

AQUARIUMS....The unique audience available through BIAZA sites

Underpinning any potential to work with Government and other, the single most important fact and single most important offer that BIAZA and its members can make is our unique audience . This is a dynamic medium of communication, driving straight to the heart of the UK electorate and tax-paying base.

The following points will be made in support:

1. Our combined visitor numbers are quite vast. Something like 25 million people visit UK zoos, aquariums and similar sites every year - a staggering 40% of the entire population. BIAZA represents the majority of these sites. Every year this audience partially renews itself, so over a 3 year period the proportion of the UK public is even greater.

2. More important than even the size is the quality and democratic make up of that audience. All social sections are available at the zoo.

The proportions of ethnic minorities visiting zoos show a healthy reflection of the UK's overall cultural make up. Unlike other areas of cultural, educational or even recreational activity, there is no sense on the part of our Afro-Caribbean, Asian, Chinese or other communities that this experience is somehow 'not really for us' in some sense intimidating, the exclusive province of the white middle classes. On the contrary, many are pro-active in viewing the zoo experience, the animal world through their own cultural and heritage frameworks.

And all ages attend the zoo. And all socio-economic backgrounds. And all levels of educational attainment.

On any given day at any BIAZA site, families of many different backgrounds rub shoulders. The tradition of the family day out at the zoo transcends social and economic barriers.

3. Most tellingly of all the zoo demographic includes nearly every child at an early, formative point in their education.

4. The audience is geographically dispersed. Heavily attended UK zoos are spread all across the UK, not just concentrated in London and the South-east, a basis on which other cultural or educational provider are sometimes criticised. The largest single visitor numbers (1.4 million) occur at Chester Zoo on the border with Wales and many BIAZA collections exceed 0.5 million visitors.

5. People attend our sites in an open and happy frame of mind: families come actively prepared to learn, parents explicitly directing children to the learning on offer. Visitors spend a leisurely four hours on average at our sites, ample time to absorb new ideas.

Conclusion

For all elements, the basic premise of the zoo visit is disarmingly straightforward: the profound thrill of being reconnected with nature and the animal kingdom.

This is not a 'difficult' concept that we have to cleverly package; it is immediately understood; it is enthusiastically embraced. The zoo audience is a clientele that many interests would die for.

And yet the most democratic audiences available at sites of serious educational and ethical purpose have been historically overlooked.

BIAZA and BIAZA members need to continue to remind Government: To take more notice of us and to take more advantage of us.

<http://www.biaza.org.uk/about-biaza/ou-activities/liasing-with-government/zoo-and-aquarium-group/zoo-audiences/>