

# Worcester Art Museum: Audience Engagement Study



A Major Qualifying Project

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of this project was to define what a sustainable family audience looks like for WAM and to make recommendations on how the Museum can actively engage with them. We hope that the recommendations will help guide the future development of programs and exhibits that can be tailored to fit the specific needs of the family audience.

To complete our goal, we accomplished three objectives:

1. We described the current interactions of visitors to WAM
2. We developed an understanding of the demographic profiles of current visitors
3. We explored what prompts patrons to visit and not visit WAM

To achieve the first two objectives we used observations to gain an insight to the ethnographic tendencies of the current visitors to WAM. This allowed us to see what trends we could find in terms of appearance of the visitors and the way they interacted. The visitors were also able to fill out surveys that were on iPads throughout the museum. These questions have helped us determine a better demographic profile of the visitors to WAM. We then conducted interviews with multiple participants who had never visited WAM before. This helped give us insight on what elements are hindering these potential visitors from going to the museum. We also complemented the findings through using secondary research focusing on what other art museums have done to engage family audiences. This helped us determine some techniques that may be applicable to WAM.

Analysis of the findings yielded the following conclusions:

- Spaces and activities for the family audience
  - Designated area for children is important; emphasis on young children

- Dedicated design of and access to family space is important
- Marketing Communications
  - Lack of communicated expectations between visitors and the Museum
  - Preparation for a museum visit is not clearly defined for visitors
  - Directing a visit is not communicated well by the museum; visitors feel intrusive
  - Word-of-mouth is the most effective method

Based on this analysis, we developed the following set of recommendations to define what a sustainable family audience looks like for WAM and were able to make some recommendations on how the Museum can actively engage with them.

- The recommended definition of a sustainable family audience for WAM is any combination of adults accompanied by children between the ages of 6-16 that have a shared desire to engage in fun, creative learning activities together.
- Develop a Frequent Family Pass program to encourage multiple visits
- Provide clearly designated spaces for families
- Offer family friendly activities and exhibits
- Revise hours of operation to better suit the family audience
- Foster relationships with area school districts and the faculty of schools
- Use of social media and opinion leaders to promote word-of-mouth about family events with interest to children

It is our hope that with this report and recommendations, WAM can successfully define their family audience and consider new ways to actively engage with this audience.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Museums were traditionally created to serve several roles that include collection, preservation, and education (Lewis 2004). Many museums are still sought out as destination points for these reasons by tourists and historians. But, over the course of the past few decades museums have seen a shift from the traditional roles and have begun to incorporate more different modern functions for society. Museums are using collections to stimulate social conversations that enrich the dialogue of current events and are creating new ways to spur development through enhancing the cultural cohesion of communities (NMDC 2010).

The Worcester Art Museum (WAM) would like to explore ideas for growth in the community with the family audience being the main focus. As other art museums continue to look for ways to engage new audiences, WAM hopes to create an environment that is accessible to everyone and can be a place that families will enjoy. Providing an opportunity for families to have a conversation about art will create the type of connection that fosters further discussion with other families and will keep the attending families coming back. Family participation in WAM will also create a dynamic community relationship to help grow involvement of all audiences.

Many changes are already underway at WAM and Matthias Waschek, Director, notes in his highlights of Fiscal Year 2013 that new opportunities are helping to ensure long-term sustainability. Since WAM has recently integrated a new collection from the decommissioned Higgins Armory Museum, there have been plans made to construct a permanent exhibit for the armor and other facility upgrades to help diversify audiences and income streams (Director's Report 2013).

Showcasing arms and armor is only one way that WAM has set out to engage family audiences, and they would like to find more innovative ways to develop approaches for other

exhibits and areas of the museum. In accordance with the museum's vision and mission, the endeavor is to draw in more families that will enjoy, appreciate, and interact with all aspects of the museum. WAM wants to provide the family audience with the best experience possible, but it remains difficult to identify and create programs to reach such a broad and loosely defined subset of the population.

Our goal is to provide a working definition of "family" for WAM and to also develop recommendations of how the museum can tailor exhibits and programs to engage this audience. To achieve this, the following research questions have been established that we wish to answer:

**Research Questions:**

1. Why do current family visitors attend WAM?
2. Why do family visitors not attend WAM?
3. What defines a sustainable family audience for WAM?

We answered these questions by describing the current interactions of family visitors at WAM, understanding the demographic profiles of current family visitors, and exploring the motivations that prompt patrons to visit WAM.

## CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Demographics of Worcester and Surrounding Areas

The United States Census Bureau published data from the 2010 Census that shows a fairly even distribution of age ranges throughout the city of Worcester for the categories of 0-19, 20-34, 35-54, and 55+. Each segment represents approximately a quarter of the total population percentage with ages 0-19 being higher than the others as seen in Figure 1. The age distribution is fairly similar to the national statistics with a difference being that the range of 55+ is higher than the others nationally. One fact to note about the age distribution in Worcester is that the higher percentage of 0-19 is higher partly due to the estimated 36,000 college students (worcestermass.org) that live in both on and off-campus residences because the United States Census defines that students be counted at their “usual residence” which is where they eat and sleep a majority of the time (<http://2010.census.gov/2010census/about/how-we-count.php>). Worcester residents also have an even gender distribution with 50.7% of all people identified as female which is comparable to the Massachusetts total of 51.5% of people identified as female (censusviewer.com).

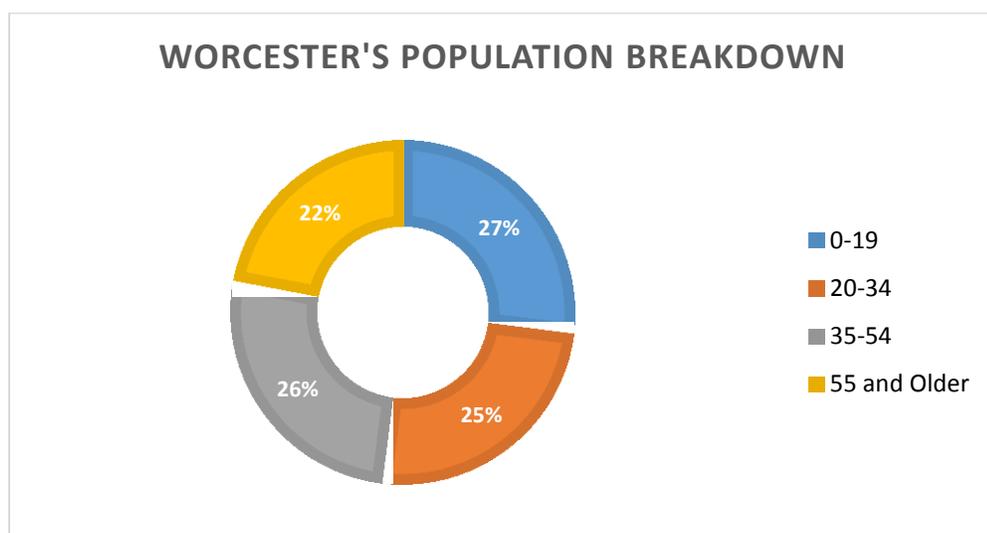


Figure 1: Worcester's population by age. Sourced from the US Census Bureau, 2010 US Census

The Census also outlines household data for the 69,859 households in the city that shows a median household income of \$45,679 which is 31% below the state median and 14% below the national median (quickfacts.census.gov). It may seem obvious that lower income households would have less money to spend on cultural activities but the lower than average median income could indicate that there are other negative effects to the amount of leisure time a family has. As suggested in the empirical modeling of Bloeman and Stancanelli (2009), parents that earn higher wages were found to have more time to allocate towards housework, childcare, and pure leisure. Functions were also developed to describe spousal roles and were able to show the opportunity cost of having a parent out of the household at work.

Other relevant demographic information from the Census includes the higher than average amount of minorities that live in the Worcester area. The percentage of persons in Worcester not classified as “white alone” is 40.4% compared with 33.9% in Massachusetts and 37.4% nationally. Worcester has been projected to see a population growth rate of 6.7% over the next 20 years and this will be below the projected national population growth rate of 15.6% (UMDI 2010). The effect of the slower growth rate has been felt by Massachusetts in general as it had already lost a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives after the 2010 census due to a decline in population. This makes it vitally important that WAM understands how audiences are changing as the overall number of area residents will continue to grow in the future.

## **2.2 Current Audience Profile of the Worcester Art Museum**

Over the spring and summer of 2014, WAM conducted audience surveys to capture data on a variety of topics. The goal of these surveys was to find out more about the summer audience at the museum and to look at the regions that non-member patrons were coming from. The data was compiled into two presentations representing a Free Summer Questionnaire and a Zip Code Analysis that we used as resources for the state of the current audience at the museum. The

following examination of the two data sets helps frame some of the existing knowledge about the visitors of the museum.

### **2.2.1 Free Summer Questionnaire**

For the days between July 24<sup>th</sup> and August 30<sup>th</sup> 2014, a questionnaire was used to help profile the audiences at the museum. Random visitors were approached and asked a series of 9 questions that were staged for a mix of closed and open-ended responses. The questions asked were, “Are you a current member of WAM? Where are you from? How old are you? Annual household income? Did others join you today? How did you learn about Free Summer? Primary reason for visiting today? How much time was spent at WAM? How often do you visit?” There was no record of gender breakdown to use for data comparison.

About 72% of the 700 random visitors responded to the questionnaire and 9% of these visitors were self-identified as current members of WAM. A predominant amount of visitors came from Massachusetts as only 17% identified that they reside outside Massachusetts. Looking at the cluster plot of responses seen in Figure 2, it is clear that most of the visitors who reside in Massachusetts also reside within 25 miles of Worcester.

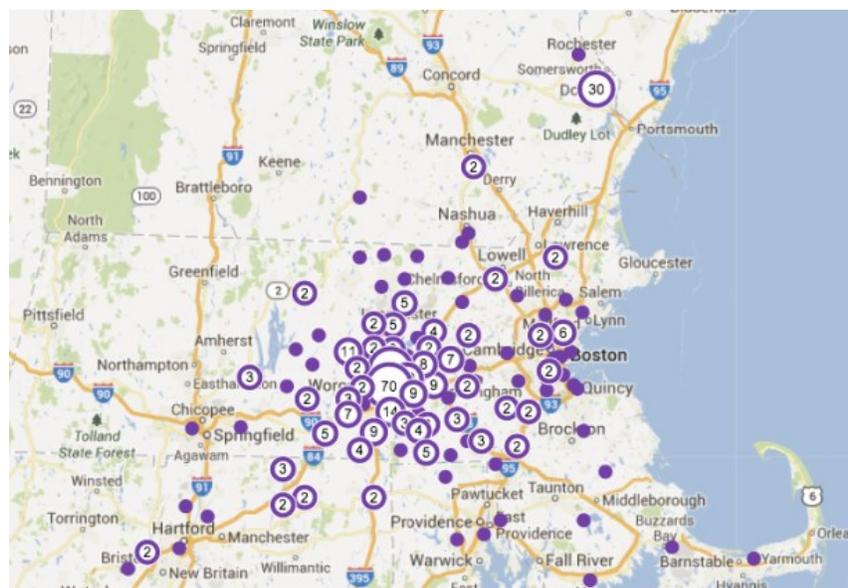


Figure 2: Geographic Mapping of Visitors to WAM during summer 2014

Question five asked if others joined the respondent in their visit and 46% answered that they were visiting with their family while the remaining 54% were distributed through the categories of individual, couple, friend, and other. The family visitation peaked on Saturdays and Sundays with the lowest percentage of families visiting during the week.

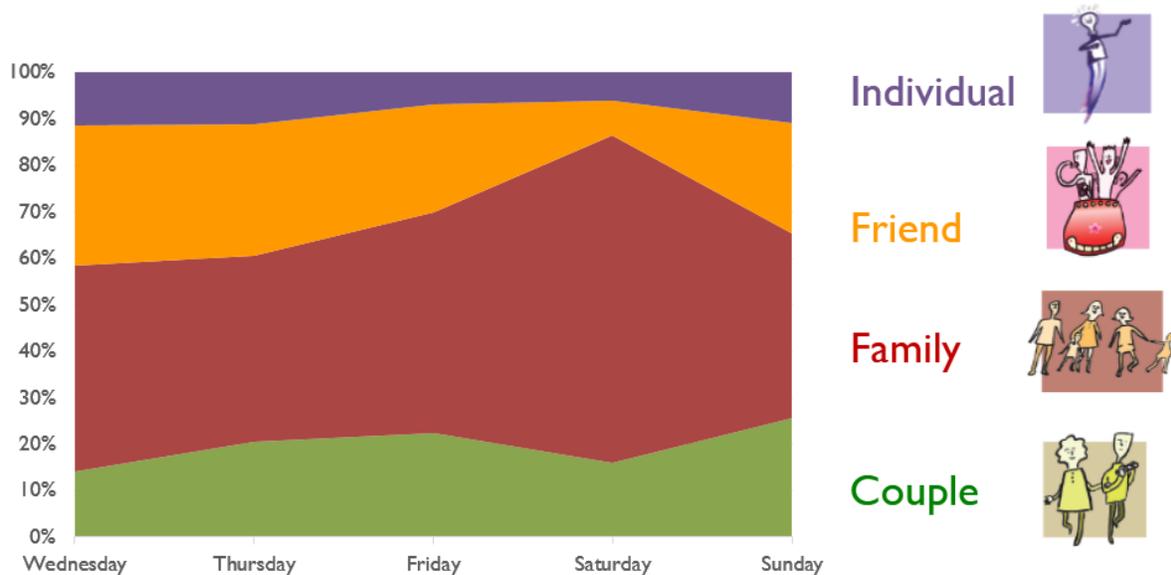


Figure 3: Lone Vs. Group Audiences at WAM per day of week in Summer 2014

Question six asked the visitors how they learned about the Free Summer program. The majority of 29% learned about the program through word-of-mouth from family or friends with Internet being a close second at 23%. The remaining sources were split between various forms of print and digital media, but the one unexpected answer was to see that 14% of respondents said that they had never heard about the program. The lack of knowledge about the free admission program shows that these visitors had either not been exposed to any of the advertising channels or that they had possibly disregarded the ad when encountered or the message was not communicated clearly and in a way that draws their attention. The attendance information for this question was further broken down by age and marketing channel. Respondents aged 18-34

primarily were reached through billboards, social media, and the website. Those in the category of 35-49 were the majority that said Facebook, website, and they were also the majority that responded to radio, social media, and Access, WAM's magazine. Ages 50-64 gave responses that showed print media of newspapers and Access were the primary means of hearing about the free summer program while 65+ were reached through newspapers and the website.

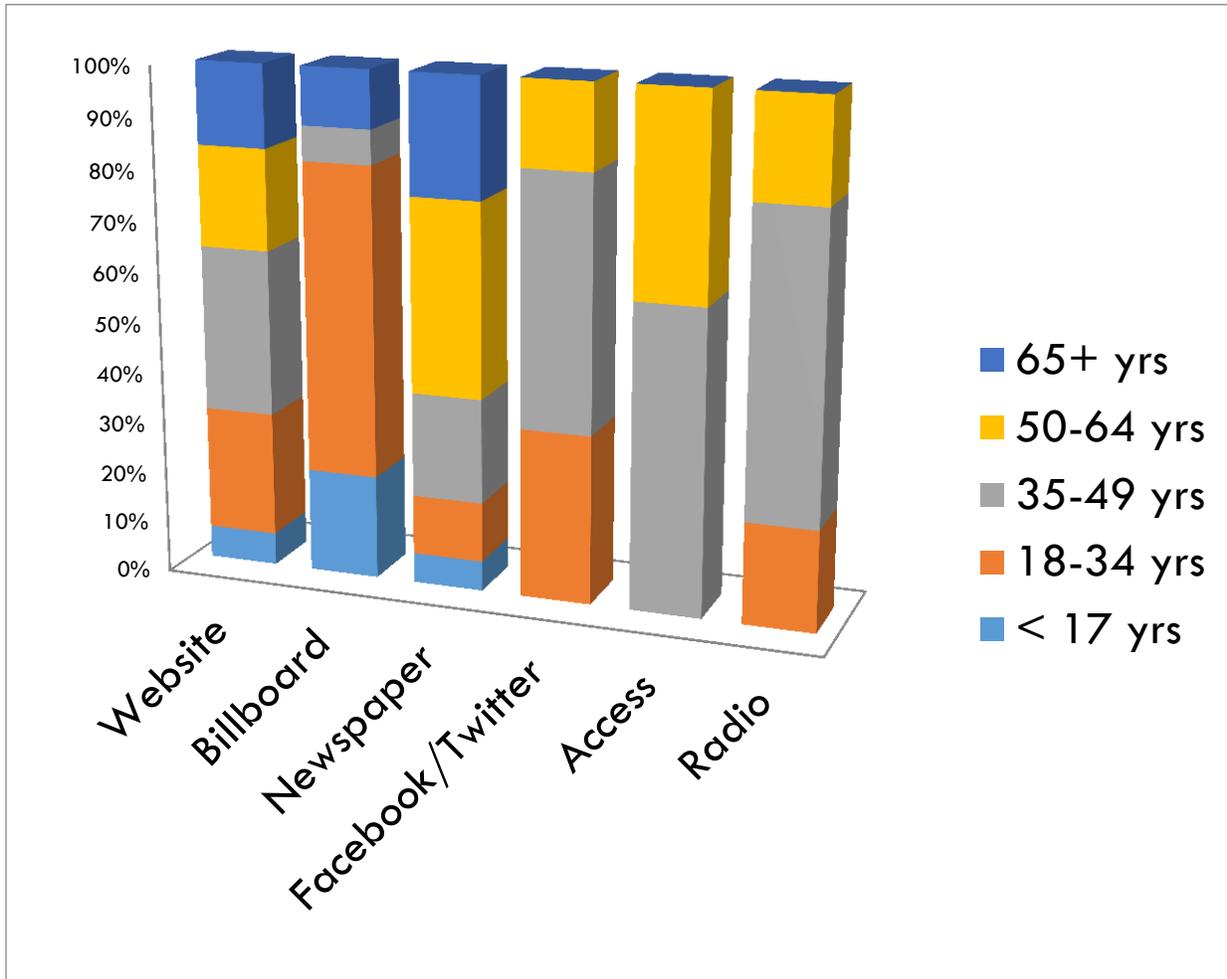


Figure 4: WAM's audiences' information sources (age-wise break-up)

The primary reason for visiting was the next asked question and again the majority, 31%, of respondents indicated that they were there because of family or friends. The other notable reasons included special exhibits, free admission, improve knowledge, enjoyment, and to get inspired. This question was also broken down for the museum members with 19% of their primary reasons for visiting being the special exhibits and 16% of responses indicating the reason of visiting was to spend time with family and friends.



Figure 5: Word Cloud based on responses from survey

On average, the patrons who were surveyed spent 1.9 hours at the museum with almost 40% spending more than 2 hours total. Also, 57% of those surveyed were repeat customers and over half of the repeat customers had been to the museum more than once previously. The center of repeat customers was unsurprisingly centered in Worcester with more first time visitors increasing radially outward from the city. This trend shows that more local patrons are likely to repeat their visits to the museum when admission is free. Local visitors are also possibly more apt to stop by the museum for shorter, more frequent visits when admission is free.

### 2.2.2 Zip Code Analysis

The zip code analysis was done after collecting zip codes of patrons at the front desk over the spring and summer of 2014. Only non-members were asked for zip codes and then the

responses were also broken down into other categories of origin, region, counties in Massachusetts, month of year, top five cities, and counties in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut.

The majority of visitors surveyed, 79%, were from Massachusetts and only 21% came from all other places combined. From the Massachusetts respondents, almost half were identified as residing in Worcester County with the remaining visitors coming from the Greater Boston area defined as Suffolk, Norfolk, Middlesex, and Essex Counties. These numbers were consistent throughout the months that the survey was taken.

When broken into a city level analysis, Worcester remained at the top by netting 41% of respondents with Cambridge at 7% and Newton at 6%. The remaining cities all had 5% or less from each place and even towns that neighbor Worcester such as Holden and Shrewsbury had less respondents than the much farther Cambridge. This may be attributable to the population density of the Boston Suburbs but there would need to be further investigations to determine potential other factors.

The analysis of these statistics led to the conclusions that WAM should identify ways to cultivate interest in the Greater Boston area, continue to look for ways to increase interest to the west of Worcester, consider targeting other markets based on region, and should continue further visitor research to verify the findings.

### **2.3 Description of Family Programs at Worcester Art Museum**

WAM currently engages in several programs aimed at a family audience that include family specific tours, different classes and education programs, free entrance on the first Saturday of the month, and Helmutt's House (a special interactive exhibit within the Knights!

Exhibition). Some of these programs run in conjunction with other events but most are operated independent of each other.

### **2.3.1 Family Day**

On the first Saturday of every month, WAM has a family day. This day includes a free docent-guided tour beginning at 10:30 am. This tour lasts for about half an hour, and is filled with facts and stories that involve the family as a whole. On that same day, from 11-11:30 am, is their free Make Art! Session.

While attending one of the family tours it was observed that the children had difficulty in seeing many of the works and the ones that were tall enough to see had to ask someone to read the labels to them. The adults that went along for the tour spent a majority of their time making sure that the children behaved responsibly and facilitated their movement. This left little time for them to enjoy the museum or to engage with the children as the tour progressed.

### **2.3.2 Higgins Education Wing**

WAM holds classes for youths from ages 3-17 years to spark creative thinking and responding. WAM offers classes for ages 3-5 years (accompanied by an adult) which develops communication and motor skills through games, stories, and activities. Classes for ages 5-7 years stresses children expressing themselves through painting and sculpting. For ages 8-13 years, classes are offered to create creative and technical thinking minds. Classes for ages 14-17 years continue to aid the students to become independent and offer students the opportunity to create their own portfolio (<http://www.worcesterart.org/education/youth-classes/>).

With different art programs happening through the wing, this area of the museum tends to be more “alive” than some of the exhibitions but because it is separated from the main galleries the education wing seems like a separate entity. At first glance from the lobby a visitor may not

even know that there are classrooms, offices, and galleries tucked away in the hallways of the Higgins Education Wing.

### **2.3.3 Helmutt's House**

Helmutt, the mascot that has been brought over from the Higgins' Armory, is featured throughout the *Knights!* Exhibition to engage children with the armor and paintings. Helmutt's House, is in the middle of the exhibition, and includes the Art Cart, which is full of scavenger hunts, guides, armor to try on, and games for the whole family to play

(<http://www.worcesterart.org/events/art-cart/>).

Children tend to gravitate to the armor exhibition but with the current housing in the main gallery, adults still feel that they must keep them from doing anything not deemed proper in an art museum. Even within the designated area for children, Helmutt's House, adults were still heard to quite the children down in an attempt to preserve the tranquility of the museum.

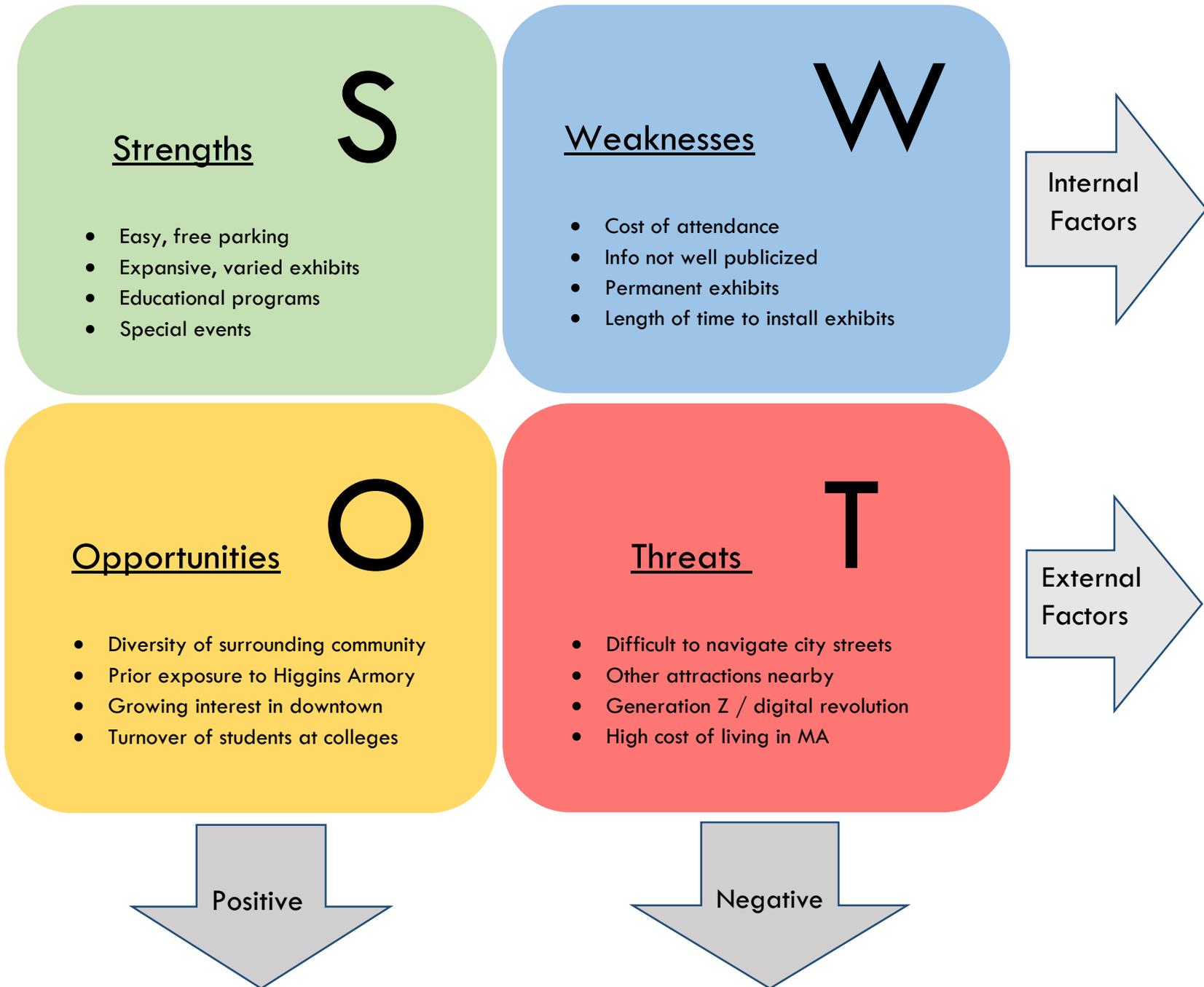


Figure 6: SWOT Analysis of WAM based on visitor experience

## **2.4 SWOT Analysis of WAM**

A SWOT analysis is a planning method to clearly define the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of an entity. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses is an internal evaluation of the business and is an extremely important way to evaluate current operations while thinking about how others may evaluate the business as well. The determination of opportunities and threats is based on external factors and is used for the purpose of separating the business competitors. The above SWOT was developed through our perspective of WAM based solely on the background research and perspectives held prior to the commencement of this report. When discussing the internal strengths and weaknesses of WAM, the only qualification that should be assumed is that the SWOT was made through the eyes of the audience and not from internal knowledge that staff personnel may possess.

### **2.4.1 Strengths**

The strengths of WAM for the purpose of the SWOT analysis were focused on the great offerings that are inherent from the location as well as the benefits offered from the Museum's programs. The easy and free parking is a great amenity for people that must drive to WAM. Public transit is not great through the City of Worcester and many people must drive, walk, or pay for a taxi if they want to move freely around the city. Having free parking is something that is rare in any city environment and lets visitors know that the business values their patronage. The various exhibits span several centuries and have works ranging from pottery to priory from a Medieval French monastery. The Museum also offers many different educational programs which are well described by the following quote from the WAM website, "Classes and workshops incorporate visits to the galleries to learn more about various works of art - providing inspiration for your own creativity back in the studio - and are offered for almost every age and for all experience levels". Special events at WAM are also a great experience were visitors have a

chance to see traveling exhibits, live performances, or unique social events hosted throughout the museum.

### **2.4.2 Weaknesses**

The weaknesses of WAM were viewed from the same perspective as the strengths with an emphasis on what is seen from the eyes of the visitor. Price is usually one of the first things that comes to mind when one thinks of attending any attraction and although parking is free at WAM, the cost of attendance can be a deterrent to some visitors. This is especially applicable to those who have never attended and are hesitant about whether the time and money it takes to visit are necessarily “worth it”. To counter this problem, the Museum has partnered with several local schools and businesses to offer free attendance but this leads to the next identified weakness of information not being well publicized. An example of this is the fact that WPI students and faculty get free admission any time with their school ID but it wasn’t until we started research for this report that either of us had heard about the free admission. The other identified weaknesses are not as easily mitigated as the first two, but the size of permanent exhibits such as the priory or Worcester Hunt floor mosaic, and the amount of time involved with setting exhibits in general are constraints that must be considered. These permanent exhibitions are fantastic pieces of art and would require extensive downtime to galleries if they were ever to be moved.

### **2.4.3 Opportunities**

Some of the opportunities that WAM can leverage to the advantage of the business include the diverse population residing in surrounding communities, the influence of the Higgins Armory, the growing interest in downtown Worcester businesses, and the large number of students that come to Worcester for education every year. The diverse population is explored in Section 2.1 and shows that there is a full spectrum of ages, incomes, and ethnicities in the communities of central Massachusetts. This is an opportunity for the Museum to introduce exhibits relevant to

either one or many different subsets of the population. Many of these communities have also been exposed to the now decommissioned Higgins Armory that used to reside in Worcester. Since WAM is in the process of dedicating a permanent exhibit for showcasing the pieces acquired from the Higgins, it would be a great opportunity to draw those who enjoyed the Higgins back to see the new display. Another external initiative that is moving in the favor of WAM is that of the expanding of businesses and shopping in the downtown area. As more people are being attracted to the center of the city, the Museum is uniquely poised to be in the heart of the action when people are looking for things to do and attractions to visit. The other large factor affecting downtown and Worcester as a whole is the ebb and flow of college students every year. As new students arrive, WAM is a great place for them to be comfortable visiting and a complement to the learning environment that they came for. As students graduate or return to their homes during breaks, they can help spread interest in WAM as a destination activity.

#### **2.4.4 Threats**

The external threats to WAM lie beyond the control of the Museum but must be considered when looking at strategic planning. The first problem for visitors is navigation of the city. Boston is notorious for being difficult to travel through and has made a concerted effort to change that. Worcester maybe smaller than Boston but it contains some of the same difficulties due to the lack of public transit, layout that has sprawled over several hundred years, and the lack of highway access to all but the periphery of the city. This can easily encourage visitors to go to other nearby attractions that may be easier to get to or more relevant for one's interest. Since a person living in central or eastern Massachusetts can reach other cities such as Boston, Hartford, or Providence in approximately an hour, there are many choices to pick from when looking for activities. Also adding another layer to decision making is the fact that the cost of

living in Massachusetts is generally higher than other states. Bert Sperling’s most recent ranking on [www.bestplaces.net](http://www.bestplaces.net) lists the cost of living at 37.4% higher than average which means that residents generally have less money available for leisure. Another growing problem is that Generation Z wants to visit places less than before because of the ease of access to pictures and video over the internet. The info-graphic below shows some characteristics of Generation Z.

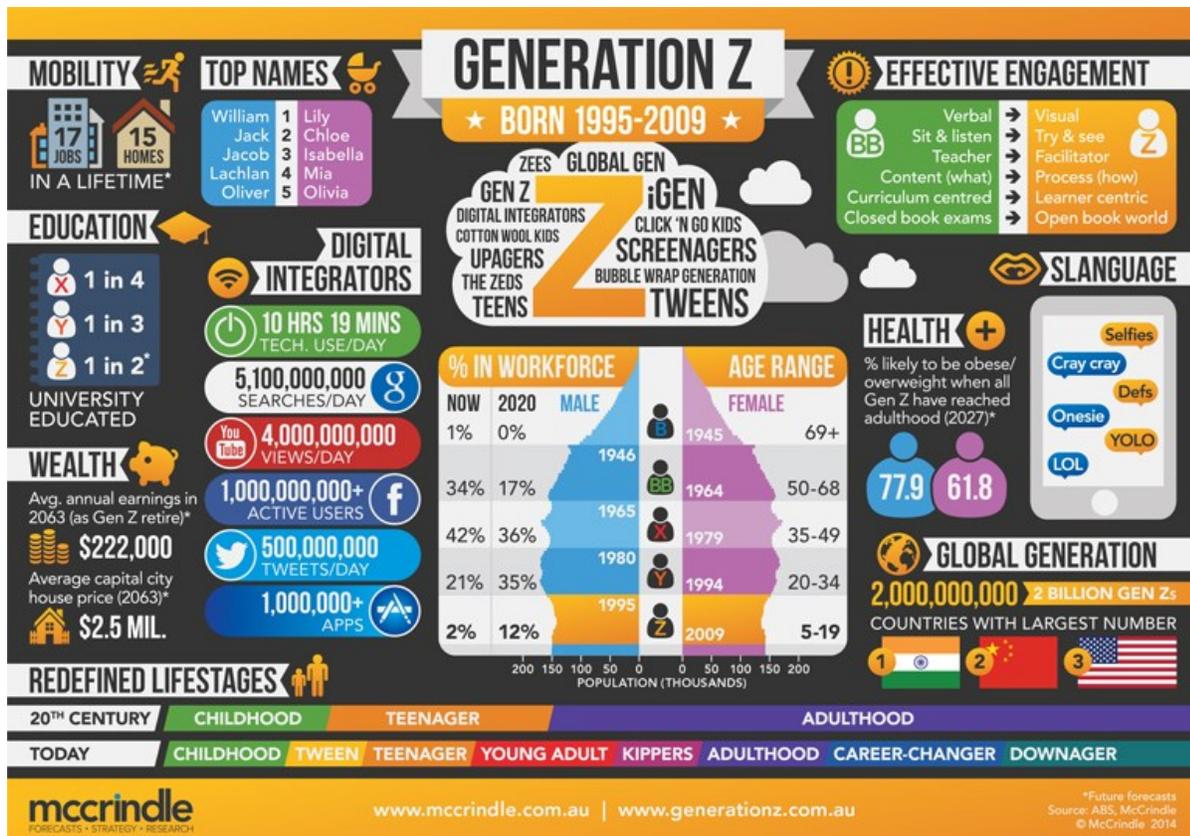


Figure 7: Generation Z attributes as compiled by McCrindle research agency

Generation Z is more likely to want to virtually tour something before, during, and after a visit, if they decide to visit at all. Every “brick-and-mortar” business must contend with “virtual” or “e-business” and respond to this threat at varying levels. WAM is in a unique position because a museum must provide an experience for visitors and that is difficult to convey through any media, but many organizations are successfully integrating digital devices to enhance the experience instead of replace it. Ultimately, this population is important because it constitutes the younger

part of family audiences currently but they will be starting and forming their own families over the next five to thirty years.

## **2.5 Literature Review**

*Museum Experience Revisited*, by Falk, Dierking, and Semmel (2012), is a seminal work on museum audiences written to describe how visitors view their experiences. The authors concluded the needs of a particular museum may vary vastly from visitor to visitor such that responsibility of describing a family should be described by those conducting the specific research. The method of creating a definition of family tailored to research has led museum professionals and researchers to refer to family groups in the context of inter-generational, cross-generational, or multi-generational groups. The idea that a family consists only of immediate family members that are related by blood or marriage has been obsoleted by these new philosophies and has required that every museum create the model that works best for them.

Once decided on the definition of the audience, researchers typically look at how visitors move through the museum, what exhibits attract particular visitors, how long do they choose to stay in any particular exhibit or area, and what discussions are had while experiencing the exhibits. This expansive amount of data was narrowed down to several specific items that were selected as topics. These topics include the reasons people visit a museum, how they experience a museum, and the ways that museums are engaging and educating visitors.

### **2.5.1 Motivations for Visiting Art Museums**

Everyone has a different motivation to visit an art museum and attending with others can potentially create conflicting interests. Even when visiting alone, on different days, the same person can be visiting for his own different reasons (Falk 2005). Understanding motivation can help museums create experiences that ensure a visitor is attracted to the museum, satisfied while

visiting the museum, and is likely to return to the museum at a later date (Antrobus 2011). John Falk wrote a book titled *Identity and the Museum Visitor*, from the point of view that advocates looking past the demographics of the visitor to understand identity-related needs and interests. By understanding the types of visitor needs, instead of the types of visitors, a museum will be able to more accurately predict the visitor experience (Falk 2009; Tinworth 2011). The attempt to expand and market to an audience should be done by appealing to the important clusters of visitor identities that the museum wants to foster (Faulk and Sheppard 2006). The identities that emerged from the research of Faulk and Sheppard are *The Explorer*, *The Facilitator*, *The Professional/Hobbyist*, *The Experience Seeker*, and *The Spiritual Pilgrim*.

The Explorer was found to be self-described as a curious individual that wanted to learn something new. The researchers found that this individual visited particular places because it can, “reinforce who they are, in essence, their self-image” (Falk and Sheppard 2006). The Facilitator visited the museum to satisfy the needs of another. These individuals could include parents that want their child to be in a “learning environment” even if they have no interest themselves. The Professional/Hobbyist was similar to The Explorer in attributes but they had much more knowledge or interest in very specific agendas. Most Professional/ Hobbyist visitors attended the museum to enhance some already existing segment of their life. The Experience Seeker was a very broad category that encompassed many different groups that had the commonality of wanting to “collect” an experience. This is much like the people who take photos of everything they do just in order to say that they have “done it”. The last group identified was the Spiritual Pilgrims that visited to “reflect, rejuvenate, or generally just bask in the wonder of the place” (Falk and Sheppard 2006).



Figure 8: These five types of visitors can give insight to what each group is expecting from a museum visit.

Graphic adapted from a presentation by Kathi Kaiser and Tanya Treptow, 2014.

Based on the Free Summer Questionnaire, the majority of families that visited the museum during the previous summer could be classified as “Explorers” from their response of “wanting to increase knowledge”. This audience requires exhibits that not only showcase art, but exhibits also need to provide a way for them to learn about the art. Perhaps a caption describing the artist or the context behind the art work is enough for some Explorers but as with any audience, the Explorers will have different ideas about what information they will want to learn. WAM does provide information with some of the exhibits and tries offer background on some pieces without intruding into the visitor’s experience. The stance of WAM seems to follow the logic that people viewing art should intuit his or her own meaning versus having a placard ascribing meaning to it and while there is nothing wrong with this idea, the Explorer will still be looking for ways to learn about the art.

No matter which group WAM is trying to appeal to, each of the above groups has specific needs and motivations that could be classified as extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsic motivations that bring people to museums include rewards, guilt, or competition (Heaton 2013; Goldman 2004). Rewards are any tangible or perceived benefit from doing an activity and can have diminishing returns for both the one giving the reward and the one receiving it. Rewards may also divert attention away from the other values of the activity such as enjoyment or learning. For rewards to be effective they should be designed carefully to not somehow drive behavior and mask the opportunity for a more robust learning experience (Heaton 2014). Guilt is the perception that one should or shouldn't be doing a particular activity for any reason. It can coerce people to tasks that they typically would not perform such as holding the door for someone on crutches but never holding a door for others. Guilt can be used as a self-motivator also and is a tool to get the "Ultra-Learning Mom" to bring the kids to the museum under the assumptions that they will be learning something that she has no interest in herself (Heaton 2013). The competitive motivation would be when the individual visiting the museum has an opportunity to challenge themselves or others through items such as trivia or puzzles. The danger with any of these extrinsic motivations is that the visitor gets distracted from the enjoyment of the visit to the museum by any of the above motivating factors and the experience is diminished or de-valued (Heaton 2013).

Opposite to extrinsic motivations are intrinsic motivations that come from a deep interest in an activity and the pleasure derived directly from participating or experiencing something (Benton 2013). Intrinsic motivation is difficult to measure and is subjective to many different variables such that most researchers develop their own measurement techniques to suit their particular study (Holmes 2009). Experiments have shown both a difference in intrinsic motivation for grade school students based on a particular learning situation and also that there was no

significant difference in the intrinsic motivational levels of the students based how exhibits were presented (Braund and Reiss 2006; Holmes 2009). The one thing that studies do agree on is that the most difficult thing to accomplish is to improve interest in a subject through experiential learning if there is no interest to begin with (Braund and Reiss 2006; Holmes 2009). Section 2.5.3 discusses more about how to spark this interest through the context of museum learning.

### **2.5.2 Family Audience Engagement by an Art Museum**



*Figure 9: This image shows two young girls more interested in their surroundings than in the museum exhibits; illustrating the difficulty in figuring out what can be of interest to children*

The above picture was found online and is credited to an unknown photographer that submitted it to Time Magazine in 1975. The museum pictured is the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the two girls are unknown. What this picture captures is something that continues to elude the best educators and professionals; an understanding of children's curiosity. Museum researchers have been working to understand how to engage with their visitors through surveys, questionnaires, and various other methods to measure data that can be collected but it has been

difficult for the researchers to make sense of data for children that can seem incongruent with that of their adult counterparts.

Alessandro Bollo (2003) suggests using time, attention, and capacity to retain information to determine the possibility of interactions between visitors and exhibits. He created indexes to populate data for attraction power, holding power, utilization time, and sweep rate. These characteristics showed how different visitors allocated time but did not hypothesize why. Several interesting techniques were used to visualize the routes that visitors traveled and these were overlaid with “heat maps”, shown below, to visualize the amount of time spent at each work. Ultimately he found that this data was irrelevant for children because they had to travel at a pace complementary to their adult chaperones.

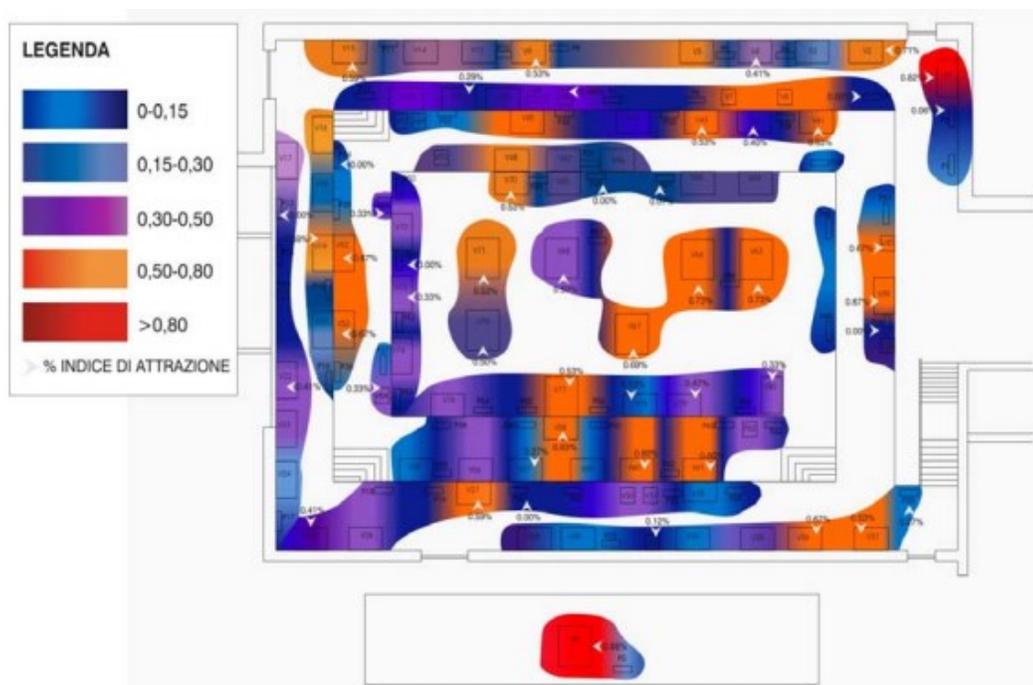


Figure 10: “Thermography” of exact path taken through Piedmont Hall for times greater than 15 minutes

Other researchers tried to take an approach of understanding the various stages of engagement that visitors go through and can be seen in the “arc of engagement” pictured below (Brown and Ratzkin 2011).

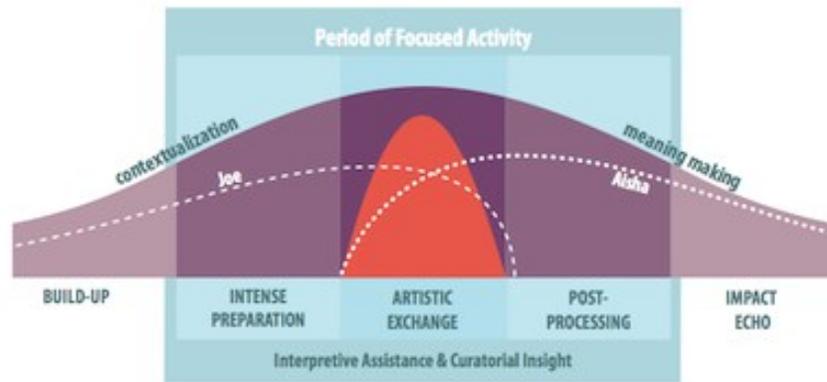


Figure 11: Arc of engagement tracing the process from preparation to impact

The suggestion follows that general typologies for audience members flow through this “arc” but has a noted lack of data to support the engagement of families with children. Although there is not enough evidence gathered to create a recipe on how to engage family audiences, it has been found that family audiences need to feel comfortable viewing art which sometimes centers on shared active and tactile experiences (Pegno 2014). An example of this type of exhibit would be that the armor can be worn in the Higgins section or the games that can be played in relation to the exhibit. Essentially any item that involves physical interaction with the art will allow for people to more easily share their thoughts about it.

Art museums may always be a place to quietly look and learn but without museum atmospheres that create a collaborative and participatory environment, families will never thrive. The children can become easily disinterested and the parents must change their own actions to accommodate. This makes enjoyment difficult for the entire family and may even disturb others at

the museum. Museums must constantly be looking for new ways to keep the interest of the entire family and utilize a strategy of continuous process of planning, marketing, contextualizing, delivering, interpreting, and evaluating in order to effectively engage with the family audience (Brown and Ratzkin 2011; McCray 2007).

### **2.5.3 Museum Learning**



*Figure 12: Image of a visitor walking through the Katherine MacDonald exhibit at McMaster Museum of Art. The question posed by this image is whether the museum should be defining the experience or the visitor should be defining her own.*

Traditionally museum professionals perceive the museum and the visitors as separate entities in the entirety of the museum experience. For instance, one may view the museum experience as only about the museum and the content that it offers for the visitor. This view stresses the importance of exhibitions for the visitor and enforces the belief that the exhibit has an innate meaning for the visitor to discover. The other point of view is that the museum experience is primarily about the visitor and that one must understand variables such as audience demographics and visitation frequency (Faulk 2009). While these traditional views may hold true for some, there are many professionals that use the idea of constructivism to accept both of these

views as true (McCray 2007). Constructivist theory holds that prior knowledge is of primary importance and that it is this knowledge structure that learners use to create links to new information (Phillips 1995). By drawing on past experiences, people are able to connect on a meaningful level with the current experience they are having.

The way that museums fit into the equation is that they help to provide an opportunity for visitor to build this link but they do not explicitly spell out what is to be learned (Jeffery-Clay 1998). When a museum helps to link familiar experiences and concepts to each other, the visitor is able to engage in a more meaningful learning experience (Jeffery-Clay 1998). This must also be done through the lens of autonomy so that the learner is allowed to create their own climate of creativity (Hon 2012). WAM has used this constructivist approach to their staging of the Re-Mastered Exhibition that is styled more like a home setting than an art gallery. By arranging paintings a way that someone may see in a private collection, it allows the viewer to be more at ease while digesting the totality of the works that might otherwise appear as individual pieces.

Another important aspect to the learning environment is the explanatory engagement of the group with the exhibits and material in the art museum (Leinhardt 2014; Faulk and Dierking 2000). The engagement must involve thoughtful connection and can sometimes be helped along by mediated dialogue (Hein 1998). If a museum visitor engages only in conversation this does not explicitly lead to learning, but it should be used to reinforce and formulate ideas about specific concepts. Leinhardt (2014) also found that groups of visitors whose conversation included analysis, synthesis, and explanations learned more than groups who only discussed exhibits minimally in terms of overall themes and ideas.

## **2.6 Summary**

WAM has found itself in a situation where they are trying to grow while simultaneously sustaining their current audience. However, to achieve this, WAM needs to define and better understand the needs and wants of the family audience to recognize if they are targeting the correct audience. The outcomes of this project should help define what this sustainable family audience looks like for WAM and can be used to make recommendations on how the Museum can actively engage with them. This will be achieved through the use of investigation methods that can describe the current interactions of family visitors at WAM, lend understanding about the demographic profiles of current family visitors, and that explore the motivation prompting patrons to visit WAM.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The goal of this project was to define what a sustainable family audience looks like for WAM and to make recommendations on how the Museum can actively engage with them. The recommendations will help guide the future development of programs and exhibits that can be tailored to fit the specific needs of the family audience. The objectives of this research were to:

1. Describe the current interactions of visitors to WAM
2. Understand the demographic profiles of current visitors
3. Explore what prompts patrons to visit and not visit WAM

The development of our methodologies focused on some key features of meaningful research into families at art museums as offered by Pat Sterry and Ela Beaumont (2006). These features include:

1. Investigating real-life family activities
2. The use of multiple methodologies
3. Use of the family group as a single unit for analysis

The museum environment is purposefully dense and complex with many variables that can influence what visitors' experience. Limitations of the research methods depended on visitor variables such as expectations, group dynamics, previous experiences, and interests. There were also limitations associated with exhibition variables of location in the museum, lighting, accessibility, height, and ambient noise level (Allen 2002).

We used secondary research, direct observations, surveys, and interviews to collect data for the report. The secondary research focused on what other art museums have done to engage family audiences and was compiled to look for techniques that may be applicable to WAM. Data about the behaviors of families in the museum was collected through direct observations in

order to describe their interactions and to develop recommendations that are meaningful for this audience (Creswell, 2007). Direct observations can make it difficult to understand why visitors are behaving in particular ways so we also used information gathered by survey through iPads at the museum. Survey responses could be made anonymously but in order to help bolster responses, visitors were offered an incentive of the chance to win a free WAM membership if they left an email address (Dillman et al, 2010). The use of surveys has been shown to make some people more comfortable in responding rather than participating in an interview but survey respondents may not complete it and we will be unable to probe for additional details and deeper insights (Jacobson et al, 2009). It was for this reason we also sought to interview families that do not attend WAM in order to see what types of reservations kept them from attending.

The decision to use qualitative data and interviews for this research was made in consideration of the fact that WAM is interested in the families that do not attend the museum. The use of qualitative data was important to the findings because it provided a means for us to collect the views of the participants in the form broad general questions (Clark & Creswell, 2007). Interviewing these individuals allowed them to develop their own narrative about why they do not attend the museum and allowed us to look for key elements in their stories (Creswell, 2003). With important factors identified, we were able to make generalizations about the family audience that does not attend WAM.

### **3.1 Secondary Research (Benchmarking)**

A plan for researching a select few museums was developed to understand what other museums have had to overcome in their pursuit of a good family experience. The Peabody Essex Museum, the Museum of Fine Art Boston, and the Walters Art Museum were selected to study in conjunction with WAM based on several factors. First, the museums are all within a radius of Worcester in which a family living in Central Massachusetts could easily drive there for a

weekend trip. Next, the museums all showcase a variety of art and all have worked to incorporate families at some level.

These museums we have chosen to study are known to have developed good family programs. The research will be conducted through the use of different mediums such as press releases and online sources. These sources were used to develop an understanding of what other museums have had to overcome in their pursuit of a family experience. Family membership pricing options were explored at these different institutions in order to understand what types of pricing options are being used to incent family visitors. This information allowed us to make recommendations on the most attractive pricing options that WAM may be able to offer for families. We developed recommendations using the context of the “model family” defined in Chapter 3 and recommendations were developed through the lens of the problem statement.

### **3.2 Visitor Observation**

To achieve the first two objectives used observations to gain an insight to the ethnographic tendencies of the current visitors to WAM. The idea behind the ethnographic study of visitors is to observe their interactions with the museum in a non-directed way (Anderson 2009). Our goal for the observations was to see how the visitors respond to the museum experience on their own terms. By understanding how the museum visitors communicated with staff, experienced the exhibits, and navigated the museum we could use the qualitative data to find themes, patterns, and existing relationships. We observed multiple areas throughout the Museum including entrances, café, and the exhibits. The field observation guide (as seen in Appendix A) was developed to aid in recording qualitative data about the visitors as we directly observe from a distance.

As we recorded data for observations it was important that we blended in with the visitors as to not interrupt their experiences. Patrons have commented on prior occasions, through comments that were collected by the museum, that they had awkward feelings when they sensed

that they were being watched by museum staff. The goal is to strive to be as unobtrusive as possible so as to not bias the observations. This method of direct observation allowed us to focus more on recording the interactions the visitors have with the exhibits and each other (Trochim 2001). The schedule for the research observation was Wed Nov 12<sup>th</sup>, Fri Nov 21<sup>st</sup>, Thurs Dec 4<sup>th</sup>, Sat Dec 6<sup>th</sup> (Family Day), Sun Dec 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **3.3 Survey (Museum Visitors)**

WAM encouraged visitors to fill out surveys that are on iPads throughout the museum by offering the chance to win a free membership. Ideal respondents for the survey would be those adults that are accompanied by children while visiting the museum but the survey was open to anyone. Limitations of these surveys are the time of day, day of the week, and varied level of museum experiences. The schedule for the visitor surveys was dispersed throughout the months of December, January, and February.

### **3.4 Interviews with Family Members**

The previously mentioned observations and surveys were supplemented with interviews of individuals that have never visited WAM. All selected members were preferred to live close to the Worcester area and this is noted in the questions. The topics to be discussed in the interview, as seen in our interview protocol in Appendix B, were designed to assist in gaining a more in-depth look at the current family audience. With permission, the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were compiled with the results of the observations to determine the best definition of a family audience for WAM and their motivations to visit or not to visit an art museum, specifically WAM.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

Secondary research of other museums was charted for comparison of museum programs. Observations were made six different days and any notes were transcribed into a text document. The museum survey was answered by 257 respondents during the three month interval of December 2014 through February 2015. Interviews were recorded and prepared for analysis in NVivo QSR software by transcribing all recordings into a text document and manually coding text with the software. In this chapter, the findings from the data collected using these chosen methods are discussed.

### **4.1 Secondary Data**

The Peabody-Essex Museum (PEM), Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) Boston, and the Walters Art Museum exhibit many of the same characteristics when first looking at their respective websites and all offer a section of the site dedicated to children and families. All of the museums proffer a list of what they each provide specifically for families and each museum website makes note of some connection between art and learning. Each site also contains a list of dates for programs and events, but that is about where the similarities end because each museum has its own perspective on how to incorporate the family museum experience with the other offerings of the institution.

The focus at PEM centers around playful learning that is designed to stimulate inquiry through exploration of different activities. The Art & Nature Center in the museum emphasizes the interconnections with nature through a combination of memorable objects, contemporary art, and interactive experiences that the children can touch and feel. There is also a permanent spot designated as The Investigate! Zone that consists of low tables that toddlers and preschoolers can use to create art as they play. All family spaces are located on the first floor of the museum and are integrated with the Art Nook and Create Space that are used for art making workshops and

drop-in programs. PEM offers an annual membership option for families at a cost of \$110 and allows for the free admission of up to two adults and any children 18 and under.

<h1>Peabody-Essex Museum</h1>			
<p><b><u>Hours of Operation</u></b></p> <p>Open Tuesday-Sunday, 10 am until 5 pm</p> <p>Open the third Thursday of every month 10 am-9:00 pm.</p> <p>Closed Mondays (except holidays).</p>	<p><b><u>Family Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-PLAY! - Online interactives</li> <li>-Maker Lounge</li> <li>-Gallery Spot</li> <li>-Drop-in Art Making               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Art Cart</li> <li>-Story Trails</li> <li>-PEM Pals</li> </ul> </li> <li>-Studio Discoveries</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Family Membership Information</u></b></p> <p>\$110</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Admission for two members or one member and a guest</li> <li>-Free admission for children 18 and under</li> <li>-Enrollment in PEM's Birthday Club</li> <li>-Family breakfast event</li> <li>-Heads Up! quarterly flier</li> <li>-Fully tax deductible</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Promotion</u></b></p> <p>Focused on Adult activities</p>

There are many places other than MFA in Boston that are more suited for children such as the Boston Children's Museum, Boston Museum of Science, or the Boston Aquarium to name a few. But, the Museum of Fine Arts has made a concerted effort to attract families by offering special events and programs such as "Playdates" on the first and third Mondays of the month. The museum also has opportunities for families to explore together and has a nine page guide available that highlights how to have an enjoyable family experience. The guide suggests such things as making sketches of the art and creating a list of things to find while at the museum. There is not a specific section of the museum that is exclusively dedicated for family use but they do provide an art cart on the weekends that contains books and activities for children. The MFA Boston allows children under 17 free entry with a ticketed adult and has an annual membership

price of \$75 for one adult that also includes discounts of 40% on parking, 15% on museum dining, and 10% in the museum shop also.

MFA Boston			
<p><b><u>Hours of Operation</u></b></p> <p>Saturday through Tuesday, 10 am–4:45 pm;</p> <p>Wednesday through Friday, 10 am–9:45 pm</p>	<p><b><u>Family Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Family Art Cart</li> <li>-MFA Playdates</li> <li>-Art Connections Cards</li> <li>-Family Activity Totes</li> <li>-Drawing in the Galleries</li> <li>-Birthday Parties</li> <li>-Open House</li> <li>-Studio Art Classes</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Family Membership Information</u></b></p> <p><b>Supporter</b> <b>\$75–\$109</b></p> <p>Admission for one adult and children 17 and under One single-use guest pass <i>Fully tax deductible</i></p> <p>Free admission to the collections and all exhibitions</p> <p>Members-only exhibition previews, events, and family programs</p> <p>Parking discount of up to 40% 15% discount at all Museum dining venues</p> <p>10% discount at the Bookstore and Shop, in stores and online</p> <p>Discount tickets to lectures, courses, concerts, and films</p> <p><i>Preview magazine</i></p> <p>Customized e-mail with information just for members</p>	<p><b><u>Promotion</u></b></p> <p>Focused on events and upcoming special exhibits</p>

The Walters Art Museum contains a space on the lower level near the main entrance named The Family Art Center that houses programs and activities for children and families. This section of the museum primarily offers families an opportunity to create art and to discover art together through construction. The website for the museum does not offer much insight into the types of programs that are being offered but it does contain a good outline of tips for a family visit. The museum uses a mascot named Waltee to provide themes for the children’s activities and events. Waltee is designed to be a “cute and cuddly” lion cub from ancient Egypt that points the way to family friendly programs. The Walters Museum uses an art cart on the weekends

throughout the museum that contains various books and activities families can engage in as they explore other exhibitions. General admission the Walters Art Museum is free with special exhibitions being ticketed. But, the museum offers an annual family membership for the cost of \$75 that entitles the holder to free admission for all ticketed events up to four people, 10% off at the Walters Shop, 10% off at the Walters Café, and various other discounts on programs and tours.

Walters Art Museum			
<p><b><u>Hours of Operation</u></b></p> <p>Wednesday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Thursday 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Closed Monday and Tuesday.</p>	<p><b><u>Family Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Drop-in Art</li> <li>-Gallery Fun</li> <li>-Family Festivals</li> <li>-Summer Camp</li> <li>-Access Programs</li> <li>-Birthday Parties</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Family Membership Information</u></b></p> <p><b>\$75</b></p> <p>Free admission <b>for 4</b> to ticketed exhibitions</p> <p>Invitations to Members Openings</p> <p>Subscription to The Walters Magazine</p> <p>2 Thursday Night Drink Vouchers</p> <p>10% off at the Walters Shop</p> <p>10% off at the Walters Cafe</p> <p>Early registration for educational programs</p> <p>Discounts on Walters programs</p> <p>Discounts at local retailers</p> <p>Members-only tours with a curator or conservator</p> <p>Access to special Member Groups</p> <p><b>Parking Discount at Centre and Cathedral Streets Lot</b></p> <p><b>Membership is tax-deductible</b></p>	<p><b><u>Promotion</u></b></p> <p>Focused on special events and celebrations</p>

	<u>WAM</u>	<u>PEM</u>	<u>MFA</u>	<u>Walters</u>
<b><u>Offerings</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Exhibits</u></b></li> <li>• <b><u>Classes</u></b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knights!</li> <li>• Youth Classes &amp; Summer Programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tree Tales</li> <li>• Studio Discoveries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing in the gallery</li> <li>• Playdates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ancient cultures</li> <li>• Gallery talks</li> </ul>
<b><u>Family Activities/ Events</u></b>	Family Time on first Saturday of month	Weekly special events	Open house events	Family festivals
<b><u>Hours</u></b>	Wed-Fri, Sun 11-5pm Sat 10-5pm 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thurs 11-8pm	Tues-Sun 10-5pm 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thurs 10-9pm	Sat-Tues 10–4:45pm Wed-Fri 10–9:45pm	Wed-Sun 10-5 pm Thurs 10-9 p.m.
<b><u>Food Options</u></b>	Café 11:30-2pm	Café 10-4:30pm	Family specific Cafe 10–4 pm	Café open during all business hours
<b><u>Parking</u></b>	Free	Pay to park	Pay to park	Validated parking
<b><u>Entry Tickets</u></b>	\$14 Adult \$6 Children 4-17	\$18 Adult Free under 16 Free Tues-Fri if you work in Salem	\$25 Adult 7-17 free in evening Under 6 always free	Free with select ticketed exhibitions
<b><u>Family Membership</u></b>	\$80 – 2 adults/2children	\$110 -2 adults, kids free	\$75 -1 adult, kids free	\$75 -free admission for 4
<b><u>Location</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Strengths</u></b></li> <li>• <b><u>Weaknesses</u></b></li> </ul>	<p>Close to Universities, other cultural attractions</p> <p>City can be difficult to navigate</p>	<p>Hotel discounts, other Salem attractions</p> <p>Public transit lacking</p>	<p>Hotel packages, other Boston attractions</p> <p>High amount of foot traffic</p>	<p>Central location in the city</p> <p>Competes with larger surrounding museums in D.C. and Philadelphia</p>
<b><u>Annual Attendance in 2013</u></b>	90,882 visitors	250,000 visitors	Over 1.02 million visitors	165,000 visitors

**Table 1: Comparison Chart of Museums**

#### Sources for Table 1:

1. [http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-02-20/entertainment/bs-ae-walters-director-20130220\\_1\\_julia-marciari-alexander-william-and-henry-walters-names-new-director](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-02-20/entertainment/bs-ae-walters-director-20130220_1_julia-marciari-alexander-william-and-henry-walters-names-new-director)
2. <http://www.pem.org/support/>
3. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323968304578250103690093908>
4. <http://www.mfa.org/annual-report-2013/numbers.html>
5. <http://www.worcesterart.org/director/annualreport2013/visitors/>
6. Museum websites

#### **4.2 WAM Observations**

The majority of family visitors we observed were Caucasian, approximately 67%. Of all the families that were observed, about 48% had children under the age of 12 (majority between 6-12 years), 19% had children between the ages of 12-18, and 33% either had children over 18 or no children at all. This is subject to our own estimates of how old the children were. There were some common themes in our observations that also relate to the themes we saw in the interviews. The majority of the families we saw had children that were at the elementary and middle school, as there were fewer high school students or infants. This data, which the majority was recorded on one of WAM's family days, helps with clarity when it comes to the definition of a family audience.

The families that brought their children were often seen restraining their children from running or attempting to touch pieces of art. Specifically, in the Salisbury Hall, there were multiple occasions that children were stopped from touching the horse statue in the middle of the floor, clearly adding stress into the family's visit. There were also a few occasions when adults were drawn away from what they were doing in order to attend to a child and did not get a chance to return to what they were looking at. It was also observed that multiple children were drawn to the projection screens in the Salisbury Hall. It was clear that something like a video or movie was

much more captivating to the children as opposed to a lot of the artwork. If children are taking their parents away from certain exhibits, this is going to ruin the family's experience. We will mention later in the interview section, how much impact word of mouth has when it comes to parents, and that many parents would take advantage of child-friendly areas.

Many of the exhibits included pieces that the children could not easily view without assistance from an adult and were not in the line of sight for most people less than five foot tall. All of the families talked about the works they were viewing and offered varying levels of explanations to the accompanying children. The children were most interested in the art that resembled something they were familiar with, such as pottery, but showed little interest in sculptures or paintings that depicted human subjects.

#### **4.3 WAM Survey**

The survey was administered through SurveyMonkey on iPads located throughout WAM and received 257 responses from 12/1/2014 to 2/28/2015. The respondents were primarily non-members of the museum with 85% identifying as such, and 52% of the non-members were visiting the museum for the first time. The age range of respondents was spread out across the spectrum from under18 through 65+ and is fairly representative of the distribution of attendees seen at the museum while making observations for this project. The image below (Figure 13) shows the distribution of age for the respondents. Also pictured below (Figure 14) is the gender distribution of survey respondents that shows a majority of visitors self-identifying as female.

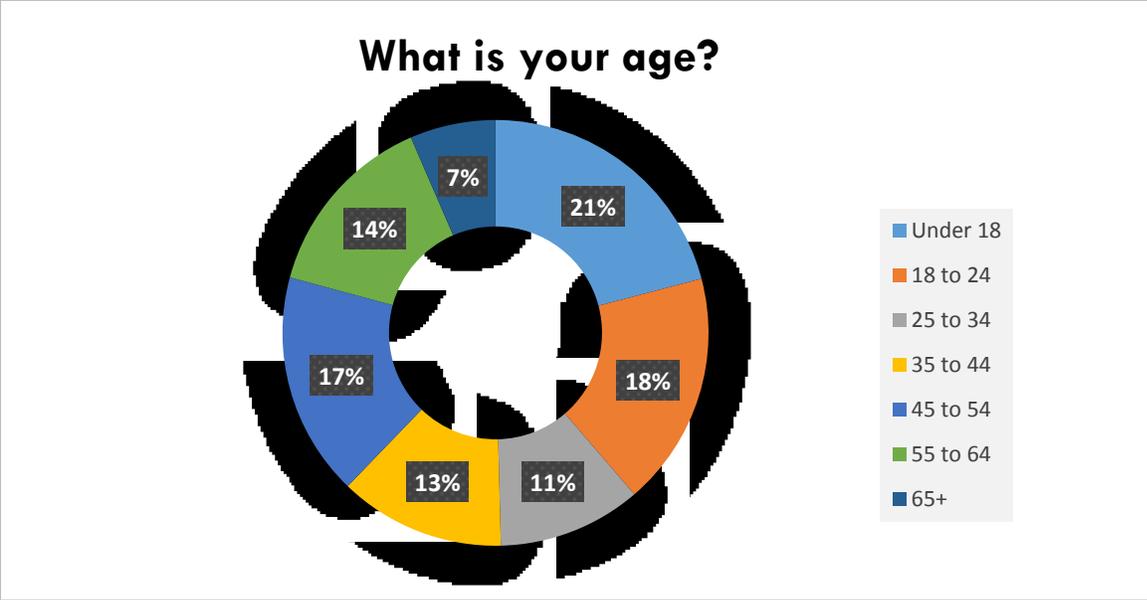


Figure 13: Survey Sample Age Distribution

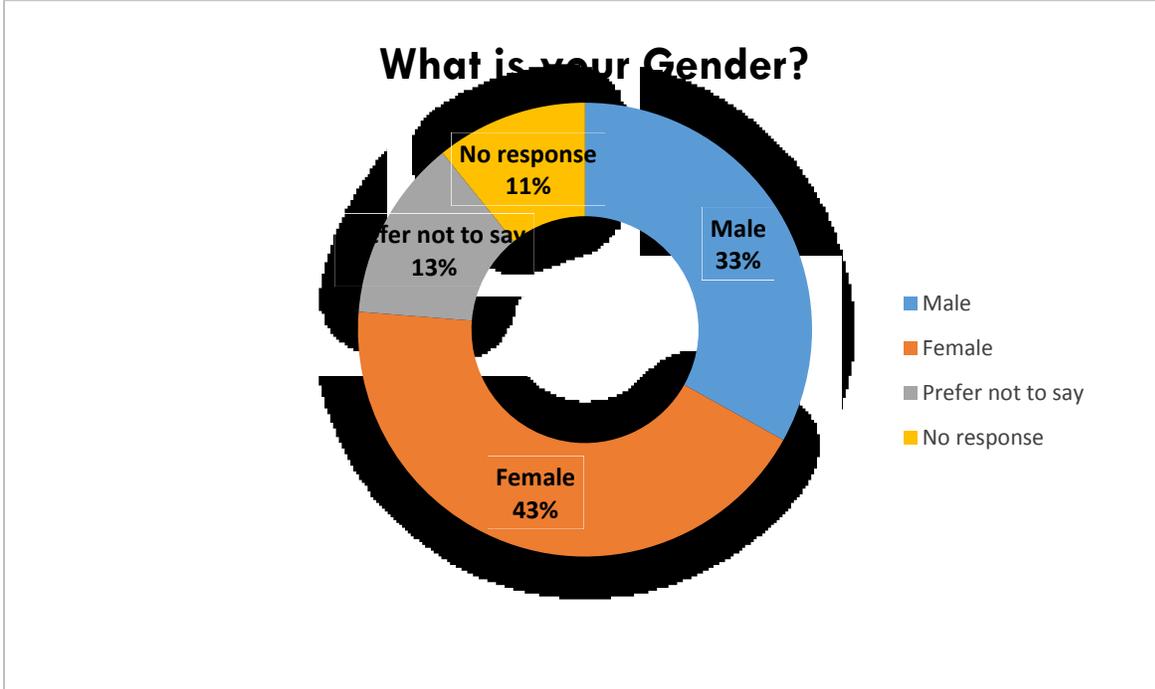


Figure 14: Survey Sample Gender Distribution

When asked to select the most important reason for the visit to the museum on that particular occasion, the most responses indicated spending time with family or friends. The graph below shows the distribution of responses and it should be noted that a person may have picked several options in response to the question.



Figure 15: Reasons for visiting WAM

Visitors were asked about what exhibits or services brought them to WAM and were able to choose a scale from poor to excellent. Note that the Museum Store and the Museum Café have the largest number of “No Opinions”. We were interested in developing a pivot table to determine whether the times of the survey response matched up with the hours of operation for the Store and Café but the raw data was only date stamped with no times included.

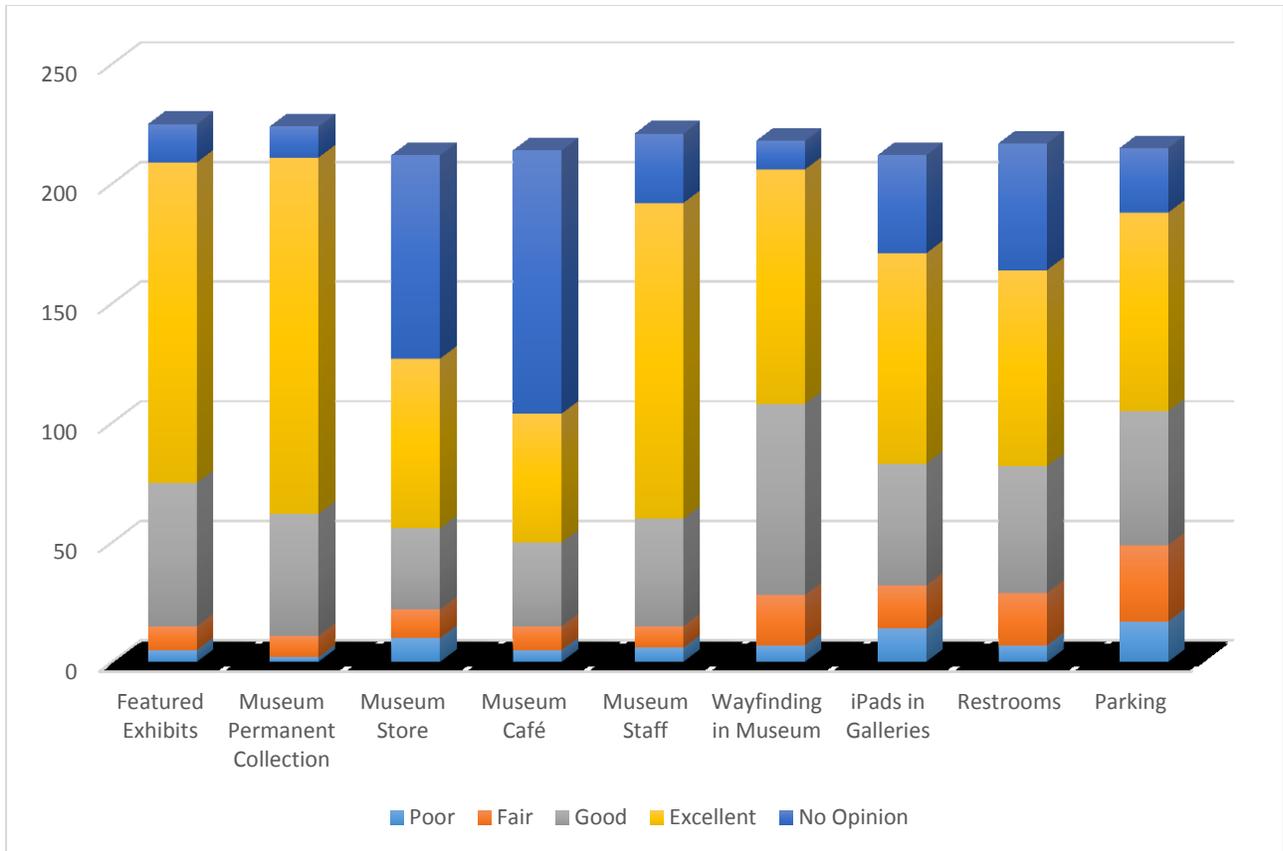


Figure 16: Rating of selected museum services; number of responses per museum service.

The survey included a question that asked for the zip code of the visitor to determine where people were traveling from. It was interesting to see that responses came in from around the globe but the majority of responses were from visitors that lived in the New England region. We attempted to discern whether the international visitors were students or had come to visit as a destination attraction but the only data that could be used was age versus zip code and the results were inconclusive.



Figure 17: Map of zip codes from respondents worldwide.

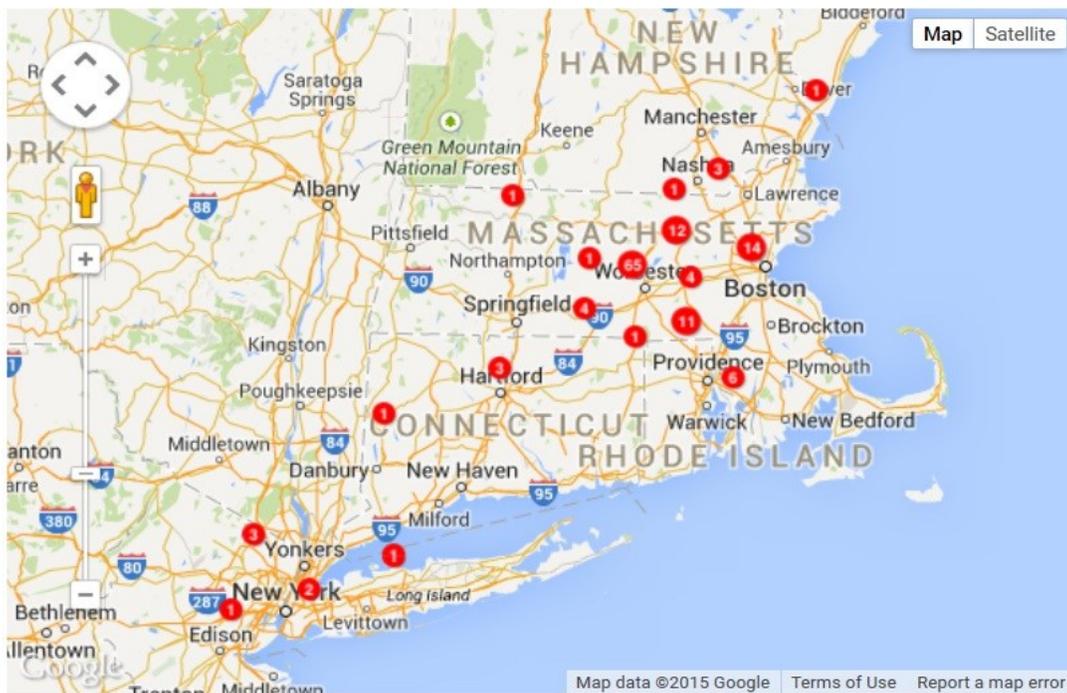


Figure 18: Map of survey responses from people with zip codes in New England

Visitors were asked what print or online news sources they read on a regular basis and which radio stations they typically listened to. The survey showed that people typically listen to National Public Radio (NPR) stations and read the local newspapers such as the Worcester Telegram & Gazette or the Boston Globe.

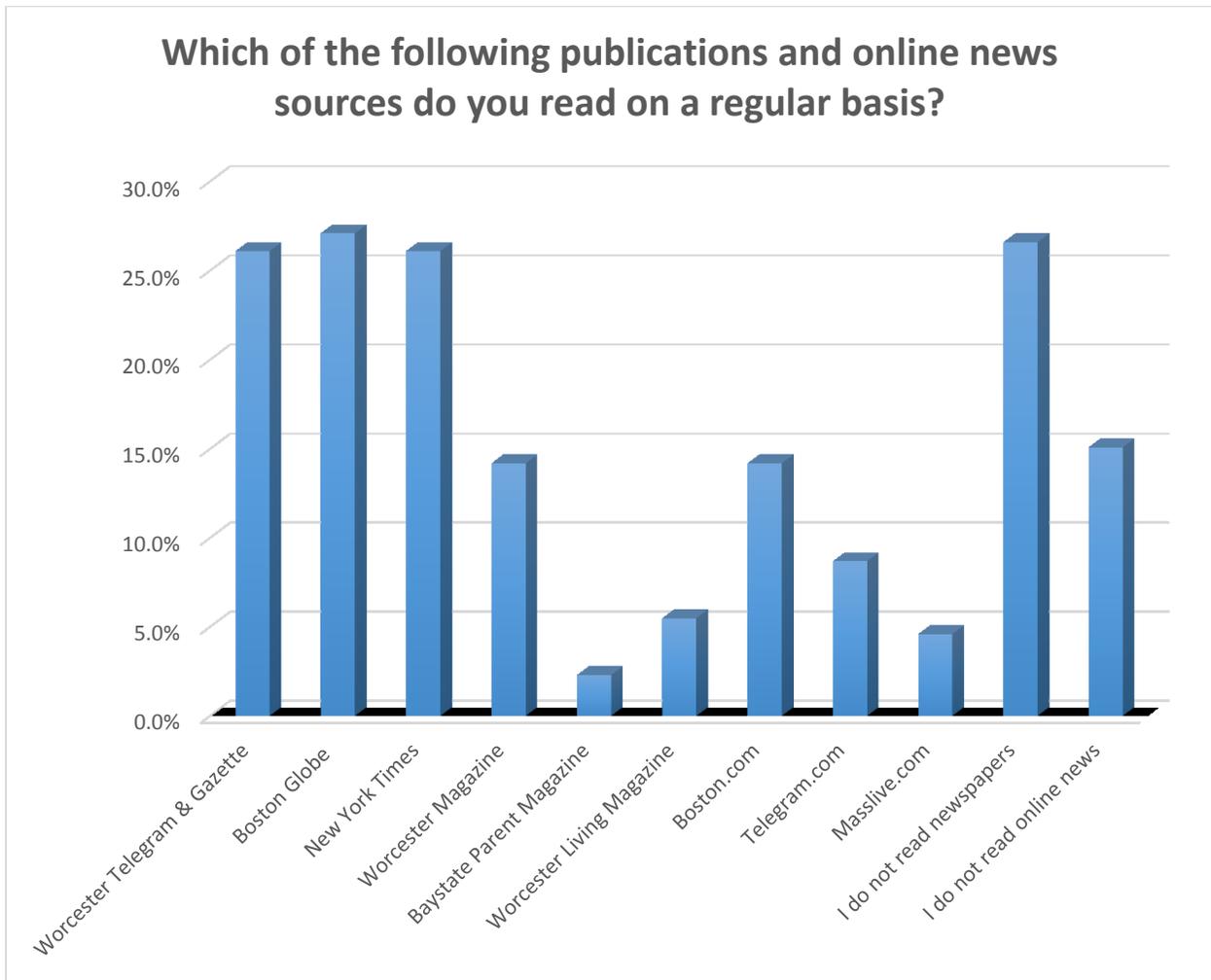


Figure 19: Responses to the survey question about preferred news source

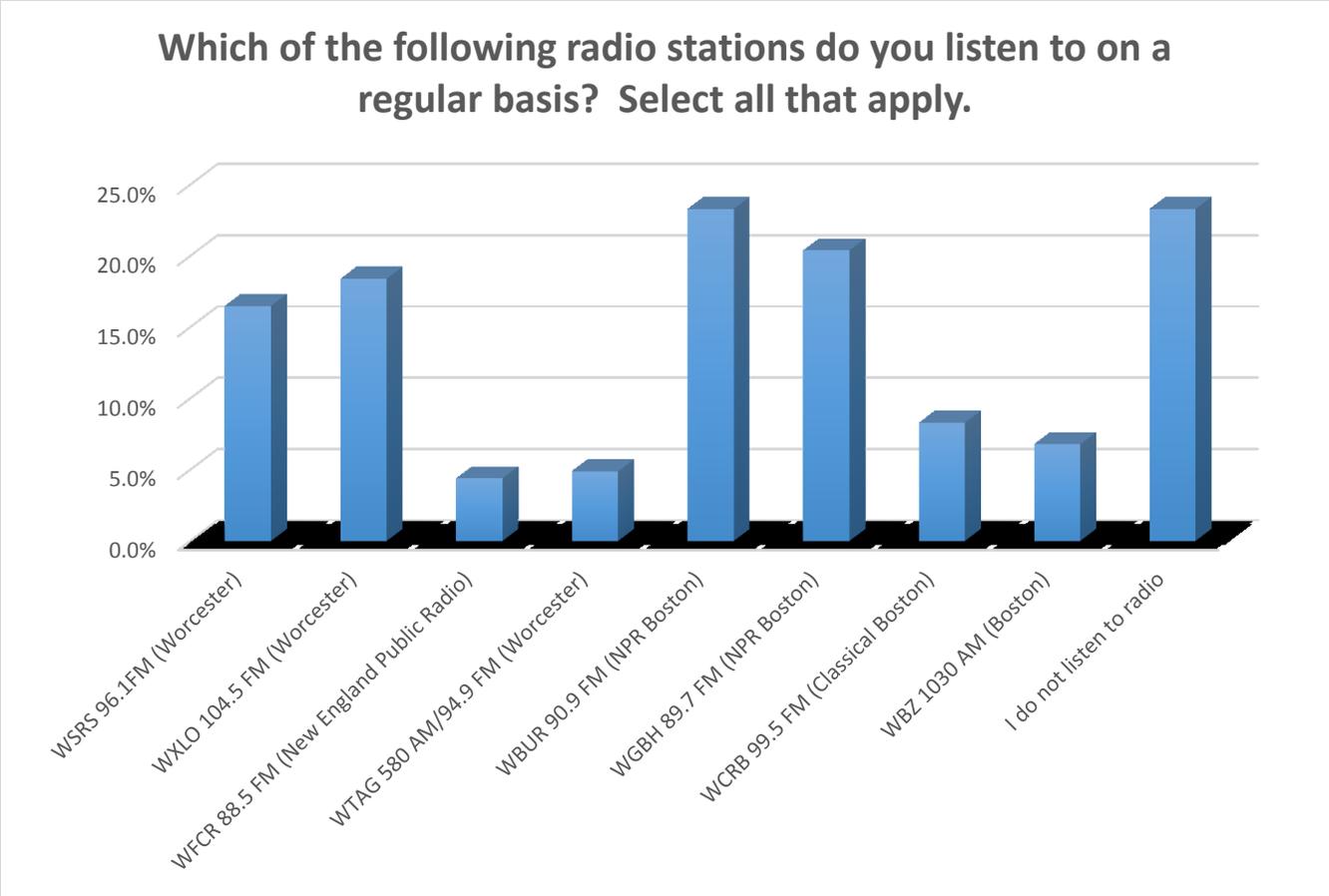


Figure 20: Responses to the survey question about radio stations listened to.

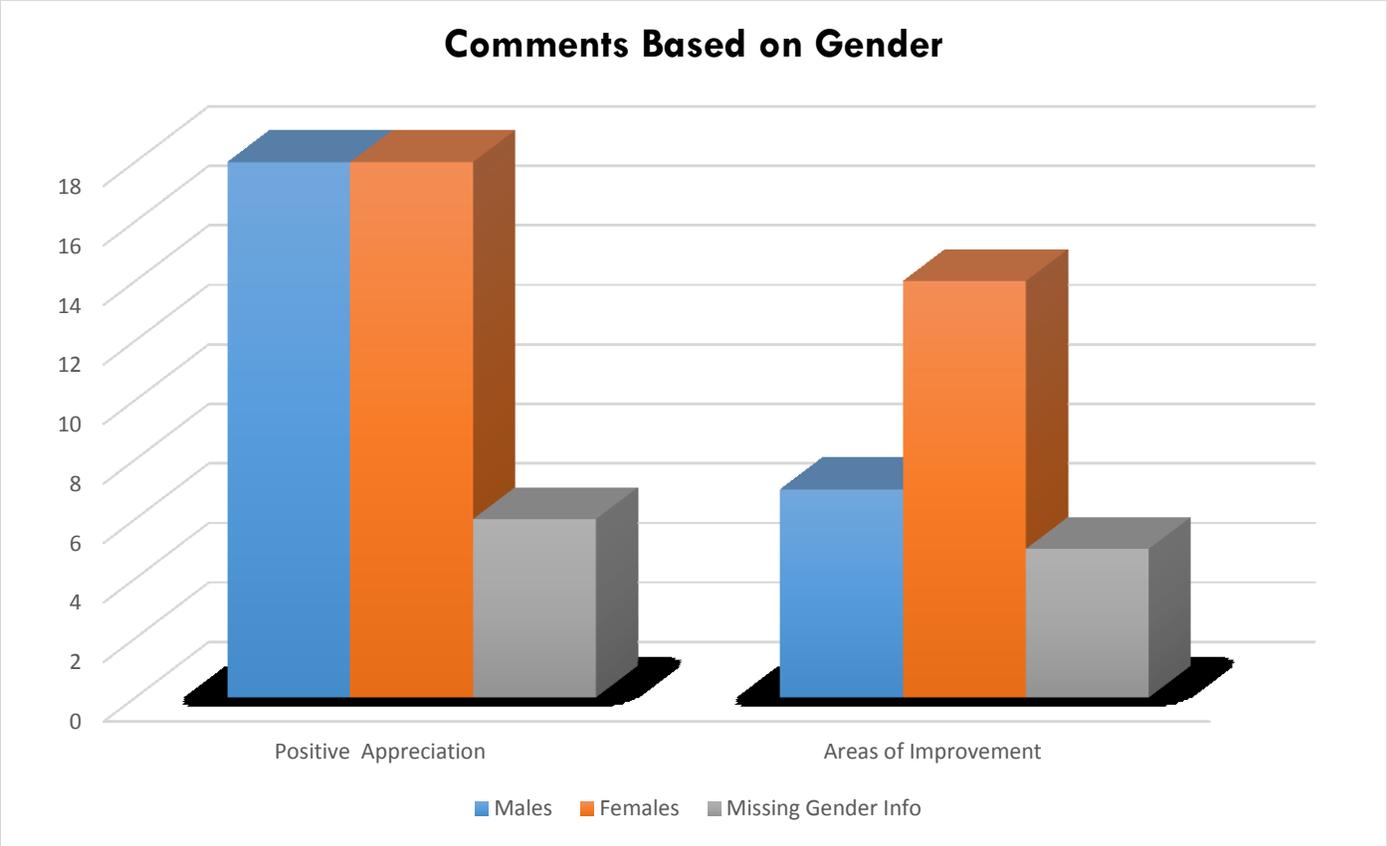
The WAM survey also left an open-ended section for visitors to write in any comments about their experience at WAM, of which we were able to identify 42 as positive appreciation and 26 comments as suggested changes or areas of improvement. These comments, as seen in Appendix C, are highlighted by the word clouds below and were used to look for themes when analyzing interviews. The sections of survey comments about positive appreciation and areas of improvement were also identified based on gender as identified in Figure 23 below which shows an equal amount of males and females with positive feedback and twice as many females identifying areas of improvement.



Figure 21: Word cloud showing typical words used in section of survey comments identified as Positive Appreciation



Figure 22: Word cloud showing typical words used in section of survey comments identified as Area for Improvement



*Figure 23: Gender-wise breakdown of survey comments based on identification as Positive Appreciation and Areas of Improvement*

#### 4.4 Interviews

Ten interviews were conducted with individuals who have a family and who have never visited WAM. Interviews were conducted in person and through phone conversations with participants. With the participant's permission, all interviews were audio recorded for note taking purposes and for production of verbatim interview transcripts. Using NVivo 10, the interview transcripts were manually coded to run queries and reports. Key themes from the interviews included a lack of readily available general information, unclear pricing for different groups, difficulty attending museum during normal hours of operation, unfamiliarity with exhibits, and hesitancy about bringing children to the museum.

The information gathered was analyzed to reveal several general themes that influenced the decisions about whether to attend WAM or whether to return after having visited. The major categories identified were:

- Spaces and activities for the family audience
  - Designated area for children is important; emphasis on young children
  - Dedicated design of and easy access to family space is important
- Marketing Communication
  - Lack of communicated expectations between visitors and the Museum
  - Preparation for a museum visit is not clearly defined for visitors
  - Directing a visit is not communicated well by the museum; visitors feel intrusive
  - Word-of-mouth is the most effective method

Trends were also seen in how families made decisions about what they wanted to do for activities. These trends were garnered from the interview responses alone and were categorized into the following types of consumer segments:

	Interested in Art	Less Interested in Art
Price/Deal Conscious	<p><b>Deal Enthusiast Family</b></p> <p>Might visit often if they get deals and novel exhibits to keep their interest alive.</p>	<p><b>Deal Hunter Family</b></p> <p>Might visit once if they get a deal or promotional offer. They might never re-visit due to lack of interest in art.</p>
	<p><b>Demanding Family</b></p> <p>Ideal target group. But they need novel and interesting exhibits to keep visiting.</p>	<p><b>Disinterested Family</b></p> <p>Not a target audience for WAM</p>
Not Price/Deal Conscious		

**Table 2: Audience segments for WAM**

- **Deal Enthusiast Family** – They have an interest in art, and a great deal only makes a museum more of an attractive option to them. Both the interesting exhibits as well as promotional offers attract this segment.
- **Deal Hunter Family** - Price conscious about family activities. They may, or may not, enjoy art but will only visit the museum if it seems like a good deal. It is easy to please and attract them with promotional offers.
- **Demanding Family** – They demonstrate love for the arts and are not price conscious either. But, they are very difficult to please because they need novel and interesting exhibits to entice them to visit and re-visit the museum.
- **Disinterested Family** - Needs some excitement and considers museums to be too low-key and/or does not enjoy art. Kids involved with sports and social organizations. This segment looks inaccessible since they are not interested or motivated (no intrinsic motivation) in going to a museum.

Along with these 4 segments, we also discovered one more segment from the interview responses. We call it the **Destination Family**. These families are very busy Monday through Friday, mainly work in Worcester, and are constantly on the road. So they do not want to drive again during the weekend to visit a museum or want to drive only when going on a vacation. Adjusting museum timings to the needs and schedules of this segment, might offer a great opportunity to WAM to improve audience visits on weekdays.

We also looked at how some of the key themes throughout the interviews went on to include a lack of information and communication with the public. Several of the interview participants were WPI employees and were not sure about if they could get in free with their WPI ID badge. Multiple participants wondered what time the museum was open until, and assumed that by the time they get out of work the museum would already be closed. The participants that had a slight interest in art museums were not aware of any of the exhibits on the display, but multiple were excited to hear that the Armory's exhibits had been included into WAM. It was clear that there was a lack of communication and knowledge between WAM and these potential patrons. The majority of these participants work within walking distance with the museum, but all knew very little about it. If people this close in proximity to WAM have difficulty when it comes to knowledge about the museum, it could be of concern how much knowledge people in a larger radius have.

As seen in Table 3 below, multiple parents felt uncomfortable bringing their young children to the museum. One participant, **Molly**, we interviewed said:

*I like trying to connect with it. An art museum is not the absolute best place to bring two young children. They like to be loud and run around, and that kind of stuff isn't exactly*

*welcomed in an art museum. A children's section or some sort of 1 hour daycare or something could be a good idea.*

Judging from these interviews, there seems to be a crossroads, where parents would like to go to the museum, but they are very aware that it would not be ideal to bring children of that age. All participants mentioned that when they are planning to go out, it is decided based on what their kids will enjoy. Marie, who has children that live at home over 20 years old, was quoted saying, *"They say happy wife, happy life. In my case, its happy children, happy life"*. It was clear that no matter what age the children were, when parents were making decisions, they keep the interests of their children in mind. If the parents do not feel like that they can bring their children to the art museum, then WAM is losing a good amount of the family target market. This can be solved through establishing more child and family friendly areas and continuing to get the word out about Family Days.

Name	Age	Gender	Occupation	Place of Residence	Family Description	General family activities	Visited other museums?	Visited other art museums?	Visited WAM?	Reasons for not visiting WAM/museums
Will	60	M	Teacher, Worcester	Acton, MA	Wife, 59, Son in college. Caucasian	Movies, active activities, sports	Yes	Yes, MFA	No	Like to be more active. Obligated to go to places further away rather than near home. Unsure of hours
Hannah	36	F	Accountant, Worcester	Framingham, MA	Husband, 39. Caucasian	Music, concerts, hiking	Yes	Yes, Florida/Boston	No	Lack of information, don't know about price/hours. Unsure of current exhibits, and not able to go after work
John	32	M	n/a	Auburn, MA	Wife, 33, Two children: 6,8. Caucasian	Staying around on weekends. Doing stuff for the kids	Yes	No	No	Has heard bad recommendations. Don't consider themselves art museum type. Worried about children running around
Julie	32	F	WPI employee	Worcester, MA	Husband, 33. Caucasian	Read. Cook. Travel	Yes	Yes. Rhode Island	No	New to Worcester. Obligated to go to places further away rather than near home.
Kristina	26	F	WPI employee	Oxford, MA	Husband, 34. Two Children: 2, 1. African-American	Going outside. Playground.	Yes	Yes MFA	No	Not open after work, don't want to go back to Worcester on weekends. Would go if they knew whose art was hanging up. Otherwise, feel like they are too stuffy, you cannot really talk, and feels like there is an expectation to stay and linger at every piece. Also not a place to bring children
Molly	29	F	WPI employee	Leicester, MA	Husband 30. Two children: 2 and <6 months. Caucasian	Outside. Park. Spending time at home	Yes	Yes MFA	No	Enjoys art museums, feels uncomfortable bringing little children to it however. Unaware of museum hours
Marie	53	F	WPI employee	Southborough, MA	Husband, 55. Children: 24, 21. Caucasian	Be on the water. Outdoor stuff. Go out to eat	Yes	Yes	No	Can't get family interest. Personally enjoys art museums, difficult to get husband and kids to go
Naina	36	F	Stay at home Mom	Shrewsbury, MA	Husband, Two children: 2, 6. Indian	Go to parks. Beaches, skiing	Yes	Yes	No	Not something they think their children would enjoy
Paul	50	M	WPI employee	Auburn, MA	Wife, 47, two sons: 23,21 Caucasian	Rowing. Movies. Dinner. Stay at home	Yes	Yes	No	Not looking to become "culturally enriched". Not part of their social norm. Would rather do something active

**Table 3: Interview Sample Table**

All participants stated that their respective families are typically very busy Monday-Friday. There is not much planning ahead, a few days in advance if anything, but a lot of choices are made spontaneously. These choices are usually made through word of mouth. Parents of young children responded that they would often ask other parents of young children what has worked for their children or not to help them make decisions. One mother of two young children, Molly, said, *“We have a few friends around the area that also have kids that are the same age, so we try and do stuff all together. We definitely listen to them for recommendations, they will do something that their kids love or hate, and we’ll try to do the same stuff with our kids.”* Participants usually said that people telling them to go check something out such as a show or an exhibit at a museum was the most influential way to get them to go do something.

Word of mouth marketing is challenging, but we see that parents look to other parents when it comes to finding a plan for the weekend. If families have a good experience at the museum, this should draw more families in through word of mouth. A few others mentioned that receiving emails such as from Groupon or Amazon Local, as well as places they often visit keep them updated on events that they will typically enjoy and are going on in the area. These sites and deals are one path that WAM could take in order to increase museum attendance.

Participants mentioned the following mediums for gathering information about events and activities :

- Family/Friends’ recommendations
- Advertisements through email
- Flyers from the school
- Facebook
- Research online
- The Sunday newspaper
- Worcester magazine
- Amazon local
- Groupon
- A webpage for Worcester events
- Online reviews

Multiple participants, who were all WPI employees, all mentioned that this was on their “to-do” list, but was difficult to get themselves to get up and go to the museum. There was a common theme that when people go travel somewhere else, such as a Scotland or Washington DC, museums are on the top of their” to-do” list. However, when a museum such as WAM is only thirty minutes away from their home, they find it difficult for them to make their way over to the museum. Many WPI employees also mentioned that they drive to Worcester Monday through Friday, and would rather not drive there again on the weekends. A few employees mentioned that if the museum was open after working hours, or if there were special events going on, then they would highly considering making a short walk over.

Family memberships were not very popular with the interview participants. We originally had thought that the cost of memberships would be the biggest deterrence but it was found that price was not the issue with memberships. It was more that the participants mentioned that they did not like the idea of family memberships and associated them with guilt. In terms of numbers, membership is something that has been difficult for WAM, so we suggest later in our recommendations a different type of open family membership. A few of the participants’ quotes are as followed:

**Julie:** *“There’s a feeling like if you do pay for a membership and you don’t go, then we’re not getting our money’s worth”*

**Kristina:** *“And I am also hesitant to get a family membership, because if we don’t use it I feel like it’s a waste”*

**Molly:** *“We do not; we just don’t like having the burden of having a membership. If we pay for one, and don’t use it we just feel like it is a waste, or we feel obligated to go.”*

**Naina:** *“It is not something that we would want to be stuck into where if we didn’t have other options we would go there because we had a membership.”*

Through our multiple methods of research, we were able to come to the following conclusions about why families visit WAM, and why families don't visit WAM.

As we saw from the Free Summer Program data mentioned in our background, the top three reasons why families visited WAM are:

1. **Family/ Friends Time:** Visitors enjoy coming to the museum and spending time with their friends and family listening to stories, learning fun facts, and sharing observations.
2. **Enjoy art:** Many visitors that choose to visit WAM are listed in the audience segment that is enthusiastic about art, and the art is what gets them to visit.
3. **Museum's collections and exhibits:** The exhibits and collections such as the *Knights!* exhibit have been extremely popular. Finding out what appeals and engages the audiences and offering those exhibits brings the audiences back to WAM over and over again.

From our interviews, we were able to gain more information on why families do not visit WAM, the top three reasons being:

1. **Inconvenience:** Multiple parents felt uncomfortable bringing their young children to the museum, which in turn prevented them from coming. Inconvenience was also caused by the difficult hours of operation. These inconveniences discouraged them from visiting WAM.
2. **Lack of clear communication:** Multiple interview participants, including WPI employees, were unsure of museum hours, as well as if they could get in for free or not. Participants also were unaware of what exhibits were currently on display. This lack of effective marketing communication does not allow WAM to reach out to potential audiences with a clear voice and message.
3. **Disinterested in art:** Many people do not come to the museum because they just do not have an interest in art. These peoples' lifestyle's seem to not have time for art museums. Even if an individual enjoyed art, if his/her family members did not enjoy art, he/she was not interested in visiting the museum alone.

## **CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS**

The goal of this project was to define “family” for WAM in order to determine what this audience expects while visiting the museum and what the family audience enjoys at the museum. By describing the current interactions of family visitors at WAM, understanding the demographic profiles of current family visitors, and exploring the motivations that prompt patrons to visit WAM, recommendations of how the museum can engage these audiences were developed. The recommendations have been broken up into the marketing mix elements for WAM: Product, Price, Place and Promotion as shown in sections 5.2 through 5.5.

### **5.1 Family**

The recommended definition of a sustainable family audience for WAM is any combination of adults accompanied by children between the ages of 6-16 that have a shared desire to engage in fun, creative learning activities together. The age range selected for this definition represents grades 1-10 in the traditional school system where the proposed School Liaisons would be most effective at reaching this audience and their respective families. If the children are any younger than 6, they most likely cannot read and will have a more difficult time with comprehension of conversation about an exhibit. If children are older than 16, they will begin driving, become more independently mobile, and will be making more of their own choices about preferred individual activities. As seen in the benchmarking table on page 40, other museums are also offering specific services for those 16 and under.

By focusing on the combination of adults and children there are other benefits that cannot be realized by targeting a narrower age range. One of these benefits is the feedback that can be received. It is difficult to get meaningful feedback from children but accompanying adults know how these children respond to other activities and may be able to more accurately gauge

the level of enthusiasm from the child during the museum visit. Another benefit is that the adults want to bring children to places that they can both enjoy. Kids will not enjoy an activity if it is too complicated or challenging and adults will not enjoy an activity that is seemingly dull and unexciting in order to make it “kid friendly”.

## **5.2 Product**

**Target the “edutainment” centric families with programs designed to both educate and entertain**

*“I ask her what she wants to do. Because if I ask her,  
and she says no, and then she won’t enjoy it.” – John*

The idea of “fun” appeared in every interview and is important specifically for the family audience that doesn’t frequent WAM. Children’s activities were centered on sports, music, or some other happening that involves active participation that is stimulating for the child. The added benefit is when the parent or adult can also participate instead of simply being relegated to the family chauffeur. By engaging both parties in the activity there is a greater chance that more enjoyment will be had.

Difficulty arises when the “fun” is mixed with the “education” and the perception of the child is that they are being coerced into something that they do not want to participate in. All participants indicated that they consider what the children want to do when planning activities, so the key to edutainment for WAM lies in reaching the children while also being relevant for other audiences. The Helmutt Family Guide and the live talks about Arms and Armor are good examples of how edutainment can work well but these tools need to be easier to access, hands-on, and should continue to expand. If a child completes the Helmutt Family Guide on a single trip, what is she supposed to do on the next visit? How can the experience build on this?

The key to a good product for the WAM family audience is to find the middle ground where the activity can provide a little bit of interest for everyone while retaining the educational aspect. This idea was also noted by a comment in the museum survey that recommended WAM to, “reconsider the new tendency towards low-level entertainment especially when it comes to children's education.” An example of a way to accomplish this is by highlighting the state-of-the-art conservation facilities at WAM that are a tremendous resource for the art community. Children are fascinated with seeing how things work and the basic processes required for conservation while adults may find interest in the nuance and intricacy involved with the conservation efforts. The images below are a good example of what may cross this family divide of interest.



Figure 24: Adaptation of "Then-and-Now" photos by Travis Simpkins. Pictures show the Worcester Hunt Mosaic over the last 78 years.

The installation of the Worcester Hunt Mosaic was a grand project that required expert skill and care. Children might enjoy the reinforcement of the tactile nature of an activity that highlights conservation by as a child could be given his own “damaged tile” to restore while learning about the process. The adults could discuss logistics of moving and installing a large piece of art or possibly learn about the science behind the conservation. Another example is the Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) being done at WAM. This technique uses science and technology to connect with art conservation. Seeing a demonstration of the detailed visualization in surface geometries can be interesting for children and adults alike.



Figure 25: RTI dome used by Worcester Art Museum

### **5.3 Price**

#### **Frequent Family Pass**

*“If we don’t use it, I feel like it’s a waste” – Molly*

A family pass is an incentive for repeat visits, attendance to special events, and an opportunity for discounted purchases. Many families interviewed did not like the idea of family memberships in general because they felt that the price was not justified if it wasn’t used and were not sure about the commitment. It would be suggested that WAM consider issuing a “Frequent Family Pass” (FFP) instead of the upfront membership. The way the FFP would work is that families would visit the same way they currently do but would be given a loyalty card at the first visit. If the family returned a specified number of times over the course of 6 months, they would get free admittance for the remainder of the loyalty year. For example, if a family of two non-member adults and two school age children visited the museum 3 times in 2 months at current rates, the cost would be \$120. The family could then visit the museum for the next 10 months at no cost and also take advantage of other specials that could be offered through the program.

By instituting a loyalty program based on the terms of the user, they decide whether or not to commit to the return visit and if they are unsatisfied or do not have time for repeat visits, and then there would be no additional “waste” of money. This would also give the museum the added benefit of being able to track the usage characteristics and spending habits of the program members. If so inclined, the cards could even be set up to be scanned throughout the museum to provide personalized information from an iPad or kiosk. This information can be beneficial when looking at exhibit dwell time, deciding hours of operation, events/ classes to offer, or to even tailor specials to the particular user.

#### **5.4 Place**

##### **Provide family friendly hours of operation and clearly designated spaces for the family audience**

*“I think a lot of ... [why we don't visit]... is the timing. Just trying to fit it in.” – Julie*

Having standard gallery hours the same every day would give a compact way to convey this such as, Wed-Sun: 10-5, instead of the current, Wednesday-Friday, Sunday: 11am-5pm; Saturday: 10am-5pm Also, extending hours on a few days of the week (on a regular basis) would enable working parents to bring their children to the museum even on weekdays. Knowing that extended hours have substantial associated costs, the museum could potentially adjust shifts of the staff to help mitigate the added time. The other part of this recommendation is to further investigate longer hours on particular days or potentially on a seasonal basis to capitalize on the downtime families experience when summer sports are not in session.

The other obstacle that was identified dealt with the designation of “Family Spaces”. The current family spaces may be functionally good for the

targeted audience but they are not well delineated from the rest of the museum and may be difficult to find. If a family is having problems with a child in the museum environment, they need a space to retreat to quickly where they can re-group and decide about what to do next. This also allows for minimal disturbance to other visitors as well. This notion was also echoed by numerous survey comments from non-family visitors that urged WAM to provide a “traditional” atmosphere by not “turning the museum into a playground” and by not having, “the cartoon character in random places, it detracts from the otherwise sophisticated environment.” The “Family Space” needs to be identified on maps, signs, and other information provided to guests so that the audience that wants to use can easily find it, but the audience that wants to avoid it may do so just as easily.

## **5.5 Promotion**

### **Word-of Mouth is the key**

*“We get flyers from the school with recommended activities, and the kid’s teachers suggest things for them to do” – John*

In this research, word-of-mouth was the biggest influencer of whether someone was willing to visit the museum or not. This includes recommendations from family and friends but also from the people that many children spend 6+ hours a day with; teachers. Teachers are suggested for this position because of the role they play as opinion leaders. They have the ability to be an active voice in the school community and they are asked for advice from parents and other education professionals. Knowing that school groups already visit the museum, it would be helpful to have a good understanding of why they are visiting, how their experience was, and what could improve about it. This would only require one or more teachers to volunteer as a School Liaison to

serve the surrounding school communities by sharing resources with colleagues and keeping the museum current with the changing needs of the educator audience. The CNSE Children's Museum of Science and Technology employs a similar position with the job description of:

*You will receive advance notice of upcoming exhibits, special events, and programs. In addition, you may be offered the opportunity to give your educational input on a relevant task force. Additionally, you will help spread the word about CNSE CMOST's exciting and educational programs, workshops, tours, outreach, and professional development opportunities!*

*As thanks for helping CNSE CMOST distribute our educational programming information to the other educators in your school building, you will receive a free one-year Family membership to CNSE CMOST as well as the reward of putting your entire school in touch with an educational world of science and technology.*

The School Liaison would be able to reach parents and family decision makers through the schools, educators, and the children. These three factors combined would heavily influence perceptions about the museum as a family friendly place to be.

Another great tool for word-of-mouth advertising is social media, public relations, and online deal sites. Since WAM already has a Facebook and Twitter account, a campaign can be run to get more followers and to have them post reviews. Looking at reviews that are already on Facebook at the time this report was written there are 9389 check-ins but only 749 reviews. If more people reviewed their experience it would give valuable feedback about ways for WAM to improve audience engagement. This also allows WAM to highlight positive reviews such as the one below from Betsy Zeller.



**Betsy Gartrell Zeller** — **5★** We had a great day at the museum today! This was absolutely perfect for our 3 year old boys. They loved the knight exhibit. Thank you.

[Like](#) · [Comment](#) · about 11 months ago · [3 Reviews](#)

This review from Betsy is great because she gave the highest rating of five stars, the review sounds sincere, and she spelled out exactly why she is giving her rating. The only criticism of Betsy's review is that she has only reviewed 3 other places and may not have high credibility as a source. Contrary to Betsy's review is that of visitors like Noreen Simon, below, who liked the museum but did not enjoy the visit.



**Noreen Simon** — **2★** W.A.M. is great...but.....just don't go with a toddler....they will follow you and remind you repeatedly not to let the toddler touch the glass doors, lean against the walls, touch the exhibits, despite the child not doing any of the above. Oh, and this was during August, when it's free and they encourage families to visit. When I filled out a survey AND followed up with an email, we received no contact. We were in the museum less than 15 min and left, feeling very unwelcome.

[Like](#) · [Comment](#) · over a year ago · [37 Reviews](#)

Noreen explicitly spells out what frustrations she had during her visit and why she felt “unwelcome”. These types of reviews happen everywhere and warrant an immediate response to mitigate the concern. An appropriate response to Noreen may have been, “Noreen, it was unfortunate that you were unable to enjoy your visit to the museum and we appreciate your feedback. WAM is continually working on training initiatives with all of our staff, and you can be rest assured that your concerns will be shared with them to prevent any future discomfort for patrons. While it's still Free Summer, we hope you can come back and give us another opportunity to deliver a great experience for your family.”

This response addresses everything negative that is stated and shows people who are reading the review that if they have a problem at WAM it will be addressed promptly.

As seen in figure 26 below, Online deal-sites like Groupon and Amazon Local are also a good way to reach a social media connected market as these deals get passed around very quickly. Any deal that is offered should be tailored to fit the specific need of both the museum and the audience to get the maximum amount of benefit from it. The offering could be for a specific family class that involves activities or a guided tour that is given a convenient time for the holders. A deal for the WAM family audience might be \$20 for a family, up to four people, to come to the museum for a class on medium-specific painting. Once the family enjoys their time at the museum, they are much more likely to give positive feedback online and through word-of-mouth to others.

	<p><b>\$19.99 for Admission for Two at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (\$30 Value)</b></p> <p>Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum</p> <p>📍 Boston</p> <p>Explore a unique art collection spanning thousands of years inside a building that resembles a palace; new wing by architect Renzo Piano</p>	<p><del>\$30</del> <b>\$19.99</b></p> <p><a href="#">VIEW DEAL</a></p>
	<p><b>Admission or Membership to The Old State House - America's Revolutionary Museum (70% Off)</b></p> <p>RevolutionaryBoston at the Old State House</p> <p>📍 Downtown</p> <p>Experience the American Revolution through Revolutionary-era artifacts &amp; live performances, then tour the Boston Massacre site out front</p>	<p><del>\$20</del> <b>\$12</b></p> <p><a href="#">VIEW DEAL</a></p>
	<p><b>\$10 for Admission for One to Boston Children's Museum (Up to \$14 Value)</b></p> <p>Boston Children's Museum</p> <p>📍 Boston</p> <p>Boston Children's Museum offers programs &amp; exhibits that encourage hands-on learning, inspiring kids to use their imagination &amp; creativity</p>	<p><del>\$14</del> <b>\$10</b></p> <p><a href="#">VIEW DEAL</a></p>

Figure 26: Example of Groupon Museum Deals in the Nearby Area

Further, clear and consistent communication is important to any relationship and it is especially important when trying to compete for people's time. It was recognized that most people did not want to spend any amount of time looking for information and were turned off to an activity if it required too much effort to find a detail that was assumed to be readily available. A good example of this is museum hours of operation. Families are not even aware that the museum gallery closes at 5pm or when classes begin and end.

*"I'm just not sure about what's going on over there, their hours, how late they are open....most likely they would be closed by the time we get out of work. I just don't know that much about it." - Hannah*

This person does not know when the museum closes but assumes that she cannot make it there on a work day. Being certain to have hours of operations on every piece of advertising could help potential visitors clear this obstacle. Making the hours simpler would benefit by making it more compact for advertising.

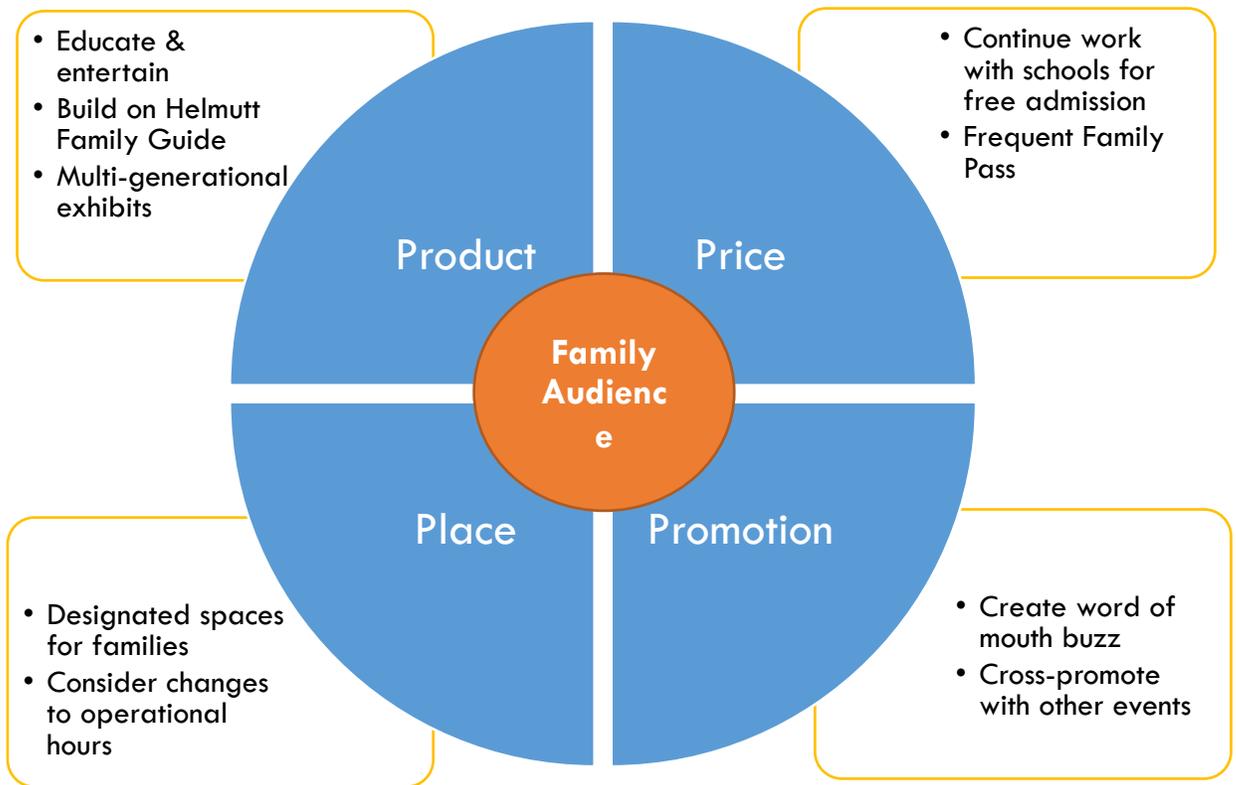


Figure 27: Recommended Marketing Mix for WAM

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Organizations that are devoted to the arts have seen many changes over time but one thing that always remains true is that the patrons of these institutions desire to be engaged by the activity. The goal of this project was to define what a family audience looks like for WAM and to make recommendations on how the Museum can actively engage with them. Through the use of secondary data, observations, surveys, and interviews we found several things to be true for visitors. There is an apparent lack of communicated expectations between visitors and the Museum, spaces for families could use improvement, and word-of-mouth is the most effective marketing method for the family audience.

Suggestions made to improve audience engagement were to create dedicated spaces for families, tailor some features in exhibits specifically for children, create a Family Pass that is mutually beneficial, and to create a program of School Liaisons to help word-of-mouth advertising. Some of these suggestions require more resources than others and have varying degrees of difficulty in regards to implementation. Volunteer School Liaisons would be relatively low cost when compared to constructing a dedicated family space but both options show the family audience something important; that WAM cares. Everyone has different expectations and by making a sincere effort to enhance the museum experience for the family audience, people will take notice. More patrons will enjoy their visit to the museum and will consequently feel inclined to tell others that they should give it a try too.

Limitations of the research conducted for this project include the size of the participant pool and potential concentration of sampling during interviews, the candor in responses to the survey, and the variability of visitors on days of observations. Finding families that do not typically attend WAM and were interested in speaking about family activities in the context of museum visits was difficult and could have potentially yielded better results through more

snowball sampling. The surveys were open on iPads throughout the museum such that anyone could key in a response without any selection to the sample. The days chosen for observation were done so because of indications that they would be higher in traffic, but it is possible that other days could have yielded different results. Future research for WAM could include focus group discussions with families that attend places such as the Eco-Tarium, or focus groups with children to figure out what excites them the most about WAM and its activities, more directed surveys in the Central Massachusetts region to understand the family audience potential for WAM, and looking to people directly involved with child care for thoughts on how to create more engagement.

Understanding that change is difficult and sometimes risky, it is inevitable. If WAM can retain the audiences that currently visit while introducing features to draw in the audiences that it desires to capture, success will be found. In an era where competition for customers' mind-share and share-of-wallet are at an all-time high, WAM will be required to implement a plan with concerted effort and strategic actions.

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**Appendix A**  
**Field List for Observation**

Location:

Description of the Location:

Date:

Time spent observing:

Weather:

Number of people in observation group(s):

Group Descriptions: Age, Gender, Family/Non-Family, Ethnicity, Residence, Physical Appearance, etc... Provide more details here

Verbal communication between group(s):

Physical communication between group(s):

What exhibits/features of the museum do they seem drawn to?

**Other Important Observations:**

## Appendix B

### Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Hello Mr./Ms. <XYZ>! We are Oliver Sullivan and John Crawford. We are students at WPI that are currently working on our major qualifying project where we are attempting to understand people's interests in Art Museums. This interview is being conducted as a part of that project. I assure you that the information you provide in this interview will be kept completely confidential and anonymous. Now before we start, do we have the permission to record this conversation for future reference? .... Thank you.

1. Can you start by telling us about your family?
  - a. How many people are in your household?
  - b. What are their current ages?
  - c. Do you include friends or relatives in your family activities?
  
2. What type of leisure activities does your family enjoy?
  - a. **If they respond with museums or cultural institutions ask about art museums**
    - i. If yes to art museums, then jump to **question 8**
    - ii. If no to art museums, continue
  
3. What factors help determine what leisure activities your family chooses to do?
  - a. Recommendations from others?
  - b. Advertisements?
  - c. Special Rates?
  - d. Is price a factor?
  - e. Is location a factor?
  - f. Does it matter how long it takes to complete?
  - g. Do you ask for input from the children?
  
4. How frequently do you spend time in family activities? (eg. once a week, 6 times a month, etc...)
  - a. Are there certain days of the week that you prefer to engage in family activities?
  - b. Are there certain times of day that you prefer to engage in family activities?
  - c. Are there times of year that you have more family activities than usual?
  - d. Are there times of year that you engage in less family activities than usual?
  
5. How do you plan your activities?
  - a. How far ahead do you plan?
  - b. What do you have to account for in your planning?
    - i. Meals?
    - ii. Timing?
    - iii. Travel?
    - iv. Extras?
  - c. Do you research the activities online?
  - d. Are there any resources that you wish were more easily accessible?

6. Do you attend any special or one-time events with your family?
  - a. How far ahead do you plan?
  - b. What do you have to account for in your planning?
    - i. Meals?
    - ii. Timing?
    - iii. Travel?
    - iv. Extras?
  - c. Do you research the activities online?
  - d. Are there any resources that you wish were more easily accessible?
  
7. Do you have a family membership to any of the places you like to go?
  - a. If yes, how long have you had this membership?
    - i. What do you like most about having the family membership?
    - ii. What could be improved about the family membership?
  - b. If no, would you prefer to have some discounted family rates?
    - i. Are there other incentives you would prefer?
  
8. Art Museums
  - a. Can you describe how you plan for your trip to the art museum?
  - b. What do you look for in the museum experience?
    - i. Learning opportunities?
    - ii. Hands-on exhibits?
    - iii. Classes?
    - iv. Guided tours?
  - c. What was the most enjoyable experience you had at the art museum?
  - d. Are there things that you don't like about art museums?
  - e. BACK TO QUESTION 3

## Appendix C

### WAM Survey Comments: Positive Appreciation & Areas of Improvement/Recommendations

<u>Positive Appreciation</u>	<u>Areas of Improvement/Recommendations</u>
it was fun to see the art	Lighting was horrible in the remastered area and the lack of labeling next to paintings was very upsetting. The computer info area is a nice supplement but absolutely not a replacement for info written next to paintings
very impressed	I came to visit to see the Edward Hopper paintings you are credited with having only to find they are not on display. Please contact me if they will be displayed in the future and I would love to return.
great time	Floors need washing...glass doors need cleaning.. Athhstetically needs work
the museum is amazing I love every second	I wish there were before pictures next to the two Hogarths. It would have been nice to see side by side
Great place	Being yelled at soured the day
I love ancient Egypt. It would be nice if there was a bigger area dedicated to it. I like the interactive things in the Knights area.	What's the deal with the pink horse? It ruins the feel of that exhibit...the projected images are awesome as is the armor but coupled with the pink!? Terrible. Also find the carts and cartoons clutters and busy. Too many chairs in the galleries, nearly knocked into one! Keep it simple, intelligent. This fantastic collection does not need gimmicks, just great exhibits to work with and enhance the amazing permanent collection. Please don't turn the museum into a playground!
taking a photography class and am learning about manual settings on my digital camera. No better way to learn about the capturing of light than by the masters and innovators. Gallery exhibitions, placement and lighting was a great way to help me learn (without a flash), appreciate all of the wonderful art throughout. I will certainly be spending more time with and referring family, friends and co-workers. Kudos to the museum staff every step through my journey today. They were friendly, courteous, helpful and a group to be proud of. Thank you for a great day and experience.	also the cartoon dog seems odd.....dumbing down the museum experience. It's good for children to lean about art and broaden their horizons and it is not useful to make it about a cartoon as this distracts from truly learning about art.
nice museum for a small city	Helmet the dog is quaint and educational although denigrates cultural immersion, perhaps a card board cutout of a dog in wooden armor isn't necessary to properly immerse oneself into eastern culture
iPads are surprisingly discreet, and remastered should have already been done long ago.	Dont get the point of the Idea lab
We liked the music	Your descriptions are to wordy
Beautiful exhibits	
Loved Linda Turgeon's from Perro's interpretation!	The rooms with paintings smell awful.

<u>Positive Appreciation</u>	<u>Areas of Improvement/Recommendations</u>
Loved it	Modern art doesn't make much sense.
This survey rocks!!!!	I can do without the idiotic political commentary from the Pulitzer Center as well as the mural on the wall above the Antioch display in the main hall. To politicize is to trivialize.
Always a joy to spend time here	Do not like the horse painted pink!
Great collection	Please reconsider the new tendency towards low-level entertainment especially when it comes to children's education. I work a lot with children and I think I have a good idea, what the like. Google "Reggio" for example. You will see, what children are capable of when it comes to art.
It was great, Thank you	Can have Helmutt the dog plush toys in the gift shop? More cheeseburgers in cafe, please.
It was great	Do not like the cartoon character in random places , it detracts from the otherwise sophisticated environment
it was good. The prices were cheap and my dad loves one of the artist you have	i would be interested in reintroducing tai chai classes by bill reardon again...I have mastered yang style 24 step short form and find it very beneficial to starting my day at the museum..it is proven in China the people that do tai chai daily on their lunch hour have a better performance and productivity level increase."..please bring. It back as an elective course...thank you
it was fun! I'd def come back lol	The one you called Helmutt is everywhere...don,t you feel he was Higgins mascot? Adopt some originality to having a museum mascot of your own...just say,in
a wonderful time!	Evaluate some of the newest programs and events. Some of them work, others should be eliminated.
Amazing	Would rather not see nude drawing classes held during museum hours..... Please put this subject matter up for voting by the people on this survey questioners
it was good. The prices were cheap and my dad loves one of the artist you have	Better signage for parking lot.
exitingfun	Less iPads. Not necessary.
it was nice	Would like to see styles of artwork more that are rarely featured.
I love the artery I wish there was more	Ok
Great strange exhibit!	More artwork
Came to see the armor part of museum and concert	
lit was awesome	
It was a lovely way to share in some holiday happenings.	
ginger bread houses	
Keep the good teachers!	
Loved it! The museum is a beautiful place to visit!	
The del Sarto is exceptional. So is the Knights exhibit	
It was a great way to spend the day	
I like that you can put your hands in the gauntlet!!!!!!!!!!!!	
I like how visitors can share opinions to the museum	