Economic Impact & Guest Research Study
Major Findings/Executive Summary

This report was commissioned to accomplish several objectives: 1) to estimate the economic impact that the Balloon Fiesta has on Metro Albuquerque 2) to monitor changes in guest types and guest behavior and 3) to assess guest satisfaction with the event. Two surveys were conducted; an intercept survey during the event and a follow-up e-mail survey.

- One thousand forty three (1,043) intercept surveys were completed during the nine days and 129 e-mail surveys were received.
- In 2011, nearly three quarters of a million people attended the nine-day event (737,466).
- In 2009, it was reported that 80% of the attendees were from “Outside of Metro-Albuquerque” versus 60.5% in 2011. The percentage of local residents was greater this year.

Economic Impact

- The direct and indirect economic impact of the Balloon Fiesta was $117,124,897.
- Direct spending was $90,794,494.
- Out of area attendees spent an average of $194 per day while visiting. This is substantially higher than $144 reported in 2009.
- Over 1,600 (1,602) full time equivalent jobs are generated as a result of the impact of the Balloon Fiesta, and a payroll of $21.9 million is generated in the Metro-Albuquerque area.
- Nearly $15 million was generated in tax revenues.
- Nearly $9 million was generated in state and local taxes.

About the Attendees

- Approximately 75% of the respondents came from five states: New Mexico, Texas, California, Colorado, and Arizona.
- Respondents from outside the Albuquerque area indicated they spent an average of 4.5 nights in Metro-Albuquerque.
- Thirty-four percent of the respondents spent additional time visiting New Mexico as part of their visit. They spent an average additional day and a half (1.5 days) visiting New Mexico, outside of Albuquerque.
- Thirty-nine percent of the respondents were from the Albuquerque Metro Area.
- The average adult party size for local residents was slightly lower than out of town guests, 3.1 vs. 3.9 respectively.
- Nearly eight percent of the respondents attended the Balloon Fiesta Park alone.
- First time attendees dropped from a high of 57.8% in 2006 to 41.2%.
- Half of the respondents (51.6%) attended only one or two sessions.
Marketing to the Attendees

- Nearly three-fifths of the respondents (59.1%, a substantial increase over 2009) heard about the event from “Friends/Family”.
- 5.9% of respondents heard about the Balloon Fiesta through “Online social networking.” This is an important new medium.
- Eighty-one percent of the out of town respondents cited “the Balloon Fiesta” as the main reason for being in Albuquerque. This is substantially higher than in years past (in 2006 it was 69.2%).
- Vacation travel is down in the state of New Mexico and this impacted the overall attendance numbers.1
- Nearly two-thirds of the respondents plan on visiting the Balloon Fiesta next year.
- “Admission Promotions” impacted 14% of the attendees’ decisions on which days to visit.

Event Satisfaction

- Respondents were “extremely satisfied” and considered the following Balloon Fiesta attributes/events as “extremely important”: “Attitude/Helpfulness of staff”, “Balloon Mass Ascensions”, “Balloon Glows” and “Quality/Selection of Food”.
- “Live Entertainment/Concerts” was rated the least important area garnering a 5.4 out of 10 for importance and a 6.9 out of 10 for satisfaction. However, half (50.5%) of the respondents were not able to rate this area as they either did not see the entertainment or were not aware of the entertainment.
- Lower importance/Satisfaction scores were also given to “The Memorial Brick Walkway” and “Balloon Flying Competition”, but these scores were impacted by a lack of knowledge of each area.

Transportation

- Eighty-three percent of the attendees traveled by car to this year’s Balloon Fiesta, and public transportation accounted for 6.5% of the attendees.
- Nearly one-third (30%) had used “Park and Ride” in the past and 79% would do so again.
- Overall, in 2011, 19.2% of the respondents did not consider the traffic “Congested at All”. This is up from 15% in 2009.

Sponsorship

- Sponsorship is a valuable tool for companies. Even companies like “Kodak,” that is no longer a sponsor has name recognition long past their sponsorship involvement.
- Regardless of actual sponsorship, the top five sponsors respondents recalled were: Wells Fargo, Creamland Dairies, Dos Equis, Intel and Nikon. They were followed by: Pepsi, Kodak, Farmers Insurance, State Farm, Rainbow Ryders and Walgreens.

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1 New Mexico Tourism Department: The State of Tourism in New Mexico, Longwoods Travel. This report provides a multi-year look at tourism spending and visitation to New Mexico
Not surprisingly, 94% of the respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that Corporate Sponsorships makes the Balloon Fiesta possible.

Fifty-six percent of the respondents “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that they were more likely to purchase brands from sponsors because of the association.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that they have a positive attitude towards sponsors because of their association and 60% of the respondents “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that sponsorship is a better way to influence purchase decisions than traditional advertising.

**What was done well and what needs improvement**

Throughout the survey, overall responses indicate attendees are satisfied with the management of the event including personnel, volunteers and activities. The Balloon Fiesta personnel will continue to face challenges with parking, communication (including signage) and bathroom facilities, but overall the Balloon Fiesta is doing an excellent job of managing the event.

- “Parking/Transportation/Traffic control” was highlighted as a major issue. Twenty-four percent of the respondents praised the Balloon Fiesta personnel in this area and 16% indicated that it was an area for improvement.
- Food was also an area highlighted and 7% of the respondents felt that the Balloon Fiesta handled food very well and 7% of the respondents felt it was an area of improvement.
- Other things that respondents felt the Balloon Fiesta did well (greater than 5% response) during the event were: Organization and Logistics, Volunteer/Vendors and Activities/Sessions.
- Other things that respondents felt the Balloon Fiesta could improve on were (greater than 5% response): Seating, Communication (including signage) and Bathroom Facilities. 

Respondents, when asked for “Comments/Suggestion” provided a variety of responses. Most of the responses were complimentary and favorable. Weather was a big complaint out of the control of the Balloon Fiesta personnel. One area for review may be communication to attendees.

**Demographics**

- There were some significant demographic changes in the 2011 Balloon Fiesta attendees. There were more singles, more men, more Latinos/Hispanics, fewer retirees and more students. This will impact how to market to these attendees and what they like to do at the Balloon Fiesta.