

Publications

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An Economic Evaluation of a Water-Based Urban Tourist Attraction in San Antonio, Texas

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The importance of an economic study of the Paseo del Rio (a highly developed portion of the San Antonio River) has greatly increased with the proposal of many extensions, each of which will involve large investment. That developmental plan which has been in the forefront involves an extension of the Paseo del Rio, in the central business district, north to Brackenridge Park and south to the city limit. An economic study of the existing, developed area would determine the estimated impact of it on commercial enterprises, and produce information relative to the possible effects of future extensions and associated developments.

The purpose of this study is to determine the economic effect of the Paseo del Rio on commercial enterprises and activities as it affects tourism and recreation in the central city. Based on the assumption that the economic effects of the developed river area

arise from the expenditures of the users, and that beneficiaries are the businesses surrounding the area, three surveys have been conducted. One concerned users of the developed river area. It served to identify their socioeconomic characteristics and other relevant factors which might be important to their knowledge and use of the river. The second was a survey Of the businesses in the central business district to identify their economic characteristics, their relationship to the Paseo del Rio, and the proportions of gross receipts of these businesses attributable to the developed river area. A third survey served to identify characteristics of residents of San Antonio, their knowledge of the Paseo del Rio and their use of it for various purposes.

Statistical analyses indicated that the income of the user, the size of the user group, and the distance traveled by the user were all positively associated with the level of his expenditures. The two user activities, shopping and eating, were associated with high levels of expenditures. Other user characteristics which resulted in high levels of expenditures were the purchase of food and recreational goods. The businesses in the river area were stratified according to distance from the Paseo del Rio to reduce variation. This stratification was extremely significant, with the proportion of gross receipts attributable to the developed river area decreasing as distance from the river increased. Businesses selling the goods and services of arts and crafts, entertainment and lodging attributed high proportions of their gross receipts to the Paseo del Rio. The types of customers which contributed large amounts of gross receipts to the area were tourists and local residents (businesses and households).

The users of the area are not only tourists, but also San Antonio residents and persons from nearby cities. Thus, an extension of the Paseo del Rio would be significant not only to increased tourism but also to added recreational use of the river by the residents of the city. Reaction to the proposed extension was favorable both from the standpoint of the businesses in the surrounding area and from the users of the Paseo del Rio.

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