

VISITOR EXPERIENCES AT EAGLE DAYS IN MISSOURI

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Master of Science

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By

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

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# Visitor Experiences at Eagle Days in Missouri

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## ABSTRACT

Eagle Days are series of organized wildlife viewing events that were created by the Missouri Department of Conservation to increase public awareness about bald eagles and their declining populations. Although Eagle Days have been held across Missouri since the winter of 1978-1979, only one formal study has been conducted on these events and it was after the first year. The purpose of this research is to evaluate visitors' perceptions of Eagle Days events in Missouri using the experience economy paradigm. During the winter of 2008-2009 on site surveys were conducted at 3 of the Eagle Days events (Smithville, Chain of Rocks, and Springfield). Independent samples t-tests were used to measure the viewing experience of, males and females; repeat and first time visitors; visitors who traveled shorter distances versus those traveling longer distances; groups with and without children; and visitors who spent a longer period of time at the event verses those who spent a shorter amount of time. Significant ( $p < .05$ ) were found differences between males and females as well as between visitors who spent a longer period of time at the event versus those who spent a shorter amount of time at Eagle Days. These findings provide some useful insights into Eagle Days for managers to consider in planning and marketing these events for visitors.



## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

In 1782, there were approximately 100,000 nesting pairs of bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) in the United States when the bird was adopted as America's national symbol. By 1963, this number had been reduced to less than 500 breeding pairs in the lower 48 states (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2007a; USFWS, 2008a). Due to several factors, decreases in the bald eagle population probably began in the late 1800's. Public misconception that these birds were a threat to domestic livestock played a major role in their population decline (USFWS, 2007a). Subsequently, farmers and ranchers shot many eagles and other large raptors to protect their livestock. Another factor which led to the decrease in eagle populations was habitat loss. Since eagles have specific habitat requirements, most nests are located within a half mile of water where fish and waterfowl are readily available. These areas are often affected by logging, mining, road construction wetland filling, as well as residential and industrial development (Sibley, 2001).

Congress responded to the population decline of bald eagles in 1940 by creating the Bald Eagle Protection Act. This law prohibited the taking, selling or possession of an eagle or any of its body parts. To "take" as described by the act includes pursuing, shooting, shooting at, poisoning, wounding, killing, capturing, trapping, collecting, molesting, or disturbing. The Bald Eagle Protection Act was expanded in 1962 to include golden eagles and renamed the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Legislators increased penalties for violating the act and law enforcement measures were strengthened in 1972.

Although legislation favored, the bald eagle, their population continued to decline as dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) was introduced as an agricultural and disease control pesticide during World War II (EPA, 2008). DDT washed into waterways and was absorbed by aquatic plants and fish. Bald eagles prey upon waterfowl and shore birds, but their primary food sources are fish and carrion (Sibley, 2001). Subsequently, bald eagles ate fish and waterfowl that had been contaminated by this chemical. DDT caused fragile eggshells, thus making them unable to withstand the birds' weight during incubation. In addition to being harmful to wildlife, DDT is dangerous to human health. Possible concerns of human exposure to this chemical include damage to the liver, nervous and reproductive systems (EPA, 2008). Rachel Carson brought the dangerous effects of DDT to public attention in her book *Silent Spring*, published in 1962. This important literary work prompted the Environmental Protection Agency's 1972 ban the use of DDT in the United States (EPA, 1972).

In addition to the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, bald eagles below the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel were declared protected in 1967 under the Endangered Species Act of 1966. This act was passed as a way to list native animal species as endangered, while providing them with the protection needed until they can recover. Congress amended the act in 1969 to prohibit the importation and sale of species in danger of extinction.

In 1973, a new Endangered Species Protection Act was passed by Congress. Its purpose was to provide a means of protecting the ecosystems associated with threatened and endangered species of fish, wildlife, and plants. As defined by Congress in 1973, threatened species means "any species which is likely to become an endangered species

within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range” (Endangered Species Act of 1973).

In 1978, bald eagles were listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Designation as an endangered species allows for the creation of extensive recovery efforts for bald eagles such as captive breeding programs, law enforcement efforts, and protection of nesting sites (USFWS, 2007a). In 1995, bald eagles were reclassified as threatened since their numbers continued to rise (9,789 breeding pairs in 2006); (USFWS, 2008a). See Figure 1. With continued population increases, bald eagles were removed from the endangered species list in June, 2007. Presently the bald eagle is not listed as endangered or threatened. However, these birds are still protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (USFWS, 2007a).

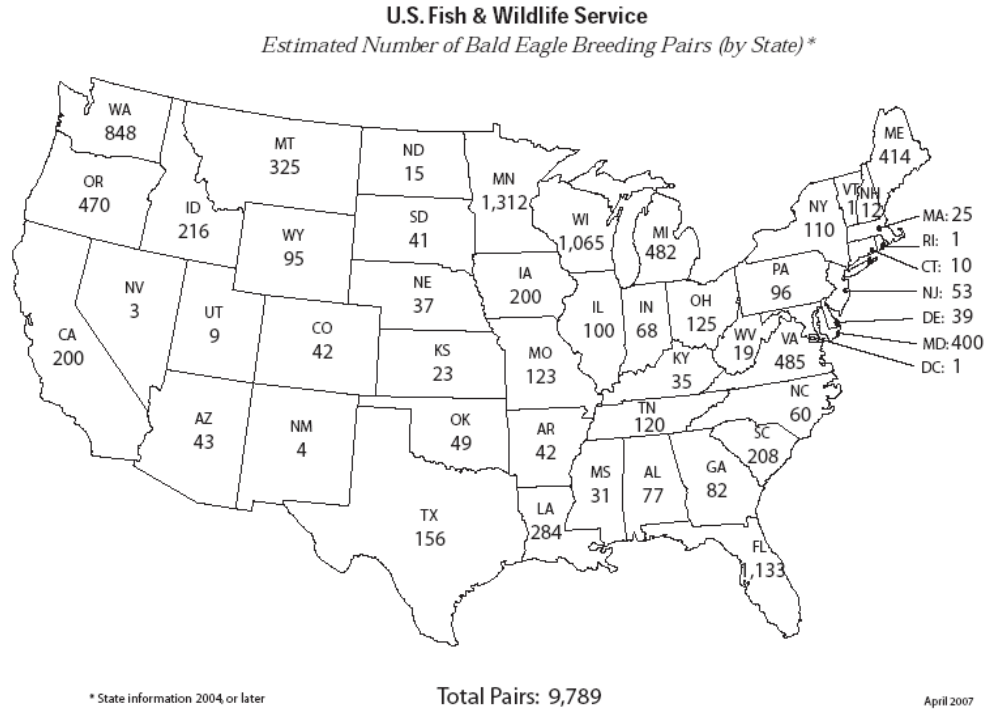


Figure 1: Bald Eagle breeding pairs by state (USFWS, 2007b)

The trends in Missouri bald eagle populations have been consistent with nationwide figures. Their numbers have increased significantly from 11 nesting pairs in 1990 to 123 in 2004. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) assisted in the bald eagle's recovery by enforcing the laws enacted by Congress and helping with repopulation efforts. For example, 74 immature bald eagles were released into the wild throughout Missouri between 1981 and 1990 as a cooperative effort between U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Dickerson Park Zoo in Springfield, Missouri (MDC, 2007).

### *Eagle Days*

As a result of declining bald eagle populations, MDC created Eagle Days, a series of organized events for the public to view these birds in the wild. Eagle Days have been continuously operating since the winter of 1978-1979 and serve several purposes: 1) to increase public awareness of Missouri's bald eagles; 2) to present factual information about eagles; 3) to provide enjoyable wildlife viewing experiences; 4) to make the public aware of the status of bald eagles and what can be done to protect them (Maupin, Witter, & Bassett, 1980). All of the events include presentations with captive eagles to give visitors a chance to see a live bird up close. Presumably, this element adds to visitors' wildlife viewing experience.

Maupin, Witter, and Bassett (1980) surveyed visitors at the 1978-79 Eagle Day events found that about 90% attended simply to see an eagle (over half the visitors reported that they had never seen one before). Participants were also asked about their enjoyment of these events using the following question, "Which one of the following best describes your feelings toward EAGLE DAY?" Almost 96% of visitors found the events to be very enjoyable (32% of them said that Eagle Days was "one of the most enjoyable

wildlife viewing days I've ever had"). In addition, the survey revealed over three-fourths of participants got close enough to an eagle to satisfy their interests. Participants were also asked about other wildlife recreation activities: 79% fed birds at home, 67% were anglers, 32% were hunters, 24% photographed birds, 11% maintained bird lists, and 26% belonged to at least one wildlife interest group. (Witter et al., 1980).

### Need for Study

Although MDC has conducted Eagle Days for 29 years, there has been only one formal evaluation of these events and that was after the first year. This situation represents a unique opportunity to study participants at Eagle Days and measure their wildlife viewing experience. Anecdotal evidence from MDC staff suggests that the public seems to enjoy these events and that many of them are repeat participants. However, updated visitor information is needed, especially since the bald eagle was removed from the Endangered Species list in 2007. In addition this is a unique opportunity to apply experience economy to a leisure setting.

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to evaluate visitors' perception of Eagle Days events in Missouri using the experience economy paradigm.

### Subproblems

This survey contained some demographic questions to characterize visitors: gender, zip code, ethnicity, and possible disabilities. Additional questions collected information on satisfaction, bird watching skills. This study also evaluated the amount of time spent at Eagle Days.

## Hypothesis

This study will test the following hypotheses:

H1: Male and female visitors will have the same type of wildlife viewing experience at Eagle Days.

H2: There are no differences in the wildlife viewing experiences of repeat and first time visitors at Eagle Days.

H3: Visitors who traveled shorter distances to Eagle Days will have the same wildlife viewing experience as those traveling longer distances.

H4: Visitors with children in their group will have the same type of wildlife viewing experience at Eagle Days as those attending the event without children.

H5: There are no differences in the wildlife viewing experiences of visitors who spent a longer period of time at Eagle Days as compared to those who spent a shorter amount of time.

## Delimitations

This study was delimited to Eagle Days visitors, (age 18 and over) at Smithville Lake, Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, and Springfield in Missouri during the winter of 2008-2009, using an on-site survey.

## Limitations

- Visitors may have completed their survey during the wildlife viewing experience rather than at the end as instructed.
- It was not possible to survey every visitor at the events, but an attempt was made to ask as many visitors as possible at each location. This was a purposive, not a random sample.

- The initial goal was to survey visitors at each of the seven Eagle Days events in Missouri. However, permission was denied at Mingo, Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuges, and at Clarksville.
- Most of the visitors saw at least one bald eagle in the wild, but this item was not measured on the questionnaire.

### Definitions

The following terms are used through this study:

*Endangered Species*: is any species that is in danger of extinction in all or a significant portion of its range (Endangered Species Act of 1973).

*Threatened species*: is “any species which is likely to become and endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range” (Endangered Species Act of 1973).

*Experience*: Experiences are inter actions that “inherently personal, existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level” (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

*Experience Economy*: Is the movement away from the product or service as the item sought by consumers to an economy that is focused on the experience surrounding the product or service (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

#### *Wildlife Viewing*

Various aspects of wildlife viewing experiences have been studied, including the social and biological issues related to participation. Finkler and Higham (2004) studied the impacts of whale watching in the San Juan Islands off the coast of Washington. Two different visitor groups were examined: those who watched whales from boats and those who observed from land-based platforms. Each group of visitors were surveyed after their viewing experience was completed. The authors found that both the land and boat-based visitors were concerned about boats maneuvering into the path of whales. Almost three-fourths (74%) of the land-based visitors and over half (54%) of the boat-based whale watchers thought that boat noise was a disturbance. Perceptions also differed between the two groups in relation to boat traffic affecting the safety of whales (73% of land-based versus 56% of the boat-based watchers). As a whole, results of this study found more concern among land-based than boat-based whale watchers regarding visitor caused disturbances. Perhaps this level of concern can be explained by the presence of too many boats, according to land-based visitors.

Orams's (2000) evaluation sought to identify the factors that influenced whale-watching enjoyment. Author found that there was a high level of visitor satisfaction of the viewing experience, primarily due to the presence of whales. Contrary to the assumptions of operators and regulators, proximity to whales was mentioned infrequently (n=23, 4%) as a way to improve the wildlife viewing experience. While the presence of whales had an impact on satisfaction, there were additional factors that affected



enjoyment, including boat design, positioning of the boat, crowding, length of trip, and commentary about the whales. In addition, some visitors reported satisfaction with their trip even when no whales were seen, as evidenced by statements such as “even though we did not see a whale the crew made the trip enjoyable and entertaining” (p. 565).

Neil, Orams, and Baglioni (1996) reported differences between repeat and first time whale watchers. The authors found that visitors who had been whale watching previously were more knowledgeable about them and had more reasonable expectations about the types of whale behavior as compared with novices. They also found evidence that visitors’ enjoyment of the experience was more esthetic and emotional, instead of intellectual.

Montag, Patterson, and Freimund (2005) evaluated wolf viewing experiences in Yellowstone National Park using participant interviews, surveys, and direct observations. The authors found that visitors were willing to devote more time to wolf viewing in the study area than in other locations, such as zoos, where sightings were more likely. In addition, they found that visitors who did not see a wolf still reported positive experiences. The authenticity of the experience, landscape, opportunity to view other wildlife, and tangible evidence of wolves (such as tracks, scat, and howling) contributed to a positive experience, even without seeing a live animal. Many visitors perceived their wolf viewing experience to be authentic and that they were part of the experience. These perceptions were shown in statements like “it’s neat to see a wolf or animals in a zoo just for educational purposes, but it’s so artificial. And I think it’s so importation to come into their world and see them in their world, not our world” (p. 277).

Hammitt, Dulin, and Wells (1993) evaluated the quality of wildlife viewing in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park using the satisfaction model which had been tested in other outdoor recreation settings. This model suggests an inverse relationship between visitor satisfaction and the number of people using an area (Hammitt et al., 1993). In this study, the quality of wildlife viewing experiences were described as a function of: species availability, visual encounters, expectations and beliefs toward wildlife encounters, relative importance of certain species, and visitor attempts to enhance wildlife viewing.

Hammitt et al. (1993) collected data for this study through brief interviews with visitors at Cades Cove - a popular tourist destination in the park that contains an abundance of wildlife. In addition to onsite interviews, respondents were given a mailback survey. The questionnaire contained four sections: 1) visitor characteristics and motivations, 2) expectations about the number and species of animals seen and beliefs about the species and number of animals they actually saw, 3) the importance of seeing particular species and numbers of animals and, 4) visitor behavior during wildlife viewing. Also noted was a difference in the quality of viewing experiences between first time visitors and repeat visitors based on their expectations. The authors concluded that several variables influenced the quality of wildlife viewing: expectations about the total number of animals seen and number of types of animals seen, beliefs about the number of white-tailed deer and black bears seen, stopping the car to observe wildlife, and the use of binoculars or telescopes to view wildlife (Hammitt et al., 1993).

A study conducted by Manfredo and Larson (1993) in Colorado identified wildlife-viewing experience typologies using an Experience Based Management

approach. Their goal was to provide a baseline for managers to evaluate and allocate resources according to the types of experiences desired by visitors. The authors were able to identify four types of experiences based on visitors' reasons for participation, additional activities, and preferred settings. These categories were: 1) High Involvement Experience; 2) Creativity Experience; 3) Generalists Experience; and 4) Occasionalist Experience. These typologies were developed using preference ratings of favored recreation opportunities comprising a mix of: 1) valued psychological outcomes resulting from recreation engagements; 2) activities occurring while on a recreation outing, and 3) the type of setting (physical resources, social conditions and management activities) required for activity achievement and experience (Manfredo & Larson, 1993).

Schanzel and McIntosh (2000) evaluated visitor experiences at the Penguin Place conservation reserve in New Zealand. This reserve offers guided tours that included an informational talk about penguins and an opportunity to see the colony. A series of trenches and blinds allowed visitors to get fairly close to the penguins, thus causing minimal disturbances. Afterwards, 40 semi-structured interviews with international visitors were conducted to gain insight into the experiential aspects of penguin viewing.

The natural setting was found to enhance the experience due to unanticipated wildlife sightings and observing penguin behavior in the wild. The most reported comment was "enjoyment of viewing wildlife in their natural environment" (Schanzel & McIntosh, 2000). Benefits from their "unique" wildlife experience included increased knowledge, awareness, pleasure, and environmental awareness. In addition, the authors found specific emotions that were essential to the experience such as pleasure, curiosity, privilege, amazement, and fascination. These findings suggest that wildlife viewing was

more “sensory complex” than previously thought. The authors found that visitors who were dissatisfied with their wildlife viewing experience had unrealistic expectations about it. This discrepancy was probably a result of advertising.

Stalmaster and Kaiser (1997) studied the effects of recreational activities on wintering bald eagles at the Skagit River Bald Eagle Natural Area in northwest Washington. Recreationists were sub-divided into three categories: those on fishing boats, those on eagle viewing boats, and those on foot. The behavior of eagles was grouped into four categories which included: on-river perching (perched on trees < 50 m from the river), off-river perching (perched in trees >50m from the river), roosting (eagles at the Barnaby communal roost), and eagles on gravel bars (standing or feeding). Eagle reactions were classified as: flushing response (whether or not the eagles flushed from recreationists or not), flushing distance (distance between the recreationists when flushing occurred), and displacement flight distance (distance eagles flew after flushing). Estimates of eagles in the area were made and compared to the number of disturbances caused by recreational activities.

In addition to the observational study, Stalmaster and Kaiser (1997) conducted an on-site survey to determine perceived impacts on the eagles. The study found that the number of eagles perching on-river and feeding or standing on the riverbank decreased exponentially with increased recreational activity, while the number of eagles roosting and perching did not change (Stalmaster & Kaiser, 1997). The flushing response of eagles was most prominent in relation to foot traffic. Viewing boats were found to be less intrusive as compared with to fishing boats. Visitors thought that 4-11% of the eagles in trees and 8-25% on the ground flushed as a result of their presence, as compared with 15-

64% and 63-95% that were actually observed in the study. Boaters perceived that they flushed more eagles compared to the foot traffic, which is opposite of what the data suggested (Stalmaster & Kaiser, 1997).

Steidl and Anthony (2000) conducted an experiment to measure of the effect of human activity (i.e., camping) on the nesting behavior of bald eagles. The study observed the reactions of bald eagles from camps at 500 feet (control) and those at 200 feet (treatment). The authors found that during the treatment period, eagles decreased the amount of time they spent on activities to ensure the success of their nestlings, such as feeding (30%), preening (52.6%), sleeping (55.7%), and maintaining nests (49.8%). Eagles increased the amount of time spent on protective behaviors like brooding (13.8%). The amount of vocalizations increased during the treatment periods over the control by 307% per day as compared to the control. Interestingly, the treatment effect decreased as the observation period progressed, thus showing evidence that the eagles became habituated to the presence of humans. Moreover, there were no differences in the treatment effect in areas with frequent human activity.

Wildlife viewing activities are a form of leisure experience. Leisure experience itself has been studied for years and a vast number of techniques have been used in its evaluation.

### *Leisure Experience*

According to Tinsley & Tinsley (1986), leisure experiences contain several elements such as: 1) freely chosen, 2) intrinsically satisfying, 3) optimally arousing 4) requiring a sense of commitment. Three of these four attributes were supported by Tinsley, Hinson, Tinsley, and Holt (1993) who compared memorable and common

leisure experiences to each other and work. This study supported all the factors previously listed, except for sense of commitment. The feeling of freedom was mentioned by 13% of participants. Intrinsic motivation was reported by more than 60% of individuals and 58% mentioned optimal arousal.

In a qualitative study, Gunter (1987) identified eight properties of leisure experiences: 1) sense of separation, 2) freedom of choice, 3) feeling of pleasure, 4) spontaneity, 5) timelessness, 6) fantasy, 7) sense of adventure, and 8) self-realization. These aspects were revealed through essays written by university students describing their single, most memorable leisure experience and a second essay of their most common and meaningful type of leisure experience during daily life.

Mannell (1980) described leisure as having a “mental experience.” Mental experiences have a “private” quality, which refers to the moods, emotions, perceptions, memories, beliefs, and attitudes that comprise an individual’s stream of consciousness. This explanation for leisure suggests that a cognitive approach to study these experiences would be reasonable. A cognitive approach would evaluate internal (beliefs, emotions, expatiations) and external (social groups, social structures, main-made environments) factors that contribute to the meaning, quality duration, intensity, and memorable nature of leisure experiences. Mannell also looked at using experimental methods to study leisure experiences, suggesting that knowledge has been gained from using this methodology. Several researchers have concluded that freedom is an element of leisure (Gunter, 1987; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986; Tinsley et al., 1993), and that it is important to consider the location in which the study is taking place since settings can affect the

experience (Mannell, 1980). While some control over the environment maybe lost in naturalistic settings, field experiments can be conducted there.

Knutson, Beck, Kim & Cha (2006) point out that there are several elements of experiences. First, a person must get involved or participate in some way. Second, experiences are internal and therefore unique to each individual. Their survey sought to identify the factors that were important in consumer experiences, to improve hospitality managers understanding their customers and allow them to improved their offerings accordingly. The 125 item web-based survey was distributed through email. Results revealed seven factors of consumer economic experiences: environment, benefit, convenience, accessibility, utility, trust, and incentive. Benefit was found to be the most important factor with a mean of 6.23 on a seven-point scale, suggesting that the experience must create added value for the customer. The second factor was accessibility, followed by convenience, incentive, utility, and trust.

Arnould and Price (1993) evaluated river rafting experiences using a series of interviews, surveys, and observations of participants, outfitters, and guides. The data collection took place before, during, and after their rafting experience. Results indicated that river rafting offers participants feelings of absorption and assimilation, and personal control that were previously associated with extraordinary experiences. In addition, three themes of river rafting experience were identified; harmony with nature, connecting with others, and personal growth.

As illustrated by the review of leisure experience literature there are many ways to evaluate leisure experiences. A variety of methods could be chosen for a given activity or setting and no one method or scale is superior to another, given that they are valid and

reliable. There are many factors to evaluating leisure experience, the methods and scales should be chosen to best evaluate the subject under study. Another method for evaluating leisure experience may be experience economy. Pine and Gilmore (1999) have developed the experience economy paradigm as business frame work; however their ideas are starting to be applied in other sectors as well.

### *Experience Economy*

Pine and Gilmore (1999) developed the experience economy as a framework to influence the purchase behavior of customers in modern society. The business economy has shifted throughout history, initially focusing on commodities, later to products, and then to services. Consumers are now seeking the experience that is related to a product, in addition to the product itself (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). For example, it is no longer sufficient to offer quality coffee or sell a well-made shirt. According to these authors, products should be surrounded by a distinct experience in order to attract customers and keep them coming back. Pine and Gilmore (1999, p12) define experience as “events that engage individuals in a personal way.” Experiences are personal in nature, because they are influenced by perceptions and state of mind. This aspect allows two people to be at the same event and have different experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). This model has some implications for visitors in leisure-based settings.

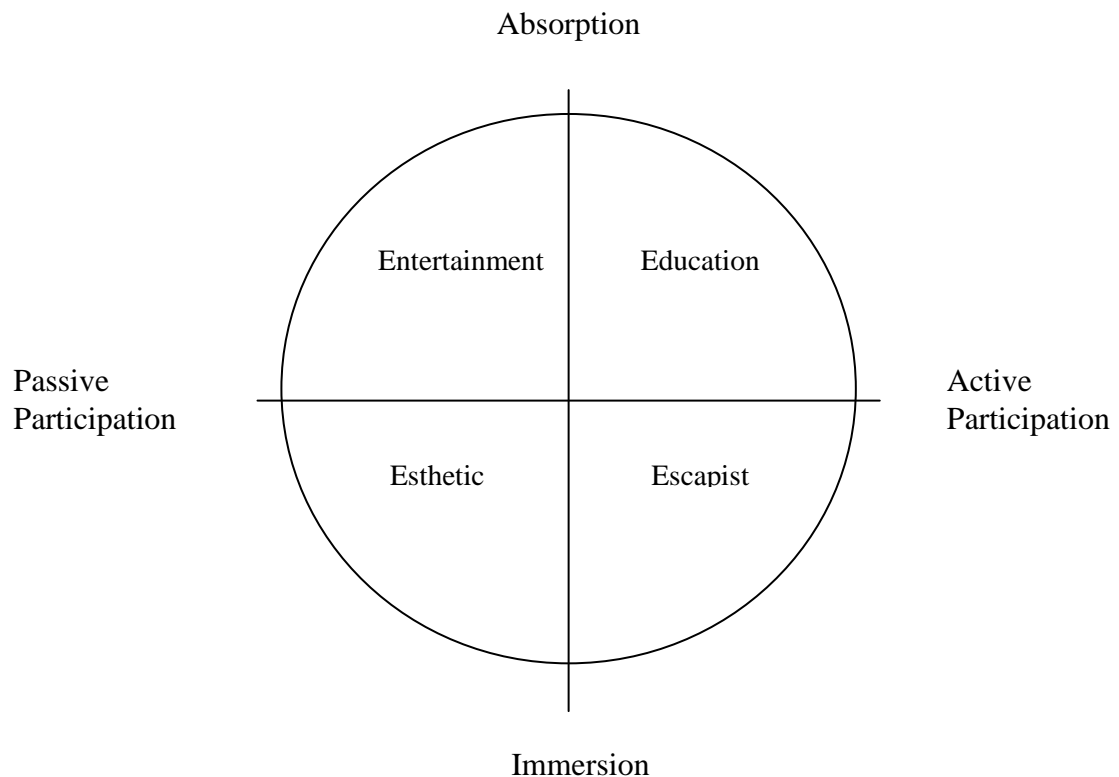
An individual’s level of engagement occurs along two axes: 1) levels of participation and; 2) absorption-immersion (Pine & Glimore, 1999). The x-axis is a continuum anchored by passive participation on one end and active participation on the other. Individuals who are passive do not directly affect or influence the performance, as compared with those who are actively involved with it (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). For



example, park visitors who choose spend their time on hiking trails, would be classified as active participants. In contrast, visitors who sit and observe nature around them, would be passive participants.

The y-axis shows the type of connection between the person and the event. Absorption and immersion are at opposite ends of the continuum. Individuals on the absorption end of the spectrum bring the experience into their minds. Those on the immersion end “become physically (or virtually) a part of the experience itself” (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p31). See Figure 2. One example to illustrate this concept is the audience at a typical comedy club. People in the back become absorbed in the experience since they bring their surroundings into themselves. Others, especially those seated near the front, might become immersed into the experience by becoming part of the comedy show if the comedian talks to them or about them.

Figure 2: Experience Economy Realms (Pine & Glimore, 1999)



According to this model, an experience falls into one or any combination of four realms (entertainment, education, esthetics, or escapist) based on relative positioning (Pine & Glimore, 1999). An entertainment experience occurs when a visitor passively observes the activity and performance of others. A person involved in an entertainment experience is absorbed, but does not become actively involved in it. Experiences that are in the realm of education combine absorption with active participation. Escapist experiences comprise greater elements of immersion than entertainment or education. Visitors in an escapist realm are completely immersed and actively involved in their experience. The last quadrant of experience is esthetic. Visitors are immersed during esthetic experiences, but not actively involved.

Hays and Macleod (2007) used the experience economy paradigm to evaluate heritage trails in England. These authors looked at the elements of walking paths to determine if they were presented as products or experiences. Their evaluation was based on the elements suggested by Pine and Gilmore: use of theme and storytelling, type of appeal and use of sensory triggers, issues of authority and credibility, use of positive cues and reinforcements, opportunities for visitor involvement, engagement and customization. Most of the trails were self-guided and brochures were available at tourist information centers free of charge. Trail evaluations were made using both rhetorical and content analysis. The rhetorical analysis focused on the organization and presentation of messages, along with any visual images and text used to identify symbolic meanings in the brochures. Content analysis assessed the following elements: coherence of theme rational versus evocative appeals, opportunities for engagement, and personalization.

The trails were categorized by Hays and Macleod (2007), based on their themes presented in the brochures (town, historical, architectural, sculpture, public art, and other). The evaluation found that 77% of the trails included formal cultural and informal cultural products, while 33% focused only on formal products. Formal cultural products included monuments, museums, gardens, natural features; whereas informal ones were pubs and restaurants, leisure facilities, shops and markets. The researchers suggested that in order for trails to provide memorable experiences, a coherent story should be told. Trail stories were measured on a numeric scale from 0-5 (the more coherent, the higher the score). The overall score was 2.3. About 16% of trails had high coherence and 17% were classified as having none. The evidence suggested that heritage trails were viewed

mainly as products, not experiences. The researchers recommended more experiential elements that, such as engagement and memorable theme, and less of product orientation.

Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung (2007) proposed a model for measuring the experience economy. Their study was conducted on Bed and Breakfast (B&B) customers in the Midwest. Surveys were randomly distributed to guests by operators of 95 B&Bs (15 at each of the 95 locations). In order to develop the survey instrument, the authors initially conducted a qualitative study. During this phase they visited B&Bs and interviewed operators to develop a pool of survey items for each of realm of experience. Initially, this procedure yielded a total of 56 items, but it was later reduced through panel reviews and trained judges. The resulting scale consisted of 24 items, six for each of the four realms of experience. In addition, 11 items on arousal, memory, perceived quality, and customer satisfaction were included for the purpose of testing predictive validity. Results showed that education and esthetic dimensions were significantly related to arousal and entertainment was moderately related. The realm of esthetics was found to be significantly related with arousal, memory, overall quality and satisfaction. During analysis two items from each realm were removed from the data in order to increase reliability. Esthetic experiences were rated highest among the B&B visitors with means of 5.88, 6.39, 6.02, and 6.26 for the individual items. Esthetics was followed by education, escapism and entertainment. Their findings suggested that the survey instrument was reliable. The scale developed used generalized wording which made it easier to adapt for use in other settings.

Although experience economy has numerous business applications, it has been used sparingly in leisure and recreation settings. Only recently have researchers

developed a tourism measurement framework (Oh et al., 2007). While experience economy has yet to be applied to wildlife viewing, it appears to be a good fit for Eagle Days. More than likely, visitors have different experiences at these events, unbeknownst to MDC.

## CHAPTER III

### Methods

#### *Study Locations*

This study evaluated visitor experiences using the experience economy paradigm at three Eagle Days events in Missouri during the winter of 2008-2009: 1) Smithville Lake, 2) Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, and 3) Springfield. A fourth site, Lake Ozark, was used as a pilot study to test the procedure. Each of the four participating sites had displays, activities, presentations using captive birds, and eagle watching opportunities.

The Lake Ozark event took place on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm and on January 4<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. The event was held at three different locations: Willmore Lodge (craft, video, and viewing), Osage National Golf Course (educational programs), and the Dam (eagle viewing area). Visitors could attend each or any combination of these activities, in any order.

The Smithville Lake event was held on January 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 am until 4:00 pm and on January 11<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 am until 4:00 pm. This event took place at two locations Little Platte Park Course Complex (activities and educational program) and the Smithville Lake boat ramp (eagle viewing). A shuttle bus transported visitors back and forth between the two locations. Most visitors attended the program first and then went to the viewing area.

Eagle Days at Old Chain of Rocks Bridge was held on January 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 2009 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm on both days. Tents were set up at this event which included activities, displays, and educational programs. Eagle viewing took place on the Old

Chain of Rocks Bridge overlooking the Mississippi River. Most of the visitors watched the eagles and attended the interpretive program, but not necessarily in that order.

The Springfield Eagle Days event took place on January 17<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm and on January 18<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 am until 4:00 pm. Eagle programs were presented every hour at the nature center and viewing took place at the Lake Springfield Park Boathouse and Marina - a few miles away. Visitors either attended the program first then went to the viewing area, or vice-versa. However, it is possible that some visitors may not have attended both locations due to the distance.

### *Pilot Study*

At the Lake Ozark event, a handheld device and/or paper surveys were used by technicians to collect the data (the handheld data collection device was being tested for use in visitor surveys by MDC). The portable device enabled the operator to enter visitors' answers using an interview style, and then making the selection with a stylus on a touch screen. Presumably, this method of data collection reduced the amount of time spent on data entry. Due to programming limitations, the experience economy items could not be entered into the hand-held device. Instead, they were photocopied on to a piece of paper and given to participants for completion. The handheld device was used to collect all other information.

One of two methods were used to collect data at this location, depending upon if the visit had been completed. During the initial approach, visitors were asked if they had just arrived at Eagle Days. If so, both paper survey and the portable device were used. If their visit was not complete, the handheld device was used and they were asked to finish

the paper portion of the survey after their visit. Drop boxes were conveniently located at each of the event areas.

After the event, it was difficult to match the data collected using the hand-held device with the paper survey. Some paper surveys were not returned to the drop boxes and many were labeled incorrectly. Some visitors refused to answer the items on the paper survey after completing the hand-held portion. The time requirement to enter the data into the hand-held restricted the number of surveys that could be collected at one time. Subsequently, the sampling protocol was modified after the pilot study was completed.

#### *Data Collection and Sampling*

At the primary study locations (Smithville Lake, Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, and Springfield) the hand-held data collection device was not used. Instead, all of the questions were transferred to a paper version of the survey.

Due to uniqueness at each site, the events were conducted in slightly different ways; therefore, data collection efforts were not standardized. The goal was to ask visitors to complete the on-site survey before exiting since it would yield the most accurate account of their wildlife-viewing experience.

This was a purposive, not random sample of visitors. A purposive sample is composed of subjects deliberately selected by researchers because of known characteristics which are thought to be typical or characteristic of the population (Vogt, 1999). An attempt was made to ask as many visitors as possible to complete the questionnaire. In order to reduce sampling bias, approximately two-thirds of the sample was asked to complete a questionnaire on Saturday and one-third of the surveys were



collected on Sunday. This was done because in previous years more visitors attended on Saturdays rather than Sundays, according to previous attendance records.

### *Questionnaire*

A two-page, 27 item survey instrument was developed for this study. Some of the questions were derived from Maupin et al., (1980) Eagle Days survey and others by MDC request. The demographic questions included questions regarding age, gender, race, disability, and zip code. Most items, except the zip code and travel party size, were closed ended, thus reducing visitor burden. In order to establish group composition, the number of adults and children in the group were recorded separately. In order to measure repeat visitation, individuals were asked, “How many Eagle Day events have you attended?” There was also a self-assessment of bird watching skills. Visitors were asked to rate themselves as beginners, intermediates or experts. This section of the survey also contained an item that measured visitors overall satisfaction with Eagle Days using a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied). See Appendix A.

In order to evaluate the experiential aspects of Eagle Days, the experience economy scale developed by Oh et al., (2007) was included in the survey. The sixteen experience economy items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (coded 1) to strongly agree (coded 7). Four items for each realm were placed in alternating order on the survey (first, education; second, esthetics; third, entertainment; fourth, esthetic) to avoid potential bias. See figure 3.

Figure 3: Experience Economy measurement items (Oh et al., 2007)

**Measurement items for Experience Economy**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Escapism</b>
The experience has made me more knowledgeable I learned a lot It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things It was a real learning experience	I felt I played a different character here I felt like I was living in a different time or place The experience here let me imagine being someone else I completely escaped from reality
<b>Esthetics</b>	<b>Entertainment</b>
I felt a real sense of harmony Just being here was very pleasant The setting was pretty bland (reverse coded) The setting was very attractive	Activities of others were amusing to watch Watching others perform was captivating I really enjoyed watching what others were doing Activities of others were fun to watch

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

#### *Response Rate*

A total of 440 visitors were asked to complete a survey and 376 complied with the request thus resulting in an 85.5% response rate. See Table 1. Non-response bias was assumed to be negligible. Most visitors who refused said that it was due to the cold weather.

Table 1. Refusal rates of visitors at Eagle Days by location.

Location	Initial Contacts	n	Response Rate
Smithville	87	78	90.7%
Chain of Rocks	154	129	83.8%
Springfield	199	169	84.9%
Total	440	376	85.5%

A total of 376 usable surveys were collected from three sampling locations: Smithville Lake (n=78; 20.7%), Chain of Rocks (n=129; 34.3%), and Springfield (n=169; 45%). See Table 2. To ensure a proportional amount of surveys collected on the weekends, 62.8% of the questionnaires were distributed on Saturdays and 37.2% on Sundays. Overall, visitor experiences at these three locations were not significantly different from each other ( $p = .071$ ). However there are differences in the esthetic and entertainment realms the locations were combined into one unit of analysis for subsequent tests .See Table 3.

Table 2. Number of surveys collected at Eagle Days by event location and day.

Variable	Attribute	n	%
Location Attended	Smithville	78	20.7
	Chain of Rocks	129	34.3
	Springfield	169	44.9
	Total	376	99.9
Day attended	Saturday	236	62.8
	Sunday	140	37.2
	Total	376	100

Table 3. ANOVA of experience economy at Eagle Days by locations.

		<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Education	Between Groups	2	1.64	.195
	Within Groups	362		
	Total	364		
Esthetic	Between Groups	2	4.49	.012
	Within Groups	367		
	Total	369		
Entertainment	Between Groups	2	3.82	.023
	Within Groups	348		
	Total	350		
Escapist	Between Groups	2	2.06	.130
	Within Groups	357		
	Total	359		
Total	Between Groups	2	2.665	.071
	Within Groups	342		
	Total	344		

### *Visitor Characteristics*

A larger portion of surveys were completed by females (n=238; 63.6%) than males (n=136; 36.4%). Most of the respondents were between 45-64 years old (n=196; 52.4%) and about 10% were over age 65. The next most frequently reported age group was 35-44 (23.8%). See Table 4 for the demographic characteristics. In response to the

question “How would you rate your bird watching skills?” Over two-thirds of the visitors (69.4%) classified themselves as beginners, 26.3% as intermediates, and 3.8% as experts.

Table 4. Descriptive characteristics of visitors to Eagle Days.

Question	Response	n	%
Gender	Male	136	36.4
	Female	238	63.6
	Total	372	100
Age	18-24	11	2.9
	25-34	41	11.0
	35-44	89	23.8
	45-64	196	52.4
	65-over	37	9.9
	Total	374	100
Race/ethnicity	American Indian	4	1.1
	Asian	3	.8
	Black	7	1.9
	Hispanic or Latino	2	.5
	White	342	92.4
	Other	3	.8
	Multiple	9	2.4
	Total	370	99.9
Disabilities	None	336	93.9
	Hearing impaired	6	1.7
	Learning impaired	1	.3
	Mobility impaired	6	1.7
	Other	6	1.7
	Multiple	3	.8
	Total	358	100.1
Bird watching skills	Beginner	261	69.4
	Intermediate	98	26.3
	Expert	14	3.8
	Total	373	99.5

Most visitors (91.5%) who attended Eagle Days came with a group consisting of slightly more than 3 people ( $M=3.42$ ;  $SD=3.41$ ). The average number of adults per travel

party was  $M=2.33$  ( $SD=1.88$ ) and the mean number of children per group was  $M=1.09$  ( $SD=2.06$ ). However, over half of the groups ( $n=204$ , 54.4%) were not accompanied by children. See Table 5. The average time spent at Eagle Days was 1.5 hours, (80.9% of visitors spent an hour or more at the events). For most visitors ( $n=211$ ; 56.1%), this was their first time they attended an Eagle Days event. Nearly one-quarter of them (20%;  $n=76$ ) said it was their second time to visit. The average number of visits at these events was  $M=2.34$  ( $n=373$ ). See Table 6.

Table 5. Group size of Eagle Days visitors.

Item	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Number of adults in party	375	2.33	1.88
Number of children in party	375	1.09	2.06
Total in party	375	3.42	3.41

Table 6. Mean number of Eagle Days events attended by Eagle Days visitors.

Item	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Number of events attended	373	2.34	2.74

Visitors heard about Eagle Days in a variety of ways, including newspapers ( $n=151$ ), television ( $n=98$ ), and word-of-mouth communication ( $n=91$ ). See Table 7. For a complete list of the “other” methods noted on the survey ( $n=78$ ), see Appendix B.

Table 7. How Eagle Days visitors heard about the event.

Question	Response	n	%
Sign or billboard	Yes	25	6.7
	No	349	93.3
Television	Yes	98	26.2
	No	276	73.8
MDC Website	Yes	36	9.6
	No	338	90.4
Word-of-mouth	Yes	91	24.3
	No	283	75.7
Radio	Yes	32	8.6
	No	342	91.4
Other Website	Yes	25	6.7
	No	349	93.3
Newspaper	Yes	151	40.4
	No	223	59.6
Magazine	Yes	47	12.6
	No	327	87.4
School	Yes	5	1.3
	No	369	98.7
Other	Yes	78	20.9
	No	296	79.1

Most visitors reported that they were very satisfied (n=201; 56.5%) or satisfied (n=125; 35.1%) with the Eagle Days events. The mean satisfaction score was high (M=4.42; SD=.85) using a 5-point rating scale. See Table 8.

Table 8. Satisfaction of visitors to Eagle Days events.

Item	n	M	SD	VD	D	N	S	VS
Overall Satisfaction	356	4.42	.85	n=10 2.8%	n=2 .6%	n=18 5.1%	n=125 4.5%	n=201 56.5%

VD= very dissatisfied, D=dissatisfied, N= natural, S=satisfied, VS=very satisfied

*Experience Economy*

The experience economy items used in this study were reliable measures, as indicated by the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each of the subscales (Education=.893, Esthetic=.810, Entertainment=.897, Escapism=.873). See Table 9. Each of the four quadrants were mutually exclusive using a series of dependent samples t-tests. This finding indicated a high degree of validity. See Table 10. The mean experience economy score was 4.98 (n=345) on the 7-point scale. Esthetics had the highest average response of 5.88 (n=370) of the four quadrants. This realm was followed by education (n=365, M=5.59) and entertainment (n=351, M=4.83). The lowest quadrant was escapism (n=360, M=3.64). See Table 9.



Table 9. Experience economy item means for Eagle Days visitors.

Item	n	M	SD
<i>Education</i> ( $\alpha=.893$ )	365	5.59	1.2
This experience has made me more knowledgeable	374	5.74	1.3
I learned a lot	369	5.48	1.3
It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things	369	5.60	1.3
It was a real learning experience	369	5.57	1.4
<i>Esthetic</i> ( $\alpha=.810$ )	370	5.88	1.0
I felt a real sense of harmony at this location	374	5.77	1.2
Just being here was very pleasant	373	6.28	1.0
The setting was pretty bland	372	5.57	1.6
The setting was very attractive	372	5.91	1.2
<i>Entertainment</i> ( $\alpha=.897$ )	351	4.83	1.3
The activities of others were amusing to watch	364	5.30	1.3
Watching others was captivating	366	4.88	1.5
I really enjoyed watching what others were doing	366	4.51	1.6
Activities of others were fun to watch	363	4.62	1.6
<i>Escapism</i> ( $\alpha=.873$ )	360	3.64	1.5
I felt I played a different character here	364	3.77	1.6
I felt like I was living in a different time or place	368	3.86	1.7
The experience here let me imagine being someone else	363	3.41	1.8
I completely excepted from reality	366	3.53	1.9

Table 10. Dependent samples t-tests for each pair of realms in the experience economy.

Pair	n	t	df	p
Education x Esthetic	364	-5.491	363	.000
Education x Entertainment	349	10.734	348	.000
Education x Escapism	357	24.763	356	.000
Esthetic x Entertainment	351	14.433	350	.000
Esthetic x Escapism	360	26.257	359	.000
Entertainment x Escapism	346	16.224	345	.000

### *Hypothesis Testing*

H1: Male and female visitors will have the same type of wildlife viewing experience at Eagle Days.

H1: Rejected for esthetic

H1: Accepted for education, entertainment, and escapism

An independent samples t-test showed a significant difference between the wildlife viewing experience of males and females for esthetics ( $p=.018$ ). Males had a rated esthetics as  $M=5.72$  ( $n=127$ ), but females scored  $M=5.98$  ( $n=216$ ). Based on these results, the null hypothesis was rejected for esthetics. For the realms of education, entertainment, and escapism there was no significant difference between the two groups. As a result the null hypothesis for these three realms is accepted. See Table 11.

Table 11. Independent samples t-tests of visitor experiences by gender.

	Gender	n	<i>M</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Education	Male	130	5.48	-1.52	361	.130
	Female	233	5.67			
Esthetic	Male	134	5.72	-2.38	366	.018
	Female	234	5.98			
Entertainment	Male	129	4.80	-.30	347	.764
	Female	220	4.84			
Escapism	Male	131	3.52	-1.14	356	.254
	Female	227	3.70			

H2: There are no differences in the wildlife viewing experiences of repeat and first time visitors at Eagle Days.

H2: Accepted for education, esthetic, entertainment, and escapism

There was no significant difference of wildlife viewing experiences between first time and repeat visitors to Eagle Days for education ( $p=.682$ ), esthetic ( $p=.102$ ),

entertainment ( $p=.248$ ), or escapism ( $p=.807$ ). These findings confirmed the null hypothesis for all realms. See Table 12.

Table 12. Independent samples t-tests of visitor experiences based on level of participation in Eagle Days events.

	participation	n	<i>M</i>	t	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Education	Novice	205	5.58	-0.41	360	.682
	Repeat	157	5.63			
Esthetic	Novice	209	5.81	-1.64	365	.102
	Repeat	158	5.99			
Entertainment	Novice	195	4.75	-1.16	346	.248
	Repeat	153	4.92			
Escapism	Novice	202	3.65	-0.16	355	.870
	Repeat	155	3.62			

H3: Visitors who traveled shorter distances to Eagle Days will have the same wildlife viewing experience as those traveling longer distances.

H3: Accepted for education, esthetic, entertainment, and escapism

In order to evaluate this hypothesis, visitors were divided into two groups based on their distance traveled to Eagle Days using a median-split method. Those below the median score were classified as “near” while visitors above the median score were “far” away. The wildlife viewing experiences of visitors traveling a greater distances to Eagle Days versus those who traveled a shorter distance were not significantly different for education ( $p=.736$ ), esthetic ( $p=.150$ ), entertainment ( $p=.548$ ), or escapism ( $p=.757$ ). The null hypothesis was accepted for all realms based these results. See Table 13.

Table 13. Independent samples t-tests of visitor experiences based on distance traveled to Eagle Days events.

	location	n	<i>M</i>	t	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Education	Near	189	5.57	-.34	360	.736
	Far	176	5.61			
Esthetic	Near	189	5.96	1.44	365	.150
	Far	178	5.81			
Entertainment	Near	178	4.87	.60	347	.548
	Far	171	4.77			
Escapism	Near	184	3.65	.31	355	.757
	Far	173	3.60			

H4: Visitors with children in their group will have the same type of wildlife viewing experience at Eagle Days as those attending the event without children.

H4: Accepted for esthetic, entertainment, and escapism.

H4: Rejected for education.

The wildlife viewing experience of visitors with children in their group and those without children were similar (non-significant) using an independent samples t-test for the realms of esthetic ( $p=.108$ ), entertainment ( $p=.368$ ), and escapism ( $p=.704$ ). However, the realm of education was significantly different ( $p < .003$ ) between groups with children ( $n=168$ ,  $M=5.79$ ) and those without ( $n=196$ ,  $M=5.43$ ). Groups with children rated education higher than those without children. See Table 14.

Table 14. Independent samples t-tests of visitor experiences based on group composition.

	child	n	<i>M</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Education	without	196	5.43	-2.99	362	.003
	with	168	5.79			
Esthetic	without	200	5.81	-1.61	367	.108
	with	169	5.98			
Entertainment	without	189	4.77	-.90	348	.368
	with	161	4.90			
Escapism	without	194	3.61	-.38	357	.704
	with	165	3.67			

H5: There are no differences in the wildlife viewing experiences of visitors who spent a longer period of time at Eagle Days as compared to those who spent a shorter amount of time.

H5: Accepted for entertainment, and escapism

H5: Rejected for education and esthetic.

Visitors were grouped into shorter or longer periods of time spent at Eagle Days using a median split method. Visitors spending less than one hour and forty-five minutes (median score) were grouped in the shorter time period, whereas those staying longer than the median time were placed into the longer time period. Results of the independent samples t-tests which compared the means of these two groups found their experiences to be significantly different for the realms of education (n=142,  $M=6.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and esthetics (n=144,  $M=6.04$ ,  $p < .016$ ). Which were both rated higher by visitors who spent more time at the event. Based on these results, the null hypothesis was rejected for education and esthetic, and accepted for entertainment and escapism. See Table 15.

Table 15. Independent samples t-tests of visitor experiences based on time spent at Eagle Days events.

	time	n	<i>M</i>	t	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Education	Low	219	5.33	-5.74	359	.000
	High	142	6.01			
Esthetic	Low	222	5.78	-2.42	364	.016
	High	144	6.04			
Entertainment	Low	208	4.80	-.44	345	.664
	High	139	4.87			
Escapism	Low	215	3.59	-.66	355	.508
	High	142	3.69			

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

In some respects, visitors to Eagle Days in 2008-2009 were similar to those who participated in the winter 1978-79. A majority of groups in 1978 had 1 to 5 people (73%, n=524). In the 2008 study, 90.9% (n=341) of groups were 1 to 5 people. The most frequently reported age group in 1978 was 22 to 39 (34%, n=245). In the 2008 survey, most visitors were age 45-64 (52.4%, n=196). One reason for this age difference is due to the inconsistent response sets used by researchers during these two times. The 1978 survey used 5 year intervals (except for the first and last categories): less than 12 years, 12 to 16, 17 to 21 and so forth. The present survey used 9 year intervals for age categories starting except for the first one 18 to 24 (no one under the age of 18 was surveyed) and the last one 65+. In 2008, 45.4% of visitors reported having children in their travel party. In 1978, 45% of visitors described their group as “your family.” Since the questions were not asked exactly the same way, direct comparisons were not possible. Unlike the 2008 study, there were more males in 1978 than females (54% and 46%, respectively) compared 36.4% and 63.6%, respectively.

The 1978 survey asked Eagle Days visitors if they were a “non-birdwatcher,” “occasional birdwatcher,” or “a birder.” Most visitors to the first Eagle Days reported themselves as occasional birdwatchers (61%), 22% as non-birdwatchers, and 17% as birders. A similar question was used in this study. In 2008, participants rated their bird watching skills as beginners (69.4%), intermediates (26.3%) or experts (3.8%).

When comparing the reported experiences at Eagle Days of female visitors to that of male visitors there was a significant difference in the reported esthetic experience.

Females rated esthetic experience higher than males ( $M=5.98$  vs.  $M=5.72$ , respectively). Since there are more females attending managers should consider this in their planning. By making an effort to make sure the areas are doing their part to make sure the area is esthetically pleasing by paying attention to things like litter in the area.

It is interesting to note that contrary to previous research in wildlife viewing there were no significant differences between first time and repeat visitors experience. Other studies have found that repeat visitors are more knowledgeable about the wildlife of interest and have more realistic expectations. In this study these findings might be attributed to a reduced educational experience or possibly rate another experience type differently. However, this was not the case in this in this study.

Visitors who spent more time at Eagle Days rated their education and esthetic experiences higher ( $M=6.01$  and  $M=6.04$ , respectively) than those who spent less time ( $M=5.33$  and  $M=5.78$ , respectively) at the events. The increased rating of education may be due to their attendance at the live bird presentations conducted Eagle Days events. Also, longer stays help visitors to experience more of the ambience present at some of the locations. These findings suggest that MDC should consider adding additional activities or services at the events to increase the likelihood of longer stays since duration seems to positively affect visitor experiences. For example, the addition of food and beverage service might be warranted at these events. Food was only available at the Chain of Rocks but at the other events. The addition of more warming stations might be helpful (Only one was available at the Chain of Rocks event. Except for the indoor activities there were none available at the other locations) to increase visitor stays so they can enjoy more of the scenery.



The finding that there is a significant difference in the educational experience of the groups with children when compared to those without could be caused by an increased likelihood that they attended the educational presentation and participated in the additional activities offered. Managers should consider this in their planning and possibly gear more educational opportunities towards families. In addition this could also indicate a need for more educational opportunities for adults.

In some aspects, Eagle Days are similar to self-guided trails, both are self-paced events. Eagle Days visitors move from one activity to the next based on activity selection. It could be beneficial for managers of Eagle Days events to consider this similarity in developing marketing strategies. For example, it might be useful to provide information about the activities and having friendly staff to interact with the visitors. Hays and Macleod (2007) recommend that trail developers present a cohesive story to keep their visitors engaged. While the trails are static, Eagle Days has the opportunity to adapt to the visitor and environmental situations. Therefore, the staff at Eagle Days should act more like roving interpreters, interacting with each individual visitor creating a more personalized experience.

Also, Eagle Days should be marketed as an experience, not as a product. Advertising should focus on the four realms, treating each one as an individual benefit in the marketing plan. For example a slogan could be created to promote Eagle Days as more than a bird-watching event that is a holistic experience designed for family fun.

Although Eagle Days visitors were not asked if they saw a bald eagle, it is important for managers to understand that satisfaction can be achieved without seeing a bird in the wild. Orams (2000) found the staff at an event can influence visitors'

experiences even though wildlife was not seen. Similarly, Montag, Patterson, & Freimund (2005) found that indirect knowledge of the desired animals' presence contributes to the authenticity of the experience. This can be achieved by presenting tangible evidence that bald eagles in the area, such as identifying calls, nest, and stories of sightings.

Since most Eagle Days visitors were novice birdwatchers, their skill level should be considered when designing programs and activities. Knowing that most visitors are unskilled birders is an indication that may be important to assist them at finding birds, operating equipment and identifying the differences between mature and immature bald eagles. This information could also assist with marketing. Since there are not many intermediate or advanced birders attending Eagle Days, groups such as Audubon Society may be recruited to assist with these events.

The majority of visitors reported high satisfaction with Eagle Days. However, it is important to note that 8.5% of visitors reported being less than satisfied with their visit. Even though they are not in the majority, these visitors should be considered when planning and conducting these events. While visitors were not asked to explain their reasons for dissatisfaction with Eagle Days, some possibilities may be inferred based on other research. Schanzel and McIntosh (2000) found that visitors who were dissatisfied with their wildlife viewing experience at Penguin Place conservation reserve in New Zealand had unrealistic expectations about their visit. This can be reduced by ensuring that, MDC's marketing efforts present a realistic picture of Eagle Days events.

### *Future Research*

There are numerous ways to study an activity or event, the approach of experience economy is only one. There are additional elements of Eagle Days that could benefit from further study. First a more in depth look at satisfaction could provide additional insight into those individuals that are not satisfied with their visit. It may also be beneficial to ask if the visitors saw a wild eagle during their visit. As indicated from past research on wildlife viewing the presence of wildlife can enhance the experience.

Further research into why there were no significant differences found between first time and repeat visitors is necessary, as the findings of this study contradict past research on repeat participation in wildlife viewing. Identifying how the visitors to Eagle Days are different to other wildlife viewing participants could provide important information to MDC.

This study effectively applied the experience economy paradigm to a natural resource recreation setting. Further application of this paradigm in natural resource recreation would be beneficial for evaluating visitor experience. However, some changes could be made to the experience economy realm of entertainment. This realm maybe more accurately represented by adapting the measurement items to a natural setting. Certain items, for example “watching other perform was captivating.” could be changed to “watching natures’ performance was captivating.”

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Appendix A

# **EAGLE DAYS**

*Visitor Survey*



University of Missouri

Dear Visitor:

To improve Eagle Days, the University of Missouri-Columbia is evaluating your wildlife viewing experience. We would like for you to complete this brief survey, but your participation is voluntary. All responses are anonymous.

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How many Eagle Day events have you attended? \_\_\_\_\_ (including today)

How much time did you spend at this event today? \_\_\_\_\_ Hours \_\_\_\_\_ Minutes

How would you rate your bird watching skills? (check only one)

- Beginner                       Intermediate                       Expert

Please indicate your level of overall satisfaction at Eagle Days. (check only one)

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
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How did you hear about Eagle Days? (check all that apply)

- Sign / Billboard                       Television                       MDC Website  
 Word-of-mouth                       Radio                       Other Website  
 Newspaper                       Magazine                       School  
 Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

How many people are in your group today? \_\_\_\_\_ # Adults \_\_\_\_\_ # Children (under 18)

What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:

- Male                       Female

Age:

- 18-24                       25-34                       35-44                       45-64                       65 or over

Race / ethnicity: (check all that apply)

- American Indian                       Hispanic or Latino  
 Asian                       White  
 Black or African American                       Other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

Disability: (check all that apply)

- None                       Learning Impaired  
 Hearing Impaired                       Mobility Impaired  
 Visually Impaired                       Other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)



**Directions:** For each of the following statements, please consider what you have experienced at Eagle Days and circle the number that best matches your feelings.

	Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
This experience has made me more knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt a real sense of harmony at this location	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The activities of others were amusing to watch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt I played a different character here	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I learned a lot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Just being here was very pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Watching others was captivating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt like I was living in a different time or place	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The setting was pretty bland	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I really enjoyed watching what others were doing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The experience here let me imagine being someone else	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It was a real learning experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The setting was very attractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Activities of others were fun to watch	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I completely escaped from reality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## Appendix B

List of the other methods Eagle Days visitors heard about the event.

### **Springfield:**

Grandson  
Harbinger newsletter  
Internet  
Previous literature @ conservation ctr & nature center  
I am a SCNC volunteer  
Mail out brochure  
Springfield nature center newsletter (the harbinger)  
Family  
Sister  
Owl prowl  
MDC Magazine  
From grandson  
Harbinger  
Harbinger-from Conservation Dept.  
Son (news) TV  
Cub Scout Den Leader  
Scout leader  
Cub Scout Trip  
Daughter knew about it  
Family member  
Wife  
Harbinger  
Zoo  
We came last year too  
PR person @ Dickerson Park Zoo  
Springfield dens header calendar/ mo conservation mag  
Get newsletter  
Live close  
Internet site

### **Smithville Lake:**

Girl scout event  
MDC  
Sun Paper  
Thompson newsletter (Liberty)  
Boy scouts  
Boy Scout Troup  
Sports show  
Know it happens yearly  
Boy scouts  
Jerry Lipton visitor center  
Google

Mo Conservation Magazine  
MDC Liberty office  
Sign on highway  
Live in area  
Scout pack 412  
Friend  
Mltons newsletter  
Smithville resident  
Ranger told  
**Chain of Rocks:**  
NPR  
Trailnet  
Trailnet  
Cub scouts  
Volunteer  
St Louis guide bok  
Drove to see the bridge  
Church on the rock  
Church- COTR  
School MoVIP  
Email trailnet news letter  
I've been here before  
Friend  
I went to it a few years ago & wanted to go again.  
Friend  
Internet search  
Conservation center (off 94 past chesterfield)  
MDC Employee  
Riverfront times I think  
Had to search never is advertised enough  
Look up on the web  
Husband  
Know about it for years  
Trailnet