" by conducting a "questionnaire mailed to a stratified random sample of 6,000 households in six arbitrarily determined geographical regions across the United States," and 1,917 questionnaires were used (Ahmed, 1994, p. 61-62). This questionnaire consisted of several parts which focused on basis attributes of a state's tourist image, specific information about the state of Utah, touring patterns, preferences, and attitudes of tourists, and demographic profile of the respondents (Ahmed, 1994). The results found the perceptions of each of the two groups to be significantly different from those in the other (Ahmed, 1994, p. 67). The "geographical affiliation does influence perceptions," specifically in the study about Utah as a tourist destination (Ahmed, p. 67).

A notable perception recorded by someone who has obtained both sides of the spectrum (living outside of Mississippi and living inside) comes from the author Daisey Karam-Read. For Karam-Read (2007), moving from New York to Mississippi was such a culture-shock that she records her personal experiences in her memoir *From Manhattan to Mississippi: A New Yorker Falls in Love with the South*. Karam-Read explains before her move to Mississippi in 1998, she "was the quintessential urbanite, and big city excitement was as necessary as oxygen" (p. 14). A typical "conversation with one who's

never been to Mississippi usually begins with the assumption that everything and everyone there is decades behind the times, benightedly entrenched in the values of the antebellum South” (p. 9). Karam-Read admits she was once such a person and “would never have guessed, for example, that Mississippi was the first state to grant property rights to women (in 1839) or the first to maintain a state-supported college for women in 1884” (p. 9). She reveals the key difference in hearing what Mississippi has to offer versus what Mississippi actually offers: “Living in Mississippi, however, yields a truer understanding ... It’s a state of enormous complexity, in which contradictions and ironies abound” (p. 9). She revels in Mississippi trivia and boasts that “Mississippi has produced more Miss Americas per capita than any other state” (p. 88), the voice of Shelby Foote in *The Civil War* documentary series is a great representation of the mesmerizing Mississippian twang (p. 80), here “there are no strangers – only unmet friends” (p. 67), “family and food” are “the fondest conversation topics” (p. 36), and “a big part of what makes living in Mississippi easy” is the restful feeling southerners give (p. 33). She explains, “Their hospitality, good manners, and lack of complaining all reflect the mental health of people native to these parts” (p. 32). These attractions define Mississippi and entice people from all around to come and experience for themselves the pleasant surprise of the real Mississippi.

Methodology

Population

Students attending The University of Mississippi, taking courses in the Nutrition and Hospitality Management Department, were the target subjects for this Qualtrics survey.

Instrument

The first questions of my survey dealt with identification standards including age, gender, academic level, followed by “Are you from Mississippi?”, “If so, what region of Mississippi?”, “Have you any experience with traveling in Mississippi and, if so, what experiences?”, etc. Subjects were then asked to rate on a Likert scale the areas of Mississippi as they perceive them to be: interesting and friendly people, beautiful scenery, good value for money, interesting historical attractions, suitable accommodations, appealing local cuisine, unpolluted/unspoiled environment, personal safety, good nightlife and entertainment, great beaches/water sports, good climate, attractive casinos, interesting cultural attractions, and quality of infrastructure. The scale ranges from "Offers very much" to "Offers very little".

This survey uses Hallab & Kim’s (2005) questions while adding “access to many state and national parks” and “enjoyable food and arts festivals” for a total of 16 items on the questionnaire. State and national parks are offered throughout the state of Mississippi, and participants’ perceptions on this particular tourism will offer insight for this research. Several food and arts festivals are offered in the Lafayette County area throughout the year. This category is asked in order to see if students consider them to be among Mississippi’s greatest attributes of the 16 listed. Once revised and created, this

survey was reviewed by a group of Nutrition and Hospitality Management Department faculty researchers for content validity. Please refer to Appendix 1 “Qualtrics Survey Software” for full survey.

Data Collection

Faculty members of the department made announcements to students in their courses encouraging them to voluntarily participate by clicking on the survey link sent via email by the professor. Follow up emails were sent out after weeks 1 and 2. Distribution instruments were emails containing links to the Qualtrics survey to students enrolled in classes.

Data Analysis

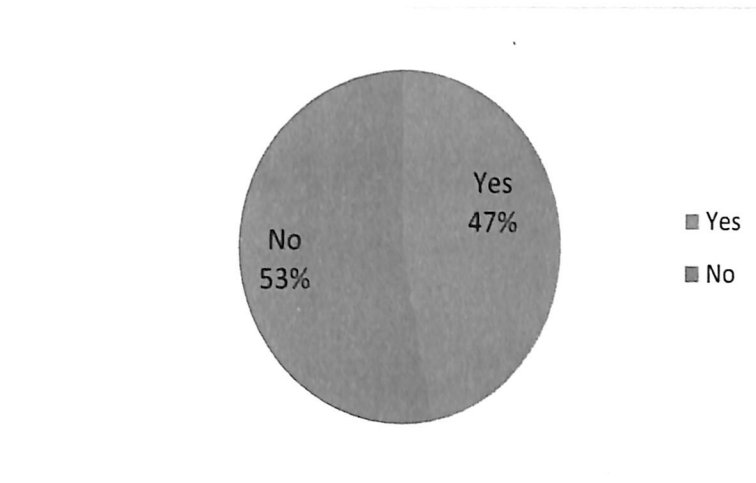
I analyzed the Qualtrics data for differences between the two groups and quantified the reasons for the varying view points. Using SPSS 17.0 Independent sample t tests were run to determine if any significant differences existed between the two group’s rankings of the 16 items.

Results

Demographics

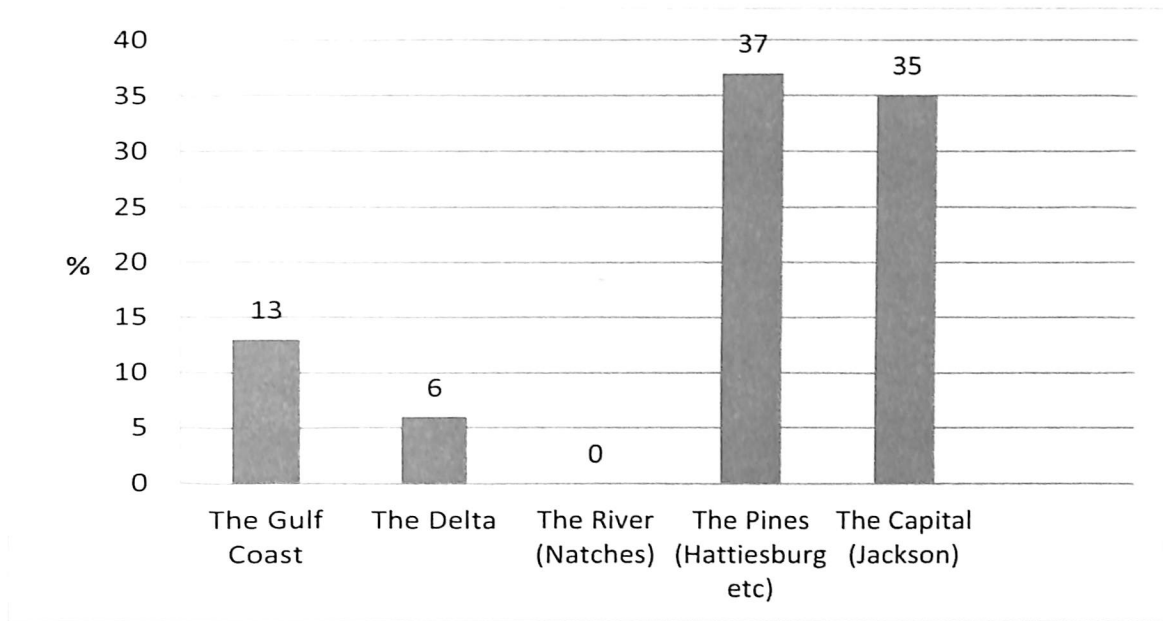
Out of the 242 participants who responded to the survey, 47% were from Mississippi, and 53% were from other primarily Southern states. For this study the other states were not broken out for analysis. Please refer to Graph 1: “Are you from Mississippi?”

Graph1: "Are you from Mississippi?"

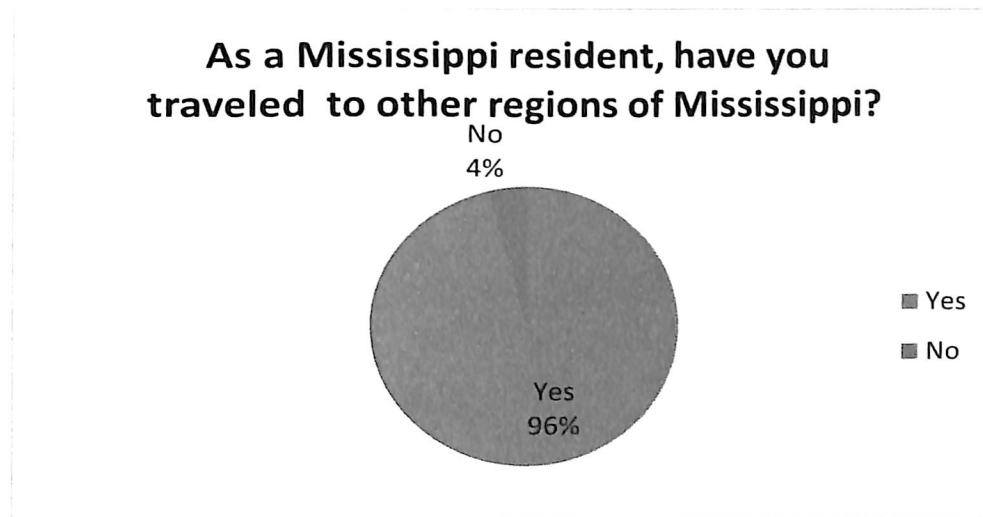


Of those from Mississippi, the highest percentage (37%) was from the Northern Hills, and close behind (35%) were from the Capital of Jackson. 13% reflected the Gulf Coast, 9% the Pines (Hattiesburg), and 6% the Delta. No test subjects responded to The River (Natchez) area. Please refer to Graph 2: "Which region of Mississippi are you from?" Of these Mississippi residents, 96% responded positively to traveling or visiting regions of Mississippi other than Oxford or their home town, with 4% answering no. Please refer to Graph 3: "As a Mississippi resident, have you ever traveled or visited regions of Mississippi other than Oxford or your hometown?"

Graph 2: “Which region of Mississippi are you from?”

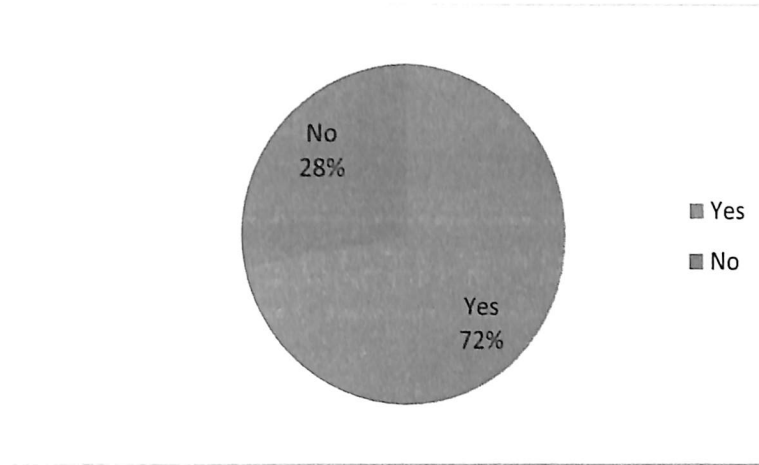


Graph 3: “As a Mississippi resident, have you ever traveled or visited regions of Mississippi other than Oxford or your hometown?”



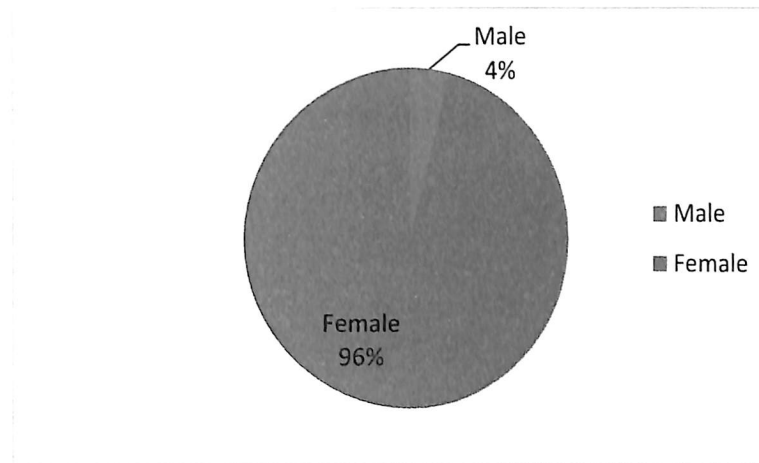
Seventy-two percent of 119 respondents (Mississippi residents and non-Mississippi residents) answered yes to traveling or visiting regions of Mississippi besides the University/Oxford area. Please see Chart 3: “Have you ever traveled other regions besides Oxford?”

Chart 3: "Have you ever traveled other regions besides Oxford?"



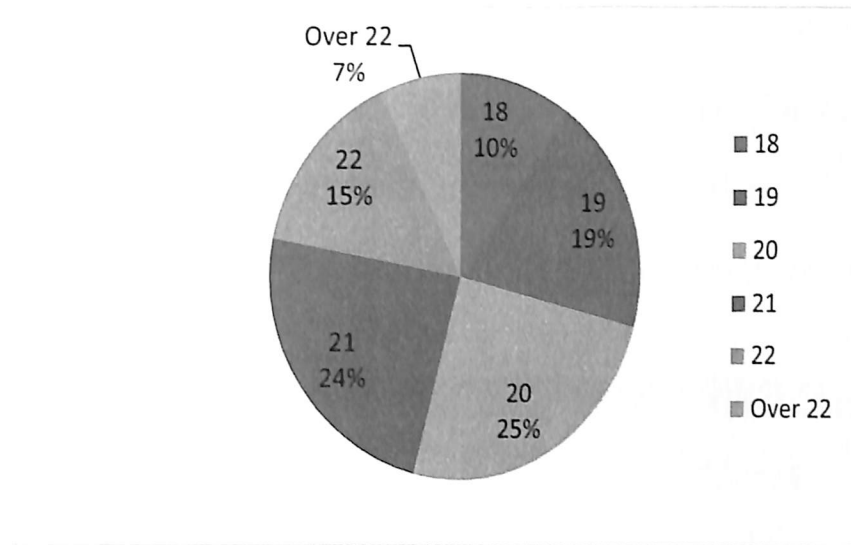
Accurately reflecting the gender of Nutrition and Hospitality Department, 96% of test subjects were female. Please see Graph 5: "What is your gender?" below.

Graph 5: "What is your gender?"



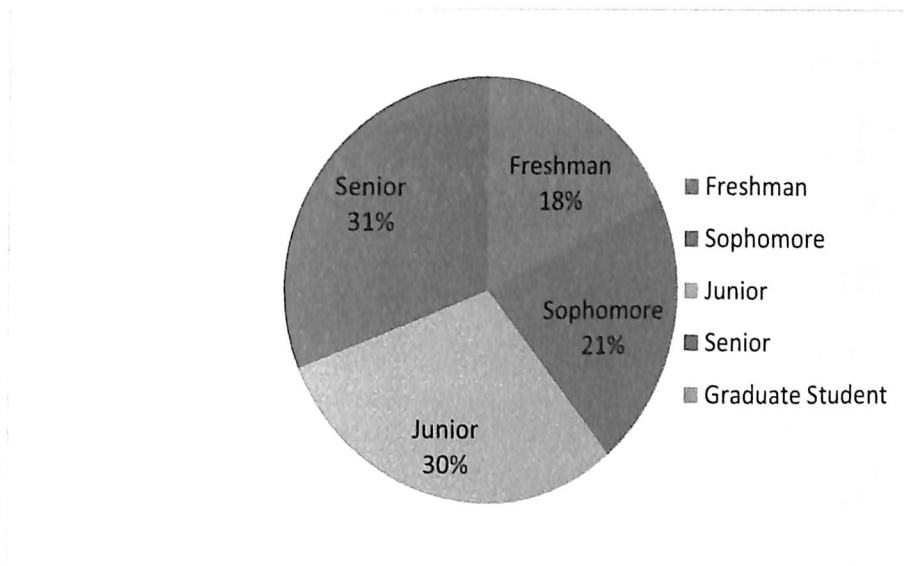
The age group distributions were: 18 years old (10%), 19 (19%), 20 (25%), 21 (24%), 22 (15%), and over 22 (7%). Graph 6: "What is your age?" is pictured below.

Graph 6: "What is your age?"



Academic levels reported were: Senior (31%), Juniors (30%), Sophomores (21%), Freshman (18%). Please refer to Graph 7: "What is your academic level?"

Graph 7: "What is your academic level?"

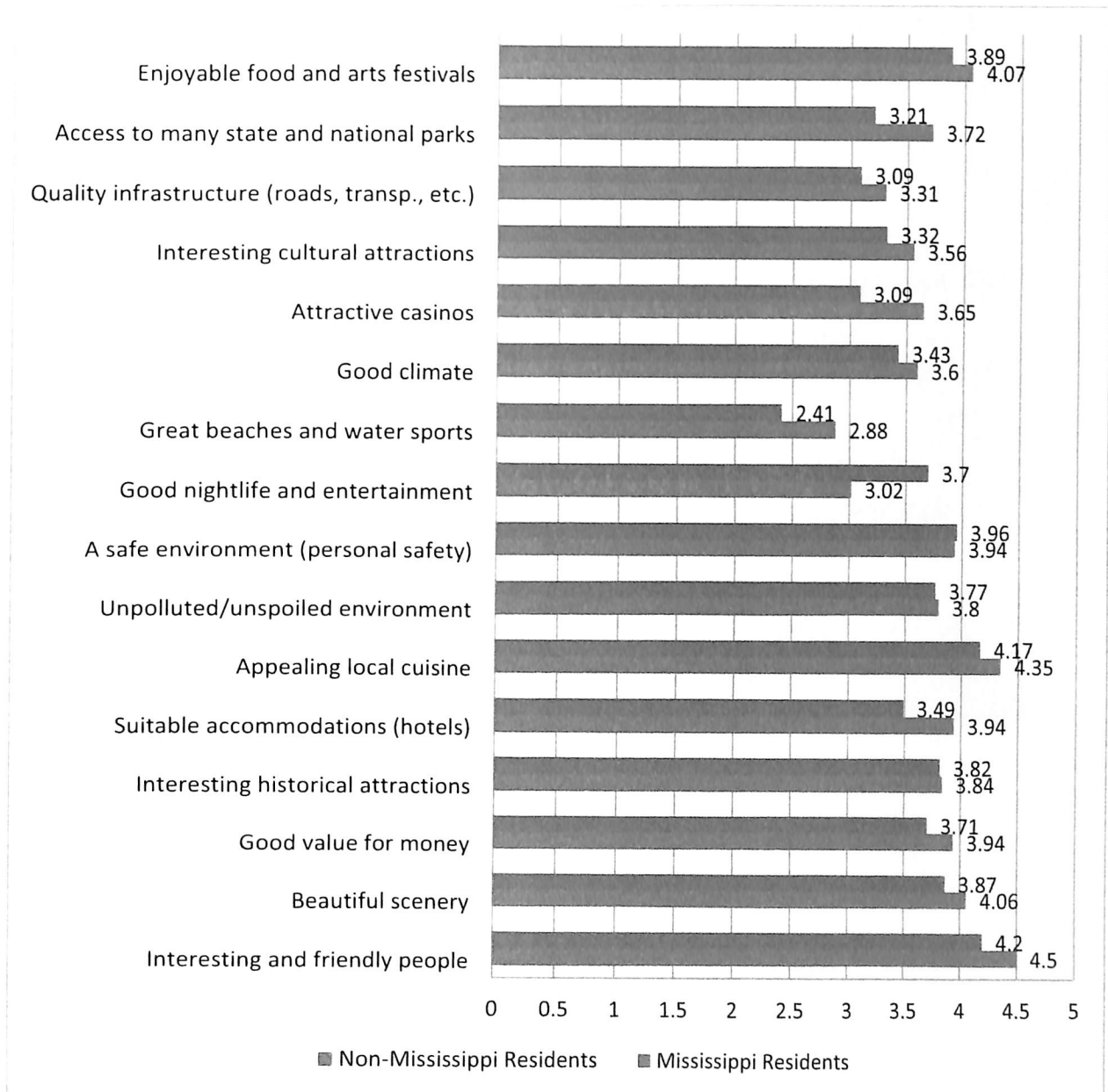


Psychographics

Following the demographics of the Qualtrics Survey, our participants were asked, "Based on your perceptions, please rate the state of Mississippi in respect to the amount of attractions and other aspects of tourism that are available to residents and visitors of

the state.” Independent samples t-tests were conducted on the sixteen tourism criteria to determine whether or not students from Mississippi perceived Mississippi tourism offerings differently from the students who were not from the state. See Graph 8: Mean Scores of All Mississippi and Non Mississippi Residents’ Perceptions.

Graph 8: Mean Scores of All Mississippi and Non Mississippi Residents’ Perceptions



Six of the sixteen tests were significant. Mean scores showed that students from Mississippi rated all but one of the criteria higher than the students not from the state.

Criteria rated higher by student from Mississippi were interesting and friend people, suitable accommodations (hotels), great beaches and water sports, attractive casinos, and access to many state and national parks. The criteria rated higher by students not from Mississippi were good nightlife and entertainment. See Graph 9: Significant Mean Scores below. The significance levels are further shown through SPSS 17.0 Independent Sample t tests. See Table: “Independent Sample t tests” for significant levels.

Graph 9: Significant Mean Scores

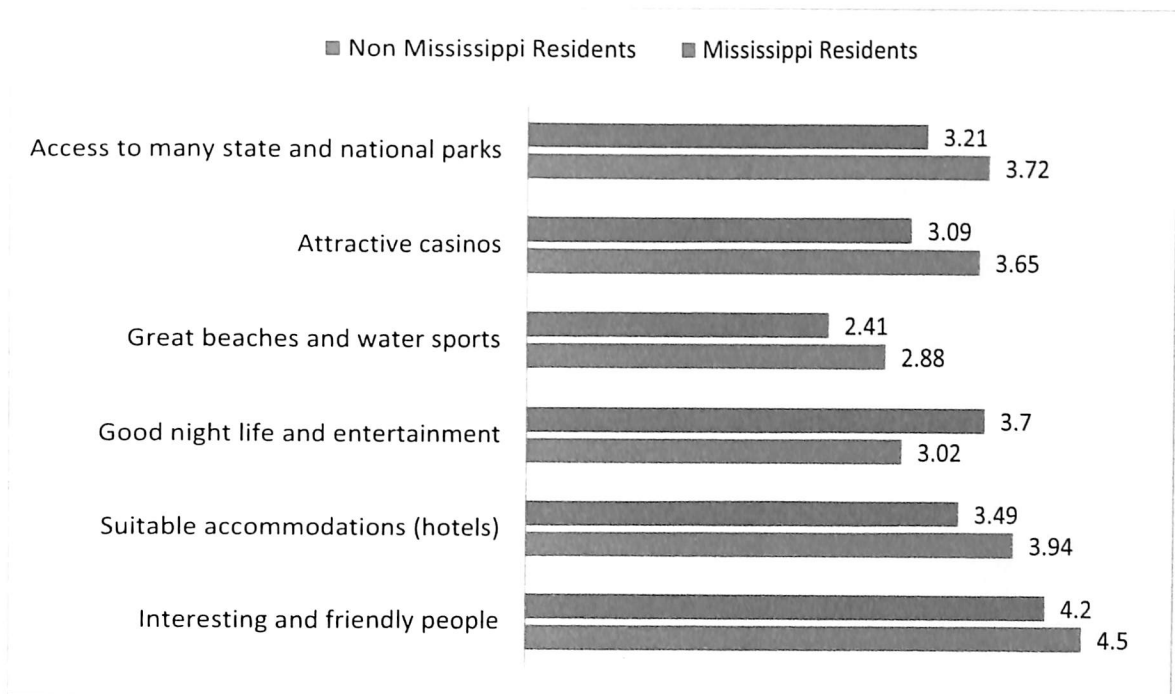


Table 1: Independent Sample t-tests

Question 1: Interesting and friend people t(225) = 2.80, p = .005
Questions 5: Suitable accommodations (hotels) t(225) = 3.59, p=.000
Question 9: Good nightlife and entertainment t(225) = -4.50, p=.000
Question 10: Great beaches and water sports t(224) = 3.12, p=.002
Question 12: Attractive Casinos t(223) = 3.77, p=.000
Question 15: Access to many state and national parks t(225) = 3.83, p=.000

Discussion

The data collected indicates significant differences in 6 of the 16 questions asked of our Mississippi and Non-Mississippi residents. The results supported my hypothesis that the two groups differ in their perceptions of Mississippi as a tourist destination in certain areas.

Hallab and Kim's "findings revealed that, overall, Mississippi's attributes of interesting and friendly people, beautiful scenery, good value for money, and interesting historical attractions" all "earned top ratings from participants" (2005, p. 399). The 2 groups they focused on were those "who have been to Mississippi and those who have not" (p. 398). My recommendations differ with Hallab and Kim's in that "It may be beneficial for actual tourists to be shown in advertisements and brochures enjoying the above-mentioned features and conveying a favorable vision of them". It seems that too often in Mississippi, we rely on word-of-mouth advertising to make or break a business. I find this tactic unrealistic as well as a big mistake. Hallab and Kim add to their study an

additional exploration factor that better advertising “may [also] aid the destination to succeed in its attempt to draw previous visitors’ attention and therefore boost the possibility for a revisit”. While revisitation is not covered in my research, it is another factor worth considering for Mississippi’s tourism department. Regardless of revisitation, more efficient and effective advertising is a solution proposed by Hallab and Kim as well as by me.

I searched two more areas that Hallab and Kim did not include in their survey. These two questions included “access to many state and national parks” and “enjoyable food and arts festivals”. A study prepared by Bobby King Associates, Incorporated in May of 2006 reported on the “Cultural and Heritage Tourism in the Lafayette County, Oxford, and University” (L-O-U). This area of tourism includes food and arts festivals:

Within the L-O-U community there are numerous organizations and institutions that have strong cultural and heritage agendas already in place including the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council and the recently opened Powerhouse Community Arts Center, the University of Mississippi, particularly the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts, the Southern Foodways Alliance and the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, the Oxford-Lafayette County Heritage Foundation, the Oxford-Lafayette Country Development Foundation with its nationally acclaimed Retiree Attraction Program and the City of Oxford’s Tourism Council and its support for the highly acclaimed Double Decker Festival (Bobby King Associates, Inc., 2006, p. 24).

While assessing this type of tourism, recommendations were given to L-O-U to help expand and maintain success in attracting visitors to the area. An “on line survey” should be designed and “promoted through the media as well as direct mail and internet communication” in “both the Hills and Delta travel regions”. By doing this, “this information should prove useful in helping to develop both partnerships and programs on a larger than local level”. My survey results show that Mississippi residents, with a mean score of 4.07, and Non-Mississippi residents, with a mean score of 3.89, ranked the “enjoyable food and arts festivals” category in the top half over all other categories. Since test subjects are students at the University of Mississippi, the L-O-U community must significantly contribute to this favorability. Promotional advertising will help continue our success in this section of tourism.

The other added question to the Qualtrics survey was “access to many state and national parks.” This category was among the 6 significant mean scores for Mississippi residents, who rated this with a 3.72 mean score, versus Non-Mississippi residents, who rated this with 3.21 mean score. The t tests reported 3.83, showing a high level of difference. According to Ms.gov, Mississippi’s Official State Website, Mississippi offers 32 state and national parks (2012). Mississippi has 25 state parks and 7 national parks (Ms.gov, 2012). Oxford does not have any state or national parks available, therefore the non-Mississippi residents are not exposed to this tourism while attending the university. There is very little if any advertising for state and national parks in Lafayette County.

Those not from Mississippi reported a score of 3.09, whereas those from Mississippi scored a 3.65 for favoring “attractive casinos” in the state. While Tunica is approximately 76 miles from Oxford, there is no advertising for the Tunica casinos in the

Oxford/University area. Only Mississippians realize the majority of our casino locations and offerings. As Hallab and Kim offer, I suggest also that “destination and casino officials may need to show more details (interior and exterior) when it comes to advertising Mississippi’s casinos. This will, hopefully, enhance the individual’s induced image of the state in regard to such an attribute.” Advertising the infrastructure and Delta landscaping may be helpful in showing the attractiveness of the scenery, as well as that of the buildings. Inside eating facilities and gaming areas could be enhanced with intense photography for pamphlets and billboards, which would favorably draw more fans and visitors to the attractive casinos.

Mississippi boasts many beaches and opportunities for water sports. Those from Mississippi had a mean score of 2.88, and those not from Mississippi scored 2.41. Thirteen percent of participants reported being from the coastal area of Mississippi. This group of students likely contributes greatly to the desirability of this area of Mississippi tourism. It would perhaps be beneficial to advertise coastal areas more intensely in the Northern parts of Mississippi. The drive time to the coast of our state is less than that of the drive to the most highly advertised coastal areas of nearby states. This would likely appeal to every demographic.

Non-Mississippi residents attending the University of Mississippi have reported an agreement that Mississippi “offers very many” to “good nightlife and entertainment”. With a mean score of 3.70 by Non-Mississippians, and a score of 3.02 by Mississippi residents was documented for this tourism category. This is likely because the University/Oxford area heavily advertises concerts, bars, alcoholic beverages, and late night entertainment. Several websites, including Aroundtown-oxford.com, and

Clubplanet.com/us/Oxford-Mississippi are devoted to advertising nightlife specials in the Oxford area. The University of Mississippi was ranked number three party school by Princeton Review in "376 Best Colleges - 2012 Edition." (Castens, 2012).

Those not from Mississippi recorded a mean score of 3.49 with Mississippi's suitable accommodations, whereas Mississippi residents recorded 3.94. Mississippi is a mostly rural state and simply not as modern as other more urban states. Those subjects from out of state compare Mississippi accommodations to their either home state or other states they have traveled to and find Mississippi below par. I determine this to be a negative opinion of Mississippi's hospitality, however, I believe that if subjects were asked about service alone in these accommodations, we would see a much more complimentary response. Mississippi hospitality is one of a kind and the attraction to those outside the state. Those from the state are comfortable and content in the lodging, perhaps because they are closer to home.

Non-Mississippians gave "Interesting and friendly people" a 4.2 and Mississippi residents gave this a 4.5, making this category the highest favorable category for both residential groups out of the total 16 questions. As stated in the introduction, the people of Mississippi can be counted as an attraction, because they are well-known for their southern hospitality.

Conclusion

More advertising is in Mississippi's best interest for tourism growth. This research heavily points to the fact that Non-Mississippians do not favor Mississippi tourism as much as Mississippi natives do. This appears to be because non-

Mississippians are not exposed to the numerous varieties of destination offerings here. In the following example, the Internet is the resource tool helping out a bed and breakfast. In a January 2013 *DeSoto Times Tribune* article entitled, "MS Bed and Breakfast Association optimistic, emphasizes Internet", Tim Summers, JR. reports on Ronald Fry, president of the Bed and Breakfast Association of Mississippi (Summers JR., 2013, p. 2). Fry explains that the basic objective of the association is to grow tourism to the state, while enhancing guest experience. The organization's goal for the next five years is "to see their growth reach around 30 percent," because, "in the last year they reported growth of about 10 percent", despite the economic slump affecting other sectors of the business world" (p. 7). One establishment in particular, The Columns bed and breakfast in Tunica, succeeds in "using the Internet to make a clear statement, a differentiation from the giant sprawling casino complexes" that they find is their biggest competition. As the owner Charles Hailey explains, "Pretty much, we just put ourselves out there" (p. 7). This further asserts the imperativeness of advertising for tourism facilities to be successful in the state of Mississippi.

The research results recommend Mississippi to continue their efforts with the destinations rated highly by participants. However, marketers and promoters in Mississippi should advertise more of Mississippi's offering to appeal to out-of-state tourists. This is particularly true in a town such as Oxford, Mississippi where students attend the university from around the country and internationally. By presenting Mississippi's resources with more publicized marketing, both Mississippi residents and non-Mississippi residents will visit the state's offerings and help grow her economy for even more tourism sights to arise and flourish.

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Default Question Block

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The survey is designed to collect students' perceptions of Mississippi in regards to its tourism industry. You will also be asked for some general demographic data. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely optional and voluntary. If at any time you wish to discontinue taking the survey, you may do so. This survey has been approved by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Tanya Ruetzler at Ruetzler@olemiss.edu or 662-915-7805. Thank you again for your time.

Are you from Mississippi?

- Yes
- No

Which region of Mississippi are you from?

- The Gulf Coast
- The Delta
- The River (Natchez)
- The Hills (North)
- The Pines (Hattiesburg etc.)
- The Capital (Jackson)

What state are you from?

- Alabama
- Georgia
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Other (please specify)

As a Mississippi resident, have you ever traveled or visited other regions of Mississippi other than Oxford or your home town?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever traveled or visited other regions of Mississippi besides the University/Oxford area?

- Yes
- No

If yes, which areas of Mississippi or which attractions in Mississippi have you visited? Please list all areas or attractions visited.

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your age?

- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- Over 22 (please specify)

What is your academic level?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate student

Based on your perceptions, please rate the state of Mississippi in respect to the amount of attractions and other aspects of tourism that are available to residents and visitors of the state. Please use a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "offers very little" and 5 being "offers very much".

	Offers very little 1	2	Offers some 3	4	Offers very much 5
Interesting and friendly people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beautiful scenery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good value for money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interesting historical attractions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Suitable accommodations (hotels)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appealing local cuisine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unpolluted/unspoiled environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A safe environment (personal safety)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good nightlife and entertainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Great beaches and water sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good climate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attractive casinos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interesting cultural attractions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality infrastructure (roads, transportation, water/sewage etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to many state and national parks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enjoyable food and arts festivals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thinking about the experiences you have had in Mississippi (in Oxford and other regions if applicable), what tourism attractions/areas of hospitality do you feel need the most improvement (ie attractions, restaurants, hotels etc)?