

A Study of Visitors to
American Sabor
Latinos in U.S. Popular Music

An Exhibition by the
Smithsonian Latino Center at the
International Gallery of the
S. Dillon Ripley Center

February 2012

Smithsonian Institution
Office of Policy and Analysis

Preface

American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music, an exhibition organized by the EMP Museum in Seattle and the University of Washington, was opened by the Smithsonian Latino Center (SLC) at the International Gallery of the S. Dillon Ripley Center in October 2011. Visitors to the exhibition were presented with innovations and contributions of Hispanic musicians and offered the chance to experience some of the richness of Latino sounds through interactive elements.

It was once again a pleasure to have the opportunity to conduct a study for the SLC. I would like to thank the Center's Director, Eduardo Diaz, and Exhibitions and Public Programs Director, Ranald Woodaman, for asking the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) to undertake the study. I also wish to acknowledge Ranald's contributions to the administration of the survey. Additional thanks go to OP&A staff Lance Costello who designed the questionnaire, analyzed the data, and wrote the final report.

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Background

The Smithsonian Latino Center (SLC) exhibited *American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music (American Sabor)* at the Smithsonian International Gallery from July 11 through October 9, 2011. The 5,000-square-foot exhibition was created by the EMP Museum in Seattle in partnership with the University of Washington and contained 100 artifacts including costumes and musicians' instruments; 45 interviews with Latino musicians; interactive elements, including keyboards and a mixing board; and a dance floor where visitors could move to their favorite Latin rhythms.

The bilingual exhibition focused on five centers of Latino popular music in America: New York City, Los Angeles, Miami, San Antonio, and San Francisco; traced themes such as the effects of migration and immigration on Latino and popular music; examined ways that Latinos express their historical experiences through music; and looked at how musical innovations cross ethnic and racial boundaries.

SLC requested that the Smithsonian's Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) conduct a visitor study of *American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music*. Of particular interest to the Center was public reaction to the exhibit and characteristics of the visitors it attracted.

Methodology

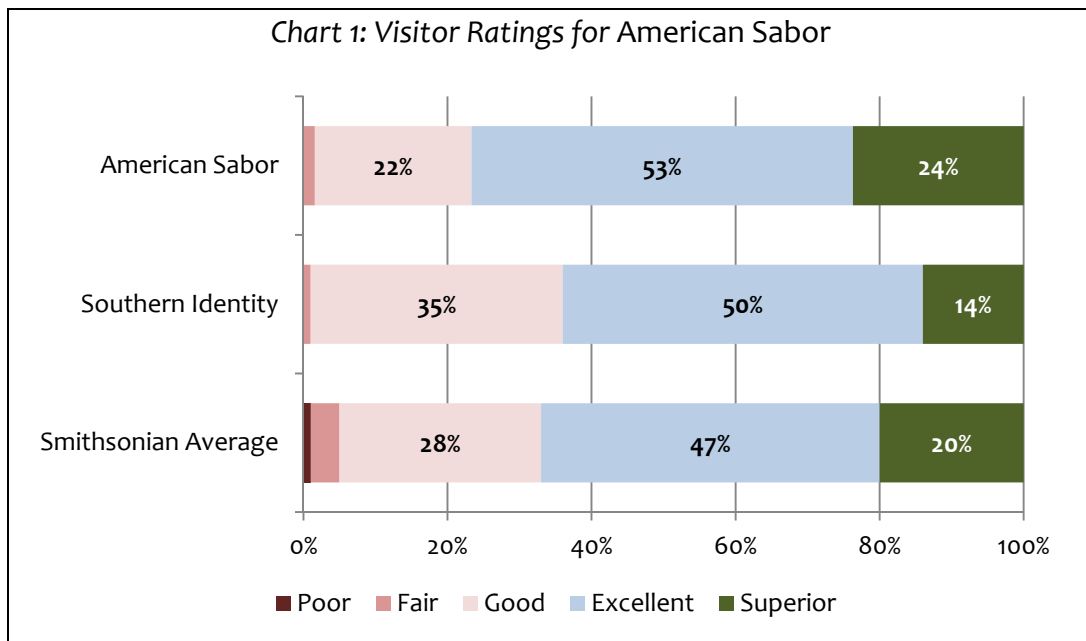
In conducting this exhibition study, the study team surveyed a sample of visitors exiting the exhibition. Visitors completed 111 self-administered survey questionnaires, with a response rate of 91 percent. Frequencies of responses to the questions on the survey are provided in Appendix A.

Findings

Ratings

Visitors were asked to rate their overall experiences in *American Sabor* on a five-point scale that has been applied by OP&A across Smithsonian exhibitions: *poor*, *fair*, *good*, *excellent*, and *superior*. In general, visitors who are basically satisfied with their visit tend to mark *excellent*. Visitors who have criticisms with an exhibition tend to select one of the lower three categories—*poor*, *fair*, or *good*. Those who have very positive responses tend to mark *superior*.

Just over half of visitors to *American Sabor* rated their experiences in the exhibition as *excellent* (53%). About one in four visitors rated their experience lower (*good*, 22%; *fair*, 2%; *poor*, 0%) and an equal percentage rated it higher (*superior*, 24%). These ratings are close to the Smithsonian average and similar to the ratings of *Southern Identity*, an SLC exhibition on display at the International Gallery of the Ripley Center from October 2010 through January 2011.¹

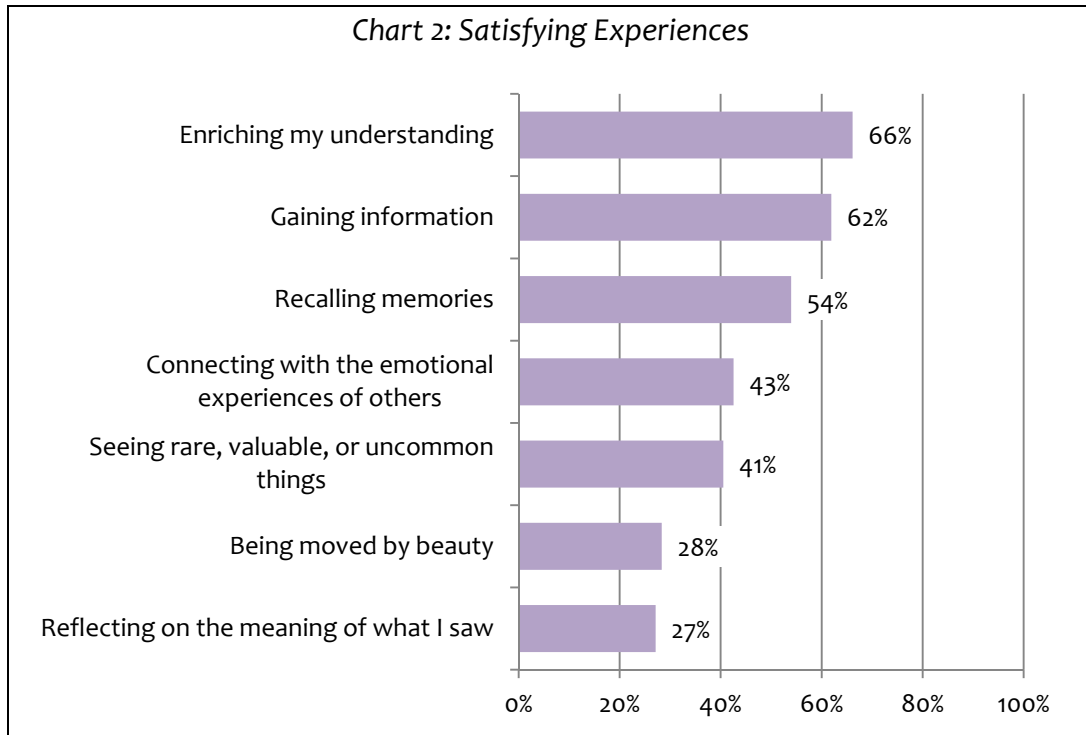


¹ Due to sample sizes, the margin of error for both *American Sabor* and *Southern Identity* was $\pm 10\%$.

Experiences

Visitors were offered a list of seven possible experiences and asked to select the ones that they found especially satisfying in *American Sabor*. On average, visitors marked three experiences.

The two most commonly cited satisfying experiences—each selected by more than three in five visitors—were learning experiences: *enriching my understanding* (66%) and *gaining information* (62%). These were followed by a personal connection experience, *recalling memories* (54%). The third tier of experiences was comprised of a second personal connection experience, *connecting with the emotional experiences of others* (43%) and an object experience, *seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things* (41%). Least likely to be selected were a second object experience, *being moved by beauty* (28%) and an introspective experience *reflecting on the meaning of what I saw* (27%).

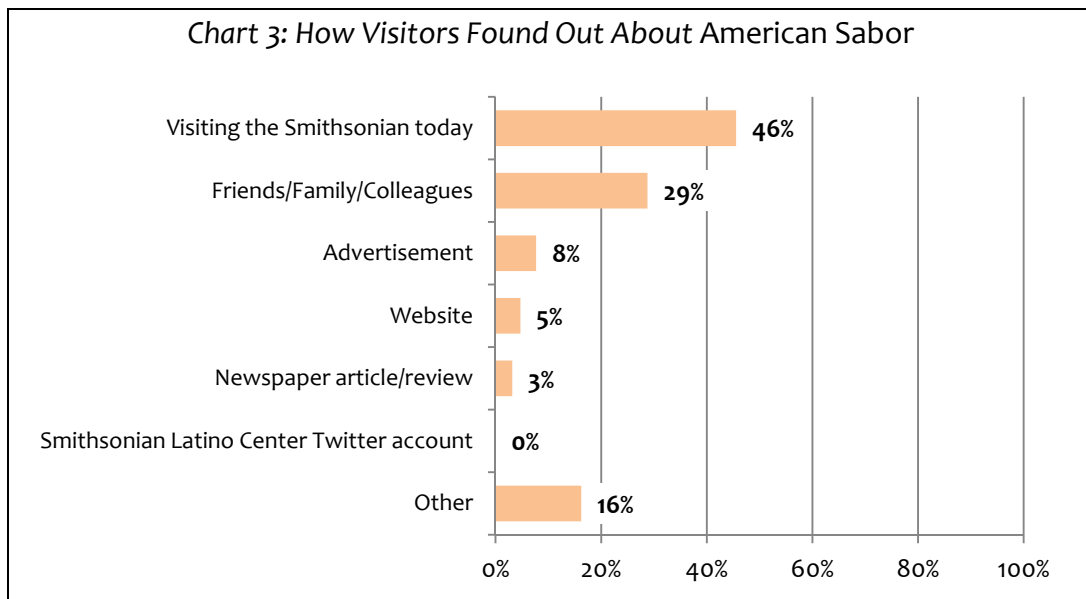


Of the seven experiences, two had statistically significant correlations with ratings. Nearly half of visitors who marked *reflecting on the meaning of what I saw* rated the exhibition superior (48% vs. 15% of those who did not mark) and more than two in five visitors who marked *seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things* rated the exhibition superior (43% vs. 11% of those who did not mark).

Visitor Characteristics

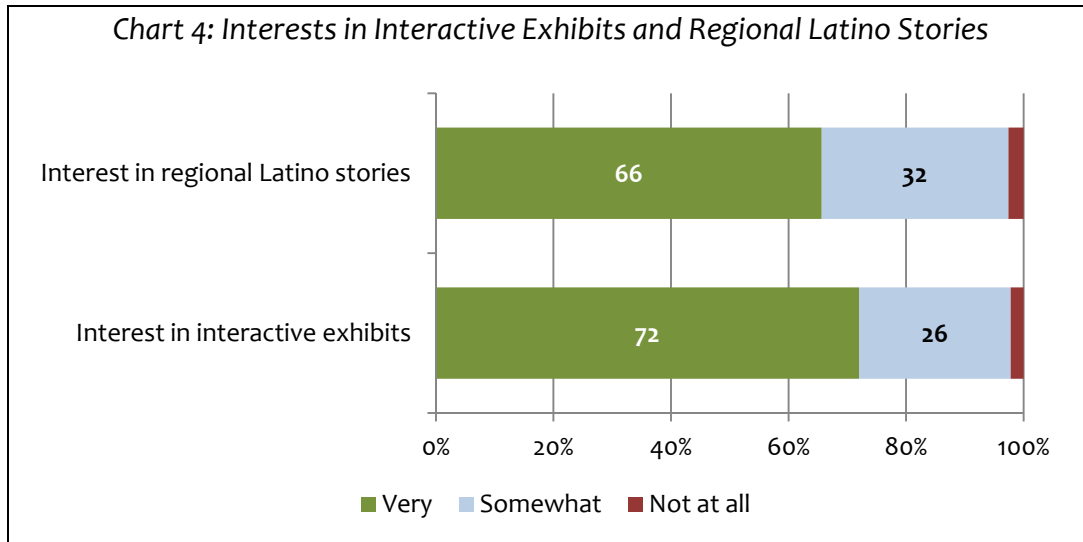
Nearly three in four visitors were making a repeat visit to the Smithsonian (*repeat visitors*, 72%) and slightly less than half were visiting specifically to see *American Sabor* (*exhibition-specific visitors*, 47%). *Repeat visitors* were more likely to be *exhibition-specific visitors* (55% vs. 28% of first time visitors) and more likely to rate their overall experiences as *Excellent* or *Superior* (85% vs. 54% of first time visitors).

Visitors were also asked how they found out about the exhibition. The most common response, selected by almost half of respondents, was *visiting the Smithsonian* (46%). Three in ten visitors found out from *friends/family/colleagues* (29%). Fewer visitors selected the remaining options: *advertisement* (8%), *website* (5%), *newspaper article/review* (3%), and *Smithsonian Latino Center Twitter account* (0%). One in six visitors noted their source as *other* (16%).



Interests in Interactive Exhibits and Regional Latino Stories

A majority of visitors marked that they were *very* interested in interactive exhibits (72%), and that they were *very* interested in regional Latino stories (66%). *Exhibition-specific visitors* were more likely to be *very* interested in interactive exhibits (91% vs. 57% of other visitors) and *very* interested in regional Latino stories (81% vs. 52% of other visitors).



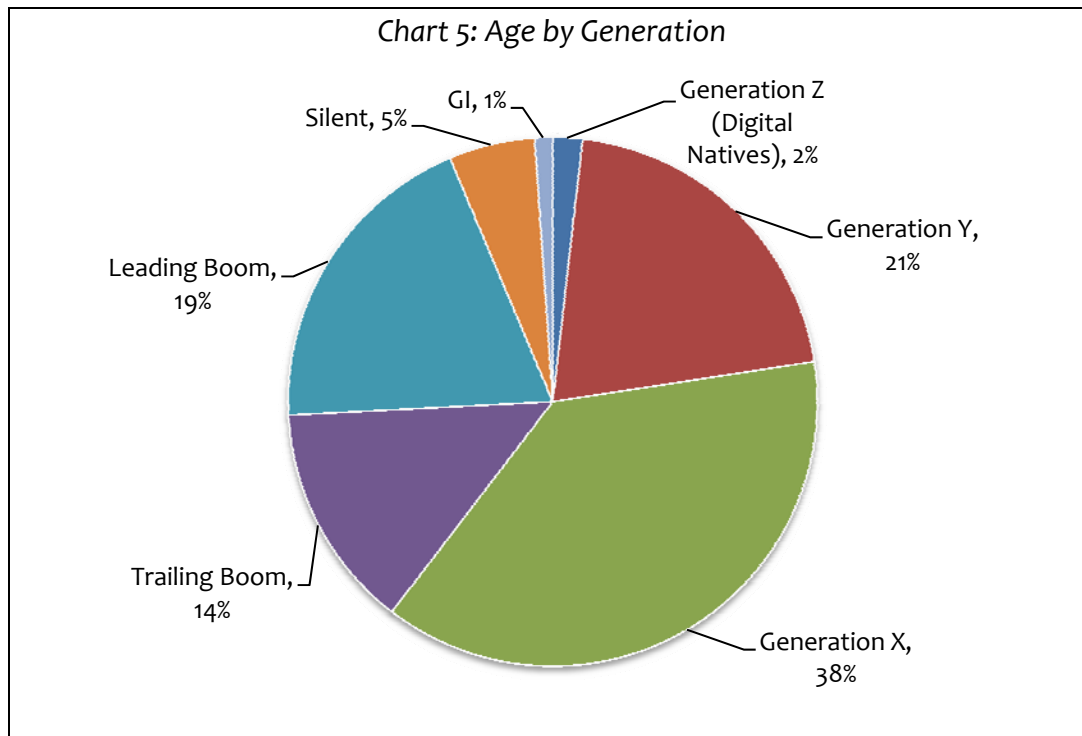
Smithsonian Latino Center

About one in three visitors knew that there was a Smithsonian Latino Center *before this visit* (28%). Two in five found out *during this visit* (39%) and one in three learned about the Center *when I read this question* (33%). *Exhibition-specific* and *repeat visitors* were more likely to know about the Smithsonian Latino Center before their visits than learn about it during their visits or when reading the question (45% vs. 11% of general visitors and 37% vs. 7% of first-time visitors, respectively). Likewise, visitors who found out about the exhibition from *friends/family/colleagues* were more likely to know about SLC before their visits (50% vs. 19% of visitors who found out from another source).

More than three in four visitors would *definitely* visit another Smithsonian Latino Center exhibition if they were in Washington during the next year (76%) and most of the rest *might* (21%). Only two percent responded that they *would not*.

Demographics

Age: The average age of respondents was 43 and the median age was 45. Dividing the respondents by generation: 1% were of the GI generation (born before 1925); 5%, Silent generation (born 1925-1945); 19%, Leading Boomers (born 1946-1955); 14%, Trailing Boomers (born 1956-1964); 38%, Generation X (born 1965-1981); 21%, Generation Y (born 1982-1998); and 2%, Generation Z (Digital Natives, born after 1995).



Sex: Nearly equal numbers of women (51%) and men (49%) attended the exhibition.

Group composition: About three in four respondents were visiting with at least one other adult (73%). Roughly one in five were visiting alone (19%) and one in ten were with at least one child under the age of eighteen (11%).

Latino: Just over two in five visitors self-identified as being of Hispanic or Latino origin (42%).

Race: Visitors were also asked to identify the race (or races) they considered themselves to be. Slightly fewer than three in four visitors selected white (71%) and slightly more than one in four selected African American/Black (28%). Fewer visitors self-identified as Asian (8%); Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (4%); or American Indian/Native Alaskan (3%).

Residence: Just under half of respondents were *local visitors* from the Washington D.C. metropolitan area (47%); about one in eight were visiting from another country (12%). The remaining two-fifths (41%) came from elsewhere in the U.S. Notably, *local visitors* were more likely to be *exhibition specific* visitors (67% compared to 30% of non-locals).

Discussion

The data suggest that visitors were satisfied with *American Sabor*, rating their overall experiences close to the Smithsonian average. Two experiences were significantly correlated with visitor satisfaction: *reflecting on the meaning of what I saw* and *seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things*. Visitors who selected either of these experiences were more likely to rate their overall experiences in the exhibition as *Superior*. More commonly, however, visitors were satisfied with the learning experiences offered by *American Sabor*. The most commonly cited especially satisfying experiences were *enriching my understanding* and *gaining information*.

Consistent with a previous study of SLC's *Southern Identity* exhibition, more visitors made their visits specifically to see *American Sabor* (47%) than knew about the Smithsonian Latino Center before their visits (28%). In other words, prior to their visits, more visitors knew about the exhibition than who was hosting it. Half of visitors who found out about the exhibition from *friends/family/colleagues* were unaware of the SLC until visiting *American Sabor* or taking the survey. This suggests that word of mouth publicity for exhibitions does not necessarily carry with it promotion of the Center.

Appendix A. Survey Questionnaire for American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music

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Smithsonian Latino Center
American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music

Is this your first visit to the Smithsonian? Yes No

Please rate your overall experience in this exhibition, *American Sabor*: Poor Fair Good Excellent Superior

Which experiences did you find especially satisfying in this exhibition? [Mark one or more.]

- Being moved by beauty
- Connecting with the emotional experiences of others
- Enriching my understanding
- Gaining information
- Recalling memories
- Reflecting on the meaning of what I saw
- Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things

Did you come to the Smithsonian today specifically to see this exhibition? Yes No

How did you find out about this exhibition? [Mark one or more]

- Visiting the Smithsonian today
- Friends/Family/Colleagues
- Advertisement
- Newspaper article/review
- Smithsonian Latino Center Twitter account
- Website (Which one: _____)
- Other: _____

When did you first find out that there is a Smithsonian Latino Center?

- Before this visit
- During this visit
- When I read this question

If you were in Washington in the next year, would you visit another Smithsonian Latino Center exhibition? No, I would not I might Yes, I definitely would

How interested are you in...

- ...interactive exhibits? Not at all Somewhat Very
- ...regional Latino stories? Not at all Somewhat Very

Are you male or female? Male Female

What is your age?

With whom are you visiting? [Mark one or more] I am alone Other adult(s) Child(ren) under 18

Do you live in the United States or another country? United States, Zip Code:

Another country, specify: _____

What race do you consider yourself to be? [Mark one or more]

- African American/Black
- American Indian/Native Alaskan
- Asian (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.)
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- White

Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin? Yes No

Please write additional comments you may have on the back of this sheet.

Thank you!

Admin
Ses Stat C R L I ID

Appendix B. Response Frequencies for
American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music

Is this your first visit to the Smithsonian?

72% No
28% Yes

Please rate your overall experience in this exhibition, *American Sabor*:

0% Poor
2% Fair
22% Good
53% Excellent
24% Superior

Which experiences did you find especially satisfying in this exhibition?
[Mark one or more.]

28% Being moved by beauty
43% Connecting with the emotional experiences of others
66% Enriching my understanding
62% Gaining information
54% Recalling memories
27% Reflecting on the meaning of what I saw
41% Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things

Did you come to the Smithsonian today specifically to see this exhibition?

53% No
47% Yes

How did you find out about this exhibition? [Mark one or more]

46% Visiting the Smithsonian today
29% Friends/Family/Colleagues
8% Advertisement
3% Newspaper article/review
0% Smithsonian Latino Center Twitter account
5% Website (Which one: _____)
16% Other: _____

When did you first find out that there is a Smithsonian Latino Center?

- 28% Before this visit
- 39% During this visit
- 33% When I read this Question

If you were in Washington in the next year, would you visit another Smithsonian Latino Center exhibition?

- 2% No
- 21% I might
- 76% Yes definitely

How interested are you in...

...interactive exhibits?

- 2% Not at all
- 26% Somewhat
- 72% Very

...regional Latino stories?

- 3% Not at all
- 32% Somewhat
- 66% Very

Are you male or female?

- 51% Female
- 49% Male

What is your age?

- 43 Average (Mean)
- 45 Median

- 1% GI (Born before 1925)
- 5% Silent (Born 1925-1945)
- 19% Leading Boom (Born 1946-1955)
- 14% Trailing Boom (Born 1956-1964)
- 38% Generation X (Born 1965-1981)
- 21% Generation Y (Born 1982-1995)
- 2% Generation Z (Digital Natives) (Born after 1995)

With whom are you visiting? [Mark one or more]

- 19% I am alone
- 73% Other adult(s)
- 11% Child(ren) under 18

Do you live in the United States or another country?

- 90% United States, Zip Code:
- 10% Another country, specify:

What race do you consider yourself to be? [Mark one or more]

- 28% African American/Black
- 3% American Indian/Native Alaskan
- 8% Asian (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.)
- 4% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 71% White

Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?

- 58% No
- 42% Yes