

INVESTIGATING MILLENNIAL ENGAGEMENT AT CASCADIA ART MUSEUM

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BACKGROUND



The National Endowment for the Arts has conducted a survey of public participation in the arts roughly every five years since 1982. In their 2022 report, they found that the overall rate of arts attendance dropped nearly six percentage points between 2017 and 2022 (National Endowment for the Arts). This troubling trend reflects the continued steady decline in attendance that art museums and galleries have been facing since the turn of the 21st century.

As museums prepare for the eventual passing of the baton from the Baby Boom generation, they need to understand that Millennials have unique identities with a different set of priorities and expectations from previous generations. Understanding this new audience is pivotal for institutions to ensure their longevity and continued relevance in the face of steadily declining public arts participation.

Cascadia Art Museum (CAM) identified that their institution is facing a problem attracting and retaining a younger demographic as visitors, volunteers, and donors. There is an institution-wide perception that since the founding of the museum in 2015, the visitors, donors, and board have skewed heavily towards the 65+ audience, and the museum is interested in engaging with new, younger audiences. In this context, the younger demographic refers to Millennials and young families. For the purposes of this study, Millennials are defined as individuals between the ages of 25 and 44. Over the 2024-2025 academic year, this study investigated the museum visiting behaviors and leisure habits of CAM's current audience and Millennials in the greater Edmonds community.

PURPOSE



The purpose of this project was to help Cascadia Art Museum better understand the composition of their current audience and gain insight into the attitudes, motivations, and habits of the Millennial audience they seek to develop.

The goal of this project was for the staff of CAM to feel well-equipped to engage with Millennial audiences by building their capacity to engage with Millennials through developing awareness of what this audience wants and needs from the museum and providing practical recommendations for staff to employ.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

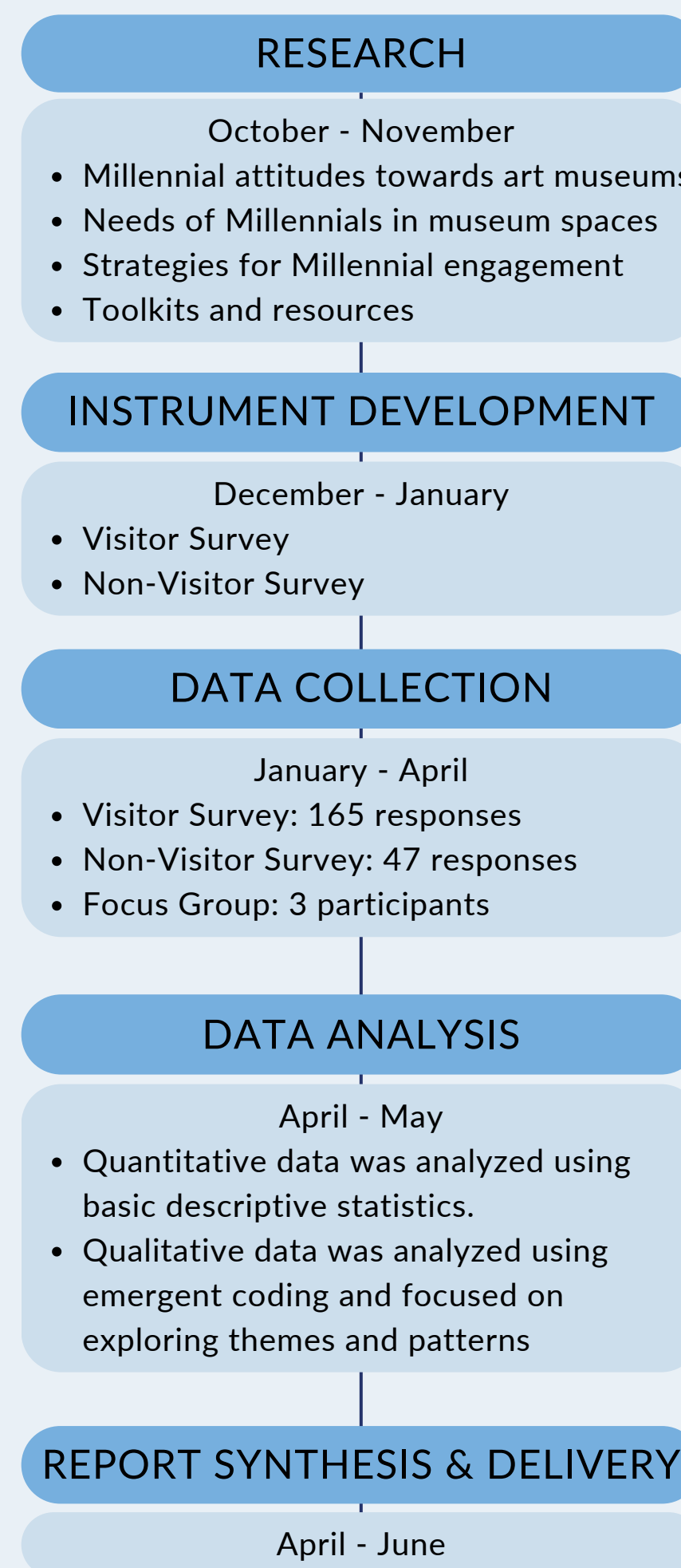
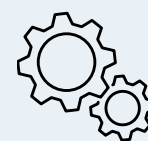
Many thanks to my committee members, Meena Selvakumar, Sally Ralston, and Erica Barnhart, for their time, guidance, and encouragement throughout this process. I would like to thank my loved ones for their infinite support throughout my time in graduate school, and my cat Pipsy whose company has been invaluable.

DELIVERABLE



The deliverable for this project was a comprehensive, community-informed, research-based report with recommendations for how the Cascadia Art Museum can begin developing an audience of Millennials as visitors, volunteers, and museum members

PROCESS



CONCLUSIONS



- The majority of Millennials are going to museums, and art museums are the most visited type of museum among this sample, but they are not coming to CAM.
- Some Millennials find art museums unapproachable and feel uncertain about navigating those spaces and engaging with art.
- Visitors have positive impressions of CAM and are very likely to recommend it to friends or family.
- Millennials who are aware of CAM have either never visited or are not visiting regularly.
- Millennials are primarily motivated to visit art museums because of personal fulfillment (to learn, relax, pass time, for fun, etc.).
- Cost is by far the most common barrier for Millennials.
- Millennials are interested in creative workshops, after-hours events, and gallery tours.
- Facebook is the most common way Millennials find ways to spend leisure time, and social media and emails are their preferred methods of staying up to date with museums.

NEXT STEPS FOR CAM

- Consider implementing flexible or extended hours and experiment with events outside of traditional hours.
- Explore embedding more interactivity in its gallery spaces.
- Experiment with including Millennials in the exhibit development process.
- Consider moving towards a more community-based, visitor-centered approach.
- Examine assumptions about the effectiveness of CAM's existing communication methods, and consider making changes to engage with new audiences.
- Consider exploring ways to lower the cost of admission
- Identify why Millennials should come to CAM.

REFERENCES

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