

# REPORT FOR 2006 CHARLESTON AREA VISITOR INTERCEPT SURVEY



**March 14, 2007**

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*Funding provided by the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau  
and Office of Tourism Analysis at College of Charleston*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CACVB) conducts a visitor intercept survey through the Office of Tourism Analysis at the College of Charleston on an ongoing basis. The Charleston area receives more than four million visitors every year. Understanding their travel behavior, expenditures, wants and needs, and likes and dislikes is crucial for target marketing as well as improving tourism service quality in the Charleston area and increasing guests' satisfaction levels.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study is a follow-up of the intercept studies conducted for the CACVB by the College of Charleston in 2004 and 2005. The population of the study was individuals who visited downtown Charleston from March to December 2006. Data collectors (several undergraduate students from the College of Charleston) approached visitors randomly in four prime tourism areas in the historic district to ask for their voluntary participation in this visitor survey. We conducted the survey distribution during a broad cross section of times of the day and on randomly selected days of the week. A postage paid mail-back survey was provided to the visitor in addition to a complimentary bottle of water as an incentive. In agreement with the CACVB, the four areas of survey distribution were the Aquarium Wharf complex, the City Market, Waterfront Park, and Marion Square. The survey form is appended (Appendix B). Potential respondents were pre-qualified to ensure that their home was outside the Charleston Tri-County area. No more than one person per travel party was asked to participate. A total of 620 useable survey forms were returned among the estimated 3,500 survey forms handed out; yielding a response rate of approximately 18%. The major questions this study attempts to answer are: Who are these Charleston visitors? How much do they spend in the Charleston area? Where are they from? What information sources are they using, both for deciding where to visit and planning the specifics of their trips?