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Spreading Awareness: One Brush at a Time



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Abstract

This study measured what the impact of a public art installation had on community environmental awareness, participation, and engagement. More specifically, this project is aimed to measure how a mural can be used to increase community awareness and engagement within the Chattahoochee Nature Center (CNC). This study was conducted in partnership with the CNC.

Background

Across human history, public art has been a key tool for spreading awareness. From Neolithic cave paintings to Banksy's graffiti, we have used art to warn others about incoming dangers and new opportunities. Over the past 30 years, the changes to the environment and its conservation have become large topics of conversation. Public art has been utilized in modern times as a tool for spreading awareness about environmental topics (Cartiere, C. (2020). However, awareness about environmental issues can still be improved on. This project aimed to help spread awareness of those environmental concerns via the usage of public art. This study has utilized surveys accessed by QR codes, which have proven be effective in increasing engagement within educational spaces (Stachowiak, B. (2023), (Pérez-Sanagustín, M. et al. (2016).

Methodology

Survey:

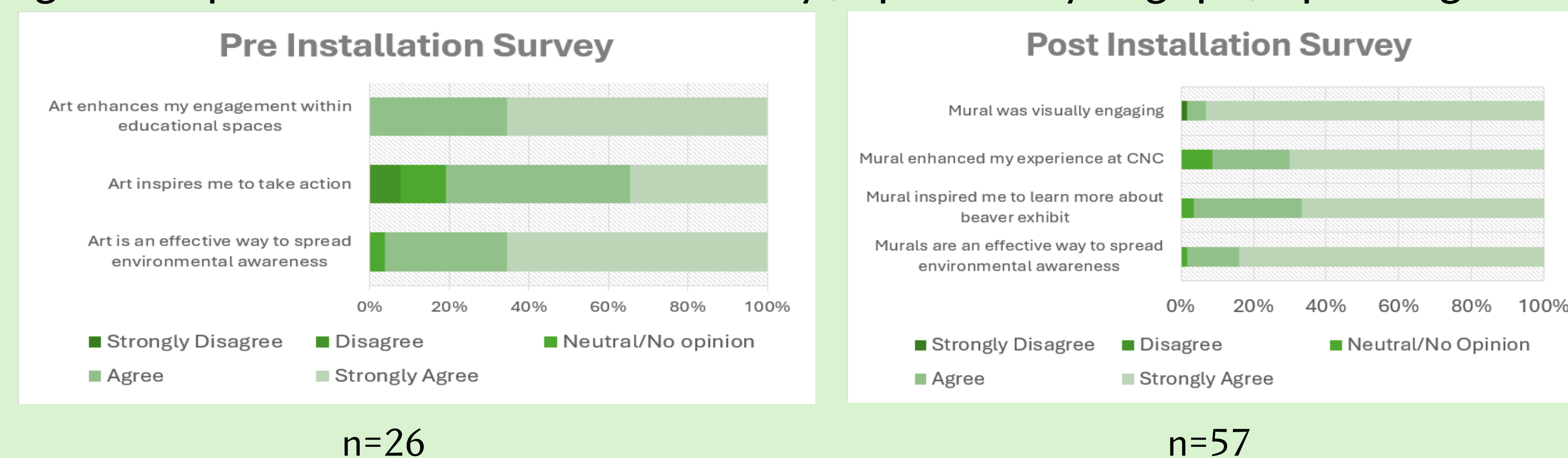
- 2 mixed-method surveys accessed by QR code placed near installation (pre/post mural installation).
- Both feature Likert scales (scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, assign lowest to 1, highest to 5).
- First survey asked participants for opinions on art installations as method for spreading awareness, second asking for opinions on the mural and whether it inspired action and desire for learning.
- Both collected participant's age, along with additional thoughts and feedback on the topic

Results

Survey:

- First survey (pre mural installation) received 26 responses.
 - 17 responses from 35-54 age group
 - 60% responded with strongly agree to both first and third question
- Second survey (post mural installation) received 57 responses:
 - 26 responses from 35-54 age group, 21 responses from 55 and up.
 - 90% responded with strongly agree to first question, 84% strongly with fourth.
 - Strongly suggests that the mural was eye-catching and attracted engagement to environmental awareness.
 - Very little disagreement to questions; could be attributed to a skewed age in respondents.

Figure 1: Responses to Likert scale from both surveys, represented by bar graphs, in percentages.



Mural creation process:

- Mural was created using acrylic paint on 26' x 7' wooden fence near the beaver exhibit at the CNC.
- Projected sketch onto wall to create outline for installation
- Installed over 6-day period during Spring Break.

Figure 2: Photos of installation site before and after the creation of mural.



Community Quotes:

- "I really like creating art whenever possible! so I'd say the act of participating in art could also enhance my environmental awareness."
- "This mural draws a person in. It has piqued my interest in learning more about beavers and I want to visit this place."

Conclusion & Next Steps

Based on qualitative responses, the current conclusion is that the mural has been an effective tool for capturing visitor attention and sparking interest in environmental education.

As a beginner to mural creation, the process was challenging, but we received tips from mentors that were extremely helpful. Despite the success of the mural by community response, it does not appear to be an efficient method of spreading environmental awareness. This is due to the large amount of time and effort required to create a mural compared to other methods, such as social media campaigns and fundraisers.

As for next steps, we will be creating a timeline of the mural creation process. We will also begin a social media campaign with the CNC, including a blog about myself and the process of creating the mural. The mural is planned to be used as an educational piece for the CNC to utilize in teaching visitors about beavers, which does help it achieve its purpose of spreading awareness.

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References

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