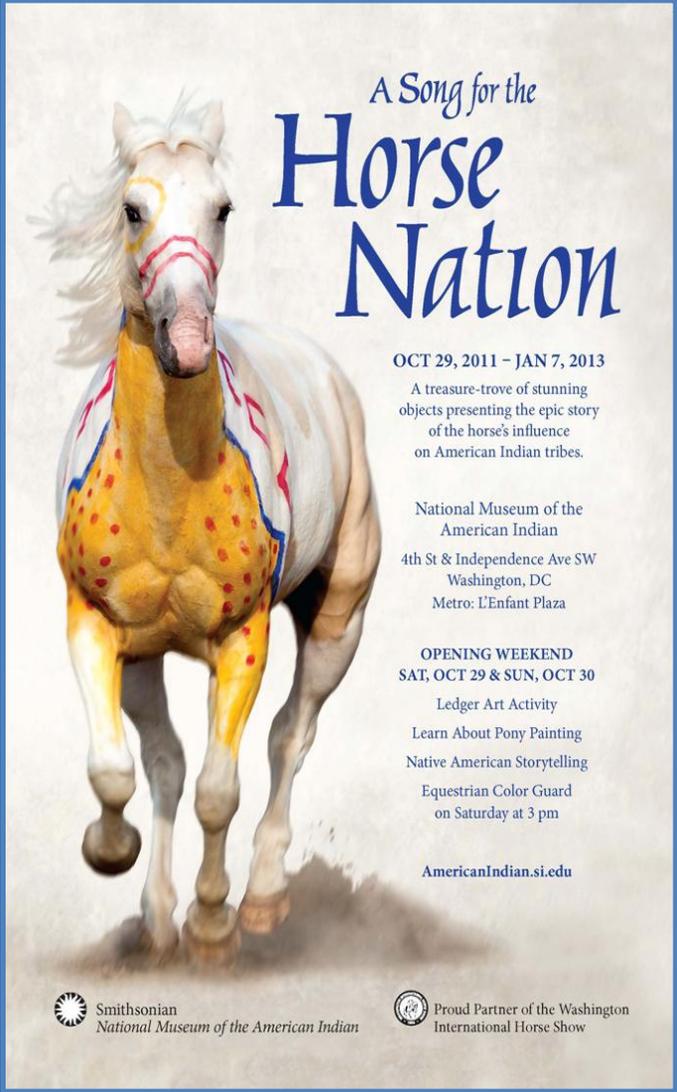


A Song for the Horse Nation

A Study of Visitors to an Exhibition at the National Museum of American Indian



A Song for the
**Horse
Nation**

OCT 29, 2011 - JAN 7, 2013
A treasure-trove of stunning
objects presenting the epic story
of the horse's influence
on American Indian tribes.

National Museum of the
American Indian
4th St & Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC
Metro: L'Enfant Plaza

OPENING WEEKEND
SAT, OCT 29 & SUN, OCT 30
Ledger Art Activity
Learn About Pony Painting
Native American Storytelling
Equestrian Color Guard
on Saturday at 3 pm

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 Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

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International Horse Show

November 2012

**Office of Policy & Analysis
Smithsonian Institution**

Abstract

This study of *A Song for the Horse Nation*, conducted by the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A), is one of a series of studies undertaken by the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The intent of these studies is to understand the museum's visitorship and to provide feedback to the exhibition program. In this case the study was also useful for special studies funded by the Latino Initiatives Pool, sponsored by the Smithsonian Latino Center. The results are based on exit surveys of visitors at the exhibition. From a random sample of 430 intercepted visitors, 333 completed surveys were collected (77%). About 8% visitors identified themselves as having a Hispanic or Latino origin.

The study shows that the ratings for this exhibition were slightly above the average for Smithsonian exhibitions. Ratings for *Horse Nation* were consistent with ratings of the exhibit when it was displayed in New York, when controlled for the percentage of international visitors who tend to grade exhibitions lower than visitors from the United States. With the small sample size of Latino visitors, it is not possible to explore possible differences between the experiences of Latino and non-Latino visitors.

Summary

This study of *A Song for the Horse Nation (Horse Nation)*, conducted by the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A), is one of a series of studies undertaken by the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The intent of these studies is to understand the museum's visitorship and to provide feedback to the exhibition program. In this case the study was also useful for special studies funded by the Latino Initiatives Pool, sponsored by the Smithsonian Latino Center. The results are based on exit surveys of visitors at the exhibition. From a random sample of 430 intercepted visitors, 333 completed surveys (77%). About 6% (24) visitors identified themselves as having a Hispanic or Latino origin.

The study shows that overall visitors to the *Horse Nation* were satisfied with their overall experience in the exhibition. 17% of respondents to the survey rated the overall experience as Superior and 60% rated it as Excellent. This is slightly above the Smithsonian average of overall experience ratings. Visitors to the Mall museum rated the exhibition higher than when *Horse Nation* was evaluated at the George Gustav Heye Center. However, when we control for the percentage of international visitors, who tend to grade exhibitions lower than visitors from the United States, ratings of the exhibition in both locations were about the same.

Survey respondents were asked to rate four experiences within the exhibition: *Seeing rare, uncommon, or valuable things*, *Good place to spend time with others*, *Enriching my understanding*, *Experiencing stories of Indian life*. The two experiences that got the highest superior ratings were *Enriching my understanding* (25% superior) and *Experiencing stories of Indian life* (25% superior). Visitors who rated one or more of these experiences as superior were more likely to rate the overall experience in the exhibition as superior.

Another finding relates to the effectiveness of the Metro marketing campaign that was running during the time of the *Horse Nation* study. Survey results show that the most popular way people found out about the exhibit was through advertisements in the Metro Center station. Visitors who had been to the Metro Center station around the time that they visited *Horse Nation* were likely to have come to NMAI specifically to see *Horse Nation* than those who did not visit the Metro Center station. Visitors who were at the Metro Center station were more likely to be first time visitors.

As Latino visitors only accounted for 7% of our sample population, the small sample size makes it impossible to compare the experiences of Latino and non-Latino visitors.

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Preface

This study is one of a series the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) is conducting at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The purpose of this study was to evaluate public reaction to the exhibition *A Song for the Horse Nation*.

At NMAI, I would like to thank Carolyn Rapkiewicz and Amy Van Allen who worked closely with OP&A, for proposing a series of studies and ensuring their efficient implementation. At OP&A, the study was under the overall supervision of Zahava D. Doering, ably assisted by Sarah Block. Stephanie Chen, an intern, reviewed the report and made many helpful suggestions. OP&A intern Hyemin Kim helped collect the data and assisted in its processing. Sarah Block deserves special recognition for undertaking most of the analysis and drafting this report.

Carole Neves, Director
Office of Policy and Analysis

Background

“The story of the relationship of Native peoples and horses is one of the great sagas of human contact with the animal world. Native peoples have traditionally regarded the animals in our lives as fellow creatures with which a common destiny is shared. When American Indians encountered horses—which some tribes call the *Horse Nation*—they found an ally, inspiring and useful in times of peace, and intrepid in times of war. Horses transformed Native life and became a central part of many tribal cultures.

By the 1800s, American Indian horsemanship was legendary, and the survival of many Native peoples, especially on the Great Plains, depended on horses. Native peoples paid homage to horses by incorporating them into their cultural and spiritual lives, and by creating art that honored the bravery and grace of the horse. The glory days of the horse culture were brilliant but brief, lasting just over a century. The bond between American Indians and the *Horse Nation*, however, has remained strong through the generations.”¹

This exhibition tells the story of the *Horse Nation* by focusing on the ways in which various *Indian Nations* adopted the horse and their history with it.

Methodology

Between May 16 and May 24, 2012 OP&A staff, administered the survey. Intercepts of participants were conducted just outside the exhibition door. During the survey periods, a total of 14 hours, 917 visitors exited. Potential interviewees were approached, asked for their participation, and handed a clipboard with the questionnaire and a pencil; i.e., for self-administration. From the exiting visitors, a total of 430 were intercepted, and 333 surveys were completed, yielding a response rate of 77%. (See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire and Appendix B for frequencies of responses.)

Findings

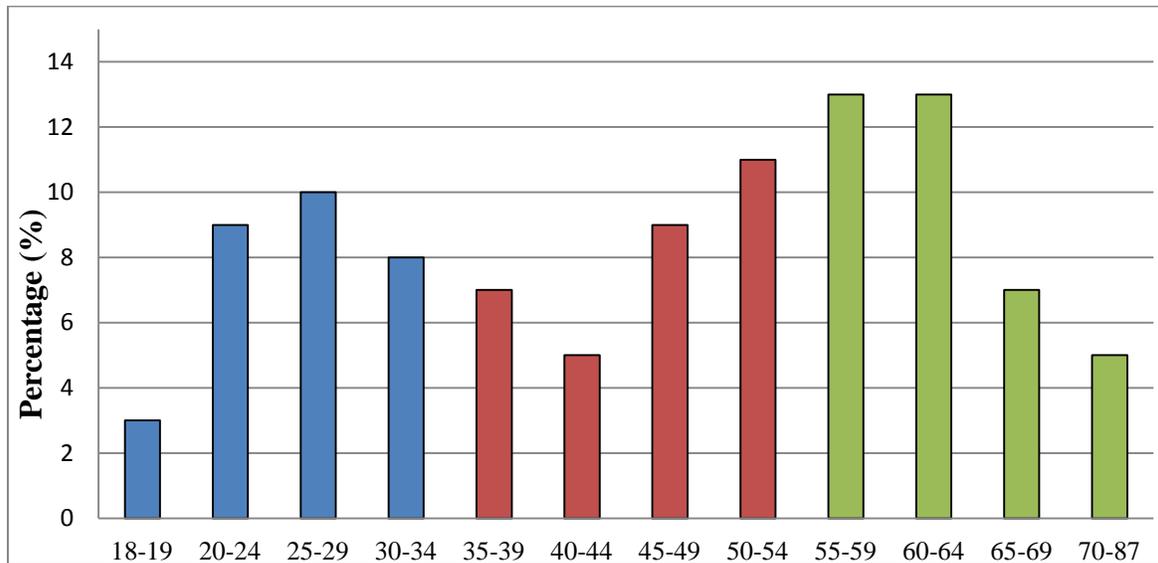
Demographic Characteristics

Age: Of the 424 visitors, 402 (95%) provided their age. The range of ages was between 18 and 87 years old. The average age of respondents was 46 and their median age was 48. Based on the distribution of ages given by the visitors, there are bimodal peaks for the age ranges 25-29 years old (10%), 55-59 years old (13%), and 60-64 years old (13%). (See Figure 1, next page.)

Sex: Approximately two out of five respondents were men (41%) and three out of five respondents were female (58%).

¹ From <http://nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/horsenation/> accessed November 4, 2012.

Figure 1. Age Distribution of Visitors, by 5-Year Age Groups



Group composition: Four out of five respondents were visiting with at least one other person (81%). Out of these, two-fifths (43%) came with one other person, one-fourth (27%) came with two others, one-fifth (20%) came with three or four others, and the rest (10%) were of smaller group sizes. Roughly three out of four visitors, who were with at least one other person, were with an adult (78%), 4% were there with youth 13 to 17, 8% were with youth 6 to 12 and 3% were there with youth under 6 years of age.

Latino: As noted above, 24 individuals or 6% of respondents identified as having a Hispanic or Latino origin. These visitors were asked to specify their origins further: 7 people identified as Mexican, 2 as Bolivian, 2 as Puerto Rican, 1 as Cuban, 1 as Dominican, none as Salvadoran, and 11 marked in the Other category.

The percentage of Latino visitors to the *Chocolate Festival* was nearly twice that of *Horse Nation* (13% vs. 7%). There was an even higher percentage of Latino visitors to the *Bolivian Festival* (17% overall); more than half (10% of the overall total) were Bolivian.²

Language: Visitors to *Horse Nation* primarily spoke English (85%); 2% of respondents indicated that their primary language is Spanish and 13% said that their primary language is something besides English and Spanish.

Residence: Slightly more than four out of five respondents were from the United States (83%)

Origins: Among both US and non-US visitors, 94% identified themselves as non-Hispanic or Latino origin; while the rest (7%) marked that they were of Hispanic or Latino origin.

² The questionnaire choices of detailed Latino ethnic classification were different for this survey than those used on the *Chocolate Festival* questionnaire. However, the overall percentage of Latino visitors is still comparable between studies.

These data show that there is no statistical difference in where visitors reside and whether they are of Hispanic or Latino origins.

Ratings

Visitors were asked to rate their overall experiences at *Horse Nation* on a five point-scale that has been used by OP&A across Smithsonian exhibitions and museums: *Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent, and Superior*. In general, visitors who are basically satisfied with their visits tend to mark *Excellent*. Visitors who are critical tend to select one of the lower three categories—*Poor, Fair, or Good*. Those who have very positive responses tend to mark *Superior*.

Slightly less than one in five visitors to *Horse Nation* rated their experiences as Superior (17%); three in five selected Excellent (60%); and slightly more than one in five visitors rated the exhibit lower (Good, 21%; Fair, 2%; Poor, 0%). This distribution is slightly above the Smithsonian average of overall experience ratings. These ratings are slightly lower than the average ratings of NMAI exhibits at the National Mall location.

Figure 2. *Horse Nation* Rating , Average NMAI and Smithsonian-wide ratings

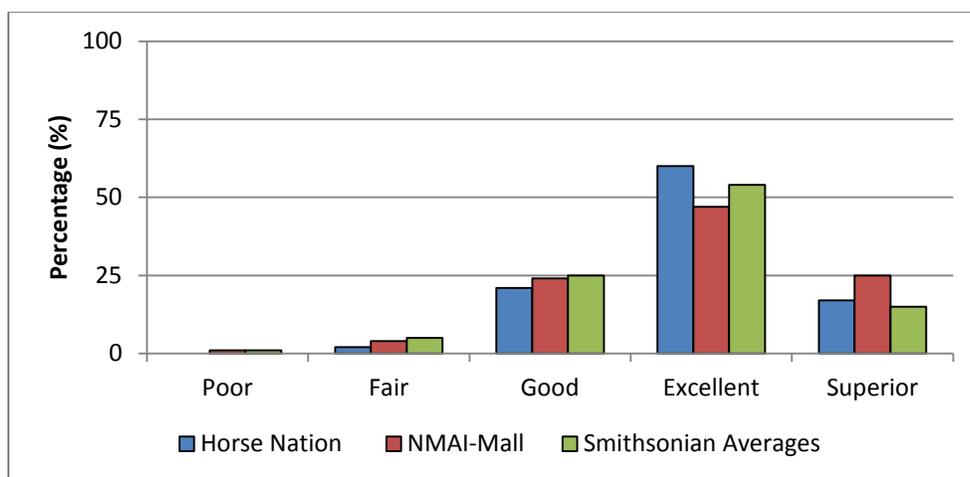
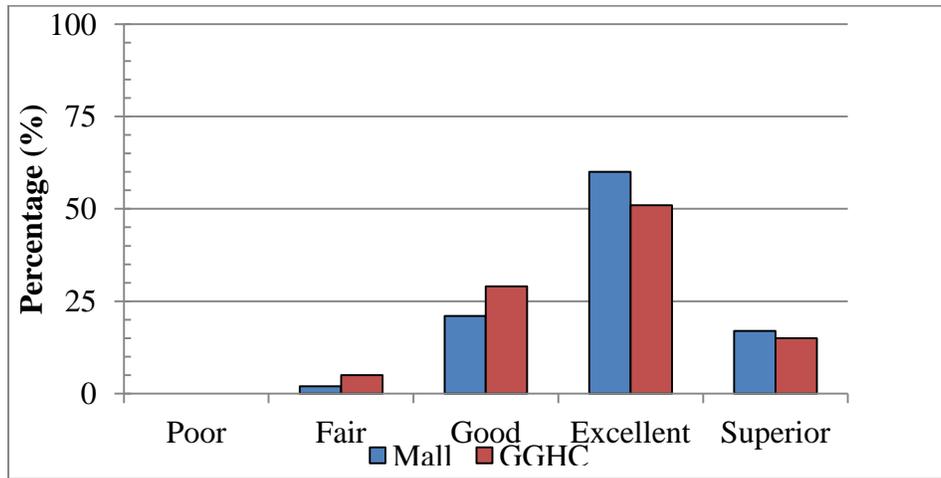
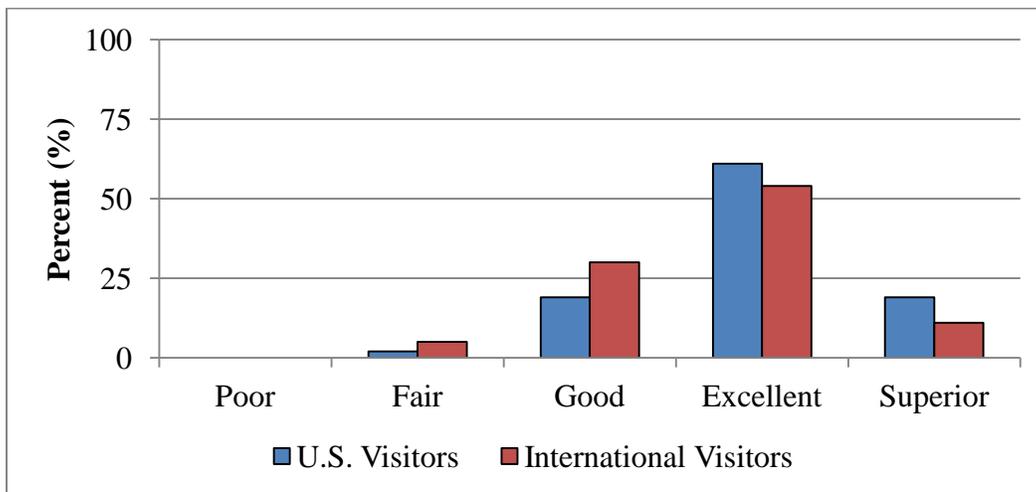


Figure 3. Overall experience in *A Song for the Horse Nation*



Mall museum visitors rated the exhibition higher than when the exhibition was on display and evaluated at the George Gustav Heyes Center in New York (Superior, 15%; Excellent, 51%, Good, 29%; Excellent, 5%; Poor, 0%). A possible explanation for this difference is the percentage of international visitors to the Washington, D.C. location (18% of total visitors) compared to the New York location (36% of the total visitors). International visitors tend to use stricter strict definitions in rating, and in both locations were less likely than visitors from the U.S. to rate *Horse Nation* as superior (Washington, D.C.: international 11% vs U.S. 19%; New York: international 8% vs. U.S. 18%).³

Figure 4. Overall rating by U.S. and International Visitors



³ There were a total of 264 respondents who gave an overall exhibition rating and indicated that they resided within the United States. Of the visitors who live in the US, a majority (61%) rated the exhibition as *Excellent*. There were 51 (19%) who gave a *Superior*, 49 (19%) who gave a *Good*, and 4 (2%) who rated the experience as *Fair*. In comparison, there are 57 respondents who reside outside the US and provided an overall experience rating. Of the visitors who live outside the US, 31 (54%) gave an *Excellent* rating while the *Good* rating had 17 (30%), *Superior* had 6 (11%), and 3 (5%) rated their experience as *Fair*. The Chi-Square test for the cross tabulations between ratings and where museum visitors reside indicate a statistical significance with an alpha of 0.05.

This tendency has been documented in other Smithsonian studies. The rating for *Horse Nation* was about equal in both locations when international visitors were compared to international visitors and U.S. visitors to U.S. visitors.

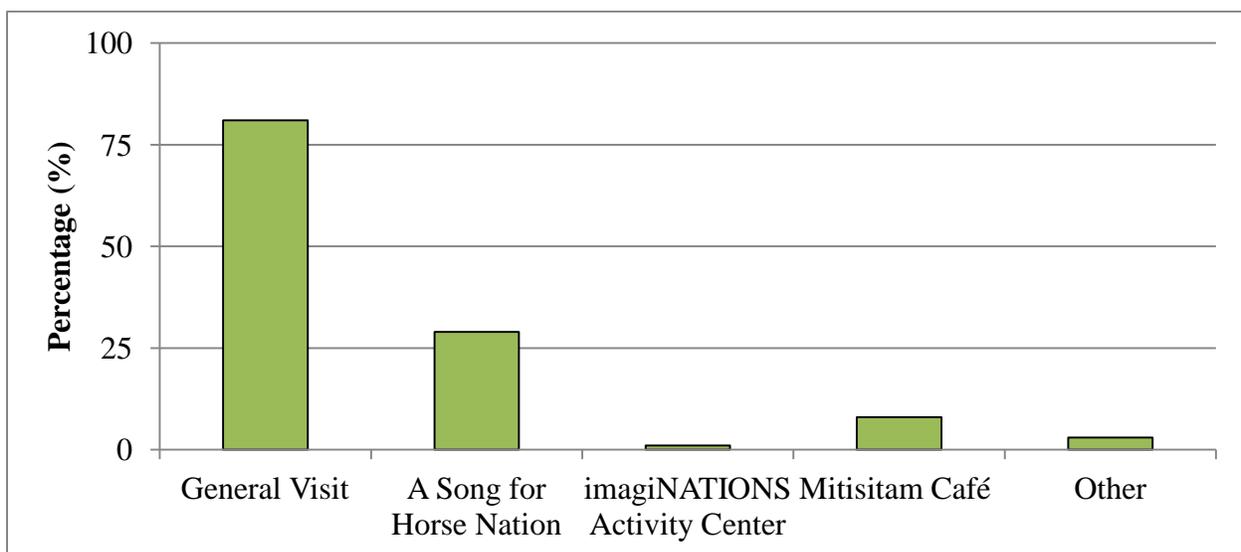
As noted above, there were a small number of Latino visitors to the exhibition. Thus, it is not possible to statistically compare Latino and non-Latino ratings or preferences reliably. That being noted, it appears that Latino visitors to *Horse Nation* rated it higher than both non-Latino visitors and the Smithsonian average (*Superior*, 24%; *Excellent*, 62%; lower than *Excellent*, 14%).

Reasons for Coming to NMAI

Approximately one four out of five visitors to *Horse Nation* were making a first visit to NMAI (First Time Visitors 77% , Repeat Visitors, 23%). Of repeat visitors, one out ten had been to NMAI in the last 12 months (Visited in the last 12 Months, 10%) and 14% had been to NMAI more than 12 months earlier.

About three out of ten respondents were visiting NMAI specifically to see *Horse Nation*. From here to the end of the report, these visitors will be referred to as exhibition specific visitors (Exhibition Specific, 29%). Approximately eight out of ten visitors indicated that they came to NMAI for a general visit (General Visitors, 81%). Eight percent of visitors came for the Mitsitam Café; less than two percent went to the *imaginationATIONS* Activity Center, while three percent indicated that they came to see something other than the listed options. Respondents were allowed to mark all choices that applied so it is not possible to say what the primary motivation was for visitors who responded that they had come for more than one reason.

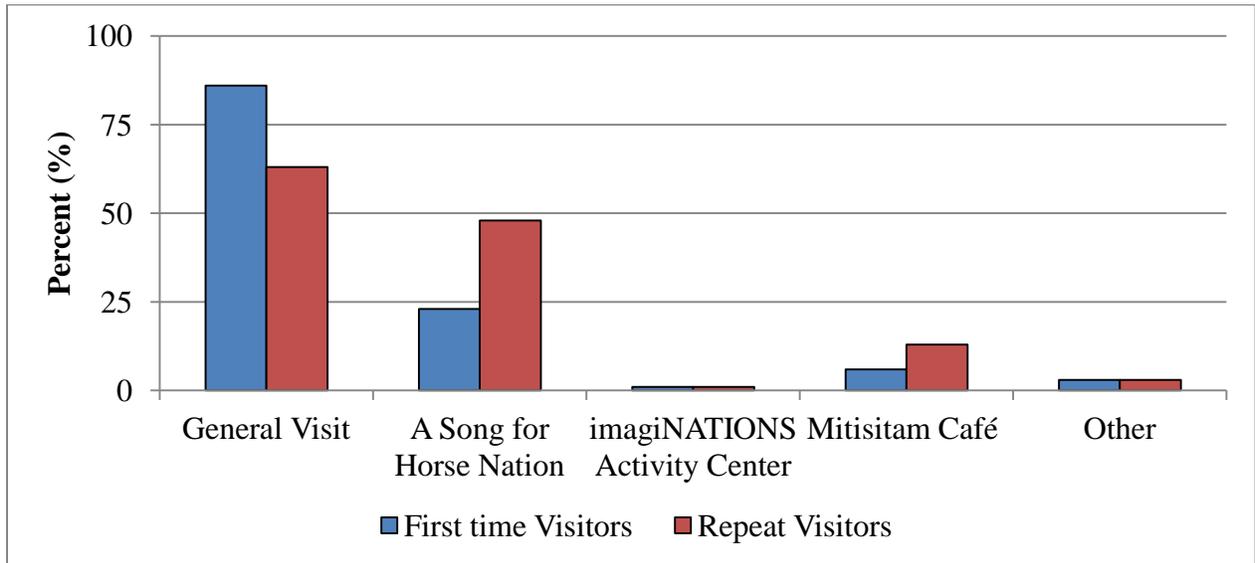
Figure 5. Reasons for Visiting the National Museum of the American Indian



The reason for visit can be further divided into whether the respondent was a first time or repeat visitor. It is important to note that conclusions cannot be drawn regarding the visiting frequency due to the low number of observations prevalent among the *imagiNATIONS* Activity Center, Mitsitam Café, and Other categories.

Repeat visitors were more likely to be exhibition specific visitors than first time visitors. Of the 249 first time visitors, 86% indicated they came for a general visit, 23% came specifically to see Horse Nation, 6% came for the Mitsitam Café, 1% came for the *imagiNATIONS* Activity Center, 3% came for other reasons. Of the 75 repeat visitors, 63% came for a general visit, 48% came specifically for Horse Nation, 1% came for the *imagiNATIONS* Activity Center, 13% came for the Mitsitam Café and 3% for other reasons.

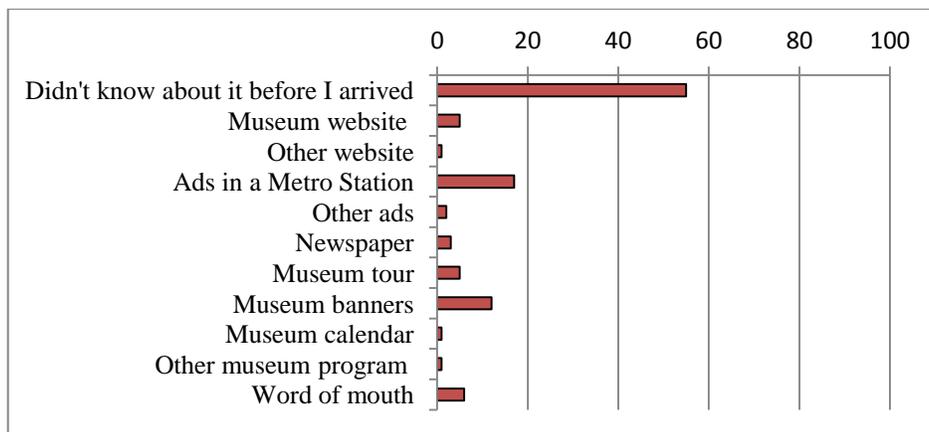
Figure 6. Reasons for Visits by First Time and Repeat Visitors



Awareness of A Song for the Horse Nation

Visitors were asked how they found out about *Horse Nation*. They were able to mark all responses that applied. Slightly more than half of respondents were not aware of the exhibition before entering the museum (55%). Of those who were previously aware, on average visitors marked one option. Among the visitors who did hear about the exhibit, most saw advertisements in a Metro station (17%). The other responses in descending order: Museum banners outside (12%), Word of mouth (6%), Museum website or social media (5%), Museum tour (5%), Newspaper or magazine article (3%), Museum calendar or mailing (1%) and Other museum program or event (1%).

Figure 6. How visitors found out about A Song for the Horse Nation (In Percent)



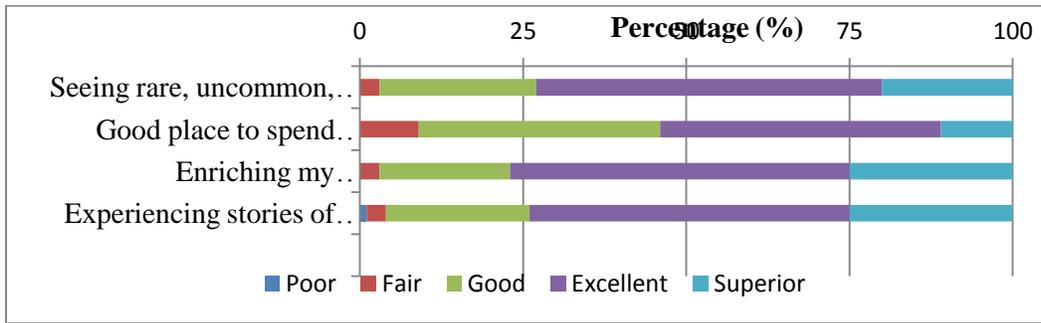
To assist in the collection of information for the NMAI Marketing study, visitors were asked if “Today were you in the Metro Center station?” to compare the effectiveness of advertising in the metro stations and, in this case, the *Song for the Horse Nation* exhibition with other forms of communication. The figure below illustrates respondents, who had knowledge of the exhibit prior to entering the museum and their frequency at the Metro Center station during the week – *Not at Metro Center* station, *Today*, or in the *Past Week*. Over 38% of all visitors who had knowledge of the exhibit found out about it at Metro stations, and 62% of all visitors who had knowledge of the exhibit found out about it in other ways. Most visitors who knew of the exhibition from the Metro ads were at the Metro Center station within the past week (79%) as opposed to those (37%) who were also at the Metro Center station within the past week but found out about the exhibit in another form. If respondents were at Metro Center station today, they also most likely heard about the exhibit in another form of advertisement (49%) compared to the 16% who knew of the exhibit from the metro stations. Those who were not at the metro during the past week of which they visited the museum most likely found out about the exhibit in another form of communication.

Notably, visitors who had been in the Metro Center station sometime during the week of when they came to see *Horse Nation* were more likely to be Exhibition Specific visitors than those who had not gone to the Metro Center.

Individual Experience Ratings

Visitors were asked to rate several experiences in *A Song for the Horse Nation*. These included *Seeing rare, uncommon, or valuable things*, *Good place to spend time with others*, *Enriching my understanding*, *Experiencing stories of Indian life*. The two experiences that got the highest superior ratings were *Enriching my understanding* (25% superior) and *Experiencing stories of Indian life* (25% superior). The other two experiences received less frequent superior ratings (*Seeing rare, uncommon or valuable things*, 20%; *Good place to spend time with others*, 11%). The experience of the *Horse Nation* exhibit as a *Good place to spend time with others* had a more varied ratings distribution, concentrating in *Excellent* and *Good*, as opposed to the other experiences. Visitors who rated one or more individual experiences as superior were more likely to rate the overall exhibition experience as superior. See Figure.1 for complete ratings.

Figure 7. Individual Experience Ratings



Discussion

Visitor ratings of *Horse Nation* showed that overall it was rated as an average exhibit in comparison to other Smithsonian and NMAI exhibits. Ratings for this exhibit were consistent with ratings of the exhibit when it was displayed in New York, when controlling for the percentage of international visitors who tend to grade exhibitions lower than visitors from the United States. In this study, most other demographic characteristics did not correlate with rating, meaning that no characteristic such as sex, race, number of previous visits were indicators of likeliness to rate *Horse Nation* higher than visitors without that characteristic. Only visitors who rated individual experiences in the exhibit as superior were more likely to give the overall experience a superior rating, especially visitors who had superior experiences of ‘Enriching my understanding’ or ‘Experiencing stories of Indian life.’

Another noteworthy finding is the apparent effectiveness of the Metro marketing campaign. While it is not possible to determine if visiting the Metro Center station and seeing the advertisements caused visitors to come to the museum who would not have come without seeing the ads, survey results show that the most popular way people found out about the exhibit was through advertisements in a Metro station. Visitors who had been to the Metro Center station around the time that they visited *Horse Nation* were likely to have come to NMAI specifically to see *Horse Nation* than those who did not visit the Metro Center station. Visitors who were at the Metro Center station were more likely to be first time visitors. The Metro Center advertisements, which highlighted the *Horse Nation* exhibit, may have encouraged people who had not previously been to NMAI to go to the museum and to see the exhibition. This indicates an effective marketing campaign.

Appendix A

Questionnaire: *A Song for the Horse Nation*

- Have you been to this museum before today?**
- No
 - Yes, within the last 12 months
 - Yes, more than 12 months ago

- Which of the following did you come to see today?**
[Mark one or more]
- General visit
 - A Song for the Horse Nation*
 - imaginationATIONS* Activity Center
 - The Mitsitam Café
 - Other: _____

- Please rate your overall experience at this exhibition, *A Song for the Horse Nation***
- Poor
 - Fair
 - Good
 - Excellent
 - Superior

- How did you know about *A Song for the Horse Nation*?**
- Museum website and/or social media
 - Other websites and/or social media
 - Advertisements in a Metro Station
 - Other advertisements
 - Newspaper or magazine article
 - Museum tour
 - Museum banners outside
 - Museum calendar or mailing
 - Other museum program or event
 - Word of mouth
 - I didn't know about *A Song for the Horse Nation* before today

How would you rate the following aspects of Horse Nation?

Seeing rare, uncommon, or valuable things

Good place to spend time with others

Enriching my understanding

Experiencing stories of Indian life

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior
Seeing rare, uncommon, or valuable things	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Good place to spend time with others	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Enriching my understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Experiencing stories of Indian life	<input type="checkbox"/>				

- Are you alone or are you with others?** I am alone I am with others

- If you are with others, please indicate the** Adults age 18 and over

<u>number</u> of people you are with.	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth age 13-17 <input type="checkbox"/> Children 6-12 <input type="checkbox"/> Children under 6
Are you male or female?	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
What is your primary language?	<input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
What is your age?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you live in the United States or another country?	<input type="checkbox"/> United States, specify zip code: <input type="checkbox"/> Another country, specify: _____
Today, were you in the Metro Center subway station?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not today but in the past week or so
Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin? [Mark one or more]	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Cuban <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Dominican <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Mexican/Chicano <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Puerto Rican <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Salvadoran <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Bolivian <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Other: _____
What race do you consider yourself to be? [Mark one or more]	<input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/ Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White

Appendix B
Frequencies for a *Song for the Horse Nation*

Have you been to this museum before today?	77% No 9% Yes, within the last 12 months 14% Yes, more than 12 months ago																														
Which of the following did you come to see today? [Mark one or more]	79% General visit 29% <i>A Song for the Horse Nation</i> 1% <i>imagiNATIONS</i> Activity Center 8% The Mitsitam Café 3% Other: _____																														
Please rate your overall experience at this exhibition, <i>A Song for the Horse Nation</i>	0% Poor 2% Fair 21% Good 60% Excellent 17% Superior																														
How did you know about <i>A Song for the Horse Nation</i>?	5% Museum website and/or social media 1% Other websites and/or social media 17% Advertisements in a Metro Station 2% Other advertisements 3% Newspaper or magazine article 5% Museum tour 12% Museum banners outside 1% Museum calendar or mailing 1% Other museum program or event 6% Word of mouth 55% I didn't know about <i>A Song for the Horse Nation</i> before today																														
How would you rate the following aspects of Horse Nation?	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 20%;"></th> <th style="width: 10%;">Poor</th> <th style="width: 10%;">Fair</th> <th style="width: 10%;">Good</th> <th style="width: 10%;">Excellent</th> <th style="width: 10%;">Superior</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">Seeing rare, uncommon, or valuable things</td> <td>0%</td> <td>3%</td> <td>24%</td> <td>53%</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">Good place to spend time with others</td> <td>0%</td> <td>9%</td> <td>37%</td> <td>43%</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">Enriching my understanding</td> <td>0%</td> <td>3%</td> <td>20%</td> <td>52%</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">Experiencing stories of Indian life</td> <td>1%</td> <td>3%</td> <td>22%</td> <td>49%</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior	Seeing rare, uncommon, or valuable things	0%	3%	24%	53%	20%	Good place to spend time with others	0%	9%	37%	43%	11%	Enriching my understanding	0%	3%	20%	52%	25%	Experiencing stories of Indian life	1%	3%	22%	49%	25%
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Experiencing stories of Indian life	1%	3%	22%	49%	25%																										

Are you alone or are you with others?	19% I am alone 81% I am with others
If you are with others, please indicate the <u>number</u> of people you are with.	78% Adults age 18 and over 4% Youth age 13-17 8% Children 6-12 3% Children under 6
Are you male or female?	42% Male 58% Female
What is your primary language?	85% English 2% Spanish 13% Other _____
What is your age?	Mean: 46 years old Median: 48 years old
Do you live in the United States or another country?	82% United States 18% Another country, specify: _____
Today, were you in the Metro Center subway station?	4% Yes 44% No 48% Not today but in the past week or so
Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin?	93% No
[Mark one or more]	1% Yes, Cuban 1% Yes, Dominican 2% Yes, Mexican/Chicano 1% Yes, Puerto Rican 0% Yes, Salvadoran 1% Yes, Bolivian 3% Yes, Other: _____
What race do you consider yourself to be?	2% African American/Black 4% American Indian/ Alaska Native
[Mark one or more]	8% Asian (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.) 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 89% White
Are you a Charter Member of NMAI?	2% Yes 98% No
